

# Diplomatic and Administrative Contributions in Peace Building on the Cameroon - Nigeria Border Conflict: From Colonial to Post Colonial Era

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**Abstract:** - Border conflicts in Africa especially during the post-colonial era have become too recurrent and have significantly affected the daily activities of individuals and the States. The cases opposing Cameroon and Nigeria over the disputed areas of Bakassi and Darak became recurrent during the early 1990s despite colonial early attempts to demarcate the borders. From this period, regular border skirmishes attracted international attention when the two sides became involved in a protracted war over the ownership and control of the Bakassi Peninsula and Darak located at the banks of Lake Chad, all rich in oil reserves. This paper thus examines the role played by diplomatic and administrative agreements in the resolution of border conflicts between Cameroon and Nigeria. In this paper, we used the historical approach, taking cognizance of existing scholarly works and researches. We equally used the model of a simple descriptive collation and analysis of historical data for objective precision so as to determine the authenticity of data and their relevance. Resulting from our findings, we noticed that diplomacy and administrative efforts were major tools in the realization of these agreements, treaties and declaration between all the actors involved in the conflict. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) looked at both the political and socio-economic impact of the border conflict before passing its final verdict in order to insure diplomatic continuity amongst the contesting States. The study ends by proposing to Cameroon government the way forward for rehabilitation or therapy needed for the restoration of peace and the development of the area. Infrastructural development and effective presence are considered to be essential elements in border management policies.

**Keywords:** diplomacy, administrative, peace building, Cameroon-Nigeria, border conflict.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The subject of our study is the Cameroon-Nigerian border, 1500 km long and covering the Far North regions (Darak in Lake Chad) and the Southwest (Bakassi in the Gulf of Guinea) of Cameroon. The Bakassi area is located in the South-West Region, Ndiang Division. It is bordered to the east by Ekondo-Titi Sub-division, to the south by the Atlantic Ocean, to the west by the Federal Republic of Nigeria and to the north by the Mundemba Sub-division. As far as Darak is concerned, it is an area located in the Lake Chad region, made up of 21 villages and 14 islands of about 658.60km<sup>2</sup> in land surface. With an estimated population of 20,000 people in

2006, the island has a density of 75.90 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>.<sup>1</sup> Several ethnic groups claiming Sudano-Sahelian origins cohabit in this area.

During the independence era, the management of the vast maritime, terrestrial and coastal border areas had been a major source of conflict between Cameroon and Nigeria. This conflict situation is more linked to colonial history, especially the game of power in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries between the colonialists and the independent States. It alternately combined the claim of sovereignty over little or poorly integrated spaces, the challenge of limits, and the questioning of the border demarcation process elaborated in their time by the colonial powers. The conflict grew with time and became a multidimensional issue. This is because it was a conflict of sovereignty over the Bakassi peninsula, discord on the delimitation of the Yaeres (swamps) of Lake Chad, disagreement over the precise boundaries of the land border at Darak and finally, problem on the course of the maritime boundary. It should however be noted that during the evolution of the conflict, various emissaries tried on their own ways to appease the two States to diplomatically resolve the disputes often characterised by violence on both camps. To this effect, diplomatic and administrative consultations took place at various levels until the final decision of the International Court of Justice. In order to better understand the process put in place to achieve a positive outcome, various actions have been repeated over a long period both administratively and diplomatically. This is what justifies the present work.

In this paper, we shall discuss aspects such as: the Historical Background of the Cameroon Nigeria Border Conflict; The Evolution of Diplomacy on the Cameroon-Nigeria Borders; Early attempts by the German colonial authorities; Diplomatic arrangements on boundary fixations during the Franco-British era; Postcolonial delineation process under Ahidjo's and Biya's Presidencies and Perspectives for a lasting peace on the Cameroon-Nigeria borders.

<sup>1</sup>Halirou Abdouraman, « Le conflit frontalier Cameroun-Nigeria dans le Lac Tchad : les enjeux de l'île de Darak, disputée et partagée », Cultures & Conflits [en ligne] 72 / Winter 2008, posted on May 19, 2009, URL : <http://conflicts-revues.org/> 17311, accessed November 08, 2017.

## II. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE CAMEROON NIGERIA BORDER CONFLICT

Cameroon unlike Nigeria had had long outstanding diplomatic relations during the different historical moments in Africa. The situation at the eve of European colonisation seems different for most of the ethnic groups found on both sides collaborated genuinely especially when it came to economic activities. During this era, long distance trade characterised the people's daily activities. However, colonial authorities during their stay came and distorted these long existed ties by imposing artificial barriers in the name of borders with no considerations following ethnic alignments. It is from this perspective that the border conflict between Cameroon and Nigeria dates back from the colonial period characterised by colonial burrows, territorial frustrations, and especially from the primacy of politico-strategic interests.<sup>2</sup> This section handles the brief origin and manifestation of the Cameroon-Nigeria border conflict.

It was a question of demonstrating that this conflict was a consequence of the precisely German colonization which had not been able, because of the international environment of the time, to finish the process of demarcating the border separating Cameroon from Nigeria. The current conflict derives from the simple fact that Europeans arriving in Africa wanted to delimit and eventually demarcate territories but they did not take into account the realities on the ground. However, this laudable initiative could not be realized at the beginning because of the occurrence of the First World War, which limited the actions of the colonialists to the demarcation process of their respective territories.<sup>3</sup> This is the reason why some leaders at the head of independent states accustomed to seeing their populations move have refused to accept the limits set during colonization that reduced their space considerably. It is this state of affairs that fostered cross-border crises amongst newly created African States.

On the other hand, the weakness of the Cameroon government to deploy the necessary administrative units and the lack of sovereignty on the cross-border line triggered Nigeria's appetite to the border areas with Cameroon. Immediately after independence, the Cameroon government did not have the necessary resources (human, financial, material) to proceed with the clear demarcation of its territory and the security of its borders which largely remained porous. All the conflicts borne on this long border seem to be due to the expansionist character of Nigeria and Nigerians on the one hand, and the lethargy of the Cameroonian State in terms of border policy on the other hand.<sup>4</sup> The beginning of this

conflict was latent partly because of British laxity to own a greater part of Cameroon after the defeat of the Germans coupled with the eventual lost of British Northern Cameroon following the referendum during the independence episode. During this period, thousands of Nigerians, mostly Ibo, and Ibibios settled on the coast of southern Cameroon a situation that later became a neighbourhood problem. A similar situation was also witnessed in the Darak area where it proximity and the waters from the Lake Chad greatly favoured occupation by the Nigerian populations who settled there as time evolved.<sup>5</sup>

Incursions by Nigerian Armed Forces and territorial occupation became the daily manifestation in relationship to border conflict, especially due to the absence of Cameroonian authorities in some areas on the common border. On January 21, 1981, while Nigerian President Shehu Shagari was visiting Cameroon, the Idaabato district chief in the South-West Province of Cameroon, was kidnapped with other Cameroonians by members of the Nigerian army while on an administrative tour in his constituency. They were released a week later after multiple protests by the Cameroonian authorities. Nigerians occupied some disputed areas of Cameroon despite the partial demarcation of the border. By 1987, statistics showed that 136.274 Nigerians had settled in these disputed areas. Indeed, on May 17, 1987, following the massive migration and settlement of its populations to Darak, Nigeria decided to hoist its flag on the Cameroonian territory. From then on, a careful planning of the occupation of about thirty islands was organized: Bachaka, Daba, Gore, Kendi, Kamouna, Katékimé, Kaforam, Dji-Bouniba, Hilé-Wanzam, Mourdas, Tororoya, Hilé-Adji, Gore-Tchandi, Gore al Goutoun, Lokonaira, Sokotram, Darak Gana, Fagge, Tchika'a, Ramin, Dorina, just to name but these. As if that was not enough, the local chiefs of the conquered villages, including Darak, Bachaka, Katékimé, Kaforam, DjiBouniba, Hilé-Wanzam, Mourdas, Tororoya, Hilé-Adji, Goré-Tchandi, Goré al Goutoun, Lokonaira, Sokotram, were abducted and replaced by Nigerians, including Haoussa and Kanuri.<sup>6</sup>

In addition, exorbitant taxes were imposed on Cameroonians by the new Nigerian administration which had settled in the contested area. In this regard, a Cameroonian farmer was constraint to give an equivalent of 10 bags of his agricultural production to Nigerian forces. The substitution of the Cameroonian flag by that of Nigeria widened these social abuses since 1988 when the Nigerian troops occupied Darak. On May 16, 1990, a serious gun fire exchange took place between the elements of the Nigerian navy and a patrol Cameroonian army. There were five (5) Nigerian soldiers killed, and several wounded on both sides.<sup>7</sup> On December 21, 1993, Nigerian armed forces invaded the Bakassi peninsula,

<sup>2</sup> A.I. Asiwaju (ed.), *Partitioned Africans-Ethnic Relations across Africa's International Boundaries 1884-1984*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985, p.56.

<sup>3</sup> L. Zang, "Les frontières en Afrique centrale : barrières, limites ou ponts ?", *Mutations*, n°1155 of mars 24, 2004.

<sup>4</sup> A. H. Onana Mfege, *Cameroon Nigeria, ONU: Entre la force de la palabre et la primauté du droit*, Paris, l'Harmattan, 2011, p.12.

<sup>5</sup> H. Abdouramane, "le conflit frontalier Cameroun-Nigeria", p 6.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> R.A. Ambona, "Le conflit de Bakassi vu par Cameroun Tribune, 1993-2002", *DIPES II Dissertation in History, ENS-University of Yaoundé I*, 2005, p.21.

marking the beginning of the border conflict by occupying Jabane and Idabato. To assert their sovereignty over these territories, they changed the name “Jabane” to “Abana”. On February 12, 1994, elements of the Nigerian army attacked the engine boat of the Divisional Officer (DO) of Isangele, who later on left the locality due to insecurity with limited armed forces. On February 19, same year, the villages of Akwa I, Akwa II, Akwa III and Akwa IV inhabited by the Balika, Bamuto and Mong ethnic groups in the Isangele locality deserted the areas as a result of frequent Nigerian attacks coupled with limited or no security to rely on.<sup>8</sup>

The illegal exploitation of Cameroonian resources at the Bakassi area by the Nigerians became a daily venture. The Bakassi region is a strategic area in which prospecting has revealed the presence of oil, gas, fish and mining resources. All these besides the laxity of the Cameroon government to ensure full control in the area then justified the presence of Nigerian populations. Further information reveals that, this border conflict was a matter of geo-economic issues (control of the commercial flow and its spin-offs) and geopolitics (control of migration and territorial integrity) linked to the extraction of Lake Chad’s waters and the displacement of its resources (waters, fish, pastures, agricultural land) to Cameroon.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, the creation of Darak was directly linked to the regressive evolution of Lake Chad with fishing as the main economic activity in the region. Thus, since the Nigerian occupation of Darak, production which was estimated at 100,000 tons of fish per year before 1970 has now exceeded 140,000 tons in the mid and late 1980s.<sup>10</sup> This evidence including other reasons advanced then explained the gradual establishment of the Nigerian military administration in Darak.

However, the historical background of the Cameroon-Nigeria border conflict was necessary in building a framework for the eventual conflict interventionists during their diplomatic and peace attempts. But one has to note here that, there have been a series of armed confrontations between the two forces especially as from 1994 when the locality of Bakassi with its neighbouring villages were siege by the Nigerian forces. Nevertheless, series of attempts by both Heads of States at local and international levels became the question of the day to sort for a lasting solution.

### III. THE EVOLUTION OF DIPLOMACY ON THE CAMEROON-NIGERIA BORDERS

Here, we shall take into account the division made by Professor Njeuma, who divided the administrative and diplomatic contributions into three periods. The first is the German colonial period that runs from 1884 to 1919. The second is that of the administration under mandate and the protectorate of France and Great Britain (1919-1961). Lastly,

is the post-colonial era under the respective presidencies of his Excellencies Ahmadou Ahidjo and Paul Biya.<sup>11</sup> This period begins from reunification through independence up to the final verdict from the international court of justice putting a final judgement to the prolonged conflict.

### IV. EARLY ATTEMPTS BY THE GERMAN COLONIAL AUTHORITIES

The Germans focused on the security of the borders at the beginning of their staying in Cameroon. However, the border between Cameroon and Nigeria was born when Britain and Germany decided to separate their colonial possessions in the Gulf of Guinea. The partition was negotiated through the diplomatic channel after the agreements reached at the Berlin West Africa Conference (1884-1885) and the recognition by Britain of the annexation of Cameroon by Germany. The first Anglo-German agreement of April 20, 1885, ratified by an exchange of notes on June 1, 1885, concerned only the coastal territory. The Niger-Cameroon border is the result of seventy-seven years of historical strata marked by European imperialism, world wars, the cold war and decolonisation. The first phase of delimitation goes from 1885 to 1914.<sup>12</sup>

In 1885, Germany entered into negotiations with Great Britain for the delimitation of the common border between their respective holdings of Cameroon and Nigeria. This operation was carried out in three stages. The first concerns the first treaty of London (April 29 and June 16, 1885), a text establishing the southern portion of the eastern boundary of a line comprising: the right bank of the Rio Del Rey, at the coast having its outlet between longitude 8° 42 and 8° 46 east of Greenwich; inland, a line following the right bank of the Rio Del Rey from that mouth to its source, thence to the left bank of Old Calabar or Cross River, and ending, after cutting the river at a point about longitude 9° 8 east of Greenwich, marked by the word ‘Rapids’ on the English Admiralty Chart. In short, the area of German influence was limited to the east of the right bank of the Rio Del Rey River while the English Zone was west of this limit. Following then was the exchange of German-British notes (July 27-August 2, 1886). At the request of the German Government, the above-mentioned frontier was extended from the point of the original line on Old Calabar or Cross River, diagonally, to the right bank of the Benue to the east of Yola. Thus, Germany gave to Britain its rights over Forcados and Saint Lucia. As a result of the above closes, some other treaties were added with input as follows: the third Treaty of London of November 15, 1893 extending the northern sector of Cameroon to Lake Chad and the Archibong (Akwa) Protocol of April 20, 1906, which redefined the southern border line between Cameroon and

<sup>8</sup> R.A. Ambona, “Le conflit de Bakassi vu par Cameroun Tribune, 1993-2002”, p.23.

<sup>9</sup> H. Abdouramane, “le conflit frontalier Cameroun-Nigeria”, p 6.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p.7.

<sup>11</sup> M. Z. Njeuma, “Diplomatic and administrative contributions to peace on the border between Cameroon and Nigeria”, *Boundaries in Africa from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century*, Paris, UNESCO/ICHS, 2005, p.162.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p.163.

Nigeria.<sup>13</sup> This line moves from the Rio to the Akwayafé River.

The London Agreement of October 6, 1909, redefined Yola's boundary to the sea. The agreement of March 19, 1906, together with four maps, the new boundary line from Yola to Lake Chad and the exchange of notes on the subject between February 22<sup>nd</sup> and March 5<sup>th</sup>, 1909, marks the culmination of a laborious process of demarcation. This agreement was read in conjunction with two previous treaties: one signed on November 15, 1893, between England and Germany concerning "borders in Africa" and the other, August 10, 1903, delimiting the region that the springs designate as the "Yola Arch". All these diplomatic documents consecrated the dismantling of the relatively homogeneous Muslim empires of Adamaoua, Mandara and Bornou. Things went differently for the southern segment of the border, from the south of Yola to the Atlantic Ocean.<sup>14</sup> Locally, a definitive route was preceded by detailed field studies to reduce areas subjected to litigation.

The year 1913 being a decisive year on German's diplomatic negotiations, gave more concrete results reflected in the content of the definitive agreements concluded at the time and which now constitute reference documents. The agreement of March 11, 1913 defined Yola's border at sea and regulating navigation on the Cross and the agreement of April 12, 1913 delimited the Anglo-German border between Nigeria and Cameroon from Yola to the River Cross. This last agreement was only the first step of a real master plan to effectively demarcate the border as stipulated in March 1913. By common accord, this work was entrusted, on the British side, to Nugent and the German side to Detzner, who reported with great care the completeness and accuracy of the geographical, historical and ethnic features of the areas on both sides of the frontier. To guarantee the permanent character of this border and make it more easily visible from a distance, the members of the Anglo-German demarcation commissions erected enormous pillars of concrete, up to two meters high and painted in white, and cairns of stone along the Gemana-Obokum portion of the border.<sup>15</sup>

The Obokum Agreement of March 11, 1913, delimited the boundary between Cameroon and Nigeria from Yola to the sea. This agreement, which was completed by the Obokum Protocol of April 12, 1913, relating to the Anglo-German border, replaces the previous provisions and stipulates that the southern border between Cameroon and Nigeria follows the Akwayafé trench. Great Britain cedes Bakassi to the Germans. The text also regulates traffic on the Cross River. These texts are the last in the series of agreements between Germany and Great Britain in the process

of delimitation and demarcation of the Niger-Cameroon border. This process was interrupted in 1914 by the First World War which saw, as early as 1916, the expulsion of the Germans in Cameroon, and the subsequent breaking of the area into two spheres of influence between the French and the British.<sup>16</sup> However, this raises, in a new geopolitical approach, the delimitation of borders.

#### V. DIPLOMATIC ARRANGEMENTS ON BOUNDARY FIXATIONS DURING THE FRANCO-BRITISH ERA

The agreements fixing boundaries during the Franco-British era range from the defeat and out-casting of the Germans from Cameroon to the outbreak of the Second World War with the failure of the League of Nations to maintain international peace. Administrations once again, undertook to demarcate the borders over the entire length and breadth of the territory. At the international level, the (Anglo-French) border between Cameroon and Nigeria has been the subject of several studies, identification and adjustments. It passed from the Picot line (1916) to the Simon-Milner line in 1918.<sup>17</sup> These two lines of demarcation were declared provisional until the technical work was completed on the land of Lake Chad to the Atlantic Ocean.

However, between 1928 and 1930, various administrators undertook informal preliminary demarcation missions along the Simon-Milner line from the ocean to Lake Chad to adapt the actual layout on paper to suit the terrain. Two prominent Africanists, Creme Thomas, governor of the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria, and Paul Marchand, governor of the French territories of Cameroon, grouped the results of these missions in a joint declaration. It delimited the boundary between the British and French parts over a thousand kilometres long. It was ratified on January 9<sup>th</sup>, 1931, through the usual diplomatic channels. The Franco-British authorities who now administer the territory of Cameroon continue the process of delimitation of the country with its neighbour Nigeria. In this process, consistency remains: the validity of the agreement of March 11, 1913 delimiting the border between Cameroon and Nigeria from Yola to the sea.<sup>18</sup> These agreements of 1913 between Great Britain and Germany prohibited the inhabitants living on one side of the border to establish permanent structures on the other side to differentiate citizenships, and those who were on the side which they thought did not think corresponded to their interests had six months to relocate elsewhere.

The only innovation was that, it was divided into two sectors. The Bonar Law agreement concluded in London on March 14, 1916, delimited the French and English zones in Cameroon. Britain received a strip of land bordering Nigeria

<sup>13</sup> M. Z. Njeuma, p.165.

<sup>14</sup> Babatola, Jadesola, "Nigerian-Cameroon boundary dispute: the quest for Bakassi Peninsular", *IISTE Journal of International Affairs and Global Strategy*, 4. 81-95, 2012.

<sup>15</sup> R.A. Ambona, "Le conflit de Bakassi vu par Cameroun Tribune, 1993-2002", p.23.

<sup>16</sup> R.A. Ambona, p.23.

<sup>17</sup> J. Anyu & M. Enow Ayuk, "The Role Played by Diplomacy in the Resolution of the Bakassi Conflict", *International Journal of Social Science and Economic Research*, Vol: 01, Issue: 10, 2016.

<sup>18</sup> International Court of Justice. Case Concerning the Land and Maritime Boundary between Cameroon and Nigeria, Order of 15 March 1996, ICJ website at <http://www.icj.org/icj/>; February 2000.

bounded by a straight line from Yola to Uro-Bali, then a line as straight as possible from Uro-Bali to Bimbia Bay, leaving France Banyo, Fouban, Baré and the entire Baré-Bonabéri railway. The English also obtained the German Bornou whose boundary was very roughly indicated by a curved line passing through Issaga, Usgisa, Gau, Kymbel, Kutelaha, and then goes northwest to Wulgo. The rest of the territory, 4/5 of the German colony, was left to the French administration.<sup>19</sup>

Germany was deprived of its colonial rights at the peace conference in Paris held from January to June 1919. This decision is unanimously approved and recorded in Articles 22 and of the Treaty of Versailles concerning the distribution of these territories and their status. Thus, the execution of the mandate B of the League of Nations (LN) in Cameroon is entrusted jointly to France and Great Britain on the basis of the agreement on the Bonar Law of March 1916. The question of borders arises again, since it is now two separate territories. In order to iron out the differences, the negotiations resumed on March 6, 1919, between Colonial Secretary of State Sir Alfred Milner and his French counterpart, Henri Simon. This phase led to the signing of the Milner Simon declaration of July 10<sup>th</sup>, 1919.<sup>20</sup> By this text, France transferred to Great Britain the territories of Bornou (Dikwa) and the northern border of the Cameroon estuary to the Moungo outlet. It received in return, some possessions in Bamileke country near Dschang, and a strip of land bordering the district of Ngaoundere. These arrangements were ratified by the League of Nations on July 20, 1922, while stating that the reshuffles are reserved for the administrations. The French ministerial decision of February 1, 1922, gave instructions to the Commissioner of the Republic of Cameroon to associate himself with his colleague from Nigeria in order to clear the terms of contradictory recognition of the common border.<sup>21</sup>

Nevertheless, at the end of the 1930s, the administrative authorities were seized of several border claims, and incidents were recorded in many places, a sign that border control was beginning to have a negative impact on the lives of could only be left to the mandatory powers. The Council of the League of Nations then intervened by setting up a team of international commissioners, endowed with the necessary means and charged with re-examining the south-north rearrangement. This intervention by the supervisory body of the “colonial administrators” shows how much peace on these frontiers worried the international community. The important thing was to consider equally all interests and all parties, including at the local level. Unfortunately, the demarcation work could only be done for 216 kilometres from the Atlantic Ocean between 1937 and 1940, when they were suddenly interrupted by the beginning of the Second World War and the change of status of the

territory which was passed from the mandate to the guardianship.<sup>22</sup> Matters of demarche were either completely discarded or dropped from the list of priorities, and no new initiative or agreement was reached before independence and reunification in 1961.

## VI. POSTCOLONIAL DELINEATION PROCESS

In this section, we shall examine border fixation diplomacy under the reign of Presidents Ahmadou Ahidjo and Paul Biya respectively. These leaders in one way or the other contributed significantly to the diplomacy and materialisation of the disputed border areas between Cameroon and Nigeria. Their activities shall equally be centred under bilateral and multi-lateral levels.

## VII. ACTIONS UNDER THE AHIDJO PRESIDENCY

At the continental level, Nigeria and Cameroon have led since the day after independence, a real border diplomacy based on the principle of the inviolability of the borders inherited from colonization formulated by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and adopted by the States in 1963-1964.<sup>23</sup> In this regard, the new States undertook to preserve, as frontiers, the limits which were those of the territory from which they came. Thus, any State was called upon to abstain from any territorial claim, and to stick to the borders as existing at the time of their accession to independence. However, the application of the law was difficult on the ground, because the colonizing powers had not completed the border fixation process, especially the demarcation phase as a result of budgetary difficulties, the two successive wars and the claims of independence. In short, the international disorder of the first half of the twentieth century was not conducive to the work of joint demarcation commissions. The United Kingdom and France left an unfinished border demarcation task in Cameroon and Nigeria, drawn on paper but not materialized in the field.<sup>24</sup> It emerged very early as a source of conflict between the two neighbouring countries but also as a factor of rapprochement.

In terms of Cameroon-Nigeria bilateral relations, the rapprochement concerns the establishment of legal instruments specifying the layout of certain inaccurate frontier sectors, or defining the framework for bilateral consultation, and the monitoring of cooperation. Because of the rivalry in the Lake Chad area in 1962, presidents Ahmadou Ahidjo, Diori Hamani, Tafawa Balewa and François Tombalbaye recognized the colonial division of Lake Chad. It was in this context that the Nigeria-Cameroon Mixed Commission was set up in 1965 to regulate the oppositions related to border plots. The committee had envisaged a materialization of the common border in three stages, on the understanding that colonial agreements formed the basis of this process.<sup>25</sup> It was

<sup>19</sup> A. H. Onana Mfege, *Cameroon Nigeria, ONU*, p.14.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> P.H.F. Bekker, “Land and maritime boundary between Cameroon and Nigeria (Cameroon v. Nigeria: Equatorial Guinea intervening)”. *The American Journal of International Law*, 97 (2), 2003, pp. 387-398.

<sup>22</sup> H. Abdouramane, “le conflit frontalier Cameroun-Nigeria”, p.13.

<sup>23</sup> A. H. Onana Mfege, *Cameroon Nigeria, ONU*, p.15.

<sup>24</sup> N. Omoigui, “The Bakassi story”, 2006, Available from: <http://www.omoigui.com>, Accessed October 18, 2018.

<sup>25</sup> M. Z. Njeuma, 2005, p.164.

a question of first determining the maritime boundary, then the land border with West Cameroon (formerly Northern Cameroon), and finally the land border of the northern regions. The first meeting of the Mixed Commission was held on October 11, 1965 in Ikom-Nigeria, to resolve the land dispute between the inhabitants of Danaré and their Cameroonian neighbours in Boudang. After an interruption due to the Biafra war, the consultations resumed its work in Yaounde from August 12 to 14, 1970. The order of the day was for the restoration of peace in the Cross River area and the demarcation of the common border. On this second point, the two delegations signed an agreement known as the "Yaounde I Declaration"<sup>26</sup> whose main resolutions are: the confirmation of the three-stage delimitation process adopted in 1965 at Ikom; the creation of a committee of experts responsible for the demarcation of the maritime boundary according to the 1958 Geneva Conventions on the Law of the Sea, and the points and positions defined in the German-British Agreement of March 11, 1913; the consolidation of bilateral relations between the two countries.

The experts met for the first time in October 1970 in Lagos, Nigeria. Two other meetings took place successively in March 1971 in Yaounde and in June of the same year in Lagos. This first phase ended with the adoption of the "Ngho-Cooker Line" on April 4, 1971, which slightly displaced the maritime boundary west of the Akwayafé River. This change was strongly contested by the Nigerian public who accused the Federal Government of yielding the channel of Calabar River and part of the Cross River to Cameroon.<sup>27</sup> However, these initial negotiations carried by President Ahmadou Ahidjo were short-lived, but the border diplomacy continued with the constitutional successor President Paul Biya.

#### VIII. BORDER DIPLOMACY UNDER THE PAUL BIYA PRESIDENCY

At the national and African levels, the Biya government continued with first of all the idea to understand the need for a policy of permanent cooperation and to solve problems through legal and peaceful channels. In this regard, President Biya created by presidential decree in 1985 a national commission for the borders. This body had the merit of initiating a joint reflection and serving as a framework for the coordination of the measures taken by the various ministries concerned with questions relating to international borders. But it had a short coming that it is being an ad hoc interdepartmental committee that was convened only when the President of the Republic deemed it necessary. Worse still, it was highly political and had neither a secretariat nor study services to examine, evaluate or propose solutions to bring peace to the international border areas of Cameroon.<sup>28</sup> The Cameroonian-Nigerian border was originally set by the German-British Convention of 1893. It was revised and

updated after the First World War through the Milner-Simon Treaty of July 10, 1919 as earlier discussed in the previous section.<sup>29</sup>

In a Franco-British declaration, which was based on the German Moisel map, the border starts from the meeting point of the three old British, French and German borders located in the lake at latitude 13° 5 north and approximately 14° 5 East of Greenwich. The modification concerns essentially the double point (Cameroon-Nigeria) moved to the East because of the establishment of separate mandates for the benefit of France and Great Britain. The Thompson Merchant Agreement of January 9, 1930, does not change this delimitation. It was on the basis of these colonial delimitations that the joint team of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) experts were to follow the demarcation of the lake frontier. Started in 1988, the boundary was 98.5% in 1990.<sup>30</sup> It has often been compromised, given Nigerian manoeuvres for the bilateral resolution of border disputes.

In addition, the boundary demarcation process was complicated by the occupation of the Darak area early in 1988 by Nigerian troops who took advantage of the suspension of the demarcation work between September 1988 and January 1989. Despite the border disputes between Cameroon and Nigeria on the one hand, and Yaounde and N'Djamena on the other hand regarding the determination of authorship and the route of the mouth of the Chari, the demarcation was approved in 1994 by the LCBC heads of states. Unfortunately, its ratification by the different countries which was planned before the N'Djamena summit of October 30-31, 1996, failed because of Nigeria's opposition. Shortly after, Nigerians were inspired by the Cameroonian model and created in 1987 at the institutional level, a Nigerian border commission which was a service of the presidency, and whose members were technocrats and academics.<sup>31</sup> From the beginning, the two National Commissions worked in total isolation, perhaps due to incompatible structures, divergent competencies and inconsistent profiles of their main facilitators.

After a summit meeting held on August 10, 1991 in the Nigerian capital-Abuja, Presidents Biya and Babangida breathed new life into the demarcation issues, and it was hoped that the two commissions would finally work together. In Cameroon, the Department of African Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and academics was enlisted in the Cameroon Border Commission. It was hoped that the National Commissions and the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commissions would work together and explore new strategies for border demarcation, management and the promotion of a culture of peace. There were signs of demystification of border issues throughout the Gulf of Guinea, and even throughout Central Africa. The conflicting aspects of management were smoothed out in favour of greater cooperation on both sides of

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> P. Konings, "The Anglophone Cameroon-Nigeria boundary: Opportunities and conflicts", *African Affairs*, 104 (415), 2005, pp. 275-301.

<sup>28</sup> N. Omoigui, "The Bakassi story", 2006.

<sup>29</sup> F. Price, "The Bakassi Peninsula: The border dispute between Nigeria and Cameroon", ICE Case Studies, No. 163, November 2005.

<sup>30</sup> H. Abdouramane, "le conflit frontalier Cameroun-Nigeria", p.10.

<sup>31</sup> H. Abdouramane, p.10.

the border. In order to maintain the momentum created by the heads of States, the Cameroonian and Nigerian Border Commissions met for the first time in Yaounde in 1991.<sup>32</sup>

In mid-1992, the Cameroonian and Nigerian governments demonstrated their good faith and commitment to cross-border cooperation in co-sponsoring a five-day marathon workshop in Yola- Nigeria, to reflect on the full range of demarcation issues and to advise governments. As a confidence-building exercise, the Yola workshop generated a lot of goodwill and a keen interest in setting up a common border management system. By the end of 1993, the disappointment was evident to the commissioners who, despite everything, had been trying since the Yola workshop to collect documentation and draw up memoranda for the attention of their respective governments with a view to a peaceful solution did not go as planned. There was a brief period of expectation, a stalemate at the level of the Heads of States, and warlike drifting atmosphere resurfaced when Nigeria sent its troops to invade and occupy the Bakassi peninsula to the dismay of the international community.<sup>33</sup>

Since the departure of the Europeans, much has changed in the border area, especially where the demarcation remains unfinished. In recent years, maritime regions have become vast reserves of economic resources and trade has intensified on both sides of the border. In addition, the configuration of the border was such that it was no longer possible to exercise control in the traditional colonial sense of the term because the real treasures were under water. The first attempt to resolve the Cameroon-Nigeria conflict was made by Togolese President Gnassingbé Eyadema in 1994 who, after a friendly and hard-working visit to Yaounde, offered his good offices for the peaceful settlement of the border conflict which opposed the two countries following the illegal occupation of the Cameroonian Peninsula of Bakassi by the Nigerian troops. The mediation failed after several unsuccessful meetings of the two parties in Togo due to lack of will from Nigeria.<sup>34</sup>

In order to resolve this border dispute, France entered the scene on February 26, 1994. On March 1, 1994 the French authorities sent a diplomatic-military mission to Yaoundé. On March 20, France equipped Cameroon with military logistics. On February 28, 1994, the Central Africa Heads of States held an informal summit in Libreville. They expressed their apprehension and the hope that the current steps will lead very quickly to the preservation of peace. At the end of this, President Bongo was appointed to offer his offices in Yaounde and Abuja. But this approach did not succeed. On April 25, 1994, an OAU fact-finding mission to the Bakassi area was not approved by Nigeria. In this situation, Nigerian

attacks took place on July 18, 1994 in the Bakassi area and were denounced by the Cameroonian authorities. They sought the OAU arbitration by seizing the central situation of the dispute prevention and settlement mechanism. At the end of this work, the OAU calls for the withdrawal of Nigerian troops from the Bakassi peninsula and reaffirmed the principle of the inviolability of borders. The withdrawal was not done and this brought the Cameroonian authorities after having exhausted all remedies on the continent to file an application at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on March 29, 1994.<sup>35</sup>

At the international level, Cameroon in June 6, 1994, filed an additional application with the Clerk of the ICJ asking the court to widen the scope of the dispute and to rule on all the contentious points of all the Cameroonian-Nigerian borders. On September 5, 2002 in Saint Cloud, precisely one month before the judgment was delivered, and after the pronouncement of the judgment by the meeting in Geneva on November 15, 2002, the two Heads of States under the auspices of the Secretary General of the United Nations met to create conditions for the enforcement of the verdict. On October 10, 2002, the ICJ pronounced its verdict on the land and maritime case between Cameroon and Nigeria.<sup>36</sup> The court ruled that by application of the Anglo-German Convention of 1913, sovereignty over Bakassi is Cameroonian and equally decided that a joint commission would be set to review the strategies for implementing the ICJ to move the process forward. The Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission (CNMC) set up a demarcation sub-commission to delimit the land border.<sup>37</sup>

In August 2003, during a Joint Commission meeting in Yaounde, a timetable was agreed upon by the two States for the completion of the withdrawal of the Nigerian civil administration, military, police forces, and nationals who were resident at the Bakassi peninsula by May 2004. This was to be followed by the establishment of the Cameroonian civil administration and the deployment of their security forces. This schedule for withdrawal was not respected and on June 2, 2004, another one had to be adopted for the period running from June 15, to October 7, 2004 during the tenth session of the joint commission held in Abuja. In this schedule, September 15, 2004 was set as the date of withdrawal of Nigeria and transfer of authority to Cameroon in the Bakassi Peninsula did not materialize. After a relatively harmonious start to the process of implementation of the stoppage in the Lake Chad zone and part of the land border, the situation got stopped, resulting in the total blockage in the functioning of the joint commission observed since 2004.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>32</sup> E. Kendemeh, "Bakassi: Projects worth CFAF 12 billion executed", *Cameroon Tribune* (Yaoundé), March 15, 2010.

<sup>33</sup> N. Omoigui, "The Bakassi story", 2006.

<sup>34</sup> R.A. Ambona, "Le conflit de Bakassi vu par Cameroun Tribune, 1993-2002", p.44.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p.47.

<sup>36</sup> A.D. Olinga, *L'accord de Greentree du 12 juin 2006 relatif à la presqu'île de Bakassi*, Paris, l'Harmattan, 2009, p.14.

<sup>37</sup> Commission of the African Union, *Demarcation of Borders in Africa: General Considerations and Case Studies*, Department of Peace and Security, Addis Ababa, September 2013, p.206.

<sup>38</sup> A.D. Olinga, *L'accord de Greentree du 12 juin 2006*, p.18.

With this blocking of the process by the Nigerians, the Secretary General of the UN with the Head of States concerned met for the third time in Geneva in May 2005 to revive the work of the joint commission by the two Heads of States.<sup>39</sup> However, this work was not revived, but there were more incidents in the peninsula, denounced by Cameroon.<sup>40</sup> It is in this context that the Green Tree Agreement was prepared as a result of the fifth Cameroon-UN-Nigeria tripartite summit held in New York in 2005 at the invitation of the UN Secretary-General. The conventional Green Tree instrument came in a context in which there had already been some transfers of authority involved in the decision of the court: Lake Chad region (December 2003, land border July 9, 2004). This sequence in the implementation of the judgment also materialized through the transfer of authority to Cameroon over the Bakassi Peninsula in August 9, 2006 and the demarcation of the maritime boundary in May 2007.

#### IX. PERSPECTIVES FOR A LASTING PEACE ON THE CAMEROON-NIGERIA BORDERS

In order to prevent these foreign incursions on Cameroonian territory from happening again in the future, the country should undertake real work to secure its various borders in addition to the efforts undertaken so far. The border in Lake Chad is materialized by iron bars. Visible in periods of recession, that is to say from February to September, these bars are immersed throughout the rest of the year.

With the aim of asserting its sovereignty, between 1969 and 1975, Cameroon with prefectural orders, reorganized the administration and renamed more than 25 agglomerations bearing Nigerian names. For example, Abana, Atabong, Ime, Odiog became respectively Jabana, Idabato, Nawunso and Wan. We can say in the same line with Professor Njeuma that “if we want cross-border relations to be free from tensions, we must institutionalize or legalize cross-border activities in conflict zones”.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, the Cameroonian authorities, in order to avoid any new claims from Nigeria decide to move to an effective presence. At the end of the Chamber’s ruling in 2002, Darak was confirmed Cameroonian and erected the same year in chief town of a new administrative district. Indeed, President Paul Biya decreed Darak as sub-divisional head quarters on January 29, 2004. Despite the various retrocessions of territories noted since then the island in question is still under Nigerian economic domination.<sup>42</sup>

In addition, there is an urgent need to rethink measures for the peaceful resolution of conflicts. Since its creation, the National Border Commission (NBC) has not really worked effectively given the importance of border areas

in the region for internal stability and economic development. Faced with the stalemate of the Bakassi border dispute, President Paul Biya decided on 27 July 2001 to restructure the National Border Commission (NBC). The missions assigned to it attached it to the General Secretariat of the Presidency. But this mission must be autonomous to act freely. It is therefore important that the leaders of both countries, while ensuring their mutual sovereignty, develop mechanisms to pacify their borders.<sup>43</sup> The latter, despite the concerted implementation of the 2002 International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruling, is still conflicting.

There is no doubt that neglect of border areas contributes to the problem of border incursions. Cameroonians along the Nigerian border use mostly foreign currency, watch Nigerian television, listen to Nigerian radio and are cut off from contacts with their own country.<sup>44</sup> Cameroon’s new border policy should, therefore, continue to provide for the construction of schools, hospitals, roads, agricultural posts, telecommunications network, pipe-borne water, just to name but these. It is perhaps only by carrying out infrastructural development and effectively occupying border areas that future incursions can be checked and sustainable peace guaranteed. Rewarding the main protagonists could be catalytic in replicating peaceful settlements of similar international disputes.

#### X. CONCLUSION

This paper examined the diplomatic and administrative actions that surrounded the border conflict settlement between Cameroon and Nigeria for sustainable peace and diplomatic development. Purposely, the paper developed the historical background of the Cameroon Nigeria Border Conflict; the evolution of diplomacy on the Cameroon-Nigeria borders during colonial and post-colonial eras; and perspectives for a lasting peace on the Cameroon-Nigeria borders. Resulting from this reflection, there emerges a ray of hope, although, on both sides of the Cameroonian-Nigerian border, internal policies are developing to make it more politically impervious. Border disputes are recurrent in post-colonial Africa. They come in many forms, but some are open like the one that opposed for more than four decades, Cameroon-Nigeria. This conflict, which has certainly influenced the general strategy of the two protagonists, their respective defence systems and sub-regional geopolitics, calls for three particular observations. Firstly, the root causes date back to the colonial period due to a poor control on its genesis. Secondly, the conflict broke out openly in 1961, when both protagonists gained full independence. Thirdly, the United Nations beside individuals and Heads of States has been the architect of both the problem and its resolver. All in all, despite the obvious desire for African integration, the need for cross-border security and therefore for peaceful cross-border

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> These incidents occurred on June 5, 17, 18 and 21, 2005, causing the death of a Cameroonian soldier and material destruction.

<sup>41</sup> M. Z. Njeuma, 2005, p.162.

<sup>42</sup> P. Konings, “The Anglophone Cameroon-Nigeria boundary”, 2005, pp. 275-301.

<sup>43</sup> P. Efande, “Bakassi exhibits potentials in fish production”, *Cameroon Tribune* (Yaoundé), April 20, 2010.

<sup>44</sup> J. Anyu & M. Enow Ayuk, “The Role Played by Diplomacy in the Resolution of the Bakassi Conflict”, p.17.



relations would above all be achieved by accepting the borders inherited from colonization. In this contest, it seems to us, the prerequisite for peace on interstate borders. Any questioning of this colonial heritage will have a dominant effect. Moreover, Nigerian expansionist pretensions have a lot to do with this negation of the colonial past.

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