

# African Social Science Review

---

Volume 6 | Number 1

Article 6

---

August 2014

## Interests and Identities in Peace Negotiations: Nigeria, Cameroon, and the Bakassi Peninsula

Rebecca K. LeFebvre  
*Kennesaw State University*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalscholarship.bjmlspa.tsu.edu/assr>

---

### Recommended Citation

LeFebvre, Rebecca K. (2014) "Interests and Identities in Peace Negotiations: Nigeria, Cameroon, and the Bakassi Peninsula," *African Social Science Review*: Vol. 6: No. 1, Article 6.

Available at: <http://digitalscholarship.bjmlspa.tsu.edu/assr/vol6/iss1/6>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Barbara Jordan Mickey Leland School of Public Affairs - Digital Scholarship. It has been accepted for inclusion in African Social Science Review by an authorized administrator of Barbara Jordan Mickey Leland School of Public Affairs - Digital Scholarship. For more information, please contact [rodriguezam@TSU.EDU](mailto:rodriguezam@TSU.EDU).

## Interests and Identities in Peace Negotiations: Nigeria, Cameroon, and the Bakassi Peninsula

Rebecca K. LeFebvre  
Kennesaw State University

**Abstract:** *For close to fifty years, the territorial dispute between Nigeria and Cameroon continued over the region along their border known as the Bakassi peninsula. The dispute almost led to war in the mid-1990s, was settled by the International Court of Justice in 2002, and resulted in hand-off of the territory by Nigeria to Cameroon in 2008. Content analysis of newspapers from Nigeria and Cameroon for the year 2010 revealed underlying identity-based needs that had been left largely unaddressed. Analysis of Nigerian newspapers showed a prevalent discussion of unfulfilled identity needs and an unresolved identity-conflict potential. Analysis of Cameroonian newspapers revealed the fulfilling of a new identity as the Bakassi region was proactively populated with Cameroonian citizens, culture, and connectivity to the rest of the country. The Bakassi dispute resolution was heralded as a success by state leadership, but it was not perceived in the same way by the general population as evidenced in the content analysis. Public opinions expressed in the media were less reflective of a cooperative result and more reflective of a zero-sum negotiation result with a clear winner and a clear loser.*

**Keywords:** Bakassi peninsula, border dispute, conflict resolution, group identity, peace negotiations

### Introduction

For close to fifty years, the territorial dispute between Nigeria and Cameroon continued over the region along their border known as the Bakassi peninsula. The dispute almost led to war in the mid-1990s, was settled by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in 2002, and resulted in hand-off of the territory by Nigeria to Cameroon in 2008. The peaceful resolution to this historic conflict has been heralded as a successful example of negotiated settlements to territorial disputes. However, the locals in the Bakassi region, 90 percent of whom are Nigerian, have been unhappy with the settlement. The result has been hostility, unrest, and a move for secession of the region that persists even several years after the final official hand-off. This raises the primary research question of this analysis: Did the Bakassi peninsula dispute resolution neglect the identity-based aspects of the situation leaving an underlying conflict unresolved?

This article examines the history of the Bakassi peninsula conflict and the impact of the negotiated settlement on the people of Nigeria and Cameroon. The processes of negotiation and implementation are analyzed from an interests-based framework as well an identities-based perspective looking for gaps that may have occurred. Content analysis is performed on newspaper articles from Nigeria and Cameroon on the topic of the Bakassi peninsula for the year 2010 in an effort to answer the research question regarding the lingering effects of the agreement on the stakeholders in the region. Key findings show evidence of identity-based issues in the region such as loss of community and cultural way of life as well as unfulfilled needs for autonomy.

## **Background of the Dispute**

The Bakassi Peninsula is a six-hundred square mile area of swampland rich in fish that juts out into the Gulf of Guinea. The region lies along the border of two African countries, with Nigeria to the west and Cameroon to the east. The population on the peninsula is around 300,000 comprised mostly of fishermen and their families (*The Economist* 2008). The region lacks much modern infrastructure, such as potable water, electricity, and roads, but what the region does have is more than ten billion barrels of crude oil, first discovered in the late 1950s (Anyu 2007). Ownership of the territory was claimed by both Nigeria and Cameroon for many years with the escalation of the dispute most noticeable after the discovery of oil in the region.

The dispute over the Bakassi Peninsula can be traced back to the arbitrary process used to create borders in Africa during times of colonialism. Britain signed a treaty in 1884 with the kings and chiefs of the Kingdom of Old Calabar that had occupied the peninsula since the mid-1400s (Anyu 2007). In the early 1900s, Germany and Britain signed a series of agreements that created the border between what is now Nigeria and Cameroon. In a key treaty of 1913, Great Britain ceded the Bakassi Peninsula to Germany, which had been governing Cameroon. Cameroon finally won its independence in 1960, and Southern Cameroon merged with it in 1961 bringing the boundary question into the spotlight, particularly because oil was being discovered at this same time. In 1974, the Kano Agreement was signed by heads of state of both countries, putting Bakassi on Cameroon's side of the border. In 1975, after the overthrow of the ruling military regime in Nigeria, the post-coup regime claimed that the Kano agreement was invalid. A series of attempts to resolve the boundary issue occurred after that, with mediation by Britain, France, and Togo, but no peaceful resolution was reached.

The conflict escalated further in the 1980s and early 1990s with several skirmishes resulting in the deaths of some soldiers followed by a massive military build-up in the peninsula by the armies of both Nigeria and Cameroon. In 1994, in an effort to avoid going to war, Cameroon filed a suit with the ICJ asking them to resolve the border dispute. The military forces continued to clash in the region until 1996 when a cease-fire was signed. The ICJ decided in 1998 that it did have the jurisdiction to hear the case. The ICJ, under the supervision of the United Nations (UN) Secretary General Kofi Annan, invited representatives from both countries to the negotiation process and heard arguments from both sides.

Nigeria's claim to the Bakassi Peninsula was based on four main points. First, they pointed to the original title in the 1884 treaty with the kings and chiefs of Old Calabar. Second, they claimed effective occupation of the region, and in fact, wanted the region's sovereignty to be determined by vote of the 300,000 people living there (Tarlebba and Baroni 2010). Third, they claimed long and uninterrupted administration of the region. Fourth, they asserted that the Cameroons had acquiesced over many years by default giving up claim to the region (Anyu 2007). Unfortunately, Nigeria's argument was weakened by the lack of seriousness displayed by the Nigerian leadership over time, as they failed to protest the 1913 treaty and then signed agreements during the pre-coup regimes of the 1970s that they later claimed to be invalid.

Cameroon's claim to the peninsula was based primarily on the 1913 treaty in which Britain ceded the Bakassi Peninsula to Germany. They produced a 1971 agreement signed by the heads of state of Nigeria and Cameroon that they claimed was meant to affirm the borders as defined in the English-German treaty of 1913. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) seemed to agree with Cameroon's argument and appreciated the consistency in documentation produced. Based largely on the 1913 English-German treaty, the ICJ ruled in favor of Cameroon in September of 2002. As part of the settlement, Nigeria was expected to quickly and

unconditionally remove its administrative and military forces from the Bakassi Peninsula.

The ICJ's verdict was communicated privately weeks before it was made public. Kofi Annan invited the presidents of both Nigeria and Cameroon to a meeting in Paris to discuss the ICJ's ruling. During the meeting, both presidents agreed to abide by the ICJ's ruling and to work together to implement the ruling with the help of the UN. Afterwards, Nigeria appeared ready to back out, and it required continued involvement of the UN to keep Nigeria on track to opt for the negotiated settlement (Baye 2010). In the months following the verdict, Kofi Annan facilitated the formation of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission made up of representatives of both countries. The commission had the responsibility to oversee demarcation of land boundaries, withdrawal of troops from the peninsula, and recommendation of confidence-building measures. The Mixed Commission's work culminated in a 2006 meeting at the Green Tree Estate in New York facilitated by Kofi Annan where the Green Tree Agreement was signed with key deadlines and terms for Nigeria's withdrawal.

Kofi Annan praised the effectiveness of the Mixed Commission, pointing out that the commission had no peacekeeping force and cost only \$5 million per year as compared to the \$200 million annual cost of the UN's Ethiopia-Eritrea peacekeeping mission. Obasanjo, the president of Nigeria, was quoted as saying that the agreement "should represent a model for the resolution of similar conflicts in Africa, and I dare say, in the world at large" (Anyu 2007). The last of the territorial handovers occurred in August of 2008 theoretically ending the 14-year dispute resolution process.

### **Post-Resolution Consequences**

The resolution of the Bakassi Peninsula dispute was expected to have benefits to all parties involved, but there are potential costs as well. The benefits of the successful implementation of the Green Tree Agreement are an outcome of peace and can be captured in three main areas: expenditure reduction, international credibility, and cross-border activities (Baye 2010). First, the military spending required to monitor the disputed area could be reduced and funds switched to focus on needed social areas such as health, education, and infrastructure, providing long-term benefits to the economy. Second, the international community would look upon the peaceful settlement positively and foreign investors would be drawn to both countries. In this case, the oil deposits under dispute, which remained largely untapped, could be opened up to foreign oil companies providing the potential for improvement in the socio-economic status of the population in the region. Finally, as confidence-building measures are put in place, trade between the two countries could be improved, reducing smuggling activities, and boosting the competitiveness and increasing tax revenues for both Nigeria and Cameroon.

Although both countries do benefit from the positive consequences of peace, there are a number of downsides socially, politically, and economically. First, over 12,000 Bakassi residents chose to leave the area and move to Nigerian territory. The Nigerian government found a place to resettle the refugees in Cross River State, but in doing so they displaced other Nigerian citizens. The accommodations for the refugees were not sufficient, with 172 housing units for 12,000 people, leaving many homeless (Agba et al. 2010). The Bakassi people also suffered a loss of cultural way of life, as the fishermen and their families were moved to a landlocked area where their skills could not be used. Second, those who choose to stay behind in Bakassi had ill-feelings toward the Nigerian government and started political movements in an attempt to secede the region from both countries, such as the Bakassi Movement for the Self-Sovereignty of the Peninsula, and the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (Agba et al. 2010). Third,

Nigeria had to relinquish significant oil wells to Cameroon, negatively impacting its economy.

Although the ICJ ruling, the Mixed Commission, and the Green Tree Agreement have been praised as successful examples to the world of a negotiated agreement to a potentially intractable conflict, the Bakassi Peninsula region has continued to experience conflict and violent outbreaks two years after the initial withdrawal of Nigerian troops (Achankeng 2009). Was there something missing from the process? Are there further improvements that should be considered for similar territorial disputes in Africa in the future? The remainder of this paper will look at a theoretical framework and research methodology to explore these questions.

### **Analysis**

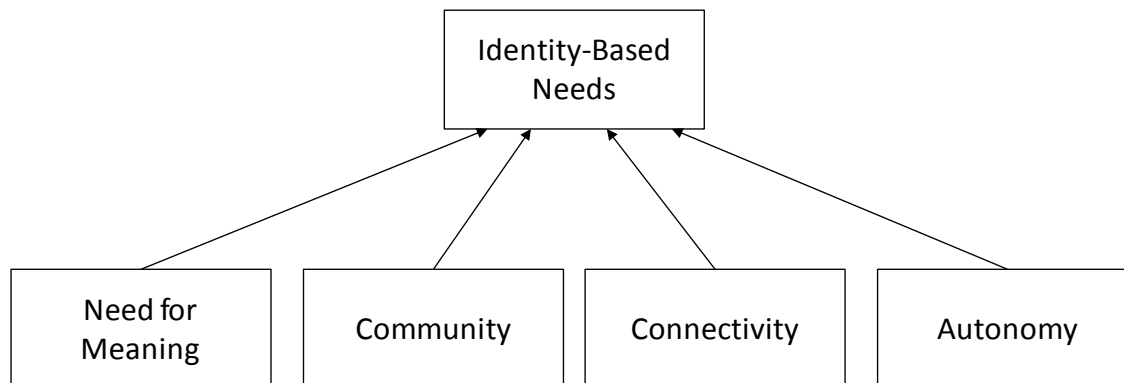
The ruling of the ICJ in this case demonstrated a legalistic approach typical of a Western-style of negotiation. The interests of both parties were identified as the land in dispute along the border and the natural resources held therein. Arguments were heard from both sides, and then the court reviewed the historical agreements to determine which agreements were most binding. The court's ruling was presented as a final judgment. Elements of the American style of negotiating in a low-context culture are apparent here, including a focus on getting to results without regard to relationships. With this approach "great emphasis is placed on procedure, the due process of law, even at the expense of substance" (Cohen 1997, 135).

Once the ruling had been delivered, the implementation phase began which demonstrated many of the negotiating practices of a non-Western culture where high-context and collectivist emphases were present. The success of the ICJ ruling can really be found in this phase where mediation and relationships were the focus and the Green Tree Agreement was developed and implemented. The UN has limited ability to enforce its rulings, so cooperation of the involved parties requires the use of other types of influence with a focus on relationships. The three key people involved in this phase shared a common context as all three were Africans, including the president of Nigeria, the president of Cameroon, and the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan who was from Ghana. The focus in this phase was heavily on relationships as seen by Annan's consistent personal involvement as well as by the formation of the Mixed Commission involving people from both countries to work together. Aspects of the polychronic-time element of traditional societies were also apparent as deadlines were fluid and moved several times.

Yet even during this phase, the focus remained on interests without much regard to identity. Interest-based bargaining moves the players from a frame of mutually exclusive positions to a collaborative frame of shared interests (Rothman and Olson 2001). Nigeria and Cameroon had a shared and underlying interest in a peaceful resolution to avoid the high costs of war to both sides. The focus on shared interests helped to make the negotiation successful resulting in the signature of the Green Tree Agreement and eventual hand-over of the territory. However, interest framing can sometimes appear to be successful with cooperation being only an illusion. If there are identity issues at the root of a conflict, leaving those issues unaddressed is likely to cause the conflict to re-emerge later with renewed virulence (Rothman and Olson 2001). An identity-based conflict revolves around the identities of the parties involved and often contains primary elements that are not negotiable. It can be difficult to find shared context between parties in an identity-based conflict, but only when each party recognizes the legitimacy of the other party can progress be made. Most conflicts, however, are not strictly about interests or identities but are about a number of interlocking issues. It is a challenge to distinguish between the resource-based issues and the identity-based issues and to determine how salient the identity issues are. One indicator is that the longer a conflict goes unresolved, the more likely an

identity issue will emerge (Woehrle and Coy 2000).

The escalated dispute between Nigeria and Cameroon over the Bakassi Peninsula lasted 14 years (1994–2008), preceded by three decades of disagreement dating back to the time of Cameroon’s independence. The lengthy nature of this dispute raises the question as to whether identity issues had emerged within the dispute. In order to further investigate this question, I needed a framework for analyzing identity issues. Mayer provides a useful framework for categorizing identity based needs into four groupings: the need for meaning, community, intimate connectivity, and autonomy (Mayer 2000). First, the need for meaning arises when the conflict itself has been around so long that it has become part of the people’s identity. It is hard for people to resolve the conflict because resolution means taking away a part of themselves. Second, a sense of community is fulfilled when people feel connected with a group which provides a social home for them where they feel safe and appreciated. Group affiliations arise from various cultural sources including religion, ethnicity, professions, and an overall way of life. Third, the need for intimacy is fulfilled by a sense of connectivity with family and friends. Finally, people have a need to feel independence and freedom, which is often expressed as ethnic or cultural groups form autonomous political entities. See Figure 1 for a diagram of this framework.



**Figure 1: Diagram of Identity-Based Needs Framework**

Some conflicts cannot be fully resolved without addressing these identity-based needs. In fact, it is not uncommon for violence to break out in identity-rooted conflicts over control of territory and governance in a region (Oberschall 2010). The territorial nature of the Bakassi dispute and the fact it has a lengthy history indicate the potential for underlying identity-based issues to the conflict. Applying Mayer’s identity-based framework, I hypothesized that there are underlying identity issues that remain unsettled in the Bakassi Peninsula area which can be observed as unfulfilled needs for meaning, community, connectivity, and autonomy in the Nigerian people. I explored this hypothesis by applying content analysis techniques on newspapers from Nigeria and Cameroon as described in the next sections.

### **Content Analysis of Nigerian Newspapers**

Perceptions of the Bakassi dispute resolution as presented in the Nigerian media were examined based on content analysis of all Nigerian newspapers available in the Lexis-Nexis on-line

database. I chose to look at newspapers because of their high frequency of publication and permanence which makes them an excellent source for documentary information (Oyekunle and Tiamiyu 2011). Even with the prevalence of other media, such as television and the internet, newspapers remain a popular source of news and information on political and public issues (Van Heerde and Hudson 2010). I decided to examine newspapers for a timeframe that followed the 2008 completion of the Bakassi territory hand-over. The year 2010 was selected as the most recently available complete year, which also allowed for the examination of lingering effects two years after the final hand-over of territory. A search of the Lexis-Nexis database on Nigerian newspapers for the year 2010 using the search term “Bakassi” revealed 119 articles. A number of articles were found to be duplicates or not relevant, yielding a final N = 65 across seven different newspapers (see Table 1 for a distribution of newspapers in the final set).

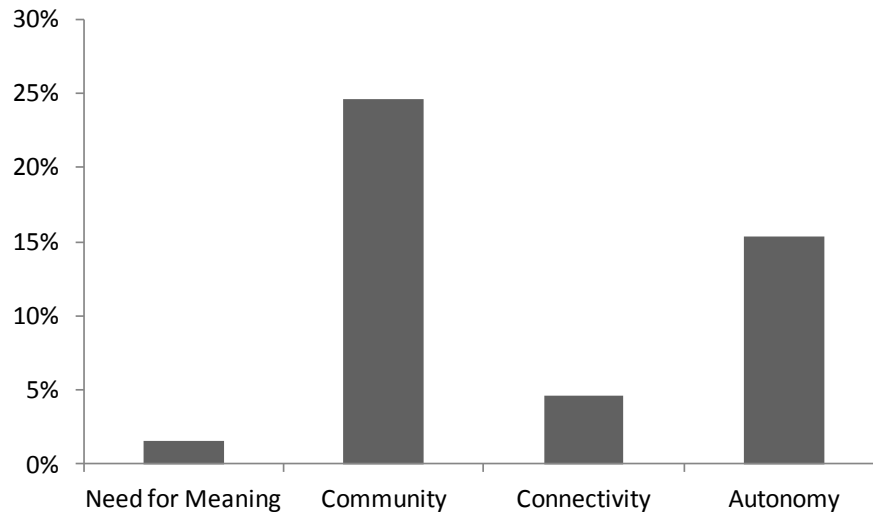
**Table 1: Distribution of Bakassi articles by Nigerian newspaper**

<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>Number of articles</b>	<b>% of total</b>
This Day	16	25%
Daily Independent	16	25%
Vanguard	12	18%
Leadership	8	12%
Daily Champion	8	12%
Daily Trust	4	6%
Business Day	1	2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100%</b>

The articles were spread across the entire year of 2010, with a range of 1 to 16 articles per month for every month. Each article was coded for references to the four categories of identity-based needs defined in the framework as follows:

- (a) *Need for meaning*: The consequences of the Bakassi dispute resolution include loss of identity through the meaning brought by the conflict itself.
- (b) *Community*: The consequences of the Bakassi dispute resolution include loss of identity through the loss of a unique culture and way of life.
- (c) *Connectivity*: The consequences of the Bakassi dispute resolution include loss of identity through the loss of connectivity among the people.
- (d) *Autonomy*: The consequences of the Bakassi dispute resolution include loss of identity through the loss of a sense of independence, freedom, and individuality.

The results of the coding analysis revealed that 37 percent of the articles contained a reference to the identity-based consequences of the dispute. Figure 2 shows how the coded references were distributed among the four categories of identity consequences.



**Figure 2: Frequency distribution of identity-based references**

The most frequently occurring category was one of community, which appeared in 25 percent of the articles. The references to community most often referred to issues of culture such as the loss of their fishing livelihood for those Bakassi residents who were resettled to a landlocked part of Nigeria. The following quotes are examples of the community references in the articles:

- “Faced with immediate extinction of their culture, denial of access to their means of livelihood and a home land that defines their collective identity and existence, notable indigenes of Bakassi are accusing Obasanjo and the former UN Secretary General Mr. Koffi Anan, of committing crimes more serious than that of Sudanese President Omar Bashir and the former Liberian war lord, Mr. Charles Taylor.”—*Vanguard*, August 15, 2010.
- “If you go to the camps, you will only see women and children. The men are all looking for a seaward end for their fishing. They are not too comfortable coming on land, they prefer staying at the fringes of the water.”—*Daily Independent*, August 4, 2010.

The second most frequently occurring category was autonomy, which appeared in 15 percent of the articles. These references generally referred to the ability of the local Nigerians to rule themselves and the indignity they suffered by being handed off between countries. There was often a viewpoint expressed that the ICJ ruling was wrong and should be reversed or fought. Some expressed the willingness of the people to go to war either over the Bakassi territory or any future attempts to give away portions of Nigeria’s territory.

- “[Mbu] asked: “why should we accept the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice?” He stressed that at no time was Bakassi recognized as a no man’s territory. The king of Bakassi, he said, was recognized as the king of that territory.”—*Daily Independent*, June 14, 2010.
- “I was dead wrong to have supported the hand-over of Bakassi because the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants of that oil rich region opposed the transfer... I see the possibility of the emergence of a patriotic government at the center with a strong president with Nigeria’s interest at heart who would one day



stand up for what is right by reclaiming Bakassi Peninsular. Nigerians are waiting for such a bold leader.”—*Leadership*, August 4, 2010.

The remaining two identity categories, connectivity and need for meaning, were in 5 percent and 2 percent of the articles respectively. The connectivity references were generally about expressing the need to resettle the Bakassi residents in order to give them a sense of belonging and to avoid dispersing the people. There was only one reference found indicating the need for meaning, wherein the conflict itself was pursued as a way to give meaning to people. In this one reference, the article discussed a rumor that had been started about the Cameroons wanting to take over another piece of land in the region, but the rumor was shown to be false. Some people seemed to be looking for another territorial fight.

Overall, the content analysis showed that the topic of the Bakassi Peninsula dispute and resolution was still a frequent and emotional topic in the news, even eight years after the ICJ ruling and two years after the implementation of the resolution was complete. The lack of fulfillment of identity-based needs was prevalent in the newspaper articles, indicating some unresolved issues remain. Is there a possibility for these unresolved issues to turn into violent conflict? Thirty-one percent of the articles contained some reference to the potential for violent conflict in the region, mostly discussing the harassment of the Bakassi residents by Cameroon police or “communal clashes.” This is an area in need of further research.

### Content Analysis of Cameroonian Newspapers

Perceptions of the Bakassi dispute resolution as presented in the Cameroonian media were examined based on content analysis of all Cameroonian newspapers available in the Lexis-Nexis on-line database. I searched the Lexis-Nexis database for all available Cameroonian newspapers for the year 2010 using the search term “Bakassi” revealing 69 articles. A number of articles were found to be duplicates or not relevant, yielding a final N = 63 across four different newspapers. Forty-two of the articles were in French and were translated into English before being coded for content (see Table 2 for a distribution of newspapers in the final set). The articles were spread across the entire year of 2010, with a range of 2 to 9 articles per month for every month.

**Table 2: Distribution of Bakassi articles by Cameroonian newspaper**

<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>Number of articles</b>	<b>% of total</b>
Cameroon Tribune/French	23	37%
Cameroon Tribune/English	21	33%
Le Quotidien Mutations	12	19%
Le Mesager	7	11%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>100%</b>

Unlike the Nigerian newspapers, the Cameroonian newspapers had few references to identity-based needs. In only seven articles (11 percent of the total) was any mention of identity issues given. These mentions did not fit neatly into the Mayer framework of Figure 1, but in a sense all seven cases could be categorized as “connectivity” needs. In the Mayer framework, connectivity needs were defined as needs arising from a loss of identity through the loss of connectivity among the people. In the Cameroon articles, there was a perception of connectivity needs, not with a focus on the loss of the Nigerians who had inhabited the Bakassi region but with the gain to the Cameroonian population who wanted to connect more closely with the

Bakassi region. One article referred to this activity as the “Cameroonization” of the Bakassi region. The Cameroonization efforts included activities such as building a road to the region, building a community center there, bringing in a radio station, and simply populating the region with Cameroonian citizens. As examples, here are quotes from several articles that discuss these efforts to establish a new identity in the Bakassi region that is more closely tied to that of Cameroon:

- “The pressing problem in Bakassi, Lekunze Ketuma expressed in the report, is peopling the area by Cameroonian nationals and motivating government workers to go and work there.”—*Cameroon Tribune/English*, March 15, 2010.
- “It is true, as stated in the document of the Prime Minister, that these people are mostly Nigerians (95-99%) and therefore they can be returned to their country.”—*Le Messenger*, May 17, 2010.
- “The “Cameroonization” of Bakassi happens each day a step further.”—*Cameroon Tribune/French*, March 29, 2010
- “A seminar will be organized on site in the coming days or weeks to accompany the launch of the community center. The Mincom Issa Tchiroma, for his part, stressed the benefits for the people of Bakassi who hitherto had the feeling of living outside of the Republic because of this isolation.”—*Cameroon Tribune/French*, March 29, 2010.

Another difference in the Cameroonian perspective versus the Nigerian perspective is in how the Green Tree Agreement and overall resolution of the Bakassi dispute was viewed. Not surprisingly, the “winner” of the dispute resolution, Cameroon, has a much more positive view. Whereas the Nigerian newspapers report on those that reject the ICJ decision, refer to that decision as a crime, or make assertions for reclaiming the territory, the Cameroon newspapers report on the Green Tree Agreement as a peaceful resolution and praise the Cameroonian leadership for their skillful diplomacy. Thirty percent of the 63 Cameroonian articles mention the “peaceful” resolution of the Bakassi dispute putting it in a positive light. Here are two example quotes that sum up the sentiment found within the Cameroon newspapers:

- “General Yakubu Gowon expressed happiness that the Bakassi conflict between Cameroon and Nigeria was resolved peacefully and promised to build on the good relations between the two countries dating as far back as the 1960s.”—*Cameroon Tribune/English*, February 18, 2010.
- “The greatest success of Cameroon's diplomacy in recent years remains the double ceremony of transfer of authority in Cameroon Bakassi and the withdrawal of the civil administration and the Nigerian police force of the peninsula.”—*Cameroon Tribune/French*, January 13, 2010.

Finally, there is one similarity between the Nigerian and Cameroonian newspaper perspectives, and that is the expressed concern for security issues in the region. Just as 31 percent of the Nigerian articles referenced the potential for violent conflict, 24 percent of the Cameroonian articles mention security issues in Bakassi. One article referred to the Bakassi region as a “lawless zone,” and five articles mentioned either armed pirates or the kidnapping of foreign nationals in the region. There was an expression of the need to strengthen the military base in Bakassi and make use of the Rapid Intervention Battalion (BIR) in six of the articles. Although the Nigerian newspapers did not express a desire to work jointly with Cameroon on security issues in the region, the Cameroonian perspective seemed to leave room for a cooperative effort as shown in this sample quote:

“Strengthening collaboration between forces of defense and security, Cameroon and Nigeria will fight more effectively against organized crime in this area.”—*Cameroon Tribune/French*, October 3, 2010.

## **Conclusion**

The Bakassi territorial dispute resolution and the Green Tree Agreement are examples of a peaceful way to settle a potentially intractable problem. The personal involvement of the UN Secretary General and the building of relationships were key elements to ensure successful implementation of the agreement. In the interest of continuous improvement, however, there is an opportunity to do more to address underlying identity-based needs in these types of territorial negotiations. Content analysis of Nigerian newspapers for the year 2010 showed a prevalent discussion of unfulfilled identity needs, providing support for the hypothesis that there is an unresolved identity-conflict potential. From the Cameroonian perspective, content analysis revealed the fulfilling of a new identity as the Bakassi region was actively populated with Cameroonian citizens, culture, and connectivity to the rest of the country.

The Green Tree Agreement may have been a diplomatic breakthrough at the state level and may have felt like a true collaborative effort to the state leaders with both sides emerging as winners, but it was not perceived in the same way by the general population as evidenced in the newspaper content analysis. The public opinions expressed in the media were less reflective of a cooperative result and more reflective of a zero-sum negotiation result with a clear winner and a clear loser. The “winner,” Cameroon, was ready to embrace the Bakassi region socially, economically, and politically as part of the collective identity of the country. They spoke of populating the region with citizens of Cameroon, establishing media links through radio, building infrastructure such as roads there, and defending the territory through their military. On the other hand, the “loser,” Nigeria, was mourning the loss of identity for people in the region socially, economically, and politically. The Nigerian media spoke of extinction of a culture, loss of livelihood, managing and influx of refugees, and the indignity of lack of political voice.

The opposing viewpoints between the Nigerian population and the Cameroonian population, and between the state leadership level and the local individual level have the potential to be a common theme in territory dispute resolution and are worthy of further research. One of the strengths of the content analysis methodology used in this research is its ability to stretch over a period of time and generate observations on events of the past. The main disadvantage is that I could only make use of what records already exist and are accessible, such as those newspapers available in the Lexis-Nexis database. There are other national newspapers that could be studied as well, including *The Guardian*, which is a national newspaper with high circulation, and *The Tribune*, which is the oldest national newspaper in Nigeria. On the other hand, reliability is very high with the content analysis method because coding of observations followed a well-defined systematic approach. In future research, surveys of the general population could enhance these resulting by providing direct indicators of public opinion. The application of this type of primary research could be used to expand on the research done in this study and seek to answer questions such as: How was public opinion formed on state matters such as the Green Tree Agreement? What part did local leaders play in either mitigating or escalating identity issues in the region? Where other mechanisms outside of the media did people use to voice their concerns?

From the evidence found so far, there are three main implications for improving the negotiation process of territorial disputes with underlying identity issues. First, clarity should be

brought to the role of the kings and chiefs in African territories, both at the time of historical treaty signing (Udogu 2008), as well as in current times. Kings and chiefs represent leadership of the local level, and they can provide deeper knowledge of identity issues and help find ways to mitigate those issues. Second, the rights and needs of all stakeholders in a conflict should be considered during the process of mediation, rather than following just the traditional path of international politics at the state level (Achankeng 2009). In the case of the Bakassi dispute, that would have meant giving a seat at the table to representatives of the local people, possibly kings and chiefs. Third, new interactive techniques in mediation should be incorporated that strive to recognize the identity-based conflict frame, engaging parties in reflexive dialog (Rothman and Olson 2001). The continuous improvement of the process for settling territorial disputes will help to bring stronger and longer lasting peace to the affected regions of the world.

## References

- Achankeng, Fonkem. 2009. Actors with obvious stakes in conflict must have a place at the table: A new approach to international mediation? *Journal for the Study of Peace and Conflict* 2008:58-72.
- Agba, A. M. Ogaboh, J. J. Akpanudoedehe, and E. M. Ushie. 2010. Socio-economic and cultural impacts of resettlement on Bakassi people of Cross River State, Nigeria. *Studies in Sociology of Science* 1(2):50-62.
- Anyu, J. Ndumbe. 2007. The international court of justice and border-conflict resolution in Africa: The Bakassi peninsula conflict. *Mediterranean Quarterly* 18(3):39-55.
- Baye, Francis Menjo. 2010. Implications of the Bakassi conflict resolution for Cameroon. *African Journal on Conflict Resolution* 10(1):9-34.
- Cohen, Raymond. 1997. *Negotiating across cultures, revised edition*. Washington, D.C: United States Institute of Peace Press.
- Mayer, Bernard S. 2000. *The dynamics of conflict resolution: A practitioner's guide*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Oberschall, A. 2010. Conflict theory. In Kevin T. Leicht and J. Craig Jenkins (eds.) *Handbook of Politics: State and Society in Global Perspective (177–193)*. New York: Springer.
- Oyekunle, Rafiat A. and Mutawakilu A. Tiamiyu. 2011. Patterns of information products advertising in newspaper media in Nigeria. *African Journal of Library, Archives and Information Science* 20(2):71-81.
- Rothman, Jay and Marie L. Olson. 2001. From interests to identities: Towards a new emphasis in interactive conflict resolution. *Journal of Peace Research* 38(3):289-305.
- Tarlebba, Nicholas K. and Sam Baroni. 2010. The Cameroon and Nigeria negotiation process over the contested oil rich Bakassi peninsula. *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences* 2(1):198-210.
- The Economist*. 2008. Ceding control: Nigeria hands territory to Cameroon. <http://www.economist.com/node/11950441> (accessed October 15, 2011).
- Udogu, E. Ike. 2008. Historicizing and contextualizing the discourse on African international law and a concise overview of the pacific settlement of the Cameroon-Nigeria Bakassi peninsula dispute. *African and Asian Studies* 7(1):77-99.
- Van Heerde, Jennifer and David Hudson. 2010. The righteous considereth the cause of the poor? Public attitudes towards poverty in developing countries. *Political Studies* 58(1):389-409.

Woehrle, Lynne M. and Patrick G. Coy. 2000. Collective identities and the development of conflict analysis. In Patrick G. Coy and Lynne M. Woehrle (eds.) *Social conflicts and collective identities* (1–15). Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

**Rebecca K. LeFebvre**, PhD, earned her doctoral degree in international conflict management from Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, Georgia. She is currently researching issues of culture, group identity, and decision theory in conflict situations with a focus on building computer-based models and simulations of decision techniques and role-playing conflict scenario games to be used for data collection. She has taught courses in politics and international relations at Kennesaw State University and the Georgia Institute of Technology.