Interest Conflict and Convergence in Contemporary Military Conflicts: A Multi-Criteria Analytical Model

Конфлікт і зближення інтересів у сучасних воєнних конфліктах: багатокритеріальна аналітична модель

Zafar Nuri Najafov
PhD in National Security and Military Sciences, e-mail: zafarnajafov@yahoo.com, ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1392-9359

Зафар Нурі Наджафов
Доктор філософії з національної безпеки та військових наук, e-mail: zafarnajafov@yahoo.com, ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1392-9359

National Defense University, Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan

Національний університет оборони, Баку, Азербайджан

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Purpose. This study aims to identify the principal factors driving both conflicting and converging interests in contemporary military conflicts and to develop an integrated analytical framework to examine these dynamics.

Methodology. The research employs qualitative theoretical analysis, comparative assessment, and conceptual modeling. Drawing on realism, liberal institutionalism, constructivism, and contemporary security studies, the study integrates geopolitical, geoeconomic, military-strategic, political-diplomatic, security, technological-information, socio-humanitarian, and ecological-resource dimensions.

Findings. Four principal categories of conflict-generating factors are identified: asymmetries in geopolitical and strategic objectives, competition for strategic resources, ideological and identity-related contradictions, and changing security threats. The analysis also identifies mechanisms of interest convergence involving economic interdependence, institutional governance, collective responses to shared risks, and diplomatic engagement. Competition and cooperation may coexist, while their interaction depends on strategic objectives, institutional conditions, and security perceptions.

Originality. The study proposes an eight-cluster conceptual framework that integrates conflict-generating factors and potential mechanisms for cooperation into a common analytical structure.

Practical implications. The framework may support structured qualitative assessments of conflict dynamics and opportunities for cooperation. Its application to quantitative risk assessment requires further operationalization and empirical validation.

Article Type: Research Article

Мета роботи. Визначити основні чинники, що зумовлюють конфліктність і зближення інтересів у сучасних воєнних конфліктах, а також розробити інтегровану аналітичну модель для дослідження динаміки цих процесів.

Методи дослідження. У дослідженні використано якісний теоретичний аналіз, порівняльний аналіз і концептуальне моделювання. На основі положень реалізму, ліберального інституціоналізму, конструктивізму та сучасних досліджень безпеки інтегровано геополітичний, геоекономічний, воєнно-стратегічний, політико-дипломатичний, безпековий, технологічно-інформаційний, соціогуманітарний та екологічно-ресурсний виміри.

Результати дослідження. Визначено чотири основні групи чинників виникнення конфліктів: асиметрію геополітичних і стратегічних цілей, конкуренцію за стратегічні ресурси, ідеологічні суперечності та суперечності, пов'язані з ідентичністю, а також трансформацію безпекових загроз. Виявлено механізми зближення інтересів, що охоплюють економічну взаємозалежність, інституційне управління, колективне реагування на спільні ризики та дипломатичну взаємодію. Установлено, що конкуренція та співробітництво можуть співіснувати, а характер їхньої взаємодії залежить від стратегічних цілей, інституційних умов і сприйняття загроз для безпеки.

Оригінальність дослідження. Запропоновано восьмикластерну концептуальну модель, яка об'єднує чинники виникнення конфліктів і потенційні механізми співробітництва в єдину аналітичну структуру.

Практичне значення. Запропоновану модель можна використовувати для структурованого якісного оцінювання динаміки конфліктів і можливостей для співпраці. Її застосування для кількісного оцінювання ризиків потребує подальшої операціоналізації показників і емпіричної валідації.

Тип статті: дослідницька стаття.

Key words: contemporary military conflicts; conflicting interests; interest convergence; geopolitical competition; international security; conflict regulation; multi-criteria analytical framework.

Ключові слова: сучасні воєнні конфлікти; конфлікт інтересів; зближення інтересів; геополітична конкуренція; міжнародна безпека; врегулювання конфліктів; багатокритеріальна аналітична модель.

Introduction

The transformation of the international security environment in the twenty-first century has significantly influenced the nature, causes, and dynamics of military conflicts. Contemporary armed conflicts are increasingly characterized by the interplay among conventional military operations, geopolitical competition, geoeconomic rivalry, technological developments, information warfare, and transnational security threats (Regan & Sari, 2024; Semenenko et al., 2024; Weissmann & Nilsson, 2026). These developments require analytical approaches capable of explaining not only

the emergence and escalation of conflicts but also the conditions under which competing interests may be reconciled or managed.

One of the central challenges in contemporary international security studies is explaining why political and military confrontations persist despite growing economic interdependence, the development of international institutions, and the availability of diplomatic mechanisms. This challenge highlights the need to examine the relationship among structural contradictions among international actors, their perceptions of security, and the institutional conditions that shape opportunities for cooperation.

Structural realism provides an important theoretical foundation for understanding these processes. Waltz (1979) argues that the anarchic structure of the international system encourages states to rely on self-help mechanisms to protect their security and strategic interests. Mearsheimer (2001) further emphasizes that uncertainty about other states' intentions contributes to competition for power and strategic influence. From this perspective, conflicting interests may arise from differences in military capabilities, strategic objectives, and perceptions of threats.

However, power competition alone does not fully explain the multidimensional character of contemporary military conflicts. Economic globalization and technological development have created extensive networks of interdependence among states and other international actors. Keohane and Nye (2012) demonstrate that economic, institutional, and political interactions may influence state behavior by increasing the costs of confrontation and creating opportunities for cooperation. Nevertheless, asymmetric interdependence may also generate vulnerabilities and become an instrument of strategic pressure.

The multidimensional nature of contemporary security is further reflected in the Copenhagen School's approach, which distinguishes military, political, economic, societal, and environmental sectors of security (Buzan et al., 1998). This perspective suggests that military conflicts should be examined within a broader system of interacting security factors rather than exclusively through the distribution of military power.

Recent studies have also emphasized the increasing importance of hybrid threats, technological competition, and multi-domain operations in contemporary warfare (Regan & Sari, 2024; Semenenko et al., 2024). These developments indicate that conflict dynamics may be influenced simultaneously by military capabilities, economic dependencies, technological asymmetries, political institutions, and societal vulnerabilities.

Despite the contributions of existing theoretical approaches, an important methodological challenge remains how to integrate heterogeneous conflict-generating factors and cooperation-enhancing mechanisms into a coherent analytical framework. Realist, liberal-institutionalist, and constructivist perspectives provide complementary explanations of international behavior, but their theoretical propositions require further integration in operational terms when assessing the interaction between conflicting and converging interests.

Accordingly, the research problem addressed in this study concerns the development of an integrated analytical framework that systematically identifies and organizes the principal dimensions of interest conflict and convergence in contemporary military conflicts. Particular attention is given to the relationship between structural sources of confrontation and mechanisms that may facilitate cooperation, conflict regulation, and the reduction of escalation risks.

The aim of this study is to identify and systematize the principal factors influencing conflict and convergence of interests in contemporary military conflicts and to develop a multi-criteria indicator-cluster framework for their integrated assessment.

To achieve this aim, the study addresses the following research objectives:

1. To identify and systematize the structural factors contributing to conflicting interests in contemporary military conflicts.
2. To examine the political, economic, institutional, and diplomatic mechanisms that may

facilitate the convergence or accommodation of competing interests.

3. To develop a multi-criteria indicator-cluster framework integrating the principal dimensions of conflict potential and cooperation opportunities.

The study is based on the proposition that conflict and cooperation are not necessarily mutually exclusive processes. Their interaction depends on the configuration of strategic interests, relative capabilities, security perceptions, institutional arrangements, and opportunities for political and diplomatic engagement.

The proposed scientific contribution is the development of an integrated conceptual framework that organizes conflict-generating factors and cooperation-enhancing mechanisms into eight interconnected analytical clusters: geopolitical, geoeconomic, military-strategic, political-diplomatic, security, technological-information, socio-humanitarian, and ecological-resource. This framework is intended to provide a structured basis for comparative analysis and the subsequent operationalization of indicators for assessing conflict and cooperation potential.

The remainder of the article reviews the relevant theoretical literature, outlines the research methodology, examines the structural drivers of conflicting interests and mechanisms of convergence, presents the proposed indicator-cluster framework, and discusses its analytical implications for contemporary international security studies.

Literature Review

The theoretical foundations of contemporary military conflict analysis have developed within several major approaches to international relations and security studies. These approaches offer different explanations of the causes of armed confrontation, the behavior of international actors, and the conditions under which competing interests may be accommodated. However, their explanatory power varies with the structural, institutional, political, and technological characteristics of particular conflicts.

Realist theories traditionally emphasize the distribution of power, strategic competition, and security dilemmas as principal determinants of interstate conflict. Morgenthau (1985) interprets international politics primarily in terms of the pursuit of national interests and power, whereas Waltz (1979) explains interstate competition through the anarchic structure of the international system. Mearsheimer (2001) further develops this perspective by emphasizing the strategic incentives that encourage major powers to maximize their relative influence. Jervis (1976) demonstrates that uncertainty, misperception, and difficulties in distinguishing defensive from offensive intentions may intensify security competition.

These approaches provide an important foundation for explaining military confrontation and strategic rivalry. Nevertheless, their application to contemporary conflicts requires consideration of economic interdependence, technological connectivity, institutional constraints, and the participation of non-state actors. Moreover, the security dilemma should be distinguished from deliberate aggression and coercive strategies, since not every military confrontation results from reciprocal uncertainty regarding security intentions.

Liberal institutionalist theories offer a complementary explanation by focusing on cooperation, international institutions, and economic interdependence. Keohane (1984) argues that institutional arrangements may facilitate cooperation by reducing uncertainty, providing information, and establishing expectations of repeated interaction. Keohane and Nye (2012) demonstrate that complex interdependence creates multiple channels of interaction among international actors, potentially increasing the costs of military confrontation.

However, economic interdependence does not necessarily prevent armed conflict. Asymmetric dependencies may create opportunities for economic coercion, technological restrictions, and strategic pressure. Consequently, the stabilizing influence of interdependence

depends on the distribution of vulnerabilities, the political objectives of the actors involved, and the effectiveness of institutional arrangements.

Constructivist approaches broaden the analysis by emphasizing the role of identities, norms, historical narratives, and perceptions in shaping national interests. Wendt (1999) argues that the meanings attributed to security, threats, and international relationships emerge through social interaction. This perspective helps explain why actors with comparable material capabilities may adopt different strategies for conflict or cooperation.

Nevertheless, constructivist explanations also face methodological challenges in operationalizing identity, legitimacy, and threat perception. These variables are difficult to measure consistently across different conflicts and political environments. Their integration into comparative analytical frameworks therefore requires clearly defined indicators and transparent assessment procedures.

Contemporary security studies have further expanded understanding of armed conflict by incorporating non-traditional threats, hybrid warfare, and the interplay between military and non-military instruments. Buzan et al. (1998) distinguish military, political, economic, societal, and environmental sectors of security, demonstrating that threats may emerge across interconnected dimensions. Kaldor (2013) emphasizes the changing relationships among organized violence, political identity, and economic networks, while Hoffman (2007) examines the combination of conventional and irregular methods within hybrid warfare.

These contributions support a multidimensional understanding of contemporary conflict. However, the concepts of hybrid warfare and hybrid threats require careful differentiation to avoid treating every combination of military and non-military instruments as a distinct form of warfare. Bankov (2024) highlights the conceptual ambiguity surrounding hybrid warfare, while Regan and Sari (2024) examine the challenges posed by hybrid threats and grey-zone conflict.

The technological dimension of military confrontation has become increasingly prominent in recent research. Katagiri (2024) examines the implications of artificial intelligence and cross-domain warfare for the balance of power and unintended escalation. Suleymanli and Hajiyev (2024) examine the transformation of military strategy in the context of artificial intelligence and emerging military technologies.

These studies indicate that technological capabilities can influence operational effectiveness, strategic competition, and escalation dynamics. Nevertheless, technological superiority should not be interpreted as an independent determinant of military success. Its effectiveness depends on organizational adaptation, command and control, logistical support, industrial capacity, and the integration of technological systems into military operations.

Research on the Russia–Ukraine war provides important empirical insights into these relationships. Watling et al. (2024) examine lessons from Ukrainian offensive operations, while Ford, 2024 analyze the influence of digital connectivity and information networks on participation in contemporary warfare. These studies illustrate the growing interaction between military operations, civilian technological infrastructure, and information environments.

At the same time, Vershinin (2024) emphasizes the continuing importance of industrial capacity, attrition, and force regeneration in prolonged high-intensity warfare. Sukman (2024) similarly discusses the significance of adaptation and institutional learning. These findings suggest that contemporary military conflicts cannot be adequately explained through technological innovation alone. Conventional military capabilities, logistical sustainability, personnel resources, and defense-industrial production remain essential components of military effectiveness.

The development of multi-domain operations has further reinforced the need to analyze interactions among different operational environments. Semenenko et al. (2024) examine the adaptation of forms and methods of warfare to changes in the security environment, while Szczygielska (2024) considers the implications of multi-domain operations for civilian populations.

These studies demonstrate the relevance of integrating military-strategic, technological-information, and socio-humanitarian dimensions into conflict analysis.

The Second Nagorno-Karabakh War provides additional context for examining the relationship among political objectives, military capabilities, and international legal considerations. Ruys and Rodríguez Silvestre (2021) analyze the legal dimensions of the use of force in connection with territorial recovery. This case highlights the importance of distinguishing military-strategic outcomes from the legal and political legitimacy of the means employed to achieve them.

Recent strategic assessments also provide a broader context for evaluating changes in military capabilities and resource allocation. SIPRI (2025, 2026) documents developments in global military expenditure, reflecting the growing importance of defense resources in contemporary international security. However, military expenditure alone does not establish the probability of conflict or determine its outcome. Its analytical significance depends on the relationship between resource allocation, military capabilities, strategic objectives, and the wider security environment.

Taken together, the reviewed literature demonstrates that contemporary military conflicts are influenced by multiple interconnected factors. Realist theories explain structural competition and security dilemmas; liberal institutionalism identifies conditions that facilitate cooperation; constructivism highlights the role of identities and perceptions; and contemporary security studies examine the interaction among military, technological, economic, informational, and societal dimensions.

Nevertheless, these approaches differ in their units of analysis, explanatory assumptions, and methods of assessing conflict dynamics. Their theoretical contributions do not automatically provide a unified procedure for examining how conflict-generating factors interact with mechanisms that may facilitate interest convergence.

The research gap addressed in this study, therefore, concerns the need for a structured analytical framework that integrates the principal dimensions of conflict and cooperation while preserving the distinction among sources of confrontation, conditions influencing escalation, and mechanisms of conflict regulation.

To address this challenge, the present study proposes an eight-cluster conceptual framework encompassing geopolitical, geoeconomic, military-strategic, political-diplomatic, security, technological-information, socio-humanitarian, and ecological-resource dimensions. The proposed framework is intended to support systematic comparison of conflict-generating factors and cooperation-enhancing mechanisms and to provide a foundation for their subsequent operationalization within a multi-criteria assessment model.

Materials and Methods

The study employs a qualitative research design combining theoretical analysis, comparative assessment, and conceptual modeling to examine the interaction between conflicting and converging interests in contemporary military conflicts. The methodological approach is grounded in the assumption that conflict dynamics cannot be adequately explained through a single theoretical perspective or analytical dimension.

The theoretical foundation of the research integrates three major approaches to international relations: realism, liberal institutionalism, and constructivism. Realist theory provides a basis for examining power asymmetries, strategic competition, and security dilemmas. Liberal institutionalism contributes to the analysis of economic interdependence, international institutions, and mechanisms of cooperation. Constructivism facilitates the examination of identities, norms, political perceptions, and their influence on the formation of strategic interests.

These perspectives are complemented by contemporary security studies that address hybrid threats, technological transformation, multi-domain operations, and the multidimensional nature of international security. Their integration provides a conceptual foundation for examining the interaction

between structural sources of confrontation and mechanisms that may facilitate cooperation.

The research materials consist of academic publications, theoretical works, and analytical reports addressing international security, military conflicts, geopolitical competition, economic interdependence, and conflict regulation. The literature is used to identify recurring analytical dimensions and establish theoretical relationships among conflict-generating factors and cooperation-enhancing mechanisms.

The methodological framework comprises three interconnected components.

First, theoretical analysis is employed to examine the principal explanations of conflict and cooperation in international relations. Particular attention is given to the relationship between structural competition, security perceptions, economic dependencies, institutional arrangements, and political identities. This analysis provides the theoretical basis for identifying factors relevant to contemporary military conflicts.

Second, comparative analytical assessment is used to examine the explanatory contributions and limitations of different theoretical perspectives. The comparison focuses on the types of conflict-generating factors identified by each approach and the mechanisms through which competing interests may be managed or accommodated. The assessment is conceptual rather than a statistical comparison of empirical conflict datasets.

Third, conceptual modeling is applied to organize the identified factors into an integrated indicator-cluster framework. The proposed framework incorporates eight analytical dimensions: geopolitical, geoeconomic, military-strategic, political-diplomatic, security, technological-information, socio-humanitarian, and ecological-resource.

Within the framework, each cluster represents a distinct analytical dimension of contemporary conflict dynamics. The clusters are intended to capture both factors that may contribute to confrontation and mechanisms that may facilitate interest convergence.

The geopolitical cluster addresses the distribution of influence, strategic positioning, and competing regional security interests. The geoeconomic cluster focuses on resource competition, economic dependencies, trade networks, and strategic infrastructure. The military-strategic cluster considers defense capabilities, military doctrines, deterrence, and escalation-related factors.

The political-diplomatic cluster encompasses political objectives, international legal considerations, negotiation processes, and diplomatic mechanisms. The security cluster addresses transnational threats and collective security arrangements. The technological-information cluster incorporates technological competition, cyber capabilities, artificial intelligence, and information-related security challenges.

The socio-humanitarian cluster considers identity-related tensions, migration, social cohesion, and humanitarian consequences, while the ecological-resource cluster addresses resource scarcity, environmental pressures, and opportunities for cooperative resource management.

For analytical purposes, the framework distinguishes three categories of variables:

1. **Conflict-generating factors**, which represent structural conditions, competing objectives, or vulnerabilities that may contribute to confrontation.
2. **Escalation-related conditions**, which influence the potential intensification of existing tensions and their transformation into military confrontation.
3. **Interest-convergence mechanisms**, which represent political, economic, institutional, or cooperative arrangements that may facilitate conflict regulation.

This distinction is introduced to clarify the analytical functions of the proposed clusters and to avoid treating the causes of conflict, conditions of escalation, and mechanisms of cooperation as equivalent categories.

The indicator-cluster framework is presented as a conceptual analytical instrument rather than a fully operationalized quantitative model. At the current stage, it does not assign numerical

weights to individual indicators, calculate composite conflict indices, or establish empirically validated escalation thresholds. Consequently, its primary function is to systematize relevant analytical dimensions and provide a structured basis for subsequent comparative assessment.

The proposed framework also recognizes that the relationship between individual factors and conflict dynamics may be context-dependent. Economic interdependence, for example, may create incentives for cooperation while simultaneously generating vulnerabilities associated with asymmetric dependencies. Similarly, technological development may strengthen deterrence capabilities but also introduce new escalation risks.

Therefore, the analytical interpretation of each cluster requires consideration of the political objectives, relative capabilities, institutional conditions, and strategic perceptions of the actors involved.

The methodological limitations of the study arise primarily from its qualitative and conceptual character. The proposed framework has not been subjected to statistical validation or systematic empirical testing across a representative sample of military conflicts. Accordingly, its analytical value lies in organizing theoretical relationships and identifying dimensions for further investigation rather than generating verified quantitative predictions.

Further research should focus on operationalizing the proposed indicators, establishing transparent measurement scales, examining relationships among clusters, and evaluating the framework through comparative case studies of contemporary military conflicts.

Theoretical Foundations of Interest Conflict and Convergence in International Security Studies

The analysis of conflicting and converging interests in contemporary military conflicts requires a theoretical approach that accounts for the interaction of structural competition, strategic perceptions, institutional arrangements, and political identities. Although major international relations theories provide different explanations of conflict and cooperation, their combined application offers a broader understanding of the conditions under which competing interests emerge, intensify, or become subject to negotiated regulation.

This study draws on realism, liberal institutionalism, constructivism, and contemporary security studies to establish the theoretical foundations of the proposed indicator-cluster framework. Rather than treating these perspectives as mutually exclusive, the analysis considers their complementary explanatory functions and identifies the analytical dimensions relevant to conflict generation and interest convergence.

1. Realist Approaches: Power Competition and Security Dilemmas

Realist theories explain international conflict primarily through the distribution of power, competition for strategic advantages, and uncertainty about other actors' intentions. From this perspective, states operate within an international system lacking a central authority capable of guaranteeing their security.

Classical realism, represented by Morgenthau (1985), emphasizes the pursuit of national interests and political power as fundamental characteristics of international relations. States seek to protect their sovereignty, maintain strategic influence, and preserve favorable positions within the international system. Consequently, conflicting interests may arise when the strategic objectives of different actors become incompatible.

Structural realism provides a complementary explanation by focusing on the systemic conditions influencing state behavior. Waltz (1979) argues that international anarchy encourages states to develop military capabilities and maintain strategic autonomy. However, measures intended to strengthen one state's security may generate uncertainty or concern among others.

The security dilemma illustrates this relationship between defensive intentions and potentially destabilizing consequences. Jervis (1976) demonstrates that uncertainty, misperception,

and difficulties in distinguishing offensive from defensive capabilities may contribute to reciprocal security competition and escalation.

Nevertheless, the security dilemma should not be treated as a universal explanation of military confrontation. Deliberate aggression, territorial expansion, and coercive strategies may reflect intentional political objectives rather than unintended consequences of defensive behavior. Therefore, the analysis of conflicting interests requires a distinction between security competition arising from mutual uncertainty and confrontation resulting from consciously pursued revisionist objectives.

From the perspective of the proposed analytical framework, realist theory provides the principal foundation for the geopolitical and military-strategic clusters. These dimensions encompass relative capabilities, strategic objectives, military doctrines, regional security interests, and the conditions influencing deterrence and escalation.

The realist perspective also suggests that the potential for interest convergence depends partly on whether actors can establish arrangements that reduce uncertainty, clarify strategic intentions, and limit the perceived costs of cooperation. However, such arrangements may remain ineffective when the underlying political objectives are fundamentally incompatible.

2. Liberal Institutionalism: Cooperation, Interdependence and Conflict Regulation

Liberal institutionalism examines the conditions under which cooperation may emerge and persist despite the competitive structure of international relations. Unlike approaches that emphasize the inevitability of strategic rivalry, institutionalist explanations focus on the mechanisms by which states can coordinate behavior, reduce uncertainty, and manage conflicting interests.

Keohane (1984) argues that international institutions facilitate cooperation by establishing rules, providing information, reducing transaction costs, and creating expectations of repeated interaction. These mechanisms may contribute to the management of political disagreements even when states retain different strategic objectives.

International institutions and legal arrangements can provide structured environments for negotiation, monitoring, confidence-building, and the peaceful settlement of disputes. Their effectiveness, however, depends on political commitment, institutional credibility, compliance mechanisms, and the distribution of influence among participating actors.

The concept of complex interdependence developed by Keohane and Nye (2012) further demonstrates that contemporary international relations involve multiple economic, political, technological, and societal connections. These relationships may increase the costs of confrontation by creating shared interests in trade, investment, infrastructure, and technological cooperation.

At the same time, interdependence may generate strategic vulnerabilities. States possessing disproportionate control over critical resources, financial systems, technological infrastructure, or supply chains may use this control as an instrument of political and economic pressure. Consequently, the relationship between interdependence and conflict regulation is conditional rather than uniformly stabilizing.

This dual character of interdependence is particularly relevant to contemporary military conflicts, in which economic restrictions, sanctions, technological controls, and infrastructure dependencies may influence both confrontation and cooperation.

Within the proposed indicator-cluster framework, liberal institutionalism provides the theoretical basis for the geoeconomic and political-diplomatic clusters. It also contributes to the analysis of collective security arrangements and cooperation mechanisms included in the security cluster.

The principal analytical implication is that interest convergence does not necessarily require the elimination of strategic disagreements. Cooperation may emerge when actors identify overlapping objectives, establish credible institutional commitments, and recognize mutual benefits from limiting confrontation.

However, the existence of international institutions or economic relationships should not be interpreted as sufficient evidence of effective conflict regulation. Their influence must be assessed

in relation to the actors' strategic objectives, institutional constraints, and the distribution of economic and political dependencies.

3. Constructivist Perspective: Identity, Norms and Perceptions of Security

Constructivist approaches emphasize that international relations are shaped not only by material capabilities and institutional arrangements but also by identities, norms, historical narratives, and socially constructed perceptions.

Wendt (1999) argues that state interests and interpretations of security develop through interaction among international actors. Accordingly, the meaning attributed to military capabilities, political behavior, and strategic intentions depends partly on established relationships and shared understandings.

From this perspective, conflicting interests may emerge when actors maintain incompatible interpretations of legitimacy, sovereignty, political identity, or international order. Historical experiences, collective memories, and political narratives may influence perceptions of threats and willingness to accept compromise.

Identity-related factors become particularly significant when political actors mobilize ethnic, religious, cultural, or national distinctions to justify confrontation. Such processes may intensify polarization, reinforce hostile perceptions, and reduce the political space available for negotiated settlements.

However, differences in identity or political values do not automatically result in military conflict. Their conflict-generating potential depends on political mobilization, institutional conditions, strategic objectives, and the extent to which competing narratives are transformed into exclusionary or coercive policies.

Constructivist theory also helps explain the possibility of interest convergence. Political identities and strategic perceptions are not necessarily fixed. Dialogue, institutional interaction, confidence-building measures, and changes in political discourse may influence how actors interpret their interests and relationships.

Within the proposed analytical framework, constructivism provides an important foundation for the socio-humanitarian and political-diplomatic clusters. It contributes to the assessment of identity-related tensions, social cohesion, political legitimacy, strategic narratives, and perceptions of security.

A methodological challenge arises from the difficulty of translating these factors into comparable indicators. Unlike military expenditure or certain economic variables, perceptions of legitimacy, collective identity, and political trust cannot be assessed adequately without clearly defined qualitative criteria.

Therefore, the application of constructivist explanations within a multi-criteria framework requires careful operationalization and consideration of the political and historical context of each conflict.

4. Contemporary Security Approaches: From Traditional Threats to Hybrid Conflicts

Contemporary security studies have expanded the analytical boundaries of military conflict by emphasizing the interaction of conventional military capabilities with political, economic, technological, informational, and societal factors.

The transformation of the security environment demonstrates that military confrontation may be accompanied by cyber operations, economic coercion, information campaigns, technological competition, and activities involving state and non-state actors.

Kaldor (2013) examines changes in organized violence associated with globalization, identity politics, and transnational networks. Her approach highlights the importance of political and societal factors in understanding conflicts that cannot be explained exclusively through conventional interstate military competition.

Hoffman (2007) develops the concept of hybrid warfare to explain the combination of

conventional and irregular methods within contemporary conflict environments. This perspective highlights the interplay among different instruments of confrontation and the challenges of identifying their combined effects.

Nevertheless, hybrid warfare should not be understood as a universal category encompassing every form of political, economic, or informational competition. The analytical distinction between armed conflict, hybrid threats, and activities conducted below the threshold of armed confrontation remains essential.

The multidimensional approach to security developed by Buzan et al. (1998) provides a broader theoretical foundation for examining the interaction of military, political, economic, societal, and environmental security dimensions.

Technological developments further reinforce the need for integrated analysis. Artificial intelligence, cyber capabilities, information systems, and autonomous technologies may influence military effectiveness, strategic decision-making, and escalation dynamics. However, their effects depend on organizational capabilities, institutional arrangements, and the wider political and operational environment.

These considerations support the inclusion of technological-information, security, and ecological-resource dimensions in the proposed analytical framework. They also indicate that the relationships among analytical clusters may be interdependent rather than strictly separable.

For example, technological competition may affect military capabilities and geopolitical influence, while economic dependencies may generate security vulnerabilities. Environmental pressures and resource scarcity may also interact with political instability, social tensions, and regional security arrangements.

Consequently, the analytical value of a multidimensional framework depends not only on identifying relevant factors but also on explaining their interactions and distinguishing between conflict-generating conditions and mechanisms that may facilitate cooperation.

The theoretical perspectives examined in this section provide complementary foundations for the proposed eight-cluster framework. Realism explains power competition and strategic asymmetries; liberal institutionalism identifies institutional and economic conditions for cooperation; constructivism addresses identities and perceptions; and contemporary security studies highlight the interaction of military and non-military security dimensions.

Their integration establishes a conceptual basis for examining conflicting and converging interests within a common analytical structure. However, the explanatory relevance of each theoretical perspective may vary across conflicts, and the proposed framework requires further operationalization and empirical assessment before its predictive or comparative performance can be established.

Results

1. Structural Drivers of Interest Conflict in Contemporary Military Conflicts

The analysis identifies four interrelated categories of factors contributing to conflicting interests in contemporary military conflicts: asymmetries in geopolitical and strategic objectives, competition for strategic resources and geoeconomic influence, ideological and value-based contradictions, and the transformation of national security threats.

These categories represent different but interconnected dimensions of international competition. Their influence on conflict dynamics depends on the political objectives of the actors involved, the distribution of capabilities and resources, perceptions of security, and the institutional conditions governing international relations.

1.1. Asymmetry of Geopolitical and Strategic Ambitions

Asymmetry in geopolitical and strategic ambitions represents an important source of conflicting interests among international actors. States differ in their military capabilities, economic

resources, technological development, diplomatic influence, and perceptions of their roles within regional and international security systems (Marston, 2024; Liang et al., 2026).

These differences influence the ability of states to pursue strategic objectives, respond to perceived threats, and shape regional security arrangements. However, disparities in capabilities do not necessarily generate military confrontation. Their conflict-generating potential depends on the compatibility of political objectives, the perceived legitimacy of strategic actions, and the willingness of actors to accommodate competing interests.

The analysis distinguishes two principal dimensions of geopolitical asymmetry.

First, capability asymmetry refers to differences in the material and institutional resources available to international actors. These include military strength, economic capacity, technological development, diplomatic influence, and access to strategic resources.

Capability asymmetry may affect bargaining positions, deterrence relationships, and states' ability to influence political and military developments. Nevertheless, the consequences of unequal capabilities depend on how these resources are employed and interpreted by other actors.

Second, objective asymmetry concerns differences in strategic priorities and political goals. Some states may seek to expand regional influence, strengthen strategic positions, or revise existing political arrangements, whereas others prioritize sovereignty, territorial integrity, and strategic autonomy.

The interaction between capability and objective asymmetries may generate tensions when the pursuit of one actor's strategic goals threatens the security or political independence of another.

Such situations may involve security dilemmas, particularly when defensive measures are interpreted as threatening. However, deliberate coercion or territorial expansion should be distinguished from escalation arising primarily from uncertainty about defensive intentions.

Consequently, geopolitical asymmetry should be understood as a combination of differences in capabilities, strategic objectives, and perceptions of security. Its analytical significance lies in identifying the conditions under which these differences contribute to confrontation rather than coexistence or negotiated accommodation.

1.2. Competition for Strategic Resources and Geoeconomic Influence

Competition for strategic resources and geoeconomic influence constitutes another important dimension of contemporary conflict dynamics. Access to energy resources, critical raw materials, technological infrastructure, and international trade networks may affect the distribution of economic and strategic capabilities among states (Liang et al., 2025; Krelina, 2025).

The concept of strategic resources extends beyond traditional energy commodities to include freshwater, agricultural resources, rare earth elements, semiconductor technologies, digital infrastructure, and information resources.

The geographical concentration of resources and the unequal distribution of technological and industrial capabilities create patterns of dependence among international actors. These dependencies may facilitate cooperation through trade and investment, but they may also generate vulnerabilities when access to essential resources or infrastructure is subject to political restrictions.

Energy infrastructure, maritime transport routes, pipelines, and logistical corridors remain important elements of geoeconomic competition. Their strategic significance is determined not only by their economic value but also by their contribution to national security, military sustainability, and the continuity of critical functions.

Technological transformation has introduced additional dimensions of resource competition. Advanced semiconductor production, artificial intelligence infrastructure, critical minerals, and specialized industrial capabilities increasingly influence economic competitiveness and defense-related technological development.

However, competition for strategic resources should not be interpreted as an automatic cause of military conflict. Its escalation potential depends on resource scarcity, the availability of

alternative suppliers, the distribution of dependencies, political objectives, and the effectiveness of institutional mechanisms for managing disputes.

The analysis therefore suggests that geoeconomic competition may simultaneously create incentives for cooperation and sources of strategic vulnerability. This dual relationship is particularly relevant when evaluating the interaction between conflict-generating factors and mechanisms of interest convergence.

1.3. Ideological and Value-Based Contradictions

Ideological and value-based contradictions influence the formation of strategic interests, political identities, and perceptions of legitimacy in international relations.

Differences in political systems, governance models, national narratives, and interpretations of international order may affect how states define their security priorities and assess the behavior of other actors.

Huntington (1996) emphasizes the potential significance of cultural and civilizational differences in post-Cold War international relations. However, this interpretation remains contested and should not be regarded as a universal explanation of contemporary military conflicts.

The analysis indicates that ideological and identity-related differences become particularly relevant when political actors use them to justify incompatible strategic objectives, mobilize public support, or delegitimize opponents.

Such processes may intensify political polarization, reinforce hostile perceptions, and reduce opportunities for compromise. Nevertheless, ideological differences alone do not necessarily lead to armed confrontation.

Their conflict-generating potential depends on political mobilization, institutional conditions, the availability of peaceful dispute-resolution mechanisms, and the extent to which competing identities are associated with coercive political objectives.

Accordingly, ideological and value-based contradictions should be assessed in relation to the political and strategic context in which they develop. Their analytical importance lies in explaining how perceptions, narratives, and legitimacy claims may reinforce or mitigate existing conflicts of interest.

1.4. Transformation of National Security Threats

The transformation of national security threats reflects the increasing interaction between traditional military challenges and non-military sources of vulnerability.

While conventional approaches to national security emphasize territorial defense, military capabilities, and the balance of power, contemporary security studies recognize the importance of political, economic, technological, societal, and environmental dimensions.

The Copenhagen School distinguishes among the military, political, economic, societal, and environmental sectors of security, providing a theoretical foundation for examining the interaction among different categories of threats (Buzan et al., 1998).

Within this broader perspective, contemporary security challenges include military and geopolitical competition, terrorism and violent extremism, cyber threats, attacks against critical infrastructure, information operations, economic dependencies, energy vulnerabilities, and climate-related risks.

These challenges differ in their origins, mechanisms, and consequences. Therefore, they should not be treated as equivalent forms of military conflict. Rather, their significance lies in their potential interaction with existing political and military tensions.

Hybrid threats illustrate the complexity of these relationships. Political pressure, economic coercion, cyber operations, disinformation, and other instruments may be employed in coordinated strategies to influence an adversary's decisions or weaken its resilience (Bankov, 2024; Regan & Sari, 2024; Iskandarov & Aliyev, 2026).

However, the combination of military and non-military instruments does not automatically constitute hybrid warfare. Analytical distinctions are required between hybrid threats, coercive

activities below the threshold of armed conflict, and military operations involving multiple instruments of power.

The transformation of security threats also increases the importance of societal resilience, technological adaptability, institutional coordination, and the protection of critical infrastructure.

Consequently, national security should be examined as a multidimensional system in which military capabilities interact with broader political, economic, technological, and societal conditions.

For the proposed analytical framework, this finding supports the inclusion of a security cluster and highlights the need to distinguish among threats, vulnerabilities, and their potential consequences for conflict escalation.

2. Mechanisms of Interest Convergence and Conflict Regulation

The analysis identifies four principal categories of mechanisms that may facilitate the accommodation of competing interests: economic interdependence, international law and institutional governance, collective responses to shared security risks, and multi-level diplomatic engagement.

These mechanisms do not necessarily eliminate the structural sources of conflict. Instead, they may influence the incentives, constraints, and opportunities shaping interactions among international actors.

Interest convergence is understood as the identification or development of compatible objectives that create opportunities for cooperation despite the persistence of broader political or strategic disagreements.

The effectiveness of convergence mechanisms depends on the degree of compatibility between actors' objectives, the distribution of benefits and vulnerabilities, institutional credibility, and the political willingness to engage in cooperative arrangements.

2.1. Economic Interdependence as a Stabilizing Mechanism

Economic interdependence may contribute to conflict regulation by increasing the costs of confrontation and creating shared interests in the continuity of economic relationships.

International trade, investment, production networks, energy infrastructure, and technological cooperation establish connections that may influence strategic decision-making.

According to Keohane and Nye (2012), complex interdependence creates multiple channels of interaction through which economic and institutional relationships affect state behavior.

The analysis identifies three mechanisms through which economic interdependence may influence conflict dynamics.

First, economic interdependence may increase the costs of military confrontation. Armed conflict can disrupt trade, damage infrastructure, restrict investment, and undermine production networks. These consequences may create incentives for states to pursue negotiated arrangements rather than military escalation.

Second, interconnected production and supply chains may generate shared interests in economic stability. Disruptions affecting one state or region may produce consequences for other participants in international economic networks, creating potential incentives for cooperation.

Third, economic relationships may provide alternative instruments of strategic influence. Sanctions, trade restrictions, financial measures, and technological controls may be employed to influence political behavior without direct military force.

Nevertheless, economic interdependence does not guarantee peaceful relations. Asymmetric dependencies may create opportunities for coercion, while political and security objectives may outweigh the anticipated economic costs of confrontation.

Therefore, economic interdependence should be assessed as a context-dependent factor that can support cooperation or create additional vulnerabilities.

Its contribution to interest convergence depends on the distribution of economic benefits, the availability of alternatives, and the political conditions governing relations among the actors involved.

2.2. International Law and Institutional Governance

International law and institutional governance provide normative and organizational mechanisms for managing conflicting interests and facilitating cooperation.

Principles such as sovereign equality, territorial integrity, the prohibition of the threat or use of force, and the peaceful settlement of disputes establish legal foundations for international relations.

International organizations and institutional arrangements may facilitate dialogue, mediation, monitoring, humanitarian coordination, peacekeeping, and post-conflict recovery.

From the perspective of liberal institutionalism, institutions may support cooperation by reducing uncertainty, improving information exchange, and establishing expectations of repeated interaction (Keohane, 1984).

However, the effectiveness of institutional mechanisms depends on their mandates, decision-making procedures, enforcement capabilities, and the political commitment of participating states.

Institutional arrangements may be constrained by competition among major powers, unequal influence within international organizations, disagreements among members, and selective compliance with international obligations.

Consequently, the existence of international institutions does not necessarily prevent conflict escalation or ensure compliance with international law.

The analytical significance of institutional governance lies in its potential to establish procedures for managing disputes, facilitating negotiations, and supporting the implementation of cooperative arrangements.

Within the proposed framework, international law and institutional governance represent mechanisms of conflict regulation whose effectiveness should be assessed separately from their formal existence.

2.3. Management of Global Risks and Collective Security

The transnational character of many contemporary security risks creates opportunities for cooperation among states with otherwise competing political and strategic interests.

Climate change, pandemics, cyber insecurity, terrorism, food and energy insecurity, and environmental degradation may have consequences that extend beyond national borders.

Beck's (1992) concept of the risk society emphasizes the emergence of risks associated with technological development and modernization, highlighting the importance of collective responses to shared vulnerabilities.

The analysis suggests that common exposure to security risks may create incentives for cooperation when unilateral measures are insufficient to manage potential consequences.

Relevant mechanisms include early warning systems, intelligence and information exchange, international scientific cooperation, joint crisis management, critical infrastructure protection, and cybersecurity coordination.

However, cooperation in managing transnational risks should be distinguished from collective security arrangements in the narrower institutional and legal sense. Joint responses to shared challenges do not necessarily imply common defense commitments or collective enforcement mechanisms.

Moreover, shared vulnerabilities do not automatically produce cooperation. Political distrust, incompatible strategic objectives, unequal capabilities, and disagreements over responsibility may limit the effectiveness of joint responses.

Therefore, the potential for interest convergence depends on whether actors recognize common risks, establish credible mechanisms for cooperation, and perceive sufficient benefits from coordinated action.

This relationship supports the inclusion of transnational security risks and cooperative mechanisms within the proposed analytical framework while requiring their institutional and

functional differentiation.

2.4. Hybrid Diplomacy and Multi-Level Mediation

The increasing complexity of contemporary military conflicts has expanded the range of actors and communication channels involved in diplomatic engagement and conflict regulation.

Traditional state-to-state diplomacy remains a central mechanism of international relations. However, diplomatic processes may also involve international organizations, non-governmental actors, expert networks, humanitarian institutions, and digital communication platforms.

In the context of this study, hybrid diplomacy is understood as the combination of traditional diplomatic instruments with public diplomacy, digital communication, expert engagement, and network-based interaction.

This working definition is used to describe the interaction of different diplomatic channels rather than to establish hybrid diplomacy as a universally recognized or independently validated theoretical category.

The analysis identifies several characteristics of such diplomatic engagement, including multiple communication channels, flexible negotiation formats, participation by diverse actors, and the integration of political, humanitarian, and technological considerations.

Nye's (2004) concept of soft power provides a complementary perspective by emphasizing the role of attraction, legitimacy, and the ability to influence preferences without relying exclusively on coercion.

Multi-level mediation may facilitate communication among conflicting actors, reduce misunderstandings, support confidence-building, and identify areas of potentially compatible interests.

Nevertheless, mediation's effectiveness depends on the parties' willingness to negotiate, the credibility and perceived impartiality of mediators, the distribution of bargaining power, and the existence of feasible political arrangements.

Communication mechanisms alone cannot resolve conflicts arising from fundamentally incompatible objectives or deliberate violations of international legal obligations.

Therefore, diplomatic engagement should be considered a potentially important but context-dependent mechanism of interest convergence.

Within the proposed analytical framework, diplomatic mechanisms contribute primarily to the political-diplomatic cluster while interacting with institutional governance, security cooperation, and socio-humanitarian factors.

Taken together, the identified mechanisms demonstrate that interest convergence may emerge through economic incentives, institutional arrangements, responses to shared risks, and diplomatic engagement.

However, their effectiveness cannot be assumed solely from their existence. The assessment of cooperation potential requires consideration of the compatibility of strategic objectives, institutional credibility, relative capabilities, and the political conditions influencing the behavior of international actors.

A Multi-Criteria Indicator-Cluster Model for Assessing Conflict and Cooperation Potential

The multidimensional nature of contemporary military conflicts requires an analytical approach that integrates multiple sources of conflict and mechanisms of interest convergence into a coherent conceptual framework. Approaches focusing exclusively on military capabilities, geopolitical rivalry, or economic competition provide important but incomplete explanations of conflict dynamics.

The theoretical analysis presented in the preceding sections indicates that conflicting interests may emerge from the interaction of geopolitical ambitions, strategic resource competition, military capabilities, political identities, technological developments, and security vulnerabilities. At the same time, economic interdependence, international institutions, diplomatic engagement, and cooperation

in managing shared risks may create opportunities for accommodating competing interests.

To systematize these relationships, this study proposes a multi-criteria indicator-cluster framework to examine the potential for conflict and opportunities for interest convergence in contemporary military conflicts.

The framework is based on the proposition that conflict-generating factors and cooperation-enhancing mechanisms may coexist within the same international security environment. Their relative significance depends on the strategic objectives of the actors involved, the distribution of capabilities and resources, institutional conditions, and perceptions of security.

Accordingly, the framework does not assume that individual factors have exclusively conflict-generating or stabilizing effects. For example, economic interdependence may increase the costs of military confrontation while simultaneously creating vulnerabilities associated with asymmetric dependencies. Similarly, technological development may strengthen deterrence capabilities but also introduce additional risks of escalation.

The proposed framework integrates eight analytical clusters:

1. **Geopolitical cluster** – encompasses the distribution of power, strategic positioning, competing spheres of influence, and regional security interests.
2. **Geoeconomic cluster** – addresses strategic resources, trade networks, economic dependencies, logistics, and investment relationships.
3. **Military-strategic cluster** – considers defense capabilities, military doctrines, arms development, deterrence, and escalation-related factors.
4. **Political-diplomatic cluster** – incorporates political objectives, ideological positions, international legal considerations, negotiations, and diplomatic mechanisms.
5. **Security cluster** – focuses on transnational threats, terrorism, cyber insecurity, and collective security arrangements.
6. **Technological-information cluster** – includes artificial intelligence, cyber capabilities, information resources, technological competition, and information-related threats.
7. **Socio-humanitarian cluster** – addresses identity-related tensions, migration, social cohesion, and humanitarian consequences.
8. **Ecological-resource cluster** – encompasses water resources, food security, climate-related risks, resource scarcity, and environmental cooperation.

Each cluster is intended to represent a distinct analytical dimension, while recognizing that clusters may be interconnected.

For analytical purposes, the framework distinguishes among three elements: key indicators that characterize the relevant dimension, potential manifestations of conflicting interests, and mechanisms that may facilitate interest convergence.

This distinction makes it possible to examine not only the factors associated with confrontation but also the institutional, economic, political, and cooperative arrangements that may influence conflict regulation.

Table 1. Multi-Criteria Indicator-Cluster Framework of Conflict and Interest Convergence Dynamics

Analytical cluster	Key indicators	Potential manifestations of conflict	Interest convergence mechanisms
Geopolitical	Power balance, spheres of influence, strategic positioning, regional security interests	Geopolitical rivalry, strategic exclusion, competition for regional influence	Strategic dialogue, regional security arrangements, diplomatic coordination
Geoeconomic	Energy resources, trade networks, logistics, investment flows, economic	Resource competition, economic coercion, sanctions, dependency-	Economic cooperation, diversification of dependencies, joint

Analytical cluster	Key indicators	Potential manifestations of conflict	Interest convergence mechanisms
	dependencies	related disputes	development projects
Military-strategic	Defence capabilities, military doctrines, arms development, deterrence relationships	Arms competition, escalation risks, deterrence instability	Arms control, confidence-building measures, military transparency
Political-diplomatic	Political objectives, ideological positions, legal interpretations, diplomatic relations	Diplomatic confrontation, legitimacy disputes, incompatible political objectives	Negotiations, mediation, multilateral diplomacy, legal dispute-resolution mechanisms
Security	Terrorism, cyber threats, transnational risks, collective security arrangements	Expansion of insecurity, asymmetric threats, cross-border security challenges	Collective security mechanisms, intelligence cooperation, coordinated risk management
Technological-information	Artificial intelligence, cyber capabilities, information resources, technological infrastructure	Cyber operations, disinformation, technological competition, information-related vulnerabilities	Information exchange, cybersecurity cooperation, digital governance
Socio-humanitarian	Ethnic and national identities, religion, migration, social cohesion	Identity-related tensions, radicalization, humanitarian crises	Humanitarian cooperation, dialogue, social integration mechanisms
Ecological-resource	Water resources, food security, climate-related risks, energy sustainability	Competition over scarce resources, environmental disputes, resource-related insecurity	Joint resource management, environmental cooperation, sustainable development policies

Source: Developed by the author based on the theoretical and conceptual analysis presented in this study.

The proposed framework provides a structured representation of the relationships between conflict-generating factors and potential mechanisms of interest convergence.

Its analytical value lies in the simultaneous consideration of different dimensions of international security. Geopolitical competition, for example, may interact with military-strategic asymmetries and economic dependencies, while technological competition may influence both defense capabilities and information-related vulnerabilities.

Similarly, ecological pressures and resource scarcity may contribute to political tensions under conditions of weak governance or incompatible resource-management objectives. However, the same challenges may create opportunities for cooperation when actors recognize shared vulnerabilities and establish effective institutional arrangements.

The interaction among clusters indicates that conflict dynamics cannot be adequately understood by examining individual dimensions in isolation. Nevertheless, the existence of interconnections does not establish the relative importance of particular factors or demonstrate causal relationships without additional empirical analysis.

The framework also highlights the distinction between conflict potential and cooperation potential. These dimensions should not be interpreted as opposite ends of a single scale. Actors may experience substantial strategic competition while maintaining cooperation in selected economic, technological, or humanitarian areas.

Consequently, the presence of cooperation mechanisms does not necessarily indicate a corresponding reduction in the risk of military escalation. Their effectiveness depends on the political context, institutional credibility, and compatibility of strategic objectives.

At its current stage of development, the proposed indicator-cluster framework is conceptual. It identifies analytical dimensions and organizes relevant factors but does not establish numerical indicator weights, composite indices, or empirically validated escalation thresholds.

Therefore, the framework should not be interpreted as a quantitative instrument for predicting the probability of military conflict. Its principal contribution is to provide a systematic basis for comparing conflict-related factors and identifying potential areas of convergence of interest.

Further operationalization would require defining measurable indicators, data sources, assessment scales, aggregation procedures, and methods for examining relationships among clusters. Comparative case studies would also be necessary to evaluate the framework's explanatory relevance and practical applicability.

Thus, the proposed framework contributes to the conceptual analysis of contemporary military conflicts by integrating structural sources of confrontation and mechanisms of cooperation within a common analytical structure. Its further development may support more systematic assessments of conflict dynamics and the conditions influencing interest convergence.

Discussion

The findings of this study suggest that competition and cooperation should not be regarded as mutually exclusive characteristics of contemporary international security. Instead, they may coexist within the same political and strategic relationships, reflecting the interplay between conflicting national interests and the mechanisms by which states seek to manage their differences.

This interpretation is consistent with the realist understanding of international relations, according to which states pursue security, influence, and strategic advantages under conditions of uncertainty (Waltz, 1979; Mearsheimer, 2001). However, it also reflects the liberal institutionalist argument that international institutions and economic interdependence may create incentives for cooperation even when strategic competition persists (Keohane, 1984; Keohane & Nye, 2012).

The principal implication of the analysis is that the existence of conflicting interests does not necessarily lead to military confrontation. The transformation of political and strategic disagreements into armed conflict depends on additional conditions, including the compatibility of political objectives, perceptions of threats, relative capabilities, institutional constraints, and the availability of credible mechanisms for managing disputes.

Conversely, the presence of economic relationships, international institutions, or diplomatic communication does not automatically prevent escalation. Cooperation may remain limited to particular areas while fundamental disagreements over sovereignty, territorial integrity, regional influence, or security arrangements persist.

This distinction is important for interpreting the proposed eight-cluster analytical framework. The geopolitical and military-strategic clusters primarily capture dimensions associated with strategic competition, capability asymmetries, and security perceptions. The geoeconomic, political-diplomatic, security, technological-information, socio-humanitarian, and ecological-resource clusters incorporate additional factors that may either intensify confrontation or create opportunities for cooperation.

Nevertheless, the clusters should not be interpreted as independent or mutually exclusive categories. Their relationships may be reciprocal and context-dependent. For example, technological competition may influence military capabilities and geopolitical influence, while economic dependencies may affect both national security and diplomatic bargaining positions.

The interaction between these dimensions supports the argument that contemporary conflict analysis requires more than merely identifying isolated threats or individual sources of competition. A structured assessment should also examine how different factors reinforce, constrain, or modify one another.

The proposed framework contributes to this objective by organizing the relevant dimensions

of conflict and interest convergence into a common analytical framework. Unlike approaches concentrating primarily on military power or institutional cooperation, it brings together strategic, economic, political, technological, societal, and environmental considerations.

However, this integrative characteristic should be understood as a conceptual contribution rather than evidence of superior explanatory or predictive performance. The study does not establish that the proposed framework produces more accurate assessments than existing conflict-analysis models.

An important theoretical implication concerns the relationship between economic interdependence and strategic competition. Liberal institutionalist perspectives emphasize the potential stabilizing effects of economic relationships, particularly when confrontation threatens shared economic benefits. At the same time, contemporary geoeconomic competition demonstrates that asymmetric dependencies can serve as instruments of political pressure.

Therefore, the analytical significance of economic interdependence cannot be determined solely by the intensity of trade or investment relationships. Its influence depends on the distribution of vulnerabilities, the availability of alternative economic partners, and the strategic importance of the resources or technologies involved.

A similar relationship can be observed in the technological-information dimension. Technological innovation may strengthen defensive capabilities, improve situational awareness, and facilitate international cooperation. However, it may also introduce new vulnerabilities, increase uncertainty regarding adversaries' capabilities, and complicate escalation management.

Research on technological transformation and contemporary warfare underscores the need to assess technological developments alongside organizational adaptation, military capabilities, and political decision-making (Katagiri, 2024; Suleymanli & Hajiyev, 2025).

The experience examined in studies of the Russia–Ukraine war further illustrates the relevance of interactions among military operations, technological systems, industrial capacity, and information environments (Watling et al., 2024; Vershinin, 2024). Nevertheless, these studies should not be treated as direct empirical validation of the proposed eight-cluster framework, since the present research does not systematically apply the model to conflict-specific datasets.

The political-diplomatic dimension raises a further analytical issue. International institutions and diplomatic mechanisms may facilitate communication, reduce uncertainty, and support negotiated arrangements. However, their effectiveness depends on the parties' willingness to participate, the credibility of their commitments, and the compatibility of fundamental political objectives.

Consequently, the availability of institutional mechanisms should be distinguished from their actual capacity to regulate conflict. The existence of negotiations or international organizations does not, by itself, demonstrate a reduction in escalation risks.

The socio-humanitarian and ecological-resource dimensions also require contextual interpretation. Identity-related tensions, migration pressures, environmental degradation, and resource scarcity may interact with political instability and security vulnerabilities. However, these conditions do not automatically produce military confrontation. Their significance depends on political mobilization, institutional capacity, resource governance, and the broader strategic environment.

These considerations suggest that the proposed framework should distinguish between the presence of a particular factor and its demonstrated influence on conflict dynamics.

Another important implication concerns the relationship between conflict potential and cooperation potential. The two dimensions should not be treated as opposite values on a single continuum. High levels of strategic rivalry may coexist with selective cooperation in trade, humanitarian assistance, environmental management, or technical coordination.

Accordingly, an increase in cooperation within one analytical cluster does not necessarily compensate for escalating tensions within another. This limitation is particularly relevant to any future attempt to construct an integrated numerical index, since simple aggregation could conceal

critical differences among political, military, and institutional conditions.

From a methodological perspective, the proposed framework therefore offers a basis for structured qualitative comparison rather than a validated procedure for predicting military conflict.

Its practical application would require operationalizing cluster-specific indicators, identifying reliable data sources, and establishing transparent assessment criteria. Additional attention should be given to possible overlaps among clusters and the risk of counting the same underlying factor more than once.

Comparative case studies could help determine whether the framework captures relevant differences in conflict dynamics and whether its analytical categories remain applicable across different political, geographical, and military contexts.

The principal limitation of the present study is its conceptual research design. The proposed framework has not been tested through systematic cross-case comparison, statistical modeling, or quantitative validation. Therefore, conclusions regarding its practical effectiveness and predictive capacity cannot be established at this stage.

Despite these limitations, the framework provides a structured foundation for examining the coexistence of competition and cooperation in contemporary international security. Its potential contribution lies in supporting more comprehensive qualitative analysis and identifying the conditions under which conflicting interests may be managed through institutional, diplomatic, economic, and cooperative mechanisms.

Thus, the findings support an understanding of contemporary security governance in which the objective is not necessarily the complete elimination of conflicting interests but the development of credible mechanisms for preventing escalation, managing disputes, and facilitating cooperation where compatible interests exist.

Conclusion

The study has examined the factors contributing to conflicting and converging interests in contemporary military conflicts and proposed an integrated eight-cluster analytical framework for their systematic assessment. The theoretical and comparative analysis provides a basis for the following conclusions.

First, contemporary military conflicts are influenced by the interaction of multiple political, strategic, economic, technological, and socio-humanitarian factors. Four principal categories of conflict-generating factors have been identified: asymmetries in geopolitical and strategic objectives; competition for strategic resources and geoeconomic influence; ideological and identity-related contradictions; and the transformation of national and international security threats. These factors may contribute to confrontation, but their presence does not necessarily result in military escalation. Their influence depends on the political objectives of the actors involved, relative capabilities, threat perceptions, and institutional conditions.

Second, the analysis has identified four major categories of mechanisms that may facilitate the accommodation of competing interests: economic interdependence, international law and institutional governance, collective responses to shared security risks, and diplomatic engagement. Their effectiveness is context-dependent and cannot be inferred solely from their formal existence. Economic interdependence, for example, may create incentives for cooperation while simultaneously generating vulnerabilities associated with asymmetric dependencies.

Third, interest convergence can be examined at three interconnected levels. At the structural level, economic relationships and institutional interdependence may influence the incentives for cooperation. At the institutional level, international law, regional security arrangements, and mediation mechanisms provide procedures for managing disputes. At the communicative level, strategic dialogue, confidence-building measures, information exchange, and multi-level diplomacy may reduce uncertainty and facilitate negotiated arrangements. These levels

represent complementary analytical perspectives rather than independently validated stages of conflict regulation.

Fourth, the principal conceptual contribution of the study is the proposed eight-cluster framework integrating geopolitical, geoeconomic, military-strategic, political-diplomatic, security, technological-information, socio-humanitarian, and ecological-resource dimensions. The framework enables the structured consideration of conflict-generating factors and potential mechanisms of interest convergence within a common analytical approach. It also recognizes that competition and cooperation may coexist within the same international security environment and should not be treated as mutually exclusive outcomes.

The proposed framework is conceptual and has not been subjected to quantitative validation or systematic empirical testing. Therefore, its contribution lies primarily in the integration and classification of relevant analytical dimensions rather than in the demonstrated ability to predict military conflict or measure escalation probabilities.

Further research should focus on operationalizing the proposed indicators, defining transparent assessment procedures, examining interactions among clusters, and testing the framework through comparative case studies of contemporary military conflicts.

Overall, the study supports the conclusion that managing conflicting interests requires a multidimensional approach that combines strategic assessment with institutional, diplomatic, economic, and cooperative mechanisms. The practical significance of such an approach lies in its potential to improve the systematic analysis of conflict dynamics and identify conditions under which competing interests may be accommodated without military escalation.

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