**Full Length Research Paper**

**Treaties and national peace; (Joshua 9:19-21) and the socio-cultural imperatives of the green tree agreement**

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In international politics, bilateral and multilateral relations are conducted based on national and regional interest. This is because development can only thrive in a peaceful environment, different societies or nations enter into treaties or alliance to protect their national or regional territories. This study focuses on the Gibeonites treaties with the Israelites as an exercise to protect their national interest and its binding effect on the Israelites not minding how it came about. It also analyses the green tree agreement and its socio-cultural imperatives in the interest of regional peace. The study examines the genesis of the Bakassi conflict between Nigeria and Cameroon and its socio-cultural implication on the inhabitants. The place of oath taking as a vital ingredient in peace building in Africa is highlighted. The research adopts the inter-disciplinary approach; which implies a combination of more than one approaches namely; historical, philosophical and phenomenological in the discussion. The paper observes that the green tree agreement is a political and not a historiocultural solution to the Bakassi conflict. It concludes that any individual, group or society seeking to have peace, must be willing to sacrifice a portion of his possession or pride in the overall interest of all.

**Key words:** International Politics, Treaties, Cultural, Society.

**INTRODUCTION**

In the international arena, one of the pre-occupations of nations in the conduct of international relation is how to maintain peace both at home and abroad. This perhaps explains why countries join international organizations or enter into bilateral and multi-lateral agreements with others. Without mincing words, membership of these international organizations helps to protect weak nations against the powerful ones. Even among strong nations, their excesses are checked (Haralambus and Horborn, 2008).

Without doubt, different nations, cultures and societies are endowed differently. Some countries possess a superior military might; others strong economy. Some others large population; while some scientific and technological advancement give them a comparative advantage. In international politics, domination, fear or the treaty of it, causes anxiety among nations. Kalu (2010) hold that “Our generation is confronted with many problem notably among which include – acute hardship, anxiety, ravaging war, economic inequality, terrorism,

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religious fanaticism and political instability”.

Okoro (2010) contends that “While wars and conflict are not new in human history, the ferocity with which it occur in our world, casts aspersion on the concept of the world becoming a global village”.

The search for an alternative or solution, have forced different nations to align or re-align with bigger powers to protect their social, economic, political or cultural sovereignty. This study focuses on the Gibeonites treaty with the Israelites (Joshua, 9:19 to 21) (New Testament Bible USA, 1985) and the socio-cultural imperatives of the green tree agreement. The study adopts the interdisciplinary approach in the discussion. To this end the historical philosophical and phenomenological approach were used. Historically archival materials were searched to get the various treaties entered into by Britain and Germany on one hand, and Britain and France on the other as well as Nigeria and Cameroon concerning the Bakasi Peninsula.

Philosophically, the issue of fairness equity and natural justice were considered as how Britain and Germany could enter into a treaty about a people that are not theirs. Phenomenologically, the study undertakes an ethnographic survey of the cultural areas covered by this study.

Conceptual clarifications

Treaties

A treaty in this context referred to an agreement willingly or persuasively entered into by two parties or more with the sole objective of protecting, preventing, or preserving their individual or collective interest. In conducting international relations, countries were concerned with three main issues: “restraining inter-state conflict, securing human rights and managing the economic system” (UNOOSA, 2007). In this wise therefore, treaties were seen as the only option that can help to unite nations. “Moreover, treaties shifts issues from the political arena into a juridical rule based forum” (United Nations Publication, 2012). According to United Nation’s record by 2005, there were approximately fifty thousand treaties on file in the UN treaty system which confirm the importance of treaty as a unifying factor among nations.

Nation

The term nation, according to Ezeani derives from a latin word “natus” meaning birth. In his view, the essence of a nation is inter-changeable and this poses great difficulty in its definition and conceptualization. Quoting Connor (1978) this essence is a psychological bond that joins the people and differentiates it in the sub-conscious conviction of its members, from all other people in most vital way. According to scholars, every nation is distinguished by four main features Common language, population, defined territory and sovereignty.

Peace and human society

In the view of Aja “Peace is a relative condition of security friendly climate that allows individuals and group relations to progressive order and stability (Aja, 2007)”. Philosophers have different view of peace. They hold that peace is both natural and a creation of human society. For instance John Locke insists that the universe is not lawless but orderly. To St. Augustine of Hippo, there are two cities; (a) the city of God (that is built upon perfect heaven) peace and (b) the earthly city of man which is characterized by selfishness, greed, corruption, tension and strife, fear and terror of death (Aja, 2007). According Machiavelli as quoted by Sabine and Thorson (1973) “Human nature is profoundly aggressive and acquisitive; men aim to keep what they have and to acquire more”.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Conflict whether at local or international level, leads to a breakdown of law and order and may also result to a loss of human and material resources. To discourage the occurrence of conflict, scholars developed some conflict resolution models such as the social atavistic conflict thought by Lombroso (2006) or the conflict resolution model by Thomas and Kilmann (1999) which are adopted as the analytical model in this study.

According to the theory of social atavism, there is a natural tendency on the part of creatures to migrate, expand and dominate space or territory using any means possible, physical or the use of force9. In conflict thought, it is the tendency to expand one’s territory that breeds reentrance or clash of occupation. In the human context according to Aja (2007), migration and territorial expansion leads to dispute over the control of land mass or territorial waters, or air space.

In order to check any probable conflict which might result from acquisitive or expansionist tendency of individuals or states, it would be appropriate to undertake the cost benefit analysis of such conflict in terms of human and material resources, national pride and global interest. According to Thomas and Kilmann (1999), “conflict management is the process of limiting the negative aspect while increasing the positive aspect of conflict”. Conflict resolution entails reduction, elimination and termination of all forms or typologies of conflict in any society. To this end, Thomas and Kilmann (1999) identified five styles of conflict management to include - competing, compromising, collaborating, avoiding and accommodating.
In the view of Sandole, 1999 cited in Elleh, 2013), to deal with a deep routed intractable conflict requires a wholeistic and comprehensive approach (New Jerusalem Bible). As it were, this will make for an in-depth grasp of the complexity and characteristic nature of the conflict.

Both the social atavistic conflict thought and the conflict resolution model presented earlier underscores the point that man is gregarious and acquisitive by nature; always eager to take advantage of situation and circumstance especially where he has an upper hand. However, in dispute resolution, compromise does not necessarily mean surrender instead it is a wise application of the intellect to sacrifice something for a long term benefit as the succeeding discussions review.

The Gibeonites pact

The Gibeonites having heard and seen the great conquest of Joshua on the neighbouring towns around decided to put themselves together to plan for any workable strategy that will stop the Israelites from having battles with them. Knowing the power of treaties they feigned to be people from a very far country because they were seriously in need of a peace deal in the form of a treaty. They lied to Joshua, despite his insistence to know where they were coming from. In the course of time, the Israelites discovered that they were their neighbours, they could not war with them because they have made a peace agreement not to war with them. The princes of Israel were angry for being deceived yet they could not raise their hands against the Gibeonites instead they said ‘we have sworn unto them’ (Joshua, 9:19,ff) (Harpers Bible Commentary, 1988).

The peace agreement between the two nations served as a strong force in restraining war between them. For this reason, even when Joshua was in rage he said ‘we will let them live lest wrath be upon us because of the oath which we swore unto them’ (New Jerusalem Bible). More so, in the Old Testament narratives, commitment to the content of a covenant relationship is not only human but divine. Even God obliges himself to this content. For instance, the attitude of the Israelites in Exodus had angered God so much that he wanted to eliminate them from the face of the earth. However God changed his mind, when Moses reminded him of his covenant with Abraham and the promise He (God) made.

As an individual, Joshua knew the risk or danger associated with breaking of a covenant of all the people who came from Egypt, only him and Caleb entered the promise land. He knew that the rest of the people could not owing to their rebellious nature against God and obstinate lack of confidence in God to make due his promises he made to their father Abraham. So, when this resent issue came up, it was obvious that to be on the safe side, they have to keep to the terms.

Without doubt, the Gibeonites were all aware that the strength and weakness of the Israelites lies in their covenant relationship with God. To secure their favor is always better than to push them to the religious angle. Since God meant everything to them, the Israelites would as much as possible strive to maintain their religious obligation.

In the Hebrew tradition, relationships are built on trust. These in most cases, are obtained in a covenantal treaty. For instance, the relationship between God and Abraham, it was stated thus---“If you will obey me and keep my commandments .....” Again, during the military exploits of Jephther, he also made a vow... “If I go to this battle and come alive.....” (New Jerusalem Bible).

These and many more, amplifies the scared position of covenant in the socio religious life of the Hebrews and by extension, Israelites. It is well understood that a serious curse follows the violation of a covenant. Unavoidably, the Israelites have been deceived to enter into a covenant with people they were expected to eliminate. As it were, covenants once entered into, remains irrevocable. This means that the Israelites must oblige themselves to it in their own interest and safety. On the part of the Gibeonites, it seems they have achieved their aim. The elders of the Israelites said “Thus what we shall do to them, let them live rather than bring retribution down on ourselves on account of the oath we have sworn to them”.

On account of the above, the elders resolved “Let them live but let them be wood cutters and water carriers for the whole community” (Joshua 9:20) (Mbiti, 1969). While the earlier mentioned may sound terrible to the admirers of the Gibeonites, it was accepted with their whole heart, as a better option. Realizing the predicament of their neighbors who were destroyed completely, slavery was better than death. Thus, the Gibeonites were reduced to servants in their own land and allowed to live.

According to biblical scholars, the earlier mentioned treaty explains the presence of the Gibeonites around the temple and other religious site of the Israelites. They serve as hewers of wood and carriers of water .In actual fact, this treaty avails the Gibeonites to come close to the temple which ordinarily, was not to be. Again, the above demonstrates that an individual or a people can secure benefit if they humble themselves.

The Bakassi conflict

The 1913 British German boundary adjustment in the South-East of Calabar is often cited as the basis for Cameroon’s claim to the Bakassi Peninsula. According to Wikipedia, the Obong of Calabar conceded his territory to the British, thereby relinquishing his political sovereignty.
Owing to the aforementioned, this Bakassi Peninsula has been a subject of international conflict occasioning series of international boundary adjustment effort from the colonial period to the post independence era, with both Nigeria and Cameroon laying claim to the territory. However, Nigerian citizens occupy Bakassi. The Nigeria/Cameroon boarder conflict epitomizes the high level of maturity and brotherly love between the two countries despite initial skirmishes; especially, against the backdrop that the bone of contention is manipulated by external factors to the benefit of the Western powers. While economic benefit occupied the front burner of this conflict, the socio-cultural implication on the inhabitants of the peninsula was played down.

The partitioning of Africa as a result of the 1884-5 Bellin Conference pitched African societies against one another. Here, brothers and other family members were divided. Ethnic groups which had existed as one were forced to belong to different countries, not minding the damage such was going to bring on the language, socio-political organization, economic and religio-cultural life of the people (https://unowa.unmissions.org/LinkClick...).

The socio-cultural imperatives

According to Mbiti “Man in Africa is anthropocentric” (Mbiti, 1969). He is at the centre of existence. This comprises the unborn, the living and the departed ancestors. Ikenga Metu asserts that Africans are highly religious people. Ejizu (2007) quoting Leonard writes that “The Africans live religiously, dress religiously, eat religiously, dance religiously and die religiously (Ejizu and Ozo-Mekuri, 2007). To the Africans, their existence is their religion and their religion existence. Therefore, to remove an African from his ancestral home, might mean detachment from their route. In Africa, land is a central phenomenon. The African is born into it, nurtured on it, and will be buried in it. To detach him, from the land means severing him from his route. The International Court Justice (ICJ) judgment transferring Bakassi over to Cameroon raised both social and spiritual question to the inhabitants, and if they are to be evicted from the land, where they have lived for centuries with their forebears. Their concern was: ‘what to do with the grave of their ancestors’ (Obodoegbulam) (Obodoegbulam, 2009). Mbiti warns that such was capable of resulting to conflict (Mbiti, 1969).

The green tree agreement

After what might seem as the international intrigues and manipulations to pitch the two countries against each other, the peaceful settlement was evolved in 2002 otherwise known as the GREEN TREE AGREEMENT.

The final document contained such provisions as follows:

1. Under the green tree agreement, Nigeria can continue to extract oil and natural gas from the peninsula and only pay taxes to the Cameroonian government.
2. Cameroon would not force Nigerian nationals living in Bakassi to leave the zone or change their nationality.
3. Respect their language, culture and belief.
4. Respect their right to continue their agricultural and fishing activities.
5. Protect their property and customary land right.
6. Not levy in any discriminatory manner taxes and other dues on Nigerian nation living in the zone.
7. Take every necessary measure to protect Nigerian nationals living in the zone from harassment or harm.

The document also provides a time frame for Nigeria’s withdrawal of her military and civil government from the territory and transfer political administration to Cameroon which was completed in 2013 (https://unowa.unmissions.org/LinkClick...).

Dispute resolution mechanism in Africa

In African tradition, treaties are made through oath taking between two or more persons, families or communities who hitherto have been engaged in one form of disagreement or conflict which sometimes have resulted to loss of lives and properties. In reaching this peace agreement, aggrieved parties come together on a neutral ground to swear an oath with their lives and the lives of their generations yet unborn before a religious element which is presided by the priest of a particular deity. The parties make solemn promises never to go back to whatever resulted to the conflict that degenerated to spilling of blood.

According to Tasie (2005), oath taking is a veritable tool in conflict resolution, he maintains that in oath taking parties in dispute may swear for the other on the emblem of a particular deity, this is because the deity aids in making the oath binding on the parties involved since the omniscience nature of the deity is believed to transcend human experience.

So strong is the oath taken to live in peace that nobody tries to break their pronouncement in the oath because it is always attached with severe consequences on the defaulters. However, this oath are not always written in black and white but stories of the agreement and what led to the agreement are always transmitted verbally through oral tradition so that the younger generation will not fall victim of breaking the oath sworn by their forbears.

Furthermore, witnesses are always sought to be present before the oath is taken, this process creates provision for a third-party or witness in the event of
violation of the oath. The witnesses most times are gotten from the neutral ground where they have chosen to go for the peace agreement through oath. Oath taking as treaties for peace is so potent in the traditional setting because violation of such agreement always results to terrible consequence which can wipe out an entire community or family if the deity before whom the oath was taken is not placated. More so, the gods and ancestors of the land are always called upon to bear witness and punish offenders, reason being that the gods are the community police whose duty is to punish offenders of any sort. Owete (2010) that is why in the traditional setting when people violate the agreement secretly they are punished and also made to appease the deities where necessary, hence, the fear of being punished by the deities makes every party to the treaty stick to the agreement so reached; there by creating room for a lasting peace where conflict hitherto existed.

In the traditional setting treaties by oath is so important in that it could be administered on individuals and communities to strengthen and promote good relationship. More so, in communities where incessant crisis occur treaties by oath are taken to mystically bind the people together in order to restrain them from violence. Mbiti (1969) calls this kind of oath “blood brother” as it makes the people involved to relate like real blood brother, they will not engage in anything that will degenerate to shedding of blood. Therefore, treaties provides a potent platform to guarantee peace if the parties involved decides to come together for peace, the agreement reached will serve as a check on the parties involved. Peace which is the absence of violence is key to development hence, if the society must have a meaningful development treaties of peace is inevitable. This is because the society is going through series of conflict ranging from sectarian, youth restiveness, ethnic variance, etc, which often leads to destruction of human lives and public structures; that is why a unifying activity is needed to bind people together and create the consciousness of restrain from violence in the event of any violence (Lawrence-Hart, 2014).

**Implication of breaking treaties**

The implication of breaking treaties varies from community to community or from one culture to another depending on the institution where the treaty was established. However, defaulters of treaties are often faced with severe consequences. Relating this to the Gibeonites peace agreement with the Israelites, it is obvious that the Gibeonites took advantage of their prior knowledge of the Israelite military exploit to save their people and culture. Despite the fact that they tricked the Israelite to a peace agreement, this was a binding oath which the Israelite realized they cannot afford to break. They were also aware of the supernatural consequence for doing so. Generally, people keep to the tense of an oath to save themselves and their future generation of the resulting consequence for violation. Relating this to the green tree agreement, both Nigeria and Cameroon obliged themselves to it partly because of regional peace and socio-cultural implication. To remove the inhabitants of the Peninsula will mean cutting them off from their ancestral home which both countries will not want to get involved because of the natural implication.

**Conclusion**

The discourse earlier mentioned, presents some of the challenges which confront humanity in a conflict situation. Generally speaking, international relations thrive better on the principles of mutual benefits. Whether it is between majority and minority or weak and strong powers, it is an incontrovertible fact that each has something to offer and something to protect. The Gibeonites in Joshua 9:19 to 21, realized that they cannot afford to go to war with the Israelites hence suing for peace. The Israelites also appreciating the fact that they need peace with their neighbours, embraces this offer. Without over stating the obvious, it is possible to secure victory in war but not peace. Total peace at any point can only be achieved when individuals and groups place public interest above personal pride or ego. Bringing this home to the Nigeria Cameroon conflict, both nations realized that they can achieve more through agreement and compromise than war. Any military or diplomatic confrontation between the two countries will lead to loss of human and material resources. Though some felt that the green tree agreement is a political solution to the dispute. It is hoped that the historical and cultural imperatives on ground will be called up someday.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

In view of the enormous benefit which derives from peaceful co-existence among individuals and societies or countries, the following suggestions will promote global unity:

1. Feuding parties in any conflict should realize the limit of their strength.
2. Should embrace the olive branch once it is extended to them.
3. Victory in war does not automatically translate to peace, so, even after defeating an enemy in battle, there is still need to come back to the negotiating table to sue for peace.
4. People should learn to keep the terms of their agreement because any violation might attract super-
natural sanction.
5. While negotiating for peace individuals and societies should divest themselves and place societal interest above personal gain.
6. In any agreement for peace or conflict resolution, parties must make provision for further negotiation or renegotiation in future.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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