

Cameroon-Nigeria Frontier: Model for Culture of Peace, 1890-1991*

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ABSTRACT

In the beginning, European colonial powers conceived the frontiers to serve mainly political purposes to define territorial limits, create political and economic societies and jurisdictions. These were done in stages as knowledge of frontier zones increased through investigative joint commissions on the ground. However, as frontiers started hurting important population centres, and the people complained aloud, and threatened peace, the administrative authorities intervened. They succeeded to use "diplomatic channels", the special status of Cameroon as a mandate and trust territory and, above all, existing personal good relations of the Head of State to cultivate a unique style or tradition to resolve frontier conflicts and promote trans-frontier cooperation. The techniques and strategies of management constitute a model because they have subsisted and succeeded in peace maintenance in the region until present day.

Key words: Cameroon-Nigeria frontier, African frontier diplomacy, Trans-frontier peaceful cooperation

RESUME

Au départ, les puissances coloniales européennes ont conçu les frontières pour des buts principalement politiques afin de définir des limites territoriales, créer des espaces économiques et juridiques. Celles-ci se sont faites progressivement, en fonction de la connaissance du terrain, à travers des commissions mixtes d'investigation. Cependant, comme les frontières ont commencé à constituer des centres de rassemblement d'importantes populations, et lesquelles populations ont commencé à se plaindre et à menacer la paix, les administrations sont intervenues. Elles ont réussi, en utilisant les "canaux diplomatiques", le statut spécial du Cameroun, territoire sous-mandat et sous-tutelle, et, par-dessus tout, les bonnes relations personnelles entre chefs d'Etat, à cultiver un style unique et une tradition de résolution des conflits frontaliers et à encourager la coopération transfrontalière. Ces techniques et stratégies de gestion constituent un modèle parce qu'elles ont subsisté et réussi à entretenir la paix dans la région jusqu'à ce jour.

Mots clés: Frontières Cameroon-Nigeria, diplomatie frontalière africaine, coopération transfrontalière.

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Introduction

The Cameroon-Nigeria frontier alone covers 1600 kilometres out of a total of approximately 3600 kilometres, which Cameroon shares with six other countries – Chad, Central African Republic, Congo, Niger, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea. The problems of cultivating a culture of peace on these international frontiers have been astonishingly more demanding on the Cameroon-Nigeria frontier than elsewhere. Accounting for this are the multiple-sided negotiations that were undertaken to establish the frontier since the colonial times, easy access to the national press and international media, which cast searchlights on the events. Indeed, in our context, negotiating for the frontiers and developing a culture of peace are one and the same process. While a common colonial authority, France, managed Cameroon's frontiers in the east and south, the Cameroon-Nigeria frontier saw a complex involvement of all the major colonial powers – Germany, Britain, France and Spain in competition.

Since the 1980's, Cameroonian scholars studied the impact of the frontier on the peoples and societies, which had to adjust to these numerous changes of sovereignty. A general review, including scrutiny of the bibliography, shows that they backed up the colonial documentary sources with extensive fieldwork, interviews, observations and rich collection of local documentation.¹ These studies have gone far to contain some of the richest information that have been recorded and point to numerous unexplored and neglected themes for further research. The lesson is that the scholars' sources are dispersed in several European and African archives and exist in many European languages that include Spanish, German, English, French, Polish and Swedish. Our preferences are therefore highly selective and mostly indicative. The review further reveals that sufficient stress has not been put on the efforts, which the stakeholders, especially the various administrations, made to ensure that peaceful interactions reign on the frontiers from the colonial to present times.

Therefore, the purpose of this article is to present some cases in the literature, which focus on the concerns and cultivation of peace by the successive administrations. The importance is to underscore the point that once frontiers have been traced in one epoch, governments and peoples must keep pace with changes along the frontiers. This is done, for convenience sake, within chronological divides, based on three successive political regimes: the German colonial (1884-1919); the

French and British mandate and trusteeship (1919-61); and, finally, regimes since reunification and independence (1961-91). Each has had its distinct problems and concerns; but at the official level, what has remained constant, like the rock of Gibraltar, is the imperialist and mercantilist attitudes that regard frontiers as lines that divide and separate peoples. This essay points to alternatives and the need to modernise frontier management.² Under these circumstances, the treaties that historically set up Cameroonian and Nigerian territories as well as the happenings on the frontier constitute useful instrument for evaluation and analyses. Though local administrative conveniences at the frontiers obliged peaceful moves, the diplomatic channels put a national stamp to the results. We talk of creating a model because of consistency in the ultimate triumph of peaceful resolution of conflict.

The German period: preparing the grounds

This period is significant as the one, which saw the laying down of the frontiers for the first time. The start of the Cameroon-Nigeria frontier was when Britain and Germany decided to separate their colonial acquisitions on the Gulf of Guinea. The Berlin West African Conference (1884-85) was crucial in making their respective "diplomatic channels" responsible for frontier negotiations and in laying down the ground rules for the partition of Africa. For a long time, through ignorance, Europeans regarded Africa as a Dark Continent and so they created new ministerial departments and structures to take care of a new phenomenon in African politics, that of the acquisition of the so-called backward territories.³ As far as the Cameroon-Nigeria frontier was concerned, the Berlin West African Conference, coming so soon after Germany's surprise annexation of Cameroon (July 12, 1884), and the recognition thereafter by Britain of German annexation of Cameroon, opened the way for negotiations between Britain and Germany to work out common frontier lines.

At the time, European mentality reasoned that colonisation in West Africa was a European affair and would have to advance in two stages: firstly, on the coastal regions and, secondly, slowly into the interior. Thus the first Anglo-German Agreement of 20th April 1885 ratified by exchange of Notes on 16th June 1885, concerned only the coastal territory.⁴ It defined the frontier between German Cameroon and British Nigeria in the Gulf of Guinea. Done in a hurry, with inadequate knowledge of the history and geography of the areas, the provisional nature of the frontier

was subsumed. Though sovereignty concerns were uppermost during the discussions, its main function was twofold: to exclude British political and economic actions east of the Cross River and to map out the outline of what was to become German Cameroon hinterland. In connection with the latter, Britain was bent on holding a commanding position in the Muslim-ruled territories of Adamawa, Mandara and Borno because of the size of their population. Also, the local governments were well structured and capable of carrying out orderly administration in which case colonial rule would cost little or nothing to the metropolitan taxpayers. The British could afford to block Germany's advance into the interior of Cameroon until the question of the ownership of Yola was settled in favour of Britain. It could do so because it relied on the political and military installations of the British firm, the Royal Niger Company, which worked for British interest in the whole of both Northern Nigeria and Northern Cameroon (the Sokoto Caliphate). The logic of this stand could be explained by the fact that above all, Yola was the political, intellectual and spiritual centre of the Muslim Emirate and by tradition all the sub-emirates owed special allegiance to the Lamido of Yola. Judging from the volume of the files⁵ on this issue, it took a long time to reach agreement and constituted a great strain on the resources and stability of the local authorities.

As it happened, by 1891-92, French ambitions on the upper Benue and Chad basin provided the catalyst, which brought the three colonial powers to the brink of war in Yola in the dry season of 1893. The French scheme aimed at linking French West, North and Central Africa into one contiguous flow of territory in spite of the fact that it threatened to eject both the British and Germans from the Cameroon hinterland. The plan's popularity in colonial circles in France was founded in its vision of a huge France overseas where the rich but enclave territories with no access to the sea would suddenly have several openings to the sea through exclusively French ports of call. Consequently, Britain and Germany quickly agreed to close ranks and prolong the coastal Anglo-German frontier of 1885-87, then only drawn according to latitudes and longitudes in an office room to reach as far north as the significant water basin of Lake Chad. The terms of the divide were contained in the Agreement of 14th April 1893 between Britain and Germany in respect of the Rio del Rey on the West Coast of Africa.⁶ The importance of this treaty for the Cameroon-Nigeria frontier of today is that though it clearly defined the

limits of the "Yola Arc" and put the extreme north terminal point of the frontier inside Lake Chad, it nevertheless dissected many groups and left them economically troubled. Acts of reconciliation however followed to humanise the brutality of the partition such as commanding free navigation on major water high ways and common exploitation of economic resources. These moves were unanimously accepted to avoid conflicts among the European administrations on the spot, but they also reflected the preparedness of the colonial conscience to ease frontier hardship. This is seen in the plethora of investigative missions, which all the negotiating powers sent to explore the territories.⁷ Those concerned are known to have shared information through diplomatic channels and the press apparently so that negotiations could proceed based on local knowledge inputs.

By the turn of the twentieth century rapid changes loomed large in the colonial horizon to hasten the pace for making more permanent frontiers. For a start, in 1900, the British government took over the administration of Northern Nigeria from the Royal Niger Company Limited. Lord Frederick Lugard, the first Governor General of British Nigeria brought in a more dynamic business laden spirit into British colonial efforts. To be more precise, he introduced constitutional changes, which gave priority to the settlement of Nigeria's international frontiers.⁸ He was anxious to assert territorial sovereignty and improve efficiency in collecting taxes, mobilising labour and reducing frontier delinquencies and "crimes". On the part of the Germans, the Society for the Protection of German Interests in the Hinterland of Cameroon waxed strong in Germany and increased contact with Britain on the field. The results were reflected in special allocations to enable joint British and German Commissioners to demarcate the frontiers with pillars and other visible marks. Accordingly, demarcation of the northern segment, that is, from the latitude of Yola to Lake Chad started in earnest in 1902.⁹ As for the French, the way had been made clear when the French annihilated the forces of Rabeh, the Mahdist Sudanese empire builder in Borno since 1893, and when the British and German troops, acting independently, conquered the Fulbe rulers of the partitioned Emirate of Adamawa.

Accordingly, the Agreement of 19th March 1906, with four accompanying maps, the re-delimitation of the frontier from Yola to Lake Chad, and the exchange of Notes on the subject on the 22nd February-5th March 1909¹⁰ were a culmination of painstaking technical

operations and feats of diplomacy. For a more global appraisal of this Agreement, considering that as a foundation for peaceful interaction across the frontier, it should be read in conjunction with two previous treaties, one signed on 15th November 1893 between Britain and Germany respecting "Boundaries in Africa", and the other on 10th August 1903 delimiting what the sources refer to as the "Yola Arc". Together they constituted the legal instruments that step by step broke up the vast and somewhat homogeneous Muslim empires of Adamawa, Mandara and Borno. The European countries claimed legitimacy over these states by right of conquest and effective occupation, and their arrangements automatically received the force of international law, the ultimate recourse for peaceful resolution of inter-state conflicts. The fact that the frontiers arbitrarily divided culturally and linguistically homogenous peoples into new nationalities only created problems of application of the Law. Comparatively, this stretch of the frontier (Yola Arc) was the most difficult to settle because of its proximity to the capital of the Lamido of Yola and the fact that the Lamido was the principal agent of implementation to a situation, which was inimical to his peoples' unity.¹¹

In contrast to the northern segment of the frontier, the local search by the authorities for accommodative frontiers in the southern segment, that is to say south of Yola to the sea, was preceded by thorough and protracted field studies to reduce the areas and issues of chronic conflict. This was natural because of the nearness to the coastal regions where Europeans had a much greater presence and impact on the economic life of the territories. The reason was probably because Europeans carried out more activities in the coastal areas and therefore could afford the operational means. These were reflected in the contents of the final Agreements of the period, which today constitutes the reference documents: the 11th March 1913 Agreement defining the frontier from Yola to the Sea and regulating navigation on the Cross River; the 12th April 1913 Agreement demarcating the Anglo-German frontier between Nigeria and the Cameroons from Yola to the Cross River.¹² This latter Agreement was just the first stage in what could be seen as a master plan to actually demarcate the frontier as stipulated in March 1913. By common accord, the work was entrusted to Nugent and Detzner, respectively British and German, who reported extensively with minute details on the geography, history and ethnic configurations on both sides of the frontier. In order to remove obstacles to peace, these British and German Boundary Commissioners enhanced visibility at a dis-

tance by burying huge posts of concrete pillars, and stone cairns, measuring as high as seven feet and painting them white along the Gemana-Obokum section of the frontier.

Other significant aspects of the Agreements, which are not too often cited as acts to pre-empt conflicts not only among the authors of the frontiers, but also among the populations directly concerned are found in Articles 19-29. These referred to issues, which were likely to strengthen peace along that frontier in the long term, such as the burning issues of fishing and navigation rights wherever these posed problems; the modalities for creating new settlements; sovereignty over the all time strategic Bakassi peninsula and the extension of the land frontier to the limit of the territorial waters, then considered as stretching to only 3 nautical miles. The fact that today it has become necessary to extend this limit to a point that surpass the conception of the period requires reference to current international Laws of the Sea, such as the Geneva Convention (1958) and that of Montevideo, Uruguay (1982). Ambassador Paul Engo, a prominent Cameroonian Jurist, played leading roles in the UN Conferences on the Law of the Sea.

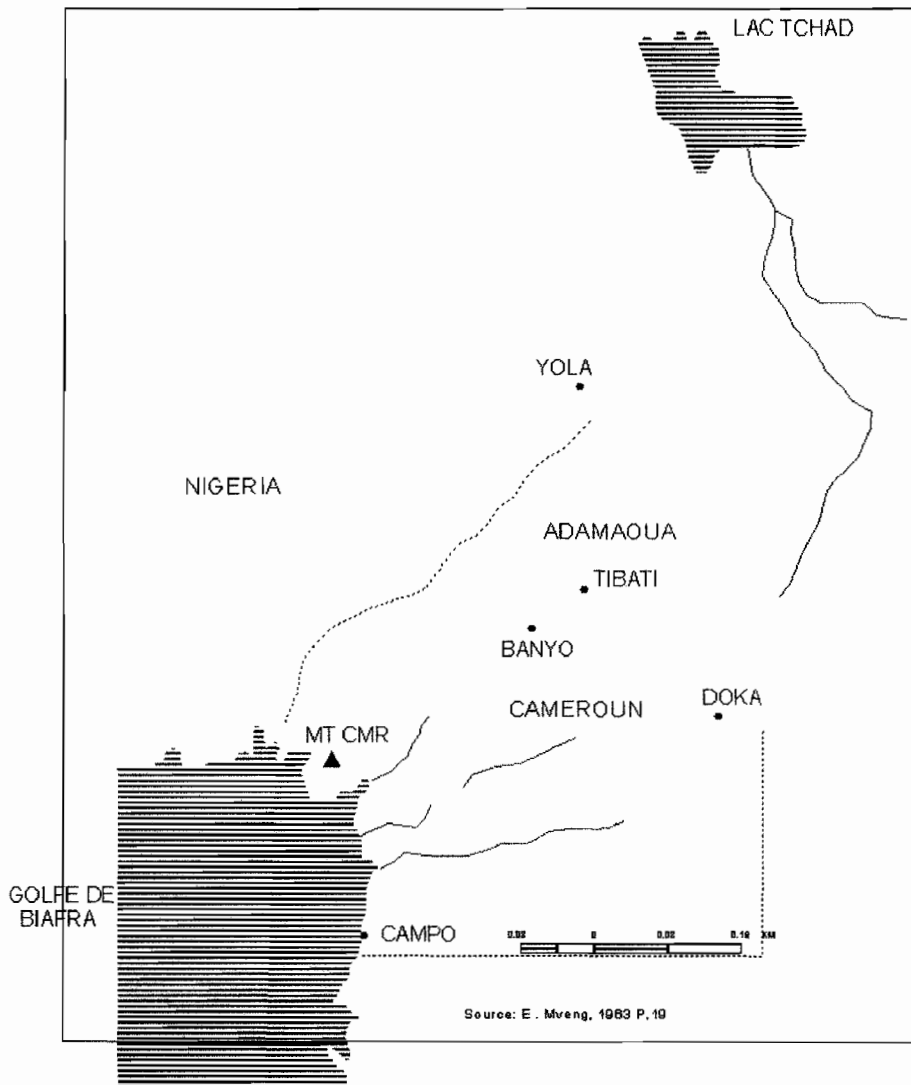
Furthermore, the most conservative aspect of the treaty demanded that in case of frontier disputes, the location on the 9 maps that formed an integral part of the Agreements, series 2240 of the British Admiralty Chart, should serve as final authority (author's emphasis). The peaceful intentions of the treaty also targeted the inhabitants of the region as a whole. In order to consolidate peaceful and harmonious relations among them, the Commissioners held consultations with the populations astride the frontier at the time of demarcation calling upon them to conform to the new imperatives of nationality and identity. They were to decide within an intermediary period of six months whether they wanted to be Cameroonians or Nigerians in which case they would migrate to the country of their choice. The sources do not reveal any official movements of peoples, or the presence of a follow up to supervise the application of the treaty provisions. Indeed, the treaty had a good chance of success only where the people were publicly educated to accustom themselves to the rule of such laws. However, when the Agreement was being ratified by Britain and Germany in London on 13th July 1914, it was confirmed apparently without the usual exchange of Notes that much satisfactory groundwork had been done to reconcile positions and arrive at establishing not only legally viable frontiers, but also the type that

ruled out divergent interpretations.¹³ This leaves room for an interpretation that bad faith and, sometimes, outright refusals to respect the terms of this Agreement have been at the heart of untoward current frontier conflicts between the two sister countries of Cameroon and Nigeria.

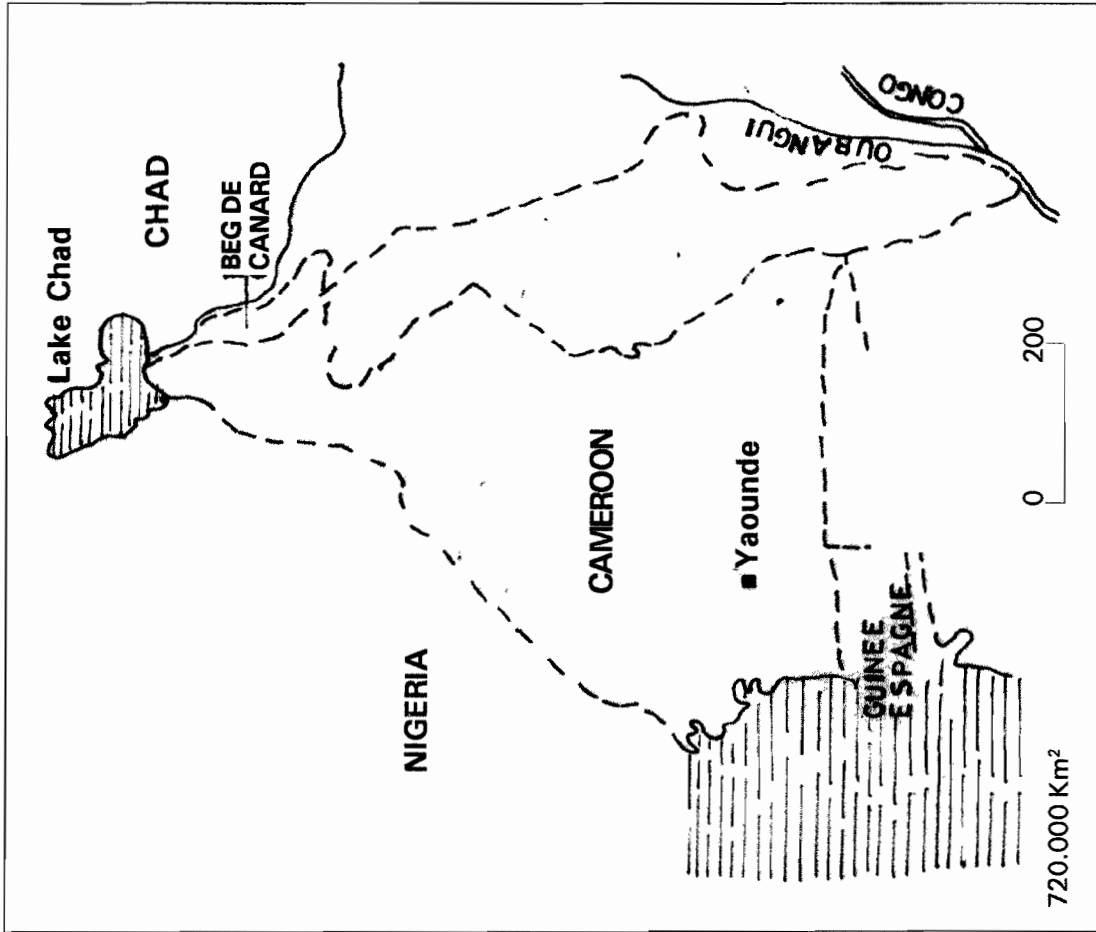
The divisive effects of the Anglo-German frontier hardly had time to influence the lives of the communities adversely when the First World War broke out involving all the colonial powers. This put an abrupt end to German rule in Cameroon as the French and British forces, assisted by Belgian troops from Congo, ousted the Germans from every nook and corner of Cameroon. France and Britain took over the destiny of Cameroon within a twinkle of the eye. Even before the war had ended, they decided to divide up Cameroon, pushed by the French patriot, General Aymerich, the Commander of the Allied Forces in Cameroon. For the second time in Cameroon's colo-

nial history (the first occurred a few months before German annexation was made public), British negligence, or a poor show of their usual diplomatic prowess in Cameroon, resulted in Britain abandoning four-fifth of the territory to France. This happened despite British General Dobel's commanding position over Douala, the most important port and bustling commercial centre in the entire country.¹⁴ Like in 1884 against Germany, in an apparent feat of anger, Britain proceeded to dissect her one-fifth of Cameroon even further into small bits and free handily joined them to various administrative units in neighbouring Nigeria.¹⁵ Britain justified this move on the grounds that it made for greater administrative efficiency since its share of Cameroon was too tiny to form a viable country on its own. The opposite was true as the division of Cameroon, in effect, created serious chronic problems of identity and exclusion that Cameroonians have had to live with for very many generations.

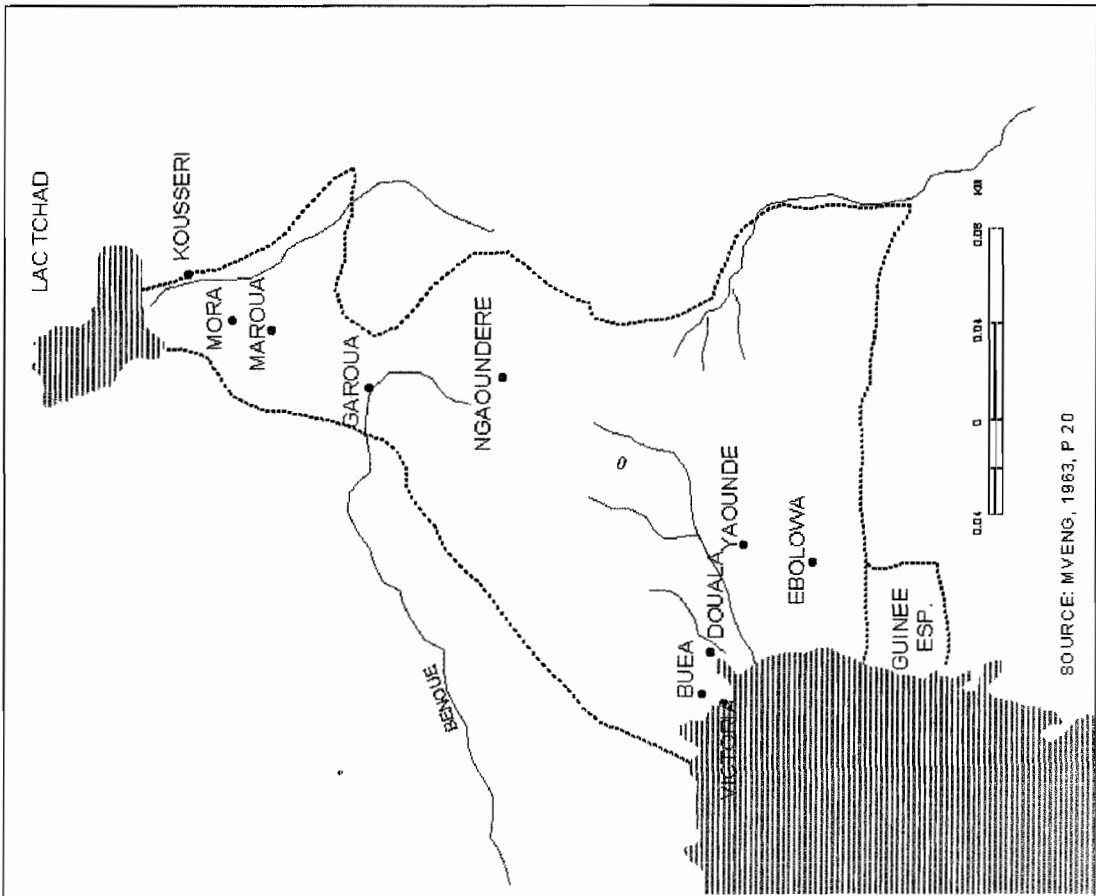
LE CAMEROUN EN 1890

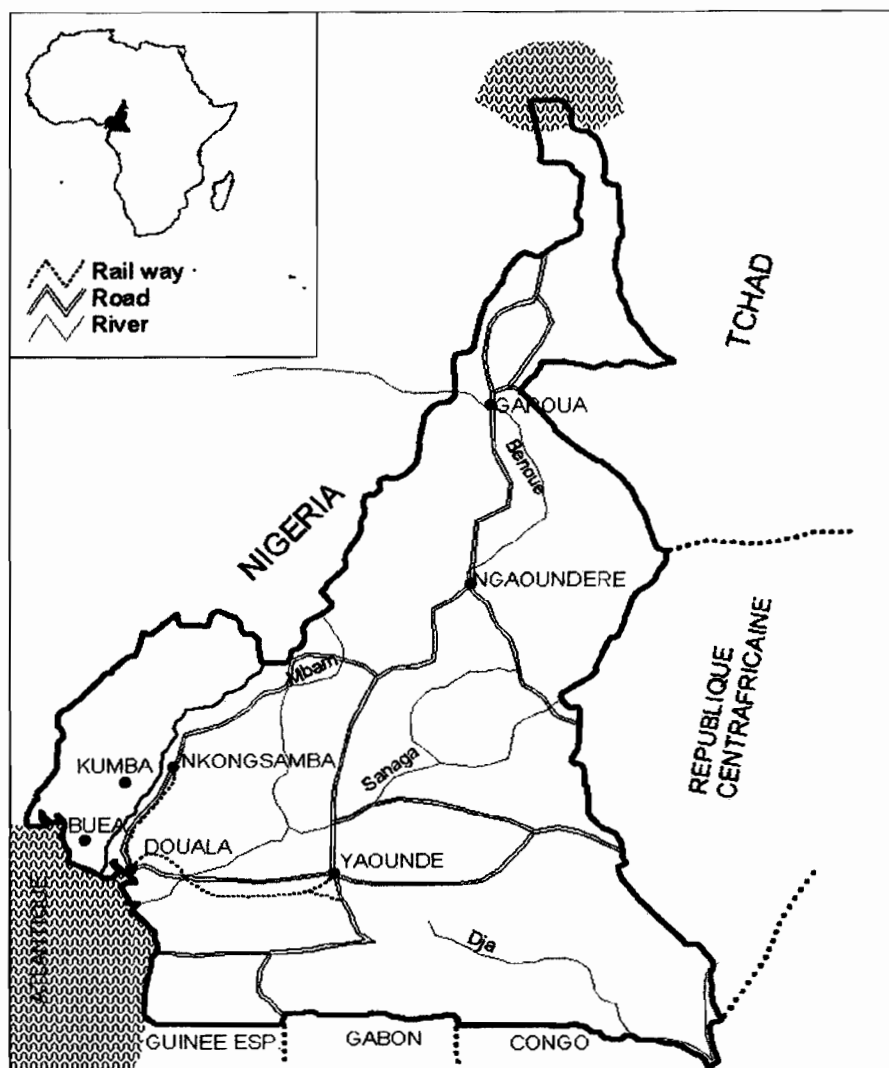


CAMEROON AFTER 1911



LE KAMERUN AVANT 1911
(480 000KM²)





Culture of Peace during mandate and trusteeship period

During this period, once more, official concerns to intervene and ensure peaceful interactions across the international frontier stretched along the entire length and breadth from Lake Chad to the Atlantic Ocean. Frontier issue were important because they were intimately linked with activities in rural development. Cameroon's frontier with Nigeria evolved in two distinct ways: firstly, as the new international frontier between French and British Cameroons and, secondly, as internal frontiers of the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria and the Cameroons. At the international level, the Cameroon-Nigeria (Anglo-French) frontier transformed from the Picot (1916) to the Simon-Milner line in 1919.¹⁶ It is significant that both these delimitation lines were declared "provisional until technical work was completed on the ground". The tradition that vested powers on bilateral commissioners to ne-

gotiate was continued but there were noticeably fewer consultations between France and Britain than had been the case between Germany and Britain to reduce friction and defuse conflict along the frontiers. One way of accounting for this is to refer to the uncertainty of the duration of the mandate period, created by doubts and worldwide fear that under Adolf Hitler's ultra nationalist drive in Germany, the Germans would regain their lost colonial empire in Africa.

The most significant move occurred between 1928 and 1930 when some non-commissioned administrators undertook preliminary demarcation missions along the Simon-Milner line from the sea to Lake Chad in a bid to adjust the paper lines to realities on the ground. Two eminent, high ranking colonial administrators, Craeme Thomas, governor of the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria and Paul Marchand, Governor of the French Cameroons, put the results together in a joint Declaration. This defined the frontier between the French and

British in Cameroon (Cameroon and Nigeria) for nearly 1600 (one thousand six hundred) kilometres long. The document was ratified in the usual diplomatic manner by Exchange of Notes on 9th January 1931. Agreement took longer than was expected due to differences in the partition of the Alantika area with Capt. Ovigneur (France) and W.D.K. Mair, D.O. II (Britain) pressing their cases too far beyond reasonable historical limits. What were at stake were extensive grazing grounds and the authority of rival lamibbe. There is no evidence that the Council of the League of Nations formally approved the Agreement as was required by law. But the investments were not in vain in that the two powers agreed in the Exchange of Notes that they acted in consonance with Article I of the Mandate Agreement to cultivate a culture of peace along the international frontiers. The merit of this new frontier was its easy references since care was taken to align it along "natural barriers", especially rivers and mountain ranges. The absence of any significant exploitable natural resources and other bones of contention facilitated negotiations on the ground.

Nevertheless, by the late 1930s, the administering authorities received several frontier related petitions, and frontier incidents were reported in many places, a sign that frontier controls had began affecting the daily lives of the people adversely. What augured well in favour of peace is the habit, which developed that if the people's claims and counter claims were to be taken seriously, they had to be presented in form of written petitions.¹⁷ The nature of the petitions showed that the cases could not be left to the mandated powers alone to handle considering Cameroon's international status. As a consequence, the Council of the League of Nations stepped in to appoint and equip a team of international Commissioners to revise the frontier, starting from south to north.¹⁸ Such interventions by the supervisory organ of the "colonial administrators" were indicative of the high level of international concern for peace on these frontiers. The significance was that all interests and parties, including local opinion, were constantly given a fair hearing. Unfortunately, demarcation work on land could only be done for 216 kilometres from the Atlantic Ocean between 1937 and 1940. The work suddenly ended with the outbreak of the Second World War and the change of the status of the territory from mandate to trusteeship. Furthermore, post-war politics unleashed a series of constitutional reforms, which weakened the foundations of colonial rule in Africa. Under such circumstances, frontier issues were completely neglected

or taken out of the list of urgent matters. Thus no new initiatives and Agreements were recorded before independence and reunification in 1961, the end of the trusteeship period.

The interest or relevance of the study of internal frontiers relating to British Cameroons as part of Nigeria is that subsequently these frontiers reverted, without any modifications whatsoever, to international frontiers at the end of the period of trusteeship now under review. Two British Nigeria Ordinances which described in detail the frontiers of the three regions of Nigeria and, by implication, the international frontiers of Nigeria, served as references: the Nigeria (Protectorate and Cameroons) Order-in-Council of 2nd August 1946; and the Northern Region, Western Region and Eastern Region (Definition of Boundaries) Proclamation of 9th September 1954 on Nigeria's internal frontiers.¹⁹ Behind these Ordinances were the Richardson (1946) and McPherson (1954) constitutional changes for Nigeria and Cameroons. A significant novelty was the creation of a new frontier between British Southern and Northern Cameroons. The line ran from west to east from river Gamana on pillar 64 of the old Anglo-German frontier to Kombon peak on the new Anglo-French frontier, a distance of 110 kilometres. Also, while serving as an internal frontier, the old Anglo-German international frontier from the point of river Gamana remained unaltered. But the customs posts were all closed and transferred to new posts on the Anglo-French frontier, further to the east. In effect, the newly constructed posts became the centres for various international actions (customs, immigration, etc.) as far as Southern Cameroons was concerned.

Naturally, when the Anglo-German frontier ceased to function as an international divide, formerly split populations reunited and resumed intercourse, strengthening old traditional bonds and inter-group structures unimpeded by any frontier restrictions. This was particularly so among the Efiks, Ejaws, Balundo, Ejagams and several villages on the creeks. Consequently, Britain extended its colonial culture and legal systems over previous German subjects and places. As stated above, the 1913 Agreements between Britain and Germany had prohibited inhabitants on one side of the frontier from making permanent structures on the other side in order to make the difference in citizenship. Also those who found themselves on the side of the frontier they thought did not correspond with their interests were given six months within

which to relocate. But with the dissolution of these erstwhile international barriers, a situation of free for all to enter Southern Cameroons developed rapidly, what looked like putting old identities on new Cameroonian wine skin. New demographical landscapes of migrations and settlements proceeded uninhibited, especially since the international character of the frontier was no longer there to prohibit them. The movements of peoples were mostly into Southern Cameroons territory for many reasons, considered a small haven where opportunities for small self-employed businesses seemed unlimited to immigrants from English-speaking West African countries. Several permanent communities grew along the creeks and were baptised with Nigerian names. During the German period, these places were either sparsely populated or not inhabited at all.

The trend was towards consolidating the Nigerian connection to the detriment of that of Cameroon in the region. The Eastern Nigeria Development Company went as far as to open the Obudu and Utanga ranches and rent the extensive Takamanda forest reserve.²⁰ The creek settlements maintained close administrative and Christian missionary ties with neighbouring Eket District and the Oron Catholic Missions. A report by V.K. Johnston, the District Officer, Kumba in 1943 reflected the sober realities in the region as far as the Cameroon connection was concerned:

The fish town area has always been a running sore in the side of the Cameroons... Owing to the maze of creeks in the area, and its remoteness from anywhere else, and its constantly shifting population, it is going to be difficult for anyone to administer properly, but at least the District Officer Eket would be dealing largely with his own people, which we in this Province are not. Certainly it is very necessary that these Fish town inhabitants should be adequately controlled; for years, they never have been, and in consequence the area has become a seething hive of every kind of lawlessness including slave trafficking and smuggling with Fernando Po, illicit distilling, counterfeit coining, tax evasion and highway robbery and sometimes murder.²¹

V. K. Johnston's account was neither the first nor the last of such forthright reporting, but it is certainly one of the most detailed for the area, a severe warning of

the early process to integrate the Rio del Rey into Nigeria. It even sounded normal for him to propose that the District Officer, Eket in Nigeria was best placed to administer the area since there would not be enough work to engage an on-the-spot District Officer based at Rio del Rey in Cameroon territory. This apparent appeal that if the Southern Cameroons authorities could not beat their Nigerian detractors, they should join them, was borne out of the feeling that the magic of the common British sovereignty and national culture over Nigeria and British Cameroons after the expulsion of the Germans, in spite of identity differences between Nigerian heritage and that of Cameroon, worked in favour of peaceful co-existence. Nevertheless, finding a solution to what could be interpreted as tantamount to construct a homogeneous frontier identity by the population of the maritime region with stronger all-round local loyalties will form a crucial issue in frontier relations in the next period.

Independence and reunification period: state versus grassroots diplomacy

The third and last period of our analysis witnessed a complicated alternation of state and grassroots actions in trans-frontier conflicts and cooperation. The old practices and strategies of petitioning, joint and mixed commissions and use of diplomatic channels were strengthened by an increase personal interest and participation of Heads of State in the process of finding peaceful solutions. Actions have focused principally on the maritime frontier and on the Lake Chad demarcation. The tradition to privilege the culture of peace started soon after Cameroon and Nigeria acceded to independence from colonial rule. For the Lake Chad frontier, responsibility devolved on the Lake Chad Basin Commission, which Chad, Cameroon, Niger and Nigeria founded on May 23rd 1964. In pursuit of peace and development in the region as a whole, the Commission embarked on a project of demarcating the frontiers, "marking out faithfully on the ground the indications defining the layout of the international boundaries contained in the Agreements, Treaties, Exchanges of Notes, Conventions and Minutes in the determination of points and maps attached to them". The contract was executed by the National Geographical Institute France International (IGN FI) with the collaboration of local experts from the member countries. Demarcation work has been completed to the satisfaction of all the member States within the context of their inter-state organisation, the Lake Chad Basin Commission in February 1990.²²

For the rest, Britain and Cameroon Republic signed the Act transferring Southern Cameroons to the Cameroon Republic on 30th September 1961, while a similar Exchange of Notes between Britain and Nigeria handed over Northern Cameroons, later renamed Saradauna Province, to Nigeria on 31st May 1961. In the maritime frontier, distinction should be made on the one hand between those parts of Cameroon's frontiers, which were inherited from colonial powers and, on the other hand, the section that has been the object of recent negotiations by Cameroon and Nigerian Governments. A distinction is necessary because conditions and methods of managing frontiers take new dimensions. In recent negotiations, for instance, the Heads of State of Cameroon and Nigeria led the delegations and were personally very involved. The venues were either in Cameroon or Nigerian cities and the reports make no mention of participation of foreign invitees. In the circumstances, decisions were arrived at and implemented expeditiously despite the risks that "diplomatic" procedures and protocol might be sidestepped.

An initial set back for a return to the German frontier legacy was the fact that the plebiscites at the end of British trusteeship failed to reconstitute Cameroon's international frontiers as they were up to the end of the German period. In origin, this was the *raison d'être* for the demand for reunification in its purest sense of reconstituting German Cameroon as it was just before the First World War. The failure meant Cameroonians would have to live and be forced to get accustomed to the humiliations of a third permanent dismemberment of their territory within forty years, counting from the end of the First World War.²³ One explanation is that politically speaking, Cameroon as a whole was passing through difficult times before and after reunification and so could not muster the means and support to fight for its German territorial rights. Internally, there was too much division among its elite and some had taken to terrorism, bordering on civil war. Consequently, the state machinery was fragile. The international scene was no better to assist the Cameroon Government to safeguard its territorial integrity. Indeed, Cameroon was one of the major battlegrounds for the Cold War politics in Africa with both Western and Eastern Blocs influencing events negatively. This embarrassed and disadvantaged the Cameroon Government whose territories were being snatched with impunity as if in an international conspiracy. Rather than go to war, Ahidjo sought legal redress from the UN International Court of Justice in

The Hague in the face of such glaring injustice and anomalies.²⁴ But this was restricted to only claims over the loss of British Northern Cameroons, leaving out the case of German "Neue Kamerun"²⁵ in French Equatorial Africa as well as in several other areas, which were under threat of Nigerian re-annexation. When the verdict was announced the President of the newly created Federal Republic of Cameroon, Ahidjo, accepted it and decreed a month of national mourning for June 1963 for the loss of the Northern Cameroon to Nigeria. The spontaneous national anger proved to be short lived because there was no follow-up of any kind against the Court's verdict.

While largely reflecting past Agreements, the new contours of the Cameroon-Nigeria frontier after reunification fell under three segments corresponding to the various legal instruments that set them up. The first, the northern segment, consisted of the Anglo-French frontier from the quarto-point (Cameroon, Niger, Nigeria, Chad) in Lake Chad at approximately 13°5' latitude north of the Equator and 14°5' Longitude east of Greenwich to the Peak Kombon in the Gesumi range of mountains. It covered a distance of 1013 kilometres. A middle segment from peak Kombon westward to the north side of river Gamana constituted the second segment. As mentioned earlier, this segment was never negotiated. It was a unilateral imposition by Britain in the process of laying down Nigeria's internal regional frontiers after the Second World War. It was raised to international status in 1961 when British Southern Cameroons and Northern Cameroons decided to go their separate ways and belong to the Federal Republic of Cameroon and the Federation of Nigeria respectively. Either out of ignorance or because of the unfavourable political climate at the time of reunification and independence, the Cameroon Government complacently accepted it. It covers a distance of up to 176 kilometres.

Finally, the southern segment was the Anglo-German frontier, which had become an internal frontier within Nigeria after the First World War. This segment had been demarcated in the 11th March 1913 delimitation treaty from pillar 64 to the Atlantic Ocean, where it terminated at three nautical miles at the intersection between a straight line joining Sandy Point and Tom Shot Point in Nigeria and Cameroon territory respectively. In recent years, this segment has attracted much attention domestically and internationally as a result of discovery of huge deposits of offshore petroleum and threatens peaceful cooperation in the sub-region.

It is to this aspect of the story that we shall now turn attention and demonstrate the continued influence of the British and German legacies to cultivate peaceful interactions along the frontiers.

Maritime Frontier: the model for peace on the balance

Post-independence direct negotiations between Cameroon and Nigeria in the maritime frontier have more than ever put peaceful co-existence in focus. The Nigerian Government intensified exploitation of petroleum products in the region after independence. It took nearly two decades before the Cameroon Government also decided to be a part of the business following favourable feasibility studies since 1964. There was no illusion that this move would interfere with Nigeria's virtual monopoly. The Cameroon Government started to take legal precautions to remain within international laws. With this in view, a law was passed in the Cameroon National Assembly fixing Cameroon's territorial water at 18 miles, 6 miles more than the Nigerians had fixed their own limit.²⁶ This was one of the earliest signals for the necessity to negotiate and increase frontier management skills and put into focus peaceful approach mechanisms along the frontier. Two practical problems stood on Cameroon's way. Firstly, Nigerians who claimed the territory for Nigeria inhabited the creeks with no respect for Cameroonian sovereignty. Secondly, Cameroon's internal political situation was marred by violence and terrorism and the government distanced itself to the extent that over the years it could not easily evolve a forward looking and assertive local policy. However under the impulse of new economic possibilities, on the initiative of the Cameroon Government, short of a general bilateral treaty, Cameroon and Nigeria signed an agreement to provide a legal framework to control the movements of persons and goods between their countries as early as on February 6th 1963.²⁷ Though this could hardly be efficiently applied throughout the length and breadth of the frontier, the Cameroon Government felt more comfortable to proceed with its plans to assert its sovereignty in the maritime region.

In 1965 two incidents along the frontier put both the Cameroon and Nigerian Governments on the path of privileging peace on the frontiers in the oil rich maritime territories. There was the incident that involved a team of experts of Mobile Oil Company prospecting for petrol on behalf of the Cameroon Government on the Cross River delta on approximately longitude 8°33 E and latitude 4°30 N.²⁸ The prospectors

fell in the hands of a Nigerian intelligence patrol unit, which seized the passport of the leader, Guy Cagswell of American nationality. They were prevented from further explorations because it was claimed that they had crossed the international frontiers and were operating in Nigerian territory. The shock waves in both countries, coupled with ignorance in Government circles in Yaounde about the intricacies of the Cameroon-Nigerian frontier were obvious. It hurt the sensitivity of the Cameroon Government, firstly because it was anxious to peacefully get into the oil production phase as soon as possible and, secondly, because it did not want to damage existing personal good relations between Cameroon and Nigeria. The case was later resolved by the intervention of the Cameroon Government through "diplomatic channels." More than ever, the reports underlined the urgency to make clear the international limits of Cameroon territory and constrain the Nigerians to respect them. This required sustained efforts in research and diplomacy and Ahidjo was prepared to leave no stone unturned until there was agreement with his Nigerian counterpart.

The second incident that can also be cited concerned a violent confrontation between two leading communities – Bodam and Danare – astride the frontier.²⁹ At the heart of the conflict was the fact that for some years the people of Danare on the Nigerian side changed the traditional manner of sharing royalties accruing from companies engaged in forest exploitation. It became a serious conflict when the arbitration of the Doki elders was in favour of Bodam and the Danare people refused to accept the verdict. For the first time a local conflict assumed national dimensions with the spread of a wild well-orchestrated rumour that Cameroonian gendarmes were on their way to support Bodam. This led to burning of houses and the use of magical spells in what looked like a war of attrition. The efforts to settle the conflict from outside by the District Officers of Mamfe and Ikom revealed that the fundamental issue, which was not limited to Bodam and Danare villagers, was the deficiencies in the frontier. The reality was that in this southern segment of the frontier, after more than two generations of intermingling as a people of one sovereign country, many people had become unaware of the frontier as a dividing line. The return to the old Anglo-German frontier, abandoned since 1914, saw the re-emergence of the old custom's posts and closure of several "unauthorised" tracts across the frontier. As we noted earlier, during the mandate period, many Nigerian citizens had moved into British Cameroons unimpeded, and projected a

Nigerian identity. They failed to adapt their attitudes or mental frame of mind to the fact that they now were and lived in foreign territory. Each village decided to fix or imagine a frontier in the place it would want it to be.³⁰ Confusion was inevitable because the frontier pillars and stone Cairns were now rarely visible and some, in fact, had been criminally removed.

These problems unflinchingly called for united actions at both the state and local levels. As long as the central administration failed to see the necessity for swift action, many things went wrong or stayed explosively on hold. This situation continued to injure the rights of Cameroon in its territory and to frustrate its citizens at the grassroots. It is hard to explain the attitude of Cameroon authorities in Yaounde. It is not unlikely that Ahidjo counted too much on the excellent relations he maintained with the Government of Prime Minister, Tafawa Balewa in Lagos and Ahmadou Bello (a prince of the Sokoto Caliphate and Premier of the Northern Region of Nigeria). Ahidjo's strategy seemed therefore to be built on a narrow assumption that he could get his way by staying close with the Federal Nigerian Government in Lagos even if this meant ignoring the hostile stand of the local military authorities and peoples. Such government to government exchanges and pour paler approach in resolving complicated frontier problems could work only in a short run, given the advanced nature of the freedom of the press in Nigeria and grassroots democracy, which stood in great contrast to the Cameroonian situation of one party centralised dictatorship. For durable peace Ahidjo needed to extend the centre of peace to both the local and central power brokers. The Nigerian press and opposition was capable in Nigeria to play the devil's advocate and, at any time incite the population concerned against government decisions they did not like. Nevertheless, as if to confirm Ahidjo's optimism, in 1965, the two leaders of Cameroon and Nigeria set up a joint and balanced technical Commission of lawyers, cartographers, and surveyors to trace the frontier through research and field studies. The degree of trust between these two Muslim Heads of State and Government (Ahmadou Ahidjo and Tafawa Balewa) was such that they did not consider appealing for foreign assistance to witness and participate in the work. Financial provisions were made and the Commission actually started work, but could not finish its assignment because of heavy rains and the outbreak of the Nigerian Civil War. The Cameroon leader, Ahmadou Ahidjo had declared neutrality in the Civil War, but it is known that he supported the stand of the Federal

Government of Nigerian against the secessionist Biafrans. Concretely, the Federal troops led by Major Isaac Boro were permitted to operate from the strategic Bakassi peninsula. As President of the Organisation of African Unity in 1969, Ahidjo was instrumental to the negotiations for a peaceful resolution of the Civil War in Nigeria. These and other similar stands by Ahidjo in favour of the Federal Government of Nigeria earned him special admiration from the ruling circles,³¹ and created a propitious climate for negotiating the frontier between Cameroon and Nigeria in the highly sensitive maritime region.

In spite of this, the post-Nigerian Civil War period saw an increase rather than diminution of local conflicts between Cameroonians and Nigerians along the frontier. The Bakassi peninsula constituted a major element in the conflict. It is situated on the most southern part of the land frontier. By the Anglo-German Agreement of 1913 it is unequivocally Cameroon territory. But it is so strategically located that it commands all shipping into the Calabar and Akwayafe rivers and, indeed, navigation in the Bight of Biafra. It has all the potentials of an enviable military base.³² The cause of conflict is definitely Nigeria's envy and, at the same time, fear of the consequences of insistence on Cameroonian sovereignty over the peninsula when the economic stakes in the region have become very high and, particularly so far Nigeria. This fear is aggravated by the fact that among the over 22,000 inhabitants, over 60 per cent are said to be of Nigerian and other foreign origins. Pretending ignorance, the Nigerians lived on the peninsula as if it was Nigerian territory, preferring Nigerian names to the settlements and casting doubts about real identities to complete the camouflage. Above all, the population was prone to look up more to Nigerian rather than Cameroonian authorities for protection because the Nigerians have deployed a more effective chain of authority in the vicinity.

These facts were no secret because the value of the peninsula was fully appreciated by Nigeria when, as we have seen, its soldiers were stationed in it for two years in order to control the secessionist Biafran naval operations. However, all of a sudden, in a well-calculated move, after the Nigerian Civil War, 200 Cameroonian well-equipped gendarmes and civil officers descended on the peninsula and hoisted the Cameroon flag to enforce Cameroonian sovereignty.³³ The gendarmes introduced habits of law enforcement, which were not easily reconcilable with the Nigerian system that the population was used to. Still under the

impulsion of asserting sovereignty, between 1969 and 1975, Prefectoral Orders in Cameroon reorganised administration and changed the names of over 25 settlements that had been given Nigerian names.³⁴ These measures made several Nigerians of the Efik and Ijaw stock to quit Bakassi to Calabar and other neighbouring Nigerian towns where they spread inflammatory stories against the Cameroon Government. The Ahidjo/Gowon entente cordiale at the summit fell on shaky grounds as real hatred among families multiplied at the grassroots to the utter embarrassment of Yaounde and Lagos. As if this was not enough, opposing pressure groups emerged and consolidated ranks, swearing to block solutions arrived at over their heads.

Besides these brisk state interventions, there were times when frontier authorities on both sides aggravated conflict and failed to work for peace on the frontier. One report after the other complained of harassment and intimidation, especially fishermen and traders who said they were being subjected to arbitrary and sometimes double and unauthorised taxation and extortion. No one felt safe. The Cameroonian immigration and security authorities pointed to ceaseless cases of local chiefs and officials who were kidnapped and detained by Nigerians. They complained that Nigerian smugglers, heavily armed troops and customs patrols violated Cameroon territory in total defiance of their authority:

In reality, according to diverse reports of administrative authorities of this Department, Cameroonian sovereignty is hardly felt in the creeks, especially at Abana and Atabong, where it is even questioned. Proof is the fact that neighbouring Nigerian Municipal Councils have been collecting taxes.³⁵

After the inhabitants of the Bakassi peninsula, participating as Cameroonians in the 1961 plebiscite, rejected the option to become part of Nigeria, a state of permanent hostility, predicated on mutual fear of attack and arrests, bedevilled frontier relations. Often, this was with the complicity of the law enforcement officers. In this respect, put in its true historical context, Bakassi had seen several phases of internal turmoil since the restoration of the old Anglo-German international frontier in 1961 and has presented itself as a hard nut to crack once and for all either by war or diplomacy.

The question was whether reason and/or bilateral di-

plomacy could triumph over claims and counterclaims, passion and tension, and bring both sides to the negotiating table instead of lead them to war? The pre-independence tradition of goodwill seemed to frizzle away at the grassroots. How strong and reliable was the "diplomatic channel" since all the stakeholders were focused on State intervention to foster cooperation and achieve peaceful settlement? The Heads of State resorted to the old strategy of the colonial times, which consisted in creating Joint Boundary Commissions, specifically to oversee frontier issues between Cameroon and Nigeria. It was charged with improving conditions so that lasting solutions could be found to various frontier conflicts. Its members were top ranking civil servants: surveyors, jurists, and administrators to underscore the importance of the expected results.

It focused almost entirely on the maritime frontier. The negotiations proper started in August 1970 and culminated in the Maroua Declaration, signed by Ahidjo and Gowon on 1st June 1975. The Declaration prolonged the frontier line from point A (the Nigerian 12 miles self imposed sea limit) to point G (17.7 miles) on the British Admiralty Map 3433 that was used for the purpose.³⁶ The line was expected to reach the 18 miles territorial limit claimed by Cameroon at the time, but the map at the disposal of the Commissioners was small for the purpose. Further and final delimitation to the oceanic tri-point – Cameroon, Nigeria and Equatorial Guinea – was envisaged whenever a map on a larger scale would have been drawn. Nevertheless, the Maroua line was a compromise, which took into account Cameroon's treaty rights on the one hand and, on the other, Nigeria's objections to the Ngoh-Coker tracing of August 1971 that virtually put the Calabar/Cross River estuary in Cameroon territory and the 1974 Kano Declaration which set up, hardly to any avail, a corridor of 4 kilometre wide of oil exploration-free zone. Judging from the speeches and fraternal atmosphere that prevailed in Maroua, and taking into account the context of the One Party system which entrusted the overwhelming power to the Heads of State, at the end of the negotiations both leaders and their experts were satisfied with the spirit of give and take that had prevailed throughout the treaty-making encounter.

However, a month after the signing of the Maroua Declaration, Gowon was overthrown by a coup d'etat. His successors, beginning with General Olusegun Obasanjo (the present Head of State of Nigeria) have

since 1975 unorthodoxly turned their backs to the treaty,³⁷ thus creating a serious impasse in the practical materialisation of the entire maritime frontier. It seemed after Ahidjo and Gowon recognised that the logic of the Maroua definition and peaceful co-existence were multi-dimensional they thought it better to shove the problems to what appeared to be the realm of "silent", in camera diplomacy, located at the summit level. Unless the decisions arrived at in this way are rapidly transformed into a comprehensive treaty, the leaders put peace at risk. "Silent", behind the scene diplomacy would work only as long as the Cameroonian and Nigerian Governments are able to restrain their peoples' inordinate ambitions and tap the resources, now in plentiful supply, in strict respect for legality. Also "silent" diplomacy seemed to have kept out the Boundary Commissions as a prominent institution of research and dialogue, advising the Governments in the search for peaceful solutions.

The Iking confrontation of 16th May 1981 in which five Nigerian soldiers were murdered in cold blood³⁸ demonstrated both the strength and weakness of the "silent" diplomacy strategy. Ahidjo and Shehu Shagari, (again two friendly Muslim leaders) then respectively Presidents of Cameroon and Nigeria, were able through contacts at the summit to hush the drums of the warlords. But the whole affair demonstrated the unpredictability of events and the ease and rapidity with which local incidents on the maritime frontier have the power to tele-guide both countries to war, if not, to force them to pay heavy ransoms to buy peace. Like other similar incidents before and after, the Iking confrontation reiterated that more profound and technical diagnoses are required to circumscribe local conflicts and a spirit of hate and revenge in the interest of general peace.

The problems in the region are complex, multi-dimensional and go beyond simply fixing and accepting frontier lines. The tracings are clear from both Cameroonian and Nigerian maps, and do not contradict each other. The heart of the matter now is the strategic nature of the region to the economies of the interested countries; they concern also the management and sharing of emerging vital resources through team research. The inadequacy of the present management structures to handle the problems is evident. There is need to employ highly sophisticated technology to guarantee security and, above all, human rights in the region as a whole. These considerations and concerns, at least, make frontier research and the culture of permanent

dialogue an imperative. The stakes are too high now to leave solutions in the hands of unstructured ad hoc committees, the military alone, and in the power of non-professional individuals, who are not up-to-date with either theories of frontier politics or common realities on the ground.

Cameroon Government in the Biya era was this first to perceive the need to adopt a collective permanent approach and to settle the issues in a legalistic and peaceful manner. Consequently, in 1985, he set up a National Frontier Commission by Presidential Decree.³⁹ This body had the duty to introduce collective thinking and serve as a forum to coordinate the actions of all the government ministries that handled international frontier matters.⁴⁰ However, there were serious structural and functional flaws. It was conceived as an ad hoc inter-ministerial committee to be summoned only when the President of the Republic deemed it necessary. Worse still, the Committee was highly political. It had no secretariat or research departments to study, review and propose solutions to problems of bringing peace to Cameroon's international frontiers. Soon after, the Nigerians copied the Cameroonian example and, at the institutional level, set up the Nigerian Boundary Commission in 1987 as a Department at the Presidency, and went further to appoint technocrats and scholars to man it.⁴¹ But like the Cameroon model it also erred by not including grassroots people from the region in its deliberations at any time. Since their creation, both national Commissions worked in complete isolation of each other due, perhaps, to incongruity of structural organisation, non-concordance of competence and divergence in the profiles of the principal animators of the Commissions. For example, distinguished scholars deliberated above strategies with men of the armed forces or men holding high political offices.

However, all was not lost in the search for common accord and approach to put frontier relations on the rail of peace. Finding a solution was imperative in the circumstance. Following a Lake Chad Basin Commission summit meeting at the Nigerian capital, Abuja on 10th August 1990, Presidents Biya and Babangida decided to inject a new dynamism into frontier matters. They ordered that the two permanent Boundary Commissions resume work together meeting as before alternately in Cameroon and Nigerian cities. In Cameroon, the Department for African and Asian Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as University dons (including the author of this paper)

were drafted into the Cameroonian Frontier Commission. Hopes were raised that the National Frontier and Mixed Cameroon-Nigeria commissions would work together and examine new strategies for frontier demarcation, management and the culture of peace. Indeed the Lake Chad Basin Commission (made up of Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria) brought an additional ray of hope when it just terminated a similar operation for frontiers on the Chad Basin. The signs were that throughout the Gulf of Guinea and, indeed, the Central African Region, frontier issues would be demystified; the belligerent aspects would be scaled down, while cooperation across the frontiers would be emphasised. In order to catch up with the momentum, generated by the Heads of State, the Cameroonian and Nigerian frontier commissions met for the first time in Yaounde in the same year.⁴² A fundamental handicap, it would appear, was the question of the status of the meeting. The Foreign Ministers, Heads of delegation, attended only the two plenary sessions at the beginning and close of the meeting? The rest was left to the host of experts that accompanied them. Curiously, for so it appeared to the participants from the University, the exchanges were limited and stereotyped. For example, for most of the time, only Heads of delegation spoke out across the table, with only sideline, off the record participation from the experts.

The minutes of meetings (now lodged in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) would show that the exchanges on the Maroua Declaration and the Nigerian proposal for setting up a Gulf of Guinea Commission were the most recurring items on the Agenda. The hostile positions of both sides, apparently on instructions, largely account for sterility in the exchanges. Considering that the countries of the Gulf of Guinea share a common continental shelf and have common stakes in economic and maritime security issues, the proposal to set up a Gulf of Guinea Commission had many positive elements that included orderly sharing of resources. Such a Commission would serve as the junction box of the Central and West African sub-regions, and oversee, define and defend common interests. Overall, there was one significant innovation. This was the high degree of personal involvement of the Heads of State, which was quite normal for post-independent African diplomacy, but which reduced the role of the traditional "diplomatic channel" to a conduit for instructions.

Finally, the latest event in the state of the art occurred

in mid-1992. The Cameroon and Nigerian Governments showed their good faith and commitment to what had become a tradition of culture of peace along their frontier. Concretely, they jointly sponsored a five-day marathon workshop in Yola, Nigeria, to brainstorm on the entire gamut of frontier issues and advise government.⁴³ The novelty was in the huge number of participants (over one hundred and fifty) and their heterogeneous backgrounds. One experienced a broad spectrum of personal contributions and interactions. The participants ranged from highly placed personalities such as Members of Government, scholars, who presented the results of original research in form of papers, traditional rulers, top ranking present and retired administrators from frontier ("gateway") provinces, security and customs officers to prosperous businessmen and women who presented summaries of their experiences in the field. All delegates from both countries were heard during the specialised and plenary sessions.

This was an unusual confidence building exercise in the construction of models for peace at the frontiers because the workshop generated much goodwill and exceptional interest to eliminate threats of war. It highlighted the dangers of neglect that benefited no one but criminals and violators of peace. The "Joint Communiqué" stressed the need for frontier management to grow and outpace the colonial structures and narrow legal framework. Policy concerns could envisage, for instance, harmonisation of representations and ranks across the frontiers as well as keep the same commissioners at the joint commission meetings to guarantee continuity in policy implementation. Providentially, the mouths and minds in Yola had chewed too much than they could swallow. By the end of 1993 the frustrations were evident in the eyes of the Commissioners who had since the Workshop been working to assemble documentation and prepare memoranda for their respective Governments for a peaceful understanding. The drift to war surfaced when Nigerian soldiers occupied the Bakassi peninsula to the consternation of the international community.

Conclusion

A plausible way for the future should take some crucial realities into account. Since the Europeans left, many things have changed in the frontier zone. The frontiers have extended far into the sea. This move will involve more than Cameroon and Nigerian interests. It will be founded on strict application of various international Conventions and Treaties on the Law of the Sea. The maritime regions have in recent years become centres

of vast economic resources and traffic across the frontier. Activities in the region provide good jobs to many otherwise jobless persons. Multinational corporations have settled and developed vested interests in the area. Furthermore, the configuration of the frontier is such that effective policing in the traditional colonial way is very demanding, no longer possible because the real treasures are hidden under water. As a matter of fact, the pressures from these changes are daily suggesting abandonment of opaque imperialistic styles and attitudes of management. It is no secret that some of the most serious incidents that brought Cameroon and Nigeria to the brink of war in January 1994 have occurred in areas where the frontier lines are in no doubt, but this did not deter interest groups from dauntless acts.

The governments can progressively institute a special regime for selected areas along the frontier regions and provinces. The legal strength of the regime will be based on the firm resolve first and foremost to respect all the treaties that establish the existing frontiers while negotiating appropriate structures for common management of shared resources in the short, medium and long term. It is agreed that Africans were no party in making the frontiers, but as current managers, policy priorities must take into account the peaceful and interactive aspirations of the local populations and the need to promote and not discourage local entrepreneurship. Historically speaking, a principal source of conflict in African traditions is neglect by people of its frontiers and condoning irregular encroachments in times of plenty, until the consequences become a matter of life and death to reverse. Run by local joint commissioners, the regime should be provided with abundant means and other instruments of empowerment to promptly respond to frontiers exigencies; it should also serve as a permanent contingent for peace that includes the multinationals as visible and not invisible partners in the areas where conflict is evident and endemic. This way emphasis will be turned to technical issues, reconciliation, and further consolidation of the history of what I see as a traditional model of peaceful resolution of conflicts since the creation of the Cameroon-Nigeria frontiers.

¹The list is long: see for instance the unpublished Ph.D. theses of: Atem. George; "Cameroon Nigerian Relations 1884-1961: A study of Political Economic and Social Interactions between two neighbouring States". University of Calabar, 1984; Falso, V.G., "Trans-Frontier Relations and Resistance to Cameroon-Nigeria Colonial Boundaries 1916/1945", University of Yaounde, 1983; Kom Priso Tchuenta Engelbert; "A Politico-Geographical Analysis of its Ramifications in the South West Province of Cameroon". University of Yaounde 1992.

² Some studies in line include: A.I. Asiwaju and P.O. Adeneyi, (eds.), Borderlands in Africa: A Multidisciplinary and Comparative Focus on Nigeria and West Africa, University of Lagos Press, 1989; O.J. Martinez (ed.) Across Boundaries, Transborder Interaction in Comparative Perspective, El Paso: TX Western Press; P. Nugent and A.I. Asiwaju (eds.) African Boundaries: Arriers, Conduits, and Opportunities, African Studies, University of Edinburgh, 1993. They see the European experiences as a sound regional model.

³ Lindley M.F. The Acquisition and Government of Backward Territory in International Law, London, 1926 for details of the perceptions of the jurist.

⁴ Accounts and Papers. African no. 6(1885), C4242, Agreement between Britain and Germany relative to their respective spheres of Action, pp. 551-56. In this agreement the British underestimated the importance of the Bakassi peninsula, which was described as "a worthless bone of contention ... a strip of dismal land, peopled by a few miserable fisher folk", and so it went to the German sphere.

⁵ For Royal Niger Company correspondence on the "Yola Arc" see, FO84.2109, Report on the Administration of the Niger Territories by Major Claude MacDonald submitted 9.1.1890; Yola later Adamawa Province - collected Histories 1905-31, National Archives, Kaduna JI. Files contains 6 enclosures. See files 1-4.

⁶ Account and papers. Treaty Series no. 9, C7026, Agreement between Britain and Germany respecting the Rio del Rey on the West Coast of Africa April 14, 1893, pp. 105-110. Public Record Office, (PRO) London. Also see Weladij, "The Cameroon-Nigeria Border", ABBIA, Cameroon Cultural Review, no. 27-28, 1974; pp 157-172, 29-30, 1976; 31-33, 1978, pp 173-194 quoting extensively from Public Record Office Files.

⁷ It will be hazardous to attempt to list the investigative missions, see, for instance, M. Z. Njeuma, Fulani Hegemony at Yola (Old Adamawa), 1809-1902, CEPER, Yaounde, 1978; 1978, pp. 155ff, A.H.M. Kirke-Green, Adamawa Past and Present, O.U.P., 1958, pp. 29ff.

⁸ R.A. Adeleye, Power and Diplomacy in Northern Nigeria, 1884-1906: The Sokoto Caliphate and its Enemies. Longman, 1971, pp. 210-217; D.J. Muffet, Concerning Brave Captains O.U.P. 1964, a close collaborator appraising Lord Lugard's contribution to Nigerian history.

⁹ Hertslet E., The Map of Africa by Treaty, Third Edition, Frank Cass and Co. Ltd, London, 1967, 3 vol., p. 1354. Ian Brownlie, African Boundaries (A Legal and Diplomatic Encyclopaedia), London, C. Hurst, 1979. p. 185ff; Robert Akamba, Les Frontières Internationales du Cameroon de 1885 a nos Jours La Frontière Méridionale et la Frontière Orientale, de l'Atlantique au Lac Tchad, 3 vols. (Mimeo.), Yaounde, 1991, pp. 500-508.

¹⁰ C.0879-82 Africa (West no. C737 Northern Nigeria). Correspondence (August 18, 1902-March 30, 1909) respecting the Anglo-German Boundary (Yola-Chad) delimitation, May 1909, (PRO) London.

¹¹ SNP7, 2363 National Archives Kaduna "Yola Expedition: Report of Col. Morland on Yola Expedition" 23.9.1901; Yola collected Histories 1905-31 enclosed 1. For instance, when Captain Morland showed Lamido Abba (1902) the Map dividing his emirate, he was reported to have made many negative remarks.

¹² C. Weladij, op. cit., 1978 pp. 173-194; W. V. Nugent, "The Geographical Results of the Nigeria-Kamerun Boundary: Demarcation Commission of 1912-13", The Geographical Journal,

XLII, June 1914, pp. 630-51. Capt. Nugent was the British signatory of the Agreement; Ian Brownlie, African Boundaries (A Legal and Diplomatic Encyclopaedia), London, C. Hurst, 1979. 185ff.

¹³ The ratification note was not published in the treaty series. Why was this so? C. Weladji, and Akamba are silent; but Ian Brownlie acknowledges the anomaly (p. 561) closeness to the outbreak of World War I cannot account for the absence of the Note.

¹⁴ C. O. (Public Records Office London,) 649/14 "Memo. On the Correspondence and Negotiations Resulting in the Provisional Administrative Division of the Cameroons on 1st April 1916", see L. Z. Elango, The Anglo-French Condominium in Cameroon 1914-16: History of a Misunderstanding; Limbe, Navi Group, 1987, pp. 28-30 for a middle of the road interpretation of the differences between Britain and France in the administration of the ex-German colony; also O. Akinjide, "Anglo-French Occupation and the Provisional Partition of the Cameroons 1914-1916", in Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, Vol. VII, No. 4, June 1997, pp. 647-656.

¹⁵ V. G. Fanso, op. cit., pp. 123-25 says France was "complexed and motivated by a spirit of revenge". Wm. R. Louis, Great Britain and Germany's Lost Colonies 1914 1919, O. U. P London, 1967, pp. 58, 149 holds that out of special consideration for legality, the British Order-in-Council of 1923 empowered British officials in Nigeria to administer and legislate for Northern and Southern Cameroons "provided always that such measures did not infringe the provisions of the mandate". V. J. Ngoh has in a perceptive article seen this move as the contested origin of "marginalisation" of British Cameroonians and the basis for the struggle for reunification to German Cameroon, but without the German masters.

¹⁶ K5 Yola Prof., National Archives Kaduna (NAK), Partition of the Cameroons 1919-1931" (4 volumes). Simon-Milner Declaration, London, 10 July 1919 accompanied by maps Moisel 1/300.000 This is the most detailed compilation of records on the Franco-British partition of German-Cameroon I have ever encountered. Extracts can be found in the National Archives in Buea and Yaounde under "Mandate documents". For this period as a whole, where sources are not cited, these volumes constitute our main source of information.

¹⁷ See, for instance, the following files in the National Archives Buea: TC/1940/1, 3; Tb1936/1; 1939/1, 2; 1940/1 - 1942/2.

¹⁸ Unclassified files on Cameroon's frontiers deposited in the library of the former Institute of Human Sciences Yaounde (henceforth MESRES PAPERS Yaounde), File "Mission d'abornement du Cameroun Français et Cameroun Britannique". Some of the documents are reproduced in R. Akamaba, "Frontiers of Cameroon", op. cit.

¹⁹ Reproduced in Ian Brownlie, pp. 185 ff. and quoted as 146 B.F.S.P. 298; S.R. and O. 1946 no. 1352. The Order came into force on 1 January 1947; then Nigerian Law no. 126 of 9th September 1954 defining the Nigerian frontiers.

²⁰ S.M. Nju, Divisional Officer, Akwaya, to Senior Divisional Officer, Mamfe; Cameroon-Nigeria Frontier, 28th August 1964 reporting on an official visit to the region. Verbal and written reports sought to convince him that these were Nigerian territories. The rents were just over 30 pounds sterling per annum, excluding gifts.

²¹ V. K. Johnson, D. O. Kumba, to Resident Buea. April 1943. MESRES PAPERS; file Ae/34, no. 1080; see also Ibid, "Intelligence Report on Isangele", by H. O. Anderson, 1934 for similar reportings.

²² Lake Chad Basin Commission, Minutes of the Seventh Summit of Heads of State, Yaounde, 13th-14th February, 1990, pp. 31-33. For details of the story see, M. Z. Njeuma, "The Role of the Lake Chad Basin Commission in Regional Integration in Central Africa", in Daniel Abwa et. al., The Dynamics of Regional Integration in Central Africa, Yaounde University Press, 2001 pp. 537 ff.

²³ V.J. Ngoh, "The Origins of the Marginalization of Former Southern Cameroonians (Anglophones), 1961-1966: An Historical Analysis", Journal of Third World Studies, vol. XVI, no. 1, Spring 1999, pp.165-185.

²⁴ Ian Brownlie, African Boundaries, pp. 580-81; MESRES PAPERS Ministère des Affaires Etrangère et Secretariat d'Etat a l'Information, La position de la République du Cameroun à la suite du pébiscite des 11 et 12 Fevrier 1961 dans la partie septentrionale du Territoire du Cameroun sous administration du Royaume-Uni de Grande-Bretagne et d'Ireland du Nord, Yaounde: 1961; Doc.T/1556: "Report of the United Nations Commissioner for the Supervision of the Plebiscite in the Southern and Northern Parts of the Trust Territory under British Administration, April 3, 1961". This report was an overriding document against Cameroon's case at the International Court of Justice (I.C.J.), The Hague.

²⁵ Gifford Roger and Louis Wm. Roger, Britain and Germany in Africa (Imperial Rivalry and Colonial Rule), Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1976 pp. 259, 459, 463.

²⁶ Cited in a Memorandum on the "Maroua Declaration", 1.8.1991. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Department of Africa and Asia, Yaounde. See particularly, Republic of Cameroon Document on the Bakassi Peninsula Dispute, (bilingual edition) published by the Government of the Republic of Cameroon, Yaounde, 1994, 59 pages, contains useful information of the evolution of the Cameroon-Nigeria frontier into the sea (p.11), oriented in support of Cameroon's claim over Bakassi

²⁷ Journal Officiel du Cameroun, 06.02.1963. "Protocol d'Accord Définissant le contrôle du mouvement des personnes et des biens entre la République Fédéral du Cameroun et la Fédération du Nigeria."

²⁸ MESRES PAPERS. File (no number or heading), USA Consul in Douala to Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Federal Public Service, Yaounde, forwarding a. "Memorandum" with enclosures. 2.11.1965; Victor Julius Ngoh, "The 1913 Anglo-German Treaty: Understanding the Cameroon-Nigeria Crisis over the Bakassi Peninsula", Weekly Post, No. 16, 1995. writing on the Bakassi conflict between Cameroon and Nigeria mentions a similar incident involving Elf SEREPCA agents.

²⁹ MESRES PAPERS. "Compt-Rendu de la tenue à Ikom (Nigeria) le 7 Juin 1965 en vue du reglement du litige frontalier entre les village de Danéré (Nigeria) et Bodam (Cameroon)". also, private papers of retired Chief Justice S. M. L. Endeley, who was one of Cameroon's Commissioners to the dispute. It is widely acknowledged that he is one of the most knowledgeable Cameroonians on the disputes on the Cameroon-Nigeria maritime frontier. I have, regrettably, not cited him enough because of economy of space in the footnotes. He put his library at my disposal and granted me interviews.

³⁰ MESRES PAPERS "Frontier Problems", Dr. John N. Foncha, Grand Chancellor of National Orders, to the Minister of Territorial Administration 27.5.1987. The document carries an important review of the local problems as they affected Cameroonians in the region. His view was that the Cameroon Government should have a frontier policy and this should begin by building the "morale" of

frustrated Cameroonians, starting with special support for Chief Simon Upwa of Lebo.

³¹MESRES PAPERS. Gratitude by the Nigerian Government for Ahidjo's role was expressed on many podiums. See, for example, "Speech by H. E. The Military governor of N. E. State of Nigeria, Musa Usman on the occasion of the visit of the Federal Inspector for North Cameroon El Hadji Usman Mey, October 1969. To crown it all, on 27 March 1972, the University of Lagos awarded Ahidjo an honorary Doctorate Degree. Ahidjo never used the title or the one he received from the University of Yaounde in 1982.

³²E.O. Esiemokhai, "Reflections on Some International Legal Aspects of the Nigeria-Cameroon Boundary and Territorial Disputes", *ABU Law Journal*, 1982, p. 40 gives details of the peninsula's strategic position as "observation post to monitor events around the Bight of Biafra". Ahidjo is said to have lived in Zaria, Northern Nigeria and the Nigerians liked the fact that he communicated with them in pidgin English and Hausa.

³³ George Atem. "History of Bakassi" (mimeo) University of Buea 1996, p. 43; MESRES PAPERS. contain scattered reports from the Senior Divisional Officer, Kumba reporting on events on Cameroon's maritime region.

³⁴ For instance, Abana, Atabong, Ime, Odiog became Jabana, Idabato, Nawunso and Wan respectively. The claims of some settlements to distant migration as part of an Efik empire are controversial. See V. G. Fanso, "Inter-Frontier Relations", pp. 106-110. for the point that the Efik empire was commercial and not political; also, Northrup, *Trade Without Rulers: Pre-Colonial Economic Development of South-Eastern Nigeria*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978, especially Chapter One; M. E. Noah, *Old Calabar: The City States and the Europeans, 1800-1885*. Calabar: Scholars Press (Nig.) Ltd., 1980, pp. 74ff.

³⁵ MESRES PAPERS. The sub-prefect Isangele to Governor S.W. Province: He reported that Nigerian soldiers penetrated Cameroon Territory on 18.02.81. Many complained of demoralisation among Cameroonian security forces. It will be superfluous to list the reports about violations of territorial sovereignty because they were a permanent occurrence. See "Boundary Files" National Archives Buea. For a Nigerian viewpoint see E.O. Esiemokhai op. cit.

³⁶ Maroua Declaration, 1st June 1975 (Maps included). An earlier Declaration of 4.4.1971 had fixed the maritime frontier from the three-mile territorial limit to point A at longitude 08°24'E and latitude 04°31'30"N. For this section on the maritime frontier I have relied heavily on S. M. L. Endeley's private papers and interviews. I however bear responsibilities for any wrong interpretations thereof.

³⁷O. Oyene B. Ede, "The Nigeria-Cameroon Boundaries", *Nigeria Forum*, Oct. 1981; pp. 292ff. account based almost exclusively on Nigerian sources. The Nigerian Government started with a similar rejection of the work of their experts (Ngoh-Coker line 1971). The situation now is that the Nigerians accept the existence of the Maroua Declaration but say it is not binding on Nigeria. They argue the Declaration failed to take account of the second paragraph of Article 12 of the Geneva Convention on the Law of the Sea (1958), which refers to historical and other special circumstances. Also, the frontier on the navigable channel of the Akwayafe river should be "wholly to the east of the Cross and Calabar Rivers" as required by the 1913 Anglo-German Agreement. Cameroonians stand by the Declaration, which was signed by the two Heads of State and, as was the common usage, confirmed by exchange of Notes on 17th June 1975. Are there any clauses in

either the Cameroonian or Nigerian Constitution, which prohibit making such a Treaty? What were the intentions of both governments when they planned and met in Maroua? All accepted that the Maroua Declaration was a compromise solution to many problems, which had been put forward by both countries since negotiations started in 1970. It does not contravene official Maps in use in both Nigeria and Cameroon.

³⁸ MESRES PAPERS. This incident provoked much inflammatory literature, especially on the Nigerian side where the press was relatively free. See for instance, the Issue of *Nigeria Forum*, Sept/Oct. 1981; Leo Akwaya, "Cameroon Gendarmes invade Nigerian villages". *The Nigerian Chronicle*, Nov. 23, 1983; Eluem Izeze, "Cameroon: thriving Under Crisis", *Nigerian Observer*, June 17, 1981; Sam Okie, "Why Cameroon Eyes the Border - Isong", *Daily Times*, (Lagos) June 13, 1981. Those who sustained the propaganda in the cities are said to have originated from these or nearby villages and would not relent until the Nigerian Government recognised the validity of their claims.

³⁹Since this paper was written, A. I. Asiwaju, and Victor Julius Ngoh have drawn my attention to two important publications on Bakassi. In his article, "The Bakassi Peninsula Crisis: An Alternative to War and Litigation", in A. I. And C. H. Schofield, (eds.) *Boundaries and Energy: Problems and Prospects*, Kluwer Law International, Great Britain, 1998, Asiwaju says that in addition to war and litigation, there is the problem-solving alternative, which he thought had more chances of succeeding. Our view is that no one approach excludes the other, and in any case no one approach is likely to succeed if the basic assumption of legality is ignored. Multi-dimensional approaches should be simultaneously engaged. These should involve the Multinationals that operate in the region. They have lots of inside knowledge of the secret on-goings and are therefore in a position to propose fair and lasting solutions; Victor Julius Ngoh, "The 1913 Anglo-German Treaty: Understanding the Cameroon-Nigeria Crisis over the Bakassi Peninsula", *Weekly Post*, No. 16, 1995. A very useful yet unpublished study is by George Atem, "Nigeria-Cameroon Relations, 1884-1961, A Study in Political, Economic and Social Interactions between Two Neighbouring States", Ph.D. thesis, University of Calabar, 1984, 714 pages.

⁴⁰ Decree no. 85/305 of March 7th, 1985.

⁴¹ B. M. Barkindo, National Boundary Commission (History, Structure and Operations 1989-1990), July 1991.

⁴² See B. M. Barkindo, (ed.), *Nigeria-Cameroon Trans-Border Co-operation Workshop Yola, Adamawa State, 24-30th May 1992 (Abstracts/Summaries of Papers, National Boundary Commission, The Presidency, Lagos, 1992; also "Joint Communique" Nigeria-Cameroon Trans-border Cooperation Workshop, 24th-30th May 1992. Accounts of this and other encounters (including reports of Mixed Commissions) are to be found in the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Department of Africa and Asia), Yaounde.*

⁴³ African frontier scholars like I. A. Asiwaju and A. O. Cukwurah have strongly recommended the European Outline Convention for Trans-frontier Cooperation between Territorial Authorities or Communities as well as the U.S.-Mexico frontier Conventions as models for peaceful co-existence on Africa borderlands. This means African models should not lay emphasis on economic gains, but should give priority to ethical and human considerations.

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