

DISCUSS BORDERS IN AFRICA DIFFERENTLY STORIES, IMAGINATIONS AND ALTERITY IN THE BORDERLANDS BETWEEN CAMEROON AND NIGERIA

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Abstract

Many studies have been devoted in recent years to the *border studies* in Africa, particularly on the issue of historical conditions for the constitution of borders; border disputes; illegal migrations; cross-border crime; cross-border cooperation; flow control; the militarization of borders; the rise of shipwrecks and sub-Saharan migrations at the gates of Europe. Admittedly, this research is interesting, but it has remained mostly limited to the geographical and material dimension of the border. A border is not only limited to a line, a barrier, a checkpoint or a political construction and the result of a balance of power that was resolved in a negotiated or conflictual manner. Beyond its socio-cultural, political and economic animation by human groups, it is also important to note that the influences of political events, the nature of interstate relations affect the imaginations of these populations settled in the borderlands in relation to the border. Based on an ethnographic approach carried out from the 2010 s until July 2018 and the collection of primary and secondary data in some cross-border areas between Cameroon and Nigeria, it is a question in this analytical framework of scrutinizing the mental geography of these human societies before colonization relative to the border, then to show how the "clash of civilizations" with the colonial order upset the African borders providing a vision of the world. From another perspective, there is a heuristic interest that is raised in this discussion, that of discussing how the mental images of the local populations settled in these borderlands have acted, interacted and varied in relation to these geopolitical spaces marked essentially by globalization and its consequences. geopolitical and geostrategic changes.

Key words: *History; perceptions; cross-border spaces; Cameroon; Nigeria; Otherness; Colonization; Globalization.*

Introduction

At the start of the new millennium, we are witnessing a strong comeback of borders all over the planet (Fourcher 2008; Agier 2013; Mbembe 2016). They are more prominent in the political debates and the various agendas of many chancelleries on the international scene with the question of the migratory crisis, the violence on the bodies of migrants designated as undesirables at the gates of Europe and above all the rise in power of crime linked to the phenomenon of crime and terrorism in the borderlands in Africa. Nowadays, when we evoke the notion of border, it refers to hedges, walls, enclosures; a place of insecurity and above all of exclusion and exercise of the power of authority which is expressed through the control of movements and flows (Boudou, 2017; Boudou, 2018; Mbembe, 2020). Beyond its physical and material aspect, it crystallizes the passions, affects, fears, many modes of believing and thinking. All these stories about the border have a common thread: the border is a place of underdevelopment; it is the turn of the warlike; a metastasized area (Foga Konefon,

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2015); a territory of circulation of illicit wealth and the reign of warlords; a difficult crossing space where men lose their humanity in so far as the security dimension has taken precedence over the other functions of international boundaries, in particular with questions of contemporary migration (Amilhat-Szary, 2020). In such contexts, the dynamic of the generalization of fear on the borders has become generalized. However, it has multiple dimensions the border. From what precedes, it is important to know what a border is without falling into exhaustiveness. In current representations, the idea of the border refers to interstate demarcation line, that is, as the boundary of the territory of the states. It is a contact line for interstate sovereignties. In other words, the borders are political constructions and the result of a balance of power that is resolved in a negotiated or conflictual way. Their route meets various criterias, which may be historical, economic, ethnic, ideological or cultural. To go in the same direction, borders are not simply traces on a map, a one-dimensional geographical place of political life, where one state ends and another begins. They are institutions established by political decisions and governed by legal texts. The border has been and, in many senses, remains a basic political institution: in an advanced society, no regulated economic, political or social life could be organized without it (Anderson, 2006). In this definition, we note that in the idea of border, the notion of spatiality and the state stands out. Hence, the intimacy between the border, space and the State. If it is true that in the imaginaries and the regimes of contemporary thought that the barrier, the line of separation, a place of restriction of freedoms; a space of exclusion and confinement remain a fixed idea as a representation of the border, it must be recognized that nowadays, the border is in the process of multiplication, it seems to have become a ubiquitous notion that is enriched with new dimensions and meanings, thus gaining more and more in complexity (Bennafla, 2002: 134-146). The borderlands between Cameroon and Nigeria bear witness to this historical liveliness. Beyond the lines that demarcate the sovereignty of these different territories; identities and atavistic nationalisms, we note that the populations of yesterday to today located on the edge of these border peripheries have contested the borders, scars of colonization and until today defy all the geopolitical upheavals to which face their different states.

With the aim of renewing the debate on borders as a space where we can think about living together, our first point of analysis will be to show the “clash of civilizations” between the colonial order and that of the traditional societies located in these different borderlands mentioned above in relation to their models of vision on the border. In our second analysis grid, we will focus attention on the imaginations and actions of these populations in these geopolitical spaces in the marked context by globalization and its geopolitical and geostrategic changes.

"The clash of civilizations" between the colonial order and the traditional societies of the borderlands between Cameroon and Nigeria on the vision of the border

The notion of borders is as old as the world. It is a universal concept and a strategic variable that has played a role in all human civilizations. This allows us to say that the border is not a strange thing in African history. It has indeed been at the heart of geopolitical upheavals and multiple reconfigurations on the social, demographic, diplomatic, military, cultural and economic levels of traditional African societies. So the

borders are old in the history of colonization in Africa. They provide of a vision of the world which took into account the African perception of these borders, their roles and also the peaceful management of these which did not respond to the same criteria and characteriology as those forged in the West.

Representations of the border in the imaginations of traditional societies before the establishment of the Cameroon-Nigeria border: spaces of connected circulation, economic solidarity and living together

The geographical space that serves as the contemporary border between Cameroon and Nigeria long before colonization is charged with many historical dynamics that have intertwined and collided. Based on historical data such as long-distance trade; the movements of people and goods, the connections between trans-Saharan cities and the spaces between Cameroon and Nigeria, we are able to affirm that the notion of connected history was not alien to these geopolitical spaces long before colonization. They essentially inform us about the African philosophy of the notion of borders as a space for migratory circulation (Foga, 2015), connected commercial networks (Sourna, 2020), economic solidarity (Fanso, 1982; Onana Mfege, 2004) and a military front and refuges (Thierno, 1985).

The border in these different spaces before colonization was a confused, complex and catch-all concept. Representations of the border had several meanings. They referred to the territorial boundaries that demarcated two or more political entities, villages, clans, tribes, etc. Borders marked the difference between large ethno-cultural groups that shared the same civilizations and the same geopolitical experiences to the detriment of other cultural groups. This is the reason why in the northern part of the current border between Cameroon and Nigeria, we find the same peoples such as the Mambila, Kwanga, the Mandara, the Gueraleba, the Goudé, Kapsiki, the Fulani, the Kanuri, etc. In the part of the former English Cameroon², there were also a multitude of people with the same History, the same cultural and ancestral values. By way of example, we can cite the case of the Ejaghams who are currently found near Mamfe in Cameroon in the district of Eyumodjock in the department of Manyu and likewise in Ikom in Nigeria at Acampa Odukpani in the State of cross-River (Foga, 2015: 102-103). For this people, all this space took on several representations at the same time cosmic, metaphysical, ontological, cultural, anthropological, social and cultural. Hence, their contestation of the border imposed by the colonial conquerors because, it was out of the question for an Ejagham who remained in Nigeria not to go and perform his ritual practices and customs in the Keaka area not far from Mamfe as the supreme traditional authority of the Ejagham of the village Big Kwa in the city of Calabar did regularly. (Achou Etta, 2008: 4). It was a sacrilege and an abomination.

In the imaginations of traditional African societies of the spatial segment which currently serves as territorial limits between Cameroon and Nigeria, it should be noted that borders have been the driving force behind several historical dynamics and numerous

²It is important to emphasize that Cameroon has experienced a triple colonization. The first period which is German was spread out from 1884 to 1916. During the Second World War, the Germans were driven out by the French and the English. And consequently, the latter shared the former German territorial possession. The English took 1/5th of the territory and France took 4/5th of the territory. Hence the appellation, French Cameroon and English Cameroon.

geopolitical upheavals. They were changing, due to wars of conquest, territorial expansion, wars of religion, the thirst for power of certain sovereigns and issues related to competition and competition for natural resources (Thierno, 1985; Saïbou Issa, 2000; Abdouraman Halirou, 2006). Indeed, in this geopolitical space, several pre-colonial political hegemonies emerged and therefore had a particularly warlike view of the idea of the border. Among those, we can mention the most prominent such as the Fulani emirate of Sokoto, Kanem, Bornou, the kingdom of Wandala and the principalities of Kotoko. Examining the history of these pre-colonial states created and located on the southern shores of Lake Chad, we see that war was omnipresent in all the narrative models of their respective origins. As we mentioned previously, the extension of the borders was at the center of several geopolitical but above all economic issues, namely the practice of slave raids (Abdouraman Halirou, 2006: 49-52).

In the same order of ideas, the border was considered as places of refuge, strategic-tactical retreats and defence. To this end, the space occupied by the Cameroon-Nigerian dyad has been for centuries a hotbed of instability and geopolitical tension between the multiple pre-colonial hegemonies as we indicated in the previous lines. Consequently, forced migrations have been a constant historical fact in this geopolitical space. For reasons of survival, the search for peace, inter-tribal wars, the borders, namely the lake islets and certain hostile natural environments made up of plant fortifications, as was the case around Lake Chad, were sites shelters for local people. In this perspective, several authors (Seignobos, 1980; Thierno, 1985; Saïbou Issa, 2000, Abdoul-Aziz Yaouba, 2006; Abdouraman Halirou, 2006; Sourna, 2020) demonstrate with arguments bearing an irrefutable seal how the military supremacy of the different sovereignties, as was the case of Bornu under the aegis of Idriss Aloma between the 15th and 16th centuries, incited the Sao, the Boulala, the Talala to migrate in a forced way to the waters of Lake Chad, where they mixed with other refugee groups to constitute the Boudouma people (Saïbou, 2000: 58). In view of the foregoing, there are two significant historical facts relating to the notion of the border. At first, the military expansion of Idriss Aloma served him to extend the territorial limits of his empire to secure the living spaces for the Bornuans who were considered his subjects. In addition, we also note that the notion of refugee is not strange in African pre-colonial history. In fact, certain hostile environments of the Chad basin where we currently find certain local populations is not the result of chance. This phenomenon is due to the historical reality that we have described and also to the fact that for these refugee populations, these hostile environments of the waters of Lake Chad were considered as refuge sites.

During this precolonial period, the territorial perimeter that characterizes the border between Cameroon and Nigeria today was the subject of intense activity of economic solidarity, peaceful coexistence and tolerance between the cultural communities that lived in this space. . In fact, the border had a whole other meaning to the detriment of that of the sovereign and postmodern order. It was a territorial network interconnected with several localities of the empire of the great empires of West Africa, the Hausa cities, Fezzan, Tripoli, the Ottoman Empire, the Old Calabar kingdoms, principalities which emerged in Central Africa, etc. The notion of itinerancy or the phenomenon of circulations has always characterized this geopolitical space. In reality,

there was the encounter, the interference, the shock, the harmonies and disharmonies between different cultures in this space. This collision and collusion is particularized by the circulation of objects, goods, people, endogenous knowledge, *savoir-vivre*, religions, culinary arts, languages, fashions of dress, dances, songs, music, tales, proverbs, aesthetics, imaginations, mode of perception of others (judgments, clichés, stereotypes) and interpretation of the world, memories, etc. It is this cultural hybridity and creolity that we have designated “Migrafritude” to designate the logics of circulation in precolonial Africa and which necessarily integrated it into international circuits in the first ages of globalization. Merchants, slaves, weavers, pilgrims, explorers, adventurers, soldiers, fishermen, breeders, Arabs,

Beyond all these characteristics, it is necessary to integrate that if these borders aimed to differentiate a collective identity from another, it is necessary to integrate that in these spaces, the border also made it possible to recognize the presence of the Other. They were spaces for socialization between different cultures. The place where there was the place of the other in intercultural relations. Unfortunately, the advent of colonization with its various imported programs upset the geopolitical, cultural and societal order of traditional African borders to the point of still having consequences today.

The Berlin Conference (1884-1885) and the revision of the precolonial borders between Cameroon and Nigeria: geopolitical and cultural upheavals and challenges to traditional societies

Contrary to the different conceptions of traditional Africa on the question of borders, according to the West, the border conveyed a whole program and another vision of the world. In reality, it corresponded to a very particular conception of the modes of organization of politics that of an international system structured around political entities of the same nature: the States. This idea emerged in the seventeenth century as a result of the peace created by the Treaties of Westphalia in 1648. These treaties put an end to the Thirty Years' War and therefore symbolised the victory of absolutism and its centralising territorial model over feudalism, which was characterised, conversely, by the fragmentation of political authority, both functionally and territorially (Duez and Simmoneau, 2018: 37-52). Thus, the frontier referred to a highly symbolic and strategic spatial marker that delimited the sovereignties that exercised absolute and definitive political, military, fiscal and jurisdictional authority over a given territory and its resident population.

This western importation from the frontier materialized in Africa at the time of colonization. To delimit their different spheres of influence and avoid rivalries between the colonial powers in Africa, the German Chancellor Otto Von Bismarck convened the Berlin Conference which took place from November 15, 1884 to February 25, 1885. It was at the origin of the “scramble of Africa” (Suret-Canale, 1985: 133-162). It was during this conference that Africa was divided into European “spheres of influence”. Articles 34 and 35 of the Berlin Act indeed stipulated the effective occupation of the land. This occupation was to be materialized by the delimitation of the borders with other powers colonialism and the securing of the latter. This was the case between Germany, which took possession of Kamerun by the German-Douala treaty on July 12, 1884, and Great Britain, which had been omnipresent in Nigeria for more than a century. With compasses, squares and pencils, these two colonial powers separated their two spheres of influence

from the Anglo-Germanic agreements of April 29-June 16, 1885; the German-British agreements of July 27 – August 2, 1886 and the German-British agreements of March 11, 1903 relating to the delineation of the Cameroon border-Nigeria: from Yola to the sea and navigation on the Cross-River (Foga , 2015: 145-161).

The following table lists the legal agreements signed between Germany and Great Britain regarding the Cameroonian-Nigerian border.

Table No.1: inventory of legal instruments relating to the birth of the border between Cameroon and Nigeria from 1885 to 1913

Instruments	Comments
1. German-British Exchanges of Notes April-June 1885	Delimitation of Germany's spheres of influence and Great Britain from the Gulf of Guinea.
2. German-British Exchanges of Notes July-August 1886	Extension of the border to the north up to the level of Yola
3. Anglo-German Treaty of July 1, 1890	Adoption of a provisional demarcation line between the Cameroonian sector German and the British Nigerian sector of the Gulf of Guinea at Rio Del Rey
4. Anglo-German Agreement of April 14, 1893	Right bank of the Rio-Del-Rey defined as the border between the possessions of the two parties.
5. Anglo-German Agreement of November 15, 1893	Extension of the border to the waters of Lake Chad.
6. Anglo-German Agreement of March 19, 1906	Redefining Yola's Boundary at Lake Chad
7. Archibong Protocol of March 20, 1906	Redefinition of the demarcation line between Cameroon and Nigeria from South. The border moves from Rio-Del-Rey at the Akwayafe River
8. exchanges of notes of February 22 and March 5, 1909	Confirmation of the demarcation of the two sectors of the Gorege/Lake Chad border and uba/mayo Tiel
9. Anglo-German Agreement of March 11, 1913	Course of the border between Cameroon and Nigeria by Yola to the sea. Articles 18, 19, 20, and 21 specify the "Camerounity" of the Bakassi peninsula
10. Obokoum Memorandum of Understanding of April 12, 1913	Yola border demarcation at the Cross River (Sector 2) eight reference maps are attached to the MoU.

Source: Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs relating to the file on the course of the Cameroonian-Nigerian border.

This new territorial division had been imposed on the local populations who lived in this geopolitical space. Consequently, ethnic, sociological, historical, geopolitical and geostrategic realities of the pre-colonial political hegemonies that existed there had not been taken into account at the time of the colonial partition between these two powers. In the same vein, the zonality, orality and instability, the main characteristic of precolonial

borders, were replaced by the linearity and fixity of the boundaries between Kamerun and Nigeria (Abdouraman Haliru, 2006: 127). This new border brought new political and geostrategic challenges. It performed new functions that deserve special attention:

A tax function and surveillance of goods and people

Both colonial powers were aware of the geopolitics of economic activities during the pre-colonial period that had prevailed between the spatial marker that dematerialized them. Thus, in the objectives targeted by the establishment of the new border, it was intended to collect the currencies to financially supply the colony for the needs of administrative conveniences, its exploitation and the enrichment of the architects of the colonial enterprise. Thus, the border was intended to collect taxes, taxes for all people, goods and objects that crossed it. It was also around the border that the customs activities that regulated foreign and domestic trade were organized. It is in this perspective that Germany created border posts all along the border between Cameroon and Nigeria to control the flow of commercial activities that took place there. For example, Dr. Alfred Mansfeld who replaced Graf Von Pückler Limburg had the mandate to create the first border posts with Nigeria in the Upper Cross-river region. He thus created border posts at Nsanakang, Okarikang, Agborkem and Tinto (Nso Atem, 2008: 54). This decision was intended to counter the economic inclinations of the British on the edge of the western border of Kamerun and also to control the flow of goods and monitor the movement of goods and people. For example, in 1909 the Upper Cross river area had a tax collector, fifty soldiers and sixty police officers assisted by the District Officer of the town of Mamfe (Foga Konefon, 2017:59-60). In the Tinto area, precisely to the north of the Upper Cross River region, there was a chief of police assisted by 25 soldiers, 4 messengers and 5 brigadier guards (Nso Atem, 2008: 54). The role of the latter at the border was to thwart the path of smugglers who crossed the border illegally. This was also the case in the northern part of Cameroon which suffered the hegemony of Calabar The role of the latter at the border was to thwart the path of smugglers who crossed the border illegally. This was also the case in the northern part of Cameroon which suffered the hegemony of Calabar The role of the latter at the border was to thwart the path of smugglers who crossed the border illegally. This was also the case in the northern part of Cameroon which suffered the hegemony of Calabar and Yola, two major commercial cities in Nigeria.

This restriction of the movement of people and the imposition of customs taxes were against the populations of this border perimeter who had a whole different way of life in these borderlands. For example, the populations of Isangelé, the Ejaghams had a millennial tradition of trading with the populations who were in the bay of Biafra. This latter area was considered a hub for trade in the Gulf of Guinea (Fanso, 1982). So, it was an absurdity for these populations to be forced into a space line which imposed taxes on them and restricted their movements and circulations. Hence, the contestation of this idea of the border, as a spatial barrier and resistance against the new colonial predators. For this purpose, given the porosity of the borders between Cameroon and Nigeria, the various trade flows and cross-border populations have generally materialized through clandestinity and illegality. Through dissimulation and several logics of circumvention, all these cultural communities settled in the borderlands of these two countries have challenged the new border line. In fact, the border was

considered a resource, a place of supply, exchange and supply (Fanso, 1982; Foga, 2015; Sourna, 2020). This dispute was also followed by fierce resistance from the local populations in the face of the imposition and domination of the colonial conqueror.

The border also had a health and military function.

A health and military function

Beyond spatial differentiation, the idea of the border in representations of the West also had an ideological-military and health significance. Health was also part of the policy of securing borders in German Cameroon. Germany was afraid of tropical pathologies and its contagion effect on local populations. Thus, any foreign person in the territory of Kamerun had the obligation to have a health check (Foga, 2017). Indeed, after the pacification of Cameroonian resistance against German colonization, Germany's objective was to exploit the territory. For that, they needed a work force. This health policy of the international borders of Kamerun aimed not only to preserve the health of the local populations, the foreign workers and sustain the workforce affected in large plantations. Kamerun, in the 1900s, had been confronted with numerous epidemics such as: smallpox, leprosy, sleeping sickness, dysentery, typhus (Owona Ntsama, 2006: 73). It was therefore necessary to control the entry of foreigners into its territory. The traditional authorities also had the task of detecting these foreigners to bring them to the German colonial administration, not only to make vaccines so as not to contaminate the local populations against possible diseases, but also to ensure that they were not smugglers. This was also the case against epizootics, at the Cameroon-Nigeria border. This border was the subject of animal health concerns during the colonial era. In fact, this space was a transit perimeter for sick animals (Sourna, 2020: 221).

The border also had a military significance. In fact, to understand the dialectic of war and peace in the history of modern Europe, the idea of the border has played a considerable strategic role. In reality, the very idea of an international border arose in international law at the time of the negotiation of the Peace of Westphalia treaties (1648) following the Thirty Years' War. It was to guarantee territorial stability and lasting peace (Amilhat Szary and Amaël Cattaruzza, 2022). Borders play a particular role in the alphabet of space in that they sediment the balance of power and therefore induce, in a very powerful symbolically way, states of affairs stemming from ancient wars. It is in this register of thought that this order was deployed in a differentiated way in the territories structured by ancient European powers but also in the spaces that they colonized, having previously declared them *terra nullius*, that is to say land not occupied or whose sovereignty could not be recognized. The drawing of borders has therefore marked the emergence of a world respectful of a post bellum status quo, their objective being to lay down the conditions for maintaining peace through law (Amilhat Szary and Cattaruzza, 2022). Hence the link between wars and peace in the idea of the border.

One can easily understand from the historical and political context which prevailed between Germany and Great Britain, the two powers were rivals. Germany was aware that England had expansionist tendencies on its territory because, Great Britain not only estimated that a part of the South-West of Kamerun was a natural complement to the "old Calabar but also that part of North Kamerun was also a surplus of the territory of "old Adamawa" (Foga Konefon , 2015:59-60). Hence, a deep and

sacred attachment to the Westphalian line which marked them out between Kamerun and Nigeria. And, it is in this perspective that Germany and England set up a policy of securing their common border to monitor the movement of goods, people; fight against smuggling and also to defend against any external aggression.

From all the above, we can say that the cutting of the border between Kamerun and Nigeria according to the Western model had significant geopolitical, socio-economic and cultural upheavals on the historical dynamics of these people located at the edge of this border. On the political level, European tracing gave a crushing blow to the evolution of pre-colonial political hegemonies that straddled these two geopolitical spaces. In other words, colonization had not taken into account certain old political and cultural parameters to carry out this territorial division. Rather, it contributed to the political and societal disorganization of a system of suzerainty and vassalage between these pre-colonial peoples that had been in place for centuries. Many works illustrate this historical reality of this colonial tracing in the destabilization of traditional political entities and many inter-lamidale relations (Abdouraman Haliru, 2006: 140-142). The new African borders resulting from colonization between Kamerun and Nigeria have also upset the cultural and economic geopolitics of the local populations who lived in these spaces. These new borders have fragmented large cultural areas and scattered certain ethnic groups from their natural biotope to other cultural spaces which did not take into account certain parameters endogenous to the cultural and political history of this large geopolitical entity. For example, the pre-colonial Fulbe found themselves in the same spatio-cultural complex. However, with the new territorial delimitation imposed by the new colonial predators, they found themselves at the end of the colonial partition between German Cameroon, Nigeria and Chad. This reality is valid for all other peoples such as the Mambila, the Kanuri, the Isangélé, the Ejaghams, to name but a few. The consequences of this territorial redevelopment had strong scars in the political destiny of these different regions after independence, particularly with the question of national integration, land disputes, inter-tribal wars, etc. the Kanuri, the Isangélé, the Ejaghams, to name but a few. The consequences of this territorial redevelopment had strong scars in the political destiny of these different regions after independence, particularly with the question of national integration, land disputes, inter-tribal wars, etc. the Kanuri, the Isangélé, the Ejaghams, to name but a few. The consequences of this territorial redevelopment had strong scars in the political destiny of these different regions after independence, particularly with the question of national integration, land disputes, inter-tribal wars, etc.

Also, we can see that the border is a universal concept that is not foreign to African history. It has indeed played a strategic role in the multiple reconfigurations of human societies in Africa. The African vision of borders was not that of the Western model. Hence, the shock of the local populations settled in the borderlands between Kamerun and Nigeria at the time of colonization. This is the reason why, despite the efforts of the colonial administration to secure their various respective borders, Germany and Great Britain faced illegal immigration, smuggling, security problems, etc.

After the independence of Cameroon and Nigeria, this border was the subject of many sources of friction between the two countries, as was already the case between colonial administrators (English, Germans and French). However, the populations

located in these border peripheries have domesticated the border and made it a space where multiple activities and very dense networks of economic sociability are played out.

Domesticating the border despite security, geopolitical upheavals and nationalist tensions: the borderlands, a resource for transnational cultural communities between Cameroon and Nigeria

African borders are the subject of much controversy and lively debate in the international literature devoted to borders studies. They have a bad reputation as they are accused of being schizophrenic and murderous. This is due to the numerous rivalries that they generated between the States in the aftermath of their independence but also because of the numerous illicit activities which prospered in these spaces and consequently served as fertile ground for the emergence of criminal gangs, armed and terrorist organizations. The border between Cameroon and Nigeria is both repulsive and attractive. It appears as a concrete example where the populations bordering this border have always marked the distance in the face of the geopolitical tensions which have opposed their two countries for years. They also worked their imaginations to find alternative solutions in their fight for daily survival to circumvent the obstacles linked to insecurity on this border corridor in all its globality and complexity.

On the territorial margins between Cameroon and Nigeria: between geopolitical tensions, insecurities and illicit trafficking

Yesterday as today, History plays the same card again in the border areas between Cameroon and Nigeria. Issues of insecurity, illegal migration, land disputes and illicit trafficking are back on the agenda as was the case in pre-colonial times, during the colonial period up to the present day. Following the principle of the intangibility of borders adopted by the Organization of African Unity in 1964, the Member States of this institutional framework had decided not to modify their borders inherited from colonization, yet they bore many scars and indelible scars that did not fail to impact the dynamics of cooperation in these countries. In reality, the Cameroon-Nigerian border, 1728 km long and characterized by porosity carried within it the seeds of conflict and destabilization. Parameters such as the inaccuracies relating to the colonial course of the border, the armed incursions of Nigeria into Cameroonian territory and the issues of insecurity and illicit trafficking in these border areas have disrupted bilateral relations between Cameroon and Nigeria at the dawn of their independence.

For many years, the sound of boots and cannon shots have multiplied along this border following the expansionism of Nigeria in Cameroonian territorial waters; the dispute over the floating border islands as was the case of the island of Darak and the poor treatment of Nigerian nationals by the Cameroonian army in certain border areas such as the Bakassi peninsula. Without claiming to be exhaustive, we can mention the muscular incursion of the Nigerian army into the Cameroonian creeks of Abama, Isangele, Atabong, Bamuso during the Biafra conflict (1967-70) with a view to tracking down the Ibos whom she considered to be the troublemakers of this war³. This was still the case in 1983 and 1987 in the islands of Lake Chad and mainly in certain localities of Karakaya, Tchoukouféa and Niméri in the district of Hilé Halifa and villages such as

³NAB, Original file: TC 1968/4 Nigerian conflict, incursion of Nigerian soldiers and atrocities in Cameroon Town like Abana, Isangele, Atabang, Bamuso, also Ibos atrocities 1968-1970, West-Cameroon.

Farancia, Ndiguili I and II, Katikime, Darak I and II, Balgaram, Kafouram, Kassaoua Maria, Naga, Gore Saguir, Gore Kendi, T'chaika where the Cameroonian populations were attacked by the Nigerian army and the Cameroonian flag torn and burned⁴. In the same perspective, this border has been the subject of a historic dispute between Cameroon and Nigeria following the dispute over the Bakassi peninsula and certain islands in Lake Chad from 1993 to 2008. Fortunately, this border crisis between the two neighboring countries found a favorable outcome at the International Court of Justice.

It cannot be overlooked that the absence of a border policy on the side of the Cameroonian State in the border areas with Nigeria has inevitably generated illicit trafficking such as smuggling; insecurity and the rise of maritime piracy and the Boko-Haram phenomenon. Beyond all these nationalist tensions and these questions of insecurity that are tied to the Cameroonian-Nigerian border, we note that cross-border communities have always domesticated the border and made it a space of cross-cultural solidarity and anti -crisis.

The border areas between Cameroon and Nigeria: places of possibilities, resources and opportunities

By carefully scrutinizing the border peripheries between Cameroon and Nigeria, the dominant paradigm on African borders as delusional, schizophrenic and murderous zones is strongly nuanced. They make it possible to thwart received ideas about the border in order to apprehend it as spaces of possibilities, resources and opportunities. Faced with the weakening of their various states and the severe economic recession that prevailed in the 1980s following the imposition of structural adjustment programs, the border areas between Cameroon and Nigeria have been remodeled by becoming autonomous economically. Many transnational economic networks have settled and flows of goods and people have made this place, a large space of circulation and connected to the capitals of the world. It is a real laboratory of cosmopolitanism where merchants, traders, peasants, fishermen, missionaries, religious proselytes, criminals, weavers, the trafficker-retailer, smugglers, transporters, porters, farmers, tourists, terrorists, soldiers, young people, children, marabouts, etc. meet and clash. As in precolonial times, this geopolitical space replays the same geoeconomic cards between the different cross-border communities today. With the emergence of border markets in the northern part of Cameroon such as Sabon Gari, Limani, Banki, Amchidé, Gambaru, Kerawa to name but a few, commercial activity characterised by smuggling networks has intensified in these areas. Consequently, this border constitutes a strategic lever in the economic cooperation between Cameroon and Nigeria. The multipositionality of the transnational ethnic communities found along the border corridor between Cameroon and Nigeria is a historical fact that has always played a role in socialization, rapprochement despite the differentiating effect of the border and the geopolitical and security upheavals to which their submits this common border.

⁴Memory of the Republic of Cameroon introduced at the International Court of Justice, on the case of the land and maritime border between Cameroon and Nigeria in 1995

Conclusion

The idea that guided our questioning from the beginning of this study was to know: what lessons should we draw from the meditation of the experience of the confrontation between the two visions of the Western and African world on the Cameroon-Nigerian border in about the future on Africa? It is clear from this reflection that African borders had a history prior to those imposed during the colonial period. They were of geopolitical and geostrategic values. The philosophy of these borders was based on the cultural model and worldview of Africans. However, the Berlin Colonial Project held from November 1884 to February 1885 not only triggered the rush of voracious predators to the Dark Continent. The latter have broken up large cultural groups into small portions of territories and consequently imposed the representations and practices of the border according to the European model in the system of traditional African societies. This has aroused the frustration of people across the continent. They contested by fiercely opposing this new forced cultural baptism which was characterized by new lines, barriers and frontiers. Because they imposed on them demands, hassles and oddities that did not correspond to their daily anthropology. For traditional African societies, the border was a resource, an open space, a place of sharing, solidarity and tolerance. Despite the many geopolitical shifts and inter-state tensions between Cameroon and Nigeria over the border, the cross-border populations have overcome these various crises and by making the Cameroon-Nigeria dyad a space that does not exclude, separate or create social apartheid.

This boundary has remained an open space where many opportunities are offered to all social strata and different nationalities. A good border management policy in the various economic and regional communities would work for an exceptional renewal of economic growth and the free movement of individuals in the black continent as dreamed by the founding fathers of African unity.

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