

**Innovations in the Cameroon Armed Forces in Times of Conflict: Recruitment, Training and Deployment Strategies and Challenges since Independence**

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**Abstract.** This paper examines the impact of modern recruitment, training and redeployment strategies on Cameroon Armed Forces since independence. Before independence, the French and the British colonial militaries protected and maintained peace and order in their respective spheres of influence in Cameroon. In 1960, the Cameroon Armed Forces came into existence and after several years of development, recruitment and training requirements were formalized in 1967 to produce physically fit and qualified forces. The study opines that recent trends and challenges have forced the Cameroon government to reorganize the recruitment and training process to combat terrorists, insurgents, separatists and maritime pirates that have threatened the unity and integrity of Cameroon. Recently, the government has continuously recruited and trained youths aged between 18 and 23 into the Cameroon army, navy, air force, gendarmerie and presidential guard to defend and protect the territorial integrity of Cameroon. In addition to the fact that it has established training bases in Ngaoundere, Garoua, Yaounde, Douala and recently Bamenda to overcome training and deployment challenges, the government has partnered with foreign powers like France, USA, Germany, Britain and China. As such, it has benefitted from logistic training, supply of equipment, financial resources, technical advisors to assist repair military vehicles and naval vessels, and support Cameroon's efforts to improve their capacity. The paper argues that the successes and failures recorded, following the deployment of Cameroon Armed Forces to fight against the Nigeria Islamic sect Boko Haram, the armed Ambazonian separatist fighters in Anglophone Cameroon, the maritime pirates along the Cameroon-Nigeria Bakassi Peninsula, and threats from sectarian rebels in the Central African Republic are due to the level of training received by the forces in Cameroon and abroad. The paper further reveals that Cameroon Armed forces are carefully selected, well trained and equipped, but in most cases, lack battlefield experience to fight recent conflicts. Based on wide range of primary and secondary sources, the study concludes that for Cameroon Armed Forces to meet up with recent innovation challenges, the government must recruit more forces, produce and acquire more equipment, invest in training, and constantly deploy forces to battlefields.

**Key words:** Innovation, Armed Forces, Recruitment, Training, Deployment, Post-Independence, Cameroon

**Introduction**

Given the threats now faced by Cameroon, ranging from terrorism, through insurgencies and piracy, to organized crime, Cameroon Armed Forces can no longer simply act as instruments of prestige to be used for parades on national holidays or for destabilizing democratically elected government through coup d'état (Houngnikpo, 2012, p. 11). They need to be able to fulfil specific missions, and they are called upon to intervene in wars more and more frequently through the hardening of peacekeeping operations, such as in Mali, South Sudan, Somali and Central African Republic. If Cameroon's Armed forces are not strengthened, they risk collapsing as in the case of Mali's military in the face of Jihadist forces in 2012 (Ismail & Skons, 2014).

In 1960, the Cameroon Armed Forces came into existence and after several years of development, recruitment and training requirements were formalized in 1967 to produce physically fit and qualified forces. Scholars of military history have argued that, recent trends and challenges have forced the Cameroon government to reorganized the recruitment and

training process to combat terrorists, insurgents, separatists and maritime pirates that have threatened the unity and integrity of Cameroon. Following the passage of new laws and reforms in 2001, the government has continuously recruited and trained youths aged between 18 and 23 into the Cameroon army, navy, air force, gendarmerie and presidential guard to defend and protect the territorial integrity of Cameroon. In addition to the fact that, it has established training bases in Ngaoundere, Garoua, Yaounde, Douala and recently, Bamenda to overcome training and deployment challenges, the government has partnered with foreign powers like France, USA, Germany, Britain and China to improve the skills and competencies of its armed forces (Van den Berghe, 1970).

Before the advent of independence, colonial militarism was prevalent in Cameroon's affairs (Sobseh, 2021), especially in the historical and political evolutionary processes (Assensoh & Alex-Assensoh, 2002). The Colonial Military was the overarching military body charged with the defence of the Colonial Republic. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century the German, British and French militaries clashed in colonial Cameroon. Immediately the German annexed the territory, they observed and compared the British and French militaries and governments who were still interested in the territory. In addition, indigenous resistance against the German policies and disrespect of the annexation treaty obliged the Germans to build a formidable military force in German Kamerun (Moberly, 1995). In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the British and the French continuously observed and compared the military strength of the Germans in Cameroon before attacking during the First World War (Sobseh, 2021). However, modern militaries in Cameroon emerged from the German, British and French colonial armies that were created for the purposes of political expediencies to quell indigenous resistance and serve the geo-strategic interests of colonial powers in terms of a manpower reserve for easy mobilisation in times of war. Naison Ngoma argues that post-independence civil-military relations of African states have been generally influenced by their colonial history, which caused fear and even dislike of the colonial military (Ngoma, 2006).

It is important to lay emphasis on the fact that, among the Cameroon Armed Forces, the army is responsible for external security but also has some domestic security responsibilities. The Rapid Intervention Battalion (BIR) falls outside the purview of conventional security forces, reporting directly to the president. Civilian authorities at times did not maintain effective control over the security forces, including the gendarmerie. The national gendarmerie has as primary responsibility over law enforcement and maintenance of order within the country. The national gendarmerie reports to the Secretariat of State for Defense (SED) in charge of the gendarmerie, a dedicated branch of the Ministry of Defense. In addition to the gendarmerie, the army and the army's military security unit are other components of the ministry, which is headed by a minister delegate under the direct authority of the president. The General Delegation for External Research (DGRE) serves as the intelligence agency for both internal and external security, and like the Ministry of Defense and DGSN, reports to the office of the president, resulting in strong presidential control of security forces. The national police, is not part of the Cameroon Armed Forces. It includes public security, judicial, territorial security, and frontier police, and reports to the General Delegation of National Security (DGSN), which is under the direct authority of the presidency (Independent Advisory Group on Country Information, 2020).

Most Cameroon military historians have rightly acknowledged the effects of colonial military experiences and policies on the growth and development of Cameroon Armed Forces in post-independence in Cameroon (Fanso, 1989). This paper treats the emergence of colonial militaries and the history and evolution of Cameroon Armed Forces; looks at the structure and missions of these forces; highlights the recruitment procedures and modalities; examines the training strategies and techniques; focuses on the redeployment of these forces in the fight

against Boko Haram insurgents in the Far North Region, armed secessionist groups in the North West and South West Regions, maritime rebels in the Bakassi Peninsula and rebels in the Central African Republic; and ends by looking at challenges and recommendations for stakeholders.

### **Methodology**

This study made use of primary and secondary data obtained from different sources. The primary data was obtained through interviews with some military officials, politicians, elites, traditional rulers, private and government authorities. In fact, the Cameroonian security apparatus is overcentralized and permission to meet senior officials involved in the security sector need to be approved at the highest level by the Deputy Minister of Defence and General Delegate for National Security. Files were gleaned in the National Archives Buea (NAB), the National Archives Yaounde (NAY) and regional and divisional archives in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon. The secondary data was obtained through the review of books, journals, articles, reports, newspapers, and the internet. We were also able to source some books that dealt with the profile of the armed forces in Cameroon, most of these were published in Cameroon itself and, even if a bit out of date, were able to provide some useful data related to the condition of the military in the country. For the purpose of clarity in this study, major issues related to Cameroon Armed Forces are critically highlighted and analyzed from a wide variety of sources. This will enable us to redress the present challenge faced by the armed forces in Cameroon.

### **Background: History and the Evolution of Cameroon Armed Forces**

The history of Cameroon Armed Forces could be traced back to the 1960s and by extension, subdivided into three historical periods. These distinct periods include: The creation before and during 1960; the period after reunification in 1960; and reforms on armed forces launched in 2001. However, a number of legislative and regulatory texts were at the cornerstone of the organisation of the Cameroonian Armed Forces.<sup>1</sup> All these texts clearly state that defence in Cameroon was meant to “ensure under any circumstances and against all kinds of aggression, the security of the state and the territorial integrity within the framework of national sovereignty”.

The creation of the Cameroon Armed Forces could be traced back to 1959 when an ordinance was put in place to organise the defence forces.<sup>2</sup> During this first stage, only the army was set up. The formation of Cameroon’s military was settled within the framework of the so-called “Plan Raisonnable”, designed by the French authorities in 1959 which was set up to cope with the *Union des Populations du Cameroun* (UPC) rebellion, which was earlier outlawed by France on 13 July 1955. This “Plan Raisonnable” prescribed emergency measures, and set up the basis for the creation of a Cameroon’s national armed forces. This Plan lasted until military cooperation agreements were signed between France and Cameroon on 13 November 1960 (Bagayoko-Penone, 2008). The army that was then created included only two fighting companies made up of elements which were already serving within the

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<sup>1</sup> For more information, see Law No.67/LF/9 adopted on 12th June 1967 setting out the general organisation of defence in Cameroon, which was enlarged to the anglophone forces; presidential instruction No. 16/CAB. PRU adopted on 1st September 1972 which defined the responsibilities of each ministerial department; the preamble of the decree No.75-700 adopted on 6th November 1975 which set out the rules of general discipline within the armed forces; and decree No. 540 adopted on 5th November 1983 which reorganized the Ministry of the armed forces and their command structures.

<sup>2</sup> See Ordinance No.59/57 adopted on 11th November 1959 which set the general organisation of defence.

colonial army, and 300 new recruits. A few months later, the gendarmerie was created as well, following the merging of the French auxiliaries and the indigenous guard.<sup>3</sup>

Following the reunification of British Southern Cameroons and La Republique to form the Federal Republic of Cameroon with the emergence of the federated States of East Cameroon and West Cameroon, the first organizational chart of the Ministry of Defence was adopted and rapidly changed a few weeks later by different ordinances.<sup>4</sup> The direction of the central services and an operational liaison organisation which included an army command and a gendarmerie command then hinged on the direction the cabinet would take. The army command had under its authority both the army and the air force units. Four sectors, each including military sectors, were created on 31 December 1960. The antecedent to the navy was a maritime detachment which was created within the Douala legion of the gendarmerie. A navy and air force were set up in 1961, though the current military structure stems from 1966.

On 7 February 1966, the gendarmerie was elevated into a general Directorate.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, the gendarmerie was “Cameroonized” and the high command, until then under the responsibility of a French officer, resulted in Cameroon’s general Delegate. A few months later the air force, the navy and the army commanders were also “Cameroonized”, following the adoption on 18 June 1966 of decrees Nos. 66/DF/280, 281 and 282.<sup>6</sup> In reality however, the missions of all these services were mostly to do with the maintenance of law and order. Finally, in 1972, Cameroon became a united republic. Following this unification process, units from the francophone Cameroonian army and from the anglophone Cameroonian army were merged.

The last historic period commenced in 2001, when the government of Cameroon launch a profound reform, which aimed at professionalizing the armed forces, adapting them to the administrative and territorial organisation of the country.<sup>7</sup>

### **Structure and Organisation of Cameroon Armed Forces**

Cameroon Armed Forces are many and include the Army, the Presidential Guard, the Gendarmerie, the Air Force, and the Navy. All these forces are well structured and organised following the launching and adoption of 21 decrees (decrees Nos. 2001/177 to 197, adopted on 25th July 2001) in July 2001, to reform the armed forces and to rationalize the military structures by taking into account the territorial organisation of the country.

These reforms laid emphasis on the organisation of the Defence Ministry; the general organisation of the Defence and the central general staff; the reorganisation of the military territorial command; the organisation of the gendarmerie; the attributions of the chiefs of staff; the reorganisation of the combat units of the army; the reorganisation of the body of fire-fighters; the organisation of the military health services; the organisation of the military security division (SEMIL); the conditions of access to military instruction centres; the special statute of active officers; the organisation of the frameworks for Generals; the special statute of the non-officer military staff; the advantages attached to the military command; the indemnities for active officers; the indemnities for non-officer military staff; the per diem, expenses and costs; the creation of a national Office for former-combatants; the creation of a

<sup>3</sup> See Ordinance No. 60/20 adopted on 22 February 1960, confirmed by the decree No. 60/280 adopted on 31 December 1960, regulated this body oriented towards law and order maintenance and the judiciary police.

<sup>4</sup> See decree No. 60/198 on 27 October 1960, which was rapidly changed a few weeks later by decree No. 60/248 was adopted on 30 December 1960.

<sup>5</sup> See decree No. 66/DF/54 of 7 February 1966.

<sup>6</sup> See decrees Nos. 66/DF/280, 281 and 282 of 18 June 1966.

<sup>7</sup> Article No. 2 of the decree No. 2001/177 adopted on 25 July 2001, stated that the armed forces include the army, the gendarmerie, the air force and the navy.

Committee responsible for implanting the reform; and the reorganisation of the President's specific general staff. However, it is important to note that, some important clauses of this reform are still to be implemented. The structure and organization of Cameroon Armed Forces shall be critically examined below.

### The Army

The Cameroon army was first created in 1959 by ordinance No. 5817 adopted on 11 November 1959. The Cameroon armed forces were initially made up of the army. Due to the importance of its manpower (16.000 men, and 10% of women 13) (Bagayoko-Penone, 2008), the army was the cornerstone of the Cameroon's armed forces. Later, Article 1 of decree No. 2001/183 adopted on 25 July 2001<sup>8</sup>, made it very clear that, the fighting units of the army were professional units which participated in the defence of the Nation's vital interests. They were split up around the national territory. The army Chief of Staff was responsible for their organisation and support. This decree mentioned the fighting units of the army because, in peacetime, the national territorial defence was ensured by the gendarmerie, the national police and the civil security forces. In times of crisis, the participation of the armed forces could be requested by the prefects or the Governors, who gave strategic direction for ongoing operations. In times of major crisis, war, or aggression, the government could set up the Operational Defence of the Territory (*Defense operationnelle du territoire – DOT*) which outlines the participation of the armed forces to the defence actions as envisioned by the defence plans. The direction of the operations is then under the leadership of the military command. The DOT is conducted by all the armed forces in a general air-ground manoeuvre (*manoeuvre aéroterrestre d'ensemble*): these forces mostly come from the army.

Concerning organization, the army is under the authority of the army Chief of Staff, who is assisted by a Major General. The army is organised into three branches: Human Resources, Logistics and Operations. The land battle (combat) units are supposed to be deployed, because the national territory is divided into three military regions, the so-called joint military regions (*regions militia interarmees – RMIA*). The RMIA's are themselves divided into ten military land sectors (*secteurs militaires terrestres*) which are based in the Regions. The army Chief of Staff is responsible for their organisation and support. These units are categorised as follows:

- The General Headquarter Brigade, located in Yaoundé. This brigade is responsible for protecting the capital and supporting the institutions. The President of the Republic has to allow any of its deployments.
- Three command and support battalions;
- The Rapid Intervention Brigade, (which currently has no general staff) and is made up of three rapid intervention battalions, all stationed within the RMIA2 (in Douala, Tiko and Koutaba). These three battalions are respectively the *Bataillon Special Amphibie* (BSA), the *Bataillon des Troupes Aeroportees* (BTAP) and the *Bataillon Blinde de Reconnaissance* (BBR). The BSA is inspired by the French Special Forces. This brigade is a tactical battle unit under the authority of the Chief of Staff of the armed forces. For this to be engaged, the President's agreement is necessary. Amongst its three battalions, only the BTAP is operational;
- Five motorized infantry brigades, supposed to be stationed in one military sector but which could then be engaged without any regard to the territorial division of the country. These brigades currently do not have a general staff. In theory, they consist of 11 motorized infantry battalions; 5 support battalions and 3 backing battalions;

<sup>8</sup> See Article 1 of decree No. 2001/183 adopted on 25 July 2001.

however, the motorized battalions are in reality not operational due to a lack of staff, equipment and vehicles.

- Three rapid intervention battalions, the so-called BIR14. Each RMIA has its own BIR. The BIR have great mobility. They are called in to intervene in internal security affairs within the RMIA where they are respectively stationed. In theory, any internal security operation should be led by the Governor and conducted by the gendarmerie. However, in order to cope with the paramilitary phenomenon of the “*coupeurs de route*”, the BIR were set up in 1999. They could also be deployed anywhere else after the President has given his agreement. Each BIR is made up of: a light intervention unit (145 men), a special command and support platoon (34 men), a special intervention unit (37 men), a command and support group (97 men) and a light intervention group (10 men). The BIR are the only battalions to be operational in Cameroon. The last BIR was created in 2007 in the RMIA 2: 1000 men were then recruited. They were created with the assistance of Israeli instructors who trained them and also provided their high-tech equipment. The BIR are made up of very young soldiers (generally around 24 years old), very-well trained in commando and anti-urban guerrilla techniques, and are particularly well-disciplined. There is a real gap between them and the rest of the more ill-equipped army and their creation is seen as a sign of the President’s distrust of the other armed forces.
- One engineering regiment, based in Douala. This regiment is responsible for organising and laying out the ground in order to facilitate the mobility of the other units. It is also supposed to contribute to civilian developmental activities. However, this regiment suffers from a lack of operational logistics.
- One ground-to-air artillery regiment, based in Edea, which should contribute to the aerial defence of the vital strategic objectives all over the territory and ensure the protection of the troops on the ground. This regiment is not operational due to a lack of operational logistics
- One ground-to-ground artillery regiment, located in Nkongsamba and responsible for accompanying the troops on the ground. Modern equipment was purchased in 2006 and 2007 but the staff have not been trained to use them.

It is important to emphasize that, amongst all of these units, the three battalions of the Brigade d’intervention: Airborne Battalion or *Bataillon des Troupes Aéroportées* (BTAP), Special Amphibian Battalion or *Bataillon Spécial Amphibie* (BSA) and Research Armoured Battalion or *Bataillon Blinde de Reconnaissance* (BBR) and the three BIR are the most operational, well trained and have better equipment than the other units.

### The Presidential Guard

In the past, the presidential guard was initially made up of the gendarmes. Recently, the better elements of each service were integrated into it. There are more 3000 men in the presidential guard. They have the same military status as the other armed forces. They are only answerable to the President of the Republic and are exclusively in charge of the security of the President. The previous presidential guard, which was involved in the coup attempt against President Biya, was disbanded in 1984. The new presidential guard has been set up with the assistance of the Israelis (Meloupou, 1998). The presidential guard commandant has four groups under his authority:

- The command and support group, which includes a support and maintenance company, a transmission company, a transport company, a medical company as well as a general staff;
- Two intervention groups (the 1st and the 2nd intervention groups);
- A support and reconnaissance group;

- An honour group (music, honour cavalry).

Most of the time, the staff of the presidential guard stay in the barracks. They do not carry out any civilian police missions. The presidential guard does its training in a special centre: the instruction and training centre of Minkama (Obala). The Israelis are still training the presidential guard and providing it with equipment. Besides the presidential guard, there exists another outfit responsible for the security of the President: the Presidential Security Direction or the *Direction de la Securite Presidentielle* (DSP) (Bertin, 2001).

### The Gendarmerie

The gendarmerie is a military force responsible for maintaining order and executing laws under the direction of the administrative and judiciary authorities.<sup>9</sup> On 7 February 1966 decree No. 66/DF/54 established the gendarmerie as a general Directorate. The immediate consequence of this decree was that, the gendarmerie became “Cameroonized”, and the high command, until then under the responsibility of a French officer, came to Cameroon’s Director-General. The gendarmerie is a military force that undertakes civil missions as well. Article 2 of this decree describes the general missions of the gendarmerie, and stresses that the gendarmerie, under the authority of the Ministry of Defence, completes its missions for the Ministry of territorial administration and for the Ministry of Justice. It is also at the disposal of the chiefs of other ministries. Article 3 presents its missions relating to national defence, internal safety, military, and judiciary police.<sup>10</sup>

Concerning its organization, the gendarmerie effectively implemented the provisions of the 2001 reform. The first article of decree No.2001/181 adopted on 25th July 2001 stated that, the national gendarmerie is a component of the armed forces and acts, overall, within the national territory, particularly in rural areas and in communication. Placed under the responsibility of the Minister in charge of defence, the national gendarmerie is headed by a Secretary of State Delegate to the Deputy Minister in charge of Defence (*Secrétaire d’Etat auprès du Ministre délégué à la présidence chargée de la gendarmerie* -SED).<sup>11</sup> This SED has the same functions as the *Directeur Général de la Gendarmerie Nationale* (DGGN) in France, and in other francophone countries, but has ministerial rank. The SED is responsible for human resources management, equipment resources and operational interventions of the gendarmerie forces.

The national gendarmerie is organised into three territorial commands, called “gendarmerie regions”. Each gendarmerie region has the same territorial jurisdiction as the corresponding military region. The gendarmerie region is responsible for the command, administration, coordination and the support of the gendarmerie units when they execute their missions. Each gendarmerie region supervises several gendarmerie legions. The three gendarmerie regions are divided as follows:

- The territorial jurisdiction of the first gendarmerie region (RG1) includes the Central, Eastern, and Southern regions. Its command post (PC) is based in Yaoundé;
- The territorial jurisdiction of the second gendarmerie region (RG2) includes the Littoral, NorthWest, West and South-West regions. Its command post is based in Douala;
- The territorial jurisdiction of the third gendarmerie region (RG3) includes the Adamawa Extreme-North and North regions. Its command post is based in Yaoundé.

<sup>9</sup> See decree No. 60-280 of 31st December 1960.

<sup>10</sup> See decree No. 66/DF/54 of 7 February 1966 establishing the gendarmerie as a general Directorate.

<sup>11</sup> See Article 1 of decree No.2001/181 adopted on 25 July 2001 relating to the setting up of the organisation of the National Gendarmerie.

Each RG is under the authority of a gendarmerie regional commandant, appointed by decree by the President of the Republic. The RG commandants, under the supervision of the Secretary of State, are responsible for leading and controlling the units under their command; defining, in cooperation with the commandant of the RMIA, the contribution of the gendarmerie forces to defence missions; planning and executing these missions; coordinating and executing the judiciary police missions; and protecting some institutions and organisations located within the gendarmerie region. In each region, the national gendarmerie is organised around one territorial command called the “gendarmerie legion”. Each gendarmerie legion has the same territorial jurisdiction as the correspondent military sector (Bagayoko-Penone, 2008). There are 10 gendarmerie legions:

- Within the gendarmerie region 1 (RG1), the Centre (PC in Yaoundé), East (PC in Bertoua) and the South (PC in Ebolowa) gendarmerie legions;
- Within the second gendarmerie regions (RG2), the Littoral (PC in Douala), the North-West (PC in Bamenda), the West (PC in Bafoussam) and the South-West (PC in Buea) gendarmerie Legions;
- Within the third gendarmerie region (RG3), the Adamawa (PC in Ngaoundere), the Extreme North (PC in Maroua) and the North gendarmerie legions.

However, it worth stressing that, in spite of the provision stating that the gendarmerie operates in rural areas, the Cameroon’s gendarmerie forces in fact intervene in urban centres as well. Recently, the gendarmerie has been deployed in big cities, in order to deal with the recrudescence of delinquency and violent attacks against people.

### The Air Force

The Cameroon air force was created by decree No. 2002/037 on 4 February 2002. This same decree organised the Cameroon’s air force.<sup>12</sup> The fighting units of the air force were gathered into air bases and put under the authority of the air base’s Commandant. This ensured their support. The air force Chief of Staff is responsible for their organisation and training. They are employed by the armed forces’ Chief of Staff, after consultation with the President of the Republic. The missions of the air force are to ensure the surveillance, the protection and the defence of the aerial space, to support and augment the other defence forces, and to protect the port and aerial facilities in cooperation with the Ministry of Transport.

Generally, the air force includes three aerial bases, in Yaoundé, Douala and Garoua. The air force staff is divided between these three bases, located within each RMIA. The Yaoundé base is a helicopter and liaison platform; the Douala base is a logistical and tactical transport platform; the Garoua base is an attack platform. The first two bases are timeworn. There are no stopping systems, no radio-navigation installations, and no lighting apparatus. No important investment has been made for ages. The Garoua base is the more modern and the best equipped venue. It conforms to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) standards and was built by the Germans, following an invitation to tender (Chouala, 2007).

The *Pole Aeronautique National a Vocation Regionale* (PANVR) is located on this base. Big aeroplanes and aeroplanes transporting weapons could land easily on this base. However, the site is not well-kept or well maintained. Finally, the Bamenda aerodrome could become the fourth aerial base, with the implantation of the airborne rifle commandos (*fusiliers commando de l’air* – BAFUSCO AIR). For the time being, a 60-member staff is working on the site, under the command of a lieutenant colonel, assisted by eight officers. Such a deployment is huge when compared to the lack of training of the units. The air force owns 6 Alpha Jet (2 are currently out of order) as attack equipment; 3 C-130 and 1 Puma as

<sup>12</sup> See decree No. 2002/037 on 4 February 2002.

transport facilities, 1 PA 23, 1 Alouette II, 2 Joker 300 and 2 Bell BO 206 as observation and liaison aircraft. It is worth stressing that the Presidential aerial squadron owns 1 Gruman G3, 1 Dauphin and 1 Cougar, which are not part of air force equipment.

### The Navy

The first article of decree No. 2002/036 adopted on 4th February 2002 created and organised the national navy. The Chief of Staff of the navy is responsible for the training and the support of the navy. He is also responsible for deploying and using navy staff, with the agreement of the President of the Republic.<sup>13</sup> Article 2 described the missions of the navy are described as follows: surveillance, protection and defence of national maritime, fluvial and riparian areas; protection and defence of seashore installations; leading of state's action on the sea in cooperation with other defence forces. Article 3 stressed on the surface naval forces, made of the ships and the embarkations; the naval rifle forces and combat divers (*forces des fusiliers marins et des nageurs de combat*); the Support units, including naval bases; and the training centre. The navy Chief of Staff is assisted by a major general, two naval commands. Moreover, Chief of Staff of the navy is responsible for the dockyard, as well as the three naval bases, located in Douala, Limbe and Kribi. The navy also owns three patrol boats (made in France and Spain), two amphibious boats (made in China), eight surveillance speedboats (*vedettes de surveillance*) (made in Spain and in USA). Most of the navy officers are primarily trained in Cameroon for their initial instruction before going abroad for their navy school (Fogue, 2007).

A decree organizing the “action of the state at sea” was signed on 1 November 2007 by the President. This French inspired concept states that a unique authority, namely the maritime prefect, most of the time an Admiral, controls and coordinates the interventions of all the Ministries (fishing, industry, customs, finances) in maritime areas. In Cameroon, this authority was a new Secretary of State (as for the gendarmerie) heading a general Directorate to the sea, and directly accountable to the President. The “action of the state at sea” aims at coordinating the navies of the Guinea Gulf countries (Cameroon, Nigeria, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and Congo). Initially this initiative was launched by the Americans with the ultimate purpose of developing a culture of permanent intelligence (Bagayoko-Penone, 2008).

### Innovations in the Recruitment and Training of Cameroon Armed Forces

In Cameroon, the military school and training centres are under the authority of the Schools and Joint Training Centres Command (*Commandement des ecoles et des Centres d'instruction - Interarmees* (COMECII). Decree No. 2001/87, adopted on 25th July 2001, outlines the principles of recruitment and admission within Cameroon's military schools (Alioune, 2017). Four admission procedures have been established:

- Procedure A: direct recruitment;
- Procedure B: joint recruitment and recruitment of soldiers coming up from the ranks;
- Procedure C: recruitment of reserve officers and graduates from higher education;
- Procedure D: recruitment of health military service officers.

Procedure A is open to every man and woman between 18 and 23 years old. These candidates must, at least, hold A-levels. Procedure C is open to every candidate between 18 and 26 years old. These candidates have to pass a common entrance examination. The number of available positions is fixed by a decree by the Deputy Minister of Defence. The training lasts 36 months for curricula A and C and 24 months for curricula B and D. The initial education seeks to teach students how to command an infantry section, or how to hold

<sup>13</sup> See decree No. 2002/036 adopted on 4th February 2002 to create and organize the national navy.

junior officer positions. Students are also taught general culture as stated by the decree No. 2004/180 adopted on 1 July 2004, which reorganises the EMIA.<sup>14</sup>

The decree No. 2005/014 adopted on 13 January 2005 organises the higher military education. According to Article 3, the higher military education is made up of three levels:

- Preparatory high military education;
- First degree high military education;
- Second degree high military education.

The general staff school or Ecole d'état-major (EMM) is responsible for preparatory and first degree education whilst the High joint military education course or the *Cours supérieur interarmées de défense* (CSID) is in charge of second degree higher military education.

Most of Cameroon's officers (85%) are trained in Cameroon. All the officers of Cameroon's armed forces first receive an army infantry officer training at the Joint military school or Ecole militaire interarmées du Cameroon (EMIA). After this initial infantry training, they follow an applied education (*ecole d'application*) at the EMIA or abroad, depending on their chosen speciality i.e.: gendarmerie, infantry, cavalry and armoured combat; army corps engineer; artillery; firemen; health; communications; justice; logistics; commissariat. The officers coming from procedure B or D stay in the speciality in which they were first recruited into the school. Most of the gendarmes and army officers are trained in Cameroon, while the air force and navy officers go on into foreign military schools.

The officers who are directly recruited after an entrance examination are well-trained, and can have further access to foreign military academies. However, they cannot be assisted by well-trained deputy-officers. In Cameroon, there is no military school for deputy officers: they all have to join the armed forces as rank soldiers (Matei, 2013). A presidential decree was adopted in order to create a military school for deputy officers, but this has never been set up. Access to training is, moreover, mainly set aside for servicemen and for gendarmes who have good network connections. A young gendarme explained during an interview that it is almost impossible for him, or his colleagues with a bachelor's degree, to be selected. These people cannot expect to attend college at the grade of warrant-officer-in-chief. The fact that there are currently no officer schools for the gendarmes<sup>26</sup> is an impediment to any potential promotion.

France is not the only partner of the Cameroon armed forces, though it is the most influential. Since the 1970's, a growing number of foreign partners have been contributing to the training of the armed forces. Cameroon's officers can thus be trained in the USA; the United Kingdom; Greece; Spain; Belgium; Germany; Morocco; Algeria and Israel, the latter being currently the most important partner after France (Houngnikpo, 2012).

### **Deployment of Cameroon Armed Forces**

Cameroon Armed Forces have been deployed in different regions in Cameroon and in some countries in Africa to fight against armed secessionist groups in the North West and South West Regions, Boko Haram Insurgents in the Far North Region, rebels in the Central African Republic and Maritime Rebels in the Bakassi Peninsula. These shall be examined below:

### **To Fight Armed Secessionist Groups in Anglophone Cameroon**

Several Cameroon Armed Forces have been deployed to the Anglophone regions of Cameroon. The Anglophone crisis that emerged from colonialism, turned into a crisis towards the end of 2016. It has plagued relations between the English-speaking people of the

<sup>14</sup> See decree No. 2004/180 adopted on 1 July 2004, which reorganises the EMIA.

North West and South West Regions and the Cameroon government from the early years of unification, to the abrogation of the federation in 1972 and the annulation of the United Republic in 1984 (Fanso, 2017). The origins and evolution of the Anglophone problem can be argued from the perspectives of colonial legacy, independence and reunification, the abrogation of federalism and annulation of the United Republic, the December 1990 Law of Association, and the outburst of the teachers and lawyers strike of 2016.

Most of the armed forces have been deployed during the final stage of the Anglophone crisis caused by the lawyers and teachers strike in 2016. On 9 May 2015, some 700 Common Law lawyers from the North West and South West Regions, and other Regions met in Bamenda demanding that, the Division of Common Law and Civil Law should be clearly defined and should operate side by side in *Ecole Nationale d'Administration et de Magistrature* (ENAM); the creation of the Law School; the non-adulteration of the educational sub-system in the North West and South West Regions and the protection of the Anglophone minority (Human Rights Watch, 2019). These lawyers deposited their resolutions and gave the government a reasonable period to react. Unfortunately, the government failed to immediately react to their demands. In February 2016, the Cameroon Education Forum (CEF) drew the attention of the government to the plight of the English sub-system of education in Cameroon. In a memorandum to the Prime Minister, Philemon Yang, the CEF lamented that about twenty-years since the ordinance on Education was signed, its provisions have been consistently violated or partly implemented. The CEF also decried the francization of education for Anglophones, non-appointment of an Anglophone as Minister of Education and the reorganization of the Ministries of Education to reflect the bi-cultural nature of the country.

The inaction of the government to lawyers' demands of May 2016 led to the call for a four-day strike action from 11 to 14 October 2016 (Ngoh, 2019). This strike was endorsed by teachers in Anglo-Saxon Universities in Cameroon. The government ignored the lawyers' demands and strike actions and on 21 November 2016, the Teachers' Trade Union in the North West and South West Regions declared an indefinite strike action until their grievances earlier tabled to the government were addressed. They organised a rally and several thousand people joined them to express grievances. At the end, Mancho Bibixy, a radio animator in Bamenda, seized the opportunity to launched his "Coffin Revolution" protesting against the dirty nature of the Bamenda City Council, the dilapidating road network and the slow advancement of the water project in Bamenda. In response, government security forces violently dispersed the demonstrators, arrested dozens of protesters, killed at least two, and wounded many (International Crisis Group, 2017).

### **To Fight Boko Haram Insurgents in the Far North Region**

Boko Haram was founded as a Sunni Islamic fundamentalist sect, influenced by the Wahhabi movement, advocating a strict form of Sharia. It developed into a Salafist-Jihadi group in 2009. The movement is diffuse, and fighters associated with it do not necessarily follow Salafi doctrine (Johnson, 2011). Boko Haram seeks the establishment of an Islamic state in Nigeria. It opposes the Westernization of Nigerian society and the concentration of the wealth of the country among members of a small political elite, mainly in the Christian south of the country (Bartolotta, 2011). Most media, writers and commentators date the origin of Boko Haram to 2002. However, security operatives in Nigeria trace its true historical root to 1995, when Abubakar Lawan established the Ahlulsunna wal'jama'ah hijra or Shabaab group (Muslim Youth Organisation) in Maduigiri, Borno State. It flourished as a non-violent movement until Mohammed Yusuf assumed leadership of the sect in 2002. Over time, the group has metamorphosed under various names like the Nigerian Taliban, Muhajirun, Yusufiyah sect, and BH. The sect, however, prefers to be addressed as the Jama'atu

Ahlissunnah Lidda'awati wal Jihad, meaning a "People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad" (Madike, 2015).

The Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) was set up by Chad, Niger and Nigeria in 1998 to deal with cross-border banditry. Several Cameroon Armed forces were part of this initiative. In April 2012 its mandate was expanded to include "the fight against Boko Haram Terrorism (BHT) in the Lake Chad Region".<sup>15</sup> In 2013 and 2014 the armed forces of Chad and Niger respectively withdrew their troops from MNJTF bases. After the abduction of the schoolgirls from Chibok, the countries of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) and Benin resolved to re-establish the MNJTF. The MNJTF include battalions from each of the LCBC member states and Benin up to 10,000 personnel from the LCBC Member States and Benin.

From 5 to 7 February 2015, experts of the four Member States of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) - Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria - and Benin gathered at the *Palais des Congrès* of Yaoundé, Cameroon, to finalise the operational documents of the MNJTF to fight against the terrorist group Boko Haram. They were assisted in this by experts of the African Union (AU) Commission. Experts and officials from other African regional organisations and bilateral and multilateral partners, particularly from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU) and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), also took part in the meeting.

Referring to the communiqué of the 484<sup>th</sup> meeting of the PSC held in Addis Ababa, at the level of Heads of State and Government, on 29 January 2015, which authorised the deployment of the MNJTF; the conclusions of the 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence the LCBC Member States held in Niamey, Niger, on 20 January 2015; and the final communiqué of the extraordinary summit of the countries of LCBC held on 7 October 2014, as well as to other relevant decisions of the AU and the LCBC, the experts undertook an in-depth analysis of the nature and evolution of Boko Haram, the regional expanses of its activities in the Lack Chad Basin region, the logistical and operational capabilities of the group, and the impact of its atrocities on civilian populations, as well as on the social and economic infrastructures of the regions where it operates.<sup>16</sup>

### **To fight Maritime Piracy along the Conflictual Bakassi Peninsula**

To grasp the security issues present in the Bakassi Peninsula and the challenges posed by maritime pirates, it is necessary to understand, at least at the basic level, the region's history. The Bakassi conflict is an ongoing insurgency which started in 2006, in the Bakassi Peninsula of Cameroon waged by local separatists against Cameroonian government forces (Ngwa & Funteh, 2019). After the independence of both Cameroon and Nigeria the border between them was not settled and there were other disputes. The Nigerian government claimed the border was that prior to the British-German agreements in 1913 (Akinyemi, 2014). On the other hand, Cameroon claimed the border laid down by the British-German agreements. The border dispute worsened in the 1980s and 1990s after some border incidents occurred, which almost caused a war between the two countries. In 1994 Cameroon went to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to avoid war with Nigeria after many armed clashes occurred in the disputed regions (Egede & Igiehon, 2017). Eight years later the ICJ ruled in Cameroon's favour and confirmed the 1913 border made by the British and Germans as the international border between the two countries. Nigeria confirmed it would transfer Bakassi

<sup>15</sup> Message from MNJTF HQ to DHQ, dated 11 May 2012, MNJTF/G3/240/02, Request for Intelligence Operatives and Equipment.

<sup>16</sup> See more at: <http://www.peaceau.org/en/article/experts-meeting-on-the-elaboration-of->, Retrieved 10 August 2016.

to Cameroon. In June 2006 Nigeria signed the Greentree Agreement, which marked the formal transfer of authority in the region to Cameroon. The move was opposed by many Bakassians who considered themselves Nigerians, form the Bakassi Freedom Fighters, and started to arm, kill and involve in piracy.

Indeed, whilst leaders in Abuja and Yaoundé continued for decades to draw their battle lines, local militias, pirates, thieves and other unsavory individuals were quickly filling in Bakassi's security vacuum due to years of underdevelopment. Some armed groups such as the "Bakassi Boys" and Bakassi Freedom Fighters proved controversial for some. Indeed, despite providing protection for the Igbo-speaking community of the south-east, the vigilante organisation was also accused by human rights groups of torturing their opponents. Pirates, too, began to increase their operations. Local news outlets in Cameroon have frequently published reports of assailants committing largely low-level robberies along the Bakassi waterways (Udeoji, 2013).

Other incidents, however, have been far more violent. For example, in August 2012, Bakassi pirates, allegedly from Nigeria, raided a ship before kidnapping a Cameroonian traditional prince and his friend. Only after securing approximately US\$30,000 in ransom payments, did the pirates free their captives. In another incident in October 2013, pirates aboard a speed boat approached a fishing vessel, before shooting and killing one fisherman and taking an engineer and ship officer hostage. Even more recent, in December 2013, the Wilbert Troy, a fishing vessel, was also reportedly attacked by pirates near the Bakassi Peninsula (Gibler, 2018). In this harrowing assault, three Cameroonian sailors were subsequently abducted, before being released a week later following a hefty ransom payment. Since this attack, a number of other maritime incidents have been reported near the Bakassi waterways. Many, however, continue to go on unreported, likely due to a fear of retribution from their assailants. Nevertheless, the expanding capability and range of many pirate groups - almost all aforementioned incidents were allegedly orchestrated by assailants from the Nigeria - illustrates that there is still cause for concern. To address this, Nigeria and Cameroon, have to be willing to work together to tackle the root causes of Bakassi piracy.

### **Challenges Faced by Cameroon Armed Forces**

The challenges to defense management in Cameroon, are varied, wide-ranging and complex. It encompasses a variety of interrelated aspects to the different armed forces. To ensure transformation in present practices to meet these challenges will require dynamic leadership and commitment (Finer, 2002). It is submitted that there are several challenges encountered by the army, the presidential guards, the gendarmerie, the air force and the navy and as such, these loopholes must be carefully analyzed to ensure success in future defense management in Cameroon. These are:

The problem of clientelism and nepotism are very common in recruitment processes, coupled with the regional balance policy, these practices result in integration within the armed forces of a large number of elements that do not hold the required qualifications or moral fibre to occupy military positions. The promotion system is very opaque. Kinship and familial solidarities are still very important in the recruitment and promotion processes.

There is also the problem of ageing and feminization. There is also an ageing process, besides the problems of the older generals, there has not been enough recruitment for younger staff. Even the staff of the elite battalions of the *Brigade d'intervention rapide* (BTAP, BSA, and BBR) are getting older. Whilst the rate of feminisation within the armed forces is, at first sight, seen to be rather satisfactory, in reality the women's situation of is not always easy: a lot of officers are using their seniority to sexually pressure young female assistants (Barany, 2012).

There is also the challenge posed by poor or outdated equipment. It is worth noting that, unlike a lot of francophone African countries, the equipments of the armed forces are purchased, most of the time, by Cameroon itself. Compared with what it used to be in the 1980s, Cameroon's armed forces are seen to be as if they are in a state of growing poverty. Following the 1990's economic crisis, and the devaluation of the FCFA, the armed forces have lost high percentage of their budget. The equipment of the armed forces is often abysmal and most often, the Cameroon's armed forces are non-commanded, and even if well-trained, are ill-equipped (Barka & Ncube, 2012). There is no chain of support (maintenance, support staff), even if they were in theory created by the 2001 reform. The ammunitions warehouses are timeworn as are the military accommodations. Only the air force has a good maintenance system which is contracted out to private companies such as Dassault, Alpha Jet or Eurocopter Roumanie.

The lack of planning and command capacities is coupled with the absence of a capable informational system. The internal systems of communication are said to be unreliable. Decisions are often taken on an empirical basis, thanks to the manual delivery of information (the so-called system of the "estafette" - express courier). There is not a unified regulatory system of data transmission: different transmission systems (provided by the French and the Israelis) are cohabitating without being compatible. Moreover, these systems are often very expensive and highly sophisticated. According to a number of specialists, it would be more efficient to buy 3rd generation material (made in the 1980's) which would be more relevant to the kind of risks and threats that Cameroon has to cope with.

The next challenge concerns military leadership. There is a gap between the generation of colonels and generals and the younger generation who are increasingly being trained in foreign schools to the standard of peacekeeping and multinational operations. However, there are often discrepancies between these Cameroon trainees who attend multinational training in foreign military academies and other African officers who take part in peacekeeping operations. In any case, these officers are not given the opportunity to practice what they have been taught. It is very common for a general to choose a young officer who comes from Saint-Cyr as an aide de camp. The young officers are therefore not motivated to fulfil their mission. Their perception of the upper grades is also biased: a number of them confess that their objective is to reach the level of colonel in order to access all the material advantages linked to the higher ranks (notably the fuel tickets and, in some cases, comfortable offices with TV and fridges). A number of colonels are said to be almost as rich as the generals, and to own plantations and buildings. Consequently, joining the military is growing to be more utilitarian and materialist.

Concerning discipline, majority of Cameroonian armed forces are disciplined. There is no parallel chain of command when orders are executed. However, with regard to corruption and embezzlement, sanctions are clearly not proportionate to the amounts that are siphoned off. For instance, the colonel who embezzled 14 millions FCFA on 20 May, 2008 was only suspended for one month and has since been reinstated to his position (Bagayoko-Penone, 2008).

There is also a serious challenge experience at the level of training. The officers who are directly recruited after an entrance exam are well-trained, and can have further access to foreign military academies. Access to training is, moreover, mainly set aside for servicemen and for gendarmes who have good network connections. A young gendarme explained during an interview that it is almost impossible for him, or his colleagues with a bachelor's degree, to be selected. These people cannot expect to attend college at the grade of warrant-officer-in-chief. The fact that there are currently no officer schools for the gendarmes is an impediment to any potential promotion.

External interference by Cameroonian partners has also served as a major challenge. There is clearly a rivalry between the French and the Israeli military cooperation services: it seems that there are no direct links between these two Cameroonian partners: the initiatives they are taking are not coordinated with regards to the training and the equipment they provide. This underlying rivalry results in two different kinds of problems: first, a rivalry between the elite units, on one hand, the *Brigade d'intervention rapide* and its three battalions (the BTAP; the BSA, BBR) mostly supported and trained by the French; on the other hand, the BIR, who are supported by the Israelis; and second, a lack of compatibility in the equipment provided by these two foreign partners: the equipment purchased in Israel are generally incompatible with French equipment. This incompatibility is particularly worrying with regards to communications systems: the Israelis have equipped the armed forces with a very competitive Helios communications system; however, the Helios terminals are not connected with other terminals and so, consequently, there is no global coverage of the territory.

### Conclusion

This paper that set out to examine the impact of modern recruitment, training and redeployment strategies on the Cameroon Armed Forces since independence has demonstrated that, recent trends and challenges have forced the Cameroon government to reorganized the recruitment and training process to combat terrorists, insurgents, separatists and maritime pirates that have threatened the unity and integrity of Cameroon. The paper has argued that, the successes recorded recently, following the deployment of Cameroon Armed Forces against the Nigeria Islamic sect Boko Haram, the armed Ambazonian separatist fighters in Anglophone Cameroon, the maritime pirates along the Cameroon-Nigeria Bakassi Peninsula, and threats from sectarian rebels in the Central African Republic are due to the high quality of training received by our forces in Cameroon and from foreign partners like France, USA, Germany, Britain and China. In fact, for Cameroon Armed Forces to meet up with recent challenges, the government must recruit more forces, produce and acquire more equipment, invest in training, and constantly deploy forces to battlefields to gain new skills and competencies.

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