

THE BORDER FACTOR IN CAMEROON-NIGERIA RELATIONS: A THEORETICAL APPROACH

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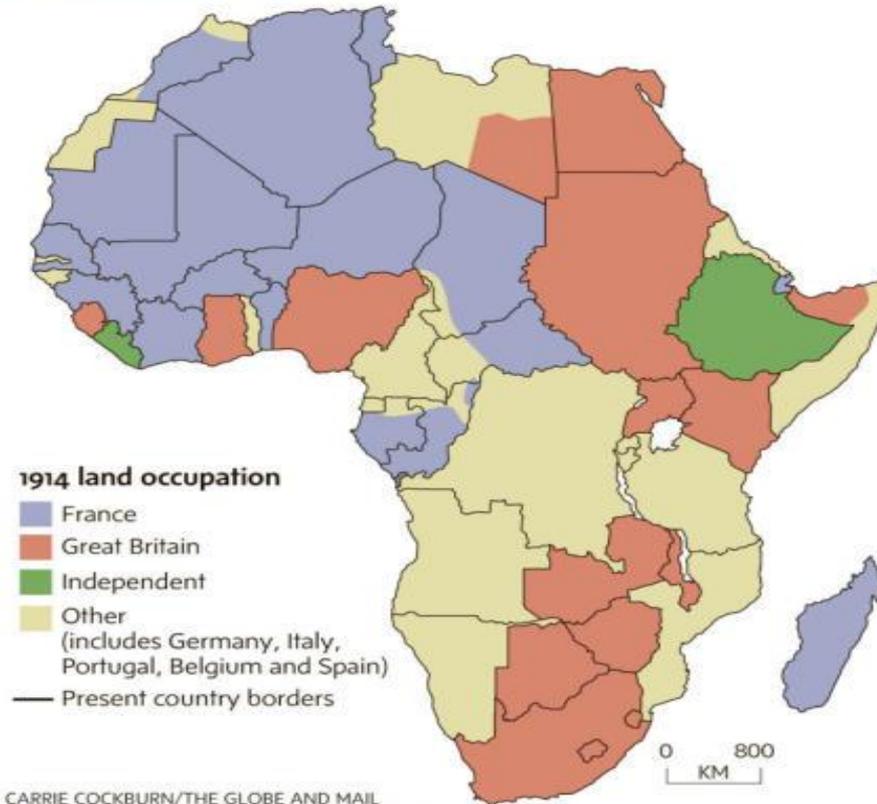
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08/06/2017

Boundaries are razor's edge on which hang suspended the modern issues of war and peace, of life or death for the nations (Lord Curzon, 1907)

Map of the Partition of Africa

Lines in the sand

Most of the borders in Africa today still reflect the old colonial boundaries from early last century, which don't often align with cultural realities on the ground.

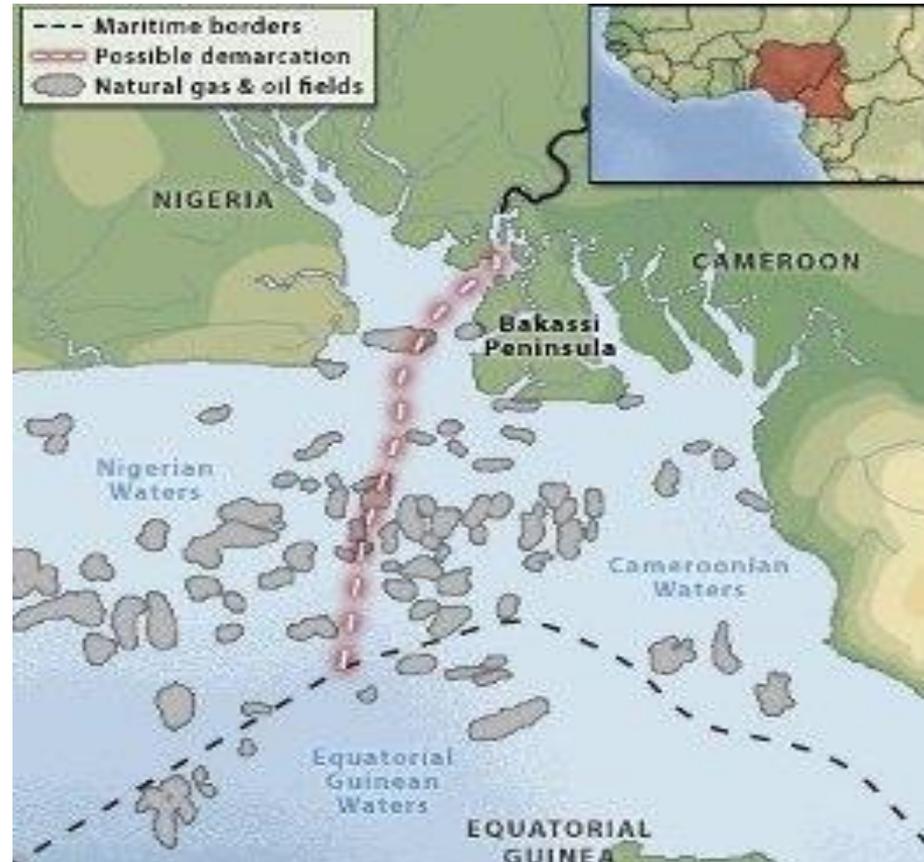


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Map of Nigeria and Cameroon: Locating the Bakassi Peninsula



Hydrocarbon Reserves in the Peninsula



Objectives of this paper

- Identify the connection between Border, territory and international relations.
- Discuss from a global perspective the various theories on border disputes. Emphasize on the lead theorists like Starr and Most (geographic proximity or contiguity and border conflicts).
- Relate these theories to Nigeria-Cameroon border dispute: causes and the framing of their border policies

BORDER, TERRITORY AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Definition of Border

It is an international line that separates two territories or nations. Some of the functions of borders include: traditional military function(frontier), legal, economic, ideological etc.

Types of Border Disputes

Positional and Functional Claims: exact line of the boundary and issues of hot pursuit respectively

Territorial Dispute

It exists when there is a disagreement between two states over where their homeland or colonial boundary should be fixed or when one country contests the right of another country to exercise any sovereign rights over some or all of its homeland or colonial territory (Huth, 2000, 98)

Why the Salience of Territory?

- Basic xtic of the nation state is centralised control of territory
- The main function of a territory is a defended area (Ardrey)
- It has a special role in IR, without it there is no sovereign state.

TERRITORIAL DISPUTES BETWEEN 1919-1995

| Region | Total | Pre-1945 | Post-1945 | Across both Periods |
|-----------|-------|----------|-----------|---------------------|
| Europe | 95 | 60 | 27 | 08 |
| Middle E. | 89 | 36 | 32 | 21 |
| Africa | 48 | 17 | 26 | 05 |
| Asia P. | 64 | 14 | 40 | 10 |
| Americas | 51 | 30 | 06 | 15 |
| TOTAL | 347 | 157 | 131 | 59 |

THEORIES ON BORDER DISPUTES

Why Theories? Theories are meant to enlighten; they constitute a set of propositions that help to explain why events occur the way they do; a theory maybe speculative or conjectural representation of reality and theorizing is meant to aid understanding or explain phenomenon (Knutsen, 1992).A theory also provides correlations between variables and a hypothesis (Brunet-Bailly, 2005).

There are many theories on border disputes. I select a few of these theories and establish a conceptual framework on how they add inform this study on the underlying causes of the Nigeria-Cameroon border problem. The questions are how does territorial dispute lead to conflict? How does proximity and contiguity lead to border dispute?

Senese(2003),Rasher & Thompson(2006), Vazquez(2009), Johnson and Toft (2014), Starr and Thomas (2005), Tir and Diehl(2001) Starr and Most (1976)

Tir and Diehl(2001)They avers that many factors account for border disputes but there are a combination of three variables: territoriality and contiguity which are influenced to the greater extent by rivalry. Rivalry to them is the underlying issues which enforces disagreement i.e. Territory and geographic proximity. These two become salient when rivalry is concerned. They outline the underlying causes of rivalry:econ policy, ideology, proximity otherwise defined as opportunity to fights.

Senese (2003)

He maintains that the principal reason behind border conflicts is question of territory. According to Senese the single most influential reason for border conflicts is territory.

-Interstate militarised disputes are highly influenced by territoriality because it opens up other avenues of disputes.

-Territoriality also leads to coercion on both sides in order to back up claims.

-The Threat of Coercion is salient because it has potentials to sour relations

Territory  Coercion  Outbreak of War. Put different territory is an independent variable and dependent variable is regime type/policy which leads coercion and war.

-Senese contends that territorial claims are distinctive: early territorial claims are not war prone unlike substantive ones which are.

He concludes by stating that alliances, geographic proximity, power status, absence of democracy cause border disputes

Rasler and Thompson (2006)

- They contend that there is a triadic combination of contested territory, proximity and strategic rivalry that leads to border conflicts. These three factors are inextricably linked
- Territorial claims revolve around control over resources, people, markets etc. Nationalism is also an important aspect especially when some ethnic groups straddle the border.
- Xtics of Territorial Claims: coercive display of force, prestige of the country is at stake in case policy is reversed, issues of national security, increase competition due to rivalry etc. However, where territorial claims are not between proximate neighbours, the likelihood of war is scarce unlike the other scenario.

Harvey Starr and G. Dale Thomas(2005)

One of the most extensive discourse on Borders and international dispute is propounded by the above-mentioned authors. Starr and Thomas opine that the location of states or contiguity is a key variable in interstate conflict.

- Borders are important avenues for International relations especially vis à vis territory and conflict; the aspect of distance is very crucial: Loss of Strength Gradient LSG (Boulding)

- Borders affect the interaction opportunities of states by either constraining or expanding it

- Length as opposed to the typology of border is a better measure of geographic opportunity; the closer the states (proximity) the more the opportunity to either interact or willingness to fight

- Borders represent the highest levels of proximity; territory plays an important role as it defines the spatial arrangements; territory also defines the group identity which is symbolic; resource holding potential of territory also increases the stakes of conflict.

How do borders Cause Conflict?

- They avenues of policy options for leaders and therefore become of great salience
- Activities within the borders can create uncertainty and of course attention
- Border Typology is very important in conflicts (Starr and Most)
- Territorial contiguity is the prime mover of conflict and therefore the outbreak of war.
- The nature of borders affects the probability of war
- Permeability of the border may also produce cooperation or conflict
- The presence or absence of a border is very crucial
- Border conflicts are primarily caused by contiguity; territorial proximity and interaction opportunity.

Gibler (2007)

- Stable borders are a feature of democratic institutionalization
 - Regime type affects likelihood of conflict especially undemocratic ones.
 - Contiguity does not cause conflict on its own. In fact the norms, structures and institutions dominate democratic peace literature and borders, conflict and democracy are interrelated. Democratic expansion across peaceful borders leads to stability.
- Border relations are deemed stable when a state perceives little or no threat to their sense of territoriality.

Harvey Starr and Benjamin A. Most

International borders help in shaping the international system because of their structural characteristics which affect the interaction opportunities of nations.

- * that the number of contiguous international borders grew from a total of 166 in 1946 to 412 in 1965;

- * that nations in 1946 on the average possessed 2.52 contiguous land frontiers, while the nations in existence in 1965 had an average of 3.30 such borders;

- * that 33 nations shared some 96 contiguous land borders through their various colonial possessions in 1946, while 31 nations shared only 66 such frontiers in 1965; and

- * that the 66 nations in 1946 possessed a total of 404 borders of different types, while the total in 1965 for the 125 nations then in existence equaled 778.

Geographic Proximity or Contiguity

- States interact with others through various contexts and along a variety of activities: trade flows, markets, immigration, diplomatic exchanges etc.
- Proximity is one of the leading determinants of international interaction
- Closeness leads to interaction
- It also creates risks such as threats/attacks or opportunities
- Distance is also an important component of trade
- Lack of a common border may be an important determinant of absence of war.
- Viability Theory of Boulding(1962):this dwells on the opportunities and risks of proximity and international wars (Loss of Strength Gradients). Easier to showcase power at home than abroad. Strength diminishes due to distance. Exporting power entails cost and time.
- Nations with many contiguous neighbours face risks and opportunities of interactions. It also generates uncertainties which may lead to an arms race, alliances, cooperation and even war.

Richardson (1960), Midlarsky (1975),
Cobb and Elder 1970

The above-mentioned authors corroborate the thesis on geographic contiguity as escalating the outbreak of border conflicts.

Typology of Borders:

- Contiguous Non-Colony Border
- Water Non-Colony Border
- Proximity-Zone Non-Colony Border

- Contiguous Colony Land Borders
- Water Colony Borders
- Proximity-Zone Colony Borders

The more colonial borders the salience of war e.g. Congo

Borders and Alliance: alliances are very common because they can easily be manipulated by leaders; alliances are constantly established in order to create opportunities where threats are manifested across the borders; common among contiguous territories mainly to modify the risks presented by the border;

Borders and Diffusion of War: Can borders diffuse war? Can the phenomenon of terrorism, coup d'états, guerrilla warfare in a prompt war? The salience of Distance.

Nigeria-Cameroon Border Dispute: The Causes

Geostrategic/Militaristic Reasons: Calabar Channel, access to the Atlantic Ocean and Southern Africa, access to the Eastern Command Channel.

Ethnic Factor: Efik, Ibibio, Oron

Socio-Economic: Resource Holding Potential (fisheries, oil & gas)

Regime Types/Foreign Policy Postures

Colonial Legacy of borders

The Framing of Nigeria-Cameroon Border Policies

-Borders and National Defence and
Security

-Alliances

-Theory on Viability

Conclusion: Various flashpoints.