Foreign Policy and National Interest:  
A Case Study of Nigeria-Cameroon Border Dispute

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Abstract: Several factors that are domestic do shape and set the framework of the foreign policy and national interest of every nation including Nigeria. But the potentials for any inter-regional cum international relation including conflicts are the functions of a number of neighbors that a state have. A state with ten neighbors has a much higher chance of conflicts than Nation (state) with only one neighbor, Lewis Richardsm asserted. This assertion is very true of Nigeria which has total of four conflicts between two countries. This conflict is rooted in the Anglo-German territorial expansionism of 1880’s. Precisely, the unresolved Ownership of the Bakassi Peninsula began in 1884/1885 (Berlin Conference) when the then German Chancellor, Otto Von Bismarck drew the boundaries between Nigeria and Cameroon. The boundaries were arbitrary, based on reconstructed assumptions and never on established firm and clear border line coupled with the rising economic potentials of the Bakassi Peninsula has increased the desirability to acquire the Peninsula at all cost by the two countries. This study is aimed at finding out how the Nigeria-Cameroon border dispute came into being and how it was resolved.

Key words: Foreign policy • National interest • Bakassi Peninsula • Nigeria and Cameroon

INTRODUCTION

Several factors do trigger and shape the foreign policy and national interest of states including Nigeria. These factors that set the foreign policy and national interest of states are both domestic and external [1-3]. National interest according to the realist scholar Morgenthau 1984 has been used to refer to as the prudent use of power by a country to promote its vital interest abroad. The assumption was that a country’s national interest was usually fixed and unchanging that national decision-makers could determine what it was [4-6].

Richard Snyder 1957 anchored the view of the behaviouralist school of thought on national interest as whatever the decision makers (officials) of nations seek to perceive and enhance [7]. According to the Marxist cum Radical Scholars, Karl Marx 1980 described National interest as the instrument of exploitation used by the upper class against the lower class. Meanwhile national interest can be defined as anything which a state considers to be valuable to it [8, 9 and 10]. Nevertheless, the concept of foreign policy has varied according to different scholars.

But generally speaking foreign policy as a concept can be appreciated better by examining the two major key words, which are the concept of “foreign” and policy. The word “foreign” as applied here points to the environment of operation of foreign policy of a nation while “policy” is a framework for an action [11].

Karl Deutch defined foreign policy as the search for the preservation of a country’s independence and security, the pursuit and protection of its economic interest. Foreign policy according to Asogwa 1991 can be defined as the actions of a State towards the external environment and the conditions usually domestic under which these actions are formulated [11-13].

These two key concepts shaped the foreign policy of a state (nation) not minding their continent. Nigeria in Africa as a continent is not an exception. Africa is a continent that is plagued and gulfed with intra and inter troubles. This is why so many scholars perceived it as a dark continent characterized with numerous crises [5, 6].

In order words, most of the intra and inter-state conflicts in Africa are induced by the arbitrary boundary demarcation drawn by the imperialist powers and inherited by the African people without regard to their ethnic
realities. Thus in the case of Nigeria Cameroon border dispute, colonel Falowo 1994 argues that, this conflict predates the colonial states of Nigeria and Cameroon’s as it has its roots in the Anglo-German rivalry over territorial possession in the 1880’s against this backdrop no time in history in suitable for us to start this analysis beyond the colonial incursion in both countries in dispute [7].

Britain was the first among the imperial invader to set foot and take possession of the area now disputed between Nigeria and Cameroon. The area was ceded to her on September 1884 in a treaty signed between Queen Victoria of England and King and Chiefs of old Calabar province [11].

This gave Britain the elbow-room to consolidate her foot-hold on the territory before other imperial powers had arrived for scramble and partition and eventually domination and plunder of the continent. Beyond this colonial factors are economic interest of the respective disputing state who either in a bid to aggrandize the wealth of her nation indulges in policy of extensionism or irredentism [12].

The Nigeria and Cameroon dispute is rooted in the indiscriminate decision of British government to cede the Bakassi territory to French Cameroon. The economic benefit in the oil rich Bakassi prompted Cameroon pursuit of a foreign policy of expansionism against Nigerian foreign policy of self preservation. The potentially oil rich peninsula is highly valuable to each country both Nigeria and Cameroon. There is both direct and indirect impact the environment had on the conflict, each country would directly benefit in the underdeveloped oil reserves in Bakassi region but the land dispute the lake Chad region had displaced fisherman as a result of drought and desertification. The conflict impacted more on Cameroon in terms of the economic benefit, expansion of their territories. After the conflict Cameroon was at the receiving and because of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) Verdict that ceded the land to Cameroon and Nigeria was the biggest loser.

Therefore the objective of this research work was imperative in the area of identifying the correlation between Nigeria/Cameroon foreign policies and their national interest to find out the factors responsible for the dispute and why the dispute has continued unabated.

Hypothesis:
- That economic and strategic interest is the motive force in the Nigeria-Cameroon border crisis.
- Foreign interventions in the dispute arise from national interest of the interveners.
- National interest is the determinant of Nigeria-Cameroon foreign policy.

Method of Data Collection: The methods of data collection used in this research work were primary and secondary methods.

Primary Method: This particular source or method involves asking questions to scholars and statesmen in the field of international politics on issues or matters revolving around national interest and foreign policy as it relates to the Nigeria/Cameroon crises.

Secondary Method: This method of data collection involves access to private libraries, state libraries, journals and documented works, textbooks written by scholar on national interest and foreign policy.

Method of Data Analysis: The method used in this research was a descriptive statistical tool. This was used in the area of data presentation, analysis and interpretation, while the inferential statistical tool was used in the testing of hypothesis. The descriptive statistical tools used were the frequency distribution table, figure and percentage, on the other hand, the test of hypotheses was done with the use of “Chi-square” formula.

The formula is as follows

\[ X^2 = \frac{\sum (0-e)^2}{E} \]

where
- \( X^2 \) = chi-square
- \( \sum \) = Sum Total
- \( O \) = Observed frequency.
- \( E \) = Expected frequency.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The table presentation of the data obtained from the research sample populations were as follows:

Table 1: How long have you been working in the Ministry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Number of Respondent</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-5 YEARS</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10 Years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-15 years</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 years and above</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From the above table, it was discovered that 4 or 7% of respondents have been in the ministry for 0 to 5 years. 8 or 14% also have spent minimum of 5 years and maximum of 10 years in the ministry. Furthermore, 11 or 19% of the respondents have spent 10-15 years and above. The analysis above showed that ministries was relatively old and thus experienced enough to attempt or answer any questions relating to Nigeria national interest and foreign policy.

Table 2: Are you part of decision making process in the ministry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Number of Respondent</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of the figures in the table 2 above, showed that 25 or 43% of the staff represents the decision-making group in the ministry, while 33 or 57% are not in the position of making decision in the ministry.

Table 3: Do you think there is any correlation between the national interest of Nigeria and her foreign policy?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Number of Respondent</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very high</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table and the figure therein, showed that 7 or 12% of the respondent agreed that the correlation between Nigeria foreign policy and her national interest is high, while 50 or 86% agreed that it was very high on the other hand, 1 or 2% said that it was low.

Table 4: Does the relationship between Nigeria foreign policy and her national interest have any significant impact on Nigeria/Cameroon land dispute

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Number of Respondent</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No idea</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From this table, 30 or 52% said yes, thereby agreeing that the relationship between Nigeria’s national interest and foreign policy have significant impact in the land dispute while 28 or 48% did not buy the idea.

Table 5: Did Nigeria formulate her foreign with special cognizance to her interest in Peninsula?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Number of Respondent</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No idea</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here, the analysis indicated that 40 or 69% of respondents favoured yes while 15 or 26% said No while 3 or 5% had no idea.

Table 6: Does leadership perception, decision makers and sectional interest shop and determine Nigeria interest in the dispute land.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Number of Respondent</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Significant</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very significant</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less significant</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis here showed that 18 or 31% described leadership perception, decision makers and section as been significant in Nigeria interests in Bakassi, moreover, 33 or 57% described it as being very significant, while 7 or 12% went for less significant.

Table 7: Is Nigeria foreign policy a determinant of her national interest in the Peninsula

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Number of Respondent</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No comment</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No idea</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of the above table showed that 10 or 17% of the respondents agreed that foreign policy is a determinant of Nigeria in the Peninsula, while 48 or 78% disagreed, also 2 or 3% of respondent did not comment as 1 or 2% had no idea.

Table 8: what factor influenced the Nigeria/ Cameroon Land Dispute?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Number of Respondent</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The analysis here showed that 40 or 69% favored that some factors influenced the Nigeria/ Cameroon crisis, while 18 or 31% believed that no factor influence the crisis.
18 or 31% of respondents opined that this may be external or internal influences is high places, 10 or 17% opined whether the factor is external or internal influences is very high 30 or 52% said that whether external or internal is low.

Table 10: Does Nigeria have any other interior motive or interest apart from her national interest in the Peninsula?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Number of Respondent</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No idea</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

50 or 86% greed that Nigeria had motive, apart from her national interest in the Peninsula, while other hand 8 or 14% showed that no interior motive, more so, 0 or 0% went for no idea.

Hypothesis Testing: In testing the hypothesis, I adopted the “chi-square” method. It is a statistical test that is used to compare observed and expected data, according to a specific hypothesis.

The test appears thus:

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$$

where

- $X^2$ = chi-square
- $O$ = Sum Total
- $E$ = Observed frequency.
- $E$ = Expected frequency.

Decision criteria: If the tabulated value is less than the calculated value, accept $H_0$.

Testing of Hypothesis 1
$H_0$: National Interest is not a determinant of Nigeria policy especially in the Nigeria/Cameroon Land dispute.
Source of Test Question Table 7

Expected frequency = Total observed frequency divided by the total number of opinions (rows)

$$= \frac{\text{Total observed frequency}}{\text{Total number of opinion}}$$

$$= \frac{58}{4} = 15$$

where

- $x^2 = \text{Chi-square}$
- $O = \text{Observed frequency}$
- $E = \text{Expected frequency}$

$$X^2 = \frac{(10-15)^2}{15} + \frac{(45-15)^2}{15} + \frac{(2-15)^2}{15} + \frac{(1-15)^2}{15}$$

$$= \frac{(-5)^2}{15} + \frac{(30)^2}{15} + \frac{(-13)^2}{15} + \frac{(-14)^2}{15}$$

$$= \frac{25 + 900 + 169 + 196}{15}$$

$$= \frac{290 + 169 + 196}{15}$$

$$= 86$$

Degree of freedom (DF) = $K - 1$

where

- $K = 4$
- $DF = 4 - 11 = 3$

Going through the tabulated value for $X^2$,

3 = 7.81

Therefore $X^2 = 86$ and $X^2 = 7.81$

Decisions: since the $X^2 > X^2$, we reject $H_0$ and accept $H_a$.

Comment: It means that national interest is a determinant of Nigeria foreign policy especially in the disputed territory.

Test of Hypothesis 2 $H_0$: Nigeria National interest has correlation with her foreign policy.
Source of text Question: Table 3
Expected frequency, also is equal to total observed frequency divided by total number of opinion in the row of the table.

\[ i.e = \frac{\text{Total observe frequency}}{\text{Total number of opinion}} \]

\[ = \frac{58}{3} = 19 \]

\[ X^2 = \frac{(7-10)^2}{19} + \frac{(50-19)^2}{19} + \frac{(1-19)^2}{19} \]

\[ = \frac{(-12)^2}{19} + \frac{(31)^2}{19} + \frac{(-18)^2}{19} \]

\[ = \frac{144 + 961 + 324}{19} \]

\[ = \frac{1429}{19} = 75 \]

Therefore \( X^2 = 75 \)

Degree of freedom (DF = \( L - I \))

where \( = 3 \)

DF = 3 - 1 = 2

Also going through the tabulated value for \( X^2 \) it was discovered that the value of \( 2(DF) \) is 5.99. Therefore \( X^2 = 75 \) and \( X^2 = 5.99 \).

Decision: \( X^2 > X^2 \), we reject the H0 and accept the H9.

Comment: It means the national interest of Nigeria has correlation with her foreign policy.

This study took adequate look at the nature of Nigeria National interest and foreign policy as it relate to the Cameroon/Nigeria Land dispute and the various variables that characterized the crises.

From the research carried out, it is imperative to notice that various findings were made.

- There is a strong correlation between the national interest and foreign policy of Nigeria.
- National Interest is the determinant of Nigeria foreign policy in the Peninsula (The disputed land).

We started this study by methodologically presenting ‘how’ the Nigeria Cameroon border dispute came into being. During the run down, we noted the contradictory interest of the two contending parties against the backdrop of the economic potentials of Bakassi Peninsula the dispute territory. It was also discovered that like most other conflicts in Africa, colonialism is largely to blame for the Bakassi crisis. Beyond this, we also discovered the supervisory role of France, a former colonial master of Cameroon against the Nigeria state.

The domestic setting to the crisis stem from the influence and activities of the trans border communities, the need to prevent and defend the national interests of the disputing parties, as well as the involvement of international communities in a dispute that entirely a family affair.

It was discovered without any fear of ridicule, that on a balance sheet, the Nigerian claims outweighed that of the Cameroon. In addition, the Nigerian claims are adequately backed by historical, legal and sociological factors while that of the Cameroon is founded on imagination and wishful thinking. We therefore argue that Nigeria should never yield to any pressure of ceding her national, territory and sovereignty to Cameroon. This is because Nigeria’s case in the Bakassi is borne out of the international law of self preservation.

Nevertheless, Nigeria’s effort at resolving her dispute with Cameroon is commendable. To this end, Nigeria has insisted on bilateral, multi-lateral and legal means. The Bakassi crisis has dragged on for too longer, with Nigeria suffering heavy losses in each face off. It is not however in the national interest of the two countries that a full blown war should be fought because in the event of allowing that to prevail, it is the enemies of Africa that will benefit through peace keeping mission. Thus it has been observed that the cause of the border crisis is the imprecise and indeterminate nature of the boundary.

Recommendations: In line with the above findings, the followings were the researcher’s recommendations for a peaceful and long lasting to the Nigeria-Cameroon boundary crisis. The problem exclude passions and calls for realism through inter African relations.

Nigeria and Cameroon must base the solution on the ratified accord and maps signed by the colonial power and various executive Heads of the States which are valid legal documents that can separate the two countries in the contested zone. Such a solution will eliminate all bitterness and any tendency for vengeance which develop from generation to generation.
Both countries have the options of a peaceful solution through bilateral dialogue and agreement. It is observed that the cause of the crisis is the imprecise and indeterminate nature of the boundary, the two nature of the boundary; the two nations should endeavor to carry out a proper delimitation of the agreed border. This appears to be the only way the citizen of the border areas can enjoy peace and harmony and participate of the area.

Negotiations, consultations and concessions will one day achieve our desired goals. After all it is not that Cameroon does not know that the disputed area is Nigeria and occupied by Nigerian and named by Nigerians but her economic survival remains her prude. Truth is bitter but to achieve success, it has to be swallowed. Nigeria’s love for peaceful negotiations will bring everlasting desired continental objectives.

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