

**THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF  
CONFLICT RESOLUTION: A CASE STUDY OF THE BAKASSI PENINSULA DISPUTE  
BETWEEN NIGERIA AND CAMEROON**

**BY**

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GODFREY OKOYE UNIVERSITY, ENUGU**

**JULY, 2026**



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**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS,  
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, GODFREY OKOYE UNIVERSITY, ENUGU  
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE  
DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (B.Sc) IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS.**

**SUPERVISOR: MR OKONKWO W. O.**

**JULY, 2026**



## DECLARATION

I hereby declare the project entitled **“The International Court of Justice and the Administration of Conflict Resolution: A Case Study of the Bakassi Peninsula Dispute Between Nigeria and Cameroon”** submitted by me to Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu state in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) in international relations is a record of bonafied project work carried out under the guidance and supervision of **Okonkwo, W O.**

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**Agu Emelda Chidimma**  
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## APPROVAL

This project has been examined and approved by the Department of International Relations, Godfrey Okoye University for the award of Bachelor of Science (B. Sc.) in International Relations.

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## DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to God Almighty for His providence, protection, wisdom, grace, provision, and guidelines. For always coming through for me with him I came, saw and conquered and my ever encouraging family.



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## ABSTRACT

*This study examined the role of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the administration of conflict resolution, using the Bakassi Peninsula dispute between Nigeria and Cameroon as a case study. Specifically, the study assessed the humanitarian and socio-economic impacts of the dispute and its resolution on the people of Bakassi and drew lessons and policy recommendations for the effective implementation of international judicial decisions in Africa. The study adopted a qualitative research design and employed the case study approach. Data were collected through documentary analysis from secondary sources, including International Court of Justice judgments, United Nations reports, government publications, books, journal articles, and other relevant scholarly materials. The data were analysed qualitatively through content and thematic analysis. The findings revealed that although the ICJ judgment provided a peaceful legal settlement to the territorial dispute, its implementation presented political, diplomatic, and humanitarian challenges. The transfer of the Bakassi Peninsula to Cameroon had significant socio-economic consequences for many residents, including displacement, livelihood disruption, citizenship concerns, and difficulties associated with resettlement. The study further found that the successful implementation of the judgment was made possible through diplomatic cooperation between Nigeria and Cameroon, supported by the mediation and supervision of the United Nations under the Green Tree Agreement. The study concludes that while international judicial institutions such as the ICJ remain important mechanisms for the peaceful settlement of interstate disputes, the effectiveness of their decisions depends largely on political commitment, international cooperation, and adequate protection of affected populations. The study recommends stronger implementation mechanisms for international judicial decisions, enhanced humanitarian support for affected communities, greater regional cooperation, and increased adherence to international law in the resolution of interstate disputes.*

**Keywords:** International Court of Justice, Conflict Resolution, Bakassi Peninsula, Nigeria, Cameroon, International Law, Green Tree Agreement.



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

Territory and resources' conflicts have continued to characterize interstate relationships in post-colonial Africa due to ambiguity in colonial territories demarcation and competition for resources in maritime and land (Otor, 2022). The International Court of Justice (ICJ), formed as the principal judicial organ of the United Nations by the United Nations Charter, offers a peaceful and legal platform where states settle their disputes according to international law (Amr, 2021). The Land and Maritime Boundary dispute between Cameroon and Nigeria is one of the most notable African cases to be settled in the ICJ through the judgment of 10 October 2002 concerning the oil-bearing region, Bakassi Peninsula. In the judgment, the court awarded sovereignty of Bakassi Peninsula to Cameroon as an attempt to settle a longstanding issue that had led to diplomatic rows and military confrontations between the two countries (Kabirou, 2024). To facilitate the process of withdrawal and other arrangements, both states entered into the Green Tree Agreement on 12 June 2006 under the United Nations supervision (Ibenekwu et al., 2022). Maintaining international peace and security has been one of the key purposes of the United Nations, and this has mainly been facilitated by various peaceful means of dispute settlement such as negotiations, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, and judicial settlement (Tuffuor *et al.*, 2024). This purpose has mainly been facilitated by peaceful settlement of disputes among states. Over the years, various means have been used in settling conflicts between states. Among the various methods of settling conflicts between states, judicial settlement through the International Court of Justice has emerged as one of the most authoritative methods



(Herbert, 2021). The ICJ was founded in 1945 under the UN Charter and started its work in 1946. The seat of the court is in The Hague, Netherlands. Being a principal judicial body of the United Nations, the court resolves legal disputes presented to it by sovereign states and gives advisory opinions on issues of international law referred to it by the authorized bodies and specialized agencies of the UN (Rosenne, 2023). Its decisions are binding on the parties concerned and make great contributions to international law.

The Bakassi Peninsula issue between Nigeria and Cameroon may be considered one of the examples where the ICJ played an important role in conflict management. The Bakassi Peninsula, situated in the Gulf of Guinea, is significant due to its fishing grounds and prospective oil fields (Onyendi & Obinna, 2024). The problem emerged due to colonial treaties, particularly, due to the Anglo-German treaty of 1913 that aimed to define the borders between British colony Nigeria and German colony Cameroon. After the liberation of both countries, Nigeria and Cameroon claimed the ownership to the territory and sometimes engaged into diplomatic and military confrontations, especially in the 1990s. The claim of Nigeria was based on its administration of the territory while Cameroon insisted only on historical treaties and the principle of *uti possidetis juris* that means preservation of colonial borders after liberation of a country (Chiatoh, 2019). Conflicts increased in the 1970s and 1980s when both countries fought for the control over the resources of the peninsula including natural resources, fishing zones and local administration (Akhare, 2023). It is worth noting that in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the tension between the two countries intensified to the point where military conflicts emerged in the disputed territory, causing casualties to be suffered by both parties and posing an increasing threat of all-out war between the neighbouring states. Besides being threatening for



regional stability in West and Central Africa, the escalation of the dispute presented an international problem for peace and security. Efforts made by the countries to resolve the conflict through bilateral negotiations were largely ineffective due to the persistence of the two parties in their positions (Powell & Wiegand, 2023).

In order to resolve the emerging crisis peacefully, Cameroon decided to submit a case to the ICJ in 1994. The submission of the case demonstrated Cameroon's desire to solve the dispute through the use of legal instruments, instead of resorting to military confrontation further. Nigeria attempted to question the Court's jurisdiction; however, afterwards, the country joined the procedure and engaged in the process. It became the moment when the ICJ took control over the resolution of the conflict. In the course of several years of arguing and studying the history of treaties and documents, the Court rendered its judgment on 10 October 2002, stating that the Bakassi Peninsula belonged to Cameroon. The judgment was mostly based on the validity of the 1913 Anglo-German Treaty (Orlow, 2025). Although initially the judgment caused certain controversy among Nigerian politicians, both countries complied with the decision of the Court. As a result, the peaceful transfer of authority over the area was organized and conducted in 2008 under the auspices of the United Nations, more specifically, the Cameroon/Nigeria Mixed Commission (Edoweku & Benin, 2024). Moreover, the signing of the Green Tree agreement in 2006 enabled further progress in this peaceful transition of power. It was thus a successful demonstration of the ability of the ICJ to be an effective tool of resolving international conflicts and avoiding warfare. The Bakassi Peninsula dispute thus offers a realistic basis on which to analyze the role of the International Court of Justice in the conflict resolution in Africa and other regions of the world. The analysis of this case would shed light not only on the advantages but also on the



limitations of using the existing instruments of international law in resolving disputes based on history, politics, and economics.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The existence of the International Court of Justice has not helped put an end to the ongoing territorial disputes that threaten international peace and security, especially in post-colonial countries characterized by uncertainty about boundaries and conflicting interests among the states involved. In 2002, the ICJ issued a binding decision about the dispute involving the Bakassi Peninsula in the Nigerian-Cameroonian border. However, the process revealed some difficulties such as state sovereignty problems, political pressure, and security problems (International Court of Justice, 2023). Also, it should be noted that the ICJ has no authority to implement its decisions, since the involvement in the process is completely voluntary for states. Besides, the process had some socio-political consequences for the people living in the area. Thus, this study is devoted to the problem of the efficiency of the ICJ in conflict management in the case of the Bakassi Peninsula dispute.

## **1.3 Aim and Objectives**

### **1.3.1 Aim:**

1. To examine the role of the International Court of Justice in the administration of conflict resolution, using the Bakassi Peninsula dispute as a case study.

### **1.3.2 Objectives:**

1. To assess the humanitarian and socio-economic impacts of the dispute and its resolution on local populations in Bakassi.
2. To examine the lessons from the Bakassi Peninsula dispute and propose policy recommendations for the effective implementation of international judicial decisions in Africa.

## **1.4 Research Questions**

1. How has the international court of justice decision impacted the socio-economic conditions and the lives of the citizens living in the Bakassi peninsula?
2. What measures were adopted by Nigeria and Cameroon in implementing the ICJ judgment and the Green Tree Agreement, and what role did the United Nations play in facilitating the implementation process?

## **1.5. Significance of the Study**

This research adds to existing literature on international dispute settlement by offering an analysis of the functions of the International Court of Justice through a legal, political, and humanitarian lens. Specifically, this study expands knowledge about the processes through which decisions of the ICJ are enforced and the potential problems that could occur. This work is important to the studies of international law and international relations because it offers an interesting case study of the Bakassi Peninsula dispute. It can be valuable to the people who are responsible for the resolution of boundary disputes as well as peacebuilding efforts, especially in the former colonial states. Finally, the results of this study can be important for international and regional organizations, including the United Nations and the African Union.

It shows some practical aspects of implementing decisions of the international court and the necessity of creating effective cooperation mechanisms.

## **1.6. Scope and Limitations of the Study**

The study is concerned with the International Court of Justice's involvement in the Bakassi Peninsula conflict involving the countries of Nigeria and Cameroon. It analyzes the 2002 verdict by the court, its execution process, and the involvement of



the relevant actors involved in the case. These include the Green Tree Agreement in 2006 and the involvement of the United Nations especially during the execution process from 2006 until the early 2010s. The scope of the study is confined to the legal, political, and institutional aspects of the issue and does not involve other instances before the ICJ or other international territorial disputes unless required for contextual purposes. The study is mainly based on secondary sources of data available from 2000 to 2025.

With regard to limitations, one of the major restrictions of this study lies in the inherent nature of the jurisdiction of the ICJ, which relies upon state consent and does not have any mechanism of enforcement since the process of compliance entirely depends upon political will and support from international organizations like the UN Security Council. Moreover, lack of primary data collection in the form of interviews of the affected people in the Bakassi area serves as another limitation of this study.

### 1.7 Definition of Key Terms

- **International Court of Justice (ICJ):** The highest judicial body of the United Nations, founded in 1945 by the UN Charter. The ICJ is tasked with resolving disputes submitted to it by member states under international law, and providing advisory opinions on legal matters referred to it by authorized UN bodies and specialized agencies. Its rulings are binding on the disputing parties.
- **Green Tree Agreement:** An agreement signed on 12 June 2006 between Nigeria and Cameroon under the auspices of the United Nations. It set out the terms for the implementation of the ICJ ruling in relation to the dispute



over the Bakassi Peninsula, including withdrawal procedures and measures to protect the people affected by it.

- **Sovereignty:** The supreme power of a state to govern itself and its own territories, without any outside interference.
- **Boundary Dispute:** Controversies between states involving the establishment, marking, ownership, or control of a border in international relations. These controversies arise due to vague colonial treaties, conflicting map interpretations, and historical claims.
- **Jurisdiction:** The power or right to decide legal cases in a court or body. In the case of the ICJ, the concept of jurisdiction is premised on the consent of states, which means the body can only handle matters that it is authorized to adjudicate by the consent of the parties.
- **Adjudication:** A legal process whereby disputes are formally resolved using a court or tribunals in which there is delivery of a legally binding decision on the basis of laws and facts presented in evidence.
- **Enforcement:** The act or process of ensuring that laws are obeyed. As far as the ICJ is concerned, the body has no powers to enforce judgments, which is left to voluntary compliance by states or even help by international institutions such as the United Nations Security Council.
- **Uti possidetis juris:** An international law principle that protects the existing administrative borders at the time of independence, making the border an international boundary.



## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF LITERATURES

#### 2.1 Overview of the Literature

The peaceful settlement of the international disputes is still one of the core objectives of the global legal regime (Rosenne, 2023). Traditionally, disputes among states led to military confrontations, territorial instability, and political tensions. To overcome these problems, the international community has adopted numerous institutional and legal measures that are intended to resolve such issues using peaceful methods such as adjudication and arbitration processes (Almakhzoumi & Alhunieti, 2024). The most important institution created for such purpose is the International Court of Justice. It is an essential judicial body of the United Nations and is responsible for the settlement of the legal disputes brought before it by states and for providing the advisory opinions on legal matters referred to the Court by authorized international organizations (Mardiah, 2023).

Academic literature on the International Court of Justice is diverse and includes different approaches to analyzing it, starting with the study of its legal power and institutional effectiveness and ending with political considerations of the Court's activity in the international system. For example, while some papers focus on its ability to contribute to enhancing the rule of law at the international level, others point out the weaknesses of this organization related to the absence of enforcement powers and reliance on the voluntary cooperation of states for obtaining the jurisdiction (Pavel, 2021). It is especially actual in the context of ongoing discussion about the effectiveness of international adjudication. The Bakassi Peninsula dispute between Nigeria and Cameroon is one of the disputes where the effectiveness of this process was discussed (Mawedi, 2020).

## 2.2 Conceptual Clarification

### 2.2.1 Meaning of International Conflict Resolution

International conflict resolution denotes the various processes used to manage and settle disputes between states peacefully without any violence. Unlike in domestic laws, the international system lacks an authoritative body with power to enforce its rules (Taulbee & Von Glahn, 2024, Akintayo *et al.*, 2024). The interaction of states in the international system is regulated using mutually agreed upon norms, procedures and institutions (Taulbee & Von Glahn, 2024, Akintayo *et al.*, 2024). Traditionally, the resolution of disputes among states was done diplomatically. Diplomacy is one of the oldest methods of peaceful conflict management. It allows for communication and negotiation of competing interests in order to arrive at mutually acceptable agreements. Diplomacy is however not enough when the issues involved are deeply entrenched into history or involve conflicting interpretations of the law (Berridge, 2022). With growing complexities in international relations in the nineteenth and twentieth century, new processes of dispute settlement evolved such as arbitration, mediation, conciliation and judicial settlement. Arbitration is the process where a dispute is submitted to an impartial panel whose decision is binding to the parties involved. An example of arbitration is the famous 1872 Alabama claims arbitration between the US and the UK that features prominently in international laws (Zhomartkyzy, 2023, Brent, 2022).

Mediation and conciliation are additional methods used in international conflict resolution. In mediation, a third neutral party helps to conduct negotiations and proposes solutions. On the other hand, conciliation entails an inquiry into the dispute



and submission of non-binding recommendations (Stipanowich, 2020). They are often used along with diplomacy in order to facilitate peaceful settlements. Of all the listed means of solving international disputes, judicial settlement is among the most essential in terms of international law. In this method, the disputing parties submit their case to international courts and tribunals which make decisions that are binding according to international law. Such procedures are conducive for clarifying legal issues, interpreting treaties and defining state rights and obligations thus contributing to the development of international relations. The creation of institutions for judicial settlement began with the formation of the Permanent Court of International Justice in 1922 under the auspices of the League of Nations. This court became the first permanent international judicial institution which decided disputes between states and rendered legal opinions in them. Despite the significant contribution made by this institution to international law, its activities were suspended by the Second World War and the dissolution of the League of Nations (Hofbauer, 2020).

The United Nations was formed in 1945 after the end of the war in order to ensure international peace and security. In such a context, the International Court of Justice was formed as the judicial branch of the UN and started functioning in 1946. In the course of its creation, the court has been provided with certain procedural and jurisdictional aspects that were characteristic of its predecessors. The ICJ is an important institution in the resolution of disputes peacefully between the states. This court operates on the basis of the state's consent; thus, it is able to take cases only in those cases when states agree to be under its jurisdiction. Consent may take place in the form of a special agreement, a clause in the treaty, or a declaration regarding compulsory jurisdiction (Amr, 2021). Researchers underline the fact that



there are two main functions performed by the ICJ. They are the provision of the impartial legal setting for the resolution of disputes and the contribution into the formation of international law (McWhinney, 2023).

However, there exist some limitations for the operation of international judicial bodies. The lack of power and inability to ensure enforcement distinguishes international courts from national courts. Hence, the effectivity of the decisions of the ICJ often depends on political considerations, diplomacy, and international reputation of states (Alter, 2021). However, the empirical research has shown that states usually follow the decisions of the court out of fear of losing their international reputation and desire to maintain good relationships in the international community. In such a way, the ICJ has proved its ability to resolve international disputes, for example, the case of the Bakassi Peninsula between Nigeria and Cameroon. It proves the possibility of finding legally based solutions to international disputes by means of international judicial institutions (Lebitsa *et al.*, 2026).

In general, the development of international conflict resolution can be considered as a transformation of diplomatic methods into the legal institutional approach.

### **2.2.2 Jurisdiction and Functions of the International Court of Justice**

The International Court of Justice was founded in 1945 through the UN Charter and is considered the main judicial body within the UN and the highest international court for dispute settlements between the countries. The main function of the ICJ is to judge the legal disputes that have been brought before it and to give opinions on legal questions that have been presented to it by some authorized UN bodies and specialized agencies. Through this, the Court ensures the peaceful settlement of the disputes and enhances the rule of law in international relations (Amr, 2021).

The ICJ's jurisdiction and functions are determined in the United Nations Charter and



the Statute of the International Court of Justice, which indicate the scope of its power. In this way, the Court not only helps to settle the disputes, but also helps in the further development of international law, ensuring the stability of international relations from the legal point of view (Lebitsa *et al.*, 2026).

There are two major kinds of jurisdiction used by the ICJ.

### **Contentious Jurisdiction**

Contentious jurisdiction means the Court's competence to judge disputes between states which agreed to its jurisdiction. Consent is one of the most fundamental rules of the ICJ activity, because it may judge cases only upon the agreement of all the parties (Vylegzhanin & Zinchenko, 2023). The cases which are brought to the Court's consideration within the scope of its contentious jurisdiction usually relate to territorial sovereignty, maritime boundaries, interpretation of treaties, state responsibility, and the right of using force (Franck & Fox, 2023).

An example of such dispute was the Bakassi Peninsula controversy (Cameroon v. Nigeria, 2002). Both states submitted themselves to the jurisdiction of the Court; thus, the Court could investigate the issue through considering the colonial treaties and other legal instruments connected with territorial sovereignty (Vylegzhanin & Zinchenko, 2023). As a result, the ICJ decided in favor of Cameroon and declared its sovereignty over the territory in question (Kabirou, 2024).

### **Advisory Jurisdiction**

Advisory jurisdiction is concerned with the legal powers of the Court to issue opinions with regard to matters relating to international law that have been referred to the Court by authorized organs and special agencies of the United Nations. In contrast to contentious cases, opinions on matters of advisory jurisdiction do not have any binding effect on states; but they have great legal weight and carry



considerable legal influence in international affairs (Stavridi, 2024). Advisory opinions help in understanding legal concepts of international law, directing the conduct of international organizations, and developing international law (Subandi *et al.*, 2025).

### **2.2.3 Evolution of International Judicial Institutions**

The history of international judiciary is defined by the rising necessity of the use of legal and institutional means in handling conflicts and disagreements between states in the international community. Indeed, traditionally, such disputes had been managed by diplomatic negotiations, alliances, and the employment of force by states. Yet, those methods were characterized by an evident instability and lack of predictability and could result in protracted conflicts and even wars. Thus, there was a necessity of having some stable and reliable institutions able to resolve such disputes through the means of legal reasoning (Jakobsen, 2019). One of the first institutions designed to handle international disputes was the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) created in 1899 at the Peace Conference in Hague. This institution allowed to establish a certain mechanism for settling disputes using the procedure of arbitration hearings, thus, introducing an entirely new approach to dealing with disputes in comparison to ad hoc diplomatic methods. Though this institution does not operate as a real court now, it paved the way for further developments (Siblesz, 2021).

The emergence of the International Court of Justice in 1945 through the United Nations Charter is one of the main achievements in the evolution of international law. In fact, the court was founded as a major judicial entity within the United Nations with competences to rule on conflicts between states and give advisory opinions on issues related to international law as posed by organs and specialized agencies



within the United Nations. The creation of the court was based on global consensus on the necessity to institutionalize international law as an essential tool in ensuring peace and fostering cooperation and avoiding conflicts (Amr, 2021). Over decades, the ICJ managed to develop its jurisprudence which contributed to interpretation and further development of international law. It is worth noting that the judgments made by the court emphasized such important principles as state sovereignty, territorial integrity, and peaceful settlement of disputes. One of the prominent examples can be the dispute about the Bakassi Peninsula which demonstrates the possibility to solve sovereignty disputes peacefully through international jurisdiction (Abdulyakeen, 2022).

The overall development of the international judiciary clearly highlights the transition from the use of coercion and unilateral actions in international dispute settlement to multilateral and legal mechanisms for handling disputes between nations. This development emphasizes the increasing role that law plays in ensuring peace and stability on the international stage, and thus minimizes armed conflicts (Abdulkarim & Musa, 2023).

## **2.3 Review of the Theme of Research Questions**

### **2.3.1. Provisions of the ICJ Ruling and Their Implications for Nigeria and Cameroon**

Theme: This theme highlights the major provisions of the ICJ judgment and the impacts that such rulings have on both Nigeria and Cameroon. From its judgments, the court ruled that sovereignty over the Bakassi Peninsula belongs to Cameroon due to colonial treaties and border agreements that were signed during the colonial era (Akhere, 2023). The Court ordered Nigeria to withdraw its troops, police, and administration from the territory of the peninsula. It was clear that Cameroon has



jurisdiction over the territory in question. The judgment also emphasized respect for the rights and welfare of people living in the area (Kabirou, 2024).

For Nigeria, the impact of the ruling has been huge because of the loss of control over the territory which is assumed to be rich in natural resources like oil and fishing. There have also been some political discussions in the country about the issue (Kpwa, 2022). Cameroon, on the other hand, had its territory confirmed with more control over the peninsula. At the diplomatic level, there has been improvement in relations between the two nations due to the judgment (Dimgba, 2025).

### **2.3.2.. Socio-Economic Impact of the ICJ Decision on the People of Bakassi**

This aspect of the study focuses on the effects of the ruling made by the International Court of Justice on the welfare of the people living in the Bakassi Peninsula. Even though the judgment did help in resolving the matter between the two nations, there were still some negative consequences that befell the people (Adenuga & Bamidele, 2025). The insecurity amongst the people of Bakassi towards the new regime was largely because of fear of discrimination, insecurity, and even identity crisis. There were others who had concerns regarding their citizenship and future.

For the fishing communities, it was a hard time as they depended on fishing for their survival. There were some individuals who had moved from one part of Nigeria to the other while there were those who decided to stay in the territory of Cameroon. This movement led to many problems such as lack of proper shelter, unemployment, and social facilities. This particular theme helps us understand how international laws affect the common man.

## **2.4 Theoretical Framework**

### **2.4.1 Liberal Institutionalism**



One of the most popular theories of international relations is liberal institutionalism, which focuses on the role of international institutions, laws and procedures of cooperation in directing and influencing the behavior of states. It opposes realism, which sees states as self-interested units striving to accumulate power and ensure survival in an anarchical international environment. Instead, liberal institutionalism states that even without the presence of any central world authority, states can cooperate provided that there are certain rules, norms, and institutions that make interaction and exchange possible (Johnson & Heiss, 2023). International organizations like UN, WTO, and ICJ become arenas for negotiations, monitoring, solving conflicts and enforcing agreements in order to make states honor their deals and solve any problems peacefully. They provide tools for minimizing the chances of conflicts through creating transparency and predictable behavior expectations, developing international norms and reducing uncertainties. Liberal institutionalism assumes that due to economic, political and security interdependencies states often find themselves interested in cooperating even if it contradicts their national interests (Saaida, 2024).

Moreover, the theory highlights the importance of international law not only as a means of regulating relationships but also as an element of stabilization of the international system. Various treaties, conventions, and customary international law offer a framework for rules that ensure cooperation and decrease the probability of the use of aggressive measures unilaterally (Schachter, 2024). Successful peaceful settlement of the conflict in the Bakassi Peninsula between Nigeria and Cameroon with the help of the International Court of Justice shows how international institutions and legal mechanisms can deal with the territorial dispute and prevent its escalation into war (Kabirou, 2024). In other words, according to the theory of Liberal



Institutionalism, the international system is not just a field of disorder where only power politics reigns but also where cooperation, international law, and institutions are important for ensuring peace and well-being. Thus, Liberal Institutionalism is an optimistic theory that views international relations from the perspective of possibilities of international cooperation (Johnson & Heiss, 2023).

#### **2.4.2 Normative Perspective on International Law**

According to the Normative Approach to International Law, international law is much more than just a set of guidelines or recommendations, and it is a comprehensive system of principles, rules, and standards that regulate the behavior of states and other subjects of international law. According to this approach, international law is not only prescriptive but also evaluative because it prescribes how states should behave in their interactions with each other and serves as an instrument of evaluating states' behavior according to the relevant legal, moral, and ethical standards (Klabbers, 2020). In other words, states are responsible not only to each other but also to the international community at large.

The key idea of the normative approach is that the legitimacy, sustainability, and efficacy of international law rely upon universal legal principles, international treaties, and customary international law which include the following norms:

- Sovereignty and sovereign equality of states, which means that the territory and political independence of each and every state must be respected;
- Non-intervention in domestic affairs of other states;
- Respect for human rights, implying protection of the dignity, freedom, and basic rights of each individual;
- Peaceful settlement of any disputes through negotiations, mediation, arbitration, and judicial procedure;



- Prohibition of the use of force, except for those cases that are justified by the UN Charter. (Schachter, 2024; Brunnée & Toope, 2018).

As a result, international law provides a set of common expectations, thus decreasing uncertainty, and contributing to predictability and stability. In addition, the rule-based system of international relations helps to settle conflicts on legal terms, and not by means of threats and coercion, resulting in greater orderliness and justice of the international community.

Furthermore, the normative approach pays great attention to the significant importance of international courts in interpretation and enforcement of international law norms. By rendering judgments and giving advisory opinions, international court, namely the International Court of Justice (ICJ), defines the legal obligations of states and the breaches of international law norms, thus increasing the influence of international legal norms. It is necessary to emphasize the judgment of the Court in the Land and Maritime Boundary between Cameroon and Nigeria (Cameroon v. Nigeria: Equatorial Guinea intervening) of 2002, when ICJ applied principles of treaty law and the territorial sovereignty in order to define the property of the Bakassi Peninsula (Adnan & Khairalla, 2025).

Moreover, the normative approach acknowledges the fact that international law is constantly developing and evolving in response to new global problems. Norms of international law continuously adjust themselves to the ever-changing nature of geopolitics, humanitarian needs, technological advancements, climate change, cyber war, terrorism, and pandemics. The emergence of concepts like the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and changes in the field of international environmental law indicate that international law is still able to address new problems, while being based on its normative essence (Shujaieh, 2026; Hansen-Magnusson & Vetterlein, 2022).



### 2.4.3 Realist Perspective on Judicial Institutions

The realist approach to international relations helps to better understand how international judicial institutions work and what their limitations are. In contrast to liberal institutionalism and the normative approach, Realism claims that the international system is anarchical and that there is no central authority to enforce international law (Dogan, 2025). Hence, states are driven not by legal and ethical obligations but by the need to maintain their power, security and national interest. Within this context, international judicial institutions like the International Court of Justice are not independent bodies enforcing international laws but institutions which efficiency depends on the cooperation.

According to Realism, the authority of international judicial institutions is limited by the issues of sovereignty, strategic interests and balance of power. Despite the fact that such institutions have the right to render judgments and advisory opinions, they have no independent mechanism of enforcing them. The compliance with the decisions of international institutions depends on the political will of sovereign states. If the ICJ decision contradicts the strategic, economic or security interests of the state in question, the latter can ignore it, postpone its implementation or implement only part of it (Lebitsa *et al.*, 2026). Legal norms are not enough to make states act according to the rules, as international politics is dominated by power relations.

From the perspective of Realism, international judicial institutions serve as tools of diplomacy and conflict management. These institutions are used by states to:

- Obtain legitimacy on the international stage for their territorial, political, and economic claims.
- Stall or shape negotiations while improving their negotiating position during

bilateral or multilateral disputes.

- Convey their seeming dedication to international law while retaining the freedom to advance their national interests.

Wherever judicial decisions have been carried out successfully, the Realists claim that such compliance is not necessarily due to the respect for international laws. Compliance is actually influenced by diplomatic pressures, geopolitics, economics, and national self-interest (Lebitsa *et al.*, 2026). In the case of Land and Maritime Boundary between Cameroon and Nigeria (Cameroon v. Nigeria: Equatorial Guinea intervening), where the ICJ ruled in 2002, the country finally complied with the decision of the Court. Nevertheless, according to the realists' view, Nigeria's compliance with the ruling had been more a result of international diplomatic pressures, security issues, and Nigeria's interest in maintaining its international reputation and stability in West Africa, rather than simply being legally bound (P Kwachuh, 2020).

Moreover, the Realists also note that international judicial institutions are more efficient when dealing with equally powerful countries because the threat of vulnerability encourages compliance. When there are serious power imbalances between countries, weaker ones use judicial institutions to make their claims, whereas the stronger parties resist, manipulate, or ignore these rulings depending on their strategic considerations (Väyrynen, 2023).

To conclude, the Realist Perspective explains the conditional and limited nature of the power held by the international legal systems. While organizations like the International Court of Justice have a crucial role to play in resolving conflicts and ensuring peace, they still rely on the interplay of law and politics in order to be able to achieve this goal effectively. Hence, the theory offers a useful rationale behind the

implementation or failure to implement certain international verdicts (Rossi, 2023).

## **2.5 Empirical Review**

The empirical review is a comprehensive assessment of the literature that has been done before about the problem under investigation. It allows researchers to get familiar with previous knowledge, methodology used by other researchers, their results, and possible gaps that can be filled by the current study. This section presents recent empirical literature regarding the role of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in conflict resolution with focus on the issue of the Bakassi Peninsula between Nigeria and Cameroon.

First of all, Kabirou (2024) considered the effectiveness of the Green Tree Agreement as a diplomacy tool in conflict resolution between Nigeria and Cameroon over the territory of the Bakassi Peninsula. Qualitative research design was applied to this study; also the author used documentary data in order to gather information. In conclusion, despite the fact that Green Tree Agreement helped a lot in preventing any further armed conflict, many questions remained open concerning citizenship, natural resource rights and well-being of displaced Bakassi Peninsula people. Thus, international agreements do not guarantee sustainable peace if there are no implementation mechanisms of it and adequate protection of people involved in the conflict. However, the role of the International Court of Justice in conflict resolution was considered quite superficially.

Secondly, Lloyd and Ebut (2018) analyzed legal and socio-economic consequences of the Green Tree Agreement after ICJ judgment. The authors used doctrinal legal research approach; they made an analysis of terms of the Agreement and its consequences for both parties – Nigeria and Cameroon. It appeared that although the Green Tree Agreement solved the problem of transferring of Bakassi Peninsula



territory from one party to another peacefully, it did not solve the problems of well-being, identification and economical rights of the indigenous population of the peninsula. However, the authors did not pay enough attention to wider implications of the ICJ participation in international conflict resolution.

In her study about the development of armed, both militant and non-state armed, groups before and after the resolution of the Bakassi conflict, Kpwa (2023) conducted qualitative case study research based on the documentary analysis method. It was found out that the discontent due to displacement, neglect, unemployment, and lack of post-conflict rehabilitation gave rise to militant groups in the region. The author made an assumption that conflict resolution is efficient only if it takes into account peacebuilding and socio-economic development. However, the study emphasized the security aspect and gave little attention to the judicial process preceding the resolution.

The study carried out by Ngalim (2019) focused on the perception of Bakassi residents in terms of the implementation of the Green Tree Agreement. In order to conduct qualitative research, the author used interviews, observations, and thematic analysis methods. As a result of the investigation, he/she found out that even though security situation had been improved with Cameroon's administration, people kept complaining about infrastructural development, environmental issues, and poor accessibility of government services. The researcher made a recommendation to invest more in infrastructure and community development in order to sustain peace in the peninsula. However, the research was focused only on community perceptions without assessing ICJ performance.

In his work, Abdulyakeen (2022) analyzed the factors determining Nigeria's compliance with the ICJ ruling and Green Tree Agreement in the Bakassi boundary



dispute. A qualitative research method and the documentary analysis were used for the study. The authors came to the conclusion that the compliance of Nigeria with ICJ's ruling was driven not only by legal but also by political interests. In other words, political interests have an impact on the state's compliance with international judicial rulings. However, the main emphasis of the research was on the behavior of Nigeria's compliance.

Nwogbaga, Akpan, Nnanyere and Onwa (2025) analyzed the effect of the ICJ decision on the relations between Nigeria and Cameroon from 2010 to 2020. Qualitative analysis of secondary data showed that the decision significantly enhanced diplomatic relations and decreased the probability of an armed confrontation between the two states. However, the authors also identified some persisting problems related to the protection of the rights of the residents of the region and the implementation of agreements made after the conflict. The study concluded that regional cooperation should be increased and the mechanism of the implementation of decisions made by international courts should be strengthened. Despite these important findings, socio-economic implications of the decision for communities involved were not analyzed in detail.

Based on the above analysis of empirical studies, it can be stated that the recent scholars mostly share the opinion that the International Court of Justice significantly contributed to the peaceful resolution of the dispute over the Bakassi Peninsula. Still, implementation of the decision has been raising several political, legal, humanitarian and socio-economic problems. Some scholars have already analyzed legal aspects, diplomatic relations, compliance with the Green Tree Agreement and post-conflict security. However, very few works have considered the problem from the holistic point of view, integrating all the mentioned aspects of the case. Therefore, the



current study will fill in the gap by examining the role of the International Court of Justice in conflict resolution administration.

## **2.6 Gaps in Existing Literature**

Despite recent research that has helped immensely in comprehending the role of ICJ in settling the Bakassi Peninsula dispute, there still exist some major areas that need more research. Even though researchers have considered legal, political, diplomatic, and humanitarian perspectives on the Bakassi Peninsula dispute, yet there exist some areas that need more empirical evidence. Thus identification of such gaps helps justify this research effort.

### **2.6.1 Limited Integration of Legal and Humanitarian Perspectives**

The majority of the recent scholarly studies have mostly focused on either the legal or humanitarian implications of the ICJ judgment. For example, Lloyd and (2018) have considered the legal implication of the Green Tree Agreement while Ngalim (2019) has paid more attention to the experiences of affected community members following the transfer of Bakassi. Fewer studies have attempted to bring together legal and humanitarian approaches in a bid to get an all-encompassing evaluation of the involvement of the Court in conflict resolution.

### **2.6.2 Insufficient Attention to the Management of Conflict Resolution**

Most of the current scholarly literature views the ICJ judgment in terms of legality but not as a means of administering conflict resolution. While Abdulyakeen (2022) focuses on Nigeria's compliance with the judgment, Nwogbaga *et al.* (2025) evaluate its impact on bilateral relations, insufficient attention has been paid to the contribution of the Court's intervention towards the management of the peace between the two states.

### **2.6.3 Inadequate Examination of Socio-Economic Implication**

Some researchers have recognized the displacement and economic suffering experienced by the Bakassi inhabitants following the implementation of the judgment. Nevertheless, fewer studies have tried to give a comprehensive analysis of the socio-economic impacts of the transfer.

#### **2.6.4 Lack of Analysis of Implementation of the Judgment**

It is observed that many of the existing studies stop their analysis at the ICJ judgment stage or the conclusion of the Green Tree Agreement without paying sufficient attention to the implementation of the agreement. As a result, there is very little empirical data regarding the implementation problems faced, diplomatic negotiations, and compliance mechanism employed by both the states.

#### **2.6.5 Limited Comparative and Policy-Oriented Studies**

However, there is very limited academic discussion about how to compare the Bakassi dispute with other international conflicts where the International Court of Justice has delivered its judgments. This type of comparative research would be helpful to learn lessons from the judicial conflict resolution, state compliance with the international court judgment, and post-conflict peace-building process.

#### **2.6.6 A Need for a Holistic Assessment**

Previous literature on the Bakassi Peninsula dispute does not consider all aspects of the dispute. The previous literature has analyzed either legal aspects, diplomatic relations, state compliance, or humanitarian issues of the dispute. Very few studies exist that use multidisciplinary approach in analyzing Bakassi Peninsula dispute. This type of analysis will help understand the role of the International Court of Justice in the administration of conflict resolution in a better way.

The empirical literature reveals that the International Court of Justice has played a vital role in resolving the dispute over the Bakassi Peninsula peacefully. Nevertheless,

many issues related to the administration of conflict resolution, implementation of the decision made by the International Court of Justice, socio-economic consequences of the dispute and the integration of legal and humanitarian perspectives still remain to be researched. The present research attempts to fill these research gaps by adopting a multidisciplinary approach to the role of the International Court of Justice in the administration of conflict resolution. The Bakassi Peninsula dispute will be considered as a case study.



## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Theoretical Framework

Both Liberal Institutionalism and Realism are chosen as theoretical frameworks of the present study owing to their relevance to the Bakassi Peninsula dispute between Nigeria and Cameroon and the role of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in its resolution. It should be noted that the dispute entailed the following aspects: territorial sovereignty, national interest, international law, diplomacy, and conflict resolution. In view of the fact that there is no one single theory capable of explaining all the above-stated aspects of the dispute, both frameworks will be used in the study.

##### 3.1.1 Liberal Institutionalism

Liberal Institutionalism focuses on international cooperation and the role of international institutions aimed at maintaining peace and stability. The proponents of this theory claim that despite the differences in political regimes and national interests, states can engage in cooperation when there are international laws, rules, and institutions guiding them. According to this theory, the United Nations (UN) and the ICJ are such organizations that provide peaceful dispute resolutions through negotiation, mediation, arbitration, and judicial settlement. These institutions promote dialogue and enhance diplomacy and prevent the outbreak of the armed conflict.

Thus, the Bakassi Peninsula dispute is an example of Liberal Institutionalism. Instead of the lengthy military conflict, Nigeria and Cameroon agreed to resolve the dispute with the help of ICJ judicially. Afterwards, the United Nations mediated the dispute implementation, and the Green Tree Agreement showed how international



cooperation contributed to the peaceful conflict resolution. Therefore, the theory of Liberal Institutionalism is important for the study in question.

### **3.1.2 Realism**

Another perspective that could be useful in the analysis of the Bakassi Peninsula dispute is Realism. As opposed to Liberal Institutionalism which emphasizes the cooperation, Realism considers international politics as a power game and international relations as power, security and national interest relations in an international anarchic system. It argues that states seek to protect their sovereignty, territorial integrity, economic resources and security. Therefore, conflicts emerge as a result of competition among states for important territories or natural resources.

In this case, the Bakassi Peninsula is of particular importance to both Nigeria and Cameroon due to its significant strategic and economic value related to its oil and gas resources and rich fishery in the Gulf of Guinea. Realism also helps to understand the political opposition to the decision of the ICJ. Even though Nigeria has eventually accepted the judgement of the court, many Nigerians and political figures have opposed it as they saw it as a violation of their national interests including the loss of their territory and economic resources.

### **3.1.3 Relevance of the Theories to the Study**

A combination of both theories of Liberal Institutionalism and Realism is appropriate to analyse the case under discussion. Liberal Institutionalism reveals the process of international cooperation and legal institution work in the resolution of the conflict, while Realism shows the struggle for control of important resources and territory.

Both theories help to identify the causes of the dispute, the role of ICJ in its resolution and the problems associated with the implementation of the decision made by the Court. They also help to assess the successes and shortcomings of

international institutions in managing conflicts resolution.

### **3.2 Research Hypotheses and Variables**

The hypotheses for the proposed study are generated depending on the research objectives and research questions outlined in Chapter One. Every hypothesis involves a null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ), an alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ), and the independent and dependent variables associated with each hypothesis.

#### **3.2.1 The Significance of International Court of Justice in Solving Disputes Among States**

This hypothesis tests the significance of International Court of Justice (ICJ) in solving disputes among states peacefully.

**Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ):** International Court of Justice does not play a significant role in solving disputes among states.

**Alternative Hypothesis ( $H_1$ ):** International Court of Justice plays a significant role in solving disputes among states.

**Independent Variable:** Activities, judicial intervention, and processes of International Court of Justice.

**Dependent Variable:** Peaceful resolution of disputes and conflicts among states.

#### **3.2.3 The Socio-Economic Implications of the Decision of ICJ to the People of Bakassi**

This hypothesis investigates socio-economic implications of the decision of the International Court of Justice to the people of Bakassi Peninsula.

**Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ):** The decision of ICJ did not have any significant impact on the socio-economic status of the people living in the Bakassi Peninsula.

**Alternative Hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>):** The decision of ICJ had a significant impact on the socio-economic status of the people living in the Bakassi Peninsula.

**Independent Variable:** The decision of the International Court of Justice regarding Bakassi Peninsula.

**Dependent Variable:** Socio-economic status of the people of Bakassi.

### **3.3 Research Design**

The research design adopted in this paper is that of qualitative research. In contrast to quantitative research design, qualitative research design does not involve measuring social, legal or political phenomenon in numeric form but only involves interpretation and understanding of such phenomena. As compared to quantitative research design which is based on statistics, qualitative research design helps the researcher to observe the issue in its natural setting and offer in-depth description of the issues involved, events, policies and procedures. The use of qualitative research design in this research is appropriate as the study focuses on the role of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the administration of conflict resolution and more particularly relates to the dispute over Bakassi Peninsula between Nigeria and Cameroon. The study is related to legal principle, historical development, diplomacy and international court decisions, which need description and analysis instead of statistical measure.

The case study approach is used in the research design in order to analyze the dispute over Bakassi Peninsula between Nigeria and Cameroon. Case study approach in research design involves an in-depth observation of the phenomenon in real-life situation. In case of this study, the use of case study approach helps the researcher in tracing the history of the dispute, analyzing the judgment delivered by ICJ and its implementation, and the roles played by the government of Nigeria and



Cameroon, the United Nations and others.

### **3.4 Method of Data Collection**

The data collection technique chosen for this research work is documentary analysis. Documentary analysis is a type of qualitative research technique which entails the identification, selection, examination, and interpretation of available documents related to the problem being researched. This method is ideal for research work related to legal, historical, and political issues. As opposed to research works which employ the use of primary data from questionnaires and interviews, this research uses secondary data drawn from credible documentary sources. They include judgments and advisory opinions of the International Court of Justice, treaties, agreements, United Nations reports, government documents from Nigeria and Cameroon, scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, conference papers, and any other relevant academic literature.

Relevant documents gotten from credible online sources are included in the research where necessary. The documents were chosen based on their relevance, credibility, and authenticity, as well as their contribution to the objectives of the research work. The reason for the choice of documentary analysis in this research is that the information needed in this research is already available in written document format. Using this research technique allows the researcher to analyze the legal decisions, historical documents, and scholarly opinions objectively by comparing the information from different sources. This makes the findings more credible and reliable.

Therefore, documentary analysis serves as a reliable basis for this research since it makes sure that the findings of the research are based on credible academic sources of information..



### 3.5 Method of Data Analysis

The data used in the study were subjected to the qualitative approach to data analysis that is suitable for legal, historical and political studies. In contrast to the quantitative analysis that uses numbers and statistics in its operations, qualitative data analysis involves interpretation and critical assessment of the documentary sources in order to derive meaningful conclusions.

There was an extensive analysis of the relevant documentation in the form of decisions made by the International Court of Justice (ICJ), international agreements and treaties, UN reports, government publications, scholarly books and peer reviewed journal articles among others. This process involved the content analysis approach in which the information derived from such documentary sources was systematically analyzed and categorized under the main themes consistent with the objectives of the study. Some of the themes that will be examined include the role of ICJ in conflict resolution, implementation of the Court's decision, socio-economic impact of the decision and the role of United Nations in peaceful implementation.

Moreover, the study used the comparative and interpretative approaches to compare various scholarly positions on the topic, highlight their areas of consensus and conflict and establish the link between the legal perspectives and conflict resolution practices. This facilitated the drawing of logical conclusions about the effectiveness and inefficiencies of the International Court of Justice in conflict resolution administration.

### 3.6 Logical Data Framework

| Research Question One | Dependent Variable | Independent Variable | Empirical Indicators | Method of Data Collection | Sources of Data | Method of Data Analysis |
|-----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
|-----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|



|                                                                                                                                                |                                                                         |                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| What are the humanitarian and socio-economic impacts of the Bakassi dispute and its resolution on the local community?                         | Humanitarian and socio-economic state of the people of Bakassi.         | The Bakassi Peninsula dispute and the implementation of the ICJ judgement. | The indicators that were used to evaluate this variable are:<br>Forced migration of people<br>Lack of means of existence and fishing<br>Social facilities<br>Issues related to citizenship and identity<br>Economic difficulties and unemployment                                          | The data were obtained by analyzing humanitarian reports, government papers, academic periodicals, books, newspaper reports, and documents of international organizations devoted to the Bakassi Peninsula dispute. | International Court of Justice (ICJ) documents<br>The UN reports<br>Nigerian and Cameroonian government documents<br>Books and articles of academic literature<br>Newspapers and humanitarian reports | The gathered data was qualitatively analyzed using content analysis and thematic interpretation of documentary sources concerning the humanitarian and socio-economic impacts of the dispute. |
| What lessons can be learned from the Bakassi Peninsula dispute for the effective implementation of international judicial decisions in Africa? | Effective implementation of international judicial decisions in Africa. | Implementation of the ICJ judgment in the Bakassi Peninsula dispute.       | Compliance with ICJ judgments<br>Diplomatic cooperation of the states<br>The role of the United Nations and other international organizations<br>Protection of affected populations<br>Peaceful implementation of judicial decisions<br>Development of international judicial institutions | The data was gathered through the documentary analysis of ICJ judgments, Green Tree Agreement, UN reports, governmental publications, books, journal articles and other academic sources.                           | ICJ judgments<br>United Nations publications<br>Green Tree Agreement<br>Governmental documents<br>Academic journals and textbooks<br>Publications on international law                                | The data was analyzed qualitatively by means of content analysis.                                                                                                                             |

## CHAPTER FOUR

### ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the analysis and results of the research on the ICJ involvement in conflict resolution administration with respect to the Bakassi Peninsula dispute case between Nigeria and Cameroon. The analysis is based on the documentation from ICJ judgments, UN reports, the Green Tree agreement, official government documents, academic books, and scholarly journal articles. The focus of

this chapter is on analyzing the humanitarian and socio-economic impact of the dispute and its resolution on the populations of the Bakassi region and making conclusions and policy recommendations based on the lessons learned.

#### **4.2 Assessment of the Humanitarian and Socio-Economic Impact of the Dispute and its Resolution on Local Populations in Bakassi**

The controversy concerning the Bakassi Peninsula between Nigeria and Cameroon is considered to have been one of Africa's most critical territorial disputes till it was decided by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in 2002. ICJ found that sovereignty over the territory should be transferred to Cameroon on the basis of the Anglo-German Treaty of 1913 and other provisions of international law. Although the judgment offered a peaceful solution to the controversy, its enforcement by the Green Tree Agreement of 2006 has had considerable humanitarian and socio-economic implications for the peninsula inhabitants.

One of the most urgent consequences of the enforcement of the judgment has been the population displacement of the affected persons. While some of the inhabitants preferred staying under Cameroonian control, others were forced to move to other regions of Nigeria due to the issues of citizenship, safety, and possible future employment opportunities. The relocation procedure involved exposure of numerous affected people to such conditions as insufficient housing, unemployment, healthcare, education, and lack of social services.

Transfer of authority affected the economy of locals as fishing, which was the major occupation for the majority of residents, became limited by the restrictions in accessing usual fishing spots according to new administrative procedures. Besides, many traders witnessed reduced economic activity, which led to decreased family incomes and higher poverty levels.



Moreover, the lack of certainty concerning citizenship and legality of one's existence was the other major effect. Nigerians who stayed on the territory of the peninsula raised issues related to property rights, freedom of movement, political representation, and public services. Although the Green Tree Agreement provided some measures in order to ensure safety and security of rights and property of affected citizens, there were still implementation problems, even with involvement of both governments and UN.

It should be mentioned that the research showed that the ICJ successfully settled the territorial dispute using judicial measures; however, just decisions of courts cannot deal with humanitarian aspects of the issue of transfer of territories. The effective implementation can only be guaranteed by the complementary policy including humanitarian, socio-economic rehabilitation, and proper protection of affected people.

### **Findings**

The findings prove that the process of implementing the ICJ decision had some humanitarian and socio-economic effects for the population of Bakassi. The main effects included displacement of people, disruption of fishing and trading activities, loss of employment, uncertainties about citizenship, and problems with resettlement. The Green Tree Agreement and UN assistance helped to ensure the peaceful transition; however, more actions were needed to improve the wellbeing of affected citizens.

## **4.3 Lessons and Policy Recommendations for the Effective Implementation of International Judicial Decisions in Africa**



The Bakassi Peninsula conflict provides many lessons to the management of conflict resolution by means of international judicial processes. First of all, it is necessary to note that interstate conflicts can be peacefully settled using international judicial mechanisms if there is political commitment of the states concerned to the international rule of law.

Secondly, it becomes clear from the study that only judicial decisions are not enough to ensure a successful conflict resolution process. The implementation of the decision of the ICJ was greatly dependent on continued diplomatic negotiations between Nigeria and Cameroon, accompanied by mediation and supervision of the United Nations through the Cameroon–Nigeria Mixed Commission and Green Tree Agreement.

It is important to emphasize that during the implementation of judicial decisions, special attention should be paid to ensuring the safety of people involved in conflict situations. The experience of the conflict in the Bakassi Peninsula proves that territorial settlements may lead to humanitarian and socio-economic problems that should be solved by providing suitable resettlement, social assistance and economic aid to the affected population.

It is obvious from the research that compliance with the international judicial decisions leads to peace and political stability within the region and strengthens the international law. The willingness of Nigeria to accept the decision of the ICJ, despite numerous disagreements within the country, has prevented any further armed conflict between the two states.

### **Policy Recommendations**

On the basis of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are hereby made:



1. Governments that are part of interstate territorial disputes should focus on the resolution of the disputes peacefully through international judicial institutions instead of resorting to military engagements.
2. States need to show more commitment in obeying decisions of the International Court of Justice in an effort to ensure international peace and security.
3. The United Nations, African Union, and other regional bodies should play larger roles in monitoring the implementation of international judicial decisions.
4. Governments should put in place humanitarian, rehabilitation, and resettlement programs for people affected by interstate territorial disputes.
5. Programs aimed at educating the general public on international law and peaceful conflict resolution need to be increased.
6. Human rights, citizenship rights, and socio-economic welfare of the affected populations should receive more consideration in future international judicial settlements.

#### **4.4 Findings Summary**

The study has revealed that even though the decision of the International Court of Justice was able to resolve the issue of the Bakassi Peninsula dispute peacefully, it brought humanitarian and socio-economic problems to the local community as a result of its implementation. Some of these problems included displacement, disruption of livelihoods, uncertainties about citizenship, and resettlements.

Also, the study revealed that the successful implementation of the decision of the International Court of Justice was made possible as a result of cooperation between the two countries that was facilitated by the United Nations through the Green Tree



Agreement. The study further revealed that the implementation of international judicial decisions can only be effective through political commitment, cooperation from the international community, and the protection of the affected populations. Conclusively, international judicial institutions like the International Court of Justice continue to remain important tools in the peaceful resolution of interstate disputes.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights the findings of the study on the impact of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the administration of conflict resolution, with specific focus on the Bakassi Peninsula case involving Nigeria and Cameroon. In particular, the research examined the humanitarian and socio-economic effects of the dispute and its solution to the people of Bakassi and the lessons learned and policy recommendations for the effective application of international court rulings in Africa. This chapter ends with future research areas.

#### 5.2 Summary of Findings

The major findings of this study include the following:

##### 1. Humanitarian and Socio-economic Effects of the Bakassi Dispute

It was established that despite the success of the ICJ ruling in solving the territorial dispute between Nigeria and Cameroon using legal means, there were several humanitarian and socio economic effects on the people of Bakassi Peninsula because of the resolution of this dispute. For instance, the inhabitants of this area faced issues like displacement, uncertainty of nationality, disruption of fishing and trading, loss of means of survival, among others.

##### 2. Lessons for the Effective Application of International Judicial Rulings

In addition, it is evident from this research that the successful implementation of the ICJ ruling has been achieved through collaboration between Nigeria and Cameroon, the signing of Green Tree Agreement and mediation of the United Nations in this process. The lesson from this case is that effective implementation of international judicial decisions requires political commitment, observance of international law,

international cooperation, proper institutional capacity, and the protection of affected population during implementation.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

In light of the above findings, it is concluded that implementation of international judicial decisions goes beyond mere issuance of verdicts. In the case of the Bakassi Peninsula dispute, it has been shown that although international judicial decisions may offer a peaceful means of solving territorial disputes among states, there is likelihood of serious humanitarian, socioeconomic, and political ramifications in the process of their implementation, which should be carefully managed. It has also been concluded in the study that the implementation of international judicial decisions is dependent on the goodwill of the state to accept the ruling, diplomacy, and cooperation from international organizations such as the United Nations. The Green Tree agreement as well as the intervention by the United Nations were key in the peaceful implementation of the decision on the Bakassi Peninsula. In addition, the study shows that the rights of the affected populace have not received due consideration in the implementation of the decision. Concerns like displacement, deprivation of livelihoods, confusion on nationality, and lack of adequate resettlement facilities are some of the factors that should be incorporated in international judicial decisions.

In general, it is concluded that for proper implementation of international judicial decisions, there is need for political goodwill, international cooperation, and appropriate humanitarian concerns.

### **5.4 Recommendations**

According to the results and conclusions of the study, the following



recommendations are provided:

1. Governments need to ensure that the well-being of populations affected by the implementation of international judicial decisions is taken care of. This can be done through appropriate resettlement, rehabilitation, compensation and sustainable livelihood programmes.
2. States need to ensure that they are more committed to comply with the decisions made in the International Court of Justice. This will enhance rule of law, peaceful settlement of disputes and regional stability.
3. The governments need to enhance their diplomatic cooperation and dialogue for the implementation of international judicial decisions to avoid political tensions and peaceful compliance.
4. The international organizations like the UN and AU need to enhance their roles in ensuring that there is proper monitoring, supervision and implementation of international judicial decisions through mediation, technical assistance and peace building efforts.
5. Proper financial, technical and administrative assistance needs to be provided to facilitate the implementation process to help in minimizing any humanitarian and socio-economic challenges of the process.
6. The African states need to continue resolving disputes through international courts rather than engaging in military confrontation and unilateral actions.
7. There needs to be further research on the humanitarian, socio-economic and political impacts of international judicial decisions.

### **5.5 Policy Implications**

In conclusion, the results of this research carry significant implications for governments, international organizations, and other stakeholders engaged in



international conflict management.

In the first place, governments need to enhance their policies in regard to promoting compliance with international judicial decisions and the use of diplomacy as the preferred means of peacefully settling interstate disputes.

Secondly, international organizations, notably the United Nations and the African Union, need to develop institutional structures to facilitate the implementation of international judicial decisions through mediation, capacity building, monitoring and peacebuilding after making a decision.

Thirdly, governments have to design policies which would ensure the adequate protection of the people affected by territorial disputes through the establishment of proper resettlement programs, livelihood support, provision of social services and legal protection during the whole process of implementation.

Finally, closer cooperation between governments, international organizations and civil society organizations can help with peaceful implementation of judicial decisions and protection of vulnerable groups.

Thus, the research shows that for an international judicial decision to be effective it is necessary to have both adequate legal judgment and proper implementation policy.

## **5.6 Limitations of the Study and Future Research Directions**

As is the case with all academic researches, this study also has some limitations that need to be mentioned. Firstly, the study focused on the international territory dispute between Nigeria and Cameroon at the Bakassi Peninsula. Hence, the results obtained might not be applicable to the analysis of other international territorial disputes in different geographic, legal, and political conditions.

Secondly, in the current research, secondary sources of data were mostly used. The



secondary sources include books, scientific journal articles, documents of ICJ, United Nations, government reports and other documents. Even though the credibility of these sources cannot be questioned, the absence of primary data did not allow the researcher to collect first-hand information from the policymakers, diplomats, lawyers, and members of the affected communities. Despite these limitations, the research makes important contributions to the existing body of literature on the implementation of international dispute settlement mechanisms and their humanitarian and socio-economic implications.

The future studies should analyze the process of the implementation of International Court of Justice decisions in other interstate disputes within the African continent and internationally. This would help in conducting comparative research and obtaining better understanding of the efficiency of international courts in the context of international disputes' resolution.

Moreover, future researchers should conduct analysis of the practical challenges associated with the implementation of international court judgments. In particular, attention needs to be paid to the role of governments, regional and international organizations, as well as non-governmental organizations in ensuring compliance with international judicial decisions. Finally, the use of primary data in future research would provide insight into the long-term humanitarian, socio-economic and political impact of international judicial decisions on the affected community.



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