HUMANUS DISCOURSE Vol. 4. NO 2. 2024
ISSN 2787-0308 (ONLINE)

Nigeria-Cameroon Transborder Cooperation and the Peaceful Management of Transborder Resources and Economic Integration.[1]

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Abstract

The study examines the significant consequence of the colonization of Africa by European imperialist powers and the imposition of ill-defined boundaries in the African landscape. It is indicated that the Nigeria-Southwest Cameroon borderlands are coherent cultural areas that were evolving into an integrated region across the Nigeria-Cameroon border region, thus bringing Africa into the mainstream of global border theory and theorizing. The consequences have been internationalized from this localized impact of the boundary, leading to militarization of the boundary regime and litigation following the International Court of Justice ruling. Lessons from Latin American and European transboundary management and cooperation are highlighted to demonstrate the futility of war and litigation. The comparative and analytical border theory suggests similarities of sovereignty perforating realities with state-centric imaging, severe identity vivisection, cultural interpenetration and perception of the borders by border inhabitants as their natural backyards. To resolve the contestation between the border people and their national governments, the paper concludes that new forms of border governance regimes are required that would include non-state actors and organizations in the form of a transborder model to include local populations in decision-making and contribute to their development through a regime of transborder cooperation and economic integration between the two states.

Keywords: Transborder Cooperation; Border region; Resources; Management; Integration.

Introduction

Both border theory and borderlands studies owe much of their cross-disciplinary origins and development to scholars of the American West. However, by the late 1990s, spurred by the rapid developments of the European Union, Europeanist scholars had contributed not only a wealth of empirical

[1] **We thank all our resource persons for volunteering valuable information that helped enhance the quality of this work. Most importantly, we thank the Tertiary Education Trust Fund for funding the study.**

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studies but also significant theoretical insights and concepts of borderland studies. Conceptually, Africa has remained the peripheral poor with particular reference to the areal studies family. African borders have often been seen as incomplete or exceptional in mainstream border theory – due to their supposed permeability, negotiability arbitrariness, and lack of impact on popularly rooted social identities. However, Africanist scholars are increasingly making two arguments concerning the supposed exceptionalism of African borders. Firstly, many African borders are not indeed as irrelevant, permeable, and arbitrary as widely assumed. Secondly, many of the characteristics of African borders, in their diversity, are also present elsewhere. With increasing global theorizing, the United States-Mexico-Canada and European borders may well turn out to be exceptions to the global norm. African borders will contribute to shaping our understanding of the functioning and meaning of borders in the global context.

It is bringing "theory into Africa and Africa into theory," which has given rise to the present project on Nigeria-Cameroon International Boundary and Borderlands Studies. For instance, many characteristics of border management, legal regimes, and border life that operate at the border inform the comparative and analytical foundation of border theory, and to which African borders are no exception.[2] African borders often exemplify extreme border characteristics. For instance, while the performance of sovereignty and control is a high-profile feature of any border post, it is particularly salient at African borders where the performance may exist in inverse relation to the state's substance. Similarly, as border inhabitants everywhere produce their border theory rooted in social practice, thereby contesting the conventionally bounded citizenship imaging of the state, the distance between border communities and state claims to territory and identity in Africa is often significant, with few avenues to closing the gap.[3] Few African countries, in contrast to North America (the United States, Canada, and Mexico) and others, have authorised dual nationality for their citizenship despite the impossibility of preventing its practice.

Apart from furthering existing border theory, the empirical and theoretical insights gained from studying European, North American, and African borderland inhabitants will enable the analysis and contribution to studying the Nigeria – Cameroon borderlands. The prospective areas of concern and future inquiry include the meaning of national borders in pre-, post, multi, or transnational societies, giving borders transnational identities of their own. Furthermore, can these borders substitute the state in the long run? Might the strength and persistence of local political models lead to the transformation of the state as the unique model of organised power? Or do they foreshadow a specific form of inter-placement between non-state actors and the state that will lead to hierarchical political settings in Africa and elsewhere? If so, what kinds of new borders – manifested physically, discursively, and symbolically

[2] A. Dunmoye, "Nigeria and Cameroon: Lynchpin for ECOWAS-ECCAS Inter-Regional Cooperation."In*Nigeria-Camerron Transborder Cooperation,* 1-18. Edited by A. A. Adaji and R. O. Oji. (Abuja: National Boundary Commission, 2015).
[3]Ajomo, M. A. "Legal Perspective on Border Issues." In *Borderlands in Africa,* 37–43. Edited by A. I. Asiwaju and P. O. Adeniyi(Lagos: University of Lagos Press, 1989).

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ISSN 2787-0308 (ONLINE)

legal regimes arising around such political forms do we envisage particularly for Nigeria and Cameroon?

Following the International Court of Justice (ICJ) judgment of October 10, 2002, over the Bakassi Peninsula, sovereignty over areas in the tenuous relationship is being transferred to one another by Nigeria and Cameroon in phases and through a process that has spanned the past seventeen (17) years. Starting from December 2003, both countries started transferring sovereignty over villages in the Lake Chad area to one another. In June 2004, Narki and Ndabakura in Borno State were transferred to Nigeria—similarly, Boura Wango in Adamawa State. Then, in August 2006, the Bakassi Peninsula was transferred to Cameroon. Indeed, the transfer of sovereignty in areas affected by the judgment in Taraba State is yet to be done because the land boundary delineated by the ICJ judgment in the areas is yet to be demarcated.

It is important to note that in the process leading to the transfer of sovereignty, Summits of Heads of State were held between Presidents of Nigeria and Cameroon. Two summits were held in Geneva initially, then another in Paris, followed by a fourth in Geneva before a final one was held in New York, leading to the "Green Tree Agreement" between the two countries. The Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission was also established with two sub-commissions: one on the affected populations, which worked from June 2003 to April 2004, and the other for demarcation, which is still at work. The Green Tree Agreement provides for a systematic follow-up arrangement under the supervision of the Mixed Commission and agents of the State Witnesses, which are comprised significantly of Britain, France, Germany, and the United States. The Green Tree Agreement resulted from the problematic diplomatic negotiation of the October 10, 2002 ICJ judgment. It re-emphasized the acceptance of the judgment by Nigeria and Cameroon. It reiterated their mutual commitment to its implementation in a mutually agreed way that stipulates the procedures to be followed in Nigeria's disengagement and final transfer of sovereignty over the Peninsula to Cameroon. The two countries set a schedule ranging between two and seven years for the total actualisation of the judgment.

A series of human activities allowed and prohibited by the two countries agreed. The two countries also agreed to certain guarantees of the human and people's rights of the affected populations. However, the overall effects of the Green Tree Agreement were to offer Nigeria an excellent face-saving mechanism for the transfer of authority over the Bakassi Peninsula and also to ensure continued goodwill between the countries after that. In other words, the primary issue since the ICJ judgment has been the relocation and resettlement of the affected populations in the area. Despite calls from the Nigerian government, human rights and civil society organizations should take a second look at the ICJ strategy of creating an entirely new settlement for the displaced populations, not laying the foundation for a future problem. It is observed that populations displaced as a result of the judgment are mainly from the Niger Delta States of Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Rivers, Delta, and Ondo. These nomadic populations have moved along with migratory maritime resources but can still trace their ancestral homes.

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It is further observed that the resettlement of such displaced people in 'virgin' land in the past has often created questions of proprietary rights to land with neighbouring or host communities, leading to spirals of conflict again. Beyond the preceding, the strategy of relocation and resettlement in 'virgin' lands will commit the government to create new settlements in all the affected states of the federation from where these displaced peoples come from. More so, these people have migrated without their living memory and, as a result, would find it difficult to cope in their environment. Hence, it is imperative to leverage micro-diplomatic percolating realities to build transborder cooperation between the adjacent territories abutting the international boundary. It is hoped that through a political decision-making process where actors organize themselves through relationship structures, shaping a set of principles and rules, among other things, to implement processes for a better use of power to ensure a better performance and obtain a better outcome of sustainable socioeconomic development in the border region.

Thus, the development and the diffusion of transborder cooperation, as understood as the strategic alliance between players and contiguous territories to reinforce the regional integration processes, has become a challenge of great relevance in the Nigeria-Cameroon border region. Nigeria and Cameroon need to embrace transborder cooperation as an opportunity to reconcile geo-economic and geopolitical differences for each of its borders. While each border scenario is unique because of its nature, just as the boundaries that shape them, with no detriment to that, generally, it is possible to identify a series of characteristics that lead to the construction of a typology of action for the borderline territories. Nigeria and Cameroon borders cannot afford to relegate and abandon these opportunities.

Statement of the Research Problem

The present research effort is necessitated by a need for more rigorous analysis arising from generalization and theorization on the phenomenon of international boundaries, divided peoples, and cultural areas based on the transnational paradigm. This task has become urgent and imperative for several reasons. First, the Nigeria – Cameroon boundary along and astride the Cross River borderlands is the least developed of all Nigeria's international boundaries. Second, the boundary regime has been highly mobile, and its tributaries of components have often led to border conflicts between Nigeria and Cameroon. The prime vector of conflicts in this borderland is border inheritance from the German (later French) and the British agreements. Third, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) Judgment has added another dimension to the boundary regime's colouration, which needs to be examined and analyzed.

Most importantly, the Nigeria-Cameroon borderland is of security concern to both nation-states, especially Nigeria's strategic interest. Thus, the Eastern Naval Command headquarters is located in this borderland, and the border is within the prism of the soft underbelly of the Nigerian economy. Therefore, the prevailing state of uncertainty along the Nigeria-Cameroon border and in taking cognizance of the imperative for specialized and training programs of the University of Calabar aimed at improving knowledge and enhancing capacity for

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proactive handling of border and cross-border initiatives in the service of broader regional integration for sustainable development.

To what extent do they have stability as cultural markers? Should we consider national differences purely political and economic, or are they customs stations for customs? Using the notion of borders as conduits, how do borders facilitate cultural exchange just as they equilibrate the disparities of value of commercial exchange, i.e., disparities that are themselves reflected in culture and social contestations? How do governments perceive borders, and how do the border people perceive borders? How can this contestation thesis be resolved, or are these new political and identity organizations only reacting to uncertainty caused by the weakness or absence of state structures? In many senses, therefore, the territorial border becomes loose where there is a boundary dividing identities into two nations and a bridge linking them in mutual dependence; hence, the need to examine these interlocking variables that bind based on pre-colonial micro-diplomatic integrative realities that percolate the border region despite the boundary conflict.

Research Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative methodology concerned with collecting and collating primary and secondary data that explicates current realities. The data collected reflected two competing themes: the state-centric perspective on border studies and the micro-integrative level of analysis. Firstly, data on the state-centric perspective necessitated visits to some institutions and libraries such as the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS), Kuru, Jos; the National Boundary Commission (NBC), Abuja; the Nigerian Institute for International Affairs (NIIA), Lagos; the National Archives in Calabar and Enugu in Nigeria and Buea in Cameroon.

Secondly, data on the micro-integrative sources enabled a tour and collection of oral evidence on the border region from the Bakassi Peninsula through Ikang, Akpabuyo, Ekang, the Ejagham, and the Boki communities along and astride the international boundary, including Amana, Becheve, Akwaya in Obudu/Obanliku areas. However, language did not pose a barrier to communication as against what obtains at the state-centric level, especially as the researchers were versatile in the local dialects spoken in the contiguous areas of the border region. Most importantly, Ejagham, Boki languages, and "pidgin English," popularly referred to as "Cameroon English," are widely spoken.

Beyond historical precedents and states' practice of foreign policy, which traditionally focused on trade, security, and defence issues, data generated demonstrated first mechanistic and state-centric analysis and interpretation as a consequence of state formation; its rationalistic orientation and focus on problems created by the delimited boundaries. The second and increasingly more popular radical genre of data tends to be dialectical, holistic, and system-level in orientation, construed civil disorder due to double antimony of boundary function bearing on societies. The study,therefore, utilized a multi-scaler analytical framework inherent inthe modern approach to border studies currently in vogue in Europe and North America aimed at the humanization and integration of borders. Data generated from both primary and secondary

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ISSN 2787-0308 (ONLINE)

sources were carefully evaluated, synthesized, analyzed, and integrated into the content analysis of the issues under investigation, upon which conclusions and enduring recommendations were put forward.

Conceptual and Theoretical Explication

The concepts of boundaries, frontier (or border), and, lately, borderlands do not give the impression that the concepts are synonymous or can be used interchangeably. Fortunately, however, the images the concepts conjure are significant in border research because they are 'Siamese triplets.' C. S. Momoh opined that a boundary is an imaginary line delimiting one state's territorial extent or jurisdiction from another. Thus, by separating the territorial limits of adjacent states, international boundaries, in effect, reasonably indicate in each case the distance from the central administration and the extent that the arm of the law can reach.[4] Hence, since a boundary is a line, it does not command width. On the other hand, a frontier (or border) is a zone or region having both length and breadth, indicating without fixing the exact limit where one state ends and another begins. Thus, "a boundary girds a frontier, and more often than not, it is the expansion of the frontier owing to pressures from within which so frequently renders the boundary necessary."[5] In other words, the frontier (or border) represents the area where "the outward push of political authority of one state runs into that of another."[6] It is a zone of actual contact or separation in political, geographical, cultural, and economic characteristics. It is a zone where 'internationality meets with locality' and, in most cases, with a distinct cultural and economic characteristic, is described as border culture or community.

Granted that in specific historical circumstances, a border could be a region or a contact area, it is imperative to understand the effects of international boundaries on the diffusion process because any type of communication is essential not only for the evaluation and analysis of possible discrimination effects but, as a necessity to understand the processes of spatial development in the era of integration. In studying the spatial impact of communication barriers, it is essential to locate the process of diffusion as the propagation phenomenon in time and space of specific institutions, ideas, individual groups, or any receiving entity.[7]

[4] C. S. Momoh, "A Critigue of Borderland Thoeries." In *Borderlands in Africa,* 51-78. Edited by A. I. Asiwaju and P. O. Adeniyi. (Lagos: University Press, 1989).
[5] O. Chukwurah, "Nigeria-Cameroon Transborder Cooperation." Paper presented at the Nigeria-Cameroon Transborder Workshop, Yola, 1992, p. 3.
[6] A. Oyebode, "Nigeria's Maritime Boundaries: Law of the Sea and Diplomatic Relations." In *African Integration: Images and Perspectives,* 176-190. Edited by R. T. Akinyele, (Lagos: University of Lagos, 2003). p. 177.
[7] M. O. Bonchuk, "International Boundaries and Divided Peoples: A Case Study of Boki and Ejagham Communities in the Cross River Area, 1884-1994." Ph.D Dissertation, University of Calabar, Calabar, 1997, p. 299.

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The borderlands concept is relatively new in international boundaries literature, which describes areas contiguous to the boundary between two states. The African experience reflects this view. Scholars such as Oscar Martinez and C. S. Momoh have classified spatial boundaries and borderlands regarding interactions along and across shared borders. Martinez, for example, argued that the borderland concept is replete with ambiguities and controversies because of its liveliness and extent but not in terms of its plain characterization.[8] It is instead the inter-communal zone abutting an international boundary. Momoh, in his analysis, divided borderland interaction into: (a) minimal borderland, (b) zero borderland, and (c) maximal borderland.[9] Maximal borderlands fit graphically within the Nigeria-Cameroon discourse on transborder relations. In other words, borderlands are a social and political setting in which the interests of the state, its relations, and problems between neighbouring countries are exhibited. Thus, states carry out border relations through treaties or agreements showing their political and territorial sovereignty. Thus, these border relations, over time, typically change to suit the preferences and national interests of the states concerned. Along and astride the Nigeria-Cameroon borderlands lies artificially partitioned ethnic groups such as the Ejagham, Boki, and Akwaya in the Cross River region with Southwest Cameroon, and the Tiv, Hausa, Fulani, Mandara, Adamawa, Mambil-Vote and the Fali of Mubi, divided by the 1913 Anglo-German boundary and placed in Nigeria and Cameroon respectively.[10]

Arising from the preceding, the literature about boundaries reflects various competing perspectives; after that, the doctrine of boundaries between objects may be natural or imposed. Property boundaries are, for instance, expected to be linear and definitive. Other boundaries can be presented in the form of contact or transition areas. Such boundaries are usually vague. However, Stephen Jones indicated that boundaries (and the concept of a boundary) are intricately and inseparably linked with the concept of 'the region' in geography, for instance, the West African region. In other words, literature on the traditional doctrine of boundaries reflects two types of boundaries: natural and artificial.[11] However, both types have a range of applications that render them vague.

By and large, the ideas about boundaries are related to their geographical and historical circumstances. Jones posits that the age of reason produced the doctrine of natural boundaries when philosophers of the time appealed to it when they found it convenient. In this sense, Jan Broek discussed the problems, limitations, and vagueness inherent in the doctrine of natural boundaries. However, boundaries are natural to understand and interpret as physical, cultural, racial, linguistic, or religious.[12] It is not only the desert that does not respect or recognize boundaries. Granted that the doctrine of natural

[8] O. Martinez, *Across Boundaries: Transboundary Interaction in Comparative Perspective.* (Texas: El Paso Press, 1986), p. 17.
[9] C. S. Momoh, "A Critigue of Borderland Thoeries…", p. 53-54 .
[10] M. O. Bonchuk, "International Boundaries and Divided Peoples…" p. 230.
[11]Jones, Stephen. B. *Boundary Making: A Handbook for Statement, Treaty, Editors and Boundary Commissioners.* (Washington D. C.: Carnegie Endowment, 1945), 53.
[12]Broek, Jan. "The Problem of Natural Frontiers." In *Frontiers of the Future,* 211–236.(Berkely and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1951).

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boundaries is fraught with imprecision, vagueness, and defects, the way is left open for the theory of artificial, subjective, and political boundaries to sway. It is because all boundaries are political, arbitrary, artificial, and subjective to the will of the nation-states. However, there are instances where political decisions have tried to make races, religions, cultures, or languages fit within boundaries ostensibly demarcated on natural grounds. It only reinforces the contention that boundaries are artificial creations by sovereign states.[13] Nonetheless, the latest developments in weaponry have rendered the notion of boundaries as faultless security propositions regarding sovereign rights of states, economic, commercial, and industrial elites, who have exclusive territories for exercising political, legal, economic, and fiscal authority.

Study Area and Geophysical Characteristics

The Nigeria-Cameroon border region in focus was negotiated by the British and Germans from 1884 to 1913, and the agreement was maintained until 1918 when Germany lost the First World War. The erstwhile German possessions were partitioned, and a Condominium Administration was established between the British and the French. This partition was endorsed by the League of Nations in 1922, and each administered its portion as the League of Nations Mandate. The partition of German "Kamerun" created two distinct boundary configurations: the original German-British boundary and a new Franco-British Mandate-Cum-Trusteeship divide. France granted its Cameroon Trusteeship Territory independence under the name "La Republique du Cameroon."[14] Nigeria became independent on October 1, 1960. 1961, the United Nations organized plebiscites in the British Northern and Southern Cameroons. The electorate was asked to choose between going independent by joining Nigeria (integration) or Cameroon (unification). Northern Cameroon integrated with Nigeria, while Southern Cameroon united with Nigeria. It means that the British Cameroons, the offspring of partition, were further fragmented. The boundary changed accordingly, and the original British-German boundary was modified.[15] Consequently, Cameroon gained a triple boundary heritage, significantly impacting the border status.

The various border mutations overtime have compounded the Nigeria-Cameroon border development, and these have posed challenges not only to transborder development but also affect transborder cooperation. It generates serious security concerns for the border-impacted populations. Asiwajubelieves that the germinal substance of the complexity lies in the fact that the border region has been highly mobile; thus, the task of delimitation and demarcation is arduous.[16]Nigeria and Cameroon are still engrossed with sovereignty assertions, territorial claims, militarization of border areas, and even litigation that culminated in the International Court of Justice. The 1,700 km long border is a predominantly rugged terrain culminating in high mountains, including

[13] A. I. Asiwaju, *Artificial Boundaries.* (New York: Civilities International, 1900), pp. 30–31.
[14] National Archives Beua, Pa/1958/4, No. 115. "Report of the Political Officer on Rio del Rey to Chief Political Officer," Duala, November 25, 1958.
[15] National Archives Beua, File No. Pa/1916/13 - 128/1916. D. O. Bamenda to Government House.
[16] A. I. Asiwaju, "Cross-Border Relations in Africa." In *Governance and Border Security in Africa,* 1–12. edited byC. Bassey and O. Oshita (Lagos: Malthouse Press, 2010).

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Mandera, Mambilla, and Bamenda highlands and intervening plateaus and forests. The coastal lowlands in Nigeria and Cameroon receive heavy rainfall throughout the year due totheir location near the Atlantic Ocean, and the area is suitable for agriculture. The border infrastructure could be better, and the border needs to develop more infrastructure.[17] The people who inhabit the border are engaged in agriculture, including farming, fishing, cattle rearing, small-scale businesses, and trade. Both sides share identical socioeconomic problems as a result of the geographical milieu. Calabar is the eastern naval command headquarters close to the Bakassi Peninsula. It also houses Nigeria's premier Export Processing Zone. Along the Benue segment of the border, Makurdi is the headquarters of the Nigerian Airforce Tactical Command.[18] The Chad Basin, whose waters are of strategic importance to Nigeria, is shared between Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon.

It is instructive to note that before the colonial partition through the post-colonial boundary complexities, the area existed as a contiguous monolithic region irresistibly driven by some interlocking variables. These include common historical background, homogeneous ethnic groups, familiar/contiguous territory, trade, natural resources, sub-regional integration projects, and local sub-culture. M. O. Bonchuk indicated that the differences and discontinuities in the legal system and enforcement of common-law tradition (Nigeria) on one side and civillaw (Cameroon) on the other, and the mutualassertion of sovereignty pose challenges to enforcing law and order. The rugged terrain or the border environment from the coast to the hilly arid areas in the north provides a border underworld that camouflages cross-border crimes.[19] The differences in income, livelihood, poverty, unemployment, and demographic patterns in these two countries have given rise to illegal cross-border smuggling and prostitution alongside legitimate business and commerce.[20] Since independence, both states have engaged in bilateral agreements to promote trade and cooperation, including cultural exchanges; however, more has yet to be achieved. Against this background, both governments are compelled to engage in transborder cooperation and integration. The concept of the transborder area offers both states policy options to achieve the objectives of transborder integration.

Pre-Colonial Affinities in the Nigeria and Southwest Cameroon Border Region

Before the beginning of colonialism in the Cross River region, trade routes developed in the south of the region up to the Benue. As a port and capital of the Oil Rivers Protectorate, Old Calabar had a locational advantage in the said trade. The proximity of Old Calabar toCameroon's seaports of Duala and Victoria enabled her to play a middleman's role in the trade relay. Duala and Victoria

[17] National Archives Beua, Statistic on Southern Cameroon Schools. P. 614/OC/Kumba/1954.
[18] M. O. Bonchuk, "The Challenge of Parallel Administration in a Bifurcated Borderland: Focus on the Cross River "Gateway Way" Local Government Areas with South West Cameroon." *Journal of the Institute for Public Policy and Administration,* 2001: 18–40.
[19] M. O. Bonchuk, "International Boundaries and Divided Peoples…" p. 105.
[20] M. O. Bonchuk, "The Challenge of Parallel Administration in a Bifurcated Borderland…, 12.

needed to be better located and depended on Old Calabar for trade with hinterland peoples.The Efik of the Calabar estuary established commercial contacts with groups in the Cameroons. Interestingly, Roger Casement's assessment in July 1894 indicates that Calabar was wealthy in goods and wanted people. Balondo had nothing except brothers, sister's children, and poor, hungry, enslaved people.[21] The Efik supplied the hinterland groups up to the Cameroons, particularly the Balondo, with a variety of European goods such as hot drinks, salt, clothes, iron, guns, and gunpowder. The Balondo supplied enslaved people with ivory and palm produce. Efik traders were believed to have kept their Ndian trade routes hidden from the Europeans to avoid their monopolistic practices from being broken. The seaports of Duala and Victoria in Cameroon relied on Old Calabar for certain goods in 1886.[22]

The Balong and Abo towns depended on water communication to supply their barter goods. Old Calabar supplied them with their needs.[23] The Balong, Wur, Balondo, and others, traded and exchanged goods such as salt, tobacco, indigo, and other forest products with the Efik. The Diary of Antera, Duke of Old Calabar, who traded in the Cameroons in 1786, is one of the most essential sources concerning Efik's trade with Cameroon groups. The Diary revealed suitable trading and social relations between the Efik and their Cameroonian counterparts before the European incursion in the region.[24] The Cameroonian ethnic groups and their Efik and Ibibio counterparts made considerable profits from this trade. Old Calabar and Cameroon trade relations led to the growth of the former as a commercial and administrative headquarters of not only the Oil Rivers Protectorate of Southern Nigeria.[25] K. K. Nair posited that despite the depression of the 1860s, the economic prosperity of Old Calabar was brightened by trade and commercial contacts with the Cameroonian ethnic groups. This trade and commercial contact between the Efik and Cameroonian ethnic groups, especially the Balondo, led to social interactions that culminated in marriages between the Efik and Balondo.

A biographical study across the Cross River region's borders with Southwest Cameroon clearly shows that some Efik, Ejagham, Ibibio, Boki, and Akwaya have dual parentage. M. O. Bonchuk has demonstrated that both groups have contracted marriages from pre-colonial times to date, and those marriages have produced offspring that inhabit the region. For instance, the mothers of some Efik leaders, such as David and Richard Henshaw, came from the Balondo towns of Iloani and Lobe, respectively. Edidem Essien Ekpo Oku, V, Obong Calabar, in 1965, traced his mother's lineage to the Balondo in Cameroon.[26] Furthermore, the Efik and Ejagham socio-political and religious institutions, including

[21] Roger Casement, "Intelligence Report on Trade in the Cross River Area." Calprof/ F/26. 234, 1894, p.43.
[22]M. O. Bonchuk,"From Integration to Bifurcation: The Internalization of Calabar Boundary Regime in the Context of Border Conflicts and Management in Africa." In*Scholar Journal Arts Humanities Social Sciences,* 3(6A), 2015:1126-1134
[23]K. K. Nair, *Politics and Society in South Eastern Nigeria, 1841-1900.* (London: Frank Cass, 1972), 98.
[24] A. J. H. Latham, "Price Fluctuations in the Early Palm Oil Trade." In*The Journal of African History,* 19 (2), 1976: 213–218.
[25] D. Forde, *Efik Traders of Old Calabar*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 233.
[26] M. O. Bonchuk, "International Boundaries and Divided Peoples…", p. 60.

chieftaincies and their array of paraphernalia, such as the Muri-Munene, Ekpe, Mgbe, and other masquerades, still prevalent in the region, are standard features shared by both groups across the borderlands till date.

North of the Cross River bend were the northern trade routes that straddled the Boki, Ejagham, and Akwaya areas, linking the Benue up to Cameroon. The Boki, Ejagham, and Akwaya produced palm oil, kernel, salt, and ivory. From their neighbours in Cameroon, such as the Bayangi, they bought enslaved people. Other groups, such as the Balong, Bafaw, Bamilake, and Bangwa, exchanged palm oil, plantain, yams, ivory, and enslaved people.[27] From Bali and Bamenda, enslaved people, kola nuts, beans, tobacco, and enslaved people were exchanged. The Ejagham, Boki, and Akwaya, like the Efik on the coast, had a locational advantage in the northern trade with Cameroon ethnic groups. They sold forest products to the Efik on the coast for exchange with European goods. European goods were priced as textiles, guns, gunpowder, iron rods, hot drinks, hats, umbrellas, beads, brass products, and copper. The imported European salt was more refined than that produced at Mbankana and Danare. Thus, from Ejagham settlements of Nsofang, Ajassor, Bendeghe-Ekiem, Agbokim-Obi, Effraya, Abijang, Ekughatai, and Boki groups – Biajua, Abu, Kanyang, Oku, Bamba, Butatong, Aban-Orok, Basho, Okwa, trade relations blossomed with Mamfe and Mfum in Cameroon.[28]

According to I. R. Amadi, by 1800, the Cross River constituted a commercial and cultural unit that provided an excellent highway for the use of the canoe. The river was so important to trade that the British secured it from the Germans. The Aro, Efik, Ibibio, Isangelie, Umon, and Agwagune, who had the locational advantage in the Cross River and Rio del Rey, exchanged goods with the Upper Cross River and Cameroon hinterland groups.[29] Indeed, both the Cross River and Rio del Rey had been linked in trade, with the Cross River becoming the main centre of trade between Old Calabar, Bonny, Duala, and Victoria seaports.[30]

Before the 1913 inauguration of the Anglo-German boundary treaty in the region, the Boki, Ejagham, and Akwaya shared (and still share) a contiguous stretch of territory between themselves and their kith and kin in the Cross River borderlands. As historical and linguistic evidence reveals, their original homeland was the Nigeria-Cameroon border. The trade brought both the Upper Cross and Cameroon groups together with the Efik on the coast.[31] The Efik referred to the Upper Cross as "Atam" and the Ejagham as "Ekoi." This was because the Ejagham people sold a redwood (camwood) locally known as "Ekui" to the Efik, hence the corruption of "Ekui" to "Ekoi." However, D. V. Dewhurst[32] Reported that from the outcome of a meeting of the Ejagham

[27] O. A. Otora, "Trade and Contact Metamorphosis between the Lower and Upper Cross River Region from 1900-1950."
[28] M. O. Bonchuk, "International Boundaries and Divided Peoples…", pp. 60–63.
[29] I. R. Amadi, "The Cross River Peoples and their Eastern Neighbours, 1800-1813." In *Calabar Journal of Liberal Studies,* 2 (2), 1987: 26–48.
[30] Fa/1922/1. No. 720/1922. "Trade on the Cross River," 1934.
[31] J. H. Greenberg, *The Languages of Africa.*(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970), p. 42-44.
[32] D. V. Dewhurst, District Officer Ikom. "Intelligence Report on Ejagham Improvement Union, Ikom," File No. CSO.26/278, 1924.

ISSN 2787-0308 (ONLINE)

Improvement Union held at Oban in September 1922 and attended by Ejagham groups from Memfe, Ikom, and Calabar Divisions, resolved to jettison the label "Ekoi" given to them by the Efik, and popularized by P. A. Talbot, and wished to be known as Ejagham.[33]

One of the dominant themes in the history of the Nigeria-Southwest Cameroon border region is that of the secret societies. Most secret societies were religious-magical, and the way they functioned could be revealed only to the initiates. Members are bound by oath, and hardly can they reveal their secrets. In this region, secret societies served different functions and provided the cement for social stability and inter-group relations.[34]It was corroborated by D. F. Thompson, who referred to them as the backbone of the indigenous political order. Their existence was justified according to the roles they played.Their judicial functions approximated the European notion of law courts; their executive functions could be compared to contemporary governmental departments. Not all secret societies provided helpful functions.[35] In Boki, Ejagham, and Akwaya, water witches' and sorcerers' guilds were condemned, and checks were instituted to deal with them.

Perhaps the most important and most important to all peoples in the border region, including Southwest Cameroon, was the Leopard society: Mgbe (Ejagham), Ekpe (Efik), and Nyamgbe (Boki). They were also found among the Mambila and Kaka, where they were referred to as *So.* Their costumes were more loosely woven than other societies and decorated with large circles and other geometric forms that interpreted the leopard's natural markings. These costumes were of the same basic form of construction as others in Boki, Ejagham, Efik, Issangelie, and Oron. P. A. Talbot submits that Mgbe was originally a woman's cult imported from Ejagham in Cameroon; men wrestled it from the women and transformed it into an influential governmental institution in Ejagham and beyond. In their respective studies, E. O. Erim, S. O. Onor, O. E. Uya, and M. O. Bonchuk agree with Talbot's assertion that Mgbe was an Ejagham creation that spread across the Cross River region. Usak Edet is supposed to be the cradle of the society. Usak Edet is Balondo land, and Archibong Ekundu, a Cameroonian from Usak Edet, brought Ekpe to Calabar in the 18th century and sold it as "Essien Ekpe Oku."

Nevertheless, the spread of the Mgbe confraternity among these groups was in response to the economic and political conditions at the time. The leopard (Mgbe) masquerade in this region pre-existed the slave trade economy and the imposition of the Calabar integrated boundary regime. The trade-in of palm oil catalyzed its adoption and spread at different times in the region and the new world. There was also the element of diffusion through social interactions, migrations, outright purchase, and peaceful penetration, especially among the Aro from Ejagham, Boki, Old Calabar, Oron, Issangedighi, and Rio del Ray axis, trade routes and centres that developed provided channels and "osmotic points" of interaction, interjection and interpenetration into the Cameroon

[33] P. A. Talbot,*In the Shadow of the Bush.* (London: Macmillian Press, 1979) p. 79.
[34] Oral Interview with Ntufam Ayuk Agbor Ojong (76), Traditional Ruler at Ikom, October 16, 2023.
[35] D. F. Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit.* (New York: Random House Inc, 1982), pp. 22–25.

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ISSN 2787-0308 (ONLINE)

hinterland groups. For instance, the Bayangi, Bangwa, and Mfun-Mamfe in Cameroon adopted the leopard socially for status, trade, insurance policy, and aesthetics.

Through Old Calabar port, where enslaved people were transported overseas, the societies spread to the Caribbean and have become prevalent among some Afro-Caribbeans. From the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries, the Efik adopted the Ekpe to meet the challenges of the enslaved person and palm oil trade. A. J. H. Latham observed that the Ekpe provided the Efik with what he described as "a genuine African capitalist institution of elementary kind."[36] Bassey W. Andah observed that the spread of Ekpe in the border region created a vast Ekpe polity,[37] O. E. Uya described the phenomenon as the "Ekpe imperium."[38] This cultural feature and its array of masquerades fertilized cultural unity in the border region. Inter-ethnic marriages, folklore, and music assisted in this spread. The leopard society had a hierarchical structure with particular grades that emphasized security for social control and adapted to various structures.

The *Nsibidi* sign writing was another peculiar cultural feature unique to the border region. The *Nsibidi* is the reduction into the writing of the sign language utilized by the Leopard secret society, known as Mgbe, Nyamgbe, and Ekpe. Daryll C. Forde opined that the writing originated from the Upper Cross region. Talbot submits that *Nsibidi* originated from the Ejagham of Akamkpa. M. D. Jeffreys attributed its origin to the Aro, while J. K. Macgregor's account implied an Ejagham origin. Erim O. Erim observed that by 1900, the knowledge of *Nsibidi* had spread throughout the Cross River basin to the Cameroons. Sandy Onor's study indicated that "the ideography of the Ejagham people … explodes the myth of Africa as a continent without a tradition of writing."*Nsibidi* is a cultural product the leopard society utilizes as a communication medium. *Nsibidi* script was sacred and could not be divulged to junior members as it was used mainly by those in the higher grades. By 1900, it attained full cultural fruition and facilitated communication and the spread of the cultural product in the border region. According to P. Allison, *Nsibidi* also embraced other meanings, ... it was once understood as the sacred language of Ekpe/Mgbe. Societies served as a secret code for transmitting amorous messages; white ethnographers applied it to the principle of decorative art, and it was a force of cultural resistance in the 20th century.[39] Ethnographers and cultural and art historians who have studied the ethnography of the Cross River region and southwest Cameroon have concluded that this region was evolving towards a culturally coherent area before the colonial era. The area is characterized by Cross River monoliths or *Akwanshi*, together with a collection of small shaped stones of cynical and ellipsoid form in a wide area bounded by the Cross River to Eyong confluence.[40] Indeed, these stone civilizations' most significant and most elaborated concentration is found in Nta, Nselle and Nnam, Ekajuk, Nde,

[36] A. J. H. Latham, "Price Fluctuations in the Early Palm Oil Trade…", p. 216.
[37] Bassey W. Andah, *Some Nigerian Peoples.* (Ibadan: Emmi Commercial Press, 1967), p. 34.
[38] E. O. Uya, *Ekpe Emporium in the Cross River Region of Nigeria.* (Calabar: Wusen Press, 1986), p. 23.
[39] P. Allison, *The Cross River Monoliths.* (Lagos: Department of Antiquities, 1969) p. 16.
[40] Allison, pp. 26-29.

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and Abanyum. Other socio-cultural, religious, magical, and political institutions also fertilized inter-group relations. Some of them, such as Obasi-Njom, Kachi, Atam, Agrinya, Amgbu, and Ekpa, among others, were used to cleanse society of evil diseases and the activities of witches, water spirits, and sorcerers or used to prepare initiates for war.[41] Fertility cults, such as Monikim and Echon, were expected by both groups, while Bapong and Kapen in Boki were magico-religious institutions shared by both groups in Nigeria and Cameroon.

Linguistically, Okon E. Essien has demonstrated that:

> given the mutual intelligibility and the fact that sometimes one language is referred to by more than one name, the number of languages … is fewer than what is often assumed …. On the other hand, particular dialects that are mutually intelligible versions of the same language, which happen to bear different names, are treated by many, including linguists, as if they were separate languages with no mutual intelligibility between them at all.[42]

The above view contrasts J. C. Anene's assertion that groups inhabiting Nigeria – Cameroon borderlands speak "mutually unintelligible languages," which he adduced as the singular reason they could not unite in a systematic struggle against European incursion.[43] Apart from O. E. Essien's analysis of the language situation of the region, J. P. Sterk's study of the languages of the Upper Cross region, as evidenced in his lexico-statistics[44] We determined the genetic relationships of the Cross-border languages, indicating the mutual intelligibility of the languages spoken up to Southwest Cameroon.

In his study of cross-border cultural interactions, M. O. Bonchuk indicates evidence that the Efik language evolved into a "lingua franca" of the region. Efik language was the language of trade in the region up to Cameroon. Efik trade and contacts also influenced the languages of coastal groups. In most areas in this region, the Efik language was adopted by traders and missionary schools, which became the principal means of communication.[45] Although some areas in the Upper Cross region still maintained a distinct language, a great deal of their vocabulary is made up of Efik loan words, which was replicated in the Cameroon hinterland.

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[41] Oral Interview with NtaEkuri B. Abang (61+), at Bissong-Abang, Eyumojok Division, Cameroon, on 20thOctober, 2023.
[42] Okon E. Essien, "Cross River State Languages: Problems and Prospects." In M. B. Abasiattai ed. *Akwa Ibom and Cross River State: The Land, the People and their Culture,*12–21.(Calabar: Wusen Press, 1987).
[43] J. C. Anene, *Background to the Making of Nigeria's International Boundaries.*(London: Longman, 1970), p. 123.
[44] J. P. Sterk, "A Tentative Classification of the Upper Cross Languages and Its Implications for Reconstructing the Migrations of the Upper Cross Peoples of Nigeria." In M. B. Abasiattai ed. *Expanding Frontiers of African History: The Interdisciplinary Methodology,*253–263.(Calabar: University of Calabar Press, 1988).
[45] M. O. Bonchuk, "International Boundaries and Divided Peoples…", p. 78.

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ISSN 2787-0308 (ONLINE)

The Need for Transborder Cooperation

At the attainment of independence, African states started to group (regionally and at the sub-regions) to bring down the barriers erected by the colonialists. The governments required frameworks for consultation and cooperation to achieve shared developmental goals. Until the 1990s, building and strengthening mutual solidarity through institutional mechanisms was the central focus of regional and sub-regional cooperation policy.[46] To achieve these objectives, regional and sub-regional institutions were created, such as the Organization of African Unity (now African Union), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), the Mano River Union, the Chad Basin Development Authority, including the Economic Community of East and Central African States (ECCAS), reflected the mode and determination of the African States to work towards the integration of the region.

Economic integration and cooperation have remained the central theme in their development efforts. Though the OAU asserts the principle of inviolability of the inherited borders, these borders continue to generate conflicts that detract attention from the critical question of border development and integration. Thus, African states desire to end these conflicts and territorial disputes and promote peaceful coexistence to maintain a climate of peace among adjacent neighbours, creating structures for border cooperation. It has resulted in adopting approaches or paradigms for developing border regions and reducing the security challenges posed by the borders. The European experience in transborder cooperation and integration, as manifested in the success story of the European Union, the establishment of European "Euregios," and the transnational perspective are often very encouraging.

Though borders and borderlands anywhere in the world share similar characteristics despite differences in the historical evolution and geographical circumstances, it is within these historical facts that the concept of “transborder cooperation" can be located and utilized to develop the Nigeria-Cameroon borderlands. Since the border region is a contiguous culture-coherent area that was historically stable until very recently when the border region became highly conflictual, the components of innovative actions spurred by the need for cooperation are still intact. José Luis Rhi-Sausi and Nahuel Oddone are of the view that such initiatives favour trans border cooperation when there are three fundamental indicators:

(a) There is the desire by the comprised territories to participate in a process of physical connection

[46]O. A. Otora, “Where Internationality and Locality Meet: An Analysis of Conflict of Laws in Cross-border Relations in Nigeria’s Eastern Borderlands.” *ICHEKE: Journal of Faculty of Humanities,* Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt. Vol. 16 (2), pp. 101–124.

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(b) there is a highlevel of political agreement between the affected states that will allow the realization of some institutional framework to organize their relations.
(c) A subnational frontier government (cross-border communities association) is recognized as an articulator of the local players, as a fundamental institutional instance for positive transborder governance.[47]

With the above conditions satisfied, transborder cooperation offers the regions and the neighbouring municipalities the alternative to bring closer each territorial sector of the geopolitically segmented towns, enabling these towns to mitigate, in part, the effects of the artificial division that they have suffered and allowing the intensification of the ties in the diverse planes between the different territorial sectors, as well as strengthening the different networks.[48] To that extent, it would enable a reconciliation of the fundamental criteria that have promoted the ECOWAS and ECCAS integration over the last decades. On the one hand, the geo-economic opportunities promote the physical integration of the subcontinent. Conversely, the geopolitical characteristics would strengthen regional political concert and the overall integration process in the Nigeria-Cameroon border region.

Furthermore, transborder governance promotes a new form of border cooperation based on the sub-regional integration process and strengthens grassroots (or local) administration. It would provide an opportunity for infrastructure and stimulate development in the shared borderlands. It is imperative because most governments in Africa and the sub-regions are confronted with the challenge of good governance and maintaining a climate of peaceful coexistence. Border regions are of particular interest because there are areas where internationality meets with locality. Being far removed from their core states, they need to be addressed in terms of development. People of different nationalities converge around them.

Concerning peaceful coexistence, the transborder cooperation effort to ensure peace must be constructed to embrace not only the prevention of war as the worst form of conflict but also the systematic devaluation of boundaries as barriers and the promotion of cooperation in peaceful border management. At the same time, security should be viewed beyond the conventional state-centric concerns. Hence, the concern should not be limited to the safety of the state machinery and its operators but extended to the people and society within and across the border region. Therefore, security should go beyond the narrow militaristic dimension to include concerns for socioeconomic development and the welfare of the divided but related ethnic groups abutting the border region.

The area is of overlap of cultures. It is impossible to draw lines of separation, mainly as related ethnic groups of Ejagham, Boki, Akwaya/Becheve, and

[47]José Luis Rhi-Sausi and Nahuel Oddone, "Cross-Border Cooperation and Regional Integration: Opportunities to Peru." In *The Perspective of the World Review,* 4 (1), 2012: 147-172.
[48]D. F. O Majón, Papel das RegiõesnasDinâmicasFronteiriçasna Europa. *Revista CIDOB d' AfersInternacionals, Barcelona,* No. 69, 2005, p, 70.

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Efut/Balondoare involved. This cultural intermix is a fertile ground for transborder cooperation, primarily as the state-centric perspective and the top-down approaches to border management treat border-impacted populations and territories as marginal areas in conceptualizing the integration process. The Nigeria-Cameroon transborder regime would emphasize the relevance of the border-impacted populations and reconsider the integration process from the bottom-up approach.

The grassroots unofficial economy is vibrant but unrecorded, and the revenue loss to both governments to the border criminal enterprise is enormous. Thus, a very diminutive quantity recorded at the official level as clandestine and unrecorded trade has assumed a frightening dimension.[49] Though socio-cultural, religious, and political institutions are still observable and prevalent, the transport and communication infrastructures still need to be improved, and the indices of modernity peter off at the margin of the borders. Throughout the length and breadth of the border region, educational institutions, health, energy, industry sports facilities, and modern markets are nonexistent at the margin of the borders. These border communities have been removed from the "national mind" and national symbols of their core states.[50] Their economies have decayed, leaving them to remain as primitive cultivators of agricultural produce. The border environment, including development, has assumed the status of asylum, thereby facilitating cross-border crimes and criminality.

Despite the government's rhetoric of rural development, the border communities remain neglected as they are left to eke their livelihood from the 'sins' business. These localities and communities are the most depressed socially and economically. More infrastructural facilities, such as road linkages, health facilities, electricity, and potable drinking water pipes, must be built. The rugged terrain, remoteness from the core states' capital, and cost of developing the area have compounded development efforts.

The Nigeria-Southwest Cameroon boundary sector has remained highly permeable and is difficult to police. There are only a few customs and immigration officials posted to operate the areas. Even with the recent construction of a model border post at Mfum, the facility is yet to be put into proper function due to the Ambazonia Separatis agitations in Southwest Cameroon. Its permeability has encouraged the opening of illegal routes. Generally, borders are noted for their roles as facilitators of crimes and criminality. The border syndicates of criminals utilize the border environment to perpetrate cross-border crimes, human trafficking, smuggling of petroleum products, second-hand clothing, and piracy.[51] Another serious security concern is determining who is a Nigerian among the border communities. The border

[49] O. A. Otora, "Artificial Boundaries and the Political Economy of Border Regions: A Study of Clandestine Movements and Economic Activities across the Cross River (Nigeria) – Southwest Cameroon Border Region." In*Journal of African Politics and Society (JAPS).* Vol. 2 (2), December, 2013: 196–211.
[50] M. O. Bonchuk, "Niger-Cameroon Borderlands: Prospects for Economic Cooperation and Integration…" p.106.
[51] O. A. Otora, "Calabar and the Challenges of Maritime Security in Nigeria's South-Eastern Borderlands." *International Journal of HumanitatisTheoreticus.* University of Yaounde 1, Cameroon.Vol. 2 (Special Edition), 2019: 100–114.

ISSN 2787-0308 (ONLINE)

inhabitants speak Akwaya, Becheve, Boki, Ejagham, or Efut languages. Along the Ikom-Mfum-Ekok corridor of the border with the Cross River State of Nigeria, Nigerians view and listen to Cameroonian radio, video, and Makossa music. In extreme cases, in this border segment, the inhabitants easily watch and listen to Cameroonian programs but cannot receive such signals from Nigeria. It constitutes severe security implications for Nigeria because these areas were part of colonial Nigeria before the plebiscite of 1961.

It is certainly not about two incompatible criteria; on the contrary, their degree of interaction and interdependence is notable. However, their compatibility is only sometimes translated into a working instrumentalization to promote integration and transborder cooperation. Just fathom that when the construction or extension of a connectivity infrastructure promotes the mobility of goods and persons at border crossing points, the absolute mobility will also depend on other factors, which, under the existence of structured regional institutional agreements, will facilitate a compelling and legitimate solution for the complete validation of the integration liberties. The Latin American experience of the borders of Ecuador-Peru and Brazil-Peru is very instructive, as highlighted in the *Fronteras Abiertas* (Open borders), which has carried out direct interventions in their border regions.[52] The elements of the success story of the above example can be applied to demonstrate the functionality and the pertinence of the transborder approach, especially as economic integration requires a minimum level of physical integration for the involved countries.

Following the preceding, the perspective identifies the effort of the African Development Bank (ADB), ECOWAS, and ECCAS as one of the core partners of the transborder project, as evidenced in the construction of the border post at the Mfum-Ekok border crossing. O. A. Otora agrees that the approximation of ADB, ECOWAS, and ECCAS can be summarized in the understanding that:

> strong support for the development of the physical infrastructure [is] indispensable for meeting the basic needs… and for supporting the integration process and international competition of the region …. The infrastructure is the primary intervention of the human being on the territory, to access it and to allow his potential for development to flow. It usually starts with the provision of essential services for survival … but quickly expands to include the routes of access that permit the widening of the area influenced by human activity and more advanced technologies to generate energy and enable long-distance communication. … the level of infrastructure of a territory is intimately involved with the level of development of the society that inhabits it and constitutes a severe restriction

[52]José Luis Rhi-Sausi and Nahuel Oddone, "Cross-Border Cooperation and Regional Integration…", p. 151-152.

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> on the possibilities of great leaps in the material welfare of the society.[53]

Thus, the borders have fully supported the above initiative to integrate the border region's transborder infrastructure. It presents a manifest interest in the border zones' territorial integration from below and the realization of public-private partnerships. The system is an infrastructural program with an institutional mechanism for coordinating intergovernmental actions to build a common agenda to stimulate projects for integrating transportation, energy, and communication infrastructure.

In Europe, the successes of the European construction process since 1945 have introduced a scenario of a borderless Europe, while the European Union's efforts at realizing a sizeable single market based on the liberalization not only of the movement of goods and people but also of capital and localizing the activities of economic agents have changed borders substantially – both politically and institutionally including socioeconomic patterns.[54] The process implies breaking down barriers and obstacles that create discontinuity in the communication process and diffusing people, goods, information, or knowledge. Arising from the assertion is the necessity of resorting to theoretical interpretations of various conceptual discourses on frontiers, borders, borderlands, transborder regionalism, regional development, integration, and cooperation aimed at converting barriers into bridges. Cultural, linguistic, institutional, physical, political, economic, or social barriers could differ. Boundaries have also been manipulated positively for the identity construction of single agents or groups or territorial identities or negatively when the border is perceived as hostile.[55]

It is imperative to understand the effects of boundaries on the diffusion process because any type of communication is essential not only for evaluating and analyzing possible discrimination effects but also for understanding the processes of spatial development in the era of globalization. In studying the spatial impact of communication barriers, it is necessary to locate the process of diffusion as the propagation phenomenon in the time and space of a specific institution, idea, individual group, or any receiving entity. A communication process implies (a) an emitting entity, (b) a receiving entity, (c) one or more communication channels, and (d) propagation time-specific spatial modalities, which will vary following the contents and the communication ways (Shaldom 1993, 38).

Concerning communication barriers regarding borders and their negative meaning, it is imperative to understand the nature of the obstacles that prevent the transfer of information, provoking discontinuity, intensity modification, and direction of flows. Thus, identification and evaluation of those spatial factors

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[53]O. A. Otora, "Borders and Borderlands Identities: A study of Cross-border Neighbourhood Governance in the Southern Sector of Nigeria-Cameroon Border Area." In *Professor Bassey Andah Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences,* 14, 2021: 90–112.
[54]M. O. Bonchuk, "European Transboundary Paradigm: Its Relevance to the Nigeria-Cameroon Border Integration." In *Nigerian Journal of Social Development Issues.* 2 (1): 2002: 18–32.
[55]A. I. Asiwaju, "Cross-Border Relations in Africa." In C.O. Bassey and Oshita Oshita edited *Governance and Border Security in Africa,* 1–12. (Lagos: Malthouse Press, 2010).

ISSN 2787-0308 (ONLINE)

that influence a differential regional development process in specific borderlands. An examination of the socioeconomic profile of borderlands has led Button and Rossera to distinguish between the first, traditional view, where the transborder area is defined as the territory immediately close to a fixed borderline, inside which the socioeconomic effects close to the existence of a border are significantly felt and; and second, the view of the frontier limit, where the border is not perceived as a demarcation line, but as an external limit, and as a mobile limit.[56]

Furthermore, the basis for human communication is interaction as conflict is defined as a breakdown of communication. Transborder communication, thus, becomes a conscious and deliberate process from which can be derived infinite interaction. For effective border management, the transnational perspective as evidenced by the pre-colonial linkages of language and cultural relations across shared borders should be made to increase the possibility of realizing effective communication at the more formal conflictual level as the intensity of informal micro-diplomatic relations is raised. To enhance the already existing cordial relations at the micro-level, radio and television programmes that utilise these local languages should be encouraged. Unity of institutions, and joint sociocultural ventures in the use of local languages to disseminate information should be established.

Currently, the volume of unrecorded trade along the Nigeria-Cameroon border is enormous, what is recorded is usually marginal. Revenue lost to both states due to smuggling is massive. the realization of the magnitude of cross-border unrecorded trade flows and the dynamism has led experts in West African studies to appreciate and recommend the need for an alternative strategic orientation towards rethinking regional integration in favour of market-driven integration. Instead of pursuing regional integration on the traditional model of international organizations, regional integration should be rooted in alternative realities of transnational interactions as so strongly manifested in the Nigeria-Cameroon cross-border trade; especially, as Article (2) of the ECOWAS Treaty seeks to abolish quantitative and administrative restrictions on trade among states cannot be overemphasized.

Summary and Conclusion

The paper examined the Nigeria-Cameroon international boundaries with the possibility of erecting a regional transborder cooperation regime to promote peaceful economic integration in the Nigeria-Southwest Cameroon border region. It was indicated that the boundaries were inherited from colonial regimes, and the boundaries divided the related ethnic groups, their coherent cultural areas, and kinship systems; they are not pure boundaries in the real sense. It was argued that cross-border conflicts along and astride these boundaries are promoted by state-centric policies adopted by the 'core states' who interpret the boundaries and barriers. At the informal/grassroots level, the divided but related groups continue to interact freely as their socioeconomic, religious, and political desires demand.

[56] Button K. and F. Rossera, "Barriers to Communication." In *Annals of Regional Science,* 24 (4): 1984.

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ISSN 2787-0308 (ONLINE)

Much like Europe, the prospect for transborder cooperation and economic integration in the border region appears irresistibly driven by four interlocking variables: the local population, vibrant border economy, natural resources, and the environment, as well as the widely recognized necessity to ground African integration on the realities of African history and culture. Thus, the continuous existence of these factors has led to various micro-diplomatic integration formations across Africa's border regions, each begging for formalization as cornerstones for the more comprehensive regional integration schemes pursued by Africa's various sub-regions.

Transborder integration is a reference to a novel category of internationalism forced on territorial adjacent sovereign states, Nigeria and Cameroon are compelled to interact for reasons not only of common interests in human and natural resources straddled by a shared international boundary but, also, common concerns about cross-border environmental impact of human activities and natural disasters. Granted the fact that formal cooperation and integration processes have been vitiated by conflicts at the state-centric level, the vibrant micro-diplomatic processes could be galvanized for wider macro-integration and development. Therefore, local communities across borders are encouraged to interact and promote cross-cultural, and economic, and initiate development projects that enhance their well-being but within the context of their national laws.

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