

**SECURITY CRISES IN THE CAMEROON COASTAL TOWNS:
BAKASSI FREEDOM FIGHTERS' REACTION TO
INTERNATIONAL DECISION OVER THE BAKASSI PENINSULA**

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Abstract

A major feature in Africa is the multiplicity of armed non-state groups. They play a fundamental role in the violence that plagued human security and the state capacity to guarantee it. Of the 26 intra, interstate and transnational conflicts in 18 countries between the 1990s and 2014, with insecurity sanctioned by massive internal displacements, human rights abuses, heightened criminality and dead toll; these armed groups' influence was enormous. Some scholars attribute the existence of such groups to resistance, political reforms and resource control attitudes. But new approaches to peace analyses also attribute the struggles for self-determination as a prime factor for "rebelism". This paper follows this model. It also argues that insecurity along the Cameroon coast was occasioned by the rebels in reaction to international decision over the Bakassi Affair. But it concludes with a brief therapeutic suggestion for this phenomenon in Africa.

Keywords: Security crises, Bakassi Freedom Fighters, International decision, Bakassi peninsula, Cameroon Coastal Towns

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Introduction

The increasing presence of non-state armed groups, NSAGs (vigilantes, cultist, ethno-religious groups, armed wings of political parties and rebel groups) in stability questions in Africa has raised important concerns about the institutionalization of violence as a means of redressing grievances, thus exposing the citizenry to vicious violence. This disposition often minimizes state competence to provide public security, democracy and development, and so has raised scholarly interest in comprehending these groups, especially rebel movements. Okumu and Ikelegbe (2010: 9-11) qualify rebel movements as organizations, which engage essentially in armed opposition and resistance, and particularly insurrection or insurgency against governments and ruling regimes. Harbom and Wallensteen (2006) see them as armed insurgent opposition organisations that are incompatible with, and challenge existing national governments with prime objective of change (replacement of existing governments; change existing frameworks in order to participate in and control governments; devolution of authority to grant autonomy to regional governments or the redesigning of national boundaries in favour ethnic separate).

Meanwhile their actions are often challenged by the government, in terms of character, legality and legitimacy, Clapham (2000:198) and Addison (2003: 1) identify different rebel movements in Africa; namely liberationists (who resists foreign rule and seeks independence), “insurgentists” who seek political change and power; and the irredentists who pursue secessionist goals with warlords trying to overthrow regimes and create “personal territorial fiefdoms.” Okumu and Ikelegbe (2010: 9-11) exemplify the Mau Mau (Kenya), *Front de Libération Nationale* (FLN, Algeria), *Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola*, *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique*, South West Africa People’s Organisation (Namibia), Zimbabwe African People’s Union, *Partido Africano para a Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde* and the Boko Haram as liberation groups against foreign domination. Some of such groups commence as liberation movements only to assume reform insurgencies later, while others start as liberation movements and became reform insurgencies, but all with “warlordism” as a rule. One outstanding characteristics of liberationists is that they are recognised in international law and subject to it (Musila 2010: 89-119).

Some insurgent rebel movements grew out of grievances and agitation associated with identity-based exclusion and alienation by corrupt and autocratic regimes that abused and repressed the opposition and marginalised groups. In Burundi, the *Conseil National pour la Défense de la Démocratie / Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie* and the *Forces Nationales de Libération*, (former *Parti pour la Libération du Peuple Hutu*) fought against marginalisation by the Tutsis leadership for over a decade and in Chad, the *Union des Forces pour la Démocratie et le Développement* tried to topple Idriss Deby's government. More so, ethno-regional based governance, marginalization and exclusion separatist rebel movements such as the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Southern Sudan and the Tuareg rebellion in the northern parts of Mali, Niger and South Algeria had long sort for independent states. Meanwhile *Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de la Casamance* in Senegal staged a self-determination struggle since the 1980s, the Ogaden National Liberation Front in Ethiopia fights over the control oil-rich Ogaden region with the Ethiopian government (Mkandawire, 2002: 181-221).

The operational environment greatly determines the strategies and members' behavioural patterns of these groups. Krijn (2010: 389-417) posit that groups challenged by unfriendly milieu (restriction to jungle camps or sparsely populated villages) resort to forced conscriptions, abductions, harsh punishments for escapees, confiscation of materials and deadly reprisals. But those who depend on larger communities for critical support rather show greater sensitivity to them. Adams (2010: 389-417) aggress with the latter case in these words: “. . . those which seek acceptance and legitimacy from national, regional and international audiences tend towards more moderate behaviour with inhabitants of the controlled territories- what determines the group's success on the field.”

Perhaps Muhammed Kabir Isa (2010: 313-334) and George and Ylönen (2010: 341-364) are inspired by these to theorize such movement's social bases. They calm that they are often well structured with a coordinate system of leadership, strict rules and strong ideological foundation and political education. Their membership always ranges from a hundred to thousands divided into the thinkers and the foot soldiers. Foot soldiers – largely disenchanted and frustrated men and youths - dominate the groups, examples being the *Moryham* (Somalia), the *Raray* (Sierra Leone), *Bayaye* (Kenya and Uganda), *Machicha* (Tanzania), *Hittiste* (Algeria), *Tsotsis* (South Africa), *Area Boys* and *Yan Daba* (Nigeria).

But Adams Oloo (2010: 147-183) points the social base of the Kenya militias to the lower class, namely, the urban poor and slum dwellers. And Ikelegbe and Garuba (2007: 124-147) claim that leadership often educated responsible for the think-tanking and liaison affairs with the outside world. Peters (2010:381) claims out that entry and initial base of mobilisation and recruitment in these groups are also marginalised and oppressed ethnic groups, such as the Mano and Gio in Charles Taylor's NPFL, and the Mende in Foday Sankoh's RUF (Sierra Leone). McIntyre (2007: 22) adds that membership is often voluntary and based on identity patriotism, solidarity and the depth of grievances. But in some cases, recruitment is restrained by space, arms and maintenance resources. However, as engagements broaden and confrontations become more extensive and stressful, and as they begin to lose contact with communities, these groups may turn to conscription and forced recruitment from within and outside their identity base. Juvenile, girls and children are sometimes captured, conscripted and used as fighters, spies, ordnance carriers, sex slaves and cannon, and drugs are used to psychologically empower them. Examples of child rebel (see plate 1) are Charles Taylor's *Small Boys Unit*, the *Gronna Boys*, Museveni's *Kidogos* (Uganda) and the *Green Bombers* (Zimbabwe)

Elbadawi and Sambanis (2002: 3) confirm the relationship between natural resources, rebel movements and violent conflicts. Thus, grievance and greed tend to have a symbiotic relationship with rebellion. To get started, rebellion needs grievance, whereas to be sustained, it needs greed. This claim is grounded on evidence of the association between mineral wealth and the occurrence and duration of conflicts; the existence of violent scrambles for resources in conflict regions; the concentration of conflicts in resource-rich zones of conflict regions; the profiteering from war and conflicts by rulers, warlords, traders and fighters; the high levels of economic crimes and underground economies; the involvement of mercantilists, syndicates and black marketeering companies in resource-rich zones of conflict regions, and the interference of neighbouring countries that tend to be motivated by struggles for privileged resource access. But another thesis adds to this list the character of the state, regimes, politics and state failures, and economic decline and deepening poverty, unemployment, collapse of social services, urban congestion and decay, rising school dropout levels, globalization and the proliferation of small arms. Even though some of these factors may have influenced the emergence of the insecurity witnessed on the

Cameroon coastal towns at a given moment, those under study ocustrated by the Bakassi Freedom Fighters was based on grievances and greed, accentuated by their dislike for the ICJ's final pronouncement over the disputed territory of Bakassi Peninsular. The insecurity they meted on the general population was considered as an instrument to an end, the end being the recognition of the creation of a nation-state out of Cameroon and Nigeria, the Ambazonia Republic. In this paper, the background to the ICJ's decision is sketched; the formation and actions of the Bakassi Freedom Fighters in the Cameroon coastal towns and government counter actions are examined. The paper concludes by attempting a rebel-free therapy for Africa and Cameroon as a whole.

Plate 1. A Rebel Child Soldier



Source: (Gemini.info.usaid.gov/photos, 2011).

International Courts of Justice's Ruling over Bakassi Peninsula

The peninsula is located at the South-Eastern tip of Nigeria, where it pushes south ward into the Gulf of Guinea. It is a low-lying region bordered on the West by the estuary of the Cross River, on the North by the AkpaYafe, on the East by the Rio del estuary, and on the South by the Gulf of Guinea. It consists of series of islands covering approximately 50 square kilometers and occupied for the most part by long established communities of Nigerians - several very poor villages of the Efik fishermen. Both Nigeria and Cameroon claimed ownership of the Bakassi peninsula and by so doing, both countries engaged in series of verbal vituperation and military maneuvers. The claim was based on two major factors, namely: The 1913 Anglo-German Treaty of 11 March 1913 and the 1975 Maroua Declaration that attributed the territory to Cameroon. But Nigeria did not see things the same way, the reason why both countries were constantly on a daggers-drawn over the past thirty years (Omede, 2006; Ate, 1992).

As a matter of fact, the claim was marked by the discovery of oil by both countries on the Peninsula. Before the discovery of this oil, the Cameroonians and Nigerians in the area lived an unperturbed life, well aside from the few squabbles so to say, since both nations paid little or no attention to this area considered remote and inhabited by people considered to be non consequential. But the discovery of oil and other natural resources triggered hostilities between both countries in the area (Donnalt Wet, 2006; 56-57). The clashes began in 1965, when the Bundams (near Mamfe Cameroon) were attacked by the people of Ikom in the Cross River States of Nigeria due to mere suspicion across the border. Also, on 16 May 1981 the first serious skirmish between Nigerian and Cameroonian forces occurred when Nigerian patrol boats came under fire on the Akwayafe River, resulting in the death of 5 and 3 seriously injured Nigerians. In May and June 1991 another clash occurred when Cameroonians entered 9 fishing villages, hoisted their national flag, announced their renaming, and promised them real social security. But at the same time, asked them to pay taxes. Ngoh (1989: 276-277) and Tazifor (2003: 265-266) explain that these people were well-informed of how to evade taxes and did so with great skills.

On 21 December 1991, a battalion of Nigerian troops occupied Diamant and Jabane, two islands on the peninsula with the fishing communities requesting help from Calabar and Abuja against the Cameroonians. The crime of the Cameroonians was an alleged harassment and maltreatment of Nigerians living on the peninsula states. In retaliation, the Cameroon military response led to several deaths and immense destruction of property. But this did not scare the Nigerian troops who further occupied the localities of Idabato, Uzuma, Kombo and Janea in 1994. The fighting continued intermittently as both parties increased the quantity and quality of weaponry in the disputed territory, and by early in February 1994 over 18,000 people fled into Cross River State until the end of the 1996 confrontations (Nowa 2011).

The 1996 year saw a renewal of confrontations as the Nigerian troops which occupied the peninsular further clashed with Cameroonian troops, and this led to several dead on both sides; both capturing prisoners-of-war. Whatever, the affronts took another perspective in April 1996 when, according to presidential directive from the Nigerian General Staff Head quarters, Abuja, no. GHQ/390 of 11 April 1996 urged the Cross River

State administration to conduct election for the post of Councilor in the Bakassi Peninsula. Soh posits that this was in reaction to Cameroon government's actions. It reportedly conducted council elections in the area in January 1996 (Soh, 1998: 27). Both countries were therefore utilising the peninsula for their political egos and propaganda. However, the manifestation of such ego and propaganda could only be checked if both parties were ready to follow the course of peace and end the conflict; the reason why they sought joint efforts (joint commissions) to demarcate the disputed territory, and the Maroua and Yaounde Accords. But because these efforts yielded no dividend, they introduced into the matter the OAU, the UN Security Council and International Court of Justice (ICJ) at The Hague, but the later playing the central peace role.

Following the clashes in 1994, Cameroon filled a law suit against Nigeria at the ICJ on her sovereignty over the Bakassi and another on 6 June 1994 while complaining to the OAU of the Nigerian illegal occupation of its territory. Cameroon was confident about this law suit following the resolutions of the 1913 Anglo-German agreement and the 1975 Maroua declaration on the peninsula as earlier indicated. During the 31st OAU Heads of State Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in 1995, some African leaders brought Presidents Biya (Cameroon) and Sani Abacha (Nigeria) to dialogue and resolve the dispute, but with no results (Ngoh 1989: 276; Tazifor 2003: 266). Consequently, the OAU assigned Togolese President Eyadema to follow-up the peace talks. Also from 16 to 17 February 1996, Ferdinand Leopold Oyono and Chief Tom Ikimi, Cameroon's External Minister and Nigeria's Foreign Minister respectively, met in Kara, Togo and agreed that Cameroon and Nigeria recognise the matter being at the ICJ and so agree to end all hostilities. (Tazifor 2003: 265-266). The Kara Accord was one of the bases of inspiration for the UN.

But following the non-respect of the Kara agreement, the United Nations Security Council expressed its position on the conflict namely, that both states should respect the Kara cease-fire accord, refrain from further violence, take necessary steps to return their forces to the positions they occupied before the dispute was referred to the ICJ, and they should redouble their efforts of reaching a peaceful settlement through the ICJ. It was here that the Security Council acknowledged the bilateral and regional efforts aimed at

ensuring a peaceful resolution of the dispute as well as the UN Secretary General's and ICJ's proposals to send a fact-finding mission to the disputed area (Funteh, 2015: 228).

A UN mission was dispatched to the area on 15 March 1996 and the court made an interim ruling. This found that the evidence in support of Cameroon's allegations of Nigerian aggression was contradictory and insufficient for a categorical ruling to be made, and Nigeria promptly hailed this as a victory. The other parts of the ruling, that both sides withdraw from positions occupied since 3 February and that the ceasefire be observed, were simply noted. Barely a month later, between 21 and 24 April, the fighting resumed and only the arrival of the UN mission in mid-May seemed to have persuaded both combatants to greater discretion. In 1995 Nigeria's submission arrived at The Hague, questioning the competence of the court to decide a border issue at dispute between two members of the Lake Chad Commission. But this had no effect on the evolution of the court's findings. Before the court could make a ruling, it was again approached by Cameroon, protesting against a renewed Nigerian offensive in Bakassi on 3 and 4 February 1996. Cameroon asked the court to rule on Nigeria's aggression and to demand the withdrawal of forces to positions held before the fighting of 3 February. It also demanded the cessation of all military activity to allow the court to gather evidence *in situ*. Grey (2002: 225) says that by the end of September 1996, matters still seemed no nearer a solution. The ICJ had announced no new findings, and the UN mission to the region proved to have a goodwill rather than fact-finding brief.

Matters dragged on indecisively until 2002, when the ICJ finally decided in favour of the Cameroonian claim. It is interesting to say that what seemed easy took eight years of intensive negotiations to settle. Representatives from both states worked hard to support their thesis and the ICJ listen carefully reviewing historical documents in a bid to arrive at a just settlement. Among the points Cameroon presented to justify their claim was the 1913 agreement in which the boundary was defined and signed; meanwhile Nigeria claimed, among others, that the most democratic way to decide Bakassi sovereignty was to conduct a referendum since according to it, the 300.000 inhabitants of the area did not want to be Cameroonians. On 10 October 2002, based on old colonial documents, the ICJ delivered a judgment in favour of Cameroon. The boundaries in the Lake Chad region were

determined by the Thomson-Marchand Declaration of 1929-30 and the boundary in the Bakassi by the Anglo-German agreement of 1913 (Nowa 2011).

With this settlement, Nigeria was to quickly and unconditionally withdraw its administration from the Lake Chad area under Cameroon sovereignty and from Bakassi peninsula. Cameroon was to remove its citizens from anywhere on the new border between the two countries and the land boundary from Lake Chad in the north to Bakassi in the south was demarcated and signed by both countries. But weeks before the ICJ ruling, Kofi Annan, the then Secretary General of the UN invited President Paul Biya of Cameroon and Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria and they met on 5 September 2002 in Paris in the presence of French President Jacques Chirac. Both presidents pledged to abide by the anticipated decision of the ICJ, and agreed to establish an implementation mechanism. But this was not the case with the larger Nigerian population, especially after the ruling was released in their disfavour. This created a political uproar in Nigeria, where some media went as far as identifying a Western conspiracy against them. In effect the Nigerian government refused to withdraw from Bakassi or cede sovereignty as demanded by the Court (Funteh, 2015). But Nigeria later compromised her stand when Annan created the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission on 15 November 2002 at Geneva, with the aim of enabling a smooth handing over ceremony. The Mixed Commission did their work on the handing over logistics and recommendations on confidence-building between the states. A few years later, on 12 June 2006, the two parties met at the Green tree Estate in Manhasset, New York where they concluded the "Green Tree Agreement" and agreed for a handing over ceremony to be done in front of UN officials and diplomats from different countries. Nigeria was given 60 days to quit its occupation forces off the area (UN News Service 2011).

The handing over ceremony took place in Archibong, witnessed by the African Union, the British, French, German UN and US officials, as well as the Nigerian Chief of Defence Staff, General Martin-Luther Agwai, and the heads of the army, navy, air force and police. When the Nigerian flag was lowered and that of Cameroon was rose (see plate 2) and documents were signed by Nigerian Justice Minister Bayo Ojo and his Cameroon counterpart, Maurice Kamto; all signifying the transfer of authority over the disputed Bakassi peninsula. The final handing over ceremony took place in Calabar (Nigeria) in 2008, laying to rest the long standing conflict (<http://news.bbc.uk/2/hi/africa/7559895.stm>)

2011). But the ICJ's decision to end insecurity around Bakassi only opened-up another scene on the Cameroon coast due to the Bakassi Freedom Fighters' activities.

Plate 2. Flags on the Bakassi peninsula



Source: (<http://www.dibussi.com>, 2008).

Note: Nigeria (left) and Cameroon (right).

Bakassi Freedom Fighters (BFF) and Insecurity

BFF was a rebel group formed by disenchanted men and youths in and around small island towns of Isangele, Kombo Abcdimo and Idabato. Their prime objective was rejecting the ICJ's decision, creating a separate state out of Nigeria and Cameroon; forcing the international community and the Cameroon government to recognize it. The people desire to break from Nigeria and Cameroon to form their own nation. So, when the ICJ's judgment over the Bakassi peninsula favoured Cameroon, this section of the local Bakassi inhabitants (the majority of the Nigerians) became disgruntled about the decision. They believed that as a common people they were to be consulted by the ICJ before declaring the territory Cameroon's. But since this was not done, they claimed this was in disrespect of their common feeling; this feeling being that of one people and the desire to preserve and protect it. It was for this reason that they opted to breaking away from the ICJ's decision and seek a neutral future for themselves. This future was breaking away from Nigeria and Cameroon in order to form their own nation. To obtain this, they planned to make their voices heard by terrorist attitude, pirates on the sea and hostage taking. *Terrorism Monitor* (2010:13) terms this a popular opinion on the Bakassi in these words:

The United Nations should realize that we have the right to decide where we want to be and the right to self-determination. We are Nigerians and here in our ancestral home. You can see some of the graves here dating back to the 19th century. How can you force a strange culture and government on us? We appreciate what the Nigerian government is doing but let it be on record that they have betrayed us and we will fight for our survival and self-determination. We expected that the

government as well as the ICJ could have come to the people and called for a referendum so that the people would decide what they wanted for themselves. But we don't really know why it had to be done that way. If they do not then we and our brothers on the other side will decide to take things into our hands, and have our voices heard no matter what it takes until our desire is attend.

Taking things into their hands and having their voice had no matter what it takes was inclining to hash actions; and taking control of what they called their own political future.

Funteh (2015:227) maintains that this political future would begin with political movements, which would declare independence of the Bakassi land. In fact, the secession feeling was born by a portion of the English-speaking population of Cameroon due to marginalization by "The Cameroon Republic," and led by Southern Cameroon National Council (SCNC) with its peaceful approaches since the 1990s. Bakassi has been part of the independence plan (*The Post* 2005). But a more aggressive movement Southern Cameroons Peoples Organization (SCAPO) was born and glamour for a more aggressive method and after the Green Tree Agreement, SCAPO declared the establishment of an independent "Republic of Ambazonia." In July 2006, the Bakassi Movement for Self-Determination (BMSD) joined with the SCAPO and the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) to declare this time the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Bakassi. After the Nigerian Senate ruled the transfer of sovereignty was illegal in 2007, the three groups again declared the independence of Bakassi in July 2008, this time with BMSD declaring that it would subsume all its activities under the "joint leadership" of MEND and on account of a military group, the Bakassi Freedom Fighters¹, a transformed vigilante group formed in 1996 - with Africa Marine Commando (AMC) as their military wing.

Plate 3. Rebal group in the Cameroon Waters

¹ In fact, the origin of this group is traced to the decision by local traders in the peninsular to repress armed robberies plaguing the area and disrupting their smooth trans-border businesses. Some of these armed robbers were both Cameroonian and Nigerian soldiers, and creating an armed vigilante group was to be the solution. The group was provided regular salaries and money to purchase arms by the traders and soon began receiving sophisticated equipments (see plate 3) from some Nigerian and Cameroonian elites, since ever the group became politicized in 2006 (*This Month*: 2008).



Source: *Terrorism Monitor* (2010) VIII, 43:1.

The mission since 2002 was nothing short of terrorizing the coastal towns and waters. claim the abduction of six sailors from a Belgian ship anchored 40 km off Douala. The BFF's spokes person said the hostages were moved to a camp on Nigerian territory and demanded the release of 10 Ijaw fighters in a Cameroonian prison and the immediate opening of direct talks with Cameroon president Paul Biya (*Le Jour* September 2009). The talk was to discuss practical steps of giving up its gripe over the Bakassi Peninsular. They also kidnapped 7 Chinese fishermen in Cameroonian coastal waters who were later freed in exchange for an undisclosed ransom (*Radio France Internationale* March 2009). These gunmen in light boats attacked 2 cargo ships in Douala harbour, kidnapping two Russian crewmen from one ship and looting the safe and abducting the captain of the second ship, a Lithuanian refrigerated vessel. The security of Douala's port is a major regional concern as Douala acts as the commercial lifeline for the land-locked Central African Republic and Chad, another major petroleum producer which runs its oil through the Chad-Cameroon pipeline to the Cameroon port of Kribi (*Cameroon People* 13, 20 November 2007).

In October 2008, a boat was attacked in Cameroonian waters and 10 people were taken hostage. The hostages were subsequently released; on 16 November 2010 at least five people were killed in an attack on an offshore oil platform. The rebels, on 6 and 7 February 2011, left two dead, one wounded and 13 kidnapped - all locally based Cameroonians in Limbe. On 7 February 2011, the Mbanjo Maritime Gendarmerie Brigade post was attacked and four people and many others were injured. This action caused the Government to advice against all late travel in and around this region. The rebels traded fire with police for hours on 7 February in Douala, which resulted to the kidnap of 17 officials who were later freed after a huge ransom was payment. The freedom fighters broke into the Amity Bank of Limbe and ECOBank in Douala. The towns of Buea and

Limbe were constantly raided by these gunmen; actions that prompted the government to react (*This Month* July 2011).

Cameroon Government Response

Although the Cameroon government refused to acknowledge the political dimension of the violence in Bakassi by declining to identify the insurgents as anything other than “armed bandits,” the decision to hold the 14 August 2009 ceremony marking the transfer of authority in the Nigerian city of Calabar rather than in Bakassi was interpreted as an acknowledgement that Bakassi was far from secure (*Reuters* August 2008; *Jeune Afrique* December 2008). Prior to the transfer of power, when the BFF announced a merger with the Niger Delta Defense and Security Council (NDDSC), with the intention of setting Bakassi “ablaze” and crippling its economy if the handover went through (*Africa Press International* July 2009) successively, the Cameroonian government tried measures to secure security in the area as well as the entire Cameroon coastal region. In response, the Cameroon’s *Bataillon d’Intervention Rapide* (BIR) commandos were sent to the coast in 2007 to deal with the rapidly deteriorating security situation (*The Sun* October 2008). Situating them at suspected points in the area, the BIR’s presence helped to usher into the area some calm. With the prevailing political situation in the country, the mandate of this elite force has been expanded from just providing border security to something of a Praetorian Guard for President Paul Biya. However, the BIR mandate in checking the rebels was reduced when in February 2008 when Cameroonians protested against high cost of living and a good number of the BIR was deployed to the major cities of the country. There, they victimized over 1000 lives of unarmed civilians, especially in Douala and Yaoundé (*IRIN* August 2008). Several months later the BIR was again deployed in the cities to prevent protests against the elimination of presidential term limits and the granting of immunity to Biya for all actions taken while in office. These actions, among others, the secret paying of “hostage bills,” did not help solve issues as the BFF remain present along the Cameroon coastal towns, persisting in their cause and intermittently striking state establishments and the population.

Conclusion

The results of the dispute between Cameroon and Nigeria over the Bakassi peninsula led to Nigeria ceding the area for Cameroon following the decision of the ICJ. But such decision only gave birth to various political opinions (secession and creation of a Bakassi nation was strongest) accentuated with the birth of the BFF. In order to have their voice heard both by Cameroon and the international community, and operating from the border lines of Cameroon and Nigeria, they inclined to terrorizing the coastal population of Cameroon and increasing the security crises in the towns of Douala, Limbe and Buea. Meanwhile this paper argues that insecurity along the Cameroon coast was used as an instrument to an end, the end being the recognition of the Bakassi nation, other experiences in Africa was due to diverse reasons with far reaching ramifications. It is hoped that the Africa minimize rebel phenomenon would be checked. But this is possible only if there exists the political will for the respect of democratic principles, good governance and equitable distribution of the national wealth, strategic approach consistency between domestic and partner-initiated programmes, as well as significant regional collaboration given the trans-national character of most threats and vulnerabilities. Consequently, an effective strategy must incorporate national, regional and global realities. While the precise configuration would largely be country-specific, effective strategies would broadly adhere to demonstrable political commitment, increased operational efficiency, transparent regulatory systems, and heightened public awareness. In fact, the regional and sub-regional organisations ought to work closely together in bringing all these into a reality.

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