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ROLE OF PERSONALITIES AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE NIGERIA- CAMEROON DISPUTE

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Abstract

The Nigeria-Cameroon conflict over the Bakassi Peninsula is territorial in nature with economic undertones. Although the border dispute has been lingering since after independence, the discovery of oil in the 1970s brought to the fore intense interests of both countries in the Peninsula. Cameroon took the case to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in 1994 in which the ICJ ruled in its favour in 2002. This paper examines the roles of personalities of the decision makers in the mediation of the Bakassi Peninsula crisis on both sides with emphasis from 2002 to 2015. It looked into their background through the lens of family, education, idiosyncrasy and philosophical ideologies. Similarly, the paper examined the thrust of their personalities with respect to their foreign policy outlook as well as the effectiveness of their political systems. Thus the study seeks to assess personality as a factor that affected the state to state relations between Nigeria and Cameroon. This paper used the systems analysis to analyze the conflict at three levels. Qualitative research method was used by adopting interviews, primary and secondary data.

Keywords: Bakassi Peninsula,, Cameroon, Nigeria, Territorial Conflict

Introduction

Decisions according to David Easton are *the “output” of the political system by which values are authoritatively allocated within a society*” (Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, Jr.1971:468). Thus, decision making can be said to be a principal idea for studying and analyzing the decisions and behaviours of a wide range of groups and individuals such as politicians, legislatures, voters, executive officials etc. in a given political system. Therefore, decision-making has shifted in paradigm over time, from study of a segment of a general issue to the study of the decision makers’ personalities and its effect on the system. It was shown here that states or governments are loosely used to describe the executives who make decisions that affect the polity (Roberts, 1988: 37). Decision making in relation to either domestic or foreign policy is more or less like an individual making a choice of which college to attend. One has to put into consideration many options out of which to make a life changing decision. But even with that, it is not possible to look at all the

possibilities before undertaking such a decision. So it is with policy decision making. It is usually influenced by cognitive, emotional, and psychological and in some cases even biological factors as well as through rational calculations (Rourke, 2008:72).

These parameters differ from one decision maker to another, and to a large extent determine the outcome of his/her choice of decision even if there is an existing system for the state. The personalities of the executive head determine the tone of the foreign relations of those states even if the foreign policies remain the same. The behavior of President Bush Jnr after the 9/11 attack was to go out in an all offensive attack on the perceived enemy. It could be said to be a continuity of the Bush’s family legacy of aggressiveness (personality traits) as the Senior Bush’s attack on Gulf in 1993. But President Obama rule has seen the recalling of America’s military from Afghanistan and a more indirect participation in conflicts around the world. Studies such as Rourke

(2008:75) and Lefebvre (2014) have identified the centrality of the role of different actors particularly Heads of States, former Presidents of both states, United Nations Office of the Secretary-General and the International Court of Justice in the escalation and de-escalation of the Bakassi conflict. The Heads of States of Nigeria and Cameroon's engagement in the Bakassi dispute brought to fore their idiosyncrasies and its overall effect on the outcome of the crisis. We shall now look at the decision makers with emphasis from 2002.

Cameroon Political System

The Cameroonian system of government is republican in nature, with a framework of a unitary Presidential Republic. In which case, the President is both the head of state and head of government. The system is multi-party in nature, with many political parties. The system of government is divided into executive and legislature where executive power is exercised by the government while legislative power is vested both in the government and the national assembly. The judicial system is subordinate to the executive branch's ministry of justice. This means that the Supreme Court may only review the constitutionality of law at the request of the President. (Cameroon-today.com)

Although, the Cameroonian government boasts of over fifty ministries and almost a hundred ministers with their delegates, major decision making lies with the President. During my field work, I came across a strange but existing system in the Cameroonian government. No major decision can ever be taken without the knowledge of and confirmation from the Cameroonian President. Even though power has been delegated to ministers and those that are concerned such heads of delegation during meeting or negotiations, the ultimate decision lies with the President. This strange behavior frustrated the Nigerian government delegates during the sittings of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission (CNMC) where each decision must be referred to 'higher authority' by the Cameroonian

delegation. This statement was confirmed by one of my respondent who is the director, International Boundary, National Boundary Commission Nigeria in one of the CNMC meetings. When he questioned him on the constant 'reference to higher authority' during meeting, he responded (R3), "we are not like Nigerians. We are just like luggage; they carry us and put us there. Sometimes our position even doesn't matter. So that is the situation. Cameroon is a police state and you just have to follow their hierarchy". However, the Nigeria delegates were vested with the power to take/make decisions without constantly referring to their higher authority. Here, the difference between the two systems of government is evident.

The government of Ahmed Ahidjo (1960-1982) has made several attempts to finalize the ownership of the Bakassi Peninsula. He made a strong commitment to Nigeria during the Nigerian civil war which further cemented his relationship with the Nigerian military Head of State, General Gowon. It was during Ahidjo's rule that the Maroua Declaration was signed. Ahidjo led a strong and stable government only handing power to his Prime Minister Paul Biya when he was convinced by his French doctors that he was terminally ill (www.britanica.com).

Paul Biya (1982-Date): Background

He was born in 1933, in the French section of the Cameroon of Mvomeka, Meyosessala subdivision, Dje-et-Lobo Division, South Province. He had his early education in Cameroon and later in France where he measured in Public Law from 1948-1956. Mr. Biya had a colorful career from 1962 as Charge de Mission (assistant) in the Presidency (www.notablebiographies.com). He became the Director Cabinet, Ministry of National Education in 1964. He went on to become the Permanent Secretary in same Ministry in 1965. And in 1967 he became Director of Civil Cabinet (Chief of Staff) and to Secretary General and Director of Civil Cabinet in 1968. In 1980, Biya became Minister of State,

Secretary General in the Presidency and subsequently became Prime Minister in 1982. His first wife died in 1992 and he married the present first lady Chantal Biya in 1994. She can be described as a strong woman with a flamboyant sense of style and a dedicated supporter of her husband regime and his policy (www.huffingtonpost.com). He had his entire career under President Ahmed Ahidjo who mentored him. Paul Biya took over power after the resignation of his mentor in 1982 and was elected President of Cameroon National Union (CNU) and then elected President of the republic in 1983 and 1984 respectively (www.prc.cm).

Politically, when he came to power, he made some bold changes on the old system by introducing democracy along with social and economic liberalization. He also reinforced international cooperation when Cameroon played a big role in ending apartheid in South Africa. It can be seen in his relations with Nigeria as well where economic activities is the bane of cooperation. He was reelected into power under the Cameroon National Union (CNU) umbrella in 1985, then the party was changed to Cameroon People's Democratic Party (CPDM) in 1988 under which he was reelected in 1992, 1997 and 2004 (www.en.wikipedia.org).

In 1990, he upgraded the law on association and political parties bringing the numbers of parties to more than two hundred. In his attempt at making Cameroon a multi-party state, he included other political parties in his government which include the National Union for Democracy and Progress (NUDP) and Union des Population du Cameroon (UPC), while in the national assembly five parties were represented. These are CPDM (his party), NUDP, Social Democratic Front (SDF), UPC and Cameroon Democratic Union (CDU). He came to power under the strong notion of bringing change to the system with his "New Deal" philosophy that promised to establish a humane nationalist agenda (www.cameroon-today.com). The agenda focused on respect of ethnic and linguistic differences, with no tolerance to tribalism. It promotes state decentralization and brought about grassroots democracy within the single party. But most of the promises he made when he

came to power remained undelivered due to massive corruption which characterized his government. He marginalized the Anglo-phone section of the people and removed all key government officials that were loyal to the former President after their fall out (www.prc.cm). It is evident that Paul Biya has been the corridor of power for a long time under the Ahidjo led government that was popular for its unitary system of government. This could explain why he changed the outlook of the state when he eventually came to power.

Biya's Foreign Policy and Personality thrust

Paul Biya's foreign policies are all encompassing which are:

- i. To promote the development of Cameroon
- ii. To protect the nations territorial integrity and sovereignty
- iii. To support regional and international organizations
- iv. To increase the visibility of Cameroon within the international community (Mbaku and Takougang, 2004).

In his foreign policy, he promised action, innovation and ingenuity, while the fundamental objectives of his foreign policy are similar to that of the former President, Ahmed Ahidjo, but their tactics are remarkably different. His foreign policy can be said to have been tailored in part to guarantee his grip on power (www.cameroonpostline.com). Looking at the outcome of events in Cameroon over the period of Biya's rule, one can say that his monopolization of power to a large extent contributed to the failed foreign policy of Cameroon. Qualified diplomats and statesmen were not allowed to do their jobs because every decision rests with the President. The diplomatic corps members, especially those of the USA show apparent lack of knowledge of the host country and ways to make life better for their people (Mbaku and Takougang, 2004:160). He maintained a peaceful atmosphere for his people despite their cries of corruption and marginalization of some sectors of the state. Paul Biya's stance on war is clearly non-confrontational as can be seen in the disagreement on

the Bakassi Peninsula with Nigeria. When in 1994 General Abacha of Nigeria invaded and occupied the Bakassi Peninsula, Cameroon remained cool-headed and sought for multilateral intervention to end the crisis without going to war. As a result, it can be said that Biya's foreign policy towards Nigeria is that of friendship and firmness.

As with most African leaders, and Biya's predecessor Ahmed Ahidjo, relinquishing power is always a herculean task. Cameroon has only known two Presidents since its independence. Although Ahidjo mentored Biya, their viewpoint to the leadership of Cameroon varied. Biya who was perceived as docile and most unambitious of Ahidjo's protégés proved to be the most cunning of all when he assumed power. He controlled every sector of the country and not a single major decision is made without his approval (www.cameroonpostline.com). He constantly stressed the virtues of constitutionality and respect for state establishments, but has never dithered to violate these rules when they impede his personal goals and interests. Biya's loyalists remain unpunished on whatever crime they committed while his adversaries are summarily punished or out rightly killed. In late 1980s former Minister of Finance Etienne Ntsama was believed to have stolen huge amount of money, almost half the annual budget of the country and kept it in the ceiling of his house, he was not punished nor ejected from his office (home.uchicago.edu). But when Biya's own former loyalists and tribesmen plotted against him they were handled with iron fists. Minister Ayissi Mvodo (former governor) and Titus Edzoa (former secretary general at the presidency) switched to opposition party; and were also rumored to associate with the Social Democratic Front of John Fru Ndi -an Anglophone party- in their bid to expose the massive corruption of the Biya's government and remove him from power. But the plan was foiled when Mvodo died mysteriously while Edzoa was sent to prison on trump-up charges of corruption (Post watch Magazine, 2004).

Of recent he manipulated the constitution to suppress the clause limiting the terms of office for President. His

responses to issues are bold and swift to say the least, both at local and international level. In 1998, Transparency International rated Cameroon as the most corrupt nation in the world. Biya responded by accusing the German body of meddling into the affairs of the state. The majority of Cameroonians live below poverty line yet instead of taking the index as a challenge to make a change that will positively affect the lives of the people, he brushed over the issue (Mbaku and Takougang, 2004 pg. 155). The economy continued with a downward slide making life more difficult. The relationship between the state and the people became tainted with distrust and fear.

Considering the background of President Biya and his foreign policy outlook especially in Africa, it can be observed that even as Cameroon is under death grip of a cunning, corrupt leader, he was able to forestall civil war and uprisings within the state by playing the 'divide and rule' principle on the basis of culture and religion against his own people. He has also perfected the system of rewarding his loyalists and turning a blind eye on their shortcomings which in turn earns him their perpetual support. He also maintains a good albeit tense relations with neighboring countries especially Nigeria. Therefore when the Bakassi dispute started taking a violent path, President Paul Biya was quick to take the case to the ICJ for the sake of peaceful coexistence. It can be seen in his patient response to Nigeria's persistent failure to meet the dateline set by the UN for withdrawing its military presence in the Bakassi Peninsula after the ICJ ruling.

The official date for the withdrawal was in August 2004 but for some reason, Nigeria requested the date to be shifted to September of the same year. President Obasanjo paid an official visit to Cameroon on 28 and 29 July 2004 giving the impression to the observers that both countries will honor the ICJ judgment. But the impression was shattered when on 2 August 2004 Nigeria announced the unilateral suspension of the withdrawal of its armed forces from the Peninsula without informing or giving reason to Cameroon. This led to the re-launching of the Mixed Commission in

2005 where a new withdrawal plan was drawn. Eventually, the UN Secretary General intervened and the GTA was signed in 2006. Although the systems of government varied in the two countries, credit should be given to Cameroon for not taking the bait of going to war with Nigeria over the Bakassi Peninsula.

Nigeria's Political System

In 1959, three main political parties contested for elections under the names National Council for Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC), the Northern People Congress (NPC) and the Action Group (AG). These parties are regional in nature with NCNC representing the Eastern part of the country and led by Nnamdi Azikiwe, the NPC represented the northern region with Sir Ahmadu Bello leading the party while AG represented the western region and was headed by Chief Obafemi Awolowo. The regional system of the Nigerian political system could be said to have been institutionalized right from independence.

The Nigerian political system is a mixed of military rule and civilian leadership in its 56 years of existence. Nigeria practices the Federal System of Government where powers are shared between the federal, states and local governments. In this system of government the central component tends to be very strong and controls the resources of the country (www.vanguardngr.com, 2015). The first republic led by the Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa lasted for only six years. His foreign policy was Afrocentric to say the least because he was instrumental in negotiating a settlement in the Congo Civil War and also protested strongly the Sharpeville Massacre of South Africa. He also encouraged other African leaders to form the OAU.

In 1966, a military coup saw the end of the first republic, the demise of the Prime Minister and other key officials, and also marked the beginning of political instability in the country. The Military ruled Nigeria from 1966-1978, when the then Military ruler handed over to a civilian government of Shehu Shagari. In 1993 another coup took place and again the military stayed in

power till 1998 with only a one year civilian rule in between. Nigeria saw a change from military to civilian rule after the death of General Sani Abacha in 1998. Abacha invaded the Bakassi Peninsula in 1994 after persistent complains of brutal attack on Nigerians by the Cameroonian gendarmes in the Peninsula. The case was already in the ICJ when he passed away and the mantle of leadership fell on Olusegun Obasanjo.

Olusegun Obasanjo (1999-2007): Background

Olusegun M.O. Obasanjo was born on 5 March 1937 in Abeokuta, Western Region of British Nigeria. He was born into a Christian family and he attended the Baptist High school in Abeokuta and upon completion he secured a job as a teacher. In 1958, he joined the army because his family could not afford to pay for college. He received training as Officer in England and quickly rose in the army (www.en.wikipedia.org). Obasanjo lost his second wife in 1987 to armed robbery attacked and his first lady in 2005 to botched surgery. Even as a soldier, he portrayed a high sense of statesmanship because he came down in history as the soldier that accepted the surrender of Biafran forces when the Nigerian civil war ended in 1970 (www.africa.upenn.edu).

He first came to power after an unsuccessful coup attempt that saw the demise of the Nigerian military Head of State, Brigadier Murtala Mohammed in 1976, being his second in command. During that period he continued on the legacy of his predecessor. He is also the first military leader in African to hand over power to civilian government following elections. In 1999, he came to power again as the civilian President after the dark regime of General Sani Abacha which made Nigeria a pariah state following his altercations with the western powers (www.bbc.co.uk, 2006).

Obasanjo's statesmanship was tested when he spent most of his first tenure going around the world in what came to be known as 'diplomatic shuttle' trying to re-establish Nigeria in the good books of the international

community. He created the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) alongside the South African President Thabo Mbeki and Algerian President Abdulaziz Boutflika in 2001 (www.africaprogresspanel.org). The initiative aimed to foster development in Africa, open government system and also to end wars in return for aid. NEPAD aims to help in foreign investment as well as lift trade barriers to African exports (www.bbc.com, 2015).

Although he faced communal clashes as well as religious unrests, he was able to handle and ended them given his experience in the military. During his regime, Nigerian military was active in solving regional crises especially in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Though he was accused of corruption, much emphasis was placed in his achievements which continued into his second term in office. It was reported by the BBC and other local media outlets that massive rigging took place during his reelection for second term to the extent that European Union (EU) poll observers cited 'serious irregularities' in election. (www.bbc.com).

His second term continued with many achievements both within Nigeria, sub-region and the continent as well as in the international system. He made great technological advancement when Nigeria's first satellite Nigeria Sat 1 was launched by Russian rocket in 2003. He was also lauded for introducing Global Mobile System (GSM) into Nigeria. He met challenges of industrial strike when fuel price was hiked, constant attacks on oil facilities by the Niger Delta militants for more resource allocations and vandalization of oil pipelines. His grip on the government made it possible for him to negotiate his way out of the strike as well as used carrot and stick method on the Niger Deltans when the need arise. With the increase in oil price which improved the volume of Nigeria's reserve as well as his diplomatic prowess, he was able to get the Paris Club of lenders to write off two third of Nigeria's foreign debt while he paid the rest. Obasanjo tenure was characterized with forceful thrust towards achievements. The Bakassi dispute was settled despite

lack of support from the senate and the Nigerian population (www.bbc.com).

Obasanjo Foreign Policy and personality thrust

Nigeria's foreign policy since 1960 has not changed, though the principles guiding her external relations have constantly changed. Historically, Nigeria's foreign policy is deeply rooted in Africa with strategic emphasis on political and economic cooperation, peaceful dispute resolution and non-alignment. However, the nature and dynamics of Nigeria's relations with other countries has been based on the personality of successive governments in determining the direction of external relations and diplomatic functions based on certain ideological and idiosyncratic basis (www.vanguardngr.com). In a study on the impact of personality of Nigeria's leadership on Nigeria's foreign policy and by extension, the Bakassi crisis, it was determined that Nigeria's leaders act within four concentric circles of national interest with security, independence and relations with its most immediate neighbors'- Benin, Cameroon, Chad and Niger at the innermost circle. The next circle emphasizes on Nigerian-West African relations, the third weighs on issues of peace, development and democratization in continental Africa and the fourth outermost circle focuses on relations with the rest of the world (Nnanna *et al*, 2013). Obasanjo adopted the foreign policy outlined in the 1999 constitution. These are summarized as thus:

- i. Promotion and protection of national interest
- ii. Africa as the centerpiece of Nigeria's foreign policy
- iii. African integration, unity and collaboration
- iv. Promotion of Nigeria's national interest as a foreign policy
- v. Protection of national sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as establishment of a self-reliant economy.

He continued with Nigeria's major foreign policy thrust of Afrocentric through numerous aid and assistance to regional bodies such as ECOWAS. Most of his second

term was characterized by his foreign policy both in Africa and the rest of the world (Alli, 2010:145). In 2004 border talks resumed between Nigeria and Cameroon over the Bakassi Peninsula after Nigeria ceded its sovereignty to Cameroon under the terms of the 2002 ICJ ruling. Both countries agreed for a joint security patrol after talks with the UN secretary Kofi Annan.

A special transitional arrangement for the Nigerian civilian administration will be in place for five years. As earlier noted, states act solely in terms of national interest and these distinct interests are contained in their foreign policies. In Nigeria's statement made during the 61st session of the United Nation in New York (2006), Obasanjo personality traits came forth in his support for peace and fairness in the Middle East as regards to Israel and Palestine crisis. Obasanjo, also called on the international community for urgent humanitarian intervention in Darfur where people suffer due to the slow pace at which a peace agreement was signed in 2005, was being implemented. He reiterated Nigeria's stance on the Bakassi dispute and commended the role of Kofi Annan in managing the dispute.

Politically, President Olusegun Obasanjo has achieved so much and has remained valuable to Nigeria till today. He is known for his open letters to sitting presidents advising or cautioning them of the state of affairs. He is considered a dogged fighter who upholds his convictions irrespective of negative or positive sentiment. In his recent book of three volumes *My Watch* which chronicled his entire career, the reviewer and editor of the book stated that "at the deepest level of conviction, President Olusegun Obasanjo believes that he is God's Watchman over Nigeria and probably the father of modern Nigeria" (www.kunlekasumu.com).

Obasanjo could have played a critical role in ensuring the peaceful resolution of the conflict, but his stance on the implementation of the ICJ ruling suggested the opposite until the intervention of the UN. However, his

decision to eventually respect the ICJ verdict and withdraw Nigerian military forces from Bakassi met with strong opposition from some radicals, who felt that Nigeria's military might should be used for expansionist ambitions. One of the respondents (R13) shared her view:

"Obasanjo is the man with the vested knowledge. He knows everything so why did he allow it? It is only him that can answer. None of them has told us the truth yet. But, I believe that the lord will raise forth sons and daughters of Cross Rivers who will fight for our land-Bakassi. Those who will say this land must go back to the people or who will say we don't accept that ruling. You can't come and force the ruling on us now, it is our land".

Given his ambitious stance, Obasanjo unique diplomatic quality made it possible for Nigeria to end the Bakassi dispute without wasting state resources and subjecting the people to misery and desolation of war.

Astute Diplomat and Negotiator- Kofi Annan-Secretary General of the United Nations: (1997-2006)

He was born on 8 April 1938 in Kumasi, Ghana. His early education started in 1954 when he attended the elite Mfantsipim School. Upon graduating, he proceeded to study Economics at the Kumasi College of Science and Technology. He received a Ford Foundation grant which enabled him to complete his undergraduate studies in economics at Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota, United States, in 1961. He then completed his graduate level work, also in economics, at the Institute Universitaires des Hautes Etudes Internationales in Geneva, Switzerland from 1961 to 1962. Annan returned to the United States and earned a Master of Science degree in management in 1972 at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (www.wikipedia, 2016).

Kofi Annan joined the United Nations in 1962 when he went to work for the World Health Organization. Since

then he has been involved with the United Nations in of different branches, including the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the UN Emergency Force in Ismailia. Annan was assigned to UN Headquarters in New York where he worked with issues ranging from human resources management to peacekeeping. Mr. Annan served as the seventh Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN) between 1997 and 2007 and is the first Secretary-General to have been appointed from a UN staff position. He has a vast knowledge of peacekeeping and in 2005 he assisted in establishing two new bodies within the UN; the Peace building Commission and the Human Rights Council. He has played major roles in a number of international negotiations. He was instrumental in life back to the UN by his commitment to challenges such as HIV/AIDs and international terrorism. He was described by Richard Holbrooke, a former U.S ambassador to the UN as an ‘international rock star of diplomacy.

The founder of CNN, Ted Turner described him as a man ‘with the toughest job in the world and everybody loves him’. Being a very private person, Annan spirituality was often an issue of speculation as to what he believes in. Several writers notable among them William Shawcross called him ‘the world’s secular pope’ (Kille, 2007:299). He is a man with deep appreciation for human value. In 1996, he facilitated negotiations with Baghdad in regards to its oil sales to fund humanitarian relief. In 1999, he played a significant role in helping ease tensions between Libya and the UN Security Council. During the same period, he also persuaded the international community to focus on the violence that was occurring in East Timor. Two years later, in 2000, he helped facilitate Israel’s withdrawal from Lebanon. He also negotiated between Nigeria and Cameroon on the ICJ ruling in 2002 and to the subsequent implementation of the GTA in 2006 (Kofi Annan foundation, 2016).

Annan's years as the UN Secretary General were focused on creating relationships between the organization and citizens and non-governmental

agencies which was a sharp departure from the UN's prior emphasis on government to government cooperation. It has allowed the international organization to address new concerns such as environmental sustainability, human rights, global poverty and inequality, stopping the spread of pandemic diseases, improving education, and fighting global terrorism (Blackpast.org, 2016). In 2001, Annan jointly won the Nobel Peace Prize, for his peacekeeping work, with the United Nations. He has additionally received several honorary degrees and numerous other national and international honors (nobleprize.org, 2016). Annan’s background has given us a glimpse of his personality and his abilities as an astute and calm negotiator.

Negotiated Peace Agreements

Diplomacy as an art in peaceful negotiations and facilitation of bilateral relations has extensively been captured in emerging and re-emerging literature including (Rourke, 2012). It is viewed as a mechanism for adjudication in the settlement of disputes and a central theme in the interaction between judicial and political organs in the resolution of disputes (United Nations, 2013). Thus, there is a symbiotic relationship between diplomacy in negotiated peace agreements and suggestive of the fact that the application of one is not totally exclusive of the other (Martens-Gray, 2012). Prior and existing studies theorized that more than ninety-nine percent of international disputes are settled in peaceful negotiations. Similar studies including (Huth, 2009) view negotiated peace agreements as offering the two sides to a dispute, the flexibility to fashion out their desired terms of settlement, and at the same time exercise significant control over the settlement outcome, by negotiating directly. Contrary studies, including (Clausewitz, 1989) however, theorized that war is necessary for peace. Parallel theories including the realist theory also affirmed the rationality of war in balancing the global power equilibrium. Efforts were made in the past to resolve the Bakassi dispute through bilateral negotiations, in 1981, and again in 1993, 1994 and 1996, with the dispute nearly escalating to war in the mid-1990s.

Between 1994 and 2002, the matter was before the International Court of Justice at The Hague. A judgment was pronounced in 2002 by the ICJ on the matter and the Nigerian government issued a statement rejecting the verdict of the International Court. As the years rolled by, the United Nations and its Secretary-General became the pivot around which settlement efforts revolved as well as for the easing of tensions and renewing of brotherly relations between Nigeria and Cameroon.

Following the judgment, series of bilateral meetings brokered by the UN were held between both parties which requested for a UN Joint Commission to be established to look at all possible implications of the ruling. Under the auspices of the Secretary-General, the first of such achievements of bilateral negotiations was done in November 15, 2002 in Geneva. The two Presidents in a joint communiqué agreed not only to the setting up of a Mixed Commission, but also to consider ways of following up on the ICJ ruling and moving the process forward to protect the rights of the people in the affected areas, and propose a workable solution.

The historic significance of the above cannot be over-emphasized, resulting in the effective withdrawal of the Nigerian military, police and administration from Bakassi. This was considered a triumph in negotiated peace agreements and further indicates that it is thinkable for African countries in conflict to resolve matters amicably and evade carnage, blood-shed, socio-economic and political dislocations, which have characterized post-independent state in Africa. Historically, key actors in the border conflict have been Nigeria, Cameroon, the Efik people, ICJ, Equatorial Guinea (based on their claim to the peninsula) and Sao Tome and Principe (based on their maritime borders with Cameroon). The ruling of the ICJ on the Bakassi case confirmed the legalistic method typical of a Western-style of negotiation. In this purview, the interests of both parties were identified based on the principle of hearing arguments on *'audi altarem partem'* before a final determination. The court's ruling was presented as a final judgment. As Cohen, (2003)

posited, with this approach great emphasis is placed on procedure, the due process of law, even at the expense of substance.

The conciliatory personalities of Presidents Obasanjo and Biya have been argued to be instrumental in the issuing of the joint communiqué after a Tripartite Summit in Geneva on January 31, 2004. They adopted a broad settlement blueprint which included a progressive plan with detailed arrangement for the gradual withdrawal of all civilian, military and police forces from affected areas (GTA, 2006). For Obasanjo, the GTA pact was a significant achievement in terms of conflict prevention, and conflict resolution in Africa and can represent a model for the resolution of the vortex of Africa's persistent internal conflicts and by extension the world. This position of the President is also re-emphasized when the role of the President in leading peace keeping missions in Africa is brought to the fore (NewNigeria, 2007).

Several studies including (Kille, 2007), described Annan as 'an astute statesman with diplomatic finesse', 'savvy in the art of mediation in the murky waters of international affairs'. Annan played a key role in the setting up of the Mixed Commission on the behest of President Paul Biya of Cameroon and President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria in determining ways to implement the ICJ ruling and move the process forward (www.un.org). It is however, inadequate to suggest that the personality of Annan alone was sufficient in persuading the leaders of the two warring states to concede to a bilateral peaceful negotiation, as Britain, France, United States and the United Nations also played key roles in pressuring the countries to accede to peaceful negotiations (www.un.org).

The view is supported by the words of R9 who stated that:

"Biya does not want to go to war with Nigeria because of Bakassi. So he took the case to the ICJ. He is not war hungry and he also knows what is at stake if war should break out

between Cameroon and Nigeria. So he threaded on the side of caution”.

In the end though the Bakassi dispute resolution was heralded as a success of state leadership through conciliated peace talks that led to the drafting of several treaties. The use of peace talks was a trigger indicating a new era in the resolution of international conflicts in Africa without significant bloodshed but diplomatic finesse. The summits of the peace talks culminated in the successful withdrawal of Nigerian troops on 14 August 2006, from the Bakassi Peninsula, marking the climax of a long, slow and tortuous peace process that spanned a period of 12 years. The GTA and the various phases that led up to the handing over can be referenced as a model for the peaceful resolution of disputes in Africa. The interest-based negotiations moved the players in the zero-sum game from a frame of mutually exclusive positions to a collaborative frame of shared interests (Rothman and Olson, 2001). Hence, it can be speculated that Nigeria and Cameroon had a communal and fundamental interests in a peaceful resolution of the crisis to prevent the high costs of war for both sides. Thus, mutual shared interests abetted successful negotiations leading to the signing of the GTA and eventual hand-over of the territory.

There is evident in literature reviewed suggesting that the peace talks were not entirely peaceful in terms of the disparate national interests. Another factor responsible for the successful peace talk lies with ripeness in conflict situation especially for Cameroon. The peace process may have been difficult but it was successful in terms of fostering peace and a tangible plan for future cooperative development.

Conclusion

The resolution of the Bakassi conflict marked a very important period in the history of Africa. It has established the fact that not all conflicts especially one with economic benefits can lead to war. Although conflict is inevitable, the personality and ability of the key decision makers in the Bakassi dispute proved to be of immense value as both Obasanjo and Biya are veterans in the corridors of power. Most territorial conflicts are synonymous with economic benefits and those benefits are usually the trigger to the conflicts as discussed in the course of the thesis. Kofi Annan's part as a negotiator cannot be overemphasized, but two major factors played significant role in the Bakassi dispute; the emergence of Nigeria after the end of General Abacha's dark regime and the readiness of Cameroon to bring the conflict to an end. Therefore in conflict resolution, peace talks, negotiations both bilateral and multilateral, depend on the key decision makers of the warring states or factions. Had Obasanjo succumbed to the internal pressure of ceding Bakassi, or had Biya attempted to forcefully reclaim what he believed belonged to Cameroon, then a full blown war would have become inevitable.

The connection between the levels of analysis in this case, the domestic to system levels can be seen in how the outcome of the Bakassi dispute was determined by the two major decision makers and that of the United Nations through its Secretary General. In the case of Nigeria, President Obasanjo faced internal pressure especially from the legislature while his counterpart in Cameroon was encouraged to engage in dispute settlement, a classic case of Zartman's Ripeness theory. Both parties accepted the outcome of the ICJ ruling and its subsequent implementation which led to the current situation of peace building through economic, political and social engagements.

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