Cultural Intelligence and International Business Negotiation in African Markets

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ABSTRACT

Cultural intelligence (CQ) offers a basis for explaining cross-cultural negotiation, but its application to African business settings requires clearer differentiation between individual capabilities, enacted interaction processes, and contextual conditions. This conceptual article uses a selective narrative synthesis of CQ, negotiation, and Africa-focused international business literature to develop the Cultural Intelligence Negotiation Effectiveness (CINE) Framework. The framework retains the four established CQ dimensions and proposes verified cultural awareness, adaptive communication, and relationship-oriented engagement as episode-specific processes linking capability to negotiation outcomes. Six propositions address these relationships and the moderating roles of institutional ambiguity and counterpart reciprocity. Negotiation effectiveness encompasses economic outcomes, process quality, relationship continuity, and agreement implementation. Evidence concerning Ghana, Egypt, South Africa, and multinational negotiation professionals informs the discussion without establishing continent-wide applicability. The proposed contribution is a conditional explanation of capability enactment whose value depends on demonstrating construct distinctiveness and explanatory improvement over a simpler CQ model. A staged empirical strategy specifies dyadic sampling, behavioural and counterpart measures, mediation and moderation analysis, and measurement-equivalence testing across selected countries. CINE remains unvalidated and provides a research agenda for examining when culturally intelligent capabilities support effective international commercial negotiation.

Keywords: cultural intelligence; international business negotiation; African markets; conceptual framework; institutional context

INTRODUCTION

International business negotiators must interpret unfamiliar behaviour, explain priorities, assess decision authority, and judge the credibility of commitments while discussing prices and contractual terms. Differences in cultural assumptions can complicate these tasks even when both parties have commercial reasons to reach agreement. Cultural intelligence (CQ) concerns the individual capability to function effectively across cultural settings (Earley & Ang, 2003). Its metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioural dimensions provide a basis for examining how negotiators interpret and respond to unfamiliar situations (Van Dyne et al., 2012).

Empirical research links CQ to negotiation processes and outcomes, although the evidence warrants more qualified conclusions than some managerial applications imply. Imai and Gelfand (2010) examine CQ in negotiation sequences and outcomes, while Groves et al. (2015) connect it with cross-cultural negotiation performance and interest-based behaviour. These studies support investigating CQ without implying that cultural competence guarantees favourable or durable agreements. Resources, bargaining alternatives, authority, information, and counterpart conduct also shape outcomes. More recent synthesis highlights metacognitive adaptation, and qualitative B2B research identifies contextual knowledge and communication as professional concerns (Skhiri et al., 2025; So, 2024).

CQ must also be located within the wider literature on intercultural capability. Richter et al. (2023) review competence instruments, and Morin and Talbot (2023) synthesise expatriate CQ research. These reviews make construct definition and measurement central to any negotiation model. Language proficiency is a related but distinct resource: Ng et al. (2025) examine its relationship with CQ, adaptation, and performance. The present

article therefore uses CQ as its focal capability without treating it as a substitute for linguistic resources or every other requirement of international negotiation.

This distinction is particularly relevant when applying CQ to African business contexts. Zoogah et al. (2015) explain organisational effectiveness through the interaction of institutions and organisational resources, limiting explanations based solely on national culture. Ghana-based studies link CQ to expatriate interactional adjustment and exporting firms' relationship quality (Agyei & Mtembu, 2023; Brancu et al., 2025). These outcomes are relevant to international business but differ from negotiation effectiveness. Explaining how CQ might affect a negotiated agreement therefore requires an explicit account of the intervening processes. Africa-focused international business scholarship also calls for attention to diversity and to the interaction between people and institutions (Kamoche & Wood, 2023; Nachum et al., 2023).

The conceptual domain includes African firms as negotiators in their own right. Nachum et al. (2023) direct attention to people, entrepreneurial human capital, and networks alongside institutions. This perspective supports examining African exporters and intra-African negotiations, as well as encounters involving foreign firms. It also places negotiation within firms' internationalisation objectives and resource constraints, rather than evaluating it solely as an interpersonal accomplishment.

The article asks: Through which interaction processes, and under what conditions, might individual CQ contribute to effective international business negotiation in African markets? The Cultural Intelligence Negotiation Effectiveness (CINE) Framework addresses this question by separating individual capabilities, enacted negotiation processes, and outcomes. Its proposed contribution is a conditional process model. Cultural awareness, adaptive communication, and relationship-oriented engagement are mechanisms to be investigated, not additional CQ dimensions whose distinctiveness can be assumed.

African markets denotes the geographical scope of inquiry. It does not imply a uniform culture or financial-market classification, and the analysis does not classify every African market as emerging. The framework concerns international commercial interactions involving African firms or organisations, including intra-African negotiations. It recognises the adaptive capabilities of local and foreign participants and allows relationships to vary across countries, industries, organisations, and negotiating dyads. This contextual approach follows arguments for using African diversity to develop and test international business theory (Kamoche & Wood, 2023; Nachum et al., 2023).

Conceptual Approach and Literature Selection

This article develops the Cultural Intelligence Negotiation Effectiveness (CINE) Framework through a selective narrative synthesis of literature on cultural intelligence, international negotiation, and international business in Africa. The synthesis integrates concepts and develops research propositions. Following Jaakkola (2020), each literature stream serves a distinct analytical purpose: cultural intelligence research defines the individual capabilities, negotiation research informs the proposed interaction processes and outcomes, and Africa-focused institutional scholarship provides the contextual foundations.

The literature comprises foundational contributions and relevant publications identified through targeted searches, with coverage extending through 2025. Search terms included cultural intelligence, cross-cultural negotiation, international business negotiation, adaptive communication, relationship quality, institutional context, and African business. Sources were selected for their relevance to the framework's constructs, negotiation processes, African business settings, and conceptual research approach.

The synthesis distinguishes studies that directly examine negotiation from those addressing related outcomes, including expatriate adjustment, export relationships, and internationalisation. Evidence concerning these related outcomes informs the contextual argument but is not treated as direct evidence of negotiation effectiveness. This distinction helps clarify which proposed relationships draw on negotiation research and which require further empirical investigation.

The selected literature was examined across four analytical dimensions: the capabilities investigated, the interaction processes identified, the outcomes assessed, and the contextual conditions shaping interpretation.

These comparisons informed the framework's distinction between individual CQ, its enactment during negotiation, and subsequent outcomes. Relationships supported indirectly by the reviewed evidence are expressed as propositions for future testing.

The review did not follow a systematic-review protocol and does not claim exhaustive coverage, pooled effect estimation, or representativeness across African markets. Where access was limited to abstracts or institutional publication records, interpretation was confined to the information reported in those sources. These limitations constrain the completeness of the synthesis and the strength of the conclusions that can be drawn from it. Accordingly, CINE is presented as a conceptual framework requiring empirical validation.

Cultural Intelligence and Negotiation Effectiveness

The four dimensions of cultural intelligence

Metacognitive CQ concerns the monitoring and revision of cultural assumptions. Cognitive CQ concerns knowledge of relevant cultural conventions and systems. Motivational CQ concerns the effort and confidence needed to remain engaged in unfamiliar settings. Behavioural CQ concerns the capacity to adjust verbal and nonverbal conduct. The dimensions are related but conceptually distinguishable (Ang et al., 2007; Van Dyne et al., 2012). In negotiation, these capabilities can support reflection, contextual preparation, sustained engagement, and appropriate behavioural adjustment. Recent meta-analytic work continues to position CQ as an intercultural capability within the wider network of individual differences and performance (Rockstuhl et al., 2025).

The framework distinguishes capability from its use in a specific encounter. Cultural knowledge does not ensure that a negotiator asks a clarifying question, and behavioural flexibility may remain unused under time pressure. Conversely, an interpreter or organisational protocol may support appropriate conduct without indicating high individual CQ. Enacted processes therefore occupy an intermediate position between individual capabilities and outcomes. This distinction also makes measurement consequential: observed conduct cannot automatically be interpreted as evidence of a particular capability (Richter et al., 2023; Rockstuhl et al., 2025).

Cultural awareness in CINE concerns recognising and checking assumptions within a negotiation. Cognitive CQ refers to the broader knowledge available to the negotiator, while metacognitive CQ refers to the capacity to monitor cultural interpretations. Similarly, adaptive communication concerns adjustment during an encounter, whereas behavioural CQ concerns the capacity to adjust. These conceptual distinctions must survive empirical examination. Different labels alone cannot establish that the proposed processes differ from established CQ constructs, a concern consistent with Richter et al.'s (2023) emphasis on construct–measure alignment.

Defining negotiation effectiveness

Negotiation effectiveness is defined as the extent to which a negotiation produces economically acceptable, procedurally clear, relationally sustainable, and implementable outcomes. These criteria may diverge. A rapid agreement can conceal misunderstanding; a financially attractive contract can prove difficult to implement; and a courteous exchange can fail to produce a viable transaction. Declining unacceptable terms may itself be an effective outcome. Agreement formation alone is therefore an inadequate criterion of success.

Economic outcomes include the value obtained relative to feasible alternatives and, where observable, joint value creation. Process quality includes accurate understanding of priorities, appropriate participation, and clarity about obligations. Relationship continuity concerns willingness to maintain future interaction without assuming that continued business is always desirable. Implementation concerns whether agreed responsibilities are fulfilled. These outcome categories are proposed analytical distinctions rather than a validated composite scale. Empirical studies should report them separately before considering aggregation.

Curhan et al. (2006) provide a basis for separating economic results from participants' assessments. Their subjective-value domains concern instrumental outcomes, the self, the process, and the relationship. CINE's categories differ by explicitly including implementation and by distinguishing subjective satisfaction from

objective success. The relevance of Curhan et al.'s model lies in its recognition that participants value several aspects of negotiation, rather than in equivalence between the two sets of categories.

Evidence and the African Business Context

Direct evidence from negotiation research

Imai and Gelfand (2010) and Groves et al. (2015) provide direct evidence linking CQ to cross-cultural negotiation. Groves et al. report that interest-based behaviour partly explains its relationship with performance. This finding supports examining what negotiators do as a possible link between capability and outcomes. Transfer from negotiation exercises to organisational transactions nevertheless requires testing because accountability, commercial risk, and repeated relationships may differ. So's (2024) synthesis strengthens the rationale for investigating adaptability without validating CINE's proposed mechanisms.

Recent studies further direct attention to the interaction itself. So's (2024) rapid evidence assessment highlights metacognitive CQ and cultural values in relation to adaptability and negotiation styles. Skhiri et al. (2025) identify contextual knowledge and flexible communication in qualitative accounts of international B2B negotiation. These findings motivate observing when negotiators clarify meaning, adjust communication, and respond to relational concerns. They do not establish the temporal or causal sequence proposed in CINE.

Negotiation styles must also be distinguished from outcomes. Caputo et al. (2019) examine cultural values, CQ, and preferences for negotiating behaviour. A cooperative style cannot, by itself, demonstrate effectiveness where incentives favour deception or a party lacks decision authority. Skhiri et al.'s (2025) accounts from twenty international B2B negotiation professionals offer process insight into contextual knowledge and flexible communication, but professional accounts do not identify causal effects or establish continent-wide applicability.

The broader CQ literature also supports careful inference. Schlaegel et al. (2021) synthesise seventy studies concerning CQ and six work-related outcomes and examine the contribution of its dimensions beyond established predictors. This strengthens the rationale for studying CQ as a meaningful capability, while the range of outcomes limits direct conclusions about negotiation implementation. Richter et al. (2023) review intercultural competence instruments and identify the importance of alignment between theoretical constructs and measures. Together, these reviews support specifying precisely what is measured rather than using CQ as a general explanation for all successful intercultural interaction. Rockstuhl et al. (2025) further examine CQ alongside personality and several performance domains. Their findings motivate controlling relevant individual differences when testing CINE; job performance should not be treated as equivalent to negotiated agreement quality.

Liu et al. (2010) offer a more specific connection between communication and negotiation outcomes through their work on quality of communication experience. Their findings support assessing how the counterpart experiences an exchange, rather than judging an adjustment solely by its initiator's intention. CINE's adaptive communication construct consequently needs comparison with established communication-quality measures. Language resources require separate attention: Ng et al. (2025) examine proficiency alongside CQ in relation to adaptation and performance. Misunderstanding should not automatically be attributed to low CQ.

Country-specific African evidence and its limits

Agyei and Mtembu (2023) study 397 Chinese self-initiated expatriates in Ghana using an online survey and partial least squares structural equation modelling. They report positive relationships between the four CQ constructs and interactional adjustment. This provides country-specific evidence that CQ matters for intercultural interaction. It does not directly measure bargaining behaviour, commercial agreement quality, or fulfilment of negotiated commitments. The sample's nationality and expatriate status also limit extrapolation to Ghanaian negotiators or other African populations. Recent meta-analytic work similarly examines CQ in

relation to cross-cultural adjustment, providing a broader comparison while remaining distinct from bargaining and implementation outcomes (Tripathi et al., 2024).

Brancu et al. (2025) analyse survey evidence from 145 Ghanaian SMEs concerning owner or manager CQ, relationship quality, and export performance. Their findings connect CQ with both local and foreign relationship quality, while foreign relationship quality is associated with export performance and the local relationship pathway is not significant. The distinction cautions against treating every relationship as equally consequential. It supports investigating relationship-oriented processes in international commerce but does not validate CINE or establish that its proposed mediators cause negotiation effectiveness.

Evidence from Egypt further illustrates why the commercial stage being studied matters. Fakhreldin (2021) examines manufacturing SMEs and reports that managerial CQ is more consequential for internationalisation intention than for actual internationalisation, where other motivators have greater importance. This finding concerns internationalisation rather than negotiation, but cautions against assuming that capabilities linked to willingness to enter foreign markets translate directly into completed and sustained transactions. Taken alongside Ghana-based findings, it reinforces the need for country-specific and outcome-specific testing.

South African evidence adds a measurement perspective. Mahembe and Engelbrecht (2014) assessed the Cultural Intelligence Scale using a non-probability sample of 229 young adults and reported support for its reliability and construct validity. This provides a country-specific basis for considering CQ measurement, although the sample does not establish validity among commercial negotiators or equivalence across African countries. Its relevance to CINE lies in demonstrating the importance of examining measurement properties within the intended population before interpreting structural relationships.

Negotiation-specific evidence also extends beyond Ghana. Skhiri et al. (2025) interviewed twenty international negotiation professionals at a conference in Tunisia. The sample included participants from South Africa, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, and Libya, alongside participants from non-African countries. Their accounts emphasised contextual understanding, flexible communication, and trust. However, a multinational conference sample does not constitute separate national studies, and the findings cannot establish country-level differences or validate CINE's proposed causal sequence.

Taken together, these studies provide complementary forms of evidence: the Ghanaian studies concern adjustment and export relationships, the Egyptian study concerns internationalisation, the South African study concerns CQ measurement, and the multinational qualitative study concerns negotiation experience. This geographical extension strengthens contextual grounding while leaving substantial gaps. The evidence does not establish a common African negotiation pattern or demonstrate that the proposed relationships operate similarly across countries. Comparative research must examine institutional arrangements, language practices, industry conditions, and transaction characteristics directly rather than attributing differences to nationality alone.

Institutional conditions and reciprocal adaptation

Zoogah et al. (2015) develop an Africa-focused argument connecting institutions, resources, and organisational effectiveness. Applied to negotiation, that perspective suggests distinguishing misunderstandings about interpersonal conduct from uncertainty about approvals, decision rights, or enforceability. The distinction matters because CQ may facilitate interpretation and communication while leaving commercial or legal constraints unresolved. Institutional ambiguity is therefore proposed as a condition shaping the usefulness of CQ, not as a defining characteristic of every African market.

Kamoche and Wood (2023) and Nachum et al. (2023) provide a contextual rationale for considering individual capabilities alongside institutions and networks. CINE applies that reasoning to uncertainty about negotiation procedures and decision authority. It proposes that such uncertainty changes the value of checking contextual interpretations. The moderating relationship is derived in this article; it is not an established finding of the cited Africa-focused scholarship.

Reciprocal adaptation gives local participants an active role in the model. Michailova et al. (2024) bring host-country nationals into CQ scholarship, extending attention beyond expatriates. Local and foreign negotiators can both interpret, question, and adjust; treating local participants merely as cultural informants would

overlook their objectives and agency. CINE therefore includes counterpart reciprocity: the other party's willingness to clarify meaning and respond constructively to appropriate adaptation. Empirical tests should capture both parties' interpretations and conduct.

The CINE Framework and Research Propositions

CINE proposes that individual CQ supports cultural awareness and adaptive communication during negotiation. Awareness informs communication adjustment, and both processes support relationship-oriented engagement. These processes are expected to relate to negotiation effectiveness. Institutional ambiguity conditions the association between awareness and process quality, while counterpart reciprocity conditions the association between engagement and effectiveness. This ordering organises the propositions; actual negotiations may involve feedback and repeated movement between processes.

Theoretical contribution and construct distinctiveness

CINE's proposed contribution lies in explaining how cultural intelligence is enacted within a negotiation episode and how institutional and dyadic conditions may affect its usefulness. The framework retains the established four-dimensional conceptualisation of CQ. It adds an explicit distinction between the capabilities negotiators possess, the interaction processes through which those capabilities are exercised, and the outcomes subsequently achieved. This distinction addresses a specific explanatory problem: negotiators with similar CQ may behave differently when organisational constraints, counterpart responses, or uncertainty about decision authority affect the use of their capabilities.

The three proposed processes must therefore be defined at the level of the negotiation episode. Verified cultural awareness refers to the identification and checking of culturally informed interpretations during a particular encounter. Metacognitive CQ concerns the broader capability to monitor and revise such interpretations, whereas cognitive CQ concerns the knowledge available to inform them. A negotiator may possess these capabilities without checking an assumption when time pressure or organisational routines discourage clarification. Verified awareness would consequently be assessed through evidence of assumption checking and subsequent interpretation, rather than by repeating general CQ questionnaire items.

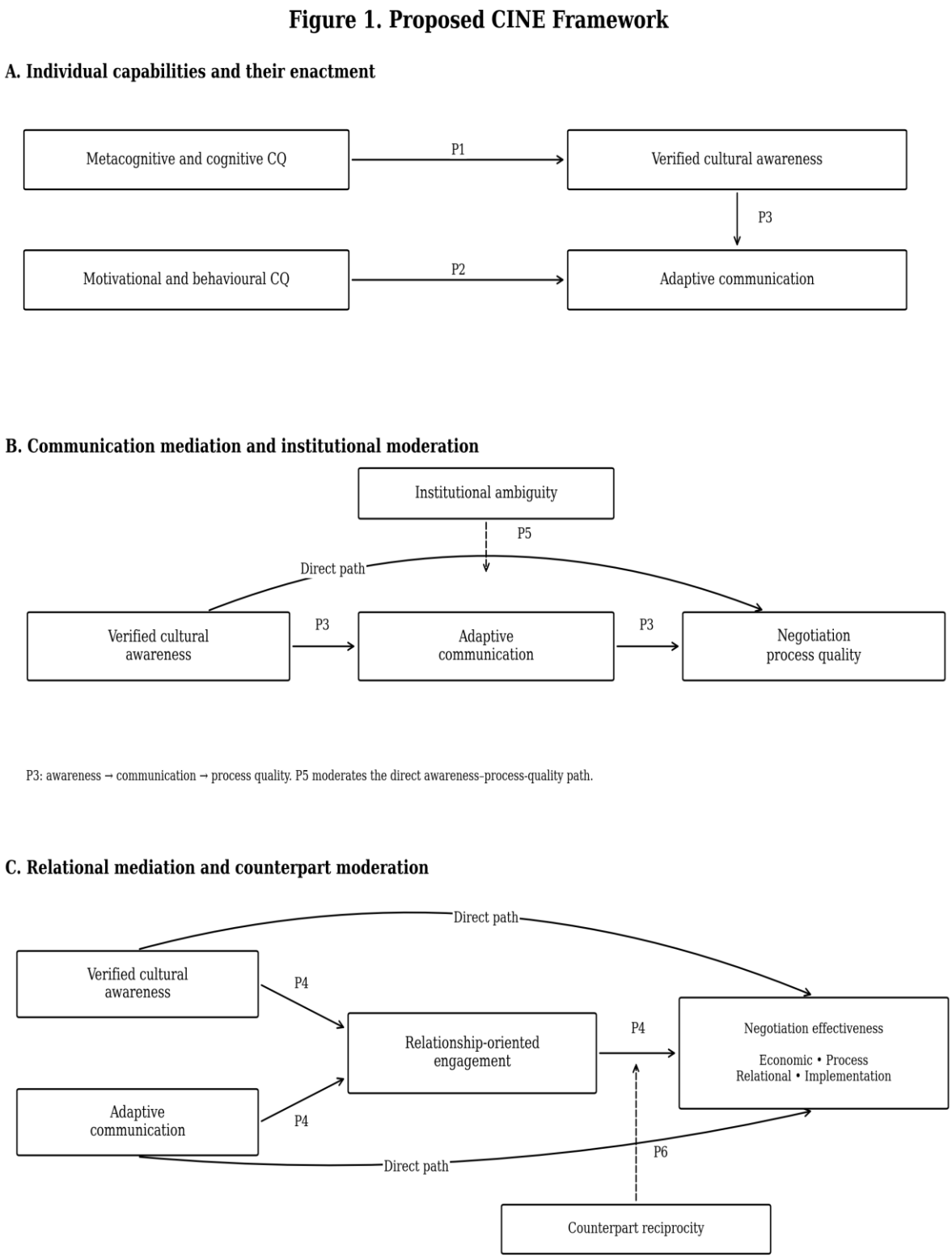
Adaptive communication refers to adjustments actually made to language, explanation, communication format, or nonverbal conduct in response to information obtained during the encounter. Behavioural CQ concerns the capacity to make such adjustments. The proposed mediator captures whether that capacity is exercised and whether the adjustment responds to the counterpart's expressed needs. It should also be distinguished from communication quality, which concerns the resulting experience of understanding and coordination. An attempted adjustment may occur without improving communication quality.

Relationship-oriented engagement refers to observable responsiveness, acknowledgement of legitimate concerns, and consistency between statements and commitments. It differs from trust, which concerns expectations about the counterpart, and from relationship quality, which evaluates the relationship more broadly. Engagement is proposed as conduct that may influence these evaluations; it should not be measured using items that simply ask whether the counterpart is trustworthy or whether the relationship is satisfactory.

These distinctions extend CQ theory by specifying the situational enactment of individual capabilities and extend negotiation research by connecting that enactment to institutional ambiguity and counterpart reciprocity. However, the contribution remains provisional. CINE would demonstrate incremental theoretical value only if its processes were empirically distinguishable from CQ and established relational constructs and explained negotiation outcomes beyond a simpler model containing CQ, relevant covariates, and direct outcome relationships.

Figure 1

Proposed CINE Framework



Note. Developed from the conceptual synthesis. Panels A–C depict complementary parts of the same framework; repeated constructs represent the same variables. Solid arrows indicate proposed relationships, including direct paths retained under partial mediation. Dashed arrows indicate moderation of the specified

relationship. Negotiation process quality in Panel B is a dimension of negotiation effectiveness in Panel C. P1–P6 correspond to the six research propositions. All relationships remain untested.

Cultural awareness and communication

Negotiators who question initial interpretations should be more likely to recognise uncertainty about etiquette, meaning, or authority. Recognition alone is insufficient: an interpretation must be checked against the encounter. Silence, for instance, might reflect reflection, disagreement, language processing, or organisational constraints. Awareness reduces premature attribution by keeping these possibilities open to verification. It does not imply complete knowledge of the counterpart. So's (2024) emphasis on metacognitive reflection and adaptability supports this rationale without establishing the specific mechanism proposed here.

Proposition 1. Metacognitive and cognitive CQ are positively associated with verified cultural awareness during international business negotiation.

Motivational CQ supplies the willingness to persist when clarification takes time, while behavioural CQ supplies options for responding. Their value depends on how they are used. Adjusting speech speed or proposal format may help comprehension, whereas imitation without understanding may damage credibility. Adaptive communication therefore involves both adjustment and checking its consequences for mutual understanding. Language proficiency should be assessed alongside these capabilities rather than subsumed within behavioural flexibility (Ng et al., 2025).

Proposition 2. Motivational and behavioural CQ are positively associated with adaptive communication during international business negotiation.

Awareness should inform the choice of communication adjustment. Otherwise, flexibility may become indiscriminate accommodation. A negotiator might, for example, establish that a counterpart needs a written explanation for internal approval and provide a suitable summary. The example illustrates an organisational requirement, not a national communication preference. It clarifies the proposed link between verified understanding and purposeful adjustment, consistent with attention to communication experience in intercultural negotiation (Liu et al., 2010).

Proposition 3. Verified cultural awareness is positively associated with adaptive communication, which partially mediates its association with negotiation process quality.

Relationship processes and negotiation outcomes

Relationship-oriented engagement means credible, responsive conduct directed towards sustaining a workable business relationship. It includes acknowledging legitimate concerns, explaining commitments, and acting consistently with what has been said. It differs from sociability, personal liking, and willingness to concede. Awareness and communication may clarify priorities, but relational benefits also require conduct that sustains credible expectations. Recent negotiation accounts and Ghanaian export-relationship evidence motivate the construct; they do not validate its proposed behavioural indicators (Brancu et al., 2025; Skhiri et al., 2025).

The evidence also leaves the direction of the relational process unresolved. Trust and intercultural communication feature in international B2B professionals' accounts (Skhiri et al., 2025), while Ghanaian SME research links CQ with export-relationship quality (Brancu et al., 2025). Neither establishes engagement as a distinct CINE mediator. Engagement may foster trust, prior trust may enable engagement, or repeated successful interaction may support both. Empirical testing must distinguish these interpretations.

Proposition 4. Cultural awareness and adaptive communication are positively associated with relationship-oriented engagement, which partially mediates their associations with negotiation effectiveness.

Partial mediation leaves room for direct relationships between awareness or communication and outcomes. Clear communication may improve contractual understanding even when no continuing relationship is sought. Economic, process, relational, and implementation outcomes should therefore be assessed separately. Tests

should also allow null or adverse relationships, including situations where accommodation increases transaction costs or creates expectations beyond the organisation's capacity to deliver.

Contextual conditions

Institutional ambiguity concerns uncertainty about decision rights, procedures, and the meaning or enforcement of commitments. Where ambiguity is moderate and clarification remains possible, checking interpretations may improve participation and agreement processes. Where authority cannot be verified or enforceability is severely compromised, awareness may instead support suspending the transaction. The proposed relationship thus depends on the possibility of meaningful clarification. Africa-focused scholarship provides the contextual rationale, while the distinctions between ambiguity levels and their moderating effects remain propositions of this article (Kamoche & Wood, 2023; Nachum et al., 2023).

Proposition 5. Under moderate institutional ambiguity, the positive association between verified cultural awareness and negotiation process quality is stronger than under low ambiguity, provided that decision rights and commitments can still be clarified.

Counterpart reciprocity concerns constructive responses to clarification, appropriate adjustment, and credible commitments. One negotiator's cultural capability cannot ensure mutual understanding when the other withholds material information or refuses clarification. Reciprocity is therefore a condition of the dyadic interaction, not an attribute inferred from nationality. Scholarship on host-country nationals' CQ supports recognising local capability and agency but does not test this negotiation-specific condition (Michailova et al., 2024).

Proposition 6. The positive association between relationship-oriented engagement and negotiation effectiveness is stronger when counterpart reciprocity is higher.

CINE's explanatory value depends on whether these distinctions and conditions improve on a simpler CQ model. The proposed processes must explain variation beyond CQ itself, and the institutional and dyadic conditions must account for differences in the relationships. The framework neither introduces replacement CQ dimensions nor assumes that relational engagement always improves bargaining outcomes. Its contribution remains conditional on demonstrating that capability, enactment, and outcomes are empirically distinguishable.

Implications for Research and Practice

Empirical testing and measurement

A staged research programme is proposed to evaluate CINE. The first stage would refine the proposed constructs through interviews with negotiators and cognitive testing of candidate measures. Country-specific interviews would examine how participants recognise assumption checking, communication adjustment, credible engagement, institutional ambiguity, and reciprocity in actual transactions. Expert review and pilot testing would then assess whether the indicators capture distinct processes rather than restating established CQ, trust, or communication-quality measures. This approach follows the emphasis on construct–measure alignment identified by Richter et al. (2023).

Research design and sampling

The principal field study would follow international commercial negotiation episodes involving firms operating in selected African countries. Ghana, Egypt, and South Africa provide one possible comparative design because the reviewed literature offers different forms of contextual evidence from these settings. Their selection would require a substantive justification based on the institutional and commercial conditions being compared, together with feasible access to comparable industries. The countries would not be treated as representative of Africa.

The negotiation episode would constitute the primary unit of analysis, with information collected from both negotiating parties where feasible. Eligible participants would have direct responsibility for substantive

commercial decisions in the focal episode. Firm sampling frames could be assembled from business registers, exporter associations, and chambers of commerce. Where sufficiently complete lists exist, firms would be selected within country and industry strata using probability procedures. Negotiation episodes would then be recruited using consistent eligibility rules. Where access requires purposive recruitment, the resulting limits to generalisability would be reported explicitly.

Sample size would be determined through a priori simulation-based power analysis for the planned measurement and structural models. The analysis would consider the smallest substantively meaningful indirect and interaction effects, model complexity, clustering, expected non-response, and the observations required within each country group. A large pooled sample would not compensate for insufficient observations in individual comparison groups.

Measurement and data collection

CQ would be measured before the focal negotiation using an established instrument covering metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioural CQ. The proposed mediators would be assessed using episode-specific behavioural indicators, counterpart reports, and independently coded interaction records where consent and confidentiality arrangements permit. Verified cultural awareness indicators would capture explicit checking of interpretations and evidence that clarification informed subsequent understanding. Adaptive communication indicators would capture changes in explanation, language, format, or conduct following an identified communication need. Relationship-oriented engagement indicators would capture responsiveness, acknowledgement of legitimate concerns, and consistency between stated and subsequent commitments.

Institutional ambiguity would be measured before the focal interaction through uncertainty concerning decision authority, approval requirements, applicable procedures, and the interpretation or enforcement of commitments. These indicators would assess the transaction's conditions rather than assign an ambiguity score solely on the basis of country. Counterpart reciprocity would be assessed through the other party's responses to initial clarification and adjustment attempts. Measuring reciprocity before later engagement and outcomes would improve temporal separation, although its possible co-development with engagement would still require examination.

Negotiation effectiveness would be assessed through separate outcome domains. Economic indicators would concern the terms achieved relative to documented objectives and feasible alternatives. Process-quality indicators would concern mutual understanding, participation, and clarity of obligations. Relational indicators would concern willingness to continue appropriate business interaction. Implementation indicators would concern fulfilment of responsibilities at an agreed follow-up point. Agreement and non-agreement episodes would both be retained, while implementation outcomes would be analysed only where an agreement created obligations. This avoids treating the absence of an agreement as failed implementation.

Analytical strategy

The first analytical step would evaluate the measurement model. Confirmatory factor analysis would compare a model separating the four CQ dimensions and three proposed processes with theoretically plausible alternatives that combine overlapping constructs. Reliability, convergent validity, discriminant validity, and residual patterns would be examined together. For independently coded behaviours, intercoder agreement would also be assessed. Indicators representing distinct components rather than interchangeable manifestations of a construct would require an explicitly justified composite specification.

After establishing an acceptable measurement model, structural equation modelling would examine the proposed direct and indirect relationships. Proposition 3 would be tested through the indirect association between verified awareness and process quality through adaptive communication. Proposition 4 would be examined through the indirect associations of awareness and adaptive communication with each relevant outcome through relationship-oriented engagement. Indirect effects would be reported with appropriate confidence intervals, and direct paths would remain available to evaluate the proposed partial mediation. The analysis would not treat a significant total association as a prerequisite for examining an indirect effect.

Proposition 5 would require modelling the interaction between awareness and institutional ambiguity. Because the proposition distinguishes low, moderate, and severe ambiguity, analysis would examine whether a nonlinear moderation specification is warranted rather than impose an unrestricted linear strengthening effect. Conditional awareness–process-quality relationships would be estimated across the observed ambiguity range. Proposition 6 would be tested through the interaction between relationship-oriented engagement and counterpart reciprocity. Conditional indirect effects could then assess whether the proposed mediated associations vary with the relevant contextual conditions.

Country comparisons would follow tests of measurement invariance. Configural and metric invariance would be examined before comparing structural relationships, with scalar invariance additionally required for defensible latent-mean comparisons. Multi-group analysis would assess whether particular relationships differ

across the selected countries. With only a few countries, country-group comparisons would be preferable to estimating a country-level random-effects structure that requires substantially more country clusters. Institutional conditions would also be measured directly so that country membership did not become a substitute explanation.

Where both parties provide observations, dyadic dependence would be addressed through a suitable dyadic model or clearly justified episode-level aggregation. Repeated episodes involving the same negotiator or firm would require additional treatment of clustering. Relevant covariates would include language proficiency, prior international experience, previous relationships, transaction size, bargaining alternatives, and decision authority.

Incremental explanatory value and inference

CINE would be compared with a baseline model containing CQ dimensions, relevant covariates, and direct outcome relationships. Its proposed contribution would be assessed through measurement distinctiveness, theoretically coherent indirect relationships, model fit, explained variation, and predictive performance where the sample permits independent validation. More complex models would not be preferred solely because they explain slightly more in-sample variation.

Alternative models would examine whether prior trust or earlier successful interaction explains the proposed processes, and whether communication and engagement exhibit reciprocal relationships. Temporal separation, multiple sources, and independent behavioural coding would help address some method effects but would not eliminate confounding or establish causality. As Podsakoff et al. (2024) emphasise, common-method bias has multiple sources. Stronger causal claims would require experimental manipulation or a longitudinal design supported by credible identification assumptions.

Managerial and educational implications

Managers can use CINE to organise preparation and reflection. Before negotiation, teams can identify assumptions about the counterpart and decide how to verify authority. During interaction, they can check understanding of obligations and adjust communication when misunderstanding becomes apparent. Subsequent review can assess whether commitments were understood and fulfilled, distinguishing rapport from implementation. These practices follow the proposed framework and require evaluation before being treated as effective interventions.

CQ development can combine negotiation simulations, reflection, and feedback from culturally diverse participants. Local expertise can inform preparation, while direct clarification tests whether an assumed preference applies to the actual counterpart. Communication can be adapted while maintaining commercial, legal, and ethical requirements. Respectful engagement does not require accepting concealed obligations or commitments beyond a negotiator's authority. Urgun et al. (2025) provide a basis for considering instructional and experiential activities, subject to evaluation in the intended setting.

Urgun et al. (2025) review 27 training studies across professional and educational settings, identifying didactic, experiential, and mixed approaches. Reported outcomes were generally positive but not uniformly statistically

significant. The review's intended application to sport limits direct transfer to business negotiation. Its relevance lies in informing activities for evaluation, including practice, reflection, and feedback; it does not establish that these activities improve negotiated agreements or their implementation.

Business schools and trade-support organisations can frame intercultural preparation as a reciprocal responsibility shared by local managers, exporters, foreign partners, and expatriates. Evaluation should examine observed behaviour and subsequent transaction quality alongside participant satisfaction. The policy implications extend only to support for learning and transparent procedures. This conceptual analysis does not establish the effectiveness of a particular national policy.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

CINE is a conceptual framework whose proposed relationships have not been empirically validated. Its contribution is therefore assessed through conceptual coherence, construct differentiation, and the specificity of its testable propositions rather than through demonstrated predictive performance. The selective narrative synthesis may omit relevant studies and cannot support claims about the overall magnitude or consistency of CQ effects across African markets. Although the discussion draws on evidence concerning Ghana, Egypt, South Africa, and a multinational negotiation sample, these sources address different populations and outcomes and do not provide a comparable cross-country dataset. The proposed empirical strategy specifies how these limitations could be investigated; it does not substitute for conducting that research.

Construct overlap is the principal theoretical limitation. Awareness may overlap with metacognitive CQ, communication adjustment with behavioural CQ, and engagement with trust or relationship quality. Future research must establish discriminant validity and incremental explanatory value. If the proposed mediators add no explanatory power, a simpler CQ model may be preferable. The capability–enactment distinction also depends on observing interaction processes well enough to measure them separately. These concerns follow the broader measurement and method-bias literature (Podsakoff et al., 2024; Richter et al., 2023).

The framework prioritises individual capabilities while negotiations frequently involve teams, interpreters, advisers, and organisational rules. Subsequent studies should examine whether team composition and decision procedures amplify or constrain individual CQ. Repeated negotiations may also change both CQ and relationship quality, producing feedback not captured by a single sequence. Further work could compare intra-African and Africa–non-Africa negotiations and examine variation across industries, while avoiding unsupported generalisations from one country or transaction type. Reviews of CQ and intercultural competence offer useful starting points for specifying these additional levels and constructs (Michailova et al., 2024; Morin & Talbot, 2023; Richter et al., 2023).

CONCLUSION

CQ provides a basis for investigating how negotiators interpret and respond to cultural differences. Country-specific studies concerning Ghana, Egypt, and South Africa, together with multinational negotiation research, provide complementary evidence on adjustment, export relationships, internationalisation, CQ measurement, and negotiation experience. CINE integrates these insights by distinguishing individual capabilities, enacted interaction processes, and differentiated negotiation outcomes. It proposes institutional ambiguity and counterpart reciprocity as conditions shaping these relationships. The framework offers testable explanations rather than a validated model of African negotiation. Country-specific empirical research must establish whether the proposed processes are distinct, whether they provide additional explanatory value, and under what conditions the proposed relationships hold.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI USE

AI was used to assist with language editing, improving clarity, and identifying relevant literature and references.

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