

INTERNATIONAL BORDER CONFLICTS AND DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS AMONG AFRICAN STATES: REFLECTIONS ON NIGERIA-CAMEROON AND GHANA-IVORY COAST BORDER CONFLICTS

David M.E. Nwogbaga; Akpan Ekaette Amos; Nnanyere, C.O. & Onwa, Doris O.

Department of Political Science, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Nigeria

dnwogbaga504@gmail.com

Abstract

The rising spate of international border conflicts has generated a lot of concerns, controversies, and debates over the implications and consequences for diplomatic relations among African States. Due to the prevailing international boundary disputes, the basis upon which the territorial integrity of African States can be established is largely questioned with respect to pre-colonial natural boundaries and the post-colonial political boundaries. More worrisome is the fact that the resolution and management processes of the international border conflicts among African States are scarcely handled by African Institutions; instead, they are handled by western-controlled institutions thereby expanding the spheres of vested interests and diplomatic maneuvering beyond African States. Thus, this study examines the impacts of international border conflicts on diplomatic relations among African States with comparative insights drawn from the experiences of the Nigeria-Cameroon and Ghana-Ivory Coast border conflicts. Qualitative Research Method was adopted while Territorial Peace Theory was applied. The objectives of the study are to: (i) identify the basis upon which the international courts passed verdicts over the Nigeria-Cameroon and Ivory Coast-Ghana border conflicts; (ii) examine how the Nigeria-Cameroon and Ivory Coast-Ghana border conflicts affect their diplomatic relations. The major findings of the study are: (a) the International Court of Justice passed verdict over the Nigeria-Cameroon land and maritime border conflict based on the principles of uti possidetis and inviolability; while the Special Chambers of ITLOS ruled on the Ivory Coast-Ghana maritime border conflict based on the principles of equi-distance and relevant circumstances; (b) although the border conflicts affected Nigeria-Cameroon and Ivory Coast-Ghana diplomatic relations negatively, it was not to the extent of the countries severing their diplomatic ties. Hence, the study enjoins other African States having border conflicts to adopt legal options as Nigeria and Cameroon as well as Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire did to sustain their diplomatic relations.

Keywords: *International Border Conflict, Diplomatic Relations, African States, Boundaries, Revisionists.*

Introduction

International border conflict among African States has been a critical issue of concern in the international system. Virtually every African state has border conflict with her neighbours. Whereas some of the border conflicts are so pronounced to the extent of affecting the diplomatic relations of the states involved; others are not quite pronounced internationally, but continually generate occasional skirmishes among the border communities thereby making the affected areas tensed. It is however unfortunate that there are scarcely any clearly defined borders among African countries due to the notable dichotomy between natural boundaries recognized by the ancient African state system known as border communities today, and the “political boundaries” recognized in the modern states system. This dichotomy has made most border conflicts among African States seemingly intractable because when border communities resolve their territorial conflicts, it may not be in tandem with the boundaries recognized under modern state system. Similarly, when the border conflicts are reconciled based on the principles of modern state system, it may be at variance with the boundaries known to and recognized by the border communities based on their pre-colonial heritage. Consequently, the border conflicts impact negatively on the diplomatic relations of affected countries sometimes to the extent of severing their diplomatic ties. It is against this backdrop that this study is poised to comparatively examine the Nigeria-Cameroon and Ghana-Ivory Coast border conflicts especially as it affects their diplomatic relations over the years. In this light, the study is focused on addressing the following research questions:

1. What was the basis upon which the international courts passed verdicts over the Nigeria-Cameroon and Ivory Coast-Ghana border conflicts?
2. How did the Nigeria-Cameroon and Ivory Coast-Ghana border conflicts affect their diplomatic relations?

Theoretical Framework

The territorial peace theory as propagated in the writings of Gilber (2012), Hutchison, Starr, and Daniel (2017), Gilber and Miller (2017) argue that the stability of a country's borders has a large influence on the political climate of the country. In other words, peace and stable borders foster cordial diplomatic relations among states, while a mismanaged territorial conflict with neighbor countries have far-reaching consequences for both individual-level attitudes, government policies, conflict escalation, arms races, and war. In particular, the territorial peace theory seeks to explain why countries with stable borders are likely to enhance their diplomatic cooperation while countries with insecure borders tend to strain and severe diplomatic relations.

The territorial peace theory is suitable for explaining the effects of international border conflicts on diplomatic relations among African States with focus on Nigeria-Cameroon and Ghana-Cote d'Ivoire experiences. Based on the proposition of the theory that peace and stable borders as may facilitated by neighbouring states like Nigeria and Cameroon as well as Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire promote cordial diplomatic relations. But countries with insecure and unstable borders are more likely to cut diplomatic ties if not properly managed.

Methodology

This study adopted qualitative research design. Hence, data and information used for this study were generated from secondary sources which include existing documents like textbooks, journal articles, periodicals, and online publications. The method of data collection used is deductive techniques which involved interpretation, synthesizing, and summarizing the contents of existing studies. The method of data analysis was based on content analysis techniques and the use of descriptive statistics like graphs and simple percentage calculations to show trends in the variables under investigation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Review

International Border Conflicts

The concept of international border has varied and shifting interpretations based on diverse views and perceptions. Ikome (2012) identified two possible definitions of border: geographic definition and legal definition. Geographically, Ikome (2012) asserted that border generally conveys a sense of imaginary or real lines that divide two pieces of land from one another; and when the lines run between two national states, it is described as international boundaries usually defined from point to point in treaties, arbitration awards or reports of boundary commissions. In legal terms, Ikome (2012) explained international boundaries as the sharp edge of the territories within which states exercise their jurisdictions; in other words, border refers to the lines that mark the legal termination of the territory of one state or political unit and the start of another. The legal definition of border by Ikome (2012) is preferred to the geographical definition because it is more comprehensive. Conceiving border as lines that mark the legal termination of the territory of one state incorporates both land and maritime borders whereas the geographic definition only captured land borders. Okoli and Ngwu (2019) while operationalizing international border used boundary and borderline synonymously. For Okoli and Ngwu (2019), border, boundary, and borderline are synonymous and can be used interchangeably to mean: a line that marks and defines the confines of a state, distinguishing its sovereign territories from those of others; a stretch of geo-spatially recognized line that divides two or more sovereign territories on a common international frontier. Thus, an international boundary as conceived by Okoli and Ngwu (2019) is one which is mutually agreed upon and jointly owned by the countries involved; it is usually derived through a mutual and consensual process of delimitation (delineation) and codification, whereby the states involved agree on the terms and features of demarcation. Similarly, Okumu (2017) explained border as a line that defines the limits of a state's territorial and physical jurisdictions. Okumu (2017) identified two forms of borders classified as *Fixed Boundary* and *General Boundary*.

Whereas the Fixed Boundary refers to one that has been accurately surveyed such that if marking or beacon is lost, it can be replaced in the same position by accurate survey measurements; General Boundary is one where the precise line of the legal boundary between adjoining land or

maritime portions is left undetermined (Okumu, 2017). The classification of international border into fixed boundary and general boundary captures that of Vogt (1986) who categorized them into political boundary and natural boundary. Whereas the political boundary describes the cartographic demarcations of territories through survey measurements arising from the colonial first scramble for Africa; natural boundary explains the pre-colonial borders of major ethnic groupings that constitute the bulk of the population of a given state (Vogt, 1986). The foregoing conceptualizations indicate that international border has geographical, legal, political, economic, diplomatic, and socio-cultural undertones which largely affect its character and dynamics. It is the interplay of these associated variables in relation to the national interests of states that tend to result in international border conflicts.

International border conflict refers to disagreement and contestations between two or more states over incompatible claims regarding precise or specific boundary demarcations (Okoli and Ngwu, 2019). According to Geomans and Schultz (2013), international border conflict exists when states pursue territorial claims over a borderline requiring either diplomatic or military interventions. Like Geomans and Schultz (2013), Okoli and Ngwu (2019) agree that though international border conflict is territorial in nature, it is often motivated by delicate geo-strategic and economic concerns that bear essentially on the exigencies of state preservation or survival. In the explanation of Zartman (2011), international border conflict described as trans-boundary dispute, refers to disagreements or misunderstandings about and across line where the territory of a state stops and another starts. In this light, Zartman (2011) identified two types of international border conflicts: dispute about boundary and dispute across boundary. While dispute about boundary is concerned with not knowing where the line is, and not liking where the line is; dispute across boundary goes beyond the borderline to claim the territory or borderland after the identifiable line either in search of a new line or to destroy an old line. Similarly, Goldstein and Pevehouse (2011) explained international border conflict as the differences over where borders between two states should be drawn and who controls a disputed piece of land. Hence, for Goldstein and Pevehouse, international border conflicts are of two varieties: territorial conflict and control conflict. As explained by Goldstein and Pevehouse (2011), territorial conflict is about where borders are drawn; while, control conflict is concerned with right of administration and governance over communities proximate to the borders.

Diplomatic Relations

Prior to the explication of Diplomatic relations, it is of essence to conceptualise Diplomacy. Diplomacy was derived from the Greek word Diploma which means folded document (Onuoha, 2008). The folded document referred here is associated with the scrolls of the ancient days which contained the official handwriting and credentials of Royal Heads meant to confirm and authenticate the claims of the bearer. Claims in this context, means the message-contents sent from one Royal Head to another through emissaries (agents) to facilitate interactions among autonomous political units. Diplomacy in contemporary international relations has featured varied interpretations. Karen (1999:120) explained diplomacy as “the practice of states trying to

influence the behaviour of other states by bargaining, negotiating, taking specific noncoercive actions or refraining from such actions, or appealing to the public for support of a position". In other words, diplomacy influences behaviours of actors without application of force; it usually begins with bargaining, through direct or indirect communication, in an attempt to reach agreement on an issue (Karen, 1999). Rourke & Boyer (2002) explained diplomacy as the art of approaching problems amicably through negotiation to facilitate peaceful dispute resolution; this means that peace is the target of diplomacy. Watson (1982) explained diplomacy as negotiation of political entities which acknowledge each other's independence; this definition explains diplomacy as the concern of sovereign states in the course of their interactions. Watson (1982) noted that contemporary diplomacy has primary tasks: information-gathering abroad, analysis of such information by foreign ministries at home; developing policies based on that information; communicating such policy. Drawing from the submission of Watson (1982), Ashari (n.d.) explained diplomacy as government process of communication with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation's ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, as well as its national goals and current policies. The foregoing clarification, entails that diplomacy is the application of intelligence and tact to the conduct of official relations between the conduct of independent states through accredited agents or national representatives for the purpose of mutual understanding and peaceful co-existence.

Drawing from the various definitions of diplomacy, the concept of diplomatic relations entails interactions through negotiations for mutual understanding among actors in such a manner that conflicts, violence, or wars do not occur at all or occur in their barest minimum (Satow, 1932). In view of this, Rourke & Boyer (2002) noted that the ability to conduct diplomacy is necessary for all other kinds of relations among states, except all-out war. The establishment of diplomatic relations among states begins first with diplomatic recognition which entails acknowledging the sovereign status of a state; followed by opening of diplomatic institutions such as embassies, high commissions, consulates, through the ministry of foreign affairs to facilitate communications. Hence, states maintain diplomatic relations among themselves when their communication links are effectively functional as captured in the assertion of Sharp (1995:53) that "Diplomats not only seek to represent their states to the world, but also seek to represent the world back to their respective states, with the objective of keeping the whole ensemble together". In doing this, the target of diplomatic relation is to protect and advance the national interests of their respective states; as such, the first duty of an ambassador is to do, say, advise, and think whatever may best serve the preservation and aggrandizement of his own state (Craig and George, 1995). Usually, the conduct of diplomatic relations among states is guided by the doctrines of: personal representation, extra-territoriality, and functional necessity (Karen, 1999; Rourke & Boyer, 2002). The doctrine of personal representation holds that diplomatic relations should be conducted in the name or capacity of the state and not that of the diplomat; as such, the diplomatic personnel enjoys the rights and privileges accorded to the state usually personified in the leader, government, or the accredited agents. In return, the diplomat owes the duties of loyalty, candour or honesty, and good faith to the state. The doctrine of existentiality or extra-territoriality postulates that the military bases, offices, embassies, and homes of ambassadors are exempted from the jurisdiction of local laws because they are taken to be the territorial extension

of the foreign states and therefore treated sacrosanct. It further relates to the persons and belongings of foreign heads of states, ambassadors, and certain other diplomatic agents. Accordingly, the laws of the host country do not apply therein, but the laws of the sending state apply. The doctrine of functional necessity on its part entails that difficult responsibilities such as diplomacy in any society requires highly appreciable rewards and compensation to sufficiently motivate agents or individuals involved to perform them effectively and efficiently. Consequently, the principles of inviolability, immunity, and reciprocity, are essential for the conduct of diplomatic relations among states to be effective; and states usually adopt political, military, economic, and socio-cultural strategies to advance the courses of their diplomatic relations.

Theoretical Review

The prevalence of international border conflicts across the African continent has generated series of thoughts on their origin, causes, and implications. As a result, two schools of thoughts are so far dominant on the issues of border conflicts in Africa: the revisionist and the anti-revisionist (Ikome, 2012).

The revisionists contend that international border conflicts among African states originated from colonialism. The arguments of the revisionists are that (i) the colonial destruction of Africa's evolved state system and the consequent partitioning of Africa into the Westphalia State System is responsible for the border conflicts in Africa because it generated multiple crisis of legitimacy, identity, development and integration; (ii) the colonial truncation of the natural evolution of pre-colonial Africa's state system has subjected the continent to a form of State Sovereignty very alien to the people of Africa which continues to generate tensions and conflicts over territorial integrity; (iii) it is only urgent reconstitution of Africa's inherited borders and state system can rid them of the prevalent socio-cultural incongruity, enhance economic development, and reduce international border conflicts; (iv) the only solution is to review Africa's colonial borders and state system. Although it is agreeable with the revisionists that the truncation of pre-colonial Africa's State System and partitioning of Africa, largely account for the prevalent cases of international border conflicts in the continent; it is not tenable that there were no border conflicts among pre-colonial African States; more so, the panacea proposed to salvage international border conflicts in Africa by the revisionists seems non-practicable because reviewing Africa's colonial borders and state system is just like visiting yesterday.

The anti-revisionists on their part, aver that although colonialism is responsible for the artificial international borders laden with conflicts in Africa, it should be acknowledged that: (i) borders the world over are artificial, as such, Africa is not an exceptional case; (ii) in as much as Africa's boundaries could indeed be arbitrary, they have actually had fewer deleterious consequences, presented more opportunities for the African peoples; and been greater assets for state consolidation; (iii) while it is true that Africa has suffered due to its partitioned nature, the cost of any attempt to adjust the boundaries will far exceed the revisionists' anticipated benefits; (iv) maintaining the existing colonial boundaries in Africa is a preferred peace option and cordial

diplomatic relations among African States. The submission of the anti-revisionists draws from the fact that the revision of Africa's colonial political boundaries back to the pre-colonial natural boundaries implies the truncation of modern system of state sovereignty into the earlier ethno-culturally specific Nations, Kingdoms, and Empires.

Without prejudice to the views of either the revisionist or the anti-revisionists, there is strong correlation between international border conflicts and diplomatic relations among states in Africa just as in other non-African States. In recognition of the characteristics of Africa's political boundaries as potential sources of border conflicts with dire consequences for their diplomatic relations, African States' leaders had upon independence from colonial rule, declared their commitment to the 1963 Charter of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), now African Union (AU) that captured the doctrines of *uti possidetis* and *inviolability* (Shaw, 1997). The doctrine of *uti possidetis* implies possess as possessed upon independence; this invariably entails that the international borders of African States are based on the political boundaries arising from colonial demarcations and they are committed to accepting them. The doctrine of inviolability of national boundaries on its part, is meant to ensure the protection of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and inalienable right to the independent existence of African States. Thus, the doctrines of *uti possidetis* and *inviolability* of national boundaries as adopted in the First Ordinary Session of African Heads of State and Government in Cairo in July, 1964 captured in Resolution AHG/Res.16(1) is meant to facilitate cordial diplomatic relations.

But notably, international border conflicts seem to have largely impaired diplomatic relations among African States. Hence, Ikome (2012:3) acknowledged that:

Although the policy of territorial status quo resulted from African Leaders' legitimate fear of opening a Pandora's box of territorial claims and possible anarchy on the continent, the expectation that by keeping the box closed unconditionally, the potential difficulties would wither away, has remained an illusion. Africa's colonial boundaries have continued to manifest a disturbing lack of homogeneity and functional polities in certain states, and, rather than contributing to peaceful relations, have remained a major source of inter-state conflict, apart from fostering the regionalization of intra-state conflicts.

The submission above suggests that African leaders actually foresaw the tendency for territorial claims to impair diplomatic relations among African States, and as such, preferred to maintain existing colonial boundaries. But even with the retention of colonial boundaries, international border conflicts which strained diplomatic relations among African States still increased in number. Africa has 53 Sovereign States demarcated by 165 boundaries (Ikome, 2012). Virtually all the 53 countries have conflicts across the 165 states borders in Africa. As reflected in Ikome (2012), from 1950 to 2000, there were about 17 largely pronounced international border conflicts in Africa involving 27 countries with multiple cases. This implies that majority of the African states have more than one international border conflicts; while some countries have border conflicts with all their neighbouring states. For instance, out of the 17 international border conflicts associated with some African states as observed in Ikome (2012), Kenya had 3 cases

with 3 different countries; while Somalia, Algeria, Tunisia, Mali, Libya, and Burkina Faso had 2 international border cases each with 2 different countries; then Cameroon, Nigeria, Morocco, Cote D'Ivoire, Liberia, Mauritania, Chad, Guinea Bissau, Senegal, Dahomey, Bissau, Niger, Malawi, Tanzania, Ghana, Upper Volta, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Eritrea, had 1 international border case each. Besides the identified states, it is noteworthy that other countries of Africa (Uganda, Djibouti, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, South Sudan, Mozambique, Rwanda, Zaire, Zambia etc.) also have different international border conflicts (Okoli and Ngwu, 2019). Whereas some of these international border conflicts were settled through sub-regional and regional mediation efforts; others were resolved through ruling by the International Court of Justice, and they include: the Guinea-Bissau- Senegal border conflict ruled in 1992; the Tunisia-Libya border conflict ruled in 1994; the Libya-Chad claims over the Auzou Stripe ruled in 1994; the Nigeria-Cameroon border conflict ruled in 2002; and the Ghana-Code D'Ivoire maritime border conflict ruled in 2017 by the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) (Ikome, 2012; Yiallourides and Donnelly, 2017; Okoli and Ngwu, 2019).

Some of the factors identified as being accountable for the prevalence of international border conflicts in Africa are either geographic, legal, political, economic, or socio-cultural. In terms of geography, Zipfs (1949), Wesley (1962), Starr and Thomas (2001), and Ikome (2012) averred that the occurrence of international border conflicts among African States largely depend on the (i) clarity of boundary demarcations and delimitations; (ii) Border Proximity. Whereas Ikome (2012) acknowledged that the porosity of African borders due to lack of proper demarcations and delimitations is the major rationale behind the ease with which border conflicts spreads across regions like the Great Lakes region, West Africa, and the Horn of Africa; Starr and Thomas (2001) noted that the location of states and their proximity to one another especially in relation to whether they share common borders or not, largely determine the tendencies for international border conflicts to occur; while, Wesley (1962) corroborated that the length of a common border between two countries is a better measure of geographic opportunity for border conflict to occur than the number of borders because it has higher interaction opportunities. These submissions regarding geographical factors drew credence from the earlier submission of Zipfs (1949) that borders create opportunities for interactions which most often than not result in international border conflicts depending on the “*number of countries*” and “*degree of opportunity existence*”. The implication of this viewpoint is that international border conflicts among African States will scarcely end unless the boundaries are clearly demarcated and opportunities provided by border proximity carefully managed through cordial diplomatic relations.

The legal angle to the debate on the causes of international border conflicts among African States finds expression on the basis of the law. Hence, Ikome (2012) recognized international boundaries as the sharp edge of the territories within which states exercise their jurisdiction as well as the lines that mark the *legal termination* of the territory of one state or political unit and the start of another. In other words, international border conflicts occur among African States when the limits of state jurisdiction or legal termination of a state's territory is not clearly defined, demarcated, or delimited. Border conflicts among African States arising from legal factors usually revolve around the questions of jurisdiction, documents, and interpretations. Whereas

Jurisdiction in this context is concerned with the legitimate exercise of control over the disputed area through legal agencies and institutions; legal documents refers to legitimate instruments of Title or supportive documents establishing ownership of a border area; while interpretation is the detailed explanation and analysis of the legal provisions of a treaty document or judicial rulings under international law to substantiate or buttress legal claims. Thus, from the legal perspective, undefined or poorly defined jurisdiction, lack of or inadequate documents, and beclouded or unaccepted interpretations regarding a disputed border area is largely responsible for the prevailing international border conflicts among African States. Invariably, for international border conflicts among African States to be managed as not to impair their diplomatic relations, the jurisdiction of the States has to be stipulated and backed up with valid legal documents without ambiguous provisions.

The political perspective contends that the prevalence of international border conflicts among African States is as a result of *interest politicization* beyond the control ability of the major parties (Starr and Thomas, 2001; Okumu, 2010; Ikome, 2012; Okoli and Ngwu, 2019). The argument is that the international borders of most African States are (i) arbitrary and artificial colonial constructs imposed on unwilling and unparticipating African People; (ii) boundary structures meant to serve administrative conveniences of the ex-colonialists rather the sovereignty needs of African States; (iii) determined by international institutions managed and controlled by neo-colonial powers with little or no influence by Africa; (iv) laden with vested neo-colonial interests which are more often than not, prioritized over and above those of the African States; (v) most of the time determined in line with colonial agreements reached by the ex-colonialists. In other words, the structures, processes, and institutions, of international border system in Africa seems largely alien to the people of African States; as such, it is very difficult to accept and maintain the political boundaries without politicised conflicts escalating to the involvement of foreign powers. Thus, even when African States could have resolved their border conflicts amicably, the vested interests of foreign powers tend to directly or indirectly obstruct the peace process thereby escalating the conflict. In this light, it implies that international border conflicts among African states can only be minimized if the conflict process is depoliticized and divested of manipulations by foreign powers.

The economic perspective argues that international border conflicts among African States is more or less, resource-based: (a) discovery of mineral resources around the border areas; (b) the second scramble for Africa's resources by foreign powers; and (c) the trade-opportunities within the border region (Okumu, 2010; Garret and Seay, 2011; Zartman, 2011; Ngwu and Okoli, 2019). The argument based on the economic perspective is that most international borders of African States enjoyed relative peace until natural wealth is discovered in the border areas; then, conflicts ensue and diplomatic relations become impaired. In the same vein, external powers scarcely manifest interests in any international border conflicts where there are little or no natural resources; but where there is abundance of natural resources in borderland, foreign powers scramble for influence and control in the conflict process. Besides border conflicts arising from the exploitation of natural resources therein, trading in natural resources is also known to have formed basis of international border conflicts among African States. Thus, international border

conflicts among African States will continue to impair their diplomatic relations unless: borders are clearly demarcated prior to the discovery of natural resources; the second scramble for Africa's resources is brought to the barest minimum; and the scope of trading opportunities at the borders are expanded.

The socio-cultural viewpoint contends that international border conflicts among African States is as a result of the increasing emphasis on, and prioritization of political boundaries over natural boundaries (Asiwaju, 1984; Kristian, 2011). The said political boundaries either divided people with common ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds into two sovereign states or brought incompatible social groups to form one state. In this circumstance, Kristian (2011) agrees with Asiwaju (1984) that borders can be much less important to peoples than to states; as such, understanding the social and cultural conditions of borderland communities is key to tackling cross-border conflicts. As Kristian (2011) noted, since socio-cultural ties span state borders and state presence may be weak in remote border communities, the local people are left to provide their own needs; consequently, any attempt to enforce border control policies, the affected border communities across state frontiers unite against state agencies.

Importantly, while explaining that international border conflict is very often not just interstate affairs, Vogt (1986) argues that in some cases, it is conflict between state(s) and the “border population” arising from the incompatibility of the “state-recognised political boundaries” and the “community-recognised natural boundaries”. In this context, the parties to “international border conflict” is not necessarily between or among states, but between the “indigenous people” of the border communities and the “adjoining states”. This form of international border conflict arises when states in the course of drawing political boundaries, divide a homogenous population into becoming citizens of two or more different countries whereas they are people of one cultural and traditional identity. Vogt (1986) contends that in a situation where political boundaries and natural boundaries conflict, international border conflicts tends to endure because even if affected states resolve, the border population extends it. Thus, the perceived alienation of the border populations from their relatives across the political boundaries lead to five phases of international border conflicts: the indifference phase, irritation and resentment phase, as well as the radical opposition and mass movement phase (Vogt, 1986).

In indifference phase, the border populations don't yet understand the implications of the political demarcations and its relevance to their sub-national relationships and the people continue to operate and relate as if nothing has happened and as if there is no external political authority. In the irritation and resentment phase, the border populations become generally hostile to the security agents charged with the responsibility of national security because they are perceived as outsiders who are more alien to them than their kith and kin on the other side of the political boundary. The radical opposition and militant mass movement phase occurs when the reality and permanence of the political boundary is appreciated and internalised by the border populations and they tend to reject the cartographic demarcations; they blatantly flout border regulations and engage in international relations against the barriers instituted by the state. Hence, unlike Okoli and Ngwu (2019), Geomans and Schultz (2013), Zartman (2011), Goldstein and Pevehouse (2011) who perceive international border conflicts among African States as being

“State-vs-State” concern, Vogt (1986) highlighted the “People-vs-States” dimension of it from the socio-cultural perspective. It is therefore pertinent to highlight that addressing international border conflicts for improved diplomatic relations among African States, the border populations and communities ought to be made to recognize governments of their respective sovereign states through the provision of their basic needs.

Empirical Review

The issue of international border conflicts and diplomatic relations among African states is not just theoretically debated in abstraction, but also finds expressions in some evidence-based cases. Okumu (2010) while writing on “Resources and Border Disputes in Eastern Africa” averred that there is the likelihood of inter-state disputes in Eastern Africa as natural wealth is discovered in the borderlands. Okumu (2010) provided an overview of international border conflicts among States in Eastern Africa ranging from the Uganda-Democratic Republic of Congo border conflict over Lake Albert Basin rich in diamond, gold, and oil etc; the Uganda-Kenya/Tanzania border conflict over Lake Victoria rich in trans-boundary natural resources (water and fish); to the Tanzania-Malawi border conflict over Lake Nyasa rich in water resources. These border conflicts actually impaired the diplomatic relations of affected states: whereas Uganda and Democratic Republic of Congo met severally to harmonize the differences affecting their diplomatic relations, it was to no avail; North Sudan and South Sudan have been having strained diplomatic relations over the control of the oil-rich border even though the Permanent Court of Arbitration had issued a ruling in July 2009 placing the oil wells in the North; while the border conflicts among Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania over the cause of drop in water level of Lake Victoria by 1.5 metres between 2004 and 2006 largely strained their diplomatic relations: Tanzania and Kenya blamed Uganda for causing the drop in water level by over-draining the lake for hydroelectric production; while Uganda blamed the drop on climate change; besides, Uganda was also accused in July 2008 of entering into secret agreement with Egypt to release more water into the Nile to meet Egypt's increasing need, but this was considered a violation of the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) which was meant to forge closer diplomatic cooperation among Burundi, the DRC, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. Eventually, Okumu (2010) concluded that the escalating trans-boundary resources disputes are due to the colonial-boundary making error, undefined and unmarked borders, poor or lack of border management, poor governance, and population bulge. As such, Okumu (2010) recommended the establishment of a regional mechanism to address border disputes and a regional framework for managing and sharing trans-boundary resources.

Bariledum and Udeoji (2020) studied Nigeria-Cameroun Diplomatic Relations: Dynamics, Challenges and Strategic Options.

In the light of National Interest as the theoretical foundation with the aid of content analysis techniques Bariledum and Udeoji aligned with Bassey (2010) that the shift in relationship between Nigeria and Cameroon is more or less a function of historical factors, precisely the redefinition of boundary by the colonial power that led to clash between tradition and modernity

which has continued to haunt the realities between both countries in their contemporary diplomatic relations. Hence, Bariledum and Udeoji (2020) observed that immediately after Independence in 1960, Nigeria-Cameroun relation shifted from pretentious friendship and cooperation forced by colonial rule, to conflictual relations marked significantly by mutual suspicion, distrust and outright alienation.

Nigeria-Cameroon Border Conflict and their Diplomatic Relations

The Nigeria-Cameroun Border Conflict had long begun from the period of the two states' Independence in 1960. Nevertheless, their Diplomatic Relations officially began on 6th February 1963, when they signed an Agreement of Friendship and Cooperation, a trade agreement, and a memorandum of understanding on the cross-border movement of persons and goods. In the light of the agreement, the governments of Nigeria and Cameroon pledged to build cordial diplomatic relations between them. The first major test of the duo's pledge of friendship and cooperation was the Nigerian civil war: Cameroon abandoned its earlier position of neutrality and fully supported the Nigerian government by closing their border with Nigeria; banning shipment of arms, medicine, food and other supplies to Biafra; granting the village of Jabane as base for the Nigerian government to monitor supplies coming into Calabar Port; mediated reconciliation between Nigeria and other Francophone African States that had recognized Biafra's Independence like Cote D'Ivoire, Gabon, and Tanzania. In view of these roles, the then president Ahidjo was publicly praised in his 1970 visit to Nigeria by the then president, Yakubu Gowon, for his support and later in 1972 awarded with honorary degree by the University of Lagos. Meanwhile, further cooperation agreements followed in March 1972 including the one on Police Cooperation, and the Air Service Agreement of May 1978. Hence, in the period of warm bilateral diplomatic relations between Nigeria and Cameroon, issues on border dispute were cordially managed through the Joint Nigeria-Cameroon Frontier Commission resulting in signing of the Maroua Declaration of 1975 which recognized Cameroon's sovereignty over Bakassi Peninsula.

Nevertheless, Nigeria-Cameroon diplomatic relations got soured after Murtala Mohammed overthrew Yakubu Gowon in a Coup d'etat in 1975, chastised him for signing the Maroua Declaration, and refused to ratify it. In response, Ahidjo declared that Cameroon would not negotiate any further with Nigeria until Murtala Muhammed had been replaced as head of state. Consequently, over the next two decades, tensions escalated, bringing the countries to the brink of war in 1981 and inviting firefights on several occasions in the 1990s, after the Nigerian army had invaded Bakassi (Anyu, 2007). In other words, violence began on the peninsula on 16 May 1981 when Cameroon gendarmes killed six Nigerian soldiers following a Nigerian military incursion. In 1993, after several skirmishes, the dispute escalated from vituperations and angry recriminations to a massive military build-up on the peninsula by both Cameroon and Nigeria and only a spark was needed to set it all alight (Anyu, 2007). With tensions high, Cameroon, eager to avert a war with Nigeria, resorted to legal avenues through the ICJ to resolve the border dispute.

In 1994, Cameroun filed applications against Nigeria over Bakassi Peninsula in the Registry of the International Court of Justice (ICJ). The first application was filed on 29th March 1994 which requested the ICJ to determine the course of the maritime boundary between Nigeria and Cameroun in so far as that frontier had not been established in 1975; the second application was filed on 6th June 1994, of which Cameroun requested the ICJ to extend the subject of the dispute to a further dispute described as relating essentially to the question of sovereignty over part of the territory of Cameroon in the area of Lake Chad (Anyu, 2007). Cameroun in its application: (a) claimed “aggression by the Federal Republic of Nigeria” on the basis that Nigeria's troops occupied several Cameroonian localities on Bakassi Peninsula; (b) asked the ICJ to adjudge and declare that sovereignty over Bakassi Peninsula was that of Cameroun; (c) requested the ICJ to adjudge and declare that Nigeria had violated the fundamental principle of respect for frontiers inherited from colonization as well as other rules of conventional and customary international law; (d) demanded that the ICJ acknowledge and impose International responsibility for Nigeria due to her activities in the disputed area (Anyu, 2007).

In the light of the above, the Federal Government of Nigeria (2002) raised preliminary objections on 13th December 1995 as follows: (a) that the Court had no jurisdiction over the parties because Cameroon acted prematurely and in bad faith by filing an Application at the ICJ when its Declaration of Acceptance of the Court's compulsory jurisdiction which it filed only on 3rd March, 1994 had neither been communicated to Nigeria nor other members of the United Nation as required by the Statute of the ICJ; and (b) That the two parties had agreed to settle their dispute otherwise than by recourse to the ICJ and were therefore bound by the principle of *pacta sunt servanda*, i.e. agreement must be kept, to stick to that agreement (Alobo, Adoga, and Obaji, 2016). As Alobo, Adoga, and Obaji, (2016) noted, on 11th June 1998, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) gave its ruling on the preliminary issues raised in Cameroun's Applications and Nigeria's responses. The ICJ ruled that:

- (i) The Statute of ICJ does not prescribe any interval between the deposit by a state of its “Declaration of Acceptance” and the “filing of an Application” by that State, and the principle of reciprocity is not affected by any delay in the receipt of copies of the Declaration by the parties to the Statute. This put to rest the argument that Cameroun was not due, to file application just roughly three weeks after submitting her “Declaration of Acceptance” to the Secretary General of the UN on 3rd March, 1994 whereas Nigeria had long submitted hers on 13th September 1965.
- (ii) With the submission of “Declaration of Acceptance” by any state(s) to the UN Secretary General, the Accepting State becomes a party to the system of optional clause in relation to the other declaration States, with all the rights and obligations deriving from Article 36 on that very day. In view of this, Nigeria and Cameroun had submitted to the compulsory jurisdiction of the ICJ through mutual consent by depositing their “Declaration of Acceptance” to the UN Secretary General irrespective of the time or interval prior to the filing of the application.

(iii) The fact that both States had attempted to solve their dispute bilaterally does not logically preclude that either of the parties had excluded the possibility of sending the dispute to the ICJ; besides, the Court could not locate anywhere in international law where exhaustion of commenced diplomatic negotiations is a pre-condition for referring a matter to the ICJ.

In reaction, Nigeria on the 28th day of October, 1998, filed a request for the interpretation of the judgment of 11th June, 1998 pursuant to Article 98 of the Statute of the ICJ. Nigeria noted in the request that (a) the meaning and scope of the judgment required interpretation, particularly as it pertains to the incidents for which Nigeria is alleged to bear State responsibility by Cameroon; (b) Cameroon joined other incidents in its reply to the preliminary objection which were not in its Application, and therefore asked the Court to strike it out; (c) In its ruling of 11th June, 1998, the Court did not specify which of the incidents it was reserving to be considered on the merit (Anyu, 2007).

The International Court of Justice (2002) in its verdict of 10th October, declared that: (i) By the nature of the *Treaty of Protection of 1884* between Great Britain and the Kings and Chiefs of Old Calabar, and the *international law* prevalent at the time, Great Britain was in a position to determine its boundary with Germany including ceding the Bakassi Peninsula; (ii) The *Anglo-German Agreement of 11th March, 1913* was valid and applicable in its entirety; and that by the *various acts and actions of Nigeria*, the Court found that Nigeria accepted that it was bound by the provisions of Articles XVII to XXII of the said Agreement which are the operational clauses relating to the cession of the Bakassi Peninsula; (iii) As a result of the foregoing, “sovereignty over the Bakassi Peninsula lies with the Republic of Cameroon”.

Post-Verdict Diplomatic Relations Between Nigeria and Cameroun.

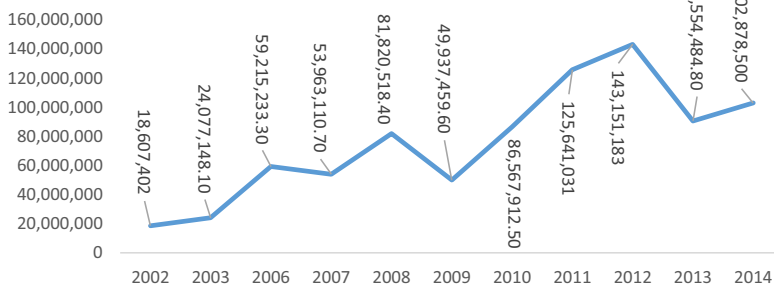
The border dispute between Nigeria and Cameroun seems not to have badly affected their diplomatic relations. This submission derives from the observation that following the verdict passed by the International Court of Justice, the two countries did not resort to war even though Nigeria initially rejected the judgement. Instead, through the mediation of the United Nation, they went into the 2006 Green Tree Agreement designed to facilitate the enforcement of the verdict. The Green Tree Agreement required (a) recognition of Cameroun's sovereignty over the Bakassi Peninsula; (b) Nigeria's transfer of authority over Bakass Peninsula to Cameroun; (c) Nigeria's withdrawal of all its armed forces from the Bakassi Peninsula; (c) Cameroun guaranteeing to Nigerian nationals living in the Bakassi Peninsula the exercise of their fundamental rights and freedoms.

Besides the Green Tree Agreement, the two countries also formed the Nigeria-Cameroun Mixed Commission through which among other things, (i) their land boundaries were demarcated; (ii) they started common development projects to promote *joint ventures* and *cross-border cooperation* e.g. construction of border markets; construction of roads leading to the two countries (Anyangwe, 2022). In essence, the border dispute between Nigeria and Cameroun did

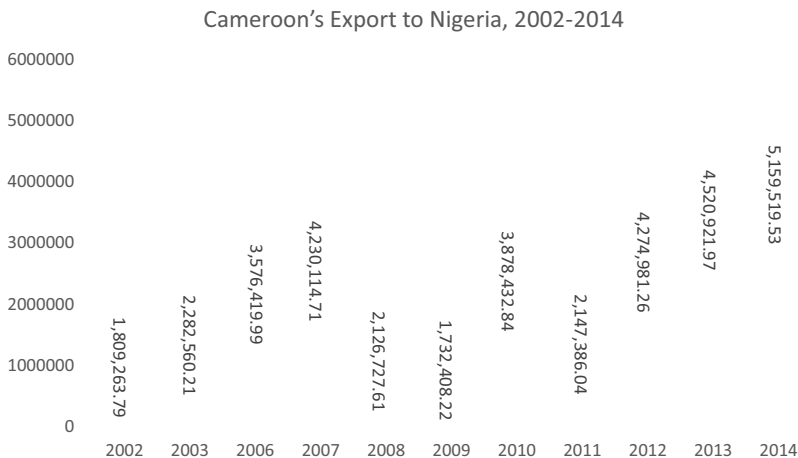
not largely impair their diplomatic relations given that they peacefully resolved the conflict through the verdict of the International Court of Justice, Green Tree Agreement, and the Mixed Commission. Ever since then, the two countries have to a large extent maintained cordial diplomatic relations; this is evident in their:

(i) Trade relations: The trade relations between Nigeria and Cameroun had continued and consistently increased within the period of 2002 and beyond; but there were observed occasional declines in their volumes of trade relations within the critical periods of the ICJ verdict enforcement: 2007 and 2008 for Nigeria; and 2009 for Cameroun as evident in Figure 1 and Figure 2 respectively. Although one would ordinarily attribute the drop in their volume of trade to the verdict enforcement misunderstandings between them, Molokwu, Uchime and Chukwudi (2021) attributed it not to the implementation of the ICJ judgment; but to the activities of Boko-Haram, bandits, farmer-herder conflicts and nationalist agitation for the independence of Anglophone Cameroon (Ambazzonians) which resulted to the closing of, and militarization of the borders between the two countries.

Figure 1: Nigeria's Export to Cameroon, 2002-2014



Source: Data adapted from Molokwu, Uchime, and Chukwudi (2021)but we plotted the Graph



Source: Data adapted from Molokwu, Uchime, and Chukwudi (2021) but we plotted the Graph.

(ii) Military collaboration: The military collaborations between Nigeria and Cameroun to checkmate the activities of Boko Haram, bandits, farmer-herder conflicts and nationalist agitation for the independence of Anglophone Cameroon which had impaired their trade relations may have reversed the occasional drop in volume of trade to steady increases from 2010 and beyond (Molokwu, Uchime, and Chukwudi, 2021).

(ii) Treaties and Memorandum of Understanding: Nigeria and Cameroun have also been engaged in series of treaties and memorandum of understanding since after the verdict and the consequent enforcement. Some of these treaties and memorandum of understanding include:

- The Memorandum of Understanding on the transnational highway project to facilitate transportation between Cameroon and Nigeria on March 29, 2016 in Yaoundé;
- The Green Tree Agreement signed June 12, 2006;
- The Cameroon-Nigeria electrical interconnection Agreement signed February 18, 2011 in Yaoundé;
- Cooperation Agreement in the Field of Sports and Physical Education signed on February 18, 2011 in Yaoundé;
- The Agreement Establishing Cameroon Nigeria Border Security Committee signed on February 28, 2012 in Abuja.
- Cooperation Agreement in the Fields of Service and Technology, signed April 11, 2014 in Yaoundé;
- Memorandum of Understanding on the Implementation of the programme on Cooperation and Cultural Exchanges signed on April 11, 2014;
- Agreement on Youth Development signed on April 11, 2014 in Yaoundé;
- Organisation of the Nigeria Trade and Cultural Week in Douala in March, 2009 and October, 2019 with a view to creating awareness, and providing a forum for exchange of goods and services between the two countries (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2022).

(iii) Maintenance of Diplomatic Institutions: Neither Nigeria nor Cameroun severed diplomatic relations with the other since the passing and enforcement of the verdict. While Cameroon has maintained its Consulate General in Lagos and a Consulate in Calabar; Nigeria has also maintained two Consulates General in Cameroon, Douala and Bueh.

(iv) In essence, the continued trade relations, military collaborations, Treaties/Memorandum of understanding, and maintenance of diplomatic institutions between Nigeria and Cameroun since 2002 to 2023, all support the assertion that passing and enforcement of the verdict over Bakassi Peninsula did not impair Nigeria-Cameroun diplomatic relations to the extent of breaking ties.

Ghana-Ivory Coast Border Conflict and their Diplomatic Relations

Ghana and Ivory-Coast are adjacent to each other in the Gulf of Guinea on the Atlantic Ocean. This maritime area contains large reserves of “hydrocarbons” which both states have been eager to exploit. Meanwhile, there were two major discoveries of oil resources in the maritime area contested:

- a. Jubilee oilfield discovered thirty-two nautical miles (32nm) off the Ghanaian Coast in 2007
- b. TEN (Tweneboa, Enyenra, and Ntomme) Fields discovered three nautical miles (3nm) east of the Jubilee in 2009

The discoveries of these major oilfields attracted significant interests from foreign investors in Ghana's Hydrocarbon potentials who began to invest in the sector at the envy of Ivory Coast. As a result, Ivory Coast began to raise eyebrows and question the rights of Ghana to explore and exploit the oil resources within the maritime area. This necessitated diplomatic moves by the two countries to resolve their dispute peacefully which manifested in the following:

- i. Bilateral Negotiation for Maritime Delimitation
- ii. Joint Ivorian-Ghanaian Commission on Maritime Border Demarcation
- iii. Submission of the Maritime Boundary Dispute to the Special Chamber of ITLOS

When the maritime delimitation was brought into bilateral negotiations between Ghana and Ivory Coast, the TEN and Jubilee oilfields were all already being developed by a consortium of companies led by London-Based Tullow Oil. As a result, Ivory Coast objected to Ghana's ongoing oil exploration and exploitation activities asserting that they were being carried out in the Ivorian maritime area. In order to address this, the two parties established the “Joint Ivorian-Ghanaian Commission on Maritime Border Demarcation; this led to the commencement of the maritime border delimitation negotiation. But as their diplomatic negotiation progressed, resolution was not in sight; as a result, on 3rd December, 2014, they agreed to submit the maritime boundary disputed to the Special Chamber of International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) as both Ivory Coast and Ghana are parties to the United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) (ITLOS, 2017).

The Special Chamber investigated the parties' (a) territorial sea (b) exclusive economic zone (EEZ) (c) continental shelf boundaries within and beyond 200 nautical miles (nm); it also examined (d) Ghana's claim regarding a long-standing, tacit agreement as to the existence of a maritime boundary; and (e) Côte d'Ivoire's allegation that, by continuing with oil activities in the disputed area, Ghana had violated its Article 83(1) and (3) UNCLOS obligations to negotiate in good faith and to make every effort through provisional arrangements not to jeopardise or hamper arrival at an agreement (Constantinos and Donnelly, 2017).

In its Provisional Measures Orders of 25 April, 2015, the Special Chambers cited in Constantinos and Donnelly (2017) and ITLOS (2017), recognized that:

- i. Drilling causes a “Permanent Physical Modification” which no financial compensation or reparation could restore;

- ii. There should not be complete shutdown of Ghana's Petroleum exploration and exploitation operations in the disputed area; Instead,
- iii. Ghana should take all necessary steps to prevent information resulting from its oil activities to be used to the detriment of Cote d'Ivoire;
- iv. No new drilling should take place in the disputed area until resolution of the dispute;
- v. There should not be full suspension of exploitation activities in the TEN fields, because the development phase was already underway, and that the abandonment of operations – and consequent deterioration of equipment – risked causing 'considerable financial loss to Ghana and its concessionaries', and posed 'a serious danger to the marine environment'.

In the Judgment of 23rd September 2017, the Special Chambers:

- (i). Dismissed Ghana's claim to the existence of tacit agreement noting Cote d'Ivoire history of objections to the former's activities in the disputed area; nevertheless, the oil activities of both countries had been within the confines of their respective areas lying on their own sides of the territorial sea, exclusive economic zone, and continental shelf, but it observed that limiting oil practice to seabed exploration and exploitation within 200nm and petroleum legislation enacted by the two States were of limited relevance to the process of establishing a common, multipurpose boundary for the territorial sea, the EEZ, and continental shelf within and beyond 220nm (Constantinos and Donnelly, 2017; ITLOS, 2017).
- (ii). Adopted the Equidistance/Relevant Circumstances Boundary delimitation Methodology. In this light, it needed to identify the parties' "relevant coasts, relevant areas, and coastal base points"; but the Special Chambers held that the relevant coastlines had no marked concavity and convexity; as such, the provisional line required no adjustment and considered as irrelevant, the location of hydrocarbon resources as well as previous oil practice. In its verdict, the Special Chambers allocated 139km of the Maritime area to Ghana, and 352km to Cote d'Ivoire at the ratio of 1:2.53 respectively approximated to 1:3, in favour of the later. On the other hand, the Special Chambers held that the equidistance line is the single maritime boundary for the territorial sea, exclusive economic zone, and continental shelf within and beyond 200 nautical miles; this of course was a strict equidistance boundary delimitation method that favoured Ghana (Constantinos and Donnelly, 2017; ITLOS, 2017).
- (iii). Ghana Unilateral Activities in the disputed Maritime area: Côte d'Ivoire had claimed that Ghana's unilateral activities in the disputed maritime area imposed international responsibility for Ghana; the allegation was that it constituted violation of (a) Côte d'Ivoire's sovereign rights over its continental shelf; (b) the obligations enshrined in articles 83(1) and 83(3) of the UNCLOS – United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea. Notably, Article 83(1) of the UNCLOS contains the "Obligation to negotiate in good faith" while 83(3) contains obligation to make every effort through provisional arrangements not to jeopardize or hamper arrival at an agreement (Constantinos and Donnelly, 2017; ITLOS, 2017).

On the contrary, the Special Chambers held as follows:

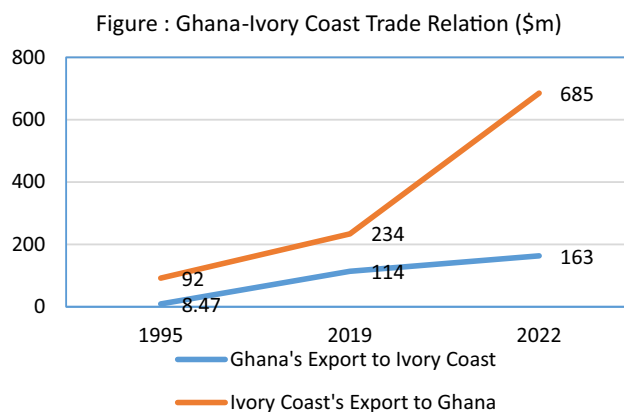
First, Ghana had not violated Côte d'Ivoire's sovereign rights over its continental shelf. This verdict was based on the argument that hydrocarbon activities undertaken by a State in an area subject to overlapping claims, before the area in question has been delimited by adjudication, does not give rise to international responsibility of that State even if these activities were conducted in an area that eventually belongs to the other claiming State (ITLOS, 2017). This verdict was based on the fact that where there is overlapping continental shelf claim, both States concerned have an entitlement to the relevant continental shelf on the basis of their relevant coasts; it is 'only a decision of delimitation that establishes which part of the continental shelf appertains to which of the claiming States (Constantinos and Donnelly, 2017).

Second, Ghana had not violated the obligations enshrined in articles 83(1) and 83(3) of the United Nation Convention on Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) (ITLOS, 2017). This submission was based on the observation of the Special Chambers that the parties (Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire) had carried out several diplomatic negotiations on maritime delimitation between 2008 and 2014. As such, Côte d'Ivoire failed to provide convincing evidence that those negotiations had not been meaningful. Hence, the Special Chambers rejected the claim relating to article 83(1) of the UNCLOS (Constantinos and Donnelly, 2017). With respect to the alleged violation of Article 83(3), the Special Chambers explained that Treaty Provision contains two interlinking obligations for the states concerned to make every effort to enter into provisional arrangements of a practical nature; and, during this transitional period, not to jeopardize or hamper the reaching of the final agreement (Constantinos and Donnelly, 2017). Regarding the obligation to enter into provisional arrangements of a practical nature, the Special Chamber noted that Côte d'Ivoire had not requested that Ghana enter into provisional arrangements, but only that it refrain from further oil activities; consequently, this prevented Côte d'Ivoire from arguing that Ghana had breached that obligation. Similarly, the Special Chamber acknowledged that Ghana's continuation of hydrocarbon activities was *not* a violation given that it had suspended its drilling activities by implementing the Order of 25 April 2015, and it had only undertaken hydrocarbon activities in the area which the Special Chamber found to be within Ghanaian waters (Constantinos and Donnelly, 2017). Thus, given that none of Ghana's activities occurred within Ivorian waters, Côte d'Ivoire's claim was rejected.

Meanwhile, Ghana and Ivory Coast have maintained their diplomatic relations even in the face of border conflict. Neither of the two countries resorted to violent alternatives in the conflict process. Instead, they explored available diplomatic strategies at their disposal ranging from the bilateral negotiation for maritime delimitation and the Joint Ivorian-Ghanaian Commission on Maritime Border Demarcation; to the submission of the Maritime Boundary Dispute to the Special Chamber of ITLOS. Thus, the collaborations between Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire have been fruitful and positive despite the border dispute. The strong bilateral trade relationship between the two countries gave room for cooperative measures that promote the economic, trade and security ties between the two countries. Even after the verdict of the Special Chamber of ITLOS, neither Ghana nor Ivory Coast rejected the judgment; they accepted it in good faith without their diplomatic relations being strained or severed. This manifested in the fact that after the verdict, Ghana and Ivory Coast maintained their: (a) Diplomatic visits; (b) Trade relations; (c) Bilateral Treaties.

(a) Diplomatic Visits: The two countries have continue their diplomatic visits to cement their relations; for instance, President Ouattara's invitation as a guest of honour to Ghana's newly elected President Nana Akufo-Addo's investiture in 2017 was regarded as signaling deepening of ties.

(b) Trade Relations: The trade relations between Ghana and Ivory Coast did not sour as a result of the verdict; instead, it soared at different average rates indicating cordial diplomatic relations between them. Ghana's export to Ivory Coast grew from \$8.47m in 1995 to \$114m in 2019 and \$163m in 2022; while Ivory Coast's export to Ghana grew from \$92m in 1995 to \$234m in 2019 and \$685m in 2022 (GP Business Consulting, 2023).



Source: Data adapted from GP Business Consulting (2023) but we plotted the Graph.

© Bilateral Treaties: After verdict was passed over their Maritime Boundary dispute, Ivory Coast and Ghana had had two major treaties: the first was the Joint-Border Security Operations Treaty between Ghana, Ivory Coast, and Burkina Faso in 2018; and second was the Cocoa Initiative Treaty. In the Cocoa Initiative Treaty, Ghana and Ivory Coast signed the Headquarters Agreement for the establishment of the Cote d'Ivoire-Ghana Cocoa Initiative Secretariat in Accra. As the Chief Executive Officer of Ghana Cocoa Board, Aidoo B. Joseph noted, “The grain of mustard seed that was planted in March 2018 by the two countries has grown and is now assuming shape and prominence in the international scene”(Ghana News Agency, 2024). This was further buttressed by the then Ghana minister of foreign affairs, Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey, when she acknowledged that by this Charter, the Republic of Ghana guarantees absolute diplomatic privileges, support and protection to the operations of the Secretariat of the Cote D'Ivoire-Ghana Cocoa Initiative and their staff (Ghana News Agency, 2024). Invariably, it implies that after their Maritime Boundary verdict was passed in 2017, Ghana and Ivory Coast still maintained cordial diplomatic relations to the extent of designing initiatives in 2018 that eventually came to light in 2021.

Summary of Findings

1. The International Court of Justice passed verdict over the Nigeria-Cameroon land and maritime border conflict based on the principles of *uti possidetis* and *inviolability*; while the Special Chambers of ITLOS ruled on the Ivory Coast-Ghana maritime border conflict based on the principles of *equi-distance* and *relevant circumstances*.
2. Although the border conflicts affected Nigeria-Cameroon and Ivory Coast-Ghana diplomatic relations negatively, it was not to the extent of the countries severing their diplomatic ties. The diplomatic relations between Nigeria and Cameroon, as well as Ivory Coast and Ghana were actually strained; but not snapped by the border conflicts.
3. The determination of both Nigeria-Cameroon border and Ivory Coast-Ghana border were all presided over by western controlled institutions subject to the influences and manoeuvre by the ex-colonialists: Britain and France.
4. Whereas the Nigeria-Cameroon border conflict was decided more or less in favour of Cameroon (Ex-colony of France); the Ivory Coast-Ghana conflict was decided in favour of Ghana (Ex-Colony of Britain) to a large extent.

Conclusion

Border conflicts oftentimes impair diplomatic relations among states in the international system. However, it may not always result in severing diplomatic relations. This submission takes credence from the Nigeria-Cameroon border conflict and the Ivory Coast-Ghana border conflict which though impaired their diplomatic relations, it did not get to the extent of cutting their diplomatic ties completely. Instead, the border conflicts were resolved through the diplomatic efforts of western controlled institutions which are more often than not presided over by their former colonialists with vested interests in the disputed areas. The vested interests of the former colonial powers may have accounted for the “partition-based verdicts” reciprocally passed in favour Cameroon (for France) and Ghana (for Britain) for each to maintain their ex-colonial strongholds in post-colonial time. Hence, the passing of the verdicts based on the principles of *uti-possidetis*, *inviolability*, *equi-distance*, and *relevant circumstances*, have always given influence and control advantages to the ex-colonialists over border conflicts among African States. Sometimes, the verdict of the Western controlled legal institutions end official conflicts among states, but it does not end the residual conflicts among the residents within the disputed area for various reasons which include among other things: not being acquainted with the provisions of the verdict; and poor enforcement of the judicial decisions to the detriment of the border communities.

Recommendations

African countries having border conflicts are enjoined to adopt legal options as Nigeria and Cameroon as well as Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire did and sustain their diplomatic relations.

However, it is advisable that African Institutions (e.g. African Court of Justice and Human Rights - ACJHR) presided over by African Leaders should be responsible for the mediation and arbitration over border conflicts among African States given that they understand the internal dynamics of the border communities better than the raw application of international law principles.

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