

Post Conflict Bakassi and Role of Cameroon and Nigerian Military

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ABSTRACT

No one would have thought that the military clashes between Cameroon and Nigeria over the Bakassi Peninsula would one day end. For close to 50 years, Cameroon and Nigeria had been fighting over the resource-rich area of Bakassi to take control of it. The mechanisms that resolved these military upheavals were the World Court's Judgment (WCJ) of 2006 and the Green Tree Agreement (GTA) of 2006. The end of the five-year special regime program, as stipulated by the GTA, finally laid to rest the Bakassi conflict. Hitherto, following the end of hostilities between the Cameroonian and Nigerian military in the Bakassi Peninsula, the region was/is being marred by militant activities. The main thrust of this paper is to examine the role played by the Cameroonian and Nigerian military in maintaining peace in the Bakassi peninsula even after the conflict has been resolved. This research used the qualitative method with content and thematic analysis on some military activities in the Bakassi peninsula. Data was collected from secondary sources and observations from two field undertakings in Bamusso, Isangele, and Idabato subdivisions in the Bakassi region. After resolving the conflict, this paper cautions that Cameroonians and the Nigerian military have not only been engaged in security activities but have taken up new humanitarian and developmental activities. This research recommends for Cameroon and Nigerian governments divert heavy projects from the military to civilians, deploying more civilian personnel in the medical, judicial, and administrative fields in the Bakassi Peninsula. They should only limit the use of their military personnel in fighting piracy and militancy in the area. If such policies are implemented, both countries will be assured peace and tranquillity in the Bakassi Peninsula.



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1. Introduction

In Africa today, several countries have experienced intrastate and interstate conflicts. In some conflicts, the military has always been brandished as working for or against the state and the population. The Cameroon and Nigeria military clash over the Bakassi peninsula's maritime border region was one such example. In some occurrences, the military was said to have exacerbated the fighting and almost caused both countries to engage in a full-scale war (Kah, 2014). The two countries had also been using the military to separately or jointly fight insurgencies in their respective states. For example, Cameroon under Presidents Ahmadou Ahidjo and Paul Biya used the military to suppress Union de Populations Camerounaise (UPC) and Anglophone Cameroon secessionist attempts (Amin, 2021). Nigeria, on its part, used the military to suppress Biafran secessionist attempts (Amin, 2020). In joint military cooperation, Cameroon and Nigeria used their military to fight against the Biafran movement in the late 60s (Torrent, 2012; Amin, 2020).

Many scholarly critics have averred that the military had worsened these interstate conflicts in Africa. The military has always been dragged into the mud or treated as footnotes in conflicts and conflict resolution. Albeit the military fuelled or exacerbated these conflicts, they have also played essential functions for their countries, like gathering intel, supporting the victims, and helping the leaders to make decisions. In the dispute between Cameroon and Nigeria over the Bakassi peninsula, the military had always been involved in suppressing the conflict, protecting national borders, and assisting civilian victims. Even when these activities tested their patience and caused them to pay supreme prices, they still outperformed, and thus, they need to be appreciated. Another prevailing aspect during the conflict was the gross violation of human rights (Achuo Kpwa, 2023).

Few works have been carried out about the role of the Cameroon and Nigerian military during the Bakassi conflict. Kah (2014), for example, looks at the role of the Nigerian and Cameroonian military in exacerbating and mitigating the conflict prior to the ICJ verdict and the GTA of 2006 to the end of the special regime transition period to 2013. He averred that even though both countries faced internal challenges, their military committed atrocities leading to the loss of lives and property. The same military also contributed to the peaceful handover of the territory to Cameroon. He went further to say that military activities were further compounded by militant activities even with the peaceful transfer process. Even though he frowned at the atrocities of the military, he concluded that if the military had not exercised restraint and patience, the peace process would have been torpedoed by militant groups that sprang up in the Bakassi peninsula.

Ngwane (2015), on his part, examines the post-conflict issues underpinning the new tension in the Bakassi peninsula, the role of different actors, and the positive and negative intervening factors. He applauded the mechanisms put in place to ensure a pacific settlement of the conflict, thereby reducing armed conflicts. However, these mechanisms have unwittingly and paradoxically become triggering factors for renewed violence as militant groups have risen. He is of the opinion that Cameroon and Nigeria's military activities in the peninsula have increased tensions despite the fact that the ICJ verdict and the GTA had ended the conflict. He concluded by saying that instead of Cameroon and Nigeria implementing negative intervening factors (military option), they should adopt positive intervening factors (infrastructural development and peacebuilding) to guarantee lasting peace in Bakassi.

The works of Kah (2014) and Ngwane (2015), mentioned above, clearly depicts the role of the Cameroonian and Nigerian military from 1981 to the end of the special regime transition period in 2013. These works clearly/mainly looked at the activities of the military in the Bakassi peninsula through countering attacks, suppressing militant activities, and fighting right up to 2013. These works could highlight three central themes: exacerbating the conflict, suppressing militant activities, and border protection. None of the works looked at the role of the Cameroon and Nigeria military after the end of the transition period in 2013. Moreover,

they failed to examine the military's role in other dimensions, mainly humanitarian and infrastructural development. In connection with this, this paper seeks to showcase the role of the Cameroonian and Nigerian military after the final resolution of the Bakassi conflict. This paper also seeks to portray the military's role in the Bakassi area in three dimensions: security, humanitarian and developmental.

1.1. Background to the Bakassi Conflict

The once-disputed Bakassi territory is located at the extreme end of the Gulf of Guinea and stretches over a surface area of 665 square km. It lies between latitudes 4.26°c and 5.10°c North and South of the Equator and longitudes 8.20°c and 9.08°c East and West of the Greenwich meridian (Ugbudian, 2018). Rainfall ranges from 4000mm to 7000mm, with 1000 square km of mangrove swamp. It also has a relative humidity above 85% and temperatures between 25°c and 35°c. It comprises five subdivisions; the area has a population ranging between 150000 and 300000 inhabitants, with fishing as their primary source of livelihood (Beckly, 2013). The meeting of two great ocean currents (Cold et al. Guinea) makes it a favorable hub for fish and other maritime wildlife to thrive in (Shaibu et al., 2015; Nwokolo, 2020). Most importantly, the area is rich in oil and gas, accounting for about 10% of the world's oil and gas reserves (Nwokolo, 2020; Amin, 2020). From the Cameroonian viewpoint, the Bakassi peninsula is located in the Ndian Division, Southwest region, while from the Nigerian perspective, it is located in Calabar, Cross River State (Obodo, 2017).

The Bakassi peninsula was first inhabited by the Efik tribe around 1450 and was later attached to the socio-political framework of the Ancient Kingdom of Calabar (Joseph & Ogedi, 2019). The area was first settled by the Afaha people from Usak Edet in Cameroon, who left their place around 8000 BC to a place in Arochukwu called Ibom; in the present-day Abia state, there they established the long juju shrine in Arochukwu called ibinuikpabia. Subsequently, in July 1884, Germany annexed Cameroon right up to the Akwayafe River, while Great Britain signed treaties with the rulers of the Old Calabar Kingdom in September 1884 (Okoi, 2016; Umoh, 2014). The annexation/colonization of Cameroon and Nigeria created a rift, especially in the border areas around the Bakassi, and the people had no idea that they were now separated from the brothers and sisters through beacons and pillars. Apart from creating problems among indigenes, the boundary demarcation process also brought problems to the colonialist. In order to solve their differences over the Bakassi peninsula, these colonialists entered into treaties and agreements with one another, which later compounded issues. The World War I (WW1) outbreak saw Germany lose Cameroon, and the latter was unequivocally divided between France and Britain (Okoi, 2016). Cameroon and Nigeria's borders at the Bakassi still caused issues despite changes in colonial regimes.

On January 1, and October 1, 1960, French Cameroon and Nigeria gained independence, respectively. However, the complicated Southern Cameroon, where Bakassi is located, only achieved independence by reuniting with French Cameroon on October 1, 1961. It was facilitated through the United Nations (UN) organized plebiscite in the region on February 1, 1961 (Ngam & Budi, 2021). The newly independent countries were now vested with the burden of redefining their borders, especially along the Bakassi peninsula, which at that time was very problematic. At the start of independence, Nigerians living in the peninsula complained of brutality, molestation, and harassment from Cameroon gendarmes. However, the two countries sought peace despite several instances that could have prompted them to engage in a protracted war. Thus, from 1962 to 1996, Cameroon and Nigeria brokered several agreements to address the Bakassi issue (Kpwa, 2022).

Many factors that contributed to the Bakassi conflict, the fallout of the shrewd, irrational, and poor demarcation of African borders by European colonialist/imperialist stands out (LeFebvre, 2013; Nwokolo, 2020; Aloba & Nabiebu, 2022). However, the most prominent

reason Cameroon and Nigeria resorted to violence over the Bakassi peninsula was the discovery of vast amounts of natural resources in the area (Ugbudian, 2018). In 1967, oil and gas were discovered in the area, bringing positive results to the Cameroon economy (Obodo & Akwen, 2017). Following this discovery, the Bakassi peninsula, once considered a worthless and dismal swamp with miserable folks, became a center of attraction for both countries. Toeing the line struggles over controlling valuable natural resources have remained a significant source of conflict in the world and Africa. Such conflicts often take the form of major territorial disputes over the possession of oil-laden border areas or the control of vital oil and mineral zones. To summarise the root causes of the conflict, Ngalim (2016) agrees that "to Nigeria and Cameroon, the conflict started as a result of the scramble for oil, whereas the indigenous population there felt it was the result of the separation of families and tribes from their ancestral ties due to the scramble for Africa."

1.2. Description of the International Court of Justice's verdict and the Green Tree Agreement

In 1981, 1992, 1993, 1994, and 1996, Cameroon and Nigeria were almost drawn into a deadly war over the Bakassi peninsula. Fed up with these upheavals over the area, Paul Biya of Cameroon filed a lawsuit against Nigeria to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on March 29, 1994 (Aboh & Ubom, 2022). Cameroon's lawsuit at that time was vested in the question of sovereignty over Bakassi (Kpwa, 2022). After eight years, the court, after written and oral proceedings, adjudged and declared that sovereignty over Bakassi lay with Cameroon (Alobo & Nabiebu, 2022). Before the court's judgment in October 2002, the then UN Secretary-General (SG) invited Biya and Obasanjo to a meeting in Saint Cloud, France, on September 5, 2002. The purpose of this meeting was to avert any eventual tension likely to arise from the court's forthcoming judgment. In a public declaration, the two Heads of State promised to respect and implement the court's forthcoming judgment (LeFebvre, 2013). The difficulty in implementing the court's verdict prompted the UN SG to invite Biya and Obasanjo again for a meeting in Geneva on November 15, 2002. The outcome of this meeting was the creation of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission (CNMC), whose sole mandate was to implement the court's ruling (Kpwa, 2023; Ariye & Etemike, 2017).

The CNMC meets every two months, alternatingly in Abuja and Yaoundé. During one of such meetings, Nigeria agreed to pull from Bakassi by September 15, 2004. However, this did not materialize, and Nigeria continued to deploy its military to her side of the Bakassi (Ariye, 2023). Consequently, following 14 alternating meetings that shuttled between Abuja and Yaoundé, the CNMC could finally broker peace between the two countries over the Bakassi area. Thus, on June 12, 2006, the Green Tree was signed between Cameroon and Nigeria, which ended military activities in the area (Amin, 2020). Under this agreement, Nigeria was required to withdraw her troops within 60 days and two years to remove her administration. Cameroon, on her part, was required to respect the rights of Nigerians living in Bakassi, granting them some facilities and not restricting their movements. After Nigeria must have removed her remaining administration, a 5-year special regime transition period was initiated so that Nigerians living there could fully prepare for Cameroon's final takeover (Kah, 2014; Kpwa, 2023). On August 14, 2013, the particular regime transition period allocated to Bakassi ended, leading to the end of hostilities between the Nigerian and Cameroonian military and the complete takeover of the territory by Cameroon (Amin, 2020).

2. Methods

This paper adopts the qualitative research method in terms of research design. In terms of data collection, this paper uses primary and secondary data about the Bakassi issue ranging

from books, official reports, journal articles, online magazines, newspapers, dissertations, and theses. This research also hinges on observations made during two field research undertakings from February to April 2019 and March to May 2020 in Bamusso, Isangele, and Idabato subdivisions in the Bakassi region. The reason why these areas were chosen is because Nigerian indigenes dominate these areas. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Department of History, University of Yaoundé 1, Cameroon, to ensure safe and ethical research. When asked about issues concerning how the Cameroon military operates in the area, these participants were unwilling to respond for fear of the unknown despite the presentation of the ethical clearance. In order to meander through this limitation, the researcher used the observation technique, which entails the systematic recording of observable phenomena or behavior in a natural setting (Dźwigoł & Barosz, 2020). Consequently, keen observations and issues relating to military activities and actions in these selected areas were made.

Table 1. Secondary data

| Bakassi Conflict | World’s Court verdict | Green Tree Agreement and Human Rights | Previous research on the role of the military | Information on research methods | Information on the current role of the military |
|----------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|---|
| Amin (2020) | Aboh & Ubom (2021) | Kpwa (2019) | Ngwane (2015) | Braun et al. (2016) | Akpan (2022a, 2022b) |
| Amin (2021) | Akonye & Nwapi(2019) | Kpwa (2023) | Kah (2014) | Denzin (2017) | Akwei (2017) |
| Funteh (2015) | Alobo & Nabiebu (2022) | Tabetah (2013) | Ngam & Budi (2020) | Dzwigol & Barosz (2020) | Asare (2023a, 2023b, 2023b) |
| Obodo & Akwen (2019) | Ariye (2023) | LeFebvre (2013) | Funteh (2019) | Noble & Heale (2019) | Bola (2019) |
| Okoi (2016) | Kpwa (2022) | Nwokolo (2020) | Yerima & Singh (2017) | | Chia & Kpwa (2023) |
| Shaibu et al. (2015) | | Ngalim (2016) | Hasa (2015) | | Kindzeka (2017, 2019) |
| Ugbudian (2018) | | | | | Kometa (2016) |
| Umoh (2015) | | | | | La Rédaction (2017). |
| Torrent (2012) | | | | | Mbonwo (2019, 2022) |
| | | | | | National Daily (2021a, 2021b) |
| | | | | | NAN (2015) |
| | | | | | Ngalame (2014) |
| | | | | | Ngonmenyui (2021) |
| | | | | | Nwachukwu (2022) |
| | | | | | Njinjuh (2014) |
| | | | | | Ogbolu(2021) |
| | | | | | Olowookere(2016) |

Oritse (2020)
 Sahara Reporters
 (2023)
 Silas (2021)
 Sun News (2017)
 Tadjon(2016)
 Ukpong(2017)

Source: Authors Compilation, 2023

Table 1 gives detailed information on the secondary sources consulted in this study. A deductive method was used in this research. These sources were consulted and narrowed down to develop themes showing Cameroonian and Nigerians' roles in post-conflict Bakassi. Twenty-eight online articles/newspapers, 24 journal articles, two dissertations, and four books were consulted. Information from fieldwork undertakings was strictly based on observations. The data analyzed in this research, this paper uses content and thematic analyses. After having analyzed the data obtained, the thematic approach was employed. The thematic approach entails identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns(themes) within the data (Braun et al., 2016). Some aspects of military activities and actions were decoded from the data about the after events of the final resolution of the Bakassi conflict. In achieving this, the researcher identifies and groups military actions and activities in post-conflict Bakassi into three broad themes: (1) security activities; (2) humanitarian activities; (3) and infrastructural development activities. These themes were/are being experienced in post-conflict Bakassi. Standard and complex activities of the Cameroonian and Nigerian military in post-conflict Bakassi were identified and themed to understand their role clearly. The researcher uses these successive steps in bringing out human rights violations in post-conflict Bakassi: (1) the researcher identified common and complex activities of the military in post-conflict Bakassi; (2) the researcher groups these threats into codes; (3) the researcher decodes these threats into potential and actual themes of military roles in the Bakassi area. The analyses from this data reveal that there are still numerous aspects of military involvement in post-conflict Bakassi, and the most identified and commonly felt ones are that of security, humanitarian and developmental activities.

The trustworthiness and accuracy of the data in this paper adopt the triangulation technique, which is used to increase the credibility and validity of research findings (Noble & Heale, 2019). More precisely, this paper uses the data triangulation technique, which includes matters such as period, space, and people; the investigator triangulation technique, which includes the use of several researchers in a study; and the methodological triangulation technique, which promotes the use of several data collection methods such as interviews and observations (Denzin, 2017). The trustworthiness and accuracy of the various activities of the Cameroonian and Nigerian military in post-conflict Bakassi, information on some aspects of military activities were collected, and this information was then verified among one or two other information, especially among official reports, newspapers, and online magazines. Information from observations was carefully and unbiasedly recorded as they happened so as not to omit germane aspects. These raw observations were then analyzed and fitted into the themes to which they are most suited. All this information, when put and verified/compared together, revealed a more than proportionate trustworthiness and accuracy to the main thrust of this paper which is to examine the role of Cameroonian and the Nigerian military in post-conflict Bakassi.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Results

3.1.1. Security Activities

On February 28-30, 2015, armed assailants attacked a Cameroon patrol boat driven by two police officers in the Bakassi peninsula. An officer was killed, and the other was taken hostage. These assailants asked for the ransom payment, the release of Nigerians imprisoned in Cameroon, and the non-payment of taxes by the Nigerian population living in the Bakassi region. According to Cameroon military sources, these bandits attacked the patrol boat with AK47s aboard a makeshift boat. Some defense reports also suggested that bandits carried out this attack using demands as a political coloring to brand themselves as terrorists. However, there were no reports if the Cameroon government had either paid the ransom or carried out the other demands of the bandits (Hasa, 2015). Another episode that showed that the military did not only use gunshots to ensure security was in June 2016. Here, the Nigerian military witnessed and aided the surrendering of arms by some 647-foot soldiers of the Bakassi Strike Force (BSF). The BSF was a militant group that operated in the Bakassi peninsula since its creation in 2006. It had been a leading militant group in the area and mainly advocated for the independence of the Bakassi peninsula.

On April 12, 2016, the Nigerian army arrested and detained the deputy leader of the Biafra Nations League (BNL), Ebuka Takon, in Ikom, and he was later released after promising to stop militant activities. The BNL was founded on August 3, 2016, and since then, it has advocated for the independence of the Bakassi people. It is the only militant group still in the area (Sun News, 2017; Chia & Kpwa, 2023). Furthermore, on September 28-30, 2016, armed militants wearing military camouflage attacked the 13th Brigade Nigerian Army stationed at Efut Esighi in the Bakassi Local Government area. The Nigerian army repelled them and killed 7 of its members. According to Nigerian military intel, the attack was carried out by the Bakassi Freedom Fighters (BFF), another militant group that was founded in 1996 and branded in 2006 and operated in the Bakassi peninsula (Funteh, 2019). This report also revealed that the Nigerian army recovered 250 rounds of 7.62mm ammunition, a rocket-propelled gun launcher, GPMG belt links, and assorted charms. Following this incident, the Nigerian army raided to destroy camps suspected of harboring BFF militants (Ukpong, 2017).

In early June 2020, Cameroon Rapid Intervention Battalion (BIR) and the Cameroon Navy members killed six armed pirates off the southern Cameroonian town of Idabato. These pirates on flying boats first opened fire at the Cameroonian security agents, but they were strongly repelled. Cameroon military sources noted that weapons, marijuana, and money in Cameroonian and Nigerian currencies were recovered from these pirates (Oritse, 2020). Events from 2021 saw the Cameroonian and Nigerian military more actively involved in ensuring security in the Bakassi peninsula, despite incurring fatal casualties. On May 8, 2021, the Cameroonian BIR faced fierce confrontations with members of the militia wing of BNL in Isangele, Bakassi. It resulted in the death of 2 Cameroon soldiers (Ogbolu, 2021). Again, on August 16, 2021, the Cameroonian military repelled the BNL militia in Abana, who had removed the Cameroonian flag and billboards bearing the Republic of Cameroon in the area (Silas, 2021). Still, on October 4, 2021, Cameroonian military personnel on patrol boats were ambushed by the BNL militia. No deaths were recorded, but 2 Cameroonian soldiers were disarmed (National Daily, 2021a). However, Cameroon soldiers again killed two BNL members on October 23, 2021, in Ine Mba. This militia had been wreaking havoc on Cameroonian institutions in that locality. From December 1-2, 2021, the Cameroonian military engaged and killed a member of the BNL militia who had been attempting to seize control major waterways to prevent vessels from shuttling between Nigeria and Cameroon (National Daily, 2021b).

The BNL militia had warned oil and gas companies to vacate the Bakassi area. It caused some of these oil and gas companies to pause their activities. Cameroonian and Nigerian military heavily surrounded the maritime borders to protect these firms and their vessels. Consequently, the Cameroon BIR came under fierce attacks from BNL militias in Isangele. On July 10, 2022, these militias bombed a military checkpoint in Isangele, killing two soldiers and capturing a military boat in Archibong in Isangele (Akpan, 2022a). During this, Cameroonian soldiers repelled the BNL militia targeting these firms and vessels at Akpa Nkanya in Bakassi on January 25, 2022. Moreso, on July 23, 2022, the Cameroonian military, in three gunboats, attacked a BNL militia camp in Isangele. It led to the death of 5 members of the Cameroonian BIR and just one BNL militia (Nwachukwu, 2022). Again, the Cameroon BIR attacked the BNL militia camp in Isangele on August 16, 2022. No casualty was recorded as the BNL militia fled into the creeks, leaving the Cameroonian BIR wondering about their position (Akpan, 2022b).

In its securing duty, the Cameroonian BIR came under severe confrontations with the BNL militia in the Ikang area on January 4, 2023. It led to the death of 2 Cameroonian BIR and the displacement of Bakassi indigenes due to random shots fired by the BNL militia (Sahara Reporters, 2023). Still, the Nigerian police foiled attempts by BNL militants on January 19, 2023, at Ekpri-Ikang Bakassi. These militants, numbering around 32, were reportedly assembled at a hideout and plotting how to hoist the BNL flag in the area. When the Nigerian police fired teargasses, these militants retaliated by throwing stones (Asare, 2023a). Also, on January 25, 2023, members of the Cameroon BIR captured Henry Edet, one of the BNL militia commanders in East Atabong (Asare, 2023b). Again, in a bid to repel the BNL militia, the Cameroonian BIR came under fierce confrontations on April 4, 2023. The Cameroonian BIR guided a Brazilian vessel that broke down in East Atabong, Bakassi. It resulted in the loss of 1 Cameroonian BIR, and the militia seized a military gunboat (Asare, 2023c).

Apart from fighting NSAGs in the Bakassi peninsula, the Cameroonian and Nigerian militaries maintained peace and order among civilians, negotiated ransom payments, and fought against clandestine crimes like trafficking, theft, and homicides. The border areas in the Bakassi peninsula have been a hub for all kinds of clandestine activities, and it has become a standard norm. Cameroonian and Nigerian border officials are familiar with these activities and have become part of it. However, these authorities significantly check and sanction issues concerning arms proliferation (Funteh, 2015). Results from field research observations revealed relative calmness within the towns, although pockets of squabbles exist here and there. Also, it revealed that Nigerians, who make up more than 85% of the population in the Bakassi peninsula, and are the majority, some of these Nigerians have been constituting a nuisance. Lastly, it also revealed that the Bakassi indigenes seem to have a friendly attitude towards Cameroon military personnel, unlike popular accounts depicting the Cameroonian military as mean and abusive to the population.

3.1.2. Humanitarian Activities

The Cameroonian and Nigerian military were/are not only prone to combat insurgencies and crimes in the Bakassi peninsula. After the final resolution of the conflict in August 2013, the military has been overtly and covertly involved in humanitarian activities. The Bakassi area is susceptible to health and environmental hazards, and when such hazards occur, the military has always been the first responders. For instance, on August 4, 2014, severe rainfall triggered heavy floods in virtually all the villages in the peninsula. It led to the submerging of houses and a wide range of displacements. Members of the Cameroon military were immediately deployed to these villages to provide food, healthcare, and shelter to the affected indigenes (Ngalame, 2014). Again, on December 28, 2014, a horrific firestorm destroyed

more than 100 homes, killed a 5yr old child, and injured two persons in Shell Creek, Idabato, in Bakassi. The Cameroon military was immediately dispatched to Shell Creek to provide humanitarian assistance to the affected indigenes. Cameroon government experts have averred that fire incidents can occur twice a month in the Bakassi area due to fish smoking in houses constructed with thatch and wood (Njinjuh, 2014). Also, on Friday in October 2015, members of the No fewer than 300 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the Bakassi local government area of Cross River benefited from the free medical outreach conducted by the 13 Brigade, Nigerian Army, Calabar. These returnees were tested, and those with any infection or disease were given medications (NAN, 2015).

Inter-town/community movement in the Bakassi peninsula is mainly done through engine boats and canoes. The risk of capsizing is low during the dry season but very high and severe during the rainy season. Rainfall occurs almost annually in Bakassi, and high tidal waves are uncertain (Tabetah, 2013). There is also the issue of overloading in most of these engine boats, ferries, and canoes, which can cause the vessel to capsize, leading to loss of lives and property. The military is always the first to respond when such unfortunate circumstances occur. For example, an unfortunate incident happened in mid-July 2017 when a Cameroon military logistic ship carrying 37 soldiers went off the coast of the Bakassi peninsula. The Cameroon Navy was immediately dispatched to rescue these victims, but only three soldiers were rescued by tracing fuel to the vessel (Akwei, 2017). Two hypotheses were given for this tragic event; overloading or militant attack (Kindzeka, 2017). In honor of these fallen soldiers, Biya of Cameroon ordered all flags hoisted at half-mast (Akwei, 2017). During field research undertakings, an incident occurred in March 2019 where a civilian vessel carrying more than 20 people capsized off the coast of Idabato. The Cameroon Navy was immediately dispatched, and it was reported that only two persons died while some sustained severe burns.

The military also served as emergency units during epidemics and endemics in the Bakassi area. For example, in early November 2019, a cholera outbreak hit Idabato and Isangele in Bakassi (Mbonwo, 2019). Over a dozen people were killed, and at least 100 people were sickened. The Cameroon government immediately dispatched an emergency team of military and medical personnel (Bola, 2019). This emergency team engaged in sensitization, hygiene, and sanitation campaigns (Kindzeka, 2019). Also, in November 2021, another cholera outbreak struck the Bakassi peninsula, and nearly half a dozen death cases were recorded. Again, an emergency military and medical personnel team was dispatched to the area (Kindzeka, 2017). The probability of having recurrent cholera outbreaks in the Bakassi peninsula is high as there is no portable water even though the area is by the sea. There are no excellent toilets, and the people resort to using riverbanks as their toilets (Kpwa, 2019). According to Cameroon government reports and field observations, only 20% of the Bakassi people use government health facilities, as the people prefer African traditional medicines and local drug vendors. More so, some Nigerians living in the peninsula would prefer to return to their home country for health services (Kindzeka, 2019). However, the existing government health facilities in the area are understaffed, and even most of the Nigeria health workers who worked in these facilities have left because of non-payment of salaries by the Cameroon government (Tabetah, 2013; Kpwa, 2019; Kindzeka, 2019).

The military in Bakassi has also been a massive promoter of education in the area. They have been encouraging parents in the area to send their children to school, and this very act, according to them, will prevent children from being brainwashed by unscrupulous/radical elements. Besides counseling parents on the advantages of sending their children to school, they also provide didactic materials to ease the learning process and support their pre-educational campaigns. For example, on October 5, 2021, members of the Cameroon Delta BIR provided a vast consignment of didactic materials and benches to 6 primary schools in Bakassi, namely; Government Primary School Idabato, Government Primary School Ngosso, Government Primary School Issobo, Government Primary School Jabane II, Government

Primary School Kombo Abedimo I, and Government Primary School Kombo Abedimo II. The ceremony, which took place in the Delta BIR's headquarters in Jabane, involved sharing books, pencils, rulers, chalk, and benches, among others (Ngonmenyui, 2021). Apart from that, most schools in the Bakassi area need more essentials to perform smooth teaching and learning; these schools need to be more utilized as the people prefer sending their children to fish rather than schooling (Tabetah, 2013; Kpwa, 2019).

3.1.3. Infrastructural Development Activities

The final transfer of Bakassi to Cameroon in 2013 gave the latter the sole responsibility of developing the area as per Article 3 of the GTA of 2006. So far, The Cameroon government has embarked on a series of developmental projects to enable the Bakassi population to fully integrate into the country's mainstream development and for them to enjoy their belonging to the Cameroon nation thoroughly. Even though civilian contractors carried out some light development projects, the military did the bulk of infrastructural projects. Before the final handover in 2013, Biya, in 2012, gave a new impetus to the Cameroon Military Engineering Corps to intensify projects in the Bakassi. Two new segments were created in the military engineering corps, 500 specialists were employed, and more than 150 new machines were acquired. It isn't easy to source construction material within the Bakassi peninsula, even though water and sand abound there. However, this material cannot be used due to its salty nature, and thus, the material must be sourced from outside Bakassi, entailing cost, risks, and efforts (Kometa, 2016).

Amidst these setbacks, the Cameroon military engineering corps have executed immense developmental projects in the peninsula. The bulk of projects done by the military engineering corps in the Bakassi peninsula is in the education section. Primary, secondary, and vocational training schools found in the various localities in the Bakassi from 2013 have been constructed by the military engineering corps (La Rédaction, 2017). More so, district hospitals and health centers found in all five Bakassi subdivisions have been constructed again by the military engineering corps (Kpwa, 2019). The military engineering corps has built most buildings that host the different local administrations, security personnel, civil servants, and women empowerment centers (La Rédaction, 2017). Three 75mm high pylon antennas, mainly to boost communication in the peninsula, were built by the military engineering corps in Jabane II, Bamusso, and Rio Terre. Also, 60 complex fishing houses with solar panels, modern toilets, and portable water were built by the military engineering corps in Isangele (Tadjon, 2016).

Road transport between towns and villages in the Bakassi area is difficult, mainly due to heavy rains. The lone motorable road linking towns in the region is the Mundemba-Isangele-Akwa Earth road. The Cameroon military engineering corps constantly maintained the road during the rainy season. The rehabilitation of the 75km Mundemba-Isangele-Akwa road started on February 8, 2012, and since then, the military engineering corps have been constructing it. Official reports from the Cameroon Ministry of Public Works revealed that the corps tarred about 80% of the roads. Also, a bridge project launched in 2010 to link Cameroon and Nigeria through the Cross River State was undertaken and completed by the military engineering corps from 2017 to 2022. This particular bridge has eased Bakassi indigenes from moving into Nigeria and back without fear of being attacked by pirates or bandits (Mbonwo, 2022).

3.2. Discussions

Following the final resolution of the Bakassi conflict on August 14, 2013, as earlier mentioned, it laid to rest military confrontations between Cameroon and Nigeria. Before the

takeover, and precisely from the ICJ verdict in 2002, militant activities took the central stage in the Bakassi area. Before the court ruling, only the Cameroon and Nigeria troops were involved in preventing the conflict from escalating and securing territorial borders. However, there were some instances where the military aggravated the conflict. Since 2002, the people of Bakassi have been denouncing the verdict and the GTA and have opposed the transfer of the territory to Cameroon (Amin, 2020). Except for June 21, 2005, which involved Nigerian troops firing rocket-propelled grenades at Cameroon troops and killing some (Kah, 2014), the rest incidents from 2002 to 2013 were orchestrated by Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs). The reasons why these NSAGs emerged after 2002 were multifaceted, and some include the fight against Cameroon gendarme brutality, complete control of the Bakassi natural resource, poor resettlement of the Bakassi returnees, and the ICJ verdict of 2002. During this period, the attention of the Cameroon and Nigerian military was geared towards containing these NSAGs. However, from August 15, 2013, the military has not only been involved in fighting these NSAGs but has diversified its attention to more pressing issues in the region. The following themes of security, humanitarian and developmental activities discussed in the results section give the different roles played by Cameroonians and Nigerians in the Bakassi peninsula after the conflict resolution in 2013.

Results may be presented in tables, graphs, verbal descriptions, or a combination. Tables, graphics, or images should be manageable; please present only a few figures in the manuscript. Authors should use a combination of presentation tables, graphs, or verbal descriptions. The tables and graphs presented must be referred to in the main text. The writing style for the tables and figures is presented in Table 1.

4. Conclusion

Previous research has shown that the only role played by the Cameroon and Nigerian military during the Bakassi conflict was those actions and inactions against each other and also against NSAGs. Furthermore, previous research also revealed that the ICJ verdict of 2002 and the GTA of 2006 ended military wranglings that plagued the area since 1981. However, following these adjudication mechanisms, the military was now combatting NSAGs until the final adjudication in 2013. One may think that the Cameroon and Nigerian military operating in the Bakassi area are solely geared towards securing territorial waters and borders or fighting NSAGs. However, empirical analyses of facts reveal that the Cameroon and the Nigerian military, after the final handover in 2013, have been involved in security challenges and humanitarian and development activities. This study goes a long way to debunk the view of the role of military personnel operating in the Bakassi after the final handover as unfavorable- through counter-military and unprofessional actions. It also portrays the military as friendly and positively minded through its humanitarian and developmental activities.

The presence of an exaggerated number of military personnel in the Bakassi peninsula can trigger agitations and fear in the minds of the indigenes. From the results obtained, this paper proffers some recommendations to create an amicable environment where the civilian and military can peacefully co-exist. These recommendations include: 1) The government of Cameroon and Nigeria should divert heavy projects from the military to private contractors. It will go a long way to reduce the military presence in the area and lead to civilian employment. 2) The government of Cameroon should deploy more civilian personnel in the medical, judicial, and administrative fields in the Bakassi peninsula. 3) The government of Cameroon and Nigeria should only limit the use of their military personnel in fighting piracy and militancy in the area. Any act of aggression committed by the security agents on the civilian population should be significantly sanctioned. The Bakassi area is guaranteed a long-lasting peace if these policies are implemented.

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