

# Metaphoric Representations of Refugees in the Print Media Reports on the Bakassi Peninsula Border Conflict

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**Abstract:** Metaphor, a significant linguistic resource for representing events, people and their actions in conflict situations, is capable of revealing ideological positioning and inclinations of news reporters. This paper therefore examines strategic deployment of metaphors by selected Nigerian newspapers in representing refugees and their actions in the Bakassi Peninsula border conflict with a view to uncovering underlying ideologies in the representations. Using insights from Charteris-Black's (2004) Critical Metaphor Theory and Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Theory of Metaphor, the study analyses instances of conceptual metaphors in the news reports on the border conflict from two Nigerian national newspapers, namely *The Punch* and *The Guardian*, published between August 2008 and August 2009. The findings reveal that metaphors of disease, dangerous water, natural disasters and confusion are deployed to conceptualise refugees as threats, impending danger and agents of chaos and social disorder at their resettlement camps. The underlying ideologies are altruism, social justice and humanitarianism. The paper concludes that tact is essential in the choice of metaphors, especially in conflict news reporting, as metaphoric representations are capable of escalating or reducing conflict situations.

**Keywords:** Metaphor, Border Dispute, Print Media Report, Refugees, Ideology

## 1. Introduction

News reporting on conflict situations prominently involves the use of metaphors to compare events, actions or situations with another. Most human activities and experiences such as struggles, combats, violence, etc., are often constructed and represented metaphorically. Thus, Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 16) opine that

mankind's conceptual system is largely metaphorical and "the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor". That is, through metaphors, human beings often relate abstract topics to concrete observable phenomena by mapping concrete traits onto abstract domains for a better understanding of the abstract subjects.

Metaphor therefore, becomes an integral part of our ordinary everyday thought and language. One instance of metaphorical representations of events and actions is in the news reports of the Bakassi Peninsula border conflict.

The Bakassi Peninsula boundary conflict is the longest-lasting international boundary disputes that Nigeria has had since independence in 1960. The peninsula is located at the extreme eastern end of the Gulf of Guinea, covering an area of some 1000km<sup>2</sup> of mangrove swamps, creeks and half-submerged islands. It lies along the border of two African countries, with Nigeria to the west and Cameroon to the east. The population on the peninsula is about 300,000 comprising mostly Nigerian fishermen and their families (*The Economist* 2008). According to Lukong (2011) and LeFebvre (2014), more than 90% of the people in Bakassi are Nigerians. Though the origin of the border conflict can be traced to the arbitrary partitioning of independent states to create artificial borders in Africa during colonialism, the source of the dispute is oil. The discovery of deposits of oil in the early 1980s triggered mounting hostilities and military confrontations between Cameroon and Nigeria who contested the ownership of the region (Baye, 2010).

Bakassi Peninsula has been acclaimed as the richest peninsula in Africa since it contains extensive reserves of oil and gas (Mbuh 2004; Mbaga and Njo 2007). To Anyu (2007), Nwachukwu (2008) and de Konings (2008), the region lacks much modern infrastructure, such as potable water, electricity, and roads but

contains deposits of more than ten billion barrels of crude oil and several trillion cubic feet of natural gas beds. Aside oil, the region is also a veritable ground for fish farming and other water-based businesses. Hence, the dispute over the ownership of the territory as claimed by both Nigeria and Cameroon for about three decades could be described as a struggle for the rich resources in and around the region. The crisis escalated in 1983 and continued till 1994 when Cameroon took the case to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague for intervention. After eight years of adjudication, in 2002 the ICJ ruled in favour of Cameroon and mandated Nigeria to handover the peninsula. The ICJ's judgement received mixed feelings. While resistant groups such as Niger Delta militants (i.e. Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND), Bakassi Freedom Fighters (BFF), and Bakassi Movement for Self Defense (BAMOSD)) rejected it and opposed the transfer of sovereignty to Cameroon, the Nigerian government reluctantly obeyed the judgement leading to the final handover of the peninsula to Cameroon in August, 2008. The period of the handover and resettlement of Nigerians in Bakassi created a serious refugee situation. Indeed, the refugee situation was a subject of local and international interest and became a lead story and constant feature in the print media during that period following the final handover. The realities of the situation were metaphorically constructed and represented in the print media of Nigeria whose citizens were displaced.

Thus, this study undertakes a critical discourse analysis of metaphors deployed in characterising people and their actions in selected Nigerian newspapers' reports on the Bakassi Peninsula border conflict in order to reveal the underlying ideologies in the representations. The following research questions will be answered: (a) What are the forms and functions of metaphors in the Nigerian newspaper reports on the Bakassi Peninsula border conflict? and (b) What are the hidden ideologies underlying the metaphoric expressions and constructions?

## **2. Studies on the Bakassi Peninsula Border Dispute**

Issues on the Nigerian-Cameroonian Bakassi Peninsula border conflict have been studied mainly from the anthropological (de Koning 2008), economic (Baye, 2010), legal (Mbuh 2004; Milano 2004; Kirchner 2005; Egede 2008; Oduntan 2006), historical (Ogen, 2010) and socio-political (Omoigui 2004; Mbaga and Njo 2007, Onomerike, 2008; LeFebvre 2014) perspectives. Available linguistic studies on the conflict are from sociolinguistic and discourse analysis perspectives (see Omoniyi and Salami, 2004; Igwebuike and Taiwo 2015; Igwebuike 2016). The most available literature has discussed the implications of the 2002 International Court of Justice judgment; the 1884 treaties between Britain and Germany; oil and the armed conflicts on the residents and the economy of both nations.

From an anthropological perspective, de Koning (2008) examines the effects of military stalemate on the local communities/livelihoods and natural

resource management in Bakassi Peninsula. He contends that the tensed situation had negative effects on the natives as well as on the ecosystem. He therefore advocates innovative natural resource management initiatives with a cross-border dimension to mitigate the negative consequences. While from a political dimension, Mbaga and Njo (2007) examine the inherent dynamics of globalisation in the Bakassi conflict, emphasizing decisive steps and mechanisms underlying accommodations into the context of an irreversible single world economy. Discussing the border conflict along the line of first' and contemporary globalization, the study concludes that the Bakassi border conflict "is just an illustration of the relationship between security and natural resource wars typical of the present day global system" and that the outcome of Nigeria and Cameroon dispute is "absolutely subject not only to their mutual agreements and accords, but also to the external forces that determine the prevailing transnationalism" (Mbaga and Njo 2007: 14). In the same vein, LeFebvre (2014) examines issues of identities and interests in peace negotiation of the Bakassi peninsula conflict and the impact of the negotiated settlement on the people of Nigeria and Cameroon. Using an interests-based framework and an identities-based perspective, the paper discusses the processes of negotiation and implementation of the treaties signed in the dispute. This is complemented with a content analysis of newspaper articles from both nations published in 2010 in order to ascertain the lingering effects of the agreement on

the stakeholders in the region. The findings specifically show a prevalent discussion of loss of social, economic and political identities and cultural way of life in the Nigerian newspapers while analysis of Cameroonian newspapers reveals the fulfilling of a new identity as the Bakassi region was proactively populated with Cameroonian citizens' culture. It concludes that though the Bakassi dispute resolution was heralded as a success by state leadership, it was not perceived in the same way by the general population as evidenced in the content analysis. Public opinions expressed in the media were less reflective of a cooperative result and more reflective of a zero-sum negotiation result with a clear winner and a clear loser.

Similarly, Onomerike (2008) examines the role of international diplomacy in the resolution of the Cameroonian-Nigerian border crisis. It analyses the effective or otherwise role that diplomacy played in resolving Bakassi Peninsula conflict in terms of the international mediation and arbitration. It concludes that though diplomacy is not the only means through which conflicts can be resolved, it remains an important strategy of conflict resolution.

Baye (2010) evaluates the socio-economic implications of the verdict of the International Court of Justice in settling the Bakassi conflict settlement between Cameroon and Nigeria in terms of the verdict being a sustainable instrument for international conflict resolution and socio-economic development in Cameroon. It first looks at the geopolitics of the Bakassi dispute and then outlines socio-economic

implications of its peaceful settlement. These are done with a view to developing a conceptual framework of international conflict dynamics and resolution. He argues that the colonial powers subjugated and divided Africa disregarding the relationship between territorial boundaries and the anthropogenic homogeneity and/or characteristics of the various ethnic groupings. He therefore opines that with the effective withdrawal of the Nigerian military, police and administration from Bakassi, it is possible for African countries in conflict to resolve matters amicably and avoid carnage, bloodshed, socio-economic and political dislocations, which many post-independent African nations have inflicted on themselves.

From a historical perspective, Ogen (2010) counters Nigeria's claim of ownership of the Peninsula and contends that Nigeria's attempt to forcefully annex the Bakassi Peninsula through Efik irredentism (historical claims) is logically indefensible and historically unsustainable. The paper argues that Nigeria's occupation of, and attempts to exercise sovereignty over the Peninsula emanated from the predictable desire of the Nigerian ruling elite to appropriate Bakassi's abundant natural resources and the strategic advantage the Peninsula holds for Nigeria's oil interests in the Gulf of Guinea, making the socio-economic interests of the inhabitants of Bakassi secondary. The study therefore concludes that peace can only be guaranteed in the Bakassi Peninsula, and indeed in virtually all conflict prone African borderlands, if African

governments respect and acknowledge the colonial treaties and national borders irrespective of their arbitrariness and artificiality, since that constitute the foundation of all modern African state structures.

Looking at the peaceful resolution of the conflict, Asiwaju (1996) proffers a political solution to war and litigation in the Bakassi crisis. Also, Nwobi (2006) examines the impact and the implication of the execution of the ICJ ruling and *Green Tree Accord* on the Bakassi populace. Nwobi (2006) examines the treaties of 1885 and 1912 and concludes that if the options in the ICJ judgement and *Green Tree* agreement are not properly handled, they have potentials to generate conflicts in the near future.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, Omoniyi and Salami (2004) investigate identity constructs of the inhabitants' narratives as captured mainly in news media commentaries in order to determine ownership of the Peninsula. Analysing sociolinguistic variables such as ethnic affiliation, ancestry, language, cultural properties (e.g. sacred sites), the people's way of life (including occupation and religious practices) and resources embedded in personal and community narratives, the study discovers that the construction of Bakassi identity in the context of ICJ verdict is dynamic and has a lot of implications to the understanding of the conflict.

Perhaps the studies which are near in focus with the present study are Igwebuike and Taiwo (2015) and Igwebuike (2016). Igwebuike and Taiwo (2015) examine the discursive representations of conflict actors as well

as their roles in the Bakassi Peninsula dispute by the Nigerian and Cameroonian newspapers. The study discovers that newspapers from each of the nations slant the news to represent their key participants – the Cameroon security forces and Nigerians living in the peninsula as people with social power in the discourse. Specifically, while the Nigerian newspapers foreground the torturing experience of Nigerian citizens in the hands of Cameroon security agents, the Cameroon newspapers foreground the heroic exploits of security forces of their country in the face of constant attacks from the armed Nigerian militants. The study concludes that the divergent representations were motivated by the value of social justice in the Nigerian media and the ideology of patriotism in the Cameroonian media.

Igwebuike (2016) investigates lexical labelling of people and their actions in terms of ownership and non-ownership of 'oil-rich' Bakassi Peninsula border. This is done with a view to uncovering ideologies underlying the representations in the Nigerian and Cameroonian newspapers. By analysing the data using Van Dijk's socio-cognitive model of Critical Discourse Analysis, the study discovers that newspapers generally label people as either territorial owners or non-owners. While 'inhabitant' and 'resident' describe people as territorial non-owners and non-landowners, 'indigene' and 'native' represent them as territorial owners and landlords. It also discovers that the ideology of economic interests which are tied to national identity/nationality and ancestral root

(or citizenship) motivated the labelling of territorial ownership and non-ownership in the newspapers of both nations. The study submits that there is a close interaction between ideology and lexical labelling and this interaction projected respective socio-political and economic concerns in the Nigerian and the Cameroonian newspaper reports.

None of the studies reviewed above considered the role of metaphor deployed in representing people and their actions, especially in news reports. How the media represented the conflict actors (especially the refugees) has a significant impact and ideological implications on the conflict. This study therefore critically examines the media representation of refugees, paying particular attention to metaphors in the Nigerian news reports on the border conflict in order to unearth the underlying ideologies embedded in the representations.

### **3. Critical Metaphor Theory: A**

#### **Review**

Metaphor is a key linguistic resource by which human beings construct and represent their social experiences, beliefs, world views or ideologies (Halliday, 1978) while ideologies are systematic frames of social understanding that organise and control specific group attitudes (Charteris-Black 2004). Metaphor and ideology are interrelated and interconnected in that metaphor has the potential to show reality, beliefs and values while ideologies influence metaphor choice in the presentation of reality (Charteris-Black (2004). In line with this, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) opine that metaphor is concerned with creating and forming

coherent views of reality. Scholars such as Lakoff and Johnson, (1980), Davis, (1994), etc. have addressed issues bordering on metaphor and representation of events and social realities. To Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 5), the essence of metaphor is “understanding one thing in terms of another” while Davis (1994) sees it as a resource that enables people to construct some elements of their experience in terms of something else that may be more generally understood, while also serving to obscure other aspects of our experience from view.

As a conceptual phenomenon, metaphor is of particular significance to critical study of ideologies in texts. To Hodge and Kress (1993: 15), ideology involves “a systematically organised presentation of reality”, metaphors are ideological in so far as they “define in significant part what one takes as reality” (Chilton and Lakoff 1995: 56). According to Chilton (1996: 74), metaphors “can contribute to a situation where they privilege one understanding of reality over others”. In their *Conceptual Theory of Metaphor*, Lakoff and Johnson (2003: 3) conceptualise metaphor basically as a central conceptual device stating that mankind’s conceptual system, in terms of “what we both think and act are fundamentally metaphorical in nature.” As described by Lakoff and Turner (1989), metaphors unconsciously guide and shape the way we understand and represent the world around us. They argue that metaphor allows us the power to define reality and can be employed to draw attention to unexpected aspects of social phenomena. Any metaphorical use of language has a concrete source

domain or trait which is mapped onto an abstract target domain or trait (Lakoff, 1993). Lakoff and Johnson (2003) argue that metaphors work by mapping what is already known onto an abstract or less known thing for easy understanding. They in turn provide frames through which words from a literal source domain are used to interpret a lesser known, abstract target domain.

Charteris-Black's discourse model for metaphor analysis consists of three interrelated parts: ideology, language (metaphor) and socio-cultural context. Ideology comprises political, historical and economic dimensions of world view and background of reports which influence representations. Linguistic aspect is mainly metaphors which involve mapping knowledge of lexical field onto another. This is very critical for the understanding of the complex relationship between language, thought and social context of the reports. The third part is the socio-cultural context. Context provides the cues for the interpretation of the metaphors. "Metaphors are . . . chosen by speakers to achieve particular communication goals within particular contexts rather than being predetermined by bodily experience" (Charteris-Black 2004: 247). For example, in metaphoric conceptualization of a refugee situation that involves the displacement of a large number of people, metaphor is grounded in experientialist connections between the domains of disease and congested refugee camps. One conceptualisation could be DISPOSSESSION IS A DISEASE in which the ontology of a DISEASE is mapped onto the abstract concept of DISPOSSESSION to

produce a rich understanding of what is transpiring between the displaced people and refugee situation. Thus, the semantic source domain DISEASE is mapped onto the semantic target domain DISPOSSESSION. One aspect of CDA involves highlighting how metaphors can be ideologically significant – how metaphors can help to construct, in the mind of the reader or listener, the nature of the events or situations being described via a particular set of values.

#### 4. Methodology

The data are sourced from two Nigerian newspapers, namely, *The Punch* and *The Guardian*. Using purposive sampling, the study selects news reports based on the subject of violence appearing from August 2008 to August 2009. The period covers one year following the final handover of the peninsula to Cameroon on August 14, 2008. It is also the time of resettlement of the displaced Nigerians. The analysis of the metaphors follows three parts: description, interpretation and explanation. Description of metaphor here implies the identification of object, substance, entity that serves as the intermediate level between the linguistic and conceptual levels. Words and grammar whose meanings are metaphorically mapped onto another are identified and described. Interpretation is concerned with spelling out the elements in the mapping and making the necessary inference about the different elements of the mapping. That is, it makes parallel inference between objects of the source and target domain and a one-to-one correspondence with objects of the target and source domain to obtain maximum structural match.

Explanation takes care of the pragmatic function of metaphor. The pragmatic function is delimited as the evaluative and persuasive dimensions of metaphor. This function is the attitude or mood the metaphor intends to convey which according to Lakoff and Turner (1989:65) is the “power of evaluation”. This would in addition account for how the media use the news reports to intervene in the dispute and impose their perspectives. The data consists of 83 instances of metaphors collected from

the two Nigerian newspapers. Out of three hundred and twenty-five (125) news articles gathered, a sample of eighty-seven (87) is purposively selected based on the theme of violence for the analysis. ‘MR’ in the samples stands for ‘Metaphoric Representation’. For constraints of space, only few very important samples are reproduced in the analyses. In addition, selected pictures are used to complement and support interpretation of data analysis where necessary.

Metaphors	Nigerian Newspapers		
	<i>The Punch</i>	<i>The Guardian</i>	Total
Disease	12	11	23
Dangerous Water	08	11	19
Confusion	0	15	15
Natural Disasters	16	09	25

Table 1: Metaphor and Representation of Refugees and their Actions in the Border Discourse

Through a content analysis, the metaphorical processes have been identified and classified into the following:

**4.1 The Refugees as a Disease**

The refugees who have been dispossessed of their land are conceptualised as a disease. Here, the image of wound infestation is deployed in depicting the returning of thousands of displaced Nigerians to their resettlement camps as a disease. For example:

**MR1:**

Following this fresh attack, thousands of Nigerians have fled the area for safety and officials at the Bakassi

returnees camp confirmed that large number of persons from Bakassi area have **swelled** the number of returnees at the camp (*The Guardian*, August 17, 2008)

**MR2:**

Another batch of 200 returnees has fled the Bakassi Peninsula over alleged continuous harassment and torture of Nigerians by the Cameroonian gendarmes. Our correspondent learnt that the latest development has **swelled** the number of returnees at the refugee camp in Ekpri Ikang, Cross

River to 1, 500 (*The Punch*,  
November 23, 2009)

In MR1 and MR2, it is reported that Nigerians ran away from the peninsula over alleged Cameroonian soldiers' maltreatment and came back to Nigeria in hundreds. Their return in mass after forceful ejection from the Bakassi peninsula is described as "swelling" the camps. 'Swelling' depicts an unprecedented increase in the number of people dispossessed of their place of abode and the supposedly ugly conditions suffered in the refugee camps. It creates a mental and vivid image of an uncontrollable increase in size; and which portends a threat to the immediate community in particular and the nation in general. The refugees in the eye of the people are like a disease. Many times, their environment is usually dirty/ unkempt coupled with hunger and poverty. These make them vulnerable to disease and crime. Thus, they constitute a threat to their host communities and are avoided by people. Just as a 'swollen wound' constitutes a problem to the body, the displaced are also represented as posing a threat to the community where they are hosted as they may spill over like a burst wound and affect other members of the society. The use of figures 'thousand' (MR1) and '200', '1500' (MRS2) shows upsurge in the large numbers of Nigerians displaced. The increase is beyond normal and as such demands control to avoid 'contaminating' other parts of the nation.

#### 4.2 The Refugees as Dangerous Water

The refugees are also metaphorically constructed as dangerous water. Here, metaphors of unsafe water such as

'flood' and 'stream' conceptualise the refugees' movement as outpouring in large numbers from Bakassi into Nigeria. For example:

#### MR4:

The first wave of returnees saw many flooding the bordering states of Cross Rivers and Akwa Ibom. The Mbo council alone in the latter saw about 57, 000 Nigerians suddenly become refugees (*The Guardian*, September 7, 2008)

#### MR6:

Bakassi: More displaced indigenes stream into A'Ibom. As the August 14 hand-over date of Bakassi Peninsula to Cameroon draws near, thousands of displaced indigenes are still streaming into Ibaka Beach in Mbo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State (*The Punch*, August 11, 2008)

#### MR7:

Bakassi...Returnees Flood Cross River, Akwa Ibom State: 57,000 Returnees Recorded in Mbo Council; Akpabio Calls for Urgent FG Assistance. FOLLOWING the return of Bakassi to Cameroun last week, neighbouring states of Cross River and Akwa Ibom have been receiving a steady influx of returnees which a state official termed "overwhelming" (*The Guardian*, August 17, 2008)

'Flood' (MR4 and MR7) and 'stream'(MR6) are metaphors of dangerous water evoking the image of a concrete action. They convey the idea of refugees moving uncontrollably in large

number; hence, the use of ‘wave’ in MR4. The metaphor of water ‘stream’ captures the constant movement of the displaced indigenes of Bakassi into Akwa Ibom State. Here, *The Punch* maps the continuous flow of stream onto the movement of the indigenes and describes the displacement with the image of ‘flowing water’ (stream). That the indigenes are still ‘streaming’ shows the magnitude of people who have been displaced and the extent of danger which their ‘flowing’ portends to the host community.

In MR4 and MR7, the metaphor of ‘flood’ conceptualizes an ‘over-flowing’ of large number of Nigerians. Just like flood is uncontrollable, the returnees are so many and uncontainable that they have ‘flowed’ to the neighbouring states of Cross River and Akwa Ibom. Through the ‘flood’ metaphor, *The Guardian* newspaper depicts the outpouring of the returnees as natural disaster that demands urgent attention. It also symbolizes the return of the returnees as an ‘unstoppable’ threat to Nigeria and that the nation might be ‘drowned’ in the process. This view is supported by the use of the figure 57,000 to depict the increasing rate at which the people are flowing as a result of dispossession. The adverbials ‘overwhelming’ (MR7) and ‘suddenly’ explicitly capture the extremely large number of returnees as a result of the steady influx and the unexpected and speedy manner in which Nigerians were departing the peninsula in large number, respectively. Beyond numbers, the flood metaphors symbolize danger as the refugees who are ‘pouring’ into Nigeria could create social and economic

problems and disaster with their unexpected arrival.

#### 4.3 The Refugees as Confusion

The refugees are represented as confused and acting in a disorderly manner. In this wise, metaphors such as ‘swarm’, ‘crowd’ and ‘litter’ are used to represent **the refugees and their actions as rowdy and chaotic. For example:**

##### MR9:

Soon they were swarming around, all wanting to air their views, which were similar - that they were leaving their fatherland, come August 14 (*The Guardian*, August 12, 2008).

##### MR10:

As at yesterday, the returnees were seen crowding the primary school waiting anxiously for their state to come and evacuate them while their mostly “Ghana must-go” luggage were assembled in the middle of the small field facing the classroom blocks (*The Guardian*, August 25, 2008)

##### MR11:

At their temporary refugee camp at the Government Primary School, Ikang Central, the refugees looked despondent and lost in their land, virtually littering everywhere in the primary school with no beds or mattresses to sleep on (*The Guardian*, August 1, 2008)

In MR9, ‘swarm’ is from the field of insect. It maps the manner in which the dispossessed throng to air their views about the displacement as confused and disorderly. ‘Swarm’ depicts the dispossessed as restless and perplexed.

They are confused on how to go about their impending dispossession. That they were ‘swarming’ shows that they were hopeless and moving in disoriented way. Just like insects such as bees or gnats swarm, the refugees are represented as moving in large numbers in a chaotic and disarrayed manner. In the same vein, MR10 and MR11 capture the confused state of the refugees using the metaphors ‘crowding’ and ‘littering’. In MR10, they are pictured as being gathered together in large numbers in one primary school. The word ‘evacuate’ clearly shows the large number of the dispossessed who potentially constitute a danger or problem and needs to be properly resettled. The popular coinage ‘Ghana-

must-go bag’ is a type of low-cost bags that the Ghanaians packed their belongings with when the Nigerian authorities ‘ejected’ them from Nigeria in the 80’s. This foregrounds the extent of poverty of the dispossessed who could not afford decent travelling bags for their departure. Also, ‘littering’ negatively presents the dispossessed as a threat to the community just like pieces of trash that have been carelessly left on the ground. Comparing the refugees’ action as ‘littering’ the environment is an explicit form of derogation. Thus, their action is associated with dirt and otherwise threat. This is foregrounded in the verbal processes of ‘crowding’ and ‘waiting anxiously’ (MR10).

The photos below from *The Punch* newspaper captures this



**Pic 1:** (*The Punch*, “give us our daily bread,” Bakassi returnees cry out; 25 August 2009)

Picture 1 above presents the refugees in their camp. It is a three-in-one picture showing different postures of hopeless and dejected people who are battling with the harsh realities of their

resettlement camp. The folding of hands, carrying of jaws and sitting on bare floor depict hopelessness. Their style of dressing also heralds disorderliness. Some are on loosely tied wrappers while others are on over-sized

clothes such as knickers, gowns and blouses. They all relate to the

representation of the people as confused as the refugees do not know the way out of their predicaments, such as hunger and homelessness. Hence, the title of the report “Give us our daily bread, Bakassi

returnees cry out”. The title aptly relates to the Christians’ daily prayer “Our Lord’s Prayer” in which they look up to the Almighty God for daily sustenance. Thus, the refugees see the Nigerian government as the Almighty who will ‘deliver’ them from the hands of hunger and consequently ‘cried out’ to them.

This is also graphically represented in the *Guardian* newspaper below:



Pic 2: (The Guardian, Bakassi returnees ask for permanent resettlement; June 28, 2009)

Picture 2 shows mainly children with few adults who have been displaced from their former abode. They are now residing in some blocks of a primary school. In the picture, the refugees are in a state of despair and are hopelessly waiting for the government (their last resort) to properly resettle them. Their mode of dressing along with their foot wears (mainly slippers) depicts their abject state of despondency. However, they seem to be looking towards their right-hand side probably in expectation

of succour and intervention. The two dirty buckets obviously show the source of water for the camp, which is rain water.

#### 4.4 The Refugees as Natural Disasters

Metaphors derived from nature’s catastrophes, such as ‘storm’ also capture the dispossessed as natural disasters. ‘Storm’ is an outburst or strong outpouring of feelings in reaction to something bad or ugly. Just like a violent weather (storm), the dispossessed are represented as

constituting a disturbance through their sudden strong attack (protest). For example:

**MR13:**

Our correspondent gathered that the Bakassi women numbering 40, stormed the Calabar office of the Cross River State's Commissioner for Local Government Affairs, Mr. Edem Ekong, on Thursday to register their grievances (*The Punch*, July 8, 2009)

**MR14:**

...more than 800 Bakassi returnees yesterday stormed Government House, Uyo to protest alleged government neglect in their camp (*The Guardian*, September 23, 2008)

'Storm' is metaphorically used in MR13 and MR14 to capture angry protests of the displaced Bakassi residents. By representing the actions of the protesters as 'storm,' the Nigerian reports depict their outburst of feelings which had been 'bottled up'. Thus, just like lightning and thunderstorm (violent weather), the dispossessed decided to pour out their grievances in anger. The word 'stormed' is used here as a physical process which evokes the image of concrete action of sudden strong demonstration by the returnees. It is used in a metaphoric sense to mean that the returnees are engaged in angry protests over the insensitivity of the government to their plight. Just like

other metaphors, the choice of 'stormed' to describe the protests portrays the actions of the returnees as disturbances to government's activities.

**5. Conclusion**

The study has analysed different forms and functions of metaphoric representations of refugees in the Bakassi Peninsula border conflict. It discovers that metaphors of disease, dangerous water, natural disasters and confusion are deployed to conceptualise refugees as threats, impending danger and agents of chaos and social disorder in their resettlement camps. Images of chaos, lawlessness and threats are constructed through the metaphors. Specifically, there is the use of the metaphors of dangerous water (e.g. flood), natural disasters (e.g. storm), metaphor of confusion (e.g. swarm) and disease (swell) in constructing a negative representation of the refugees' action. The emphasis on big numbers supports the humanitarian "help" ideology. Thus, the refugees who are "pouring" into Nigeria are not shown to only constitute socio-economic problems but the need for their proper resettlement is highlighted. The underlying ideologies include altruism, social justice and humanitarianism. The paper concludes that tact is essential in the choice of metaphors, especially in conflict news reporting, as metaphoric representations are capable of escalating or reducing conflict situations.

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