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The Changing Phases of Nigeria-Cameroon Southern Boundary, 1884 – 2002

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Abstract:

From the Atlantic terminus up to Gamana River, the Nigeria – Cameroon southern boundary had been a major source of conflict between the German and British colonialists and later, the successor independent states. More than anywhere else in Africa, several Anglo – German treaties were signed by the colonialists and several diplomatic meetings were held by successor - states on the boundary. After the dispossession of German African territories in 1918 following her defeat in the First World War, German Kamerun was repartition between the British and the French colonialists. Yet, the Atlantic terminus remained undemarcated. The vagueness of the southern end implied a no clear definition of the coastal boundary between both successor–states. With the intervention of the International Court of Justice, it was ruled in 2002 among other things that the Anglo–German Treaty of 1913 was the defining boundary between the two countries and that Bakassi Peninsula rightfully belonged to Cameroon.

Keywords: Kamerun, Nigeria, Cameroon, Bakassi peninsula, boundary

1. Introduction

From the era of European commercial sphere of influence up to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruling on the Nigeria–Cameroon boundary, the geo–political interface of what emerged as Nigeria and Cameroon, from the Atlantic littoral terminus up to River Gamana, has undergone several negotiations, alignments and realignments on account of obvious yet disregarded realities and plain ignorance. Several treaties defined the evolution of the boundary thus producing a number of regimes unequalled anywhere in Africa's history of boundary-making. These regimes include the Atlantic littoral sphere of influence, the inter-colonial regimes of Anglo-German and Anglo-French (or inter-Camerouns). In defining the various regimes of the Nigeria–Cameroon boundary, the focus of this paper shall be limited to the southern section, beginning from the Atlantic littoral, up to Gamana River. Gamana River is chosen in this study as the hinterland terminus because it was the point of separation between the British Northern and Southern Cameroon. This study is delimited to the southern portion of the boundary not only because of it being the issue-area for the unique display of European inter-colonial diplomacy, but more importantly because of its uncanny, contentious and seemingly irreconcilable profile.

Beginning from the scramble for Atlantic littoral spheres in the Gulf of Guinea between Germany and Britain in 1884, through the different boundary regimes, there was no clear definition of the coastal and maritime extensions of the Nigeria–Cameroon boundary. The vagueness of the Atlantic terminus in the Anglo-German treaties of 1884, 1885, 1886, 1893, 1906 and 1913; Anglo-French Declaration of 1919, Milner-Simon delimitation of 1919 and the Anglo-French demarcation of 1937–39 tended to portray the intervening peninsula on the sea front as a *terra nullius* yet peopled 95% by Nigerians. The ambiguity of the Atlantic terminus was made more glaring in the March 11, 1913 treaty which defined the terminus by making reference to the direction of the flow of Akpayafe and Rio del Rey rivers.

As ambiguous as the coastal boundary was, the Prime Minister of the successor-state of Nigeria on October 1, 1960, declared in the Exchange of Notes with the United Kingdom that:

All obligations and responsibilities of the government of the United Kingdom, which arises from any valid international instrument, shall, henceforth, in so far as such instrument may be held to have application to Nigeria, be assumed by the government of the federation of Nigeria (Omoigui, 2007)

Attempts by independent successor-states of Nigeria and Cameroon to reach an agreement in respect of their coastal and maritime boundaries included the Yaounde Meeting of August 1970, Lagos Meeting of March 1971, Second Lagos Meeting of June 1971, Third Yaounde Meeting of May 1972, Kano Summit of August/September 1974 and Maroua Summit of May/June 1975. In spite of these diplomatic parlays, the bone of contention which was the intervening zone of Bakassi Peninsula continued to remain unresolved.

The control of the littoral intervening zone, which had been administered by Oron Division as part of Mbo during the colonial and post-independence periods in Nigeria, was transferred to Mbo on the creation of Mbo Local Government Area in Akwa Ibom State. A confusing twist was added to the specter with the creation of Bakassi Local Government Area and the transfer of same by military fiat to Cross River State in 1996. Right or wrong, the arbitrary allocation of Bakassi to Cross River State in the mist of conflicting jurisdictional claims by Cameroon betrayed the effective occupation strategy of

the Oron nation and their Ibibio neighbors. On a different angle, such arbitrary allocation of territory after 36 years of independence, further betrayed Nigeria as not being the actual owner of Bakassi which of course never appeared on any Nigerian map.

2. Prelude to Partition (Spheres of Influence)

Before the neck and neck struggle for treaties that characterized the early 1880s by European trading companies and government agents, the British Atlantic littoral sphere of influence stretched uninterrupted from Badagry to Fernando Po. British activities in the entire coastline included trading, evangelization and cargo inspection by the Royal Navy Anti-Slave Trade Squadron. In this regard, wherever the British had their trading, missionary and naval anchorages, were to be understood as their jurisdictional spheres. Unofficial control of the monotonous coastline was exercised by a British consul based in Fernando Po, who established Courts of Equity in Duala and the Oil Rivers for peaceful conduct of trade between the Europeans and Africans (Prescott, 1960). Although the Consul's visits to these locations were irregular, he, nonetheless, supervised them from Fernando Po.

Fernando Po, the prospective eastern end of the British sphere of influence in the Bight of Biafra, was acquired as a base by the Royal Navy after the fatal liquidation of early Spanish settlers by yellow fever epidemic (Uwechue, 1991). After the withdrawal of Spain from the Island in 1771, Britain acquired Fernando Po in 1827 (Dike, 1966) as a naval outpost for the enforcement of slave trade abolition. With the erection of prefabricated bungalows from England, construction of a hospital, quarters for a military officer and European artificers, a bakery and shops, Dike affirms that the island was fast becoming a British fort in the Niger Delta. Within a short spell, the new island colony gained notoriety in the suppression of slave trade, protection of European traders against local plunders and seeming restoration of order in the cut-throat competition that characterized the legitimate trade.

The changing fortunes of the mountainous island of Fernando Po, from Spanish grave to a British hive, inflamed Spanish passion and patriotic zeal. This led to a gradual return of settlers and the expulsion of British missionary, Reverend Alfred Sakar and his Baptist Mission in 1858 (Uwechue 1991). If the Spanish initial withdrawal from Fernando Po was interpreted by the British to mean lack of interest, it was an error of judgment. With her sudden wake from slumber and strong French insinuations, Spain not only took over the island, but also refused British attempt at a buy-out.

By this untoward development, the British Consul for the Bight of Benin and Biafra was left with no better option than to relocate to Calabar in 1872 (Uwechue 1991). With the earlier relocation of the Baptist Mission to Victoria and the later withdrawal of the consul, the eastern terminus of the British Atlantic littoral sphere shrank westward, from Fernando Po to Duala. By 1884, the initial lethargy exhibited by Germany in exploring extra-territorial prospects in Africa suddenly changed with a flaming passion matched with the dispatch of a visiting Commissioner, Dr. Gustav Nachtigal to Africa. In a lightning speed, the Germans secured the endorsement of treaties of cession by African chiefs in Mahin (70 miles east of Lagos), Bell, Akwa, Dido and Nalimba (Prescott, 1960). With the emergence of Mahin Beach as a German Protectorate and a nucleus of her settlement in the Bight of Benin, the British continuous littoral stretched suffered a second break after her pull-out from Fernando Po.

An attempt by the British Consul, Hewett, to secure treaties of friendship and protection before further harm could be done to British interest, was still not enough to cage the prowling lion. On getting to Duala where the British presence was marked by the Court of Equity, Consul Hewett discovered to his chagrin that German flags were already flying in the area (Anene, 1970). To the British Foreign Office, Germany's desperate and reckless scramble for treaties was interpreted to mean a 'raid on British interest' on the west coast of Africa. Before long, the interest of the two European powers was on a collision course and the need to delineate their sphere of influence became a compelling necessity. Perhaps, without the German acquisition of Duala, the eastern boundary of the 'Niger District' or Oil Rivers and what later emerged as Nigeria, would have been Duala.

With the loss of Duala, Britain's tenacious hold began to flounder in her quest to recover Mahin. The Germans would not let go Mahin for nothing. Already, G.L. Gaiser, a German trading firm, was well established in Mahin (Anene, 1970). Equally, Victoria was a British Mission Settlement, yet roundabout its neighborhood, the German flags were already flying. If the German flag was already flying at Ambas Bay, how would Britain sustain her claims to Victoria and Mount Cameroon in the face of the hinterland theory? Would a waver be given to the theory to accommodate British interest?

At the Berlin Conference (1884-1885) convoked to arrest the looming prospect of a European war in West African, 'buy - back' and 'buy - out' were touted as possible solutions to the irreconcilable claims of Britain and German over Mahin and Victoria. But neither party was willing to budge. A flurry of diplomatic notes was exchanged between Berlin and London, between British Consul Hewett in Calabar and Von soden, the German Governor of Duala, between Hewett and London as well as between Sudan and British. To untie the Gordian knot, the principle of *quid pro quo* (i.e. give and take) was adopted among other compromise. Britain exchange Victoria and Cameroon Mountain for Mahin. Going by the hinterland theory, it was simply instructive that the German pretensions at Ambas Bay would yield Cameroon Mountain. The surrender, therefore, of victory to Germany did not imply loss of the most beautiful anchorage for British ships, but most importantly, a third westward and humiliating shift of the British littoral frontier to Rio del Rey. By this shift, the entrenched positions of the powers in the Oil Rivers and Duala Protectorates respectively acknowledge Rio del Rey as their intervening buffer. As it were, elbowing, which characterized the nature of European conflicts during the scramble for treaties and jurisdictional spheres, was avoided in Rio del Rey by European trading companies and consular agents, pending demarcation. As affirmed by Anene, 'the coast and region between Calabar and Duala was regarded as a political no-man's land, a *terra nullius* of sort.'

3. Inter-Colonial Phases of Nigeria – Cameroon Southern Boundary

In the discussion of the inter-colonial phases of the Nigeria Cameroon southern boundary, two different boundary regimes are considered i.e the Anglo-German and Anglo-French regimes. Although both phases were characterized by 'boundary allocations', the Anglo-French or post – World War I Nigeria – Cameroon boundary was a re- partition exercise. This section is particularly important because of its notoriety as the harbinger of future conflicts between the independent successor-states of Nigeria and Cameroon. Anene corroborates this fact by stating that the inter-colonial phase was 'a faint foreshadowing of the future problems.'

3.1. Anglo – German Boundary Regime

On the resumption of the Anglo-German negotiation to delineate the immediate hinterland in 1885, the national interest of the two powers, as it were in every diplomatic activity, held sway. The need to partition was not just to delimit areas of control *per se*, but partitioning to enhance off-shore national interest and aspiration.

With the intervening zone lying in-between the British and the German littoral spheres of influence, i.e, from Rio del Rey Island, Britain proposed the Ndiain River as boundary while Germany suggested Akpayafe (Prescott, 1960). To the Germans, Akpayafe was a natural separation of the Bantu groups in Kamerun from the semi-bantu groups of the Cross River basin. But a neat demarcation based on linguistic or ethnographic lines appeared impossible because of the location of pockets of Bantu enclaves like the Efut and Ododop west of Akpayafe. Similarly, some semi-Bantu groups such as the Boki and Ejagham were found on both sides of the German proposed divide. Anene's description of the complexity of linguistic pattern in the zone as lacking parallel in any African territory implied that any question of demarcation on ethnic basis would have been difficult and meaningless. A further complication was the question of ethnic affinity and origin. As it were, the semi-Bantu owed their origin to the Bantu and over the centuries shared cultural and economic intercourse.

Nonetheless, the British proposal of the Ndiain River as inland boundary to avoid the 'Efik political and commercial empire' was without doubt a strategy to deny German traders and imperial agents the inland waterways to the hinterland. The Germans found to their chagrin that the so-called Efik empire was a figment of British imagination, an illusory conjecture which only existed in British minds, not in the physical plain. That the Efik traders had trading stations in Rio del Rey region and beyond was not in doubt. What was probably in doubt was the claim of their supremacy and control. Reverend A. Ross and other Scottish missionaries, who visited the region in 1877, observed that the presence of Efik traders depended on the goodwill of the local inhabitants (Anene, 1970). As affirmed by Anene, 'the Efik political system possessed no central organs of government through which to govern the hinterland.' (1970)

Along the Cross and Calabar rivers, which were the main arteries of Efik trade routes, the semi-Bantu Umon and the Bantu Ododop respectively were strategically located to facilitate or block Efik penetration of the upper reaches of the two rivers. This meant that if the Efik commercial and political supremacy in the region were as real as her majesty's agents wanted the German to believe, then the Umon and Ododop would have been brought under Efik subjugation. Yet, there was no evidence of Efik suzerainty over these communities located on her trade route. Rather, Efik traders were at the mercy of the communities.

Without doubt, Britain had long standing interest in the Cross River region and a better knowledge of the basin between Akpayafe and Ndiain rivers but was complacent. Germany, the new entrant, was proactive and did not only scramble for treaties but embarked on hoisting of flags wherever a German foot trod. Germany claimed Britain had already gained Cross and Calabar rivers as well as the Niger river estuaries which provided vital access to the hinterland and therefore should allow her to control the next riverine system of Akpayafe and Ndiain. As it was the case on their delimitation of littoral sphere, the hinterland debate provided another debacle.

After series of diplomatic exchanges spanning between April 29 and June 16, 1885, the allocation of the hinterland boundary, beginning from the Atlantic littoral terminus, was defined in the Anglo-German treaty of 1885 as:

... the right bank of the Rio del Rey entering the sea between 8°42' and 8°46' longitude east of Greenwich, in the interior a line following the right bank of Rio del Rey from the said mouth to its source, thence striking direct to the left river bank of the Calabar or Cross River and terminating after crossing the river at the point about 9°8 longitude east of Greenwich, marked 'Rapids' on the English Admiralty chart (Hertslet, 1909).

By August 2, 1886, a supplementary agreement was reached on the northward extension of the boundary from the Cross River Rapids:

...starting from a point on the left bank of the Old Calabar or Cross River where the original line terminated, shall be continued diagonally to the River Benue to the east of and as close to Yola as may be found on examination, to be practically suited for the demarcation of the boundary (Hertslet, 1909).

In spite of the treaty, the thought of securing an amicable settlement between the two powers was far from over as it was discovered in 1888 by a British agent, Harry Johnston, after an extensive exploration of the intervening zone, that Rio del Rey was after all a mere five-mile recipient estuary of a number of streams, not an eight miles long river as assumed in the 1885 Treaty (Anene, 1970). In his diplomatic note of July 28, 1888 to consul Hewett, Zintgraff, a German official, affirmed the mythical existence of Rio del Rey as an inland mirage. Zintgraff stated *inter alia*. 'You know as well me that there is no Rio del Rey. At least, there is no source of such a river.' (Prescott, 1960; Anene, 1970; Marston, 1982)

In spite of their differing positions which dragged on till 1893, the British and German governments resolved in the agreement on November 15, 1893 that:

The boundary drawn from the point on the right bank of the Old Calabar or Cross River, about 9°8' of longitude east of Greenwich, marked 'Rapids' in the English Admiralty referred to in the above-quoted Agreement of 1885, shall follow a straight line directed towards the centre of the present town of Yola (Marston, 1982).

On the suggestion of the German government for a definitive survey of the Niger Coast Protectorate and the German Kamerun, the Anglo-German Boundary Commission between October and November 1893 delineated the boundary from the Cross River Rapids down to Rio del Rey as detailed in the Agreement of the same year (Marston, 1982).

In the final Anglo-German Treaty of 1913, all the inadequacies in the previous provisional agreements were addressed. The treaty, which defined the boundary from Yola to the sea, stated in part that:

Should the lower course of the Akpayafe so change its mouth as to transfer it to the Rio del Rey, it is agreed that the area now known as the Bakassi Peninsula should still remain German territory... (Hertslet, 1909).

Article 22 of 1913 Treaty defined the boundary as starting:

From the centre of the navigable channel on a line joining Bakassi Point and King Point, the boundary shall follow the centre of the navigable channel of the Akpayafe River as far as the 3 mile limit of territorial jurisdiction. For the purpose of defining this boundary, the navigable channel of the Akpayafe River be considered to lie wholly to the east of the navigable channel of the Cross River and Calabar River (Hertslet, 1909).

Although it took almost three decades (1885-1913) for the southern economic and political frontier between British Nigeria and German Kamerun to be delimited, it is important to note that the final act of Anglo-German boundary definition did not endure. By 1914, British and French troops invaded and occupied German Kamerun as the World War broke out (Anene, 1970), thus ushering in another boundary regime at the end of the war.

3.2. Anglo-French Boundary Regime (1919 - 1960)

The Anglo-French or inter-Cameroon boundary regime witnessed a departure from the 1913 Anglo-German line. At the beginning of World War I hostilities in 1914, the British troops and her African battalions invaded German Kamerun from the west, while French troops invaded from the east, expelled the German regiments and occupied the territory up till the cessation of hostilities in 1918. The defeat of Germany in the war dramatically altered both the Nigeria – Cameroon boundary and the European balance of power in Africa. During the interregnum, the original boundary line separating Cameroon and the newly amalgamated Nigeria became a regional boundary thus ceasing to fulfill the restrictive and exclusionary function of an international boundary. This was possible because the boundary separating the two neighbouring territories were under British control.

On the cessation of hostilities which climaxed the defeat of Germany in 1918, she was forced at the Versailles Conference of 1919 to officially renounce her extra-territorial interest in Africa (Barkindo, 1984). By this development, German African territories, therefore, became war booties shared among the principal Allied and Associated Powers. The dispossession of German's African territories gave way to the re-partition of Cameroon into British and French spheres as highlighted in the Anglo-French Declaration of July 10, 1919.

In a fresh re-alignment of the Nigeria – Cameroon international boundary, Britain acquired the western flank of the 'booty' that was coterminous with Nigeria while France acquired a larger chunk eastward. The implication of this re-partition meant an eastward adjustment of Nigeria – Cameroon boundary. Perhaps Britain's share of the German Kamerun World War I booty would have remained a distinct territory from Nigeria if it were not for the paucity of administrative resources.

Both colonial powers, Britain and France, were mandated by the newly formed League of Nations to hold the divided Cameroons as a sacred trust of civilization until such a time that they would be able to stand on their own feet in the arduous conditions of the modern world (Oliver & Fage, 1966). According to Barkindo, while French Cameroon was retained as a distinct colony, British Cameroon was split into two, the north administered as part of Northern Nigeria, and the south as part of Southern Nigeria (Barkindo, 1984). These 'mandated territories' of the League of Nations were renamed Trusteeships by the succeeding United Nations Organization (Asiwaju, 1990), at the end of the Second World War. The 1913 Anglo-German international boundary temporarily ceased to exist and was supplemented by the Milner-Simon Line of 1919, which from the coast, placed Buea, Kumba, Mamfe, Bamenda, Kumbo, Gashaka and Gupin on the British side. Similarly, Duala, Nkong Samba, Chang, Fumban, Banyo, Koncha and Uromali were allocated to France. Other territorial allocations above the River Gamana are outside the scope of this paper. Since the Anglo-French declaration on the repartition of Cameroon was followed by the Milner-Simon delimitation exercise, the actual demarcation of the inter-Cameroon boundary was not done until 1937, ending in 1939. Within the short spell, only 85 concrete pillars were planted from the coast to Crater-Lake Monongulu (Prescott, 1960).

3.3. Plebiscite Boundary Regime of 1961

By January 1, 1960, the French Trusteeship of Cameroon became an independent country while Nigeria also became independent but within the British Commonwealth on October 1 of the same year. Bound by colonial protocols and conventions, the independent successor states of Nigeria and Cameroon inherited the Milner-Simon Line as their common boundary. While the British Trusteeship of Cameroon continued to remain an integral part of Nigeria, a decision on the future was to be taken on a future date. The prospect of an inter-Cameroon boundary readjustment in favour of resurrecting a united Cameroon on the ashes of the moribund German Kamerun became a political hot-potato in the last few years preceding independence. Leading Cameroonian nationalists such as Dr. Emmanuel Endeley and John Ngu Foncha were sharply divided on the issue. While Endeley favoured remaining *in situ*, Foncha preferred a united Cameroon. In the eyes of francophone Cameroonians, these two leaders meant different things to them. Endeley was vilified as a saboteur, Foncha, a nationalist and a true Cameroonian.

Whether despised or eulogized, the two nationalists were right in their respective positions. To Endeley, South-West Cameroon and Southern Nigeria had been administered as one territory for almost four decades and shared common lingua-franca, judicial, monetary and political systems. Second, a union with Nigeria would have removed the inadequacies of the Anglo-German boundary which were latent sources of future conflict. To Foncha, a united Cameroon would mark a triumph of the pan-African spirit over the balkanizing tendencies of the colonialists and an excellent opportunity to showcase Cameroon's brotherhood in the mist of colonial diversities. The fear of internal imperialism was equally germane in Foncha's thought pattern as Nigerian migrant workers, traders and civil servants, particularly of Igbo extraction, were firmly established in south-west Cameroon. Also, the frustrations of Cameroon's representatives in making Cameroon's views heard above the rising crescendo of Igbo ethnic nationalism in the Eastern Region House of Assembly were an added fillip to Foncha (Mazrui & Tidy, 1984).

An attempt by the British government in 1954 to placate Southern Cameroon by separating her from Eastern Nigeria and giving her a separate House of Assembly and a ministerial government appeared daunting as the tone and stage for the future was set by the outcome of the general election of 1958. According to Prescott, 'the party favouring union of the two Cameroons was successful by a small majority.' (Prescott, 1960)

In the UN-sponsored plebiscite of 1961, south-west Cameroon elected to join the French Cameroon thereby re-enacting the original 1913 Anglo-German boundary as the authentic boundary between independent successor-states of Nigeria and Cameroon. North of the Gamana River, which is outside the scope of this paper i.e. the British Northern Cameroon, was elected two years earlier to remain an integral part of Nigeria, thus maintaining the original Milner-Simon line from River Gamana to Lake Chad.

3.4. ICJ Boundary Regime of 2002

Beginning from the scramble for Atlantic littoral spheres in the Gulf of Guinea between Germany and Britain in 1884, through the different boundary regimes discussed above, there was no clear definition of the coastal and maritime extensions of the Nigeria – Cameroon boundary. The vagueness of the Atlantic terminus in the Anglo-German treaties of 1884, 1885, 1886, 1893, 1906 and 1913; Anglo-French Declaration of 1919, Milner-Simon delimitation of 1919 and the Anglo-French demarcation of 1937–1939 tended to portray the intervening peninsula on the sea front as a *terra nullius*, yet peopled 95% by Nigerians. The ambiguity of the Atlantic terminus was made more glaring in the March 11, 1913 treaty which defined the terminus by making reference to the direction of the flow of the Akpayafe and Rio del Rey rivers (Anglo-German Treaty, 1913).

As ambiguous as the coastal boundary was, the Prime Minister of the successor-state of Nigeria, Tafawa Balewa, on independence day, October 1, 1960, declared in the Exchange of Notes with the United Kingdom that:

All obligations and responsibilities of the government of the United Kingdom, which arises from any valid international instrument, shall, henceforth, in so far as such instrument may be held to have application to Nigeria, be assumed by the government of the federation of Nigeria.

Attempts by the successor-states of Nigeria and Cameroon to reach an agreement in respect of their coastal and maritime boundaries included the Yaounde Meeting of August 1970, Lagos Meeting of March 1971, Second Lagos Meeting of June 1971, Third Yaounde Meeting of May 1972, Kano Summit of August/September 1974 and Maroua Summit of May/June 1975. In spite of these diplomatic parlays, the 'bone of contention' which was the intervening zone of Bakassi Peninsula continued to remain unsolved.

The control of the littoral intervening zone, which had been administered by Oron as part of Mbo during the colonial and post-independence periods, was transferred to Mbo on the creation of Mbo Local Government Area in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. A confusing twist was added to the spectre with the creation of Bakassi Local Government Area and the transfer of same by military fiat to Cross River State of Nigeria in 1996. Right or wrong, the arbitrary allocation of Bakassi to Cross River State in the midst of conflicting jurisdictional claims by Cameroon betrayed the effective occupation strategy of Oron and their Ibibio neighbours. On a different angle, such arbitrary allocation of territory 36 years after independence, further betrayed Nigeria as not being the actual owner of Bakassi which of course never appeared on any Nigerian map.

On Cameroon's initiative, the imbroglio was presented to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on March 29, 1994, for arbitration. On a verdict of 13 to 3, the ICJ depending largely on the Anglo-German Treaty of 1913 awarded the sovereignty over Bakassi to Cameroon on October 10, 2002. The definition of the maritime extension, which is to be demarcated later, was based on the UN Laws of the Sea.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, the changing phases of the Nigeria-Cameroon southern boundary was examined, beginning from the Atlantic littoral sphere of influence, through the international phases which were at different times marked by the Anglo-German and Anglo-French boundary regimes. Before the partition of Africa, European trading companies and government agents competed for control of the Atlantic littoral sphere. With the entry of Germany into the race for territories in 1884, she soon came to a collision course with Britain by taking over Duala and Mahin. After a negotiated settlement, Britain lost Victoria and Cameroon Mountain to Germany while winning Mahin in the Atlantic coast of what later became Nigeria. With the defeat of Germany in the First World War, Cameroon was shared between Britain and France as mandated territories of the League of Nations. By the UN plebiscite of 1961, South-west Cameroon voted to join Cameroon, thus re-enacting the 1913 Anglo-German boundary from the Atlantic coast to Gamana River. The post-plebiscite boundary regime was marked by a readjustment of the inter-Cameroon boundary to align with Nigeria from Gamana River down to the Atlantic coast.

The readjustment transformed the south-west Cameroon boundary with Nigeria from regional to international. The Nigeria-Cameroon boundary was further defined in judgement by the International Court of Justice in 2002, giving Bakassi, the Atlantic end of the boundary to Cameroon.

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