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Trade Difficulties between Cameroon and Nigeria Since 1960

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Abstract:

Since 1960, trade between Cameroon and Nigeria has faced many difficulties that have seriously impacted its smooth development. And yet the latter, despite its imbalance in favour of Nigeria, constitutes a real social safety valve towards supply and employment issues, and as such has generated a real craze in local populations given significant benefits generated. Yet, these States do not sufficiently benefit from these transactions, which unfortunately are still below their strengths and potentials.

This article has as objective to analyse key factors of trade between both countries since independence in a bid to understand reasons for its weak development, the reign of informality and smuggling that characterises it.

Keywords: Trade, commerce, Cameroon, Nigeria, Weakness

1. Introduction

With a panoramic view on realities of trade between Cameroon and Nigeria, as well as on available statistics, many observations can be drawn. Not only is trade imbalance in favour of Nigeria, which trades more products than Cameroon, but it is also weak in general and far below their strength and potentials. Whereas, the Bakassi Affair which for a long time has hampered the smooth running of business, was definitively resolved in 2012. Particularly with the end of the special transitional period on the peninsula, which confirmed it as belonging to Cameroon. However, since then, the common will by both governments to normalise their relationships, boost and intensify trade, reflected by the renewal of the trade agreement of 11 April 2014, is slow in producing results. Worse, atrocities of the Islamist sect Boko Haram undermined efforts undertaken by worsening the security issue, which was already quite perceptible. This raises concerns about real factors that affect this trade. In other words, what are the main causes of the low trade level between Cameroon and Nigeria? In an attempt to provide some solutions to this question, this article seeks to examine the effectiveness of legal instruments, the security issue, persistent tensions between both States, infrastructure problems and the influence of developed countries.

2. Weakness of Legal Instruments

One of the major weaknesses of trade between Cameroon and Nigeria not only lies in legal instruments but also in shortcomings of the State which, for various reasons, does not fully play its part.

2.1. Ignorance of National Laws and Bilateral Agreements

2.1.1. Entry, Residence and Leaving Conditions of Foreigners in Cameroon

In Cameroon, entry, residence and leaving conditions of foreigners are codified by Decree No. 90/1246 of 24 of August 1990. According to this law, which distinguishes between two categories of foreigners, namely residents and non-residents, entry into Cameroon is subject to the issue of a visa by the diplomatic or consular representations of Cameroon. However, there are possibilities for non-resident foreigners to move to the status of resident. Thus, irrespective of entry conditions of a migrant, natural or legal persons may apply to be issued a residence permit as a means of regularisation. If persons concerned refuse to comply, they shall be charged repatriation costs.

If requirements outlined here relate to non-residents, it should be noted that there are other categories of foreign residents who are involved in various activities. They include technicians, businessmen, members of liberal professions, clerics, non-diplomatic staff of embassies and international organisations, also family members of expatriates. The vast majority of Nigerian migrants in Cameroon are self-employed businessmen settled as industrialists, traders, craftsmen, members of liberal professions and family members of expatriates.

All these resident foreigners must hold a residence permit. Its validity depends on statutes. It is five years for persons who have resided in Cameroon for less than ten years and ten years for missionaries and residents who have resided in Cameroon for at least ten years, as well as for spouses of Cameroonians and holders of permanent residence permits.

For most of the migrants interviewed, the issue of residence permits is extremely sensitive. Many of them are reluctant to discuss it, because they are aware of their illegal residence in Cameroon. Since it is expensive and coercive, the

latter do not see its usefulness and brandish the argument of discrimination against them, refusing all the same any comparison with other African countries where the same document is three to four times more expensive.¹

However, it must be acknowledged that the complaints are very much grounded. Indeed, the price of this precious document has evolved over the years. Introduced for the first time in 1971 by the Ahidjo regime, the first residence permit cost XAF10,000 francs. In 1980, the introduction of the second residence permit witnessed an increase of XAF 10,000 francs and people without any permit had to pay XAF 20,000 francs to have their situation regularised.

In 1987, it cost XAF 40,000 francs, excluding the trade licence or the farmer's certificate, which cost between XAF 15,000 and 20,000 francs.² In 1993, the residence permit was increased to XAF 276,750 francs.³ Given this amount, one can say that the introduction of this fourth residence permit increased everything as compared to the three previous ones which were still modest. At this point, Nigerian migrants' complaint is grounded. Since conditions of their acceptance in Cameroon have improved over the years.

Before European imperialism, Cameroonians and Nigerians had no restrictions on their movements and trade. The advent of colonisation launched a new era in the restriction of their movement and introduced customs duties in various zones of influence (English, German and French).

If these new measures were reinforced with the advent of independence for all these people, it must be acknowledged that in Cameroon, the residence of Nigerians was still free of charge until 1971, when the first residence permit was introduced. Since then, the amount of money required for this precious document has increased steadily. Nigerian migrants consider this a discrimination policy, a 'scapegoat' strategy. For, it is worth noting that the increase in the last residence permit (in 1993) corresponds to a period of rising bilateral tensions between Cameroon and Nigeria. These two events, along with effects of the economic crisis, made the presence of Nigerians in Cameroon difficult and very questionable. This is the reason for the discontent of Nigerians and the unsuccessful plea of their Consulate in Buea for a more flexible regime with regard to the requirement of a residence permit for Nigerians settled in Cameroon before 1960.⁴ Even if the idea of 'scapegoat', i.e. blaming the crisis and economic recession on Nigerians, were to be valid, it would only be tantamount to a similar situation already observed in Nigeria and which led to massive expulsions in 1983.

On the other hand, the idea of the crisis should not be dismissed, because Cameroon spared no effort to replenish its 'empty coffers' since in 1993, the amount of the fourth residence permit had to be deposited not in commercial banks, but in the public treasury, as if the residence permit were an additional tax, as *Le Combattant* newspaper seems to confirm: 'The innovation in these laws [instituting the new residence permit] pertaining to the transfer of the repatriation deposit from commercial banks to the public treasury is an indication that the State, in its fight against the economic crisis, would like to do everything possible to put an end to this scourge which makes us beggars.'⁵

In any case, the cost of a residence permit in Cameroon, regardless of ideas that may have underpinned it, is still very affordable as compared to those charged in other leading African countries. At this stage, the State cannot really be blamed for taking advantage of a situation whose consequences are incumbent on it alone.⁶

As regards the conditions for leaving (exit) Cameroonian territory, it must be said that this is officially subject to the fact of obtaining an exit visa. However, this is indeed a procedure that Nigerians wishing to return home hardly, in short, never follow. The experience of many Nigerians interviewed was that any person who shows up at a border post with an exit visa is not exempt from particularly stringent checks, and no one with a hard-won residence permit thinks of submitting it when leaving the country. In addition, very few Nigerians with a residence permit leave the country before it expires.

Furthermore, it is important to specify that leaving Cameroon is not only a personal decision made by the migrant. It is an operation that is applicable to both clandestine migrants and people in an illegal situation (especially temporary visitors, tourists and forwarders who have overstayed) subject to an expulsion order. All of them, without prejudice to legal proceedings, must be repatriated either at their own expense, or at that of the employer who has signed a repatriation guarantee, or with the amount of their repatriation deposit. In the lack of inadequacy of means provided for above, the cost of repatriation is totally or partially supported by the public treasury. However, for those foreigners whose admission has not been approved by the Head of the national security border post, their carrier is responsible for their repatriation.

However, despite this legal machinery, Cameroon does not systematically expel illegal Nigerians at the border. This operation usually occurs during periods of bilateral tensions between both countries. Moreover, these repatriations when applicable, are carried out by means of trucks to the border posts. Thus, 'in case of border conflicts, Cameroonian authorities promptly retaliate by proceeding to massive expulsions'.⁷ The reality on the ground is confirmed by T.L. Weiss also demonstrates that border surveillance or, better still, regular checks on the situation of (illegal) foreigners do not seem to be a major concern of public authorities, who would thereby deprive themselves of the inflow of some precious currency by inevitably exposing themselves to abuses caused by their presence. Even if this passive attitude, which could be described as tolerance, gives Cameroon its reputation of land of hospitality for a multitude of nationalities, negative consequences of such a tolerance are undoubtedly the rise in banditry, criminality, in short, insecurity, worsened by the

¹ In Gabon, the residence permit has increased from XAF 300,000 to XAF 600,000 francs per year. In Côte d'Ivoire and Mali, it costs XOF 750,000 francs.

² T.L. Weiss, *Migrants Nigerians...*, p.133.

³ Ibid., p.133.

⁴ Ibid., p.134.

⁵ *Le Combattant* Newspaper, No 565, 4-9 February 1993.

⁶ We are hereby referring to the numerous consequences linked to the residence of illegal migrants, especially Nigerians, in terms of stealing, rape, lack of the sense of civic responsibility, corruption, robbery and insecurity...

⁷ Weiss, *Migrants nigériens...*, p.131.

activities of terrorist groups such as Boko Haram, which threaten its territorial integrity and undermine its economic activities.

Given this disaster, the tolerant attitude of Cameroon towards illegal foreigners has not changed much. Since May 2014, when President Paul Biya declared war on the terrorist sect Boko Haram (during a summit in Paris), many actions have been carried out both on the battlefield (in the northern part of the country) and on the political-diplomatic field, including the setting up of a sub-regional coalition, the creation of the inter-regional centre for coordination, security and maritime safety in the Gulf of Guinea (Group D), the Cameroon-Chad coalition, including the strengthening of internal security measures. But at no time did Cameroon proceed to the dramatic repatriation of illegal foreigners. Instead, it continues to receive them on its territory, notably under the guise of Central African refugees in the East Region, and Nigerians in the locality of Minawao in the far North Region.

In all, conditions of entry, residence and leaving (exit) Cameroon remain poorly known and less respected by Nigerian migrants who do not hesitate to take advantage of the largesse of some State representatives, the laxity and tolerance of the State itself. But these shortcomings and ignorance are not only noticeable at the level of immigration. They are also noticeable at the level of Trade.

2.1.2. Legal Framework for Trade and Taxation in Cameroon

In Cameroon, the legal framework governing trade is certainly quite dense, but also clear and appropriate to the new global situation. In General, this activity is governed by Law No 90/031 of 10 August 1990 governing commercial activity in Cameroon. This law is supplemented by other laws, decrees and rulings relating to commercial activity such as Law No. 89/011 of 18 July 1987 on the Restoration of a Market Economy and Law No. 2002/004 of 19 April 2002 on the Investment Charter for Cameroon. According to Article 4 of the law governing commercial activity in Cameroon, 'any natural or legal person, Cameroonian or foreigner, is free to trade in Cameroon in compliance with the regulation in force. Thus, if trading is free, it is nevertheless governed by rules and formalities to be fulfilled. For natural persons, the trader must provide: a copy of his birth certificate or any administrative document justifying his identification, a copy of his marriage certificate if necessary, a copy of his criminal record, a residence certificate, a copy of the title deed or lease, if they acquire of a business, or management lease, a copy of the acquisition or management lease deed, if necessary, an authorisation to trade.

For legal persons, commercial companies must apply for incorporation at the Trade and Personal Property Credit Register of the jurisdiction in which their registered office is located. And the application for registration shall be accompanied by: two certified copies of the bylaws, two copies of the certified list of managers or partners who are permanently and personally liable or who have the power to bind the company, two copies of criminal records of the persons referred to above..., where applicable, a prior authorisation to trade.

All these formalities obviously concern domestic trade. As regards foreign trade, its operations are also free subject to compliance with the regulation in force. They are particularly subject to rules of the Customs Revenue Security Programme and the Sectoral Export Monitoring Programme. Economic operators wishing to invest in import-export activities must register or renew their registration each year in the file available to this effect at the Directorate of Trade.

The file shall have the following: an information sheet, a certified copy of the declaration, a certified copy of the declaration of registration in the Trade and Personal Property Credit Register, a legalised copy of the taxpayer's card, a payment receipt of XAF 15,000 francs issued by the revenue collector of the Directorate of Promotion of Trade and Services.

As a matter-of-fact, that is the Cameroonian legislation on trade as a whole. It is only after fulfilling these formalities of internal and/or external trade that the trader now faces realities of taxation in Cameroon. Undoubtedly, this is not highly appreciated by Nigerian migrants and/or traders, who consider it 'high' and demanding. Consequently, provisions of this tax system become questionable.

According to the General Tax Code (updated on 1 January 2012), the following taxes are levied in Cameroon:

- Corporate tax: except for special tax regimes, all companies are concerned. It is based on profits generated over twelve months, corresponding to a financial year. It is rated at 35%;
- Personal Income Tax: This is applied to any person, Cameroonian or not, in possession of a profit-making tax domicile in Cameroon. Only Heads of diplomatic missions, Consuls and foreign staff holding a diplomatic card issued by the Minister of External Relations are exempt from this tax. It is calculated based on the following scale:

From 0 to 2000,000	10%
From 2,000,001 to 3,000,000	15%
From 3,000,001 à 5,000,000	25%
More than 5,000,000	35%

Table 1

The Value Added Tax (VAT): this applies to natural and legal persons, including decentralised local authorities and public law bodies. However, only transactions carried out in the context of an economic activity for financial considerations are subject to this tax. It is generally levied at 17.5%, while the excise duty applied to a category of products has a general rate of 25% and a reduced rate of 12.5%. All these general provisions are applied by the State itself (through the institution in charge), which has nonetheless made provisions for tax systems and local taxation. According to the

taxation systems, natural and legal persons are taxed according to the following systems determined based on the turnover made: flat-rate tax system, simplified system, actual system.

Local taxation applies to councils, city and district councils, regions and all other kinds of local authorities. Local taxes include: communal taxes, additional centimes and State taxes, communal taxes, regional taxes and any other levy provided for by the law.

No one is exempt from it. The contribution of the turnover is declared by the taxpayer and is due for a year.⁸

These general provisions of the Cameroon tax system reflect the requirements of internal and external trade. Although they have the advantage of being clearly defined, they are unfortunately not well-known by main actors who do not take much interest in them, nor in bilateral agreements. But, unlike trade formalities and tax legislation, which are deliberately ignored in order to make more profit, bilateral trade agreements have the advantage of existing and being known. The content and benefits they provide remain unknown. Thus, very few Nigerian traders know that their country and Cameroon are in the third trade agreement (1963, 1983, and 2014). Therefore, it seems appropriate not only to question the deep causes of such a general ignorance of legal instruments, but also irregularities observed in their enforcement.

2.1.3. Factors for Ignorance of Legal Instruments and Irregularities in Enforcing Them

As previously mentioned, Cameroon's law on trade is sufficiently clear. However, it remains surprisingly unfamiliar to some actors who ought to be familiar with it. Many factors justify this ignorance. These include the illiteracy and/or the poor level of education of most of the Nigerian traders. Indeed, Cameroon-Nigeria trade is dominated by smuggling. Smuggling, as earlier mentioned in this work, is essentially blamed on youth.

According to the study by Kengne Fodouop, 68.4% of smugglers are under 35 and the rest are aged between 36 and 48. 28.5% of them have never been to school and 41.6% have not gone beyond the second year of primary school. Despite this, their French or English is understandable and the main medium of communication is Pidgin.⁹

While admitting that not all of them are educated, the fact remains that the majority has a poor level of education. This is evident from interviews we had during our field investigations in Cameroon, Nigeria and in border areas.

Moreover, when we look back at the history of their first migration to Cameroon, we realise that most migrants first followed a member either from family, clan or tribe settled in Cameroon where they first worked as helpers: *Houseboy, fisherboy, farmboy*... This early involvement implies that they really did not have time to attend mainstream schools. They are therefore deprived of the training that would have served as a basis to understanding the law governing trade, their sector of activity or even any other legal document.

If this observation applies to Nigerian traders of all origins, it should however be noted that the poor level of expression that inevitably matches with their education is even more prominent among traders from the northern part of both countries. This is due to the fact that in both countries, mainstream (western) schools are in strong competition with Koranic ones. In addition, the idea of instant gain, the influence of traditions, ignorance and, above all, the religious extremism preached by some radical groups such as Boko Haram all constitute barriers to education.

Another reason for the ignorance of legal documents is obviously the lack of interest and the weak determination of stakeholders. Indeed, in a mad rush towards instant gain, some of them do not bother to familiarise themselves with legal procedures of their sector of activity. It is up to the State to sensitise them. But, sometimes, this sensitisation seems not enough, because it is confronted with their poor interest. Indeed, these traders, perfect smugglers, are somewhat anti-conformists and are not very willing to reduce their profit, even in legal transactions. Just as they dodge customs, they engage in customs fraud or try to bribe agents. They sometimes do not hesitate to bribe other State officials for their indulgence in their illegal activities.

As the more you eat, the more you want, this attitude automatically gives rise to another cause of ignorance.

We can thus mention bribery as another factor for ignorance of legal instruments. Whether it is the result of the initiative of dishonest traders or the personal interest of some government officials, bribery has the disadvantage of keeping Nigerian migrants in a kind of ignorance of the law, which ultimately becomes very costly.

During our field investigations, many Nigerian traders complained about Cameroonian pressure. This is the case of Anthony Otteh¹⁰, owner of a spare parts shop in Yaounde who says he has been harassed by this system. He states that the slowdown of their business over the past few years is due not only to competition from the Bamileke¹¹, but also to the economic situation and security issues (highway robbers, sea pirates, Ebola fever, Boko Haram...) which coincides with the rise of bribery. According to him, you must bribe for everything. Firstly, with the immigration police, who carry out two to three checks on residence permits per month to detect illegal immigrants as well as newcomers. Secondly, with municipal or tax officials and other public administrations, whose services, or at least their justification, are still poorly considered.

Thus, it is sometimes necessary to negotiate the category of tax in order to be classified in a lower category to reduce expenses.

They must also pay:

⁸ General TaxCode2012.

⁹ KengneFodouop, « La contrebande entre le Cameroun et le Nigeria ... », pp. 13-14.

¹⁰ An interview with Anthony Otteh, 42, a Nigerian trader in Yaounde on 16 July 2015.

¹¹ He opines that, Nigerian spare parts dealers are not happy with the invasion of their sector by the Bamileke who have invested a lot of money in it and get supplied directly from China. This situation enables them to charge competitive prices that sometimes even attract some Nigerian retailers. However, Nigerian traders not only decry this competition, but also the Bamileke approach, which makes no difference between wholesale and retail prices.

- the temporary occupation of the public road (OTVP) at XAF 30,000 francs a year in case of non-compliance with the 5-metre distance that must separate a business from the road;
- copyright with or without music equipment at XAF 15,000 francs a year;
- first aid kit required by the hygiene and sanitation service;
- price control officers from the Ministry of Trade (MINCOMMERCE) who control purchase and sale prices without taking into account subsidiary expenses (customs, transportation, handling);
- officials from the Ministry of Environment and Nature Protection who ensure that they do not use non-biodegradable packaging. For all these services and controls, the amount to be paid is negotiable and varies from an individual to another. They do not always receive receipts after payments.

For fear of retaliation and conscious of their shortcomings in the various documents to be provided, they are silenced and stoically have to endure this injustice. This is why some traders end up going back to their homeland or changing jobs or moving to rural areas where controls are less demanding.

2.2. Absence of a Trade Harmonisation Framework and Persistence of Smuggling

2.2.1. Absence of a Trade Harmonisation Framework

Since the institution of diplomatic relations in 1960 and especially the signing of the first trade agreement between Cameroon and Nigeria in 1963, there has never been a framework for the harmonisation of trade. Whereas both States are aware of the importance of their trade, which is not only still underdeveloped in relation to their mutual potentials, but also dominated by the informal sector and undermined by numerous problems.

So, the development and intensification of this trade requires that many challenges be met, with the commitment of both countries. Indeed, the latter must join efforts to eliminate all security, tariff and non-tariff obstacles that hinder the development of their trade. No doubt, there are consultation frameworks that bind Cameroon and Nigeria, but it must be said that they cannot replace a real body for trade harmonisation. The development of bilateral trade requires a specific body.

However, in the absence of anything better, existing tools try to play this role with varying degrees of success. This negotiation by local authorities happens as a result of incidents between neighbouring populations in some border areas on the one hand, and the remoteness of these areas from the decision-making centres on the other. The government has empowered local administrative and traditional authorities to settle minor conflicts. This has the advantage of speeding up procedures and saving some money and being more efficient, as these local officials are in daily contacts.¹²

Then comes the 'joint commission' which aims at normalising relationships. This is a forum for periodic dialogue between delegations from both States on issues relating to cooperation, borders and collective security.¹³ Its role, far from being limited to trade, consists in bringing to the table all irritating issues in the overall cooperation between both countries in order to entrust them to technicians of statutory ministries, so that they can propose normalisation measures, since it is led on behalf of Cameroon by the Minister of External Relations. It is thus a global framework to evaluate cooperation between both countries'.¹⁴

It should be recalled that the consultation framework, that is the joint commission was created as a result of the fluctuating relationships between both nations that share a border of nearly 2,000 km. It was therefore set up to maintain a permanent dialogue in the relationships between both nations. It is the starting point of the third trade agreement signed along with other cooperation agreements by Nuruddeen Mohammed and Pierre MoukokoMbonjo, respectively Minister Delegate for Foreign Affairs of the Nigerian Government and Minister of External Relations of the Republic of Cameroon on April 11, 2014 at the end of its 6th session¹⁵.

Finally, there is the 'joint committee' as the last consultation mechanism. Indeed, it has not really functioned although present in the trade agreement of 13 January 1982. It is described as a specialised body within the joint committee. The 1982 agreement exclusively assigns it economic tasks. Article 8 states that the joint committee is responsible for monitoring the development of trade relationships between the two contracting parties, completing the list of products appended to this agreement, drawing up new lists where necessary, examining any difficulties arising from the enforcement of this agreement and agreeing on ways and means to solve them.¹⁶

Until the replacement of the 1982 agreement, we have not been able to collect any factual data proving the functioning of this observatory which we have agreed to refer to as the trade harmonisation body. Henceforth, all hopes are placed in this new agreement (April 2014) whose objective is to promote the development of bilateral trade. Consequently, this new trade framework aims at lifting all barriers to trade. In concrete terms, the agreement aims at lifting non-tariff trade barriers, protecting intellectual property rights in order to combat and eliminate unfair practices between both nations¹⁷.

To this effect, both parties have provided for the creation of a 'joint trade commission' whose aim is to solve possible problems in the implementation of this agreement. This future 'joint trade commission' is indeed similar to the 'joint committee' in the 1982 agreement, but it intends to be more effective and pragmatic, since it will correct

¹² A.H. O. Mfegue, *Le Cameroun ...*, p.169.

¹³ Ibid., p. 164.

¹⁴ Interview with AbakarAhamat, 39, diplomat and Deputy Director of Affairs with Nigeria, Yaounde, 21 May 2015.

¹⁵ www.investiraucameroun.com, « Cameroun-Nigeria : Le nouvel accord commercial »

¹⁶ Decree No. 82/ 294 of 08 July 1982 to ratify the trade agreement, ratified on 13 January 1982 in Lagos between the United Republic of Cameroon and the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1 August 1982.

¹⁷ *Emergence* Daily No. 252 Monday 28 April 2014, p. 4.

shortcomings of the past. It corresponds to what we have termed trade harmonisation body. Expectations are high. Since it is permanent, it will certainly last as long as the agreement and will specifically solve all difficulties of bilateral trade¹⁸

For this reason, we hope that the on-going ratification of this trade agreement in the parliaments of both countries will be accelerated so that this harmonisation body can be effective.

2.2.2. Porosity of Borders and Persistence of Smuggling

According to the UN Humanitarian News and Analysis Service, Cameroon and Nigeria share a 2,100 km long border¹⁹. It is both maritime and terrestrial. It crosses mountains, a desert in the north and a dense forest in the south. It has 21 maritime border points²⁰. Ambivalent, abstract and elusive, this border that separates and binds together at the same time is the source of all misunderstandings and breaches of trust that have marked relationships between these two neighbours united by the chance of history and geography. Far from being a simple border line between both States, this border is a reality that extends to human spaces to create border regions or zones whose limits are difficult to establish. Thus, between Cameroon and Nigeria, it is necessary to distinguish several points of separation and contact which affect six (6) administrative regions²¹ and are difficult to control because they are at the same time terrestrial, maritime, fluvial and riparian. On its south-north route, this terrestrial line at Yengue, becomes maritime at the entrance to Campo and laps in the Gulf of Guinea for 380 km, before successively covering Grand Batanga in Kribi, Yoyo, the island of Manoka, Douala, Tiko, Limbé and the peninsulas of the Rio del Rey.²² Estimated at about 2,000 nautical miles (370km), this maritime border is however very abstract and difficult to materialise. After this maritime route, the border becomes fluvial and riparian again between the north-west of the Bakassi Peninsula and the town of Ekok. It is thus materialised by the Akwayafé River and its tributaries, and the Gross River. From there, it becomes terrestrial again and gains altitude in the mountainous massifs before gradually descending into the Adamawa plateaus and the Benue Basin between Gurin, Bélé, Sorau, Doundey and Bonjoula. From then on, it heads towards Lake Chad, crossing the Bonkoulé customs post south of Bourrah, the flooded and marshy areas of Babanga, Waza, the Kolofata customs post, Ashigashiya, Tourou, Mogodé in the Mokolo region and Kapsiki in the Mandara mountains, Fotokol²³.

Terrestrial borders also have the disadvantage of not being effectively controlled, except in areas with a practicable road, paved or not. As a result, the forest areas are home to a multitude of sometimes seasonal tracks that are from time to time abandoned to make people forget their existence after their discovery by authorities. As for the northern borders, they have other realities conducive to smuggling. The proximity of Nigerian cities, the cultural continuum, the low vegetation cover (savannah and steppe vegetation), the flatness of the relief as a whole and the sandy soil favour the creation of tracks, especially in the dry season,²⁴ by smugglers.

At the end of this presentation, it is clear that this border is difficult to control because of its length and varied nature. It is thus porous and therefore fosters excessive smuggling. These illegal flows are done in violation of the regulatory norms in force and concern imported or exported products that are transported in violation of customs and tax procedures, on the one hand, and on the other hand, products whose trade is prohibited or reserved to some operators, such as gold, diamonds and other ores and precious stones as well as arms and drugs trafficking.²⁵ At the same time, borders are vulnerable to various forms of border incursions. Maritime, river and riparian borders have the disadvantage of not only really being controlled at ports or landing stages, although these controls are far from effective. However, there are makeshift landing places and traffickers of a different kind who operate day and night and sometimes at unsociable hours in their motorised canoes and, above all, with impunity due to their inaccessibility.

In their report, OCISCA²⁶ researchers identified eighteen (18) coastal fraud zones involved in trade with Nigeria. These include Douala with its main port and the twelve coves surrounding it (Youpwé, Mboko, Ngodi-Bakoko, Yansoki, Dibamba (leproserie), Bonabéri), Boadibo, Bonasama (Bonaberi), Bonamoussasdi, Deido, Idenau, ports of Limbé and Tiko, Bamusso, Ekondo-Titi. All of these areas have a high level of smuggling activity due to the cunning nature of smugglers and the weak presence of the State in some areas.

Yet, it is also worth noting that this difficulty in controlling borders is not an advantage that only benefits smugglers; at the same time it favours recurrent clashes between civilian populations on either side of the border,²⁷ it is beneficial to bandits, terrorists (Boko Haram) and other actors in cross-border criminality (highway robbers, sea pirates). Cameroon had better identify and monitor its borders properly. Its poor control is a major cause of the weakness of trade.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ www.investiraucameroun.com, « Cameroun Nigeria : A long and porous border

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Littoral, South-West, North-West, Adamawa, North and Far North

²² A. H. O. Mfegue, *Le Cameroun...*, p.63.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ The rainy season is not conducive due to the flow of the mayo, a seasonal watercourse.

²⁵ A. Hubert O. Mfegue, *Le Cameroun...*, p.140.

²⁶ Les échanges transfrontaliers entre le Cameroun et le Nigeria ..., pp.23-27 quoted by A. Hubert O. Mfegue, in *Le Cameroun et ses frontières*, Paris, l'Harmattan, ..., p.141.

²⁷ In addition to conflicts between neighbouring populations, Cameroon western border has also divided formerly united villages and scattered members of the same family in different States. In 1965, for example, land disputes between the Boudang tribe in the Mamfe region of Cameroon and the Danare tribe in the Ikom region of Nigeria. This dispute shall be settled by a joint commission. See. Adamou NdamNjoya, *Le Cameroun dans les relations Internationales*, p. 217.

Informal trade, which still dominates bilateral trade with Nigeria, flourishes in such a context to the detriment of these States, since it is visible and tangible on the one hand, and invisible and elusive on the other. The poor control of borders thus leads to their violation and manipulation for criminal purposes²⁸.

2.2.3. Absence of a Genuine Border Policy

One of the major weaknesses of trade between Cameroon and Nigeria is obviously the absence of a genuine border policy. Far from being specific to western borders, this problem actually concerns all Cameroonian borders. They are neglected by public authorities. In other words, the State seems to be somewhat distant from the hustle and bustle at borders. This does not imply total absence, but insufficient presence in terms of State's representatives and the fulfilment of its prerogatives. This is why in borders, public buildings are not only narrow and unattractive, but also lack staff. In addition, there are insufficient or poorly maintained roads, hospitals, schools, telephone network, lack of electricity and drinking water, and the lack of public broadcasting signal (CRTV), which is an 'essential ideological instrument for the State'. Moreover, there are insecurity problems linked to cross-border crime, highway robbery, and henceforth terrorism.

All this gives the impression to border populations that they are 'abandoned'. This feeling of being abandoned and the weakness of the State control favours informal trade, smuggling and all kinds of illicit trafficking, which deprive the State of substantial revenue that could boost the national economy. Given this dramatic situation, it appears that the State has little scope of control at borders. Yet, these borders (especially the western ones), due to their dynamism, contribute significantly to customs and tax revenues.

Cameroon as a sovereign State must therefore be cautious and combine sovereignty and diligence when controlling its borders²⁹. Sovereignty here implies maintaining a balance between rights and obligations by the State.³⁰ In other words, the State must secure the borders, promote their development and improve living conditions of populations. The issue is clearly that of securing and developing borders. To achieve this, the State must be more empowered on borders. 'The aim is to make borders no more dividing lines, barriers of tension and permanent insecurity, but trade zones, poles of attraction and economic development actually controlled and animated by States'.³¹

Efforts have been made by the State, which has already set up joint and ad hoc border management commissions to demonstrate its active cooperation³² and respect for regional resolutions and principles of international law³³.

Moreover, there is a national border commission in Cameroon which was created by presidential Decree No 85/305 of 7 March 1985 and reorganised by Decree No 2001/208 of 27 July 2001³⁴. Its missions include among others designing, orienting and implementing the national border policy, collecting and securing national archives on borders, working for the demarcation of borders by identifying border markers. It must also ensure the development of borders, the acquisition of aerial photographs and satellite images on all borders. There are also services within the ministries (MINREX, MINATD, MINEPAT) involved in border management. In any case, border management at the national level is the combined action of several administrations.

Given this legal and institutional arsenal, it would have been expected that borders between Cameroon and its neighbours emerge not only as poles of attraction for economic development, but also as borders of peace and stability, conducive to trade. Unfortunately, the situation is far from being satisfactory on borders. The efforts made so far by the State to develop borders, secure and demarcate them, do not meet all expectations. We thus note what jurists' term 'an operational failure of the normative and legal system'³⁵. It has to do with the institutional inertia of the National Border Commission. Not only is the functioning of the latter not always effective, but also it is not supposed to function permanently despite the challenging and crucial missions assigned to it. It is therefore necessary, on the one hand, to stimulate regional cooperation, as it is the general trend, to join operational, human and financial means of many States.

This is the background to the Cameroon-Chad-Niger-Nigeria coalition in the fight against Boko Haram and cross-border crime, as well as to Decree No. 2007/1132/PM of 27 August 2007 by which the Prime Minister created the Coordination and Monitoring Committee for the implementation of priority projects in the Bakassi area. The signing of this decree is a response to the wish of the Head of State, Paul Biya who, drawing lessons from the conflict with Nigeria, was already preparing the handing over of the Bakassi Peninsula to Cameroun on 14 August 2008, by prescribing the acceleration of the development of borders, since 'they are strategic components of our national sovereignty'³⁶.

2.3. Administrative Tolerance or Little Commitment of National Administrations

Tolerance consists in accepting what could be refused, prohibited, or what one cannot or is facing difficulties to change. This is a defeatist attitude that consists in giving up and accepting, because there is no other option. Tolerance can also be seen as a virtue, which in any case, helps to avoid conflict. Being tolerant here entails accepting without having first

²⁸ A. H. O. Mfegue, *Le Cameroun...*, p.10.

²⁹ *l'Action* Newspaper 625 of 06 August 2008, Special Edition, p.11.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., p.22.

³² The desire to ensure the sustainability and stability of borders led to the drafting of the principle of intangibility of borders inherited from colonisation, which African States adopted in the Cairo resolution of 31 July 1964.

³³ Borders management remains subject to rules and principles of international law. These include the non-use of force, the peaceful settlement of disputes, good neighbourliness, non-interference and the sovereign equality of States. It is also on this normative source that the ICJ grounded its decision in recognising the sovereignty of Cameroon over the Bakassi peninsula.

³⁴ *l'Action* Newspaper 625 of 06 August 2008, Special Edition, p.22.

³⁵ This expression is used by the internationalist jurist Joseph Wilfried Minkoas in *l'Action* Newspaper No°625 of 06 August 2008, p.22.

³⁶ Ibid., p.12.

tried to forbid, refuse or change. Administrative tolerance thus consists of the fact that authorities tolerate things that are prohibited by law.

For some years now, this practice has almost become a managerial practice in Cameroonian administration. There is a generalised, or even disconcerting tolerance. This trend affects many sectors of life and national economy: basic education, secondary education, tourism, communication, agriculture, micro-finance and trade. It is a kind of 'laissez-faire' that generates disorder and many other problems, to the point of getting to laxity, administrative inefficiency, better still the poor commitment of the administration. Why all this? Yet the short, medium and long term consequences of such an attitude are devastating and likely to compromise the achievement of the emergence course by 2035. Overall, we have, for example, overcrowded clandestine schools, fake medicines, the unequal practice of medicine, the proliferation of churches, poor services offered by hotels, problems of ethics and media authorizations, the financing of fake Common Interest Groups (CIG) in the agricultural sector, the lack of seriousness or the ephemeral duration of micro-finance institutions. In the area of trade with Nigeria, we can mention, as illustration, the unfair competition of illegal actors, informality in bilateral trade, the enclosure and lack of access to certain borders, the weak representation of the State in these areas, impunity and/or the persistence of corrupt practices, not to mention complicity and impunity.

Thus, the effects of such an attitude are so harmful that the State loses precious revenues that could enable to sustain the national economy. Furthermore, it hinders the promotion of bilateral trade and consequently, that of economic and social development.

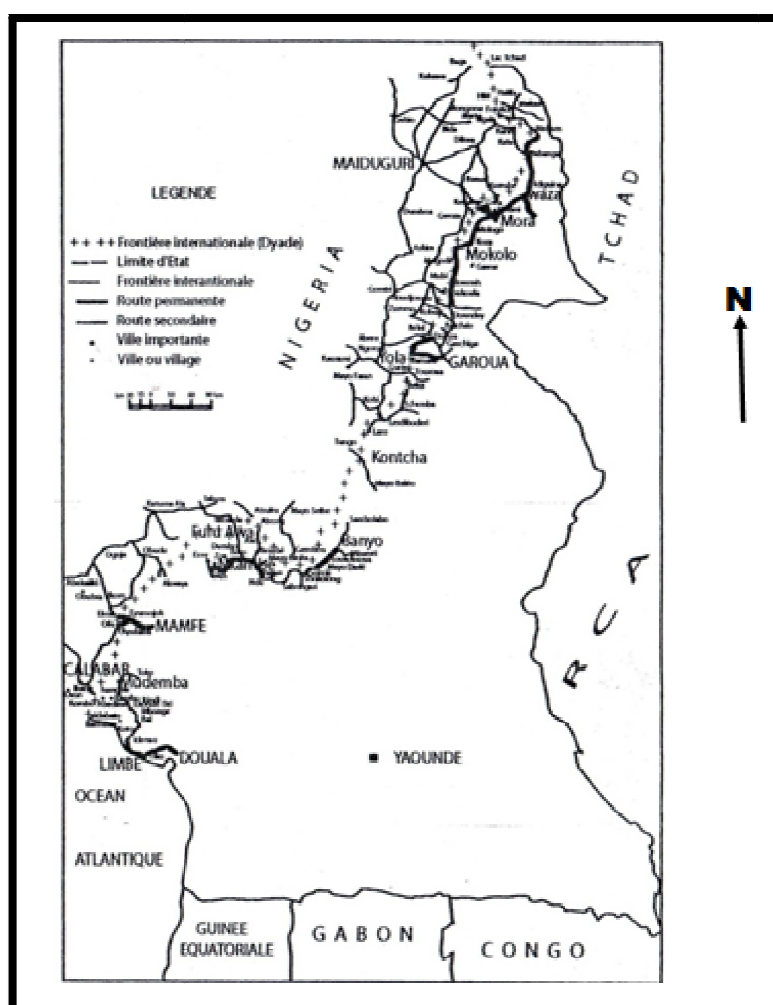


Figure 1: Western Border Line

Source: A-H. Onana Mfege, *Le Cameroun Et Ses Frontières*, P.67

This practice is so deeply rooted that attempts to return to the standard are not obvious and cannot be done smoothly. This serious situation prompted MP Martin Oyono to ask Prime Minister Philemon Yang, during an oral question session in November 2012, whether it was not time to move to a repressive phase in each of these sectors. Because, in his opinion, this flexibility has transformed compliance with law into an exception.³⁷

Should we always agree with the State that we need to negotiate gradually to agree on principles, on a sound basis, because it seems difficult to find solutions at once? Something must be done right away. In any case, the Nigerian partner itself is not better off. It is also experiencing problems of corruption, impunity, complicity and above all the persistence of informality in trade.

³⁷www.cameoon-tribune.cm, « Le Cameroun s'explique sur la tolérance administrative »

However, given the demographic pressure that aggravates unemployment in its society, would the Nigerian tolerance not be a strategy to allow thousands of unemployed people to find an outlet (an occupation) in trade in particular?

2.4. Political and Social Tensions and Insecurity Problems

The ignorance of legal instruments and administrative shortcomings are not the only weaknesses of bilateral trade with Nigeria. Political and social tensions and the problem of insecurity in particular constitute another obstacle to the development of trade. They are caused by the difficult understanding between both States, the border conflict, the perception of both people, the exactions of armed groups and the absence of coordinated measures between both States.

2.4.1. Difficult Modus Vivendi between Cameroon and Nigeria

Among the six countries with which Cameroon shares a common border, only Nigeria stands out for its strong ties with Cameroon. These close ties are the result of their geographical proximity, recent history, cultural continuity and usual interactions. The decline in ties between both countries results from four decades of conflict (1961-2002) that have unfortunately plagued their relationships for over fifty years. This raises the issue of real causes for such instability. In other words, why is Cameroonian proximity to Nigeria the most difficult to deal with?

In all, territorial disputes are the main causes of conflicts that have opposed Cameroon and Nigeria. They both claim sovereignty over a neighbouring area, contest the border, or question the borderline itself.³⁸

The first bone of contention between both countries results from the 11 and 12 February 1961 plebiscite during the independence of British Cameroon, after which Northern Cameroons became part of Nigeria. Disappointed by this territorial break-up, Cameroon, which some time before had committed itself internally to defend the fatherland,³⁹ took the matter to the International Court of Justice on 30 May 1961. It accused the United Kingdom of ignoring the administrative unity of the trust territory, of not respecting the territorial unity, the Trusteeship Agreement in general and in particular the resolution concerning the administrative separation, the preparation and the holding of the plebiscite.⁴⁰

In spite of the English manipulation, the court by a judgment of 2 December 1963 recognised the existence of a dispute between Cameroon and the United Kingdom, but refused to rule because of the expiry of the Trusteeship Agreement on 1 June 1961. As a result of this other political failure, Cameroon felt cheated and organised street demonstrations in Yaounde against Great Britain, Nigeria and the ICJ⁴¹. The country also abstained from subscribing to the optional clause of compulsory jurisdiction of the ICJ and did so only in March 1994, when Nigeria attacked again. These events marked the beginning of animosity in relationships between Cameroon and Nigeria.

The second bone of contention between Cameroon and Nigeria is the Lake Chad issue. Although they all border the lake, their common borders at this level are imprecise and thus raise the problem of access to the economic and ecological advantages provided by the lake. Due to its gradual drying up, the massive exodus of populations, especially Nigerians, to Cameroon, where a good deal of the water is located, has had to support Nigerian claims to sovereignty over certain host areas of its citizens, who have sometimes become more numerous and significant than natives.⁴² From 1994, we witnessed a military occupation and then followed the hoisting of the flag, despite Cameroonian protests. Cameroon then had no choice, but to refer to international arbitration by referring the matter to the ICJ on 6 June 1994, in addition to the maritime border case.

The third bone of contention obviously concerns the dispute over sovereignty over the maritime region. The disputed area concerns the Calabar River channel, part of the Cross River Estuary and the Bakassi Peninsula bordered by the Rio del Rey Estuary to the east, the Bay of Benin to the south, the Cross River estuary to the west and the Akwayafé River to the northwest.⁴³ Stakes are high. Not only is the area rich in oil and fisheries resources, but Cameroon waters also pose a security problem for Nigerian naval forces and constitute an obligatory stopover for ships heading to the port of Calabar.

The fourth bone of contention relates to the 1981 incidents. This is originally due to the management of the Nigerian floating population, mostly fishermen and traders in the Rio del Rey Estuary.⁴⁴ Because of the insufficient administrative management, populations have always been free to carry out their activities. But, every time Cameroonian authorities demand taxes or prescribe measures to combat smuggling mostly practised by them, they feel unsafe⁴⁵.

The relative freedom they enjoyed had made them think that they were in Nigerian. Reason why, when Cameroonian authorities decided to intensify the fight against lack of sense of fiscal responsibility and smuggling in the area, by mobilising gendarmerie and navy patrols, Nigeria thought it was facing a Cameroonian military invasion. In response, it is also positioned its troops in order to safeguard its interests. Since then, a climate of mutual distrust was created, and acts of provocation multiplied on both sides.⁴⁶ The incident thus arose from the attack of 16 May 1981 by the Cameroonian navy on a Nigerian patrol boat, resulting in several victims. Cameroonian authorities claimed that the boat had violated Cameroonian territorial waters and attacked a Cameroonian boat in the embouchure of the Rio del Rey, east

³⁸ A. H. O. Mfegue, *Le Cameroun...*, p.79.

³⁹ Préambule de la constitution de 1960, in A-H. O.Mfegue, *Le Cameroun...*, p.80.

⁴⁰ N. Mouelle Kombi, *La politique étrangère du Cameroun...*, pp.188-189.

⁴¹ A. H. O. Mfegue, *Le Cameroun...*, p.81.

⁴² Ibid., p.82.

⁴³ T. L. Weiss, « différend Cameroun-Nigeria : au-delà de Bakassi », in *Relation Internationale et Stratégique*, n° 23 Automne 1996, p.108.

⁴⁴ A. H. O. Mfegue, *Le Cameroun...*, p.85.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p.86.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

of the Bakassi Peninsula. Supported by public opinion which evokes a wilful act of provocation, Nigerian authorities changed their mind and demanded from Yaounde official apologies, sanctions to perpetrators and compensation for families of victims⁴⁷.

President Ahidjo immediately sent a goodwill mission and suggested the creation of a joint commission of enquiry to throw light on the matter. Nigeria refused the offer as well as all attempts to mediation⁴⁸ and wished to discuss the borderline issues, not the incident per se, or the arbitration of an international institution. It should be recalled that Nigeria had even questioned at certain positions the demarcation of the terrestrial border. And post-colonial settlement initiatives such as the 19 June 1971 agreement (on the adoption of the Ngoh-Cooker line) and the Maroua Declaration of 1 April 1975 have all been challenged by Nigeria, whose successive 'often very short-lasting and putschist'⁴⁹ governments have shown inconsistency in border diplomacy. Confronted with the Nigerian refusal, the settlement of the dispute is blocked and on 3 July the French Ambassador to Cameroon reveals to authorities a Nigerian plan of attack the next day on two fronts, in the North towards Garoua and in the South towards Buea and Limbe. The Cameroonian army stood ready for the attack, but the involvement of France deterred Nigeria. On 4 July, there is no attack but the 'no war, no peace' situation continues. Following the recommendations of the Ivorian and Togolese mediators, Cameroon met Nigerian demands to normalise the situation. This crisis revealed the prevailing xenophobia, the sensitive nature of the Rio del Rey Estuary and, above all, the failure of bilateral negotiations on borders after independence⁵⁰.

The fifth and final bone of contention between Cameroon and Nigeria is the Bakassi War. This conflict is a denunciation by Nigeria of the entire border process, from the German era to the Maroua Agreement. This is visible in the well-known Bassey E. Ate report⁵¹, which proposes three options for the final delimitation of the border. The first is the unilateral occupation of the peninsula to lead Cameroon into serious negotiations for the setting up of a mutually acceptable border; the second is the presentation of an offer to purchase Bakassi from Cameroon; the third is the establishment of a joint administration in charge of security, resource exploitation, customs and immigration and the setting up of common services.

Nigeria finally went in for the first option, which consisted in deploying its troops in several localities of the peninsula from 21 December 1993. Cameroon army remained cautious and the diplomatic machinery was activated to try to resolve the crisis. Due to clashes on the field and mutual intolerance, attempts to mediate and negotiate bilaterally fail. In May 1994, Cameroon took the case to the ICJ. After eight years of litigation, the ICJ rendered its verdict on 10 October 2002 in favour of Cameroon. This verdict opened a new era because of Nigerian procrastination.

French mediation (Jacques Chirac) and the involvement of the UN (Koffi Annan) led both parties to accept the implementation of the decision. The transfer of the authority of Bakassi to the State of Cameroon on 14 August 2008 then became a reality, with a transitional period of 5 years for resident populations.

At the end of the special transitional period of the Bakassi conflict on 14 August 2012, several observations can be made:

- Nigerian diplomacy is very inconsistent and rarely displays a coherent political line. This situation may result from socio-political instability;
- Nigeria is an emerging country whose size, challenges and potential do not hide its hegemonic ambitions;
- Misunderstandings between countries, as well as multiple crises and conflicts that have opposed them constitute a weakness in trade as they have seriously hampered their development.

However, these conflicts provided periods of calm conducive to trade and are far from constituting the only constraints.

2.4.2. Local Beliefs and Collective Mentalities

Cameroonians and Nigerians interact on a daily basis. Interactions are both professional and private. For example, we have administrative relationships, relationships between customers and sellers, employees and employers, landlords and tenants, husbands and wives or vice versa, neighbourhood relationships and even church brothers. These various interactions give rise to different interpretations, which change depending on the person, the time and the context.

Right after independence, the relationships between Cameroonians and Nigerians have moved on smoothly with a few exceptions until the early 1980s. However, two major events fostered the development of a bad perception of Nigerians by the Cameroonian community. They are considered invaders, held responsible for all ills and called all sorts of names⁵². The first is independence itself, which put an end to the domination of Nigerians (especially the Igbo) in Cameroon, while at the same time encouraging the 'Cameroonisation' of officials.

Indeed, the Mandate and the British Trusteeship in Western Cameroon had given rise to a Nigerian under-colonisation, the small number of English settlers in this territory having been compensated by the slightly more advanced and available Nigerians troops. Thus, the education, health, police and administrative sectors were dominated by

Nigerians. This strong Nigerian presence, which also influenced politics,⁵³ was frowned upon by Cameroonians. The latter did everything to get rid of, or at least reduce, this large presence which had become embarrassing. Since then, we witnessed some return movements, but also the reorientation of many Nigerians in Cameroon in business and especially in trade.

⁴⁷ S. Eboua, *Une décennie avec le président Ahidjo*, Paris l'Harmattan, 1995, p.96.

⁴⁸ ECOWAS, Côte d'Ivoire and Togo all proposed mediation, which was accepted by Yaounde and rejected by Lagos.

⁴⁹ A. H. O. Mfegue, *Le Cameroun...*, 85.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.89.

⁵¹ Ministry of Defence, *Mémorandum sur le différend frontalier de la péninsule de Bakassi*, pp.24-25.

⁵² V. Bong Amaze, *The Eastern Nigerian crisis and the destiny of the British southern Cameroon 1953-1954*, Yaoundé, Presses Universitaires de Yaoundé, Septembre 2000, pp.16-18.

⁵³ Ibid.

The second major event that favoured a new way of perceiving Nigerians in Cameroon was the Biafran War (1967-1970). The war led to the movement of thousands of Nigerians, some of whom settled permanently to engage in activities such as trade and agriculture. Their dynamism in these sectors did not only attract the sympathy of Cameroonians. The latter always perceived them as arrogant, uncooperative invaders and viewed their competition and domination negatively⁵⁴.

Moreover, the perception that Cameroonians have vis-à-vis Nigerian immigrants also changes depending on circumstances. Thus, from the mid-1980s to the first half of the 1990s, a period that corresponds to the golden age of Cameroonian-Nigerian trade, the supremacy of Nigerians was undermined by the rise of Cameroonian competitors, especially the Bamileke and Bamoun.⁵⁵ This situation is not only the result of the economic crisis, but also that of the liberalisation and globalisation of trade.

However, Nigerians have remained famous for supplying Cameroonian consumers with various products at very competitive prices. But the poor quality of some of these products has reinforced the perception that Nigerians are counterfeiters, dishonest or less trustworthy. Given that it was at that time when the phenomenon of 'feymen' developed⁵⁶. With the outbreak of the Bakassi conflict, the logic of 'scapegoating' was developed by Cameroonian authorities anxious to restore their reputation after the negative effects of the economic crisis, and above all the disputed results of the October 1992 presidential elections⁵⁷. Thus, for example, Nigerian traders were held responsible for the Bakassi conflict, which they were reported to have triggered in order to put an end to the exactions against them and 'to take advantage of it to consolidate their leadership in Cameroon trade'⁵⁸. It should be recalled that the Bakassi conflict was triggered at the end of 1993 by the launching of 'Operation Daurade' ordered by the Cameroonian government as suggested by the International Monetary Fund to fight against smuggling along the Cameroonian coast and particularly between Douala and the Nigerian border.⁵⁹

With the rise of insecurity in the maritime area (sea pirates) and terrorism in the northern borders under the aegis of Boko Haram, Nigerians are increasingly viewed in Cameroon as potential terrorists and troublemakers and are therefore monitored, although their activities are also impacted due to the fear and the reinforcement of security measures underway in the country.

In short, while professional contacts make Nigerian migrants look dangerous, private contacts are rather conducive for a serene attitude, as social relationships (marriage, church, tenants, neighbourhood, etc.) are more harmonious and close. On the other hand, the perception of Nigerians towards Cameroonians also depends on the type of contact. As regards private contacts, they consider Cameroonians peaceful and hospitable. Yet, as for professional contacts, they do not appreciate representatives of the administration. The latter are seen as corrupt and do not miss any opportunity to extort money from them⁶⁰.

In fact, relationships between Nigerians and Cameroonians are far from being 'ideal'. Psychological blocks are very visible on both sides. Very often, this varies between acceptance and rejection on the one hand and demonisation on the other. The attitude of indifference is rather not commonly shared, despite the quality of personal relationships among individuals.

2.4.3. The Role of Armed Gangs and the Phenomenon of Highway Robbery

Throughout the western border between Cameroon and Nigeria, there are several groups of armed criminals who terrorise populations and impede the smooth flow of trade between both countries. In this form of cross-border banditry, we can mention highway robbers, sea pirates and to a lesser extent armed robbers, as well as the exactions of the terrorist sect Boko Haram, which create obsessive fear. Who are they? What is their modus operandi and where do they mostly operate?

Firstly, highway robbers; these are groups of bandits who generally operate in networks or in isolated groups in the northern part of the Cameroon. According to André-Hubert OnanaMfege⁶¹ their origins are traced back to the pre-colonial era, at the time of the Fulani domination. Indeed, the immensity of the Emirate of Adamawa and the continuous conquests would have given rise to a culture of ransom and ways of seizing people's wealth through violence. The Fulani hegemony in this region left a legacy of Lamidats, a kind of traditional Islamised chiefdoms headed by Lamibés. The Lamido is an almighty chief who rules his territory like a modern State, to a point of often disregarding official laws. In this part of the country, the latter have perpetuated a tradition of arbitrary levies to make a fortune. They maintain what the

American anthropologist Janet Roitman refers to as the 'garrison-warehouse', a kind of place of generating wealth creation, regulating violence, accumulating, redistributing, political and economic sociability and subjectivity.⁶²

The territory of the Lamido was once fenced by roadblocks controlled by dogaris (members of the Lamido security). And users were forced to pay arbitrary entry and exit taxes. The Lamido of Rey Bouba is well known in this respect. Over time, these dogaris became uncontrollable and Lamibés lost the exclusivity on crossing rights. From then on, even common

⁵⁴ G. NjangNdi, 'The economic and social history...', pp.161-162.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p.164.

⁵⁶ In its singular form, 'feyman', refers to fairy men or people with sudden wealth.

⁵⁷ T. L. Weiss, *Migrants Nigerians...*, p.164.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Z. Ngniman, *Nigeria Cameroun, la guerre permanente ?*, Yaoundé, édition clé, 1996, p.14.

⁶⁰ T. L. Weiss, *Migrants...*, p.164.

⁶¹ A-H. O. Mfege, *Les frontières...*, p.144.

⁶² J. Roitman, « la Garnison – entrepôt », in cahier des sciences humaines, 1998, p.61. quoted by O Mfege, *Les frontières...*, p.145

citizens began to form groups to operate outside the Lamidats on any stretch of road, far from the prying eyes of forces of law and order.⁶³

Until the 1970s, highways robbers were only active in the north and their attacks remained sporadic and limited in scale. From the 1980s onwards, their crimes spread to other regions of Cameroon and became international. Their tactics became military and their means more and more sophisticated.

This evolution is the result of the multiplication of conflicts in Central Africa and on the shores of Lake Chad, repercussions of the economic recession, the socio-political instability in countries and the porosity of borders. The combination of all these factors has made northern Cameroon an arm dumping ground, a refuge zone and currently a battleground. Weapons of war, ammunition and uniforms are easily obtained from crooked traffickers and sometimes at a low price from deserter and destitute soldiers⁶⁴. Moreover, Northern Cameroon is the part of the country mostly affected by the economic recession⁶⁵ which has led to a decline in public and private morality, which in turn has worsened the 'backward' mentality of the population in this poorly educated region. In addition to corruption and complicity of public officials, 'the gendarmerie services report that nowadays, highway robbers are also Cameroonian or foreign soldiers' in activity⁶⁶. The small-scale highway robbers operate in groups of three or four, using rudimentary means (arrows, home-made rifles) without necessarily causing any casualties. These are idle people who attack isolated travellers on secondary roads. But, they are threatened by the presence of forces of law and order. The large-scale highway robbers, on the other hand, are better equipped. They apply fearsome and deadly methods of attack on highways, attacking everyone, escorted convoys and even forces of law and order. They always leave behind them dead, wounded and traumatized victims. Their favourite areas are mainly roads used by traders in the Far North, North and Adamawa Regions, East, West and North Regions. West, South-West and the coast also experience attacks, but very sporadically.

In the Adamawa, roads concerned are Ngaoundere - Garoua (village Tekel), Ngaoundere - Meignaga (village Niyambaka - Dibi), Meiganga - Ngaoui (kilometre points 10 and 80), Tignere - Mayo Baleo (village Wouldé), Ngaoundere - Tignere (village Libong) towards the border (forest between Kontcha and Mayo Baleo). In the North, the roads concerned are Garoua - Damsa, Guider - Dourbeye, Bibémi Rey Boubabibémi Chad border, the Tcholliré -Toubo road serving the border market of Mbaiboum. In the Far North, there is the National Road No. 1 serving Maroua-Kousséri and particularly the sectors of Waza-Salé - Ziguézage - Darbhanga - Tilde - Afade where small Nigerian bands discreetly penetrate. In the North-West, the Ndop - Bafoussam through Jakiri, Bali - Batiboro road serves as hideouts for highway robbers.⁶⁷ Despite government efforts to fight this plague⁶⁸, rampant banditry continues and is undoubtedly a major obstacle to the smooth running of trade with Nigeria.

Besides highway robbers, we have sea pirates. These are gangs that usually operate at sea using flying boats. Before, they used to travel in seas to pillage. Nowadays, the practice continues with the only difference that pirates are more interested in the money of their victims than in their goods.

When trading with Nigeria, pirates operate at the maritime borders along the roads leading to the towns of Tiko, Limbe, Idenau, Bamusso, Ekondo-Titi, etc. Their *modus operandi* consists in attacking boats in the middle of the sea at the risk of riddling them with bullets so as to capsize them. They systematically rob their victims of all their money and do not hesitate to kill them if they resist or fight back.

Although not easily identifiable, they are nevertheless citizens from several countries. According to the testimony from Idenau traders, they are made up of Cameroonians, Chadians, Beninese and above all Nigerians⁶⁹. This type of banditry greatly hampers trade as it directly affects importers. This cross-border criminality with devastating effects has not left the government indifferent. Despite these survivals, internal and international measures have been taken to reduce it to a strict minimum (see Chapter 6).

The third type of cross-border criminality is that of armed robbers. Made up of Cameroonians and Nigerians, they carry out sporadic operations on both sides of the border and as opportunities dictate. They are not interested in bulky goods, but rather in easily transportable valuables and money. These criminals operate in small groups or networks and sometimes have almost reliable information. They are active in the North and South of the country. They operate on trade roads and tracks and usually during late or low-traffic periods. Their *modus operandi* is to rob the victim without necessarily killing him/her.

The fourth and final group of armed criminals is the Boko Haram terrorist sect. This is an Islamist sect that originated and operates mainly in the northern part of Nigeria.

Indeed, 'Boko Haram' is the combination of two terms: Boko which means secular school in the Hausa language and Haram meaning 'forbidden' in Arabic or 'illicit' in Islam. Thus, 'Boko Haram' means that 'Western education is a sin' or a 'Sunni group for preaching and jihad'. Boko Haram is a religious movement from Nigeria frequently described as a sect. The United States considers it as such and has classified it as a terrorist organisation. It is believed to have links with Al.

⁶³ A-H. O.Mfege, *Les frontières ...*, p. 145.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p.146

⁶⁵ Cameroon has been suffering from economic recession since 1987. Its effects are more serious in the northern part of the country (Adamawa, North and Far North), which remains the least developed. Between 2001 and 2007, the proportion of inhabitants living below the poverty line rose from 18.8% to 24.6%, while it dropped by 0.3% in the rest of the country.

⁶⁶ A.Hubert O.Mfege, *Les frontières ...*, p. 146.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p.150.

⁶⁸ Below.Chapitre 6

⁶⁹ Interview with Mokicetus Nalova, a 55-year-old trader in Idenau, 20 August 2013.

Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)⁷⁰. For Nigerian specialists, Boko Haram does not fit the Wahhabi model: it is a sect that teaches and uses magic.⁷¹

Founded by Mohamed Yusuf in 2002, this organisation, which is based in the North-East of Nigeria, advocates a radical and rigorous Islam. Its ideology draws inspiration from the Taliban in Afghanistan. It rejects modernity and has as initial objective the enforcement of Sharia law throughout Nigeria⁷². The organisation has been recognised to commit a series of acts of violence against the Nigerian government, Christians and the Muslim population in the regions where it is present. Its crimes and massacres have already resulted in thousands of victims and displaced persons.

Since the death of its founder in detention on 14 August 2009, the movement has had other leaders who have restructured it to give it an international dimension. They include: SanniUmaru and Abubakar Shekau, who is of Kanuri origin like most of members of the movement⁷³. Thus, Cameroon, Niger and Chad have become targets and battle grounds. Since then, objectives of the movement have remained unclear. The *modus operandi* of the group has become very dynamic. Its killing techniques have included slitting throats, shootings, bombings, use of grenades and, nowadays, Kamikaze attacks. It is also important to note that the group has been kidnapping and taking hostages. Just as the South of Niger and Chad, the northern part of Cameroon has become a real laboratory for all these methods.

The consequences of massacres and attacks perpetrated by Boko Haram terrorists are significant. Besides the general fear among the population, thousands of displaced Nigerians have found refuge in Cameroon. Their massive arrival exceeds the hosting capacity of the camps set up by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Feeding them also constitutes a challenge, as the desertion of villages and their crowding in camps make it difficult to cultivate land; hence, the risk of famine.

While this situation of terror is disrupting agriculture, it is also seriously affecting cross-border trade, as North Eastern Nigeria and Northern Cameroon are major trading and crossing points: Demsa, Gashiga, Kerawa, Banki-Amchidé, Limani, Fotokol... Due to the violence and disruptions they cause, Boko Haram and all other armed gangs are weakening factors for trade; thus, the urgent need for concerted action.

2.4.4. Inadequacy of Concerted Actions between Both States

Given the growing issue of insecurity or the fight against smuggling and counterfeiting, concerted actions between Cameroon and Nigeria do not always yield fruits; although the promotion and expansion of trade remains a challenge and an objective for both countries.

Despite their declaration of intent, Cameroon and Nigeria have not yet set up a harmonisation framework, a situation which hampers trade. Between the Nigerian Standards Agency (NAFDAG) and the Cameroonian Standards Agency (ANOR), there are still bottlenecks⁷⁴. Cameroonian companies have difficulties in obtaining recognition in Nigeria (registration number). Yet, harmonization of standards and/or recognition would have been beneficial.

As regards the insecurity issue and cross-border crime, Cameroon and Nigeria have not always adopted concerted actions. Yet, the terrorist threat of Boko Haram in particular ignores international borders and isolated measures by States are proving unsatisfactory. Indeed, both countries agreed on 8 November 2013 to create a joint committee to secure their common border against threats from Boko Haram and pirates operating in the Gulf of Guinea. However, much is still needed.⁷⁵

Nigeria had however wished to carry out concerted actions with Cameroon army to track down the terrorists. Realising the slow reaction of Paul Biya, Good Luck Jonathan wanted to obtain the right to pursue these outlaws right to Cameroon soil. Unfortunately, his request went unheeded⁷⁶ and slowed down diplomatic relationships between both countries. This can be illustrated by the cancellation of Good Luck Jonathan's visit to Yaounde on 27 January 2014, although it had been announced by several Cameroonian media⁷⁷. After two decades of tense diplomatic relationships, the fight against terrorists of the Boko Haram sect seemed to be the new bone of contention between both countries. The opposition press has moreover described this refusal of Cameroon as a 'strategic error' and considered the fact by Good Luck Jonathan to turn to Western assistance evidence of his anger.⁷⁸ To this effect, President Paul Biya only learned the U.S. request by the Nigerian President through media.⁷⁹

It is in an attempt to reconcile both parties, that French President François Hollande organised a special summit on 17 May 2014 in Paris bringing together Nigerian President Good Luck Jonathan and Paul Biya with their counterparts from Chad, Niger and Benin. The outcome was the need to coordinate intelligence and patrols for the military response, but also for the search for the missing, including the high school girls abducted in Chibok on 14 April 2014.

⁷⁰ www.google.cm, « Boko Haram »

⁷¹ M- A. Pérouse de Montclos, Nigeria specialist, research officer at the Institute of Research for Development (IRD) in www.google.cm

⁷² *Le point du jour* Newspaper n° 013, September 2014, pp. 2-3.

⁷³ The Kanuri constitute the bulk of Boko Haram's workforce. It is an ethnic group established in Niger, Chad, Cameroon and above all in Nigeria. They are ahead of the Hausa, Choa Arabs, Mafa and citizens from other countries, including Nigerians, Chadians and Malians. See *Le point du jour*, Newspaper n° 013, September 2014, p.2.

⁷⁴ *Journal Diapason*, Hebdomadaire n° 258 du 28 juillet 2015, 11^e année, p.3.

⁷⁵ *Journal l'Emergence*, quotidien, n°261 du 12 mai 2015, p.5.

⁷⁶ Cameroon's reluctance is justified by fears of excesses often attributed to the Nigerian army. Troops of the Rapid Intervention Battalion (BIR) had already repelled elements of the Nigerian armed forces in Amchide, a village bordering Nigeria, on 15 January 2014, who were chasing members of Boko Haram see www.cameroonvoice.com, « Cameroon Nigeria : The new revolt »

⁷⁷ www.cameroonvoice.com, « Cameroon Nigeria : The new revolt »

⁷⁸ *Quotidien l'Emergence*, n° 261 du lundi 12 mai 2014, p.5.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

The LCBC and Benin had also agreed to the principle of a regional force to combat terrorism, to which they will contribute 700 men each. It should be recalled that President Paul Biya declared war to Boko Haram during that Paris Summit. With the accession to power of the new Nigerian President Mohammadu Buhari on 29 May 2015, hopes were placed on the evolution of the Cameroonian position. Unfortunately, this has not happened.

During President Buhari's visit to Yaoundé on 29-30 July 2015, both Heads of States reiterated their 'common determination to eradicate Boko Haram', but continued to ignore the right of prosecution by agreeing to a mutualisation of information.⁸⁰

As it appears, the lack of concerted action between States with regard to terrorist threat and cross-border crime also contributes to weakening trade.

3. Infrastructure Problems

Infrastructure problems are another factor that weakens trade with Nigeria. These problems relate to quantity, quality and even absence of infrastructure. Thus, we have the inadequacy and poor state of road infrastructure, the shortcomings of maritime transport, the absence of foreign exchange facilities and the inadequacy of trade infrastructure.

3.1. Multitude of Tracks and the Quasi-Inexistence of Good Roads

Trade between Cameroon and Nigeria follows many terrestrial routes, among others. However, these routes are dominated by a multitude of tracks, the exact number of which is not known, as they pass through the bush (in the South) and the savannah (in the North) and reach the border at uninhabited points.

This multitude of tracks is a conducive factor for smuggling and informal trade, as they allow to bypass customs posts on roads. In the quest of profit, even difficulties inherent to them such as: narrowness of tracks, steep tracks, transport by head, walking, fatigue, bad weather, insecurity.... are far from discouraging them.

Yet, it should be noted that the multiplicity of tracks is itself due to the very long border (nearly 2,000km), hard to control. We also have the porosity of the border, the inadequacy of State controls (terrestrial, maritime, air, personnel), the inadequacy of equipment and personnel in charge of controlling borders.⁸¹

Elsewhere, it is worth noting that the tracks are by no means the only factors of weakness in trade. Trade in goods between Cameroon and Nigeria also suffers from the quasi-inexistence of good roads. Indeed, Cameroon is linked to Nigeria by 57 goods crossing points. (See chart below).

Region	Division	Cross-border Post	Nature of Border	Nber
Far-North	Mayo-Sava Mora	Banki Toukombéré Kolofata	Terrestrial	10
	Mayo-Tsanaga : Mokolo	Kouapé Kéréwa Mogodé Mascada Bourha	Terrestrial	
	Logone and Chari : Kousseri	Darak Fotokol	LakeChad River	
North	Bénoué : Garoua	Demsa, Baa-Manga, Djamteri, Mayo-Doumsi, Datiel Bashéo, Mayo-Tien, Djalingo Timpil, Ouro-Aladjé, Bougour, Daram, Ouro-Boké, Ouro-Garga, Gétélé	Terrestrial	20
	Mayo-Louti : Guider	Dourbey, Doumo	Terrestrial	
	Faro : Poli	Béka, Karim, Kuri	Terrestrial	
Adamawa	Faro and Déo : Tignere	Tignere, Kontcha	Terrestrial	6
	Mayo-Banyo : Banyo	Banyo, Bankim, Atta Mayo Darlé	Terrestrial	
North-West	Donga- Mantung : Nkambe	Abonshie, Gida-Njikum, Lihkop, Lus, Sabongari	Terrestrial	9
	Menchum : Wum	Boworo, Fungom, Essu, Furu-Awa	Terrestrial	
South-West	Manyu : Mamfe	Akwaya, Eyumodjock, Mamfé	Terrestrial	12
	Ndian : Mundemba	Bamusso, Mudemba, Bekumu	Terrestrial and Maritime	
	Fako : Buea	Tiko, Cap Limboh, Lobe, Limbe, Ekok, Idenau	Terrestrial and Maritime	

Table 2: Cross-Border Customs Posts and Goods Crossing Points to Nigeria

Source: Compiled From Data Obtained In « La Monographie Des Échanges Transfrontaliers De Marchandises Au Cameroun » Published by the National Institute of Statistics August 2014

⁸⁰La Nouvelle Expression Newspaper, No 4028 du 31 July 2015, p.3.

⁸¹KengneFoudouop, « la contrebande entre le Cameroun et le Nigéria »..., p.19.

Among these roads, only about eleven are favourable for traffic.⁸² Unfortunately, these roads are not always good and therefore not very conducive to vehicle traffic. Most of them are not tarred. Sometimes narrow, they often lack maintenance and their poor condition further deteriorates during the rainy season due to mud that slows down traffic and sometimes blocks it for several days. Even the busiest roads are not always tarred, talk less of maintained. It concerns the following roads:

- | | | |
|-----------|-------------|---------------------------|
| • Fotokol | – Gambaru | – Maiduguri (Nigeria) |
| • Garoua | – Boukoulou | – Mubi (Nigeria) |
| • Kumba | – Ofu | – Calabar (Nigeria) |
| • Maroua | – Créa | – Bama (Nigeria) |
| • Bamenda | – Ekok | – Ikom (recently tarred). |
| • Bamkim | – Ribao | – Gembu (Nigeria) |
| • Poli | – Tchemba | – Kobi – Yola (Nigeria) |
| • Garoua | – Kobossi | – Yola (Nigeria) |
| • Garoua | – Boukoulou | – Mubi (Nigeria) |
| • Mora | – Kerawa | – Bama (Nigeria). |

The other trade roads with Nigeria are of lesser importance and less used than those mentioned above, but in fact their situation is not so different. They are characterised by their poor condition.



Figure 2: A sample of Road in Poor Condition

Source: www.investiraucameroun.com

Yet, it should be noted that the poor condition of roads is not just due to the failure of the State. Although insufficient, efforts are often made by the latter to sustainably preserve maintained or tarred roads, in particular through road weighing stations and aerial load limitation devices, in order to limit the overloading of trucks that damages roads. Penalties are even imposed on offenders in case of overloading, but truck drivers multiply strategies to circumvent all these devices. After crossing weighing stations and load limitation devices, overloading is systematically practised, for instance, two trucks are often combined into one. This attitude favours the degradation of tarred and trafficable roads.

Whatever the case, the poor condition of roads is largely due to the failure of the State. This reality clearly contradicts with authorities' stated will to promote and intensify trade between both countries.

Moreover, except for the Littoral I and II customs sectors, which are at the top of the list in terms of revenue collected, the customs posts and offices located along the Nigerian border are the most profitable in terms of revenue. In other words, the borders with Nigeria are the most profitable in terms of revenue and even the most fragile (in terms of risk and exposure).⁸³ What can justify negligence that characterises the state of roads in these areas?

Moreover, this paradox is not limited to the poor condition of roads. All border areas in the southern part of the country are suffering from landlockedness. This is the case in the divisions of Donga Mantung (Nkambe), Mentchum (Wum), Manyu (Mamfé) and Ndian (Mudemba). However, terrestrial routes are not the sole responsible for the poor level of trade or its 'informalisation'. The maritime way is equally deficient.

3.2. Failures in Maritime Transport

In addition to terrestrial routes, trade between Cameroon and Nigeria also uses maritime ways, especially the sea, rivers and the lake (Chad). Just as terrestrial routes, these transportation means are also deficient. And factors of this deficiency are numerous.

Among other things, we have the poor functioning of some ports (such as Garoua on the Benue, Tiko, Limbe....), the non-existence of official ports duly built (Idenau, Bamusso, Ekondo-Titi....), the shortcomings of the State control (insufficient staff and customs brokers), the deficit of a local tax spirit and, above all, lack of the sense of civic responsibility in tax payment linked to the mentality of traders or, better still, smugglers, who, in order to avoid customs

⁸² NIS, *Monographie des échanges transfrontaliers de marchandises au Cameroun*, August 2014.

⁸³ Borders with Nigeria are the most fragile because not only do they suffer from piracy and security issues, but they are also source of all misunderstandings between both countries.

controls and maximise their profits, set up makeshift landing stages, generally located upstream or downstream of the official port, to embark or disembark their goods. This is the case in the area known as Bois des Singes in Douala.

Elsewhere, we can mention the issues of security and insecurity. The security issue is linked to the fragility of boats, which are sometimes wooden boats equipped with engines. Unfortunately, these boats often run aground at sea because of the violence of the waves, which very often challenges their resistance and waterproofing. Yet, the capsizing is not just related to night sailing. In landing stages of Mabweta, Idenau, Bamusso, Mbangé and Ekondo-Titi, for example, some traders prefer to carry out their operations at night or in the early hours of the morning.⁸⁴ According to witnesses, this practice, which is now clearly decreasing, was very common until the mid-1990s. Capsizing, losses and above all the death of loved ones are all discouraging factors for bilateral trade.

The insecurity issue is linked to the resurgence of maritime piracy, the atrocities of armed gangs such as the Boko Haram terrorists, which have dealt a serious blow to trade in the Lake Chad region, since located within their operating area, lacustrine links that used to connect Cameroonian and Nigerian borders in this zone are practically at a standstill.

Fortunately, adequate solutions have begun to be found, such as the progressive substitution of fragile boats by real ones, the reinforcement of security measures...

3.3. *Absence of Exchange Services*

One of the major weaknesses of trade between Cameroon and Nigeria is obviously the absence of exchange services. During our fieldwork, we unfortunately noted that from the north to the south, currency exchange is still an activity dominated exclusively by individuals. This is particularly true of the Hausa (the majority group in this field) who continue to carry out their operations in the open and on mats instead of commercial banks or other approved services. Even in major cities such as Douala, Yaounde, Bafoussam, currency exchange, especially CFA Franc into Naira is carried out by 'black market' individuals who take advantage of Naira fluctuation to increase their share of profits. Consequently, there are wonders about the real causes of such a lack of interest in the exchange of Naira by the approved services. In other words, why has the exchange of Naira remained a business of individuals or networks for decades? Are difficulties of exchanging Naira in banks and its instability responsible for this situation? Thus, one can think that the informality that characterises and dominates trade with Nigeria begins with the exchange of currency.

3.4. *Inadequacy of Trade Infrastructure*

Nowadays, talking about the importance of Cameroonian western borders is a truism, because given potentials of the Nigerian giant; it constitutes all strategic, economic and commercial stakes. Unlike other countries such as Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and CAR, Cameroonian borders are distinguished by the considerable number of border markets. Although rare in the southern part (Ekok Atta), they are more concentrated in the northern half of the country, often with their Nigerian equivalent: Touroua (Cameroon)-Guri (Nigeria), Kerawa (Cameroon)-Kerawa (Nigeria), Amchidé (Cameroon)-Banki (Nigeria), Fotokol (Cameroon) and Gambaru (Nigeria).

This symmetrical or rather twinned organisation makes it easy to make remarks. The first observation to make is that of the animation of markets. Nigerian markets are livelier than Cameroonian ones. Indeed, this is the result of their irregular (unstable) functioning. 'After a period of intense activity, many sink into immobility, activities move to a neighbouring locality'⁸⁵

The second remark that can be made is that of inadequacy of trade infrastructure. In other words, Cameroonian markets as a whole are not built. They are made up of sheds arranged as wished by traders. The few existing shops and warehouses are owned by individuals. This situation is due to the fact that these markets were initially small local markets that have grown over time. Today, despite their liveliness, these markets function as warehouses and relay sites that ensure the distribution of goods to the neighbouring country. This inadequacy of the trade infrastructure per se is a cause of trade weakness. The construction of markets, for example, is bound to be more beneficial to the State, particularly in terms of supervising traders, levying various taxes, supplying populations, keeping statistics and better controlling the borders by monitoring inputs and outputs. Indeed, the inadequacy of exchange infrastructure is not a problem specific to border markets alone, since markets within the country are also affected. Yet, it would be great for the State to support local authorities in building markets, especially border ones, which are of proven importance.

4. *Influence of Developed Countries and Competition from Emerging Countries*

Another major cause of the weakness of trade between Cameroon and Nigeria lies in the influence of developed countries and competition from emerging ones. These include a preference for trade with developed countries, strong competition from emerging economies and the influence of international institutions and organisations.

4.1. *Priority to Trade with Developed Countries*

The organisation of Cameroonian foreign trade is comparable to that of many African countries. It is dominated by North-South trade and trade with countries on the continent still represents a little portion of the entire volume.

In this system, which gives priority to developed countries, the main trading partners over time have been France, Italy, Spain, Germany, the United States, Japan, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Portugal, China and India. This unfortunate situation is strangely not specific to Cameroon. It is also specific to other African countries such as Nigeria. Although the latter is now the main economic partner of many African countries (Chad, Niger, Benin), the reverse is not

⁸⁴KengneFodouop, « La contrebande... », p.22.

⁸⁵ K. Bennafla, *Le commerce frontalier ...*, p. 71.

necessarily true and most of its trade is done with East Asia and Latin America. All these countries are experiencing a constant increase in their various market shares. Thus, one can wonder on the underlying causes of such a priority.

In other words, why do African countries in general and Cameroon in particular trade more with developed countries?

Many reasons can be given to attempt a justification of such an imbalance. These include the colonial heritage and the preferential agreements with the metropolis, the weak or under-industrialisation which testifies the inability of these countries to transform their main products which constitute trade, the neo-colonial mentality that prioritises foreign products considered to be of good quality and/or the lack of spirit in local consumption.

The priority to trade with developed countries implies a weakness in inter-African trade. Thus, beside the above-mentioned reasons, it can also be blamed on an identical production base. In other words, Cameroon has the same problem as other African countries with regard to industrialisation. Thus, they set up almost the same types of industries with almost identical production. This lack of specialisation of countries in one production justifies the great reliance on developed countries to satisfy their needs. Cameroon, for instance, massively imports food and manufactured products (vehicles, machinery and electrical and electronic equipment), fuels and minerals, such that its trade balance is structurally and continuously in deficit⁸⁶.

This weakness of South-South trade is as strong and harmful as the customs duties of these countries are the highest and the commercial potential unexploited.

Pascal Lamy, then Director General of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), declared in 2006 in an interview with Tropical Markets that 70% of customs duties are paid for trade between developing countries.⁸⁷ This is a major barrier to South-South trade. This is why for a very long time; France has remained Cameroon's main partner. Even today, the change is still not significant and it is one of the main customers and suppliers (see chart N° 24).

Yet, given the dynamics of trade and the diversity of partners, this priority given to developed countries is far from being a permanent reality.

4.2. Strong Competition from Emerging Countries

Today, more than ever before, trade is taking place further and faster. This development is certainly attributable to the progress of globalisation, but also to progress made by other countries in the concert of nations that did not previously feature on the list of so-called developed countries. Thus, old Western countries are no longer the only ones to master secrets of development. This is why they are increasingly challenged by the rise of emerging countries, both in Cameroon and elsewhere in the world. These emerging countries include South Korea, India, Brazil, Argentina, etc. In recent years, there has been a gradual change in the geographical orientation of Cameroonian trade. Indeed, East Asia is seriously competing with former European developed countries.

This zone now represents more than 20% of the country's overall trade.⁸⁸ The leading countries of that zone are China, Japan, India and Thailand. Given their need for raw materials, trade with China and India is steadily growing. For Cameroon, China in particular has become a reliable partner. In 2012, it absorbed 8.5% of exports and provided 10.6% of imports, against 15.3% and 10.4% respectively. It has thus become the first bilateral partner ahead of Spain, the Netherlands and France. China alone buys more than half of Cameroonian cotton and logs destined to export.

Even though Nigeria has been the leading supplier since 2011, statistics from Cameroonian authorities show that China and India account for 13% of the country's overall foreign trade against only 5% for the United States. The European Union estimates this percentage at 20%.⁸⁹

It is therefore clear that the competition from emerging countries to developed ones is factual, although the expected results are not those obtained. Indeed, if Asian competition in Cameroon is visible and appreciable on the one hand, it must be noted that on the other hand, there are still doubts about its benefits on the economy, because foreign trade figures show that the country still has difficulty in excelling in world trade, especially with its Asian partners.

Thus, whether with China or India, Cameroonian trade balance is still largely in deficit. For example, China's imports to Cameroon increased by 110% between 1999 and 2005. At the same time, however, and particularly in 2004, some Cameroonian economists think that it was responsible for 23% of Cameroon's total deficit of \$48 million. This situation worsened in 2005 when China was responsible for \$91 million of Cameroon's deficit.⁹⁰

With India, the situation is not too different. Indo-Cameroon bilateral trade, which has been steady since February 1968,⁹¹ is still thriving. Indian exports are of pharmaceutical products, machine tools, iron and steel items, while imports are made up of products such as cotton, wood and metals. Yet, the trade balance is still largely in deficit for Cameroon. Indeed, statistics on their bilateral trade reveal, for instance, an increase in Indian exports during the April-July 2010 period to 48.93 million dollars against 18.62 million dollars in April-July 2009.

On the other hand, according to the same statistics, during the same period of April-July 2010, there was a drop of about 16% in Indian's imports, which amounted to 4.58 million dollars against 6.45 million dollars in April-July 2009.

⁸⁶ A presentation given by C. Kooh II, Chairman of the Technical Secretariat of the Competitiveness Committee on the theme "Competitiveness of Cameroonian external trade: contribution of the private sector" at the 6th edition of Cameroon Business Forum on 09 March 2015.

⁸⁷ P. Lamy, in *marchéstropicaux*, n° 3136 of 20 January 2006.

⁸⁸ www.lemoci.com, « Conjoncture économique »

⁸⁹ www.news-mboa.info, « Commerce international: la Chine est prioritaire »

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ The first trade agreement between India and Cameroon was signed on 22 February 1968. It is renewable every year.

India's Exports from Cameroon				India's Imports to Cameroon			
2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010
82.93	72.61	92.46	77.21	7.60	18.81	30.97	137.35

Table 3: Evolution in Bilateral Trade between India and Cameroon from 2006 to 2010 (In Millions of Dollars)

Source: High Commission of India, February 2011

Therefore, it appears that trade between Cameroon and Nigeria really suffers from the strong competition of emerging countries, but even with the latter, Cameroon is not benefiting and must also face the influence of international organisations and institutions.

4.3. Influence of Regional Organisations and International Institutions

Beside the key position of developed countries in Cameroon's foreign trade and the strong competition from emerging countries, trade between Cameroon and Nigeria also suffers from the influence of regional organisations and international institutions. This is mainly the role played by the European Union and the WTO.

Indeed, since the WTO replaced the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) in 1995, it has become a key organisation in the international economic landscape. To this effect, it advocates the dismantling of all protectionist barriers to promote free competition, in accordance with one of its fundamental principles on reciprocity of tariff concessions⁹². It is in this context that it denounced the EU-ACP agreements.

After a long period of hesitation, the EU agreed to replace them with the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs). Thus, with Cameroon, the interim agreement was concluded on 15 January 2009. With this agreement, the country committed itself over a period of 15 years to liberalise 80% of imports from this zone. This agreement, described as a disaster by some critics, reinforces the comfortable position that the European Union already occupies in Cameroon's foreign trade. With more than 50% of non-oil trade, it has long been Cameroon's main trading partner. It represents 54.5% of exports and 33.4% of imports. While Nigeria, although the leading supplier (with 58% of imports) for several years (2011), represents only about 8% of overall exports.

As it appears, the European Union and the WTO, within the legitimate framework of trade liberalisation, play a less appreciable role in trade between Cameroon and Nigeria. For, besides the development that is not yet effective after more than 5 decades of cooperation and the trade balance that is still in deficit for Cameroon, the EPAs from which they originate can considerably reduce the bulks of their import/export products because of customs exemptions. This influence of institutions is perceived as a major blow whose role is to durably undermine this bilateral trade with its already multiple obstacles and enormous under-exploited potentials.

5. Conclusion

Finally, trade between Cameroon and Nigeria has great potentials still under-exploited, but it suffers from multiple strong and helpless barriers. These range from the weakness of legal instruments to the influence and competition of developed countries, also insecurity issues, political and social tensions and infrastructure problems. All these factors put together undoubtedly justifies the weak development of this trade and its 'informality'. Whereas, if we look at their potentials, this trade can generate substantial revenues beneficial to the State and the population, given that it is indeed a major source of employment.

In all, foreign trade represents more than 50% of Cameroon's GDP. Aware of these challenges, the State has done everything to drastically reduce these obstacles and promote the development of this trade which has a real impact and can constitute a model of cooperation and integration. Hence, solutions and challenges facing trade between Cameroon and Nigeria.

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