



**ASSESSMENT OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GREEN TREE AGREEMENT
BETWEEN NIGERIA AND CAMEROON**

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ABSTRACT

The New York Green Tree Agreement, established between the governments of Nigeria and Cameroon to address their disagreement on the ownership of the oil-rich Bakassi Peninsula has resulted in specific implementation challenges. This study therefore investigated the degree of implementation of the Green Tree Agreement (GTA). Furthermore, it recognized issues emerging and advantages associated with the execution of the Agreement. The research method utilized was qualitative content analysis, mostly relying on secondary data sources, including books, journals, newspapers, and online materials. Game theory was utilized to juxtapose the relationship between the implementation of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) order of 10 October 2002 and the GT New York Agreement of 12 June 2006. To solve the deficiencies in this study, it was recommended that the governments of Nigeria and Cameroon should emphasize the welfare of displaced individuals and tackle the obstacles hindering the execution of the GT Agreement. Both sides should prioritize bilateralism to resolve the diplomatic concerns that arose during the execution of the Agreement. International organisations, particularly the United Nations (UN) and its agencies must persist in guaranteeing that the objectives of this Agreement are fulfilled to the satisfaction of all parties involved, namely Cameroon, Nigeria, the displaced individuals, Britain, France, and the USA.

KEYWORDS: Green Tree Agreement, International Court of Justice (ICJ), Bakassi Peninsula, Nigeria, Cameroon.

INTRODUCTION

Previous studies have contended that the conflict between Nigeria and Cameroon regarding the sovereignty of Bakassi Peninsula stemmed from colonial dominance and the discovery of natural riches in the area. The aggression stemming from the ownership dispute of the Peninsula was addressed by the International Court of Justice's (ICJ) ruling on 10 October 2002; however, hostilities between the two nation-states continued until the Green Tree Agreement was signed in New York City, USA, on 12 June 2006. In 1991, Nigerian authorities accused Cameroonian forces of forcibly annexing nine fishing towns and their adjacent areas. In response to reports of the killing of many Nigerian civilians by Cameroonian gendarmes, 500 and an additional 1,000 Nigerian troops were sent to deter similar attacks by Cameroonian security forces on Nigerian people for duration of two years. From April to May 1996, there was significant violence in the area initially inhabited by fishermen settlers of the Efik-Ibibio speaking population in Cross River State, Nigeria. More than fifty Nigerian security officers were killed, and several Cameroonian casualties were also reported (Okoi, 2016:58; Dlamini, Awosom-Fru, Dlamini & Awosom, 2022:242).

The association between Cameroon and Nigeria originates from pre-colonial eras. The inhabitants of the region comprising today's border communities possess shared historical ties, including kinship, marriage, language, culture, and tradition; however, the onset of colonialism resulted in enduring conflicts of interest and territorial disputes between the populations of Nigeria and Cameroon. Consequently, colonialism imposed arbitrary boundaries that disregarded the pre-existing connections among the tribes, further complicated by the repercussions of the First World War (WWI). During the period of independence, the United Nations (UN) conducted a plebiscite to ascertain the future of the British trust territories of Northern and Southern Cameroon; however, the Bakassi Peninsula was excluded due to the disputed nature of its original German territorial demarcation by Nigeria. This narrative, coupled with military clashes, impeded the relationship between the two countries. The contentious relationship persisted until the International Court of Justice decided the ownership dispute of the Bakassi Peninsula, delivering its ruling on 10 October 2002 (Sanda & Yanet, 2022:1).

Nigeria's assertion of sovereignty over Bakassi Peninsula was founded on four arguments, the first being the reference to the original title established in the 1884 Treaty with the King and Chiefs of Old Calabar. Secondly, the government asserted effective occupancy of the region and sought to establish the region's sovereignty by a vote by the 300,000 residents of the Island. The

government affirmed its lengthy and continuous control of the Island and contended that Cameroon had, by default, acquiesced over many years, so relinquishing its claim to the Island. Cameroonian authorities assert that their claim to the Peninsula is primarily founded on the 1913 Treaty, in which Britain ceded Bakassi to Germany, and also on the 1971 agreement signed by the Heads of State of Nigeria and Cameroon, which reaffirmed the English-German Border Treaty of 1913 (Anyu, 2007; Tarlebba & Baroni, 2010; LeFebvre, 2013), despite contradicting the foundations of the ICJ verdict. The Island's location, characterized by a significant fish deposit within an expanse of 1,000 square kilometers of Mangrove Swamp and partially submerged Islands extending into the Bight of Bonny, formerly referred to as the Bight of Biafra, undeniably serves as a primary source of interest and allure for both Cameroon and Nigeria (Ibenekwu, Emhenya & Iwundu, 2022).

Akoye and Nwapi (2019:7) assert that only General Sani Abacha decisively addressed the issue, since his administration actively sought the recapture of Bakassi from Cameroon utilizing all governmental resources at its disposal. Previous administrations just threatened Cameroon but lacked the resolve to pursue it with the ferocity exhibited by Abacha. Ola (1994) contends that “the 1961 referendum failed to resolve the boundary dispute, despite the former mandated territory of Southern Cameroon voting to join French Cameroon, and the Nigeria-Cameroon border remaining inadequately demarcated.” The dispute between the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the Republic of Cameroon pertained to the land and sea boundaries in the Lake Chad and Bakassi Peninsula region, where the two nations had a common border. The delimitation and delineation of the land boundary from Lake Chad to the Bakassi Peninsula, as well as the maritime boundary between Cameroon and Nigeria, were also subjects of contention (Ezeilo, 2010:148).

Hostilities diminished due to differing interpretations and perceptions on the implementation of the ICJ ruling in Nigeria and Cameroon. The conflict over the resource-rich Bakassi Peninsula, which began in the 1960s, appears to have been alleviated with the signing of the New York Green Tree pact, initiated by Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo and Cameroonian President Paul Biya. The government of Cameroon was said to have breached certain articles of the 'Agreement' by compelling Nigerian citizens, the indigenous population of Bakassi, to remit levies to agents of the Republic of Cameroon (Stephen, 2024:108). Ngalim (2019:105) states that “the Greentree agreement resolved the ownership dispute over the oil and fish-rich Bakassi Peninsula in favour of Cameroon, but generated issues for the relocated and settled Nigerians.”

On 14 August 2008, the residual Nigerian administration and police were evacuated from the Peninsula (Baye, 2010; Akpan & Onya, 2018).

Agbor (2013), Shaibu, Azom, and Nwanze (2015), together with Nwokolo (2020), contend that the abundance of natural resources prompted the increased interest of the Nigerian and Cameroonian governments in the oil and gas-rich Peninsula. They contended that the Island's advantageous position for agriculture, fishing, and other maritime wildlife activities, aside from its oil and gas resources, is attributable to its location at the extreme end of the Gulf of Guinea, encompassing a surface area of 665 square kilometers, and situated between latitudes 4.260C and 5.100C North and South of the Equator, and longitudes 8.200C and 9.080C East and West of the Greenwich meridian. On 10 October 2002, President Gullauume of the ICJ, in his address, encapsulated the Court's decision regarding the case presented by the government of Cameroon. The Court disclosed that the territorial boundary between Nigeria and Cameroon was established by treaties formulated during the colonial period, which affirmed the legitimacy of those treaties. The Court consequently dismissed the historical consolidation theory presented by the Nigerian government. According to the Anglo-German Agreement of 11 March 1913, the Court determined that sovereignty over Bakassi belongs to Cameroon rather than Nigeria (Sama & Johnson-Ross, 2006:109).

The Milner-Simon Declaration of 1919, the Thomson-Marchad Declaration of 1929-1930, the Henderson-Fleuriau Exchange Note of 1931, and the Anglo-German Agreement of 11 March and 12 April 1913, all representing the colonial legacy of Cameroon and Nigeria under German, French, and British colonial governance, are pertinent documents utilized by the international court to ascertain the ownership of the Bakassi Peninsula (Sama & Johnson-Ross, 2006:109; Ezeilo, 2010:149). On 1 June 1975, General Yakubu Gowon of Nigeria and President El Hadj Ahmadou Ahidjo of Cameroon executed the Maroua Declaration Accord, which extended the 1971 maritime boundary in favour of Cameroon. This constitutes an additional foundation for the ICJ's decision (The Maroua Declaration, 1975; Akonye, 2019). From the viewpoint of the Cameroonian populace, Bakassi Peninsula is situated in the N'dian Division of South-East region, however from the Nigerian perspective; it is located in Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria (Famulugba & Ojo, 2013; Obodo & Akwen, 2017). The disparity in perceptions was a primary factor in the protracted ownership battle of the Peninsula, which persisted for several years before the government of Cameroon sent the issue to the ICJ for resolution.

Nature of the Problem

The diplomatic relations between Nigeria and Cameroon were strained due to the dispute over sovereignty and governance of the resource-rich peninsula. After independence, both nations acquiesced to the unrequested international boundaries established by European colonial powers. In 1980, the Nigerian government expressed a renewed interest in the colonial border and challenged Cameroon's encroachment and claims of ownership, despite the majority of the area's residents being Ibibio, Ijaw and Efik speakers from Nigeria. On 29 March 1994, after multiple unsuccessful diplomatic efforts to address the conflict stemming from Nigeria and Cameroon's competing claims to the Peninsula, the Cameroonian government filed a lawsuit against the Nigerian government at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague, the capital of South Holland Province in the Netherlands. Eight years after the case was presented to the Court, a definitive ruling was rendered in favour of Cameroon on 10 October 2002 (Emmanuel, 2023:63).

Between 1965 and the time the issue was presented to the International Court, various conflict prevention initiatives were implemented, including the Joint Nigeria-Cameroon Border Commission (JNCBC), the Yaounde I Declaration of 14 August 1970, the Yaounde II Declaration of 4 April 1971, the Kano Declaration of 1 September 1974, and the Maroua Declaration of 1 June 1975. Additionally, the Nigeria-Cameroon Mixed Commission (NCMC), operational from 2002 to 2007, served as a paradigm for dialogue and mediation in the prevention of armed conflicts in Africa under UN auspices, featuring a delegation from Cameroon led by Mr. Amadou Ali and a delegation from Nigeria led by Prince Bola Ajibola (Abasi, 2007; Nwogbaga, 2016; Emmanuel, 2023). These results elucidate the rationale behind the divergent approaches of prior studies on the Bakassi Peninsula. Many of these academic studies investigated the origins and primary causes of the conflict. Some have investigated instances of human rights violations during the conflict, while others have analysed the case brought before the ICJ and its ruling; however, scant attention has been devoted to the degree of implementation of the 2006 Green Tree New York Agreement, given the numerous issues that have emerged in the years following its establishment.

Previous research on this subject did not investigate the advantages or the connections between the execution of the GT Agreement and enhanced diplomatic relations between Cameroon and Nigeria. In 1981, 1993, 1994 and 1996, the contention regarding the possession of the peninsula nearly intensified into armed conflict. The refusal of the Bakassi populace to be transported to Cameroon posed a challenge to the proper fulfillment of the agreement. The affected villages, having lost their identities as Nigerians, have not been fully integrated into the new state some

years after the ICJ ruling transferred the territory to the Republic of Cameroon (Baye, 2010; Emmanuel, 2023). Eke and Eke (2007), as referenced in Opué and Usang (2020:2), criticized the International Court of Justice's ruling on the sovereignty of the Peninsula and Nigeria's implementation of the judgment, characterizing the entire process as an international conspiracy akin to a conspiracy theory. Their explanation posited that the ruling constituted a neo-colonial scheme devised to perpetuate the asserted superiority and dominance of Western countries over their erstwhile colonies in Africa.

They contend that this conspiracy did not conclude just with the neo-colonial powers (i.e., external adversaries), but also involved collaboration with local agents (i.e., certain Nigerian political elites) who own vested interests in international capitalism to safeguard and implement their agendas. The execution of the ICJ ruling and GT Agreement may have exacerbated the already intensified violence in the Peninsula. Upon the conclusion of the grace time allotted for the execution of these laws, Nigerian nationals in the Bakassi Peninsula became significantly vulnerable to protection risks. Indigenous individuals who choose to return to their ancestral land to commence anew in unfamiliar regions of Nigeria faced significant hurdles, including issues related to shelter, as well as environmental and health concerns. Over 4,000 individuals residing in a provisional Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camp at Akwa Ikot Eyo Edem in the Akpabuyo Local Government Area of Cross River State were impacted by inadequate implementation strategies, rendering the June 12, 2006 Greentree Agreement ineffective in resolving the conflict. Individuals who opted to stay in their ancestral residences faced confrontation, harassment, assault, and mutilation by Cameroonian gendarmes, in violation of the stipulations of the GT Agreement (UNHCR Global Focus, 2017; Okon & Abu, 2019:2).

Ibenekwu et al. (2022:3) assert that the *zero-sum-game* perspective of the ICJ's ruling regarding the sovereignty of Bakassi is a critical factor influencing the subsequent problems affecting the implementation of the Greentree agreement's terms. Additionally, borrowing on *zero-sum game* theory, which posits that "the winner takes all," Pan (2009) articulates that the *zero-sum game* solution is typically unfeasible in intricate interstate conflicts. Jeong (2000) supports this assertion by contending that a ruling favouring one party in territorial disputes will not foster a positive connection between the disputing parties. The *zero-sum game* decision is typically harmful and destructive to the peaceful connection between conflicting parties. Odinkalu (2012)

notes a deficiency in the 2006 New York Agreement, which hinders the comprehensive resolution of the Bakassi Peninsula dispute. The ICJ ruling also neglected to consider the issue of citizenship. The ICJ ruling and the GT Agreement did not require a referendum or plebiscite for the inhabitants of the Island to determine their allegiance to either Cameroon or Nigeria. Efforts to engage civil society groups in educating the populace before the adoption of the New York Agreement were minimal. Before the execution of the GT Agreement neither party engaged in any consultation with the residents of Bakassi specifically, or with the Nigerian populace at large (Odinkalu, 2012:12). This study investigated the degree of implementation of the GT Agreement, the issues that arose, and the advantages of its successful execution.

Objectives of the Study

The primary aim of this study is to re-evaluate the execution of the Green Tree Agreement. The precise aims of the investigations are to:

- i. Analyze issues stemming from the Green Tree Agreement between Nigeria and Cameroon, and
- ii. Analyze the advantages of effective execution of the Green Tree agreement.

Research Questions

The subsequent inquiries are posed to serve as a research guide for this study:

- i. What issues have emerged from the execution of the Green Tree Agreement between Nigeria and Cameroon?
- ii. What are the advantages of effectively executing the Green Tree agreement?

Method of Study

This study utilized a qualitative content analysis methodology and primarily relied on secondary data sources. This strategy involves obtaining information from pre-existing documented sources, including textbooks, academic journals, government publications, magazines, news articles, and internet-based materials. Materials obtained from secondary sources provide scholars with a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon by analyzing past and contemporary events in a coherent manner. Secondary data refers to information that has been previously gathered by another researcher or author. It comprises data that are already accessible and have been gathered and analyzed by others (Kothari & Garg, 2019:107).

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Green Tree Accord

The Green Tree Agreement (GTA) is the formal agreement that encapsulates the treaty between the Republic of Cameroon and Federal Republic of Nigeria regarding the ownership of Bakassi Peninsula. It encompasses the procedures related to the withdrawal and transfer of control of the Peninsula to Cameroon, facilitated by the United Nations (UN) under the Secretary General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and endorsed and guaranteed by France, Britain, Germany, and the United States. The Agreement acquired its designation from the location of its ratification, Greentree, New York, USA. On 12 June 2006, Nigeria and Cameroon executed the Agreement to terminate hostilities regarding the sovereignty of Bakassi, which was initially governed by Nigeria (Baye, 2010:11; Ibenekwu et al., 2022:8). Article 3 of the GT Agreement explicitly stipulates that Nigerians residing in the Bakassi Peninsula must be afforded the right to enjoy their fundamental rights and freedoms as delineated in international human rights law and other pertinent elements of international law by the authorities of Cameroon. Furthermore, it asserts that Cameroon shall not compel Nigerian nationals residing in the Peninsula to depart or alter their nationality, and shall honour their culture, language, and beliefs, uphold their rights to engage in agricultural and fishing activities, safeguard their properties and customary land rights, refrain from imposing any discriminatory taxes or dues on Nigerian nationals in the region, and implement all necessary measures to protect Nigerian nationals from harassment or harm (Channel Television, 2013; UNHCR, 2018).

The region currently identified as Nigeria was colonized by Britain, while the League of Nations (LoN), which was officially established on 10 January 1920 to foster multilateral cooperation via collective solidarity, partitioned the majority of what is now the Republic of Cameroon. The League also permitted Britain and France to govern it as mission territories of the League of Nations after Germany's defeat in the First World War. The segment of Cameroon governed by Britain was managed by Nigeria until the 1961 plebiscite, during which Northern and Southern Cameroons opted for a union with Nigeria and Cameroon, respectively (Buratai, 2019; United Nations Archives Geneva Platform, 2024). As stated by Hilary (2018) in Sanda and Yanet (2022:7), the bilateral relations between Nigeria and Cameroon deteriorated when the Nigerian populace of Bakassi, primarily of Efik, Efut, and Ibibio descent from Cross River State and Akwa Ibom State, who constitute over 90% of the residents of the Bakassi Peninsula, became targets of harassment, intimidation, torture, humiliation, and murder by Cameroonian gendarmes.

These gendarmes routinely conduct raids in Nigerian regions of the Peninsula, imposing illegal levies on local fishermen and subsequently confiscating their motorboats. By signing the GT treaty, Nigeria pledged to acknowledge Cameroon's sovereignty over the Bakassi Peninsula and subsequently withdrew all its military personnel from the Peninsula within sixty days of the pact's signature. This pact stipulates that Cameroon shall not deport Nigerian nationals from the Peninsula nor compel them to alter their nationality. Nigerian nationals should be permitted to freely exercise their cultural, linguistic, and belief rights, as well as their customary land rights, among other entitlements (Ngalim, 2019:106).

Article 3 explicitly ensures that Nigerian people residing in the Bakassi Peninsula following the transfer of authority to Cameroon can exercise their fundamental rights and freedoms as stipulated in international human rights law and other pertinent aspects of international law. Cameroon shall: refrain from compelling Nigerian nationals residing in the Bakassi Peninsula to vacate the region or alter their nationality; honor their culture, language, and beliefs; uphold their rights to persist in agricultural and fishing endeavours; safeguard their properties and customary land rights; impose taxes and other dues on Nigerian nationals residing in the area without discrimination; and implement all necessary measures to shield Nigerian nationals living in Bakassi from harassment or harm (Green Tree Agreement, 2006).

Article 4 stipulates that this agreement shall form an essential component of the ICJ ruling dated 10 October 2002, and that no segment of the agreement shall be construed, in either written or oral form, as a relinquishment by Cameroon of its sovereignty over any portion of the region. Article 5 stipulates that the Agreement must be executed in good faith by the parties involved. Article 6 establishes a follow-up committee to oversee the execution of this Agreement, comprising representatives from Cameroon, Nigeria, the UN, and the observing superpowers of France, Britain, and the USA. Article 7 stipulates that the agreement shall not be interpreted as an alteration or modification of the ICJ's judgment dated 10 October 2002, for which the agreement delineates the modalities of implementation. Article 8 stipulates that the agreement between the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the Republic of Cameroon was drafted in English and French, and was executed at Green Tree, New York, USA, on 12 June 2006 (Green Tree Agreement, 2006; Akonye, 2019). This Agreement serves as a supplementary document to the ICJ verdict of 2002 regarding the disputed ownership of the Bakassi Peninsula between Nigeria and Cameroon.

Theoretical Framework

This study deems it essential to adopt Game theory which is a political analytical tool that originated from the studies of John von Neumann and Oscar Morgenstern in the 1950s. This theory is also linked to Shubike (1964), Plane and Riggs (1973), and Schelling (1960). The proponents of this theory formulated it to examine the issues encountered by policy-makers, who are the key actors in a state's political system. Game theorists perceive international relations and transactions as a framework focused on rational decision-making tactics and choices in contexts of conflict and rivalry, where each participant aims to maximize benefits and minimize losses. The primary emphasis of game theory is on rational decision-making and conflict resolution. The choices made are either constrained or unrestricted. Each player's objective in a game scenario is to reduce losses while enhancing rewards. In game theory, this result is termed 'pay-offs.' The participants are anticipated to be directed by logical assessments. There are two primary categories of games: *zero-sum games* and *non-zero-sum games*. In a *zero-sum game* between 'X' and 'Y', each gain by 'X' results in an equivalent loss for 'Y'. In the context of a country's elections, the *zero-sum game* signifies that two candidates are vying for an elective office, resulting in one victor and one loser (Akpotor, 2000).

Varma (1975:340) defines game theory as “a framework that addresses rational decision-making strategies in contexts of conflict and competition, where each participant or player aims to maximize gains and minimize losses.” “It is a theory frequently employed in the domains of coalition behaviour, judicial behaviour, and conflict scenarios in international politics.” In wartime, military operations such as an “air duel” or a struggle for control over a hill that one nation captures may represent a transient setback for the opposing nation. In a *non-zero-sum game*, there are neither winners nor losers; instead, it results in either a *win-win* or *lose-lose* scenario among the participants. This indicates that specific factors must be taken into account in game theory. Proponents of this theory perceive international relations as an *N-person Non-Zero-sum game*. This suggests that the advantage gained by one nation or entity does not inherently come at the detriment of others. It is not the ‘winner-takes-all’ principle that pertains to the *zero-sum game*. This theory is proposed to elucidate the conduct of States during conflicts, particularly when there are competing interests in an international issue area (Ikelegbe, 2006).

This idea enables a nation-state to evaluate and anticipate the reactions of its contemporaries in response to a specific decision or action. After assessing the potential responses of the opposing state, she selects the optimal alternative to maximize her advantage in a certain issue area. States and actors in international relations utilize available information to accurately predict anticipated

results (Sanubi, 1999; Ikelegbe, 2006; Oromareghake & Oluka, 2016). Game theory, as a scientific methodology, operates under the premise that each participant is rational, possessing a defined set of coherent and mutually consistent objectives from which to select a policy option without error, while simultaneously believing that their chosen strategies align with the rational expectations regarding the behaviours of other players (Amitai, Etzioni, 1967; Sanubi, 1999; Ikelegbe, 2006). The *Zero-Sum Game* applies to the ownership dispute between Cameroon and Nigeria, wherein the Republic of Cameroon emerges as the potential ‘*winner takes all,*’ facilitated by the 2002 ICJ ruling and the 2006 Green Tree Agreement, both of which transferred the Bakassi Peninsula to the Republic of Cameroon.

In the years following the treaty's adoption, both nation-states are profoundly focused on safeguarding their national interests, which they did not plan to relinquish. Both nations prioritized the safeguarding of their citizens' lives and properties, the preservation of territorial integrity, and the protection of national interests; they never intended to compromise any of these priorities, even after signing the GT treaty under the auspices of the UN, Britain, France, and the USA in 2006. The theory unequivocally served as the framework for the ICJ ruling on the Bakassi Peninsula and the GT Agreement about the contested boundary between Nigeria and Cameroon.

Akoye (2019:488) posits that the theory functions as a framework for comprehending and elucidating the ICJ ruling process. This theory is utilized to analyze Nigeria's behaviour in resolving the disagreement with Cameroon on the sovereignty of Bakassi, culminating in the accord that facilitated the withdrawal of Nigerian troops from the Bakassi Peninsula. This theory is applicable as both Nigeria and Cameroon engage in a significant interplay of conflict and cooperation, evidenced by various agreements made before and after the ICJ verdict, which exemplifies a *Zero-sum game*, where Nigeria's losses equate to Cameroon's gains. Nigeria lost nearly all of its territory and some of its populace to Cameroon. Cameroon acquired the Bakassi Peninsula along with a portion of its population, whilst Nigeria relinquished the Peninsula and part of its citizens. This exemplifies the principles of game theory in competitive scenarios.

Issues Emerging from the Green Tree Agreement between Nigeria and Cameroon

Since the ICJ judgment of 10 October 2002 and the GT Agreement of 12 June 2006, the implementation of these principles has encountered specific problems, including the Cameroonian authorities' reluctance to consistently comply with them, despite their mutual

endorsement. The ICJ ruling transferred the Bakassi Peninsula, previously governed by Nigerian authorities, to Cameroon, while the GT agreement conferred ownership, control, and administration of the Peninsula to Cameroon. After the transfer of the Peninsula to Cameroon, the indigenous residents had numerous issues stemming from the ICJ's ruling and the signing of the GT Agreement, the execution of which also faced significant difficulties. Individuals who opted to stay in Bakassi upon its cession to Cameroon encountered frequent confrontations, harassment, and intimidation by Cameroonian security forces (Channels Television, 2013; UNHCR, 2018; Okon& Abu, 2019).

Mbuh (2004), along with Opue and Usang (2020), contend that despite the commendable truce and ruling of the ICJ aimed at eliminating militancy and fostering peaceful coexistence, the initiative ultimately failed to deliver remedial measures to the indigenous inhabitants and residents of Bakassi. Bakassi population remain in disarray, indicating that no adequate plan was established to relocate the original occupants of the Island, Abana and Atabong, to a well-organised place for the continuation of their life. No adequate strategy was devised for the new means of subsistence for the displaced individuals of the Island. The majority of the population previously relied on fishing for their livelihood; however, this has shifted, possibly to agricultural and livestock production involuntarily (Mbuh, 2004; Opue & Usang, 2020). They were also denied access to political and economic opportunities. They encountered issues with nationality recognition following the conferment of sovereignty over the Peninsula to Cameroon (Ondoa, 2022:130). Nwogbaga (2016:1) asserts that since Nigerian authorities relinquished the Bakassi Peninsula to Cameroon, the electoral rights of the displaced Bakassi populace have been compromised, resulting in their disenfranchisement during the 2007, 2011, and 2015 general elections in Nigeria. Nigerian authorities appear to have taken minimal steps to address the electoral ramifications of displacement, particularly with the displaced Bakassians.

The Cameroonian government initiated the implementation of the GT Agreement following the New York agreement, prioritizing developmental projects such as education, sanitation, and health infrastructure; however, it was hesitant to acknowledge the Nigerian nationals who opted to remain in the Bakassi Peninsula. In an effort to execute the New York agreement, Cameroonian authorities initiated various governmental programmes. The authorities established the Lukunze Commission, led by Jacob Lekunze, the Prime Minister of Cameroon and chairman of the coordinating committee, from 2008 to 2009. The Commission highlighted the needs of Bakassi's population and pledged full commitment to the execution of proposed initiatives,

including integrated health centers. The Commission not only defined and supervised government policies but also plays a monitoring role, ensuring the efficacy of the rehabilitation of the Bakassi Peninsula. The Commission also guarantees social cohesion by upholding the rights of individuals and overseeing their social support. The Commission convened monthly to provide support and oversee site operations, as well as the daily lives of the populace. Upon handover, Nigeria retained significant electrical infrastructure, a gendarmerie brigade, and a primary school in the Issobo region, predominantly inhabited by the Nigerian ethnic minority referred to as “Idjo” (Ondoa, 2022:130).

Following Nigeria’s withdrawal, the Cameroonian government assumed control of all facilities to enhance the adaptability of the surviving populace. In contrast to the Issobo, the Rio location serves as the logistical hub for BIR DELTA, housing the majority of operations, including shipboard maintenance facilities and a bakery. Additionally, there are Cold Rooms for food preservation and a water treatment facility. The location of Akwa signifies the inception of the Greentree Agreements. Additional historical sites and locales exist where the post-implementation policies of Cameroon were concentrated (Ondoa, 2022:130-131). The Nigerian government and several non-governmental organisations (NGOs) initiated actions to execute the resettlement provisions outlined in the Greentree Agreement. Nigerian government and NGOs, in their collaborative efforts to resettle displaced individuals from the former three Ikang Wards of Akpabuya L.G.A, relocated the majority of fishermen to coastal regions, while most displaced farmers among the IDPs were relocated to inland locations.

Subsequent action involved the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that included a provision for the rotation of electoral seats between the riverine Bakassi internally displaced persons (IDPs), hinterland Bakassi, and the indigenous populations of the host communities. It includes a stipulation for the equitable distribution of the councillorship position between the two groups of settlers. Despite these arrangements, a portion of the Bakassi internally displaced persons (IDPs) persists in advocating for a new settlement in the Dayspring Island area, while others characterize this agitation as politically motivated and refuse to endorse it (Umoeffah, 2018; Uchekukwu, 2018; Okon & Abu, 2019). Fundamental infrastructures, including water, electricity, healthcare, and sanitation facilities, as well as educational institutions for internally displaced persons (IDPs), remain insufficient years after the resettlement agreements were signed by Cameroon and Nigeria. Consequently, the spouse of Mr. Asuquo Etim perished during childbirth at the IDP camp situated at Government Secondary

School, Akwa Ikot Eyo Edem, Akpabuyo LGA (Umoeffah, 2018; Uchechukwu, 2018; Okon & Abu, 2019).

In accordance with the GT Agreement, the Nigerian government withdrew its forces from the Peninsula, lowered its national flag, and replaced it with the Cameroonian national flag. Nigeria additionally removed the Bakassi Peninsula from Cross River State and permitted the renaming of nearly all Bakassi settlements in the region to Cameroonian names (Akonye, 2019:492). In April 2013, reports indicated that 20 Nigerians were killed and over 1,000 displaced during several assaults by Cameroonian gendarmes while expelling the indigenous population of the Bakassi Peninsula who opted to remain in the region. On 7 July 2017, more than 97 Nigerian nationals were killed when gendarmes assaulted inhabitants of Bakassi for failing to pay a boat fee of Nigeria's One thousand naira only. In response to persistent assaults on Nigerian citizens by Cameroonian military personnel, more than 2,000 Nigerians vacated their ancestral residences to seek asylum in internally displaced persons camps set up by the Cross River State government at Ikot Effiom/Ekpiri Obutong and Akwa Ikot Eyo Edem in Akpabuyo Local Government Area (Channels Television, 2013; UNHCR, 2018; Okon & Abu, 2019).

These instances illustrated the insufficient execution of the GT Agreement and MoU established between the host communities and Bakassi IDPs by the government. These scenarios also illustrate the story of Ibenekwu, Emhenya, and Iwundu (2022), who criticized the readiness of Cameroonian and Nigerian authorities in the year following the Greentree accord. This development has significant implications for the resettlement initiatives of internally displaced persons (IDPs). The absence of the African Union (AU) and the lack of engagement from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Economic Commission of Central African States (ECCAS), and East African Community (EAC) undermine regional support for the implementation of the GT Agreement. In addition to this problem, other significant obstacles hindered the execution of the New York GT Agreement, including domestic resistance. The administration of Nigeria's President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua faced legal challenges regarding the legitimacy of the Agreement, hindering its full implementation (Afril News, 2008). In addressing the concerns of the displaced individuals from Bakassi, Nigeria encountered domestic upheaval, particularly insurgency in the Niger Delta region. Conversely, Cameroon encountered opposition from the bulk of the inhabitants of the Bakassi Peninsula, who still identified as Nigerians (ThisDay, 2007; Issaka & Ngandu, 2008).

Despite assurances from Cameroonian authorities regarding their commitment to implement development initiatives, such as providing free education and constructing modern hospitals and roads, the displaced individuals opposed the transfer of Bakassi to Cameroon. Certain experts ascribed this resistance to the postponements in fulfilling commitments, which likely diminished popular trust in the Cameroonian leadership under Bakassi. Another area of worry was the resurgence of rebel groups and assaults on oil and gas installations in the Niger Delta region in early 2006. By November 2007, certain militant actions in the Delta region extended to Bakassi, as the Niger Delta is situated at the western boundary of Bakassi. Significant portion of the Nigerian people residing in the Lake Chad region were displaced due to the shrinking lake in the areas of Cameroon and Chad (ThisDay, 2007; Issaka & Ngandu, 2008). Roseanne (2007) and Akonye and Nwapi (2019) assert that the ICJ's ruling, which transferred the Peninsula to Cameroon, along with the GT Agreement between Nigeria and Cameroon, has left the Peninsula's inhabitants homeless and stateless, resulting in unresolved issues that persist to this day. The 'winner takes all' ruling of the ICJ undeniably represents a significant issue for both Nigeria and Cameroon years after its issuance.

Advantages of Enacting the Green Tree Treaty

The extended judicial and diplomatic conflict between Nigeria and Cameroon serves as a notable case study of maritime and territorial disputes in Africa. The issue adjudicated by the ICJ in 2002 was reported to be concluded with the signing of the New York Agreement in 2006. Onyendi and Agomuo (2024:84) noted that “the dispute over the sovereignty of Bakassi constituted one of the protracted land and maritime disputes in Africa.” During the 1990s, disputes regarding ownership of the Peninsula intensified, resulting in sporadic military conflicts and regional instability. The assertion of sovereignty over the territory led to a prolonged diplomatic impasse between Cameroon and Nigeria, both situated in the West African subregion. The acknowledgment of potential diplomatic benefits in the absence of conflict led both nation-states to concur on resolving the disagreement through diplomatic channels. The New York Agreement of 2006 facilitated a peaceful conclusion of the territorial and maritime dispute between Cameroon and Nigeria.

Odinkalu (2012:12) says that the ICJ's verdict constituted a pivotal moment in the resolution of the issue in Africa. It also demonstrates the efficacy of international legal institutions in adjudicating such conflicts. The advantage also resides in its endeavour to foster peaceful cohabitation among the inhabitants of Bakassi and to restore diplomatic relations between

Cameroon and Nigeria. The successful implementation of the GT New York accord also establishes a precedent for managing similar disputes in the near future. The successful execution of the 'Agreement' restored the diminished trust between Cameroon and Nigeria, as well as within the sub-region. Baye (2010), as referenced in LeFebvre (2013:3), characterised the benefits of successful implementation of the New York agreement as peace, encompassing three primary areas: reduction of expense, restoration of international credibility, and enhancement of cross-border operations. This indicates a reduction in military expenditure necessary for overseeing the Bakassi Peninsula dispute, with resources reallocated towards essential social development initiatives, like healthcare, education, and infrastructure, which are advantageous to the region's economy.

LeFebvre (2013:3) noted that the effective execution of the GT agreement has enabled the international community to reevaluate peace as the sole possibility for resolving maritime and land border conflicts. Furthermore, she contends that peace is essential for attracting foreign investment to regions abundant in oil, natural gas, fisheries, and agriculture, thereby enhancing the socio-economic condition of the Bakassi population. Trade and tax revenue between Cameroon and Nigeria could be enhanced with the successful implementation of the GT Agreement. On 28 February 2012, Nigeria and Cameroon signed an agreement in Abuja, Nigeria, establishing the Cameroon-Nigeria Border Security Committee, which led to the formation of the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) to combat Boko Haram insurgency, as well as the Joint Maritime Exercise codenamed "Obangame" to enhance the interoperability of the maritime forces in the Gulf of Guinea. On 29 March 2006, the two nations executed a memorandum of understanding in Yaoundé about the transnational highway project to enhance transportation between them (Hilary, 2018).

The Bamenda-Enugu route, measuring 443 kilometers, was completed collaboratively by both nations. In May 2014, following the abduction of the Chibok school girls by Boko Haram terrorist group in Nigeria, the relationship between Nigeria and Cameroon was strengthened. In 2015, the leaders of both nations convened in Yaoundé, where they affirmed their commitment to mutual support and pledged to jointly eradicate Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin (Ole, 2015; Sanda & Yanet, 2022). This non-zero-sum game method is essential for advancing bilateral interactions between nation-states in the post-GT implementation age. The successful execution of the 'Agreement' has maintained enduring peace between Cameroon

and Nigeria, notwithstanding the problems associated with the resettlement of the displaced Bakassians.

CONCLUSION

After the ICJ's verdict, the Nigerian government executed the decision of the international court and proceeded to honour its obligations under the deal negotiated in the Green Tree, New York accord. Nigeria fully acquiesced and withdrew its forces from Bakassi Peninsula, transferring control and administration of the Island to Cameroon. In the initial phase of the post-implementation era, Cameroon failed to adhere to the stipulations of the Greentree Agreement. It was alleged to have disregarded the nationality of certain citizens of Bakassi who opted to identify with Nigeria. The delay in fulfilling the immediate needs of the internally displaced persons (IDPs), including sanitation and healthcare equipment, as well as social infrastructure such as shelters and educational facilities, represents the most apparent challenges encountered by the population both before and following the implementation of the New York Agreement. This survey also cited the imposition of levies on Nigerian nationals, among other issues, as difficulties. Despite numerous diplomatic attempts to delineate the true boundary between the two states failing and leading to a diplomatic impasse, the execution of the GT agreement subsequently revitalized diplomatic engagement in the socio-economic and security domains. In response to the security challenges posed by terrorist groups in the Lake Chad region, both nations have collaborated to combat the proliferation of Boko Haram, Ansaru, and ISWAP activities. Cameroon, the victor, has integrated the Bakassi Peninsula politically, socially, and economically into its collective identity, but Nigeria, the vanquished, has resigned itself to its fate despite the loss of the Bakassi Peninsula's identity.

RECOMMENDATION

The following recommendations are essential remedies for the implementation issues of the Green Tree Agreement:

1. The governments of Nigeria and Cameroon must prioritize the welfare of displaced citizens in the Bakassi Peninsula to tackle the implementation issues adversely affecting them, including inadequate infrastructure such as healthcare facilities and schools. The Cameroonian government should furnish the Bakassi people with shelter, facilitate their access to jobs and quality education, and ensure their enjoyment of social and economic rights.

2. Both parties should prioritize bilateralism to resolve diplomatic concerns stemming from the post-Green Tree Agreement implementation period. Consequently, contentious issues such as the free movement of individuals and commodities, technical and legal assistance, as well as economic and financial concerns, must be promptly reinstated to enhance diplomatic relations between Cameroon and Nigeria.
3. International organisations, especially the United Nations (UN) and its agencies must persist in ensuring the attainment of the GT Treaty objectives to the satisfaction of all stakeholders, including the displaced individuals.
4. ECOWAS, ECCAS, and EAC, which were uninvolved in the implementation phase of the GT agreement, should abandon their apathetic stance and assume a crucial part in its execution by offering economic assistance to the Nigerian populace residing in Bakassi.
5. International financial institutions, including the African Development Bank (ADB), World Bank, and International Monetary Fund (IMF), should spearhead the provision and mobilization of resources for the Cameroonian government to facilitate the execution of the agreement established in 2006.

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