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THE 6TH INTERNATIONAL AFRICA CONFERENCE

- APRIL 16, 2026-

PROCEEDING BOOK

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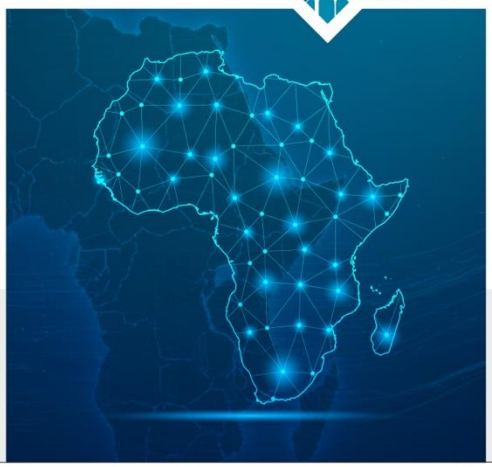
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The 6th International Africa Conference

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THE 6TH INTERNATIONAL AFRICA CONFERENCE

The Global Risks Report, published annually by the World Economic Forum, provides a comprehensive perspective on global risks by identifying the major threats the world is likely to face in the short and long term, and also functions as an "early warning system." In its latest edition, "uncertainty" has emerged as the defining theme shaping the global risk outlook for 2026. Geoeconomic confrontations, misinformation and disinformation, societal polarization, extreme weather events, state-based armed conflicts, cyber insecurity, inequality, the erosion of human rights and civil liberties, environmental pollution, as well as involuntary migration and displacement are among the most significant global risks expected to materialize over the next two years.

Against this backdrop, the theme of the 6th International Africa Conference, to be held this year, has been determined as "Africa in the Age of Uncertainty." The conference aims to address the multidimensional challenges facing the African continent and to discuss possible solutions with the participation of academics, researchers, international organizations, civil society organizations, and public sector representatives. Within this framework, the conference seeks to examine in depth the impacts of global risks on the African continent from an interdisciplinary perspective.

Participants will have the opportunity to contribute to the future of the continent by sharing their knowledge and experiences on Africa's contemporary challenges. We invite all relevant stakeholders who wish to discuss global risks in the specific context of the African continent to join our conference.

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

SESSION-1	DATE: 16.04.2026 TIME: 10.00-11.00 (UTC+3) LANGUAGE: ENGLISH	UNIVERSITY/ INSTITUTION	TOPIC
Session Chair	Pelin ALIYEV *Asst. Prof. Dr.*	Hasan Kalyoncu University, Türkiye	-
10.05-10.15	Ramel KHEDIDJA *PhD*	University of Algiers, Algeria	Artificial Intelligence and Security Transformations in the Sahel: Reshaping Strategies in Low-Connectivity Environments
10.15-10.25	Jill T. MUJAJI *PhD Cand.*	Shanghai University, China	Consequences of Geoeconomic Confrontations in Zimbabwe and the Role of Religion in Mitigating Socioeconomic Challenges
10.25-10.35	Abdennour TOUMI *Sr. Consultant*	Middle East & Africa (MEA) Institute for Strategic Studies, Algeria	Algeria's Political Reconciliation in African Sahel: Wisdom and Political Will
10.35-11.45	Q/A		
Link: http://ovs.hku.edu.tr/JoinMeeting?organizationid=fa473839-6e41-40cb-a98c-f43429aa6145&meetingid=1f570ec9-956c-42d0-873e-8d251d200c86			

SESSION-2	DATE: 16.04.2026 TIME: 11.00-12.00 (UTC+3) PRESENTATION LANGUAGE: ENGLISH	UNIVERSITY/ INSTITUTION	TITLE
Session Chair	Pelin ALIYEV *Asst. Prof. Dr.*	Hasan Kalyoncu University, Türkiye	-
11.05-11.15	Mehmet Furkan KELEŞ *MA Student*	Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia, Indonesia	South-South Cooperation Revisited: Indonesia-Africa Relations
11.15-11.25	Murat Özay TAŞKIN *PhD Cand.*	University of Wroclaw, Poland	Türkiye's Security Engagement in Sub-Saharan Africa in the Age of Uncertainty
11.25-11.35	Seife Tadelle KIDANE *Prof.*	The Center for Governance and Intr-Africa Trade Studies (CGIATS)	Developing Geopolitical and Digital Transformation Capabilities in Africa's Leadership
11.35-11.45	Göktuğ ÇALIŞKAN *PhD Cand.*	International University of Rabat (UIR), Morocco	Competing Crescents: Iran-Saudi Rivalry and Sectarian Mapping in the Sahel
11.45-12.00	Q/A		
Link: http://ovs.hku.edu.tr/JoinMeeting?organizationid=fa473839-6e41-40cb-a98c-f43429aa6145&meetingid=d08b6ca9-70ab-4b5d-8852-76a0fcbcce8c			

SESSION-3	DATE: 16.04.2026 TIME: 12.15-13.00 (UTC+3) LANGUAGE: ENGLISH	UNIVERSITY/ INSTITUTION	TOPIC
Session Chair	Büşra OZTEKIN *Res. Asst. and PhD Cand.*	Hasan Kalyoncu University, Türkiye	-
12.20-12.35	Kafia DAHER *BA Student*	Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University, Türkiye	Gender Disparity and Social Class System in Africa: A Sociological Examination of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) as a Social Institution
12.35-12.45	Şaziye Sıla AYDIN *MA Student*	Hasan Kalyoncu University, Türkiye	Disaster and Migration: The Case of the African Continent
12.45-12.55	Amany ELSOROGY *BA Student* & Abdikadir M. HASSAN *BA Student*	Erciyes University, Türkiye	Opportunities and Challenges of African Benefit from Azerbaijan's Public Service Model
12.55-13.00	Q/A		
Link: http://oys.hku.edu.tr/JoinMeeting?organizationid=fa473839-6e41-40cb-a98c-f43429aa6145&meetingid=c4658611-d50a-45f4-ba5b-834722eef421			

SESSION-4	DATE: 16.04.2026 TIME: 12.00-12.45 (UTC+3) PRESENTATION LANGUAGE: TURKISH	UNIVERSITY/INSTITUTION	TITLE
Session Chair	Göktuğ ÇALIŞKAN *PhD Cand.*	International University of Rabat, Morocco	-
12.05-12.15	Hande SAPMAZ *PhD*	Mardin Artuklu University, Türkiye	Sahra Altı Afrika'da Çatışma ve Gıda Güvensizliği Arasındaki İlişki: Sınır Bölgeleri Üzerine Karşılaştırmalı Bir Analiz
12.15-12.25	Hasan AYDIN *PhD*	Shanghai University, China	FOCAC Toplantıları ve Çin-Afrika Kalkınma İşbirliği
12.25-12.35	Eren YIĞITOĞLU *BA*	Independent Researcher	Afrika'da Dış Müdahale ve Devlet Kırılganlığı: M23 Hareketi ve PKK Örnekleri Üzerinden Devlet Dışı Silahlı Aktörlerin Karşılaştırmalı Analizi
12.35-12.45	Q/A		
Link: http://oys.hku.edu.tr/JoinMeeting?organizationid=fa473839-6e41-40cb-a98c-f43429aa6145&meetingid=cf0896b1-fcc9-464e-a44d-73a16ac18bee			

SESSION-5	DATE: 16.04.2026 TIME: 13.00-14.00 (UTC+3) PRESENTATION LANGUAGE: TURKISH	UNIVERSITY/INSTITUTION	TOPIC
Session Chair	Zeynep KOSE *Assoc. Prof. Dr.*	Hasan Kalyoncu University, Türkiye	
13.05-13.15	Habibe TEMIZSU *Asst. Prof. Dr.*	Bingöl University, Türkiye	Carl Peters'in Alman Sömürgeciliği Savunusu: İngiliz Kamuoyu Üzerinden Bir Okuma
13.15-13.25	Neslihan KURAN *Asst. Prof. Dr.*	Munzur University, Türkiye	İsrail'de Hristiyan Bir Topluluk "Falaş Muralar"
13.25-13.35	Zekiye KAYA *MA*	Sakarya University, Türkiye	Mağrip Rekabetinde Diplomasi ve Meşruiyet Aracı Olarak Filistin Politikaları: Fas ve Cezayir Örneği
13.55-14.00	Q/A		
Link: **http://oys.hku.edu.tr/JoinMeeting?organizationid=fa473839-6e41-40cb-a98c-f43429aa6145&meetingid=08d2b226-f553-4d98-9edc-41c2aa0a08cd**			

PROCEEDING OF THE CONFERENCE

FOCAC TOPLANTILARI VE ÇİN-AFRİKA KALKINMA İŞBİRLİĞİ

Hasan AYDIN

Dr., Shanghai University, Institute of Global Studies, hsn-aydin@hotmail.com

Özet

Bu çalışma Çin-Afrika İşbirliği Forumu'nu (FOCAC) kalkınma işbirliği olgusu bağlamında analiz etmektedir. 2000 yılından bu yana her üç yılda bir düzenli olarak gerçekleştirilen FOCAC toplantıları, Çin ve Afrika ülkeleri arasındaki çeşitli alanlardaki işbirliklerinin kurumsallaşmasına katkıda bulunan çok taraflı bir platform işlevi görmektedir. Çalışma boyunca bu toplantılar kalkınma ve kalkınma işbirliği anlayışında yaşanan dönüşümlere uygun olarak ele alınmıştır. Bu kapsamda, başlangıçta ağırlıklı olarak ekonomik göstergelere odaklanan geleneksel kalkınma anlayışı, zamanla yerini kalkınmanın siyasi, sosyal, kültürel ve diğer boyutlarına da odaklanan daha kapsayıcı bir anlayışa bırakmıştır. Dönüşen kalkınma anlayışına paralel olarak, başlangıçta genellikle dış yardımlar ve bağışçı-alıcı ilişkisi çerçevesinde şekillenen kalkınma işbirliği faaliyetleri de ilerleyen süreçte daha çok boyutlu bir niteliğe bürünmüştür. Bu noktalardan hareketle, çalışmanın temel iddiası Afrika+1 zirvelerinin modern kalkınma işbirliği anlayışının pratikteki en önemli tezahürlerinden biri olduğu ve FOCAC toplantılarının bu zirveler arasında özgün bir yer edindiğidir. FOCAC toplantılarının Çin-Afrika ilişkilerine çok yönlü bir şekilde ivme kazandırması ve bahse konu toplantıların diğer kıta dışı aktörlerin Afrika+1 zirveleri üzerinde dönüştürücü bir etki yapması bu iddianın başlıca dayanaklarındandır. Dolayısıyla, bu toplantıların muhtevasına ve işleyişine yönelik temel eleştirileri de göz önünde bulunduran bu çalışma, FOCAC toplantılarını kalkınma işbirliğinin dönüşümünü yansıtan, çok boyutlu, kurumsallaşmış ve küresel düzeyde etkili bir model olarak sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Çin, Afrika, FOCAC, Kalkınma, Kalkınma İşbirliği.

SAHRA ALTI AFRİKA'DA ÇATIŞMA VE GIDA GÜVENSİZLİĞİ ARASINDAKİ İLİŞKİ: SINIR BÖLGELERİ ÜZERİNE KARŞILAŞTIRMALI BİR ANALİZ

Hande SAPMAZ

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Özet

Sahra Altı Afrika'da gıda güvensizliği, uzun süreli çatışmalar, hızla yükselen gıda fiyatları, iklim değişikliği gibi faktörlerle derinleşmeye devam etmektedir. Literatürde özellikle çatışma endeksi değerleri ile yoksulluk, açlık ve gıda güvenliği göstergeleri arasında güçlü ilişki olduğu gösterilmektedir. Bu çalışma, Sahra Altı Afrika'da çatışma ile gıda güvensizliği arasındaki ilişkiyi üç vakanın sınır bölgeleri odağında karşılaştırmalı olarak incelemektedir. Çalışmada Sudan, Somali ve Güney Sudan vakalarında çatışma baskısının gıda güvensizliğini hangi mekanizmalar üzerinden yoğunlaştırdığı, sınır bölgeleri ile ilişkili üç boyut özelinde detaylandırılmaktadır. Sınır bölgelerinde yerinden edilme ve nüfus hareketliliğinin yarattığı baskılar, yardım ve pazar erişiminde ortaya çıkan kırılmalar ile geçim kaynaklarının sürekliliğini sağlayan üretim, hayvancılık ve dolaşım ağlarının bozulması boyutları, uluslararası kuruluşların raporları ve ACLED gibi ilgili veri setlerindeki verilerin incelenmesiyle karşılaştırılmaktadır. Bu sayede çalışma, çatışma ve gıda güvensizliği arasındaki ilişkinin yeniden tanımlanmasının ötesinde bu ilişkinin sınır bölgelerinde hangi mekanizmalar üzerinden yoğunlaştığını ve seçilen vakalarda hangi açılardan benzeşip farklılaştığını göstermeyi amaçlayan karşılaştırmalı bir katkı sunmaktadır. Sonuç olarak çatışma yoğunluğu ve dünyada gıda güvensizliğinin en yoğun yaşandığı ülkeler olmaları nedeniyle seçilen Somali, Sudan ve Güney Sudan vakalarının çatışma, yerinden edilme ve erişim kırılması arasındaki ilişki bakımından benzer; sınır bölgelerinin bu kırılganlıkları yoğunlaştırma biçimi bakımından ise farklılaştığı saptanmaktadır. Dolayısıyla sınırların bu ilişkiyi yoğunlaştıran özgül mekânlar olarak ele alınarak kısa vadeli insani yardımlardan ziyade kamusal kapasitenin, erişim altyapısının ve yerel yönetişim mekanizmalarının güçlendirilmesinin temel müdahale alanları kabul edilmesi gerektiği ileri sürülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Gıda Güvensizliği, Çatışma, Yerinden Edilme, Sınır Yönetimi, Sahra Altı Afrika.

AFRİKA'DA DIŞ MÜDAHALE VE DEVLET KIRILGANLIĞI: M23 HAREKETİ VE PKK ÖRNEKLERİ ÜZERİNDEN DEVLET DIŞI SİLAHLI AKTÖRLERİN KARŞILAŞTIRMALI ANALİZİ

Eren YİĞİTOĞLU

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Özet

Küresel belirsizlik çağında devlet dışı silahlı aktörlerin yükselişi ve direnç kazanması, dış müdahaleler ve devlet kırılganlığı ile doğrudan ilişkilidir. Bu çalışma, Afrika kıtasındaki karmaşık güvenlik krizlerini ve otorite boşluklarını anlamlandırmak amacıyla, Kongo Demokratik Cumhuriyeti'ndeki M23 Hareketi ile Orta Doğu'da faaliyet gösteren PKK'yı yapısal ve operasyonel düzeyde karşılaştırmalı bir perspektifle ele almaktadır. Araştırmada iki örgüt; güvenli liman arayışları, finansman modelleri ve dış aktörlerle kurdukları vekalet ilişkileri üzerinden karşılaştırılmaktadır. Yapılan analiz, temel farklılaşmanın doğrudan devlet kapasitesi ekseninde ortaya çıktığını göstermektedir. Kongo Demokratik Cumhuriyeti'ndeki sınırlı kurumsal ve askeri kapasite, M23'ün yerel doğal kaynaklara dayalı olarak doğrudan alan hakimiyeti kurabilmesine imkân tanırken Türkiye'nin konsolide ve güçlü devlet kapasitesi, PKK'yı ülke sınırları dışındaki alanlarda konumlanan asimetrik ve dağlık sığınaklara yönlendirmektedir. Buna karşılık her iki örgütün yapısal benzerliği; sınır aşan doğalarında, yasa dışı finansman modellerinde ve etnik/ırksal meşruiyet üretme stratejilerinde ortaya çıkmaktadır. M23'ün zayıf devlet otoritesinden faydalanarak bölgesel maden kaçakçılığına eklemlenmesi ile PKK'nın sınır hatlarındaki uyuşturucu kaçakçılığı ağlarını kontrol etmesi, her iki yapının da gayrimeşru sınır ekonomilerinden beslenme stratejisini yansıtmaktadır. Ayrıca her iki örgüt de silahlı eylemlerini ve şiddet tekelini meşrulaştırmak adına etnik kimlik savunuculuğu ve azınlık mağduriyeti üzerinden bir propaganda dili inşa etmektedir. Nitel karşılaştırmalı analiz yöntemiyle yürütülen bu çalışma, farklı coğrafyalarda faaliyet gösteren silahlı aktörlerin hayatta kalma ve uyum sağlama reflekslerini karşılaştırarak tipolojik bir modelleme sunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Sonuç olarak çalışma, Afrika ve Orta Doğu bağlamında devlet kırılganlığı ile dış müdahale arasındaki etkileşimin silahlı aktörlerin sürekliliğini ve kurumsallaşmasını nasıl etkilediğini ortaya koymakta ve bu doğrultuda güvenlik ile yönetişim tartışmalarına teorik ve ampirik katkı sunmayı hedeflemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Afrika, Kongo Demokratik Cumhuriyeti, M23 Hareketi, PKK, Türkiye

CARL PETERS'İN ALMAN SÖMÜRGECİLİĞİ SAVUNUSU: İNGİLİZ KAMUOYU ÜZERİNDEN BİR OKUMA

Habibe TEMİZSU

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Özet

1871 yılında birliğini tamamlayan Almanya'nın I. Wilhelm döneminde izlediği dış siyaset, büyük ölçüde Otto von Bismarck'ın belirlediği çerçevede şekillenmiştir. Bismarck Avrupa güç dengesini sarsan yeni Almanya'nın yayılmacı bir siyaset izlemesi halinde, bunun hem içeride hem de dışarıda tehlike arz edebileceği öngörüsü ile temkinli bir tutum sergilemiştir. Ancak 1888'de babasının ardından genç yaşta tahta çıkan II. Wilhelm, bu siyaseti terk ederek Almanya'nın dünya sahnesinde güç kazanmasını ve sömürgeciliğini genişletmesini hedefleyen *Weltpolitik*'i benimsemiştir. Bu doğrultuda Almanya, Bismarck'ın *Realpolitik* olarak adlandırılan denge ve ittifaklar siyasetinden uzaklaşarak Asya-Pasifik ve Afrika'da yer yer agresif olarak da nitelendirilebilecek sömürgecilik girişimlerine yönelmiştir. Bu girişimler, Alman kamuoyunda özellikle *Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft* (Alman Sömürge Cemiyeti) gibi sivil toplum örgütleri tarafından desteklenmiş, hatta teşvik edilmiştir. Cemiyetin öne çıkan isimlerinden biri, ırkçı ve yayılmacı görüşleriyle tanınan ve Alman Doğu Afrika kolonisinin kurucusu olarak kabul edilen Afrika kâşifi Carl Friedrich Hubertus Peters (1856–1918), ya da kısa adıyla Carl Peters'tir. Gençlik yıllarının bir kısmını İngiltere'de geçiren Peters, İngiliz sömürgeciliği ve dünya gücü siyasetinden derinden etkilenmiş, Almanya'nın da benzer bir yol izlemesi gerektiğini yazılarında savunmuştur. O'na göre İngiltere'nin sahip olduğu güçlü ulusal özgüven ve gurur ile yüksek kamusal yaşam standardı, büyük ölçüde sömürgecilik sayesinde elde edilen ekonomik refahtan kaynaklanmaktadır. Alman sömürge politikasını ekonomik bir zorunluluk olarak sunarak ulusal gelişim üzerinden meşrulaştıran Peters, İngiliz kamuoyunun tutumunu da bu bağlamda kendi söylemini destekleyen bir unsur olarak yorumlamaktadır. Bu çalışmada Carl Peters'in *Deutsch-national kolonialpolitische Aufsätze* adlı eserinde bu yönde yer alan görüşler incelenmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Carl Peters, İngiliz Emperyalizmi, Alman Emperyalizmi.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE SAHEL: RESHAPING STRATEGIES IN LOW-CONNECTIVITY ENVIRONMENTS

Ramel KHEDIDJA

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Abstract

The contemporary international security environment is undergoing profound transformations driven by rapid technological advancements, particularly in artificial intelligence (AI), alongside the increasing complexity of security threats in fragile regions such as the Sahel. Traditionally associated with terrorism, weak state institutions, and transnational organized crime, the Sahel region is now experiencing a shift toward hybrid security challenges that combine political instability, climate pressures, irregular migration, economic fragility, and intensifying geopolitical competition. These evolving dynamics require innovative security approaches that go beyond conventional military responses.

In this context, artificial intelligence is emerging as a strategic tool capable of reshaping security strategies, especially in low-connectivity operational environments that characterize many parts of the Sahel. Limited digital infrastructure, vast geographic spaces, and communication disruptions make traditional command-and-control models less effective, increasing the relevance of AI-driven solutions such as autonomous surveillance systems, predictive analytics, and decentralized decision-support technologies.

This study aims to analyze how AI integration is transforming security governance and strategic decision-making in the Sahel region. It examines the potential of AI technologies to enhance situational awareness, border monitoring, intelligence analysis, and crisis response while also exploring their implications for military doctrine, regional cooperation, and security governance. At the same time, the research highlights the risks associated with technological dependence, including cybersecurity vulnerabilities, ethical concerns, algorithmic bias, and the widening technological gap between states.

Methodologically, the study adopts a qualitative analytical approach grounded in security studies literature, geopolitical analysis, and recent developments in defense and security technologies. It seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how advanced technologies interact with fragile security contexts and how this interaction influences regional stability, sovereignty, and strategic balance.

The paper concludes that while artificial intelligence offers significant opportunities to improve security effectiveness in the Sahel, sustainable stability requires combining technological innovation with governance reforms, regional cooperation, and socio-economic development strategies to address the structural roots of insecurity.

Keywords: Hybrid Threats, Low-Connectivity Environments, Regional Security, African Geopolitics.

DISASTER AND MIGRATION: THE CASE OF THE AFRICAN CONTINENT

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Abstract

Migration is a phenomenon that has evolved in tandem with the course of human history and dates back to its earliest periods. Today, it remains one of the most critical issues on the global agenda. There are various political, social, and economic factors that drive people to migrate. Disasters are also among these factors. This study aims to examine the relationship between disasters and forced migration using the African continent as a case study. This study seeks to answer the question of how disasters in Africa affect migration. Africa is one of the regions with the highest rates of forced displacement globally and is the scene of intense migration flows, particularly due to the impact of climate-related disasters such as drought, floods, cyclones, and desertification. This study is a qualitative research that examines academic studies and reports on disasters and migration. The findings reveal that disaster-induced migration in Africa occurs largely within countries and across the continent. The fact that disaster-induced migration is particularly directed from rural areas to cities increases urbanization pressures and brings about various consequences, such as infrastructure deficiencies, unemployment, and difficulties in accessing social services. This situation demonstrates that disaster-induced migration has multifaceted effects across the continent. In conclusion, the study demonstrates that migration movements in Africa are largely internal and intra-regional, and that disasters play a decisive role in this process. It emphasizes the need for a comprehensive approach to various risk reduction policies and sustainable migration management strategies in Africa.

Keywords: Disaster, International Migration, Africa, Environmental Security.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF AFRICAN BENEFIT FROM AZERBAIJAN'S PUBLIC SERVICE MODEL

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Abstract

This study provides a comprehensive evaluation of the Azerbaijani "ASAN Service" model, launched in 2012 as a pioneering system for digital governance, which has rapidly evolved from a local project into a central strategic tool in Baku's foreign policy toward the African continent. The study aims to explore the institutional and technical foundations of this model, based on the "One-Stop Shop" principle and administrative integrity, and its effective role in simplifying government procedures, reducing waste, and enhancing trust between citizens and the state by providing more than 120 integrated services.

The study reviews the geographic expansion of the model in East and West Africa, focusing on implementation cases such as the "Mesob Center" in Ethiopia, and cooperation agreements with Rwanda and Guinea to digitize public services. It also analyzes the promising opportunities the model offers the African environment, particularly in combating corruption through electronic payment mechanisms and digital integration platforms like "MyGov", while leveraging the continent's digital youth population.

Conversely, the study identifies several core challenges facing the transfer process, most notably weak electricity and internet infrastructure, differences in governance systems between Azerbaijani centralization and African decentralization, as well as resistance from traditional bureaucracies and concerns regarding digital sovereignty and data protection.

The study concludes that exporting this model represents a strategic trend to enhance Azerbaijani soft power and build alliances in the Global South, while anticipating the future integration of Artificial Intelligence, which may create a pattern of technical interdependence and open new arenas for digital geopolitical competition on the continent.

Keywords: Digital Governance, Administrative Integrity, Public Service Digitization, Soft Power, Global South Alliances.

ALGERIA'S POLITICAL RECONCILIATION IN AFRICAN SAHEL: WISDOM AND POLITICAL WILL

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Abstract

More than six decades have passed since the African Sahel countries' independence. Yet, they are still living in a violent political environment, where political differences are settled by armed conflict that leads to social structure destruction, poverty, endless political animosity and foreign countries' interferences. Political reconciliation needs brave politicians and leaders to take a position and adopt a posture that brings reliable partners together on a cohesive stage, thereby fortifying the political framework put in place through the reconciliation talks process, rather than focusing solely on holding elections. The electoral process is the ultimate goal in the country's institutions function and political stability. On this stance what Chadian reconciliation needs and so that its neighboring countries. Whereas the Generals' war in Sudan entered its fourth year, in which reconciliation in general is aimed at a stage of nonviolent, coexistence pattern acceptance where former belligerents come together and set a common interest narrative for the best of the country. Reconciliation processes usually clash with technical and moral imperatives such as the appropriateness of trials, truth commissions, lustration (purges), official apologies, memorials, reparations, amnesties, and other institutions and policies to address the past.

For instance, on the South African case where political violence was the core of the South African society for decades because of Apartheid policies, white settler's minority imposed racist policies on majority of black Africans second citizens — occupier, occupied equation — consequently, with slow reconciliation process the country did enter new era of reestablishing social, political, and economic relations among former ethnic groups enemies. In this stance, the relations between white colonists and black Africans were ever equal, but political leaders like President Nelson Mandela with his wisdom and the political will of his partners from white leaders like President Frederik de Klerk, who was the father founding of new South Africa post-apartheid did emphasize on the criminal element of violence to bring South African to co-exist and live peaceful in their country.

So that goes the Algerian Reconciliation Charter launched by late President Liamine Zeroual and achieved by late President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, in which Chadian authorities and other African Sahel countries leaders are taking Algeria's political Reconciliation Charter as a model to peace and reconciliation processes. This includes Algeria's Zaouias roles in domestic politics, not as a tool of competition with the authorities, but as breakthrough of a moderate political message toward the authorities.

A strategy the authorities in Algeria have been using to marginalize the radical discourse used by radical Islamist groups is to promote political sentiment that facilitates the implementation of the moderate religious discourse called al-Wasatia, in order to end a long ideological struggle between two rival schools of thought: Neo-Islamism and Zaouia Reformism.

Keywords: Political Reconciliation, Sahel Peacebuilding, Algerian Reconciliation Model.

SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION REVISITED: INDONESIA-AFRICA RELATIONS

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Abstract

This paper examines Indonesia's relations with the African continent through the lenses of historical legacy, identity construction, and strategic partnerships within the framework of modern South-South Cooperation (SSC). Rooted in the legacy of the Bandung Conference and the enduring Bandung Spirit, these relations continue to derive moral and historical legitimacy from normative principles such as sovereignty, equality, and anti-colonialism. Over time, this symbolic solidarity has evolved into more pragmatic and economically driven engagement, particularly through institutional platforms such as the Indonesia-Africa Forum (IAF). The second IAF, held in Bali in 2024, facilitated cooperation across key sectors including energy, mining, and food security. This paper further examines Indonesia's "down streaming" policy as a development model for resource-rich African countries, as well as its green diplomacy initiatives, particularly in cooperation with the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Positioned as a middle power, Indonesia leverages its roles in global platforms such as the G20 and BRICS to promote Global South interests and act as a bridge builder in an increasingly multipolar world. Drawing on Alexander Wendt's theory of Collective Identity Formation, the study argues that Indonesia-Africa relations are shaped not only by material interests but also by a post-colonial identity. Ultimately, the paper contends that Indonesia's Africa policy represents a hybrid model of SSC, where identity-based narratives coexist with strategic and economic priorities. While framed in terms of mutual benefit, these relations are increasingly influenced by structural asymmetries and strategic considerations.

Keywords: South-South Cooperation, Indonesia, Africa, Bandung Spirit, Global South.

TÜRKİYE'S SECURITY ENGAGEMENT IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA IN THE AGE OF UNCERTAINTY

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Abstract

This paper analyzes Türkiye's security engagement in Sub-Saharan Africa in the context of growing uncertainty, armed conflict, and state fragility. As security crises deepen across East Africa, West Africa, and the Sahel, Africa has become a key arena for external actors seeking strategic influence. Within this setting, Türkiye has expanded its presence through military training, defense cooperation, security agreements, and capacity-building initiatives. The study asks how Türkiye's security policies in Sub-Saharan Africa are shaped by regional instability and changing geopolitical competition. It draws on qualitative analysis of official policy documents, bilateral agreements, diplomatic statements, and secondary literature. The paper argues that Türkiye has developed a pragmatic and multidimensional security approach that combines military cooperation with political and humanitarian engagement. This strategy has strengthened Türkiye's position as an emerging security actor on the continent. At the same time, the sustainability of this engagement remains limited by fragile state structures, armed violence, local political instability, and intensifying competition among external powers. The paper concludes that Türkiye's role in Africa should be understood primarily through a security lens, as part of its broader search for strategic influence under conditions of global and regional uncertainty.

Keywords: Türkiye, Sub-Saharan Africa, Security Policies.

DEVELOPING GEOPOLITICAL AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION CAPABILITIES IN AFRICA'S LEADERSHIP

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Abstract

This study examines the intersection of geopolitical positioning and digital transformation capabilities in shaping leadership effectiveness across Africa. While the digital divide is often framed in terms of access, this research argues that it is equally a question of usage, capability, and strategic integration within national development frameworks. The paper explores how digital transformation, encompassing people, processes, technologies, and institutional culture, can serve as a catalyst for economic diversification, governance innovation, and regional integration. At the same time, it critically assesses the structural and geopolitical constraints that influence Africa's digital trajectory, including dependency on external technologies, uneven policy coordination, and limited institutional capacity. In this context, the paper seeks to critically examine Africa's engagement with major global and emerging governance frameworks, including the G20, G7, BRICS+, and broader South–South cooperation. It aims to understand how these relationships shape the continent's strategic agency, developmental trajectories, and position within an evolving multipolar order. Methodologically, the study draws on comparative analysis of existing digital transformation models and incorporates stakeholder perspectives, particularly from policymakers and institutional actors, to evaluate how digital competencies are defined and operationalized within African contexts. The findings aim to contribute to a more grounded understanding of digital transformation as a locally embedded and strategically driven process, rather than a purely imported model. The paper ultimately proposes a framework for strengthening leadership capabilities that align digital transformation with Africa's broader geopolitical and developmental priorities.

Keywords: Digital Divide, Geopolitics, African Leadership, Institutional Capacity, G20, G7, BRICS+, South–South cooperation.

COMPETING CRESCENTS: IRAN-SAUDI RIVALRY AND SECTARIAN MAPPING IN THE SAHEL

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Abstract

This paper examines how the rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia shapes Islamic life in the Sahel and how this dynamic reflects on security in the region. The study approaches Sahelian Muslim communities as active political and religious actors who react in different ways to scholarships, charities, religious education and media activities supported by Tehran and Riyadh.

The analysis concentrates on a limited number of Sahel countries where Shia minorities, Salafi movements and Sufi brotherhoods exist together and compete for followers, resources and public visibility. In these contexts, financial support, ideas and organizational links connected to Iran and Saudi Arabia have gradually changed the weight of different Islamic trends during the last two decades.

The paper uses the term “sectarian mapping” to describe how these external engagements influence local perceptions of belonging, trust and difference in the Sahel. At the same time, the research underlines that local histories, social hierarchies and conflict dynamics play a decisive role in shaping outcomes on the ground. In this way, the Iran–Saudi rivalry appears as one important layer in a broader and more complex picture of religious and political uncertainty in the Sahel.

Keywords: Sahel, Iran-Saudi Rivalry, Sectarian Mapping, Security, Islamic Movements.

CONSEQUENCES OF GEOECONOMIC CONFRONTATIONS IN ZIMBABWE AND THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN MITIGATING SOCIOECONOMIC CHALLENGES

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Abstract

This paper examines how geoeconomic confrontations shape contemporary Zimbabwe and how religious institutions help soften the socioeconomic damage that follows. The study asks two related questions: First, how do struggles over strategic minerals, sanctions, debt, investment, and policy credibility affect livelihoods, governance, and social welfare in Zimbabwe; and second, what role can religion play in mitigating these pressures? The significance of the study lies in moving the discussion beyond abstract debates about sanctions or mineral policy to the everyday consequences felt in households, communities, and local institutions. Methodologically, the paper uses a qualitative desk-based approach grounded in document analysis. It draws on official reports, policy statements, news coverage, academic literature, census material, and faith-based organizational reports published mainly between 2017 and 2026. Mitchell's triadic conflict theory serves as the conceptual framework because it clarifies the interactions among conflict situations, attitudes, and behavior. The paper finds that competing interests over lithium, external finance, state legitimacy, and economic sovereignty drive Zimbabwe's geoeconomic confrontations. These struggles deepen poverty, strain social protection, intensify migration, and expose communities to environmental and governance-related risks. At the same time, religion, especially through church networks and faith-based organizations, helps mitigate hardship by providing social services, mediating tension, advocating ethical governance, and strengthening social resilience. The paper concludes that religion cannot replace structural economic reform, but it remains an important moral and practical force in reducing the human cost of geoeconomic pressure.

Keywords: Zimbabwe, Geoeconomic Confrontations, Religion, Socioeconomic Challenges, Mitchell's Triadic Theory.

Introduction

Zimbabwe offers a revealing case for studying geoeconomic confrontation because economic pressure in the country is not confined to trade figures or diplomatic statements. It is tied to sovereignty, social welfare, livelihoods, and political legitimacy. In recent years, Zimbabwe has become increasingly visible in regional and global geoeconomic debates for three interrelated reasons. First, it holds strategically important lithium deposits and has become Africa's leading producer of lithium-bearing spodumene concentrate, drawing major foreign investment and fresh state efforts to regulate exports and force local processing (Reuters, 2026a). Second, the country continues to navigate a difficult relationship with international finance through arrears clearance, debt restructuring, and attempts to rebuild policy credibility in dialogue with the International Monetary Fund (International Monetary Fund, 2026). Third, Zimbabwe's political economy remains entangled with sanctions discourse, corruption allegations, governance debates, and contested re-engagement with Western powers (Reuters, 2024; US Department of the Treasury, 2024).

Geoeconomic confrontation refers to struggles in which states and other powerful actors use economic tools to pursue strategic and political goals. Those tools include trade restrictions, export controls, investment decisions, sanctions, credit, debt leverage, and competition over strategic resources. Blackwill and Harris (2016) argue that geoeconomics involves the use of economic instruments to promote and defend geopolitical interests. That definition is especially useful for Zimbabwe because the country is not experiencing one single confrontation. Instead, it faces overlapping forms of pressure and competition: contestation over mineral value chains, pressure to demonstrate fiscal and governance credibility, the political afterlife of sanctions, and unequal bargaining positions in global markets. These pressures do not remain at the level of high politics. They filter downward into questions of employment, food security, access to health care, migration, and the social fabric of communities.

This paper argues that Zimbabwe's geoeconomic confrontations have consequences that are simultaneously economic, social, environmental, and political, and that religion plays an important mitigating role

within this difficult landscape. The argument is not that religion solves structural economic crises. Rather, religious actors often occupy a mediating space between households, communities, the state, and external pressures. In that space, they can provide material relief, shape public ethics, advocate accountability, and strengthen resilience when formal systems are weak or under strain.

The paper proceeds in eight sections. After this introduction, the next section clarifies the key concepts of geoeconomic confrontation and mitigation. The third section introduces Mitchell's triadic theory as the conceptual framework. The fourth explains the qualitative desk-based methodology. The fifth examines the main forms of geoeconomic confrontation currently affecting Zimbabwe, with particular attention to lithium, finance, sanctions, and re-engagement. The sixth analyzes the economic, social, political, environmental, and migratory consequences of these pressures. The seventh turns to religion and considers how churches and faith-based organizations respond through welfare, advocacy, mediation, and community resilience. The final sections discuss the implications and conclude.

Conceptual Clarifications: Geoeconomic Confrontation, Socioeconomic Challenges, and Religious Mitigation

The first concept requiring clarification is geoeconomic confrontation. Geopolitics refers broadly to struggles over power, influence, and security, while geoeconomics emphasizes the use of economic instruments in those struggles. Blackwill and Harris (2016) frame geoeconomics as the use of economic tools to advance geopolitical objectives. In practice, that includes sanctions, trade barriers, aid conditionalities, access to finance, investment decisions, and competition over strategic commodities. Geoeconomic confrontation, therefore, is not limited to open hostility. It also appears in more indirect ways: in who controls supply chains, who sets the terms of re-engagement, who captures mineral rents, and whose policy preferences shape national development choices.

In Zimbabwe, geoeconomic confrontation is evident in at least four interconnected arenas. The first is minerals, especially lithium. In 2026, the Zimbabwean state tightened export controls, required quotas, maintained a 10 percent export tax on lithium concentrate, and pressed investors to commit to domestic lithium sulphate plants ahead of a full export ban scheduled for 2027 (Reuters, 2026a). The second arena is external finance. Zimbabwe's negotiations with the International Monetary Fund and other creditors show how macroeconomic stabilization, debt restructuring, and policy credibility become part of a wider struggle over national recovery and international acceptance (International Monetary Fund, 2026). The third is sanctions and targeted restrictions. In 2024, the United States terminated its country-specific sanctions program against Zimbabwe while simultaneously redesignating named individuals and entities under the Global Magnitsky framework for alleged corruption and serious human rights abuses (US Department of the Treasury, 2024). The fourth is the wider question of how foreign firms, especially in mining, relate to the state and to communities that bear the costs of extraction.

The second concept is socioeconomic challenges. In this paper, the term captures the lived effects of economic pressure on society. These include poverty, underemployment, inflation, reduced access to quality public services, weakened social protection, displacement, food insecurity, and strained household reproduction. The World Bank (2026) notes that Zimbabwe's social protection system has become fragmented and underfunded, with extreme poverty standing at 43.1 percent in 2021, and 38 percent of the population vulnerable to poverty. These figures show that economic instability and institutional weakness combine to produce social vulnerability.

The third concept is religious mitigation. Mitigation here does not mean that religion removes the causes of geoeconomic confrontation. Rather, it refers to the ways religious institutions can reduce harm, soften social shocks, and mediate conflictual relationships. This may take the form of food distribution, water and sanitation work, health campaigns, counseling, migration support, public advocacy, or dialogue. Musekiwa and Musekiwa (2023) show that faith-based organizations and individual believers increasingly fill health-service gaps in Zimbabwe when state capacity weakens, although they also caution that such actors are not a sustainable substitute for public provision. That caution is essential. Religious institutions are best understood as part of the social field of response, not as replacements for structural reform.

Conceptual Framework: Mitchell's Triadic Theory

This paper uses Mitchell's triadic theory of conflict as its conceptual framework. Mitchell (2006) describes conflict through a dynamic relationship among three elements: situation, attitudes, and behavior. The situation refers to a condition of perceived goal incompatibility. Attitudes include emotions, perceptions, mistrust, resentment, expectations, and moral judgments that grow around the conflict. Behavior refers to the actions parties

take in response to the conflict situation and to one another. The value of the framework lies in its insistence that conflict is not a single event. It is a process in which objective pressures, subjective meanings, and practical actions shape one another over time.

The framework is especially useful for this study because geoeconomic confrontation is often discussed in narrow economic terms, as though it were only about tariffs, sanctions, mineral flows, or debt negotiations. Yet in Zimbabwe, the problem is also relational and social. There is a conflict situation in which the goals of the state, foreign investors, international financial actors, and local communities do not neatly align. Attitudes of mistrust, grievance, suspicion, nationalism, and moral injury arise from those tensions. There are also behaviors such as export bans, sanctions, regulatory tightening, lobbying, protest, migration, humanitarian response, and public advocacy. Mitchell's triadic theory enables these dimensions to be treated as connected rather than separate.

The conflict situation in Zimbabwe can be mapped clearly. The state seeks revenue, resource sovereignty, value addition, and international re-engagement on terms that preserve policy autonomy. Foreign mining firms seek stable regulation, profit security, export access, and predictable contracts. International financial institutions seek fiscal discipline, transparency, and governance reform. Communities in mining and high-poverty areas seek jobs, compensation, infrastructure, environmental protection, and public services. These goals overlap at some points, but they often pull in different directions. A government that raises export controls to force local beneficiation may strengthen sovereignty but also unsettle investors. Foreign investment may create jobs and fiscal revenue, but still leaves host communities with pollution, displacement, and little benefit. External pressure for governance reform may support accountability, but can also be interpreted locally as selective or politically charged.

Attitudes arise from this situation. State actors may frame economic pressure as a threat to sovereignty and national dignity. External actors may view Zimbabwe through the language of policy risk, corruption, or democratic backsliding. Communities may feel abandoned by both government and investors when extraction produces local hardship. Religious actors may interpret these conditions through moral ideas of justice, stewardship, compassion, and public responsibility. Behavior completes the triad. In Zimbabwe's case, behaviors include sanctions, export bans, debt negotiations, civil-society advocacy, mining audits, community dialogue, public complaint, and distress migration. Religion also operates at the behavioral level through food aid, health messaging, youth training, and advocacy (Zimbabwe Council of Churches, 2025). The framework, therefore, helps explain why religion matters: it can reshape attitudes, moderate behavior, and reduce the social harshness of the conflict situation.

Methodology

The paper adopts a qualitative desk-based methodology centered on document analysis. This approach is appropriate because the study is interpretive rather than statistical. It seeks to understand how contemporary geoeconomic confrontations are framed, how they affect society, and how religion responds within that environment. The core source base includes policy statements from the International Monetary Fund and the US Department of the Treasury, recent Reuters reporting on lithium policy and sanctions, World Bank documentation on social protection, Statistics South Africa migration data, the Zimbabwe Council of Churches annual report, the 2024 ZAMI press release, and selected academic literature on geoeconomics, conflict theory, migration, and faith-based service provision (Blackwill & Harris, 2016; Mitchell, 2006; Musekiwa & Musekiwa, 2023).

The time frame is mainly 2017 to 2026, with selected historical references used only when needed to explain longer-term migration or policy trajectories. The study does not claim to be exhaustive. Instead, it synthesizes representative evidence from authoritative and relevant documents in order to build a coherent analytical argument. Document analysis is particularly useful here because the topic crosses several fields—political economy, religion, development, conflict studies, and migration—and no single dataset can capture the full picture.

A desk-based approach also has limitations. It depends on the quality and scope of available published sources. News and policy statements may reflect institutional framing. Reports by civil-society and faith-based bodies highlight some realities more strongly than others. Because of this, the paper reads sources comparatively and critically. Official institutions are used to establish policy positions and headline figures, while civil-society and faith-based sources are used to show community-level effects and mitigation efforts.

Zimbabwe's Contemporary Geoeconomic Confrontations

Zimbabwe's current geoeconomic confrontations are best understood as a layered set of pressures rather than a single dispute. The country's growing importance in the lithium value chain has made it newly strategic to foreign capital, especially Chinese capital, while its search for macroeconomic stabilization and arrears clearance places it in continuous negotiation with international financial actors. At the same time, the reconfiguration of sanctions has kept questions of governance, corruption, and legitimacy firmly tied to external economic relations.

Lithium sits at the center of the current story. In April 2026, Reuters reported that Zimbabwe would introduce export quotas for lithium concentrate, continue a 10 percent export tax, and require written commitments to build lithium sulphate plants before January 2027, when a full ban on concentrate exports is due to take effect (Reuters, 2026a). The same report noted that Chinese mining firms dominate Zimbabwe's lithium sector and that Zimbabwe exported 1.128 million metric tons of spodumene concentrate to China in 2025, accounting for roughly 15 percent of China's lithium concentrate imports for that year (Reuters, 2026a). These details matter because they show that Zimbabwe is not merely a passive producer. It is attempting to renegotiate its place in a battery-mineral economy that has so far sent much of the downstream value abroad.

This creates a classic geoeconomic confrontation. Foreign investors generally prefer a stable regulatory environment and uninterrupted export channels. The Zimbabwean state, by contrast, is trying to capture more value domestically by compelling beneficiation and improving oversight. From one perspective, this is an assertion of economic sovereignty. From another perspective, it is a response to the long history of resource extraction, in which African states and communities see limited local value from globally important commodities. The tension is intensified by the fact that lithium is not just any mineral. It is deeply embedded in the global energy transition and thus tied to strategic competition far beyond Zimbabwe's borders.

A second arena of confrontation concerns international finance and re-engagement. In February 2026, the International Monetary Fund announced a staff-level agreement with Zimbabwe on a ten-month Staff-Monitored Program. The program emphasized prudent budget execution, improved expenditure control, monetary discipline, governance reform, operationalizing the social registry, and building a credible track record for arrears clearance and debt restructuring (International Monetary Fund, 2026). At one level, this is a technocratic reform process. At another level, it is geoeconomic because it conditions the country's access to international legitimacy, concessional financing, and investor confidence on compliance with particular policy expectations. For Zimbabwe, the challenge is not simply whether reforms are desirable. It is also whether reforms can be pursued without deepening social pain or weakening national control over development priorities.

A third arena is the sanctions question. The US Department of the Treasury announced in March 2024 that the United States had terminated the Zimbabwe sanctions program while simultaneously designating 11 individuals and 3 entities under the Global Magnitsky framework for alleged corruption and serious human rights abuses (US Department of the Treasury, 2024). Reuters similarly reported that the country program had been ended, but that sanctions were refocused on named elites and corporate entities rather than the Zimbabwean population as a whole (Reuters, 2024). This shift matters because it changes the form rather than the presence of economic pressure. It also reinforces the link between governance, corruption, natural resource extraction, and access to international financial systems. Even targeted sanctions shape perceptions of risk, affect the country's political image, and complicate re-engagement narratives.

A fourth arena involves communities in extractive zones. The 2024 Zimbabwe Alternative Mining Indaba press release, jointly issued by ZIMCODD, ZCC, and ZELA, argued that mining activities in Zimbabwe have worsened poverty and inequality in host communities, which often benefit little from the resources extracted from their lands. The press release also described displacement, environmental degradation, poor infrastructure, and the diversion of resources away from public services such as health care and education (Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development et al., 2024). This is a geoeconomic confrontation at the local level. Global demand and national policy are translated into gendered and place-specific struggles over land, water, livelihoods, and community survival.

Taken together, these arenas show that Zimbabwe's geoeconomic confrontations are not only about external coercion. They are also about internal bargaining, elite accountability, and unequal distribution of costs and benefits. The state is trying to extract more domestic value from strategic minerals and re-enter international finance on viable terms. External actors are trying to protect their interests, shape reform, or signal disapproval of governance failures. Communities are trying to survive the consequences of policies and investment patterns over

which they have limited control. This layered landscape sets the stage for the socioeconomic consequences discussed in the next section.

Socioeconomic Consequences of Geoeconomic Confrontations in Zimbabwe

The consequences of geoeconomic confrontation in Zimbabwe are multidimensional. They extend well beyond macroeconomic indicators and appear in everyday experiences of insecurity, poor service delivery, contested governance, environmental stress, and migration. For analytical clarity, these consequences can be grouped into five broad areas: economic instability, weakened social welfare, environmental and community harm, governance strain, and outward migration.

The first consequence is economic fragility and uneven development. Zimbabwe's strategic position in the lithium sector could, in theory, create jobs, fiscal revenue, and industrial upgrading. Yet geoeconomic confrontation often produces contradictory outcomes. Regulatory tightening can strengthen state leverage and encourage beneficiation, but it can also create investor uncertainty and reinforce dependence on a narrow set of external partners. Reuters (2026a) makes clear that Chinese firms dominate the current lithium sector, while the state's new quotas and processing conditions reflect unease over leakages and the export of low-value material. This means that the country's mineral importance does not automatically translate into broad-based development. There is always a risk that extraction deepens enclave growth while the wider economy remains fragile. Where policy credibility is uneven, and international finance remains conditional, resource wealth can coexist with widespread vulnerability.

The second consequence is pressure on social protection and public welfare. The World Bank (2026) reports that Zimbabwe's social protection system has become fragmented and unable to meet rising needs. It notes that extreme poverty stood at 43.1 percent in 2021, that 38 percent of the population is vulnerable to poverty, and that social protection remains underfunded and low in coverage. These figures are significant because they show that the social consequences of economic pressure are not marginal. They shape the life chances of a large share of the population. In such a setting, fluctuations in currency stability, public spending, and external financing are not abstract policy matters. They affect whether families can absorb shocks, whether young people can remain in school, and whether households can meet food and health costs.

The welfare consequences also intersect with health. Although this paper is not primarily a health systems study, it is impossible to ignore the impact of economic strain on access to care. Underfunded social protection, weak public infrastructure, and community displacement increase the likelihood of disease, malnutrition, and poor sanitation. In contexts of poverty, health care becomes harder to reach and harder to finance. That helps explain why religious institutions, community networks, and humanitarian responses become so important. They often enter precisely where household and state capacity are strained.

The third consequence is environmental and community disruption in mining areas. The ZAMI 2024 press release states that mining host communities face displacement, environmental degradation, and poor infrastructure, while illicit financial flows worsen inequality by diverting resources from public services (Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development et al., 2024). It also notes that mining-induced displacement disproportionately affects women and is associated with gender-based violence, loss of livelihoods, and reduced access to basic services. Communities in places such as Buhera and Penhalonga are reported to be facing ongoing difficulties accessing water, health care, and education after displacement (Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development et al., 2024). This is an important reminder that geoeconomic confrontation is not only about external pressure on the country. It is also about how the pursuit of mineral value produces internal frontiers of sacrifice. Some places and populations bear a heavier share of the costs than others.

The environmental dimension deserves emphasis because it is often sidelined in discussions that focus only on state revenue or investment volumes. The same ZAMI statement describes deforestation, water pollution, and biodiversity loss in areas such as Chiadzwa, Penhalonga, and Mutoko (Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development et al., 2024). Environmental harm weakens local agriculture, deepens health vulnerability, and undermines long-term development. It can also intensify perceptions that communities are being asked to surrender land and ecological security for benefits that flow elsewhere.

The fourth consequence is governance strain. Geoeconomic confrontation often sharpens the politics of blame, suspicion, and legitimacy. The IMF's 2026 statement linked Zimbabwe's re-engagement trajectory to prudent budget execution, public financial management, governance reforms, and transparency in the management

of entities such as the Mutapa Investment Fund (International Monetary Fund, 2026). The US Treasury, for its part, framed its 2024 targeted sanctions around corruption, abuse, and the misuse of economic resources by political and business networks (US Department of the Treasury, 2024). Regardless of where one stands politically, the combined effect is clear: governance becomes inseparable from economics. Investors, creditors, and international partners read governance through fiscal discipline and transparency, while domestic actors read external pressure through sovereignty, selectivity, and political history. This mutual suspicion can make reform more difficult. It can also deepen cynicism among citizens who experience both elite impunity and institutional weakness.

The fifth consequence is migration. Migration has long been one of Zimbabwe's coping strategies in the face of economic hardship, but geoeconomic pressure gives it fresh urgency. The ICMPD study on Zimbabwean migration to South Africa found that 42 percent of surveyed migrants moved during the Zimbabwean crisis between 2000 and 2010, while another 32 percent migrated after 2010; less than 2 percent had moved before the end of apartheid (Crush et al., 2017). The same study identifies economic hardship, unemployment, and political persecution as key push factors. More recent data also show the continuing scale of this trend. Statistics South Africa (2023) records Zimbabwe as the top sending country to South Africa, with the Zimbabwe-born population increasing from 672,308 in the 2011 census to 1,012,059 in the 2022 census.

Migration can relieve household pressure by diversifying income sources and generating remittances, but it also creates new problems. Migrants often face insecure work, legal precarity, high living costs, documentation barriers, labor exploitation, and xenophobic hostility. Crush et al. (2017) situate Zimbabwean migration in South Africa within what they call a "double crisis": the economic and social collapse that pushed migration from Zimbabwe and the xenophobic violence that met many migrants in South Africa. At the household level, migration can also produce long-term family separation, emotional strain, and care burdens for those left behind. Children may grow up with absent parents. Older relatives may shoulder caregiving responsibilities. Communities may gain remittance income but lose skilled labor and social continuity.

Migration, therefore, should not be read simply as successful adaptation. It is a sign of resilience, but also of structural distress. It shows that when geoeconomic pressures converge with domestic fragility, people respond pragmatically by moving across borders. Yet the very act of movement exposes them to another layer of insecurity. In this sense, migration is both a consequence of geoeconomic confrontation and a lens through which to see its broader social costs.

The overall picture is one of an uneven burden. Zimbabwe's geoeconomic confrontations produce value, visibility, and strategic importance at one level, while, at another, they intensify vulnerability, displacement, mistrust, and outward movement. This is precisely why the role of religion deserves closer analysis. When formal systems are strained, and communities feel the human cost of these pressures, religious institutions often become part of the practical landscape of response.

The Role of Religion in Mitigating Socioeconomic Challenges

Religion matters in Zimbabwe's geoeconomic landscape because it operates at the junction of ethics, community, and practical support. In times of economic pressure, households do not respond only through formal policy channels. They also rely on networks of trust, meaning, mutual aid, and moral authority. Churches and faith-based organizations often provide exactly these resources. Their role becomes especially visible when public systems are stretched, when communities in extractive zones feel unheard, or when migration and poverty disrupt social life.

One form of mitigation is direct social service provision. Musekiwa and Musekiwa (2023) argue that faith-based organizations and individual believers have become increasingly important in the provision of health services in Zimbabwe amid declining state-funded health capacity. Their analysis is careful and balanced: they recognize the growing role of faith actors while warning that they are not a sustainable substitute for the state. This observation can be extended beyond health. Religious institutions often step in where welfare institutions are weak, not because they can solve everything, but because they are embedded in local communities and can respond quickly to urgent need.

The Zimbabwe Council of Churches offers a concrete recent example. Its 2024 annual report shows that church-based mitigation is not a vague ideal but an organized set of interventions. The report states that the council provided food security support to 15,648 individuals and rehabilitated 21 water sources in vulnerable communities (Zimbabwe Council of Churches, 2025). It also reports cholera-prevention work that reached over 20,000 people

in Gwanda, Chitungwiza, and Epworth, while training health workers, interfaith leaders, school health coordinators, and local leaders in proper health and hygiene practices (Zimbabwe Council of Churches, 2025). These activities matter because they connect religion to survival in a very immediate way. They respond to hunger, public health vulnerability, and failing infrastructure rather than speaking only in abstract moral terms.

A second mitigating role is advocacy and mediation. Religion can function as a social intermediary between citizens, the state, and economic actors. Through ecumenical bodies, public statements, and local dialogue, religious organizations can voice community concerns and press for more ethical governance. The ZAMI 2024 press release is a good example because it involved not only civil-society advocacy groups but also the Zimbabwe Council of Churches. The document highlighted displacement, environmental degradation, poor infrastructure, and the diversion of mineral wealth away from communities and basic services (Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development et al., 2024). It also framed the Indaba as a dialogue space bringing together government, mining companies, and community representatives. This is significant within Mitchell's triad. Religion here acts not only by easing hardship after the fact, but by moderating relationships and trying to influence the terms on which economic activity is conducted.

A third role is resilience-building. Religious mitigation is not always about emergency relief alone. It can also involve strengthening communities' capacity to absorb shocks and reduce future vulnerability. The Zimbabwe Council of Churches reported that it facilitated eight community dialogues in Chipinge on the causes of migration and trained fifty youths in entrepreneurship and project start-up skills to mitigate migration in search of employment (Zimbabwe Council of Churches, 2025). This kind of work does not remove the structural causes of migration, but it can create local alternatives and foster a sense of agency. It also shows that religious institutions sometimes understand mitigation in developmental rather than purely charitable terms.

A fourth role is moral framing. Religion shapes how hardship is interpreted and who is held responsible. In contexts of geoeconomic stress, communities can easily become trapped in fatalism, blame, or exclusion. Religious discourse can intervene by emphasizing dignity, justice, stewardship, care for the vulnerable, and the ethical use of resources. This moral language matters because it contests the normalization of greed, impunity, and sacrifice zones. It can help communities articulate claims not only in technical terms, but also in ethical terms that resonate socially. When churches call for accountable use of mineral wealth or for better treatment of displaced communities, they are doing more than charity. They are helping define what a just political economy ought to look like.

A fifth role concerns social cohesion. Geoeconomic pressure often fragments communities. Some people benefit from elite connections or mining-linked opportunities, while others lose land, migrate, or fall deeper into poverty. Religion can provide social spaces that hold people together when economic life becomes unstable. Congregations can become sites of emotional support, collective reflection, and practical mutual aid. During periods of migration, they may help families maintain connections and a sense of belonging. During disease outbreaks, they can disseminate public health messages. During food insecurity, they can organize assistance. Such forms of cohesion do not eliminate structural inequality, but they can slow social breakdown.

That said, a serious analysis must acknowledge limits. Religion does not always mitigate well. Faith actors can become partisan, reproduce exclusion, or lose credibility when they are too closely tied to political elites. They may also lack resources and become overwhelmed by needs they cannot meet. Musekiwa and Musekiwa (2023) rightly caution that faith-based service provision is constrained by many of the same financial difficulties that affect the state. Moreover, moral language by itself cannot resolve debt, restructure mining contracts, or build a comprehensive social protection system. Religious action becomes most constructive when it is independent, community-centered, evidence-aware, and willing to collaborate with public institutions without becoming absorbed by them.

The broader point is that religion in Zimbabwe should not be reduced to private spirituality. It is part of the public sphere. In the context of geoeconomic confrontation, it provides welfare, shapes ethics, mediates relationships, and supports resilience. These functions do not replace economic reform, but they matter precisely because geoeconomic pressure is lived through social institutions as much as through markets and state policy.

Discussion: Religion, Limits, and Policy Implications

Bringing the argument together, Mitchell's triadic theory helps explain why religion can matter in a setting of geoeconomic confrontation without being cast as a miracle solution. The conflict situation in Zimbabwe

is real: strategic minerals, conditional re-engagement, targeted sanctions, and contested governance create a landscape of incompatible interests and uneven power. The attitudes generated by this situation—mistrust, grievance, suspicion, defensive nationalism, and moral outrage—shape how both domestic and external actors interpret events. The resulting behaviors include regulatory tightening, international conditionality, community resistance, social-service substitution, and migration. Religion enters this triad not as a sovereign actor equal to the state or global capital, but as an intermediary force that can influence attitudes, shape behavior, and soften the lived consequences of the situation.

This discussion also highlights an important analytical caution. It is tempting to celebrate religion whenever churches provide food, health campaigns, or community dialogue. Yet such a celebration can become shallow if it ignores the structural roots of hardship. Church relief is often necessary precisely because the political economy has failed to protect people. A feeding program does not resolve mineral dependency. A migration dialogue, by itself, does not create jobs on the scale needed. A cholera campaign does not repair underinvestment in public water and sanitation. The contribution of religion must therefore be valued, but not inflated. Faith-based mitigation is strongest when it works alongside broader reforms in social protection, public finance, local accountability, and community consultation.

The analysis also suggests that policymakers should take religion seriously without instrumentalizing it. Religious institutions are already present in many of the communities where geoeconomic confrontation is most deeply felt. They have social trust, organizational reach, and moral voice. This makes them relevant partners for public health messaging, local dialogue, and welfare support. At the same time, governments should not use church activity as an excuse to retreat from their own obligations. The long-term answer to underfunded services cannot be endless substitution by faith communities. It must include better-funded public systems, stronger environmental accountability, and more equitable sharing of mineral benefits.

Several policy implications follow. First, mineral governance needs stronger transparency and more meaningful consultation with host communities. Second, social protection must be expanded and better targeted so that economic reforms and external pressures do not fall disproportionately on poor households. Third, migration should be addressed not only as border movement but as a symptom of domestic economic distress. Local livelihood programs, youth opportunity, and community resilience efforts should be taken seriously. Fourth, independent religious and civil-society actors should be supported as watchdogs, mediators, and service partners, not merely tolerated on the margins. Fifth, public debate on Zimbabwe's geoeconomic future must remain people-centered. Strategic minerals and macroeconomic reform are meaningful only when they visibly and durably improve human well-being.

In short, religion matters most when it helps keep the human question at the center. Geoeconomic confrontation can easily become a language of states, investors, and institutions. Religious action, when ethically grounded, reminds us that the stakes are also about families, communities, water, food, health, dignity, and the possibility of staying rather than being pushed to leave.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that Zimbabwe's geoeconomic confrontations are best understood as layered struggles over strategic minerals, external finance, governance, and international legitimacy. Using Mitchell's triadic theory, the study has shown that these confrontations involve more than economic pressure from above. They are sustained by a conflict situation of incompatible goals, by attitudes of mistrust and grievance, and by behaviors ranging from export controls and targeted sanctions to migration and humanitarian response. Zimbabwe's current confrontation around lithium is especially important because it reveals both opportunity and vulnerability: the country has strategic value in the global battery economy, yet still faces unequal bargaining power, pressure for policy credibility, and local social costs.

The paper has further shown that the consequences of these confrontations are deeply socioeconomic in nature. They include economic fragility, underfunded social protection, strained health and welfare systems, environmental degradation, displacement in mining areas, governance tensions, and distress migration to neighboring countries such as South Africa. Migration, in particular, illustrates how households respond pragmatically to prolonged pressure, even though movement itself can expose people to xenophobia, exploitation, and family separation.

Against this background, religion emerges as a significant mitigating force. Churches and faith-based organizations cannot replace structural reform, debt resolution, or accountable state policy. However, they can reduce harm in meaningful ways. They provide food and water support, contribute to health responses, create spaces for dialogue, strengthen community resilience, and use moral language to challenge the normalization of exclusion and impunity. Their greatest contribution lies in keeping public attention on the social and ethical consequences of economic pressure.

The central conclusion, then, is that religion should be understood neither as a substitute for development policy nor as a peripheral afterthought. In Zimbabwe's geoeconomic confrontations, it is part of the social infrastructure through which communities endure, respond, and sometimes resist. A more humane and effective policy future will require not only sound macroeconomic management and transparent mineral governance, but also stronger partnerships with the community institutions that already sustain people in difficult times.

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GENDER DISPARITY AND SOCIAL CLASS SYSTEM IN AFRICA: A SOCIOLOGICAL EXAMINATION OF FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION (FGM) AS A SOCIAL INSTITUTION

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Abstract

The historical roots of female genital mutilation extend back many centuries; this activity is recognized as both a cultural tradition and a widespread norm, bringing with it various complications. It is not confined solely to the physical aspect but also entails deviations from established classifications and a significant psychological impact. Although FGM is primarily practiced in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, the migration of communities that practice it means that its health entanglements will have a global impact. This practice, which began among many of these inhabitants hailed from Sub-Saharan Africa, does not provide access to those concerned with clinical assess effectiveness and awareness. Female genital mutilation (FGM) refers to various practices involving the excision or injury of the external female genitalia without any medical justification. From a sociological and anthropological perspective, the issue of this practice highlights prevailing divisions that persist to this day, as current analyses have not effectively drawn conclusions or made clear statements regarding the emerging dangers. However, although FGM offers no health benefits and is known to cause serious short- and long-term consequences, both physical and psychological, it also undermines the right to equality and freedom of choice. The research examines the ways in which female genital mutilation functions within larger patriarchal frameworks, where adherence to cultural standards is frequently linked to societal approval, eligibility for marriage, and a sense of community affiliation. Instead of perceiving the act merely as a forced practice, this examination emphasizes the intricate relationships among personal choice, societal influence, and ingrained beliefs. This study provides an overview of the broad topic of 'female genital mutilation' (FGM), but a closer examination reveals the reinforcement of patriarchal structures and a complex web of harmful practices.

Keywords: Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), Patriarchal Structures, Cultural Norms, Gender Inequality, Social Control and Agency.

Introduction

There is widespread agreement that certain collective practices are often harmful, inappropriate and likely to infringe upon human rights. Many of these practices affect women and girls and never offer a solution frequently putting forward is to ensure they have better access to education, healthcare and employment. Although the origins of these practices are not questioned and a certain persistence is observed, these practices or customs represent a spectrum where such practices are not only revoked in one area but also vary significantly. It is true that numerous initiatives aimed at reducing or eliminating female genital mutilation have been implemented and are well documented; yet, despite these efforts, whilst FGM has declined in some countries, it persists in others and remains widespread in around 27 African countries, in certain regions of the Middle East, and within the African diaspora across the globe.

Female genital mutilation (FGM) refers to the partial or total removal or injury of any part of the external female genitalia for non-medical reasons (Utz-Billing & Kentenich, 2008). It affects approximately 130 million women worldwide. FGM is practiced in at least 20 countries, possibly more, primarily in Africa. It is estimated that over 200 million girls and women have undergone FGM in 30 high-prevalence countries, mainly in Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East. Consequently, it is estimated that 30 million girls under the age of 15 are at risk of undergoing FGM in the next 10 years. Numerous national surveys show that prevalence varies considerably between countries, and even within countries; however, over half of the 200 million girls and women who have undergone FGM live in Indonesia, Egypt, and Africa. Ethiopia, and 44 million of them are girls under the age of 15. In most countries, many girls have been cut before the age of 5; in Yemen, 85% of girls have undergone the practice during their first week of life (Muteshi et al., 2016).

The paper studies the issue of female genital mutilation from a sociological perspective, viewing it not only as a surgical practice but also as a 'social structure' rooted in ancestral customs and male-dominated systems. It analyses the link between gender inequalities and socio-economic status, how the practice of female genital

mutilation affects prospects for marriage, social standing and ties to the community in sub-Saharan Africa and the persistence of the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM), which remains widespread and deeply entrenched. To date, its implementation has been subject to critical scrutiny, which questions whether it should be regarded as a social institution and a fundamental aspect of social norms and expectations in African countries. However, when examining the dynamics of FGM in countries where it is practiced, there is a clear link between the practice and prevailing social norms. Female genital mutilation is not merely a physical or medical procedure; it also constitutes a deep-rooted 'social institution' and a well-established cultural practice. On the contrary, the dynamics of FGM/C are closely linked to social expectations and social capital. Our findings have implications for policy interventions aimed at reducing FGM/C.

This practice exacerbates gender inequality and places a heavy emphasis on male dominance, which shows that it is a means of controlling the biological aspects of a female. As well as a method of contraception, a sign of moral integrity and fidelity to one's husband, a means of protecting women from suspicion and disgrace, a rite of passage, a symbol of femininity and beauty, and offering benefits in terms of hygiene, health and economy. To put in another way, FGM reinforces as tool functioning to design link between the practice prevailing social norms and dictates the way in which women and girls are expected to behave. Moreover, the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) is on the rise and is becoming increasingly socially accepted; however, FGM has undoubtedly become a key factor in community participation, and this practice undermines the primary driver of social status and belonging.

Therefore, female genital mutilation (FGM) has deep sociological roots that shape social norms aimed at ensuring families' acceptance within their communities (Klein et al., 2018). Social conventions encourage parents to perform FGM on their daughters to prepare them for marriage and adulthood, as well as for their social integration. Its cultural significance conveys the idea that it preserves girls' chastity, guarantees their fertility, improves their hygiene, and increases men's sexual pleasure. FGM is used as a rite of passage into adulthood and aims to ensure premarital virginity and marital fidelity by reducing the desire for extramarital relationships in young women. The social consequences and the advocates of female genital mutilation challenge the very foundations of social norms and the concept of patriarchal structures.

Research Questions

1- How does FGM function as a social institution to perpetuate gender inequality in African societies?
2- In what ways does social class influence the prevalence, type and justification of FGM?

Literature Review

A review of current global data and regional overviews shows that female genital mutilation (FGM/C) is a deeply entrenched practice, often justified in the name of culture or religion. However, an analysis of secondary data reveals that the prevalence of this practice is not uniform across the African continent. More importantly, the most significant concern lies not only in the origins of the practice but also in its far-reaching social, psychological, and health consequences. Accordingly, this study places greater emphasis on the consequences of FGM/C than on the cultural roots underlying its persistence in sub-Saharan Africa.

1.1. Social Institution and Power Structure

a) Patriarchal Legacies and the Regulation of the Female Body

Ultimately, the motivations behind these practices vary from one culture to another. Regarding religion, not only did an Egyptian speaker note that female genital mutilation is practiced by both Muslims and Christians, but also that "there is no religious basis for this practice." It is simply part of "the population's value system regarding virginity and family honor (Toda, 2023).

Aside from the fact that there is no direct connection to religious beliefs, this practice is often carried out either in the name of religion (so that young girls do not question the act) or under collective community rules that they must follow to be accepted. In both cases, it is understood that this practice affects only girls; young boys are rarely included, which implies that similarly, it is a form of control and denies these young girls their personal rights. It is therefore not inconsistent to continue to raise questions about the roles adopted by the community. It must be said that, to many, female genital mutilation may seem like nothing more than an outdated cultural practice

that runs counter to Western ethical standards, but one that should not be questioned or criticized on the grounds of cultural relativism (Ally & Tandwa, 2025). The concept of "patriarchy" has existed since ancient times; it was only in the modern era that it became an essential analytical tool in feminist research. This means that it is not something new, but rather a continuation of a system that is not questioned or criticized.

However, there is no single, unified conception of "patriarchy." The term is defined differently by various feminist scholars and, over the past seven decades, has inevitably been the subject of debate and criticism. Indeed, some scholars have categorically rejected the concept of patriarchy, considering it an oversimplification of complex, interdependent, and constantly evolving socio-economic systems (Acker 1989; Higgins 2018). Within these communities, one in four people holds all power; only those who make the decisions can bring about change, under penalty of total exclusion.

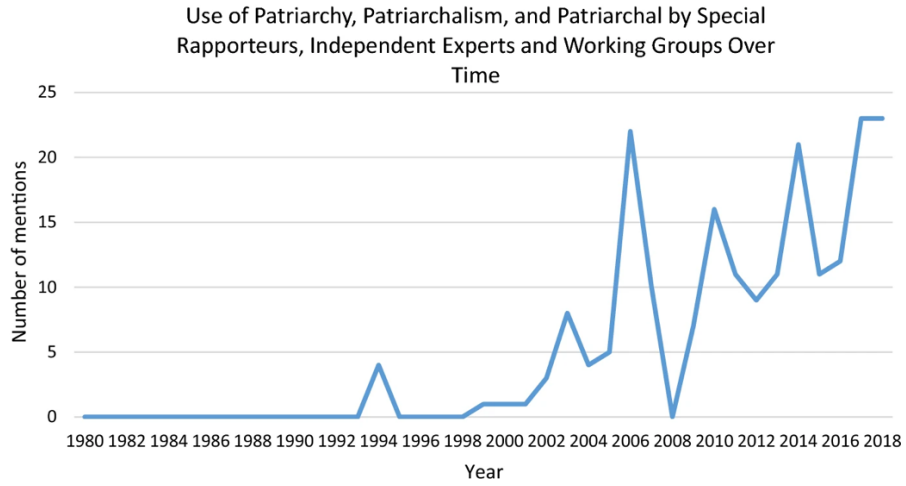


Figure 1: C. Mudgway, "Can International Human Rights Law Smash the Patriarchy?"
Source: Mudgway (2021).

Mudgway (2021) highlights the limitations of an approach based solely on quantitative data and trends, arguing that they offer only a partial view of patriarchy. She examines this issue in detail, emphasizing the need for contextual analysis for a more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon. In this context, she demonstrates a significant difference between the interpretation of patriarchy by treaty bodies and that provided for by special procedures, a divergence that could profoundly impact states' obligations to respect and guarantee women's human rights. This systemic subordination is primarily centered around the family, where the man is the head of the household and exercises direct control over women. This male oppression stems from perceived biological differences, as well as from the cultural construction of gender roles within the family and society at large (Weber, 1946, p. 206; Millett, 1970). These structures are then codified in legal frameworks, reproduced through everyday social practices, and reinforced by male violence against women (MacKinnon, 1989). Mudgway emphasizes that, as empirical data illustrate—notably the significant disparity where the number of mentions decreased only in 2008, while remaining constant in other years—approaches strictly limited to the superficial concept of "patriarchy" remain entirely inadequate. Consequently, the author opposes methods that merely aim to modify or eliminate certain harmful practices in isolation and argues that a more thorough and robust analytical framework is necessary to truly understand and dismantle these deeply entrenched structures.

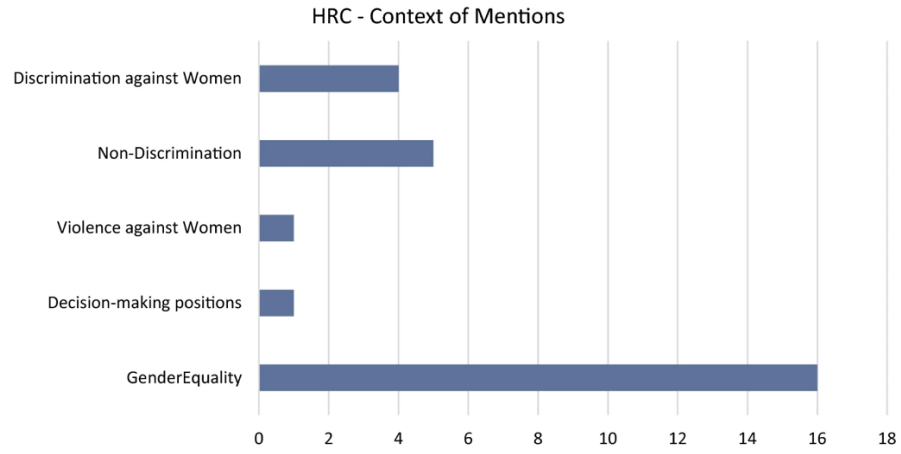


Figure 2: C. Mudgway, "Can International Human Rights Law Smash the Patriarchy? (2021): 67–105.

Source: Mudgway (2021)

Thus, the text examines the specific mechanisms by which this system generates pronounced gender inequalities, as clearly illustrated in Figure 2. In this context, it is argued that establishing a strict opposition between "tradition" and "modernity" risks severely marginalizing culture itself, effectively reducing it to an experience lived exclusively by certain groups. The author challenges the received idea that culture is inherently incompatible with human rights, emphasizing that this view is wrongly based on the assumption that culture is a static burden that women must endure, rather than a dynamic process that they create and in which they actively participate. Consequently, according to this flawed perspective, women are wrongly perceived and treated as passive victims of their own culture or "traditions" (Engle 2003, p. 60; Mudgway, 2021). The analysis reveals that, in these male-dominated societies, women's biological choices cease to be a matter of individual autonomy and are placed under the strict surveillance of the community. Within this rigid social structure, women are relegated to a state of stagnant submission where they can neither question nor judge established rules but must conform to them entirely to preserve collective honor.

The complex relationship between these two closely linked concepts is examined in detail, analyzing how harmful practices are frequently presented as stemming directly from deeply entrenched "patriarchal attitudes." In this context, it is often argued that eliminating these underlying attitudes is a prerequisite for ending the harmful practices themselves (Mudgway, 2021). However, the analysis refutes the notion that superficial adjustments can generate genuine progress, emphasizing that as long as the fundamental systemic structures remain unchanged, the societal consequences will either persist fundamentally or result in barely perceptible changes in most cases. Therefore, after highlighting the limitations of these existing analytical frameworks, Mudgway insists on the need for a more in-depth study of how these mechanisms actually operate. Thus, the following sections of the article closely examine the specific socio-cultural contexts in which these terms are used to impose social approval and establish systems of belonging within the societies concerned.

b) Social Harmony, Capital, and Communal Acceptance

The growing interest in perspectives on social norms has sparked a desire to understand how these norms are identified, as well as the social contexts and cultural factors that shape them. Unlike legal norms, whose prohibitions and violations are explicitly codified, social norms are unwritten expectations regarding appropriate behavior within specific social groups. They are based on beliefs about acceptable and unacceptable behavior, which can, to varying degrees, influence and constrain the choices of community members. These norms are produced, transmitted, and often enforced through social interactions. It is therefore possible to shed light on norms through research approaches that take social interactions as their object of study (Shell-Duncan et al., 2018).

Shell-Duncan et al. (2018) analyze the process by which social norms theory has become a key analytical framework for understanding the perpetuation of female genital mutilation (FGM), examining in detail how this framework has influenced the design of interventions aimed at ending the practice. The authors emphasize that theoretical advances illuminate a dynamic reality: FGM is often perpetuated not by a static rule, but by multiple, interdependent norms that are subject to variation and evolution, thus offering a potential avenue for structural social transformation. In this context, the study challenges preconceived notions about resistance to change by

demonstrating that some older women are actively willing to re-evaluate these deeply entrenched norms and practices. Instead of blindly maintaining the status quo, these women seek alternative solutions that preserve the physical well-being, moral integrity, and cultural identity of the girls in their families. Furthermore, the analysis highlights that, given their traditional authority over younger women, this demographic group possesses a unique power to negotiate change within the community. Therefore, the authors argue that by formally recognizing the potential role of older women as agents of change, and by strategically leveraging the variability and fluidity inherent in social norms, it will become increasingly possible to design targeted interventions that encourage collective action and accelerate the abandonment of FGM without compromising the fundamental cultural value of this tradition.

It is undoubtedly clear that one of the main areas of focus in contemporary literature is understanding why female genital mutilation persists despite the considerable health risks it poses and growing global opposition. According to structural functionalists, within these communities, this practice is often defended as an essential cultural or religious norm that helps maintain social order, stability, and group cohesion. Also, because it serves as a rite of passage from childhood to adulthood, it is, of course, considered a means of fostering a sense of belonging within the community. On the other hand, Ally and Tandwa (2025) discuss the sociocultural framework of female genital mutilation (FGM) by examining Ramose's arguments that this practice constitutes a crucial rite of passage, essential for becoming a recognized member of the community. In this context, Ramose notes that until a person has undergone this specific procedure a reference that applies to both male circumcision and FGM they remain fundamentally an outsider to the collective. The authors explain that this traditional perspective suggests a sense of relational fulfillment stemming directly from initiation alongside peers, a period during which initiates form a distinct micro-community, physically separated from the rest of society. Consequently, the entire initiation process encompassing its physical, symbolic, and educational aspects is presented as fostering a profound sense of belonging, from which emerges a powerful experience of female solidarity (Ally & Tandwa, 2025). The analysis highlights that within these structures, access to social belonging is considered an absolute necessity to be guaranteed at all costs. Consequently, this practice is rarely questioned internally, and any subsequent deviation or exclusion is strictly viewed by the community as dangerous negligence and a profound loss, rather than as an expression of personal freedom or a legitimate right to choose other paths.

Theoretical Framework

To interpret the data identified in the literature review, this study examines the evidence through three distinct sociological lenses:

1. **Feminist Theory: Patriarchal Hegemony & Regulation**

Feminist sociology argues that female genital mutilation (FGM) is a physical manifestation of male domination. The question that arises is how, by controlling women’s biological functions and pleasure, social institutions can ensure that women remain subordinate within the family unit.

Furthermore, radical feminist and postcolonial theories argue that female genital mutilation is an explicit is part of a patriarchal institution aimed at controlling women’s physical autonomy and regulating their sexual identity. This perspective interprets the practice as a systemic tool that reinforces male superiority and keeps women in a state of structural subjugation. Feminism does not directly address the consequences, but rather examines the underlying reasons, although Catherine Malabou’s example points to “Pleasure Erased” as a study of the clitoris, viewed both as a sensory organ and as a cultural symbol of feminist liberation. What is perhaps more troubling, however, is the possibility that the clitoris might function, on a discursive level, as a miniature phallus: as a typically feminine and feminized representation of lack the empty space where the phallus ought to be thereby reinforcing the metaphor of phallic domination.

In her work, Malabou considers that a Lacanian approach to the question of female pleasure could be one of the reasons, but it can be argued that this is the most pressing question for feminist philosophy at a time when gender and sexuality are the subject of constant examination, both inside and outside the academic world (Pitton & Rasmussen, 2024).

The question of origin arises in whether female biological control is a means of excluding pleasure, or a factor that exerts significant influence on social hierarchy, interaction and a woman’s place within the community; the logic behind cutting a part of a woman’s body remains a psychological issue but also a question of “ Power and social structure”, not only because a girl’s choice is excluded, but also because this practice takes place at a

very young age (5–9 years old) an age at which a child does not yet understand ethical or moral considerations, whether collective or individual. Feminism also interprets the choices and variations that these practices entail. A child of 5 or 9 would never question such practices but must obey; otherwise, they would be excluded and disgraced at that age, when they are prone to disobedience. However, the facts must be clearly stated, the individual choice of the female gender is not independent regardless of their ages and must be committed in order to satisfy their community approval. Yet, in these kinds of communities, it is the opposite that is expanding. Feminism agrees on the privilege of raising awareness about what is possible to control and modify subjective expectations within its communities.

There is no doubt that some of the most important works in postcolonial theory and criticism have addressed issues of gender and sexuality on the same level as those of race, nation, and empire. After colonialism, many customs and traditions were abandoned, but for some, they are used as a weapon of defense, claiming that "Western culture" is not suitable and preserving these practices. Therefore, it's conservable to follow and engage the ancient social norms. Furthermore, claiming that feminism is a Western phenomenon is meaningless, as it only underscores its foreignness without providing any justification. This is largely explained by the current political context, where the discourse of "feminist individualism" is considered the only valid feminist discourse in the West but not valuable in the African societies and is the subject of increasingly virulent criticism, both in the West and elsewhere.

2. Structural Functionalism (Parsons): Cultural Order & Stability

From a structural-functionalist perspective, female genital mutilation (FGM) constitutes a social mechanism aimed at maintaining group cohesion and social order. It fulfills a clear social function as a formalized rite of passage into adulthood, reinforcing community values of purity and protecting family honor. In this perspective, gender roles are preserved because they are considered functional for maintaining the stability of the established social system. The functionalist perspective, FGM is seen as mechanisms for social cohesion. It integrates or serves the individuals into community, define clear transitions from childhood to adulthood and maintain the "Purity" or acceptance to be in the group. In sociological and political contexts, trust is most often cited as the glue that holds society together (Parsons, 1951). The paradox of trust: while trust fosters cooperation, some argue that "blind trust" in institutions can prevent citizens from perceiving systemic failures. The glue that binds society together (Luhmann, 1955).

In this major theoretical contribution, Parsons develops the AGIL model, a universal model for analyzing social systems still used today in sociology, organizational research, and systems theory. At the heart of the social system lies the AGIL model, which describes four fundamental functions that every social system must fulfill:

a. Adaptation (A): The system must adapt to external conditions and secure its resources. At the societal level, the economy fulfills this function, particularly during periods of global change and economic disruption.

b. Goal Achievement (G): Systems must define and pursue goals. In modern societies, this task falls primarily to political institutions, which operate under the increasing pressure of social inequality and cultural diversity.

c. Integration (I): Social cohesion and the coordination of subsystems are ensured by the legal system, education, and other integrating institutions. This function faces increasing challenges in the context of migration, social exclusion, and global crises.

d. Maintenance of fundamental values and cultural models (L): The maintenance of fundamental values and cultural models is ensured by the family, religion and education, even in the face of rapid evolution of values and individualization.

3. Theory of Capital (Bourdieu): Social Stratification

One of Pierre Bourdieu's concepts explains why families from different social classes choose to perpetuate this practice. Female genital mutilation (FGM) is considered a form of symbolic capital. Undergoing this procedure confers social prestige, integration into the community, and strengthens a woman's status within marriage contracts. Refusal of FGM generates negative capital, leading to systemic marginalization, reduced marriage options, and downward social mobility within the class system. Female genital mutilation (FGM) can be seen or observed as a form of "Symbolic Capital" meaning in each community, where the practice of being "cut" provides

honor, dignity, status, acceptance. Conversely, the “uncut” woman faces social exclusions, the Symbolic Capital that prevents her accessing higher social circles or favorable marriage alliances. In its concept and context, symbolic capital shares similarities with the notion of reputation; it describes how individuals position themselves through symbolic representations.

“Symbolic capital, that is, capital—in whatever form—as represented, that is, apprehended symbolically, in a relationship of knowledge or, more precisely, of misrecognition and recognition, presupposes the intervention of habitus, as a socially constituted cognitive capacity” (Bourdieu, 1986). Depending on the context, different forms of capital are valued. In academia, hierarchical position is closely linked to institutionalized cultural capital, such as a university degree, but also, potentially, to cultural objects, such as books owned, and to embodied cultural capital, such as academic language proficiency. Social capital can also influence academic position, but in fields like the film industry, an aspiring actor’s social capital is perhaps more decisive than their university degree. Of course, symbolic capital, being a more flexible conception of reputation, manifests itself in many different contexts. Consequently, the social, cultural, and economic symbols necessary for social advancement vary according to the situation, each context requiring different symbolic expressions. Just as capital operates according to a process of unequal distribution, sociological tensions can arise between those who seek to acquire, retain, or convert it, since all capital is transmissible, directly or indirectly. Economic capital is immediately and directly convertible into monetary capital and thus constitutes the basis for other forms of capital, which can be considered manifestations of economic capital. These include cultural capital, which encompasses knowledge, goods, and cultural institutions, and social capital, which relates to social and familial ties. Finally, symbolic capital, which can be understood in all its forms, can be grasped as a more flexible conception of reputation, operating in numerous contexts (Ihlen, 2018).

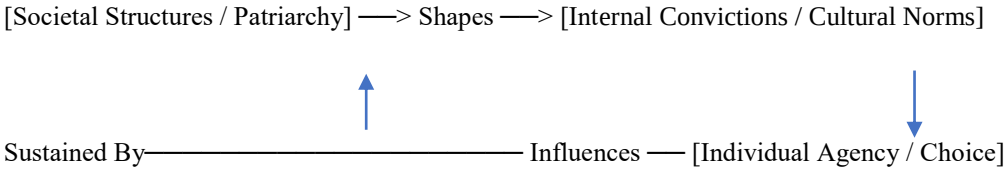
Methodology

This study employs a qualitative methodological framework that synthesizes the fundamental contributions of primarily sociology.

- **Primary Objective:** To investigate FGM in the context of broader patriarchal structures instead of viewing it solely as a "**coerced action**. “
- **Research Focus:** Studying the complex connections between individual agencies, deep-seated convictions, and the impact of society.

1. Research Focus: The Link Between Individual Action and Structure

A central pillar of this methodology is the study of the complex interaction between individual action, deep-seated internal convictions, and external societal impacts. Rather than viewing individual action and structure as binary opposites, this study perceives them as mutually constitutive.



Limited agency: The study defines agency not as absolute free will, but as “limited agency” that is, choices are made actively, but within a very narrow range of socially acceptable options.

Internalized beliefs: The study examines how external patriarchal demands are internalized across generations, transforming external social pressure into a deeply ingrained personal belief in purity, honor, and duty. This study uses a qualitative research framework designed to examine female genital mutilation (FGM) not as an isolated and coercive act, but as a deeply entrenched practice perpetuated by broader patriarchal structures. Through qualitative methods, this approach captures the nuanced lived experiences of those affected while critically analyzing the macrosocial forces that constrain and shape their choices.

A. Findings and Analysis:

a. Comparative Framework

In the Horn of Africa, female genital mutilation (FGM) is a criterion for access to marriage through physical restriction (type III). In West Africa, FGM is used as a cultural marker, this practice serving as a certificate of belonging to powerful social hierarchies dominated by women.

Feature	Horn of Africa Context	West Africa Context
Dominant Type	**Type III (Infibulation)**	**Type I & II (Clitoridectomy/Excision)**
Cultural Anchor	**Individual "Sexual Morality" & Marriageability.**	**Communal "Social Identity" & Secret Societies.**
Structural Driver	**Tight control of virginity in nomadic patriarchal lines.**	**Institutionalized rites of passage (e.g., the *Bondo* society).**
Medicalization	**Higher in urban centers (e.g., Sudan/Egypt).**	**Generally lower; heavily tied to traditional practitioners.**

B. Discourse Analysis

1. Comparative Analysis (Case studies)

Comparative Analysis of two distinct regions (Horn of Africa and West Africa) to account cultural differences, variations or resemblance. Regional disparities in prevalence and typology: Data compiled by the UNICEF Data Architecture and the FGM/C Research Initiative highlight a profound geographical divide: Horn of Africa: Countries such as Somalia (99.2% prevalence), Djibouti (93.1%), and Sudan (86.6%) have extremely high prevalence rates (UNICEF, 2024). The dominant style is type III (infibulation), which involves highly invasive physical closure and narrowing of the vaginal opening. The literature shows that progress toward abandoning this practice has stalled in this region, with a growing risk of "medicalization" in urban settings to reduce immediate physical harm. West Africa: Countries such as Guinea (94.5%) and Sierra Leone (83.0%) also have high prevalence, but the dominant styles are types I and II (clitoridectomy/excision). Unlike in the Horn of Africa, West African literature closely links this practice to membership in powerful traditional women's secret societies (such as the Bondo or the Sande), which play a role in social cohesion. Countries like Burkina Faso (75.8%) are experiencing a decline due to strict legislative opposition.

a. Societal Trends and Progress

The two regions are currently progressing at different rates about abandoning this practice: Horn of Africa: Progress is uneven. While Kenya has seen a considerable decline (from 38% to approximately 15%), Somalia remains stable with near-universal prevalence. The issue of postpartum re-infibulation is causing increasing concern. West Africa: This region is marked by a complex conflict between modernity and tradition (Farih et al., 2025). In countries like Burkina Faso and Benin, prevalence is decreasing significantly thanks to rigorous enforcement of legislation and community involvement. Conversely, in Guinea and Mali, prevalence remains above 80%, deeply rooted in ethnic identity.

b. Typology and Severity

The most significant distinction lies in the type of intervention performed, which often reflects the cultural value placed on "purity" versus "fertility." Horn of Africa (Somalia, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Sudan): This region has the highest concentration of type III infibulations, often referred to as "pharaonic circumcision." These procedures involve narrowing the vaginal opening and are almost universal in Somalia (approximately 99%). West Africa (Guinea, Mali, Sierra Leone, Nigeria): Practices here are generally type I (clitoridectomy) and type II (excision). While still physically traumatic, they generally do not involve the extensive structural closure observed in the Horn of Africa. However, type IV infibulation (niche practices such as pricking or scraping) is also documented among certain groups, such as the Hausa and Fulani in Nigeria (Arabahmadi, 2020).

c. Cultural factors: “Purity” vs. “Rites of passage”

The sociological justification for FGM varies by region, depending on the underlying social “contract.”

Feature	Horn of Africa	West Africa
Primary Driver	**Sexual Morality & Infidelity:** Infibulation is explicitly tied to ensuring virginity before marriage and fidelity after. It is a tool for controlling female sexuality in highly patriarchal, nomadic-descendant structures.	**Social Identity & Secret Societies:** In countries like Sierra Leone and Liberia, FGM is often part of an initiation into "Secret Societies" (e.g., the *Bondo* or *Sande*). It is a rite of passage into womanhood and community belonging.
Religious Overlay	Strongly linked to local interpretations of Islam, where it is often perceived as a religious obligation (*Sunnah*), despite no Quranic mandate.	Highly diverse; practiced by Muslim, Christian, and Traditionalist communities. Practice is often more ethnic-specific than religion-specific.
Medicalization	High rates of medicalization (performed by doctors/midwives), especially in **Egypt** and **Sudan**, to "harm-reduce" the procedure.	Less medicalized; more often performed by traditional practitioners (*exciseuses*) using non-sterile tools, leading to different immediate health risks.

Secondary Data Analysis

According to Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), researchers regularly observe that, although female genital mutilation (FGM) is a deeply rooted cultural practice, its prevalence is strongly influenced by socioeconomic variables. An inverse relationship is generally observed: the higher the level of education of women and the standard of living of households, the lower the prevalence of FGM tends to be.

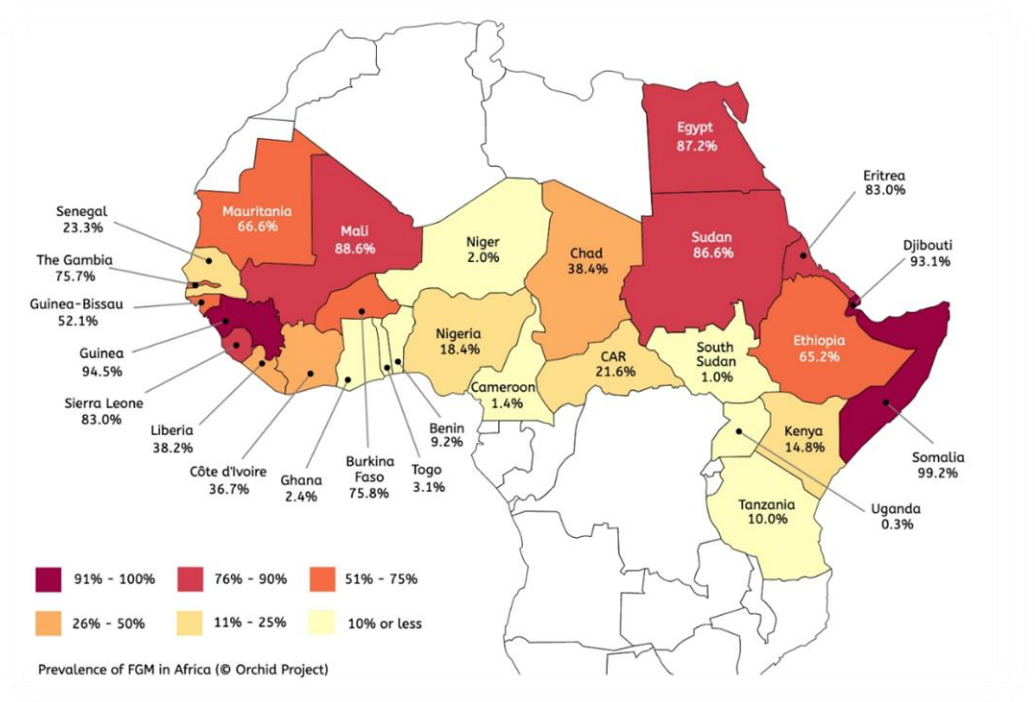


Figure 3: map showing prevalence of female genital mutilation in Africa by region. Title: Regional Prevalence FGM/C is concentrated in at least 28 countries in a band that spans from West Africa to the Horn of Africa. Source: FGM/C Research Initiative. https://www.fgmcri.org/continent/africa/

1. Correlation with Education Level

Education level is often cited as the most important predictor of female genital mutilation (FGM) performed by a mother on her daughter.

a. Awareness of Complications: More educated women are more likely to be aware of the long-term health risks, such as obstetric complications and chronic pain.

b. Changing Values: Formal education often introduces alternative social frameworks that challenge traditional and "proverbial" justifications for this practice.
c. Threshold Effect: Data from DHS surveys frequently show a sharp decrease in FGM rates among women who have completed secondary or higher education, compared to those who have received no formal education or only primary education (UNICEF, 2024).

2. Correlation with Household Wealth Level

UNICEF (2024) analyzes the complex relationship between wealth and female genital mutilation (FGM), examining this process in detail through evolving trends across wealth quintiles—from the poorest to the richest populations—as documented by the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS). The report highlights the emergence of several crucial socio-economic dynamics between these categories, beginning with the factor of economic independence. Families in the highest wealth quintiles benefit from greater social mobility, which significantly reduces their reliance on the traditional dowry market or the conventional marriage market, where FGM remains a prerequisite. Furthermore, the analysis establishes a link between wealth distribution and distinct urban and rural cultural environments, highlighting that, because wealth is heavily concentrated in urban centers, DHS data consistently demonstrates a much lower prevalence of FGM in these areas, due to a greater diversity of modern social influences and more rigorous enforcement of national laws. Conversely, the text sheds light on the harsh reality of the tradition's "cost" in extremely poor communities, where the ritual persists primarily because practitioners depend on it for their immediate livelihoods, and vulnerable families rely on it as a necessary economic strategy to ensure their daughters' future security through marriage.

3. Regional variations in DHS data

It is essential to note that these correlations are not universal. In some countries, the practice remains widespread across all socioeconomic strata due to the strength of ethnic identity.

Country (Approx. DHS Trend)	Impact of Education	Impact of Wealth
Egypt	High education significantly reduces intent to continue the practice.	Significant decrease in the "Richest" quintile.
Sierra Leone	Moderate impact; practice is tied to powerful secret societies.	High prevalence persists across most wealth levels.
Ethiopia	Strong correlation; secondary education leads to much lower rates.	Clear downward trend from Poorest to Richest quintiles.

C. Discussion

The sociological analysis of female genital mutilation (FGM) in the Horn of Africa and West Africa demonstrates that this practice cannot be understood as a simple, isolated, and coercive act of physical violence, but rather conceals behind customs, an institution, practices, and above all, a persistence that nevertheless warrants questioning. Furthermore, it constitutes a deeply rooted social institution, systematically reproduced by the evolution of patriarchal power structures, symbolic capital, and the structural and functional requirements of social cohesion. The results of this comparative study validate the main foundations of the proposed hypotheses, highlighting the complex interaction between macro-structural constraints and local socio-economic realities.

2.1. Patriarchal hegemony, bodily regulation, and symbolic capital

The structure of FGM strongly supports hypothesis 1, which posits that patriarchal structures institutionalize this practice to govern women's biological autonomy and regulate their sexual identity. As feminist sociological frameworks emphasize, FGM constitutes a physical manifestation of male domination, explicitly designed to control women's pleasure and reproduction to maintain their structural subordination within the family. This systemic control is structurally imposed from early childhood (generally between the ages of 5 and 9), a developmental stage at which individuals lack the cognitive and ethical capacity to navigate or oppose collective moral dictates.

However, understanding this practice solely from the perspective of absolute coercion obscures the workings of social power. By incorporating Pierre Bourdieu's theory of capital, this study reveals that FGM is

perpetuated because it has been historicized as an essential condition for acquiring female symbolic capital. In contexts where it is widespread, undergoing this procedure transforms physical modification into a form of social prestige, bodily honor, and local dignity. This symbolic capital directly determines a woman's place within the community and her eligibility for marriage.

Conversely, refusing to comply with the law entails a heavy social burden. An uncircumcised woman faces systemic marginalization, downward social mobility, and complete exclusion from advantageous marriages and high-society circles. The unbearable social cost of refusing to comply manifested by profound community stigmatization and isolation transforms the motivation: from an individual choice or a strict religious imperative, it becomes a rationalized strategy for structural survival. Thus, patriarchal structures preserve this institutional equilibrium by making women's social standing entirely dependent on bodily modification.

2.2. Macro-Functional Needs vs. Regional Stratification

The comparative analysis between the Horn of Africa and West Africa illustrates how the institutionalization of FGM adapts to distinct structural and functional mechanisms and regional socio-economic stratifications, supporting hypothesis 2.

REGIONAL SOCIO-CULTURAL DYNAMICS	
1. HORN OF AFRICA	2. WEST AFRICA
• Dominant Style: Type III and Primary Driver: Marriage Contract	• Dominant Style: Types I & II and Primary Driver: Social Identity
• Structural Tool: Sexual Control	• Structural Tool: Secret Soc.

Primarily the Horn of Africa (characterized by near-universal prevalence rates in Somalia (99.2%), Djibouti (93.1%), and Sudan (86.6%)), this practice manifests primarily as type III infibulation. Sociologically, this severe structural closure constitutes a rigid mechanism of physical restriction, explicitly linked to the validation of virginity and the reinforcement of marital fidelity within strongly patriarchal families from nomadic populations. In this context, the practice functions as a veritable economic contract. In economically disadvantaged communities, infibulation is a structural guarantee enabling a girl to marry, directly ensuring the payment of the dowry necessary for the household's survival.

Conversely, in West Africa (particularly in Guinea, at 94.5%, and Sierra Leone, at 83%), the institutional mechanism relies primarily on type I and type II infibulation. Far from being a simple individual mechanism of sexual control, female genital mutilation (FGM) constitutes a major cultural marker in this region, rooted in powerful traditional secret societies dominated by women, such as the Bondo and the Sande. From a structuralist-functionalist perspective, this ritual appears as a formalized rite of passage that reinforces female solidarity, establishes a micro-community of initiates, and determines institutional membership within the social hierarchy.

Data from the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) confirm that variations in socioeconomic variables generate significant fractures within these institutional systems. An inverse correlation is widely observed: a higher level of maternal education and greater family wealth systematically accelerate the rejection or medicalization of this practice. Formal secondary and higher education introduces alternative cognitive frameworks that deconstruct traditional justifications, while also raising awareness of long-term obstetric and psychological complications. At the same time, family wealth reduces reliance on traditional marriage markets and the economic necessity of dowries, thus offering young women alternative avenues for social advancement. However, as evidenced by the persistent rates observed across all wealth strata in Sierra Leone, ethnic identity and the structural power of secret societies can sometimes override these economic correlations, demonstrating that macroeconomic social capital can occasionally withstand economic fluctuations.

Conclusion

This comparative sociological study assessed the institutionalized nature of female genital mutilation (FGM) in sub-Saharan Africa, demonstrating that its persistence is fundamentally due to the patriarchal system. Far from reflecting isolated individual choices or immutable religious imperatives, FGM functions as a deeply entrenched structural tool. Patriarchal structures have successfully institutionalized this practice to control women's biological autonomy, regulate their sexual identity, and maintain structural subordination within the family. By imposing this systemic control from early childhood (generally between the ages of 5 and 9) a developmental period when individuals lack the cognitive and ethical capacity to navigate the system or resist collective moral dictates the patriarchal system reproduces male domination from generation to generation.

However, viewing this practice solely through the lens of absolute patriarchal coercion obscures its interaction with mechanisms of social harmony, capital, and community acceptance.

Structural functionalism emphasizes that, in contexts where it is widespread, female genital mutilation (FGM) is defended as an essential cultural norm that maintains social order, group stability, and collective cohesion. By incorporating Pierre Bourdieu's theory of capital, this study reveals that FGM constitutes a powerful form of symbolic capital. Undergoing this procedure transforms the physical alteration into a local marker of honor, dignity, and social prestige, which directly determines a woman's position and guarantees her structural eligibility in the marriage market. Families experience strong social pressure to conform, as obedience ensures community acceptance and social capital, transforming the ritual into a collective mechanism of social harmony. Conversely, non-obedience generates significant negative capital, leading to systemic marginalization, reduced marriage options, and complete exclusion from elite social circles and community participation. The unbearable social cost of non-conformity manifested by a total loss of belonging and profound community stigmatization transforms the motivation of a simple choice into a rationalized strategy for structural survival within the group.

Empirical data highlight that, while the overall patriarchal objective of controlling the female body remains constant, the precise institutional mechanisms vary considerably depending on the sociocultural context. In the Horn of Africa, characterized by near-universal prevalence rates and the predominance of Type III infibulation, this practice functions primarily as an explicit economic and sexual contract. Within these strongly patriarchal kinship lines, originating from nomadic populations, physical restriction constitutes a concrete tool for guaranteeing premarital virginity and marital fidelity, an essential condition for concluding marriage contracts and establishing the dowries necessary for the economic survival of families.

Conversely, in West Africa, the institutional framework rests primarily on Type I and II infibulation, deeply rooted in powerful traditional secret societies dominated by women, such as the Bondo and the Sande. From a structural and functional perspective, rather than functioning as a simple individual mechanism of sexual control, this ritual serves as a formalized rite of passage and an institutional certificate of belonging to the community. It integrates individuals into a highly organized social hierarchy, fostering a powerful sense of female solidarity and collective identity that resists modern external intervention. Furthermore, secondary data from the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) reveal that, while deeply rooted ethnic and cultural identities may sometimes retain a strong prevalence across all social strata, the structural integrity of this institution is heavily influenced by socioeconomic variables. Higher levels of maternal education introduce alternative cognitive frameworks that directly challenge traditional justifications, while simultaneously strengthening critical awareness of long-term physical, obstetric, and psychological complications. At the same time, larger family assets reduce immediate reliance on traditional marriage markets and economic dependence on dowries, thus offering young women prospects for social advancement independent of bodily modification.

Ultimately, the results of this study demonstrate that purely legal or punitive frameworks are insufficient for lasting eradication if applied without adequate structures. Given that FGM is the primary means by which women acquire symbolic capital and allows them to avoid total social exclusion, sustainable policies must go beyond mere prohibition. Lasting social transformation requires structural interventions that accelerate access to secondary and higher education, create robust economic alternatives for household survival, and actively involve local actors particularly older women who wield structural power over younger generations to negotiate the redefinition of cultural identity and social capital without imposing modifications to women's bodies.

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