Nigeria-South Africa Relations: Theoretical arguments on Cooperation and Competition

Adegboye Damola Ibukun

Doctoral Candidate, Department of Political Science, Lagos State University; Email: Damola.adegboye@yahoo.com; Tel: +2347032284202

Abstract

Cooperation and competition are central themes that shape the relationship between Nigeria and South Africa. Both countries, being key players in Africa, explore various forms of relations, both bilaterally and multilaterally, through political, economic, diplomatic, and socio-cultural interactions. Different theoretical arguments have been developed over time to explain competition and cooperation among states; however, most of these perspectives are Eurocentric. Applying African Realism as a theoretical framework, because of its Afrocentric approach to explaining cooperation and competition between Nigeria and South Africa challenges the narrow arguments of other theories, making them less applicable in this context. Using a qualitative method and secondary data, it was found that African states can simultaneously cooperate and compete, emphasizing that states will naturally compete for their national interests but also cooperate due to the Afrocentric value of brotherhood, which is the core principle of African Realism.

Keywords: Cooperation, Competition, Nigeria, South Africa.

Introduction

The relationship between Nigeria and South Africa continues to generate academic debate. Both states have consistently exerted their influence at the domestic, sub-regional, continental, and global political arenas. Their rich political history, economic size, proximity to bodies of water, population, military strength, and the internationalization of cultural values are some of the tools they use in their interactions with other states in the international system to exert their influence.

Akinboye (2013) traces the formal origin of their relationship back to the Sharpville Massacre of 1960, which claimed the lives of 72 Black individuals and left around 184 injured. This event, as highlighted by Nagar and Paterson (2012), sparked international outrage and steered the South African regime towards increasing isolation and harsher repression. In the 1960s and 1970s, Nigeria emerged as a key supporter of black liberation movements throughout Southern Africa. Chukwu (2021) emphasizes that Nigeria, a prominent African nation in terms of its economy, population, and military

65

power, played a crucial role in assisting South Africans in overcoming the apartheid regime's oppressive governance.

Adebajo (2017) pointed out that Nigeria and South Africa constitute about one-third of Africa's economic power and have led numerous conflict management initiatives for the last 25 years. Collectively, they account for over 60% of the economies in their respective sub-regions of West and Southern Africa. As a result, the potential for political and economic integration in Africa largely hinges on these two influential countries.

According to Vickers (2012), three factors contribute to the uniqueness of these states in the region. Firstly, Nigeria and South Africa possess unmatched capabilities, encompassing both soft and hard power. While Nigeria stands as one of Africa's largest economies, both nations play crucial roles as peacemakers on the continent. Vickers points out that South Africa boasts the most advanced and varied economy in Africa, along with an unparalleled level of foreign aid provided to other African nations. Secondly, Vickers (2012) emphasizes that Nigeria and South Africa dominate their respective regions in a way that is unmatched. They are widely seen as the hegemons, or potential hegemons, of West and Southern Africa, respectively.

In other sub-regions, various countries compete for this position. In North Africa, Algeria, Egypt, and Morocco are the candidates, while Kenya, Ethiopia, and Tanzania are the contenders in East Africa. Furthermore, no other state has exercised leadership roles in Africa like Nigeria and South Africa in terms of aid, developmental assistance, peacekeeping, and their contributions to the establishment and/or funding of organizations such as the Organization for African Unity (OAU), African Union (AU), New Partnership for Africa Development (NEPAD), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and Southern African Development Commission (SADC).

Moreover, Souaré (2005) and Akpotor and Agbebaku (2010) emphasize that Nigeria and South Africa have regularly deployed their military forces to support regional organizations, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), along with the African Union (AU) and the United Nations (UN). A significant example is Nigeria's command in peacekeeping operations in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Likewise, South Africa has been instrumental in peacekeeping missions in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Darfur, and Sudan (Nibishaka 2011: 5; Miti 2012). As a result, Nigeria and South Africa are listed among the top 20 countries providing troops for UN missions, surpassing all other nations in their regions.

When it comes to environmental issues, countries such as Morocco, Senegal, and the Democratic Republic of Congo view climate change as a national priority. In contrast, South Africa and Nigeria emerge as prominent leaders in climate change mitigation

66

across Africa. They carry substantial responsibilities for global resilience, adaptation, and mitigation efforts regarding climate change, acting as role models for other nations in the region (Maponya and Mpandeli 2012). These countries present valuable insights for comparing aspects of innovation, adaptive capacity, and conflict transformation dynamics. This understanding is crucial for highlighting the importance of bridging the innovation gap for security in the context of climate change adaptation (Akinyemi, 2019).

Oyewole (2020) pointed out that Nigeria and South Africa's military expenditures are notably significant geopolitically. From 2008 to 2017, their combined military spending constituted around 24 percent of the total for Sub-Saharan Africa. During this period, Nigeria contributed over 9 percent of the region's military expenditure, while South Africa's share was nearly 15 percent. In its immediate area, Nigeria was responsible for approximately 54 percent of military spending in West Africa and 20 percent in the Gulf of Guinea (GoG) between 2008 and 2017. Similarly, South Africa accounted for 67 percent of military expenditures in Southern Africa and about 30 percent in both Central and Southern Africa combined.

Having explored some hegemonic activities of both states across Africa and how these activities affect the region, it is also necessary to identify the areas of cooperation and competition between the two states, after which a theoretical discourse will be engaged. The idea behind this article is to engage in a rigorous theoretical examination to identify a single theory that explains cooperation and competition, particularly from an African viewpoint.

Methodology

The paper uses qualitative research method. Qualitative research involves collecting and interpreting non-numerical data to gain an understanding of human and social environments. According to Mason (2002), the qualitative approach highlights richness, depth, nuance, context, multidimensionality, and complexity. The data for this study were gathered from secondary sources, meaning they were already available and previously collected and analyzed by others (Kothari, 2004). Some of the data used in this study were obtained from secondary sources, including archives, databases, books, and journal articles.

Operationalization of Key Concepts

Competition

Competition is a fundamental aspect of international politics and has been studied from various scholarly perspectives over time. Waltz (2000) provides a narrow definition, describing it as "goal-seeking behaviour that strives to reduce the gains available to others." Milner (1992) defines it as a situation where "two actors in the international system have incompatible high-priority interests, and one or both adopt behaviour detrimental to the other's interests." Burkhart and Woody (2017) emphasized that, in international relations, competition can be viewed as a state of adversarial relations without direct armed conflict, characterized by three key factors: perceived contention, efforts to gain mutual advantage, and the pursuit of a goal or resource that is not easily accessible.

Russ and Straford (2021) identify competition as a central organising principle in contemporary global politics. International rankings reflect ongoing rivalries among states to attain 'excellence' across various policy domains, including health, education, defence, inequality, and business taxation. Apart from these formal competitions, states often compete for more intangible assets such as power (both 'soft' and 'hard'), wealth, attention, influence, and prestige. Other influential global actors, including charities, major religious organisations, multinational corporations, and armed insurgent groups, also contest them.

Cooperation

Cooperation is a crucial aspect of interstate relations, drawing on diverse scholarly perspectives. Siltonen (1990) describes cooperation as any social interaction in which actors voluntarily collaborate to achieve shared goals through the exchange of resources. However, because cooperation has positive connotations, it should not be confused with harmony devoid of conflict. He emphasized that cooperation can conceal power struggles and sometimes serve as a means for one partner to dominate the other.

According to Herbert (1996), cooperation often requires parties to engage in negotiations to achieve "mutual adjustment" of behavior, a process distinguished from harmony, which he compares to "the mere fact of common interests." Keohane argues that this distinction between cooperation and harmony is necessary because discord can still occur even where common interests exist. Therefore, cooperation cannot simply be viewed as a function of common interests; instead, it becomes a potential goal for states.

Koesrianti (2015) observed that states expand their activities to reach their goals by engaging in interdependence through international organizations, networks, and markets. They often join international or regional groups, sacrificing some sovereignty in the process. As states evolve as institutions, tensions can arise between maintaining

68

sovereignty and adhering to international law, sometimes requiring states to relinquish some sovereignty to improve their citizens' living standards.

Nigeria and South Africa Areas of Cooperation

Both states play a crucial role in Africa, and their strategic significance and geographical positions foster various cooperative ventures. One notable instance of institutionalized economic collaboration is the formation of the South Africa-Nigeria Bi-National Commission (BNC) in 1999. Meeting biannually, the Commission aims to enhance political, economic, and trade ties between Nigeria and South Africa (Ebegbulem, 2013). The establishment of the Bi-National Commission has led to increased business activities between the two countries. South African enterprises in Nigeria, including MTN, MultiChoice, Shoprite, and Standard Bank, alongside Nigerian investments in South Africa such as Dangote, Access Bank, and United Bank for Africa, are generating jobs and adding value to both economies. According to Rabiu (2024), the bilateral relationship between Nigeria and South Africa significantly improved from 1999 to 2008, with trade volume rising to 22.8 billion South African rand from zero million.

Furthermore, regarding Nigeria and South Africa's economic cooperation, President Olusegun Obasanjo was instrumental in establishing the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) in 2001 and the African Union's (AU) African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) in 2003. Prior to the formation of NEPAD, President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa proposed the Millennium Africa Recovery Plan (MAP), while President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal introduced the Omega Plan. These two plans were merged on 3 July 2001, at the 37th Heads of State and Government Summit of the OAU in Lusaka, Zambia, to create the New African Initiative (NAI), which later evolved into NEPAD.

Nigeria's military relations with South Africa are not as extensive as its economic and political relations. However, both countries have engaged in a few military interactions in recent years. For instance, under President Goodluck Jonathan's regime, Nigeria employed South African mercenaries to assist in the war against Boko Haram (Malik, 2016). Boko Haram is a jihadist militant organisation based in northeastern Nigeria. Since the onset of the Boko Haram insurgency in 2009, thousands of Nigerians have been killed and millions displaced.

Nigeria South Africa Areas of Competition

Due to the anarchic nature of the international political system, competition is inevitable. Aside from the competition for a permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council, both states have other areas of rivalry. The origin of diplomatic competition between Nigeria and South Africa can be traced to the assassination of Ken

69

Saro-Wiwa by the military junta government in Nigeria, an act which was vehemently and publicly opposed and criticised by Nelson Mandela. Thus, South Africa utilised its position post-1994 as an emerging power to campaign for Nigeria's suspension from the Commonwealth and the United Nations for its human rights abuses (Ebegbulem 2013). A hostile and confrontational relationship was ignited between both countries.

Another competitive aspect between the two states was the 2012 election for the African Union chair. Nigeria strongly opposed South Africa's candidacy for the AU Commission leadership, instead supporting the Gabonese candidate, Jean Ping. Ultimately, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma of South Africa won, disappointing the Nigerian faction. In this context, the relationship between Nigeria and South Africa has been a mix of positives and negatives, characterized by fluctuations that scholars refer to as a love-hate relationship (Agbu 2010:43).

In March 2012, following South Africa's deportation of 125 Nigerians due to suspicions of counterfeit yellow fever certificates, Nigeria responded by denying entry to 78 South Africans. This situation prompted the eighth BNC meeting in Cape Town in May 2012, aimed at enhancing bilateral relations. On March 2, 2012, South Africa deported 125 Nigerians (75 on South African Airways and 50 on Arik Airways) for having invalid yellow fever vaccination certificates (The Guardian Editorials, March 5, 2012). The Nigerian government quickly retaliated, viewing the actions as an unjust mistreatment and a breach of diplomatic norms, by deporting 128 South Africans within two days, stating the lack of proper documentation as the reason (The News Editorials, March 19, 2012).

Theoretical Arguments on Cooperation and Competition Between Nigeria and South Africa

Various theoretical arguments explain cooperation and competition. Given the nature of interstate relations, different theoretical frameworks provide perspectives on how states compete and cooperate. For example, realism, neorealism, liberalism, neoliberalism, constructivism, and game theory, among others, offer diverse explanations of state competition and cooperation. However, for this study, the theoretical framework adopted to explain the subject matter is African Realism theory. Before delving thoroughly into the theory, it is necessary to provide a theoretical overview of cooperation and competition in international politics.

The realist approach elucidates the anarchic nature of the international system, where competition and survival prevail. It asserts that the international system comprises self-help and selfish actors who pursue their interests by any means necessary to achieve them. For these actors, there is no necessity for cooperation or moral justification, as such concepts are deemed fundamentally flawed. According to this perspective, the

70

international system clearly reflects realist views, as all states pursue their interests through selfish means, even if this necessitates competition, conflict, or war.

According to Antunes and Camisão (2018), the first assumption of realism is that the nation-state is the principal actor in international relations. Other entities exist, such as individuals and organisations, but their power is limited. Second, the state is viewed as a unitary actor. National interests, particularly in times of war, compel the state to speak and act with one voice. Third, decision-makers are rational actors in that rational decision-making leads to the pursuit of the national interest. Here, undertaking actions that would render your state weak or vulnerable is considered irrational. Realism posits that all leaders, regardless of their political persuasion, acknowledge this as they strive to manage their state's affairs to survive in a competitive environment. Finally, states exist in a context of anarchy; that is, in the absence of any institution being in charge internationally.

Antunes and Camisão (2018), in their submission, viewed realism historically by noting that in The Prince (1532), Machiavelli stressed that a leader's primary concern is to promote national security. To successfully perform this task, the leader must be alert and cope effectively with internal as well as external threats to his rule; he needs to be both a lion and a fox. Power (the Lion) and deception (the Fox) are crucial tools for conducting foreign policy. In Machiavelli's view, rulers obey the 'ethics of responsibility' rather than the conventional religious morality that guides the average citizen; that is, they should be good when they can, but they must also be willing to use violence when necessary to guarantee the survival of the state.

They also note that Hans Morgenthau (1948) sought to develop a comprehensive international theory, believing that politics, like society in general, is governed by laws rooted in human nature. His concern was to clarify the relationship between interests and morality in international politics. In Morgenthau's account, every political action is directed towards maintaining, increasing, or demonstrating power. According to Burchill (2005), realism seeks to describe and explain the world of international politics as it is, rather than how we might wish it to be. Consequently, realists perceive the world as a dangerous and insecure place, where violence is regrettable but endemic. In their accounts of the competitive nature of international politics, realists prioritise the nation-state, acknowledging it as the supreme political authority globally. However, explaining the violent behaviour of nation-states can only be accomplished by focusing on the role of power and the significance of the Great Powers.

The significance of a strategy centred on military strength, perceptions of weakness, superpowers, conflicts, and the ongoing struggle with a seemingly persistent state of war was apparent to everyone in the twentieth century, the most violent century in history.

According to Vasquez(1999), realists contend that states focus on anarchy, self-sufficiency, maximising relative power, ensuring national security, preparing for warfare, and evaluating relative power dynamics. Morgenthau actually posited that politics represents a contest for power, where nations strive to safeguard their national interests, and a nation's power can be most effectively limited by the power of another nation.

Waltz (1979), in his book, refers to his theoretical contribution as 'neorealism' or 'structural realism' because he emphasizes the notion of 'structure' in his explanation. Rather than being based on human nature, a state's decisions and actions are determined through a straightforward approach. First, all states are constrained by existing in an anarchic international system (this is the structure). Second, any course of action they pursue is grounded in their relative power when measured against other states.

According to neo-realists or structural realists, organizations arise from state interests, meaning they cannot operate independently. Instead, it is the interests of states that dictate whether they will cooperate or compete (Baylis, 2001; Meierhenrich, 2012; Sinclair & Byers, 2006). Institutions like the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the European Union (EU) serve as platforms for states to protect their interests. Neo-realists contend that these entities are established through self-interest considerations, downplaying the role of international organizations in fostering peace and security (Baylis, 2001; Meierhenrich, 2012; Nathan, 2012).

Using realism or neorealism to explain Nigeria-South Africa relations, particularly within the context of cooperation and competition, does not provide a balanced argument. These theories largely focus on competition and fail to recognise collaboration. Additionally, besides being utopian, they do not encompass an African perspective, as they are more Eurocentric than Afrocentric. Their principles, features, and structure do not accurately reflect the nature of the African political landscape; while there are areas of competition, they also share values and beliefs that foster a bond of brotherhood and unity between them. It is on this basis that realist or neorealist approaches cannot adequately explain the relationship between these two states.

Conversely, idealists or liberalists contend that addressing global challenges requires cooperation and collaboration within institutional frameworks. They argue that the international system can foster peace if nations unite to achieve common goals. For idealists, a system shaped by welfarism, diplomacy, human rights, and democratic values will likely reduce conflicts, competition, and crises, as states will align their interests towards nurturing collective peace and security.

Therefore, it is against this backdrop that international institutions have been established as platforms for states to interact and cooperate in pursuing global peace and security. Examples of these organizations include the League of Nations, the United

72

Nations, the African Union, and ECOWAS, among others. Liberals believe that the existence of these institutions will fundamentally reduce the incidence of conflicts and wars in the international system. In explaining liberalism, Harrison and Boyd (2018) posited that the origins of liberalism can be located in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It emerged with the early development of capitalism and gained particular strength with the rise of an industrial middle class from the 1750s onwards. Figures such as Locke, Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Adam Smith were regarded by nineteenth-century liberals as early liberals.

According to Burchill (2005), liberalism comprises sub-groups and traditions. These include economic liberals, who focus on promoting market relations as the optimal form of economic organization; political liberals, who regard the spread of liberal democracy as an antidote to conflict in the international system; and moral liberals, who believe that the universal adoption of human rights benchmarks will gradually improve the condition of humanity. These are not necessarily discrete factions within liberalism. Grieco (1993) argued that liberalists believe there are other important actors, such as intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), transnational entities, and multinational corporations (MNCs). Liberalists contend that such actors, among many, can exert substantial influence in areas such as agenda-setting.

According to Harrison and Boyd (2018), for liberals, society is based on a morality of self-interest, along with mutual support and respect. While the driving force of a liberal society is enlightened self-interest, it manifests as a balance of interests, institutions, and ultimately, political power within society. Therefore, both chaos and tyranny are avoided. Liberalism encompasses several key themes: the individual and his or her rights, an optimistic view of human nature, a belief in progress, a commitment to freedom, limited government interference in the economy, and a dedication to internationalism.

Ozkan and Cetin (2016) note that liberalists focus more on cooperation than conflict due to their assumptions. They further assert that to foster cooperation and prevent conflict, democracy must be widespread, there should be higher levels of development, international organizations need to play a growing role, and the promotion of international law is essential. Neoliberalism, a refined form of liberalism, strengthens the rationale for international organizations' existence.

Niou and Ordeshook (1991) posited that Neo-liberals advocate for international cooperation, suggesting that states should prioritize their collective interests through international organizations. This perspective is echoed by Sinclair and Byers (2006), who asserted that international organizations facilitate cooperation; without them, "the prospects for our species will be very poor indeed." Consequently, they highlight the vital role of these organizations in encouraging collaboration. From this viewpoint, one can

73

reasonably conclude that organizations are essential in fostering cooperation among states. Moreover, the creation of the League of Nations further enhances institutional cooperation among liberalists.

This view has been flawed by realists because it is in the nature of states to be selfish in the pursuit of their interests. Even if liberal theory has universal applicability, there would be no war or conflict, as states would be cooperating. Furthermore, for this study, liberalism or neoliberalism does not capture the full essence of the arguments being made. It is insufficient to argue that states only cooperate and do not have areas of conflict or competition.

Using these frameworks to explain both cooperation and competition between Nigeria and South Africa is inadequate because, while both states engage in international cooperation and collectively belong to international organizations, they still perceive themselves as rivals and interact with each other in various aspects of their relationships. To this end, it does not capture the full essence of the interactions between the two states.

Constructivism is a theory that explains the interaction between cooperation and competition. Emerging in the mid-1990s, it challenged the dominant realist and liberal theories. Scholars like Alexander Wendt, Nicholas Onuf, Anthony Giddens, Martha Finnemore, and Peter Katzenstein played key roles in popularizing this theory. Wendt (1992) argues that constructivism emphasizes socially shared knowledge, which is common and interconnected among people. He highlighted that the structures of human relations mainly depend on shared ideas rather than material factors. A central argument of constructivism is its opposition to the neorealist view, which states that anarchy naturally leads to self-help; instead, it claims that this outcome depends on how states interact. Through these interactions, the identities and interests of states are shaped. Neorealists maintain that identities and interests are fixed; states know their roles and goals before engaging with others. In contrast, constructivists believe that these identities and interests are actually formed through interaction, creating the framework of identities and interests.

It has to do with perception and a system of ideas. States tend to cooperate or compete based on the existing knowledge or perception they hold about each other. The USA and China both belong to the United Nations Security Council; however, despite their cooperation to ensure international peace and security, they perceive each other as hegemonic rivals, which explains the cold war-like tension that exists between them. Constructivists argue that 'material resources only acquire meaning for human action through the structure of shared knowledge in which they are embedded' (Wendt 1995).

For instance, Canada and Cuba are geographically close to the United States in North America; however, the sheer military power balance alone does not clarify why Canada is

74

a close ally of the U.S., while Cuba is considered a sworn adversary. Concepts of identity, frameworks of ideology, and established relationships of friendship and hostility give drastically different meanings to the material power balance between Canada and the United States compared to that between Cuba and the United States. Constructivists also emphasize the importance of normative and ideational frameworks, which are thought to shape the social identities of political entities.

While the arguments for constructivism are valid, it fails to capture the Africanity of the subject at hand and does not adequately balance its attributes, particularly regarding the realities of interactions between Nigeria and South Africa. Instead of relying on perceptions and shared knowledge, the relationship between both states is informed by various epochs of their evolution, such as apartheid, the post-apartheid era, the military period, and the post-military era. Their relations are shaped by the practical realities of these periods rather than by mere perceptions.

Game theory is frequently utilized to elucidate political dynamics. Scholars commonly apply it to military tactics and foreign policy, but it can also extend to various facets of decision-making and the interplay of cooperation and competition among states. Key advocates of this theory include Neumann and Morgenstern, who introduced the book Theory of Games and Economic Behaviour in 1943. Building on their work, many scholars have further examined the topic, including Thomas Schelling, William H. Riker, Morton A. Kaplan, and Howard Raiffa, among others. Since the 1960s, the use of game theory has surged, especially as superpowers began employing games and strategies to address the actions of other powers or rivals. It was during this era that game theory achieved broader recognition and application.

Based on the assumptions of this theory, it is believed that there must be at least two players, as this is the minimum requirement for any game. The number of players can exceed two, depending on the nature of the game and the willingness of the participants. In this context, players are the decision-makers, concerned with strategy and decision-making. All players are solely interested in reaching a decision that will benefit them, and it is assumed that they act rationally.

It is also important to note that players are aware of the available alternatives and select one or more from this set. They make rational decisions among these options, which leads them to establish a priority rule that involves ranking the alternatives by preference and choosing one or two that they believe will yield the greatest payoff. Different types of games exist, including zero-sum, variable-sum, the prisoner's dilemma, and the game of chicken. However, the zero-sum game will be utilized to illustrate the dynamics of competition coupled with cooperation.

The Zero-Sum Game is played by two people and is a very simple type of game. In this game, if one actor gains, the other incurs a loss. Thus, what is a gain for one may be a loss for the other. After the Second World War (1939-45), the world divided into two camps: one led by the United States and the other by the former Soviet Union. The advancement of the Soviet camp was tantamount to the loss of the American camp, and vice versa. This dynamic also occurred during the Cold War, where the rise of American hegemony led to the decline of the Eastern bloc.

Applying game theory to clarify the dynamics between Nigeria and South Africa seems excessive; their interactions are neither characterized as zero-sum nor do they fit the prisoner's dilemma framework. The two nations have not engaged in a traditional or ideological conflict, as they primarily seek to project their influence culturally, diplomatically, economically, and politically, all while maintaining a degree of amicability. Therefore, game theory fails to encapsulate the complete argument.

After examining a range of theoretical frameworks that aim to elucidate cooperation and competition especially in the context of Nigeria and South Africa, it is evident that the constraints of these theories hinder our comprehension of how cooperation and competition can coexist. Consequently, this study adopts African realism as its theoretical framework. Oyewole (2023) supports this theory, asserting that African realism strikes a balance between Pan-Africanism and realism, thereby offering a more nuanced portrayal of the realities within the African international system. Realism is a widely accepted theory in international relations, as indicated in academic literature, and thus, it serves as the primary framework for understanding the competitive dynamics of the international system (Dawson 2017; Goswami and Garretson, 2020).

In contrast, Pan-Africanism represents an anti/post-colonial viewpoint that originated from African studies, aiming to investigate and reconstruct the colonial narrative surrounding the continent. This viewpoint critiques realism and its tenets including state-centrism, self-interest, self-help, the fight for survival and power, security dilemmas, the anarchic nature of the international system, and perpetual competition as being un-African (Ogunnubi and Oyewole 2020). Conversely, the philosophical basis of Africanism emphasizes principles such as equality, justice, solidarity, brotherhood, collectivism, consensus, cooperation, regionalism, integration, and unity (Abegunrin 2009; Falola and Essien 2014). These ideas directly oppose the realist concept of the state as a self-serving entity in the quest for survival.

A blend of realism and Pan-Africanism forms a theory that critiques realism while integrating Pan-Africanism to represent better the realities faced by African states. Realism emphasizes competition, whereas Pan-Africanism advocates for cooperation in the continent's best interest. Although competition among states is natural, the realist

76

perspective tends to be excessively Eurocentric and fails to capture the complete realities of Africa. Many elements of African culture are inherently communal, encouraging cooperation in shared interests and competition when essential, as competing is also a natural human behavior. This context sets the stage for the dynamic between Nigeria and South Africa. Both nations collaborate in areas of mutual interest, such as their roles in international organizations, bilateral agreements, and advocating for Africa's interests on these platforms. Meanwhile, they compete to assert their hegemonic influence and pursue their national interests.

Ogunnubi and Oyewole (2020) argue that realists generally regard the state as a singular actor, making it the main focus of analysis in the international realm. Even with years of self-rule, many African states fall short of the criteria set by the realist perspective. Such states often exhibit pluralism, as various subnational ethnocentric groups vie against the state, which weakens its ability to operate as a unified and impactful entity in international relations. As a result, the ability of significant African countries, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Angola, Ethiopia, Sudan, and Nigeria, to act decisively and "rationally" within a realist framework is often compromised by internal conflicts.

In addition to Nigeria and South Africa, the relevance of this theory is evident in the circumstances of Sahelian states like Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso. These countries have recently undergone military coups, and the resulting military administrations, while advocating for Pan-Africanism and liberation from neo-colonial influences, have withdrawn from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). This withdrawal has led to the formation of a competing economic bloc, indicating that although they endorse African unity, they are also engaging in competition with other nations across the continent.

When examining Nigeria-South Africa relations through this theory, it becomes clear that both nations will naturally vie for their national interests, which can often lead to conflicts. Nonetheless, international relations in sub-Saharan Africa are largely influenced by an Afrocentric perspective that emphasizes the principles and essence of pan-Africanism. This includes values such as equality, justice, egalitarianism, solidarity, brotherhood, collectivism, consensus, cooperation, regionalism, and integration. Beyond the interests of African states, there remains a pressing need for research into the means and capabilities devised and implemented to defend these interests on the global stage.

Nigeria and South Africa, while connected through their membership in the African Union, the Binational Commission, the New Partnership for Africa's Development, and other organizations, still compete in various areas. Their rivalry spans cultural sectors, including entertainment, such as sports and music, as well as the pursuit of a permanent

seat in the United Nations. Additionally, they seek economic and political influence in the region, each aiming for cultural supremacy and significance. Examples of these include the tussle for a permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council, the tussle for control of the African Union, South Africa's membership in BRICS, and the global balance of power, as well as immigration and diplomatic competition among other areas of rivalry. Despite these conflicting dynamics, shared values of brotherhood and unity, and a sense of African identity unite them.

Conclusion

The academic debate surrounding theories that explain cooperation and competition among African states is ongoing. Although several theories tackle this theme, African Realism stands out for effectively balancing both aspects. This theory embraces Pan-Africanism while accommodating realism, illustrating how states can engage in cooperation and competition at the same time. It advocates for pan-African unity and collaborative efforts while allowing for competition. However, the crucial aspect that needs careful examination is the nature of these relationships: do they serve the interests of Africa as a whole, or do they merely echo the hegemonic agendas of the involved states?

References

Abegunrin, O. (2009). *Africa in Global Politics in the Twenty-First Century: A Pan African Perspective.* London: Palgrave Macmillan

Adebajo A. (2017). *The Eagle and the Springbok: Essays on Nigeria and South Africa*. Fanele Publishers.

Akinboye, S. O. (2013). *Beautiful Abroad but Ugly at Home: Issues and New Racism in Post-Apartheid South Africa.* International Journal of Social Science Studies, 1(1), 192-205.

Akinyemi T.E(2019) *Climate Change Adaptation and Conflict Prevention: Innovation and Sustainable Livestock Production in Nigeria and South Africa*, © Springer Nature Switzerland

Antunes and Camisão,(2019). *Student Feature – Theory in Action: Realism and ISIS* https://www.e-ir.info/2019/06/17/student-feature-theory-in-action-realism-and-isis/

Baylis, S (2001). '*International and Global Security in the Post-Cold War Era', in The Globalization of World Politics*: An Introduction to International Relations, 2nd ed, New York: Oxford University Press.

Burchill S. (2005) *Conventional Perspectives: Realist Approaches. In: The National Interest in International Relations Theory*. Palgrave Macmillan, London

Harrison, K and Boyd, T (2018) *Understanding Political Ideas and Movements* (liberalism) SN - 97815261379

Herbertt A.L(1996), *Cooperation in International Relations: A Comparison of Keohane, Haas and Franck*, Berkeley Journal of International Law. VOL 14

Koesrianti, K. (2015). *International Cooperation Among States in Globalized Era: The Decline of State Sovereignty.* Indonesia Law Review. 3. 267-284. 10.15742/ilrev.v3n3.41.

Kothari, C.R.(2004), *Research Methodology, Methods and Thechniques,* 2nd Edition, New Age International Piublishers, New Dehli

Maponya, P., & Mpandeli, S. (2012). *Climate change adaptation strategies used by Limpopo Province farmers in South Africa*. Journal of Agricultural Science, 4(12), 39–47.

Mason J (2002), *Qualitative researching*, 2nd ed. sage publication

Meierhenrich.(2012) "International Organizations", London: University of London.

Miti, K. (2012). *South Africa and conflict resolution in Africa: From Mandela to Zuma*. Southern African Peace and Security Studies, 1(1), 26–42.

Nibishaka, E. (2011), *South Africa's peacekeeping role in Africa: Motives and challenges of peacekeeping.* Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung. Available at: http://www.rosalux.co.za/wp-content/ files_mf/1297156628_21_1_1_9_pub_upload.pdf.

Oyewole S.(2020*), Military Capabilities of Regional Powers In Africa: Nigeria and South Africa In Comparative Perspective Ed. Power Politics in Africa: Nigeria and South Africa in Comparative Perspective*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing. P76

Ozkan E Cetin C(2016) *The Realist and Liberal Positions on the Role of International Organizations in Maintaining World Order,* European Scientific Journal June 2016 edition vol.12, No.17 ISSN: 1857 – 7881

Siitonen L.(1990), *Political Theories of Development Cooperation, A Study of Theories of International Cooperation,* University of Helsinki. Institute of Development Studies.

Waltz, K. N. (1970). *The Origin Of War In Neorealist Theory.* Journal of Interdisciplinary History, 1(2), 179-214.

Wendt, A. (1992) 'Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics'. International Organization 2, 391-425.