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Military Boundaries, Practices and Reforms in Colonial and Postcolonial Cameroon: A Comparative Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This paper offers insights into the history of colonial militaries in Cameroon, and how the British and the French who scrambled for and failed to annex the territory were busy observing and comparing German military strategies from the time of German annexation on 12 July 1884. In 1914, they jointly attacked and defeated the Germans and successfully administered Cameroon till reunification in 1961. This paper examines the pre-First World War British-French evaluations of German strength, strategies of colonial militaries, and methods of observation, comparison of German, French and British approaches during the inter-war period and finally the influence of colonial militaries on the modern Cameroon. The article argues that, despite historically rooted pathologies from colonialism that continue to hamper military development, postcolonial military practices and reforms have not been able to address Cameroon's crises. Based on a wide range of primary and secondary sources, the article looks in-depth at the means and practices of observing and comparing colonial militaries in Cameroon, concluding that, any military that does not observe and compare the strategies, tactics and boundaries of its rival, is bound to be defeated.

Keywords: Colonial, Postcolonial, Military, Boundaries, Observation, Comparison, and Cameroon.

INTRODUCTION:

The comprehensive history of colonial militaries during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Africa has received extensive scholarly attention. In Cameroon, colonial military leaders continuously observed, compared, and evaluated the powers of their friends and enemies before attacking at boundary points (Eyongetah & Brain, 974: 72). This study looks at contested boundaries in terms of the limits of the different colonial militaries and well as that postcolonial armed forces in Cameroon. This explains why from the onset, the British and the French who scrambled for and failed to annex Cameroon in 1884 evaluated the military strength of the Germans before extending the First World War to the territory. The institutions of Cameroon armed forces, which are well structured to protect the nation, have monopoly over legitimate (Ouedraogo, 2014).

The historical and political evolutionary processes in Cameroon indicate that militarism was rooted in Cameroon's affairs during the precolonial period (Assensoh & Alex-Assensoh, 2002: 25). The development of military activities in Cameroon emerged from the German, British and French colonial forces that were put in place to prevent the spread of indigenous resistance and to serve the geo-strategic interests of colonial powers in terms of a manpower reserve for easy mobilisation in times of war (Berghe, 1970: 8). Naison Ngomareiterates that post-independence civil-military relations in African countries are still influenced by their colonial past and this has instigated indigenes to dislike the role played by colonial military in their territories (Ngoma, 2006: 98-111).

However, some military historians have rightly acknowledged the implications of colonial legacy on the evolution postcolonial military situation in Cameroon (Fanso, 1989: 51). This paper treats the emergence of colonial militaries in Cameroon; shows how the British and French evaluated the military strength of the Germans before extending the First World War to German Kamerun; explores the means, methods and strategies of colonial militaries; examines the means and methods of observing and comparing colonial militaries; compares the German, British and French approaches to military intervention during the inter-war period; and tackles the influence of colonial militaries on postcolonial Cameroon. This paper argues that, despite historically pains caused by colonial militaries, post-independence government in Cameroon still rely on foreign military equipment and technical expertise from former colonial masters.

Background: History and the Emergence of Colonial Militaries

The history of modern Cameroon may be divided into three broad time periods: pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial. Nevertheless, some important aspects of colonial military history remained unknown to the public and even to most military historians. Before 1884, the region which later became the German Protectorate of Kamerun was scrambled for by Britain, France and Germany. Germany, at last, won the competition and annexed Cameroon in July 1884. Between 1884 and early 1914, the Germans colonized and began to administer Kamerun as a single polity and thus laid the groundwork for a subsequent Kamerun identity and citizenship (Chem-Langhee, 1990: 5-15). It was only in 1889 that native resistance in Cameroon, and other parts of Africa obliged Bismarck to agree on the creation of a colonial military force. However, the outbreak of World War I radically changed the situation. A German attempt with its military might to exempt European African colonies from the war failed (Ngoh, 2002: 128). On 27 September 1914 Britain and France jointly attacked German Kamerun and the administration of the territory was disrupted. Following the disruption of the administration, most of the areas that were still managed by the Germans were not properly administered due to the confusion brought by the War (Chem-Langhee, 1990: 11). However, things started stabilising when the Germans were defeated and ousted from Kamerun in January 1916. On 17 March 1916, General Dobell proclaimed the partition of the territory into British and French spheres.

Before the actual partition, the Anglo-French accord that was reached on 4 March 1916 and effected on 6 March 1916 to partition Cameroon between Britain and France was quite timely (Fanso, 1989). The provisional boundary was fixed after conferences between General Dobell and General Aymerich in Douala. The boundary line was traced by the two Generals from Lake Chad to the Mungo River. The French received four-fifth, while the British received two disconnected pieces of territory along Nigeria's eastern frontier, estimated at only one-fifth of the original German territory. On 1 April 1916, officials and troops of each power withdrew to their own side of the frontier (Eyongetah & Brain, 974: 56). Following the defeat of the German military in Cameroon, Germany ceded her interests in Cameroon to the principal allied and Associated Powers under Article 119 of the Treaty of Versailles of 28 June 1919, and renounced all right thereto. The Anglo-French Declaration signed in Paris on 10 July 1919 by Viscount Milner and M. Simon legally sealed the delineation of the border dividing this former German protectorate into two parts. On 20 July 1922, the French and British portions of Cameroon were assigned to their respective administering powers as mandated territories of the League of Nations. As a result, and in conformity with Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, the tutelage or guardianship of the people of Cameroon was entrusted to Britain and France. French Cameroon was administered as a single unit (Enonchong, 1967: 53). In the course of administering British Cameroons, Britain adopted the administrative policy or system of Indirect Rule and for administrative convenience it divided its sphere of Cameroon into British Southern Cameroons that was administered as part of the Southern Provinces of Nigeria (later as part of the Eastern Region of Nigeria) and British Northern Cameroons which was administered as part of the Northern Provinces of Nigeria (later as the Northern Region of Nigeria) (Ngoh, 2011: 3). The British decision to divide its sphere of former German Cameroon was because of the following reasons: it comprised two disjointed strips of territory, and the existence of geographical barriers compounded by the absence of an adequate transportation and communications network between

the two disjointed strips of territory made it extremely difficult for the territory to be administered as a separate single unit from Nigeria. In addition, the Second World War brought into existence the United Nations and the Trusteeship System as replacements for the defunct League of Nations and the Mandate System (Fanso, 1989: 103).

The period from 1959 to 1961 was a turning point in the constitutional history of British Northern and Southern Cameroons as politicians who returned to New York in September 1959 agreed to accept a United Nations (UN) sponsored plebiscite on 11 February 1961 to ascertain the wishes of the people of Northern and Southern Cameroons as to their political future (Ngoh, 2004: 9). The two plebiscite questions were:

1) Do you wish to achieve independence by joining the independent Federation of Nigeria? Or,
2) Do you wish to achieve independence by joining the independent Republic of the Cameroons?

At the end, the electorate of Northern Cameroons opted to achieve independence in association with Nigeria, while Southern Cameroons voted to achieve independence by reuniting with the Republic of Cameroon. A constitutional conference was held in Foumban from 17 to 21 July 1961. It was followed by another meeting in August in Yaounde. The outcome was a draft Federal Constitution and on 1 October 1961 Southern Cameroons achieved independence and reunified with the Republic of Cameroon to form the Federal Republic of Cameroon. The former Southern Cameroons became the State of West Cameroon, while the former Republic of Cameroon became the State of East Cameroon until 1972 when the two states merged to form the United Republic of Cameroon (Fanso, 1989: 157; Azad MJ., 2022).

Adventand Means of Observing Colonial Militaries in Cameroon

The Colonial Military was the overarching military body charged with the defence of the Colonial Republic. In the late 19th century and early 20th century the German, British and French militaries clashed in colonial Cameroon. Immediately the German annexed the territory, they observed and compared French and British 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. In the early 20th 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. The first concerns the German Military. On 12 July 1884, Germany signed the Germano-Duala Treaty and the period of quiet observation of military among the German, British and French administrators who scramble for the annexation of the territory ended. A new phase of colonial military observation came into existence in German Kamerun. The name of the official German colonial armed forces in German Kamerun was referred to as *Schutztruppe* (Moyd, 2014: 41). When the German Reich became a colonial power in 1884, there were no provisions for the creation of national military forces in the territory. From 1815 to 1898, the dream of the German Chancellor, Otto Von Bismarck, was that, these forces should be established and financed solely by the trading company's active in Kamerun. But the companies either refused to do so, or invested so little in their troops that these represented no serious power factor. After carefully observing the British and French military reactions to German annexation, in 1889, native resistance in Kamerun precipitated Bismarck's move to create a colonial military force. Though financed by the German government, these troops were organised under private law and all German members of the armed forces had to resign and sign contracts of employment directly with commanders Hermann Wissmann (1853-1905) and Curt Von Francois (1852-1931) unfailingly (O'Neill, 1918: 21).

German military leaders continuously evaluated the strength of the British and French forces to reorganize the German military in Cameroon. On 3 and 4 May 1894, the police forces that resemble the model of the German East African *Schutztruppe*, were reorganised in Southwest Africa and Cameroon. On 9 June 1895, the German Emperor, Wilhelm II (1859 - 1941) officially announced the change of name (Morlang, 2014: 55-71). The main task of the *Schutztruppe* as stipulated by the *Schutztruppengesetz* (*Schutztruppe* Act), in their early years was to extend the German territory and

guarantee public order and safety. In order to achieve these objectives, the *Schutztruppe* had to wage a number of wars in Kamerun from 1894 to 1908 after observing indigenous forces. Constant threats observed from the British and French and the permanent state of wars and resistances in German colonies of Cameroon, Southwest Africa, andEast Africa forced the *Reichstag* in Berlin, to approve the *Schutztruppe*'s budget on an annual basis, and to regularly increase it. From a total of 736 Germans and 1,914 Africans serving in the three colonial armed forces in 1895, the numbers grew to 2,432 Germans and 4,122 Africans in 1914 (Moberly,1995: 12). The superior weaponry, modern breechloaders, machine guns and artillery of the *Schutztruppe* were not enough to resist the indigenes in Kamerun. This observation motivated the British and French to extend the World War I to German Kamerun in 1914.

The second focuses on the French and British colonial militaries. These colonialists who scrambled for and failed to annex German Kamerun in 1884, used different methods and metrics to observe the *Schutztruppe* before jointly attacking the territory following the outbreak of the World War I in German Kamerun in August 1914 (Ngoh, 2002: 121). Shortly after the World War I commenced in Europe on 4 August 1914, the British, the French, and the Belgian forces based in neighbouring West and Equatorial African colonies launched an attack on German Kamerun. The first major observation that gave the British and the French militaries the impetus to attack was that, Kamerun was surrounded on all sides by Allied territory. British-held Nigeria was to the northwest. The colony was bordered by Belgian Congo to the southeast and French Equatorial Africa in the east, while the neutral colony of Spanish Guinea was bordered by German Kamerun on all sides. In 1914, on the eve of the First World War, Kamerun remained largely unexplored and according to British and French observations, was neither unmapped nor demarcated (Dane, 1919: 11). The fundamental reasons for spreading the war into Kamerun were more strategic for the Allied Powers and their militaries. The British took the lead to cut the German colonies off from sources of military supplies, revenge the German coup which led to the German annexation of 12 July 1884, and to readjust their Nigerian frontier, while the French wished to acquire territories in Kamerun, expand their Equatorial African possessions and take back territories of French Equatorial Africa ceded to the Germans in 1911. Both powers after proper observation, wanted to extend the war to the German colonies to force the Germans to fight the war on many fronts, weaken her militarily, as well as increase their bargaining powers in post-war settlements. The Belgians for their part wanted revenge for the German violation of their neutrality in 1914 (Sobseh, 2011: 88-89).

Most military historians have observed colonial military strengths in Cameroon from colonial expeditions following the escalation of the World War I in 1914. While arrangements for the joint Anglo-French expedition to Kamerun were still being worked out, Nigerian troops were moved to the frontier with Kamerun. On 29 August 1914, attacked Garoua and succeeded in capturing one of its German forts. Two other Nigerian columns marched to capture Mora and Nsanakang. The Germans quickly counter-attacked recapturing these forts. Meanwhile, French troops from Equatorial Africa had launched operations against Cameroon before the joint expedition was reached. The Governor General of French Equatorial Africa ordered a general mobilization as early as 1 August 1914 and French troops had started moving into the areas which France had ceded to Germany in 1911 (Fanso, 1989: 52). As already observed, the German administration had decided on having a well-trained and well-equipped colonial army, *Schutztruppe*, and a police force, *Polizeitruppe,* formed since 1891. In fact, the strength of the German force before it was increased with hostilities in 1914 was 1650 troops and 1550 police, officered by 200 Germans. Facing the Allied troops following the start of the war in 1914 were 2000 German troops and 2200 policemen with para-military training under the command of the German force, Lt. Colonel Zimmermann (Ngoh, 2002: 123).

British and French actors in August 1914 observed and compared German superior military force and tactics to reach agreement on a joint Anglo-French military expedition against German Kamerun (Sobseh, 2012: 87). The joint force was headed by Brigadier-General Charles McPherson Dobell. Initially, General Dobell commanded a joint force of 7000 men made up of 3000 from the French West African colonies and 4000 from four British in West

African colonies. These forces were increased to 9700 men (Fanso, 1989). In addition, there were two other Allied forces not under General Dobell's command. There was a French force of 3000 men under General Joseph Georges Aymerich, outside the joint expedition. This force was increased from October 1914 by three companies of Belgian troops commanded by three Belgian captains from the Belgian Congo. Another French force of 1000 was organized under General Largeau and Colonel Brisset in Chad. This force was eventually incorporated into the British Nigerian force under General Frederick Cunliffe in 1915. With these adjustments provoked by different means of observation, the German troops became well organized and the commander, Lt-Colonel Karl Zimmermann, was determined to make the best of a bad situation. This explains why, despite the efforts of the joint expeditionary force, the Germans were slowlyand steadily defeated.

The triumph over of the Germans in Cameroon was slow but steady due to the practice of military observation and comparison. Before the collapse of Mora under the leadership of the German commander, Captain Von Raben on 20 February 1916, a strong German raiding unit had earlier broken through the Nigerian defences and reached the emirates of Muri and Yola inside Nigeria. Mora was the last stronghold of the Germans in Cameroon under Governor Ebermaier. The Germans eventually surrendered to the Allied forces and evacuated the territory on 17 February 1916 (Chem-Langhee, 1990: 6). Before the war ended in February 1916, Britain and France have reached a compromise to share Kamerun along the Picot Provisional Partition Line. The Second World War, though a European conflict, was highly felt in Cameroon. Before the outbreak of the war in 1939, Germany observed British and French militaries, denounced the Treaty of Versailles and laid claim on her former colonies, including Cameroonb (Fanso, 1989: 95).

Practices of Colonial Military Observation

In colonial Cameroon, the following sources of knowledge about the German, British and French militaries existed from 1884 to 1961. The first source of knowledge came from the German observation of indigenous military resistance in German Kamerun. This resistance took two main forms: guerrilla warfare and direct military engagement. The dominant type used depended on the socio-political and military organizations of the various societies. The decentralized societies took advantage of guerrilla warfare because of their size and the absence of standing or professional armies. Also, small groups of organized fighters in German Kamerun who mastered the terrain mounted resistance by using the classical guerrilla tactic of hit-and-run raids against stationary German forces. This was the approach used by ethnic groups like the Dualas against the Germans after annexation. The resistance was premeditated and planned and as such, it was difficult to be victorious against them or emerge successful (Ekechi, 2002; Iweriebor, 2002; Oyebade, 2002). The second was got from reports of effective military occupation of colonial territories as stressed by the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 which marked the climax of the European competition for territory in Africa, a process commonly known as the Scramble for Africa. The Berlin Conference legitimated and formalized the process of observation of colonial militaries. Following the close of the conference organized by Otto Von Bismarck in Berlin, Britain and France surrendered their claims for precolonial Cameroon to Germany and embark on the exploitation of military reports provided by the Germans on how they were effectively occupying the territory (Blij & Muller, 1997: 340). The third was extracted from the reports of indigenous wars and resistances against German military and administration in German Kamerun. Written information observed and exploited by the British and the French revealed that by 1907 the Germans clearly saw Kamerun as a colony and established an office for colonial affairs independent of the foreign ministry. The governor was granted wide powers, which included law-making, levying and collecting taxes, administering the court system, and directing military operations in the colony. Many groups opposed German penetration and conquest. For example, the (Duala, 1884; Bafut and Mankon, 1890; Bulu, 1896; Tibati, 1901; Gbaya *et al.,* 1902; Nso, 1902; Fulbe, 1902) and other groups opposed the occupation of their land by the Germans, some preferring the British or the French to re-annex them. The Germans used machine guns and modern small arms like rifles and revolvers, while the indigenes fought with flintlocks, spears, cutlasses and breech-loading guns inflicting and suffering casualties before they were being subdued

by German military forces who were most often well-drilled, well-equipped and heavily assisted by reinforced contingents who were obliged to sign peace treaties (Fanso, 1989: 25-28). The fourth source of knowledge was got from the reports of former agreement on the exchange of territories between France and Germany signed on 4 November 1911, and officially exchanged on 1 October 1912. This was another source of colonial observation of military (Ndi, 2013: 61). In 1911, the French observed the German military strength, requested the Germans to surrender their claims and rights in Agadir, Morocco and to cede to the French a small portion of the 'duck-bill' north-eastern Kamerun in exchange for large territories of French Equatorial Africa, including the whole of Gabon and French Congo as well as territory in Ubangi-Shari, present day Central African Republic. Following the victory of the Allied military forces and expulsion of the German forces from German Kamerun, the French quickly reannexed these territories and failed to return the 'duck-bill' territory ceded to them by the Germans (Elango, 1985: 657-673). The last was from the reports of the British and the French military writings and observations after the World Wars. Their military strategies were constantly reviewed in German magazines and their campaigns studied. After thoroughly observing and reviewing these mechanisms, the Germans decided to provoke the Second World War and to reclaim German Kamerun- then referred to as British Cameroons and French Cameroun. These magazines, including those of the British and French formed the main channel of disseminating information and observing colonial militaries in Cameroons (Parsons, 2001: 1067-1073).

Comparison of Colonial Militariesin Cameroons

There are different areas that are in the forefront of comparing colonial militaries in German, British and French Cameroons. Despite German wars against indigenous groups and the ravaging effects World War I, the period from 1914 to 1918 witnessed history's single largest revolution in military tactics and technologies. In the same light, almost everything about battlefield operations after the Second World War stayed intact, irrespective of advances in weapons and technologies. What emerged from the First and Second World Wars, then, was what could be considered as the Modern Style of Warfare. The following comparisons can be made from colonial militaries in German, British and French Cameroons. The first tackles the comparison of colonial policies and their impact on militaries. German and British administrations in German Kamerun and British Cameroons were based on the concept of indirect rule-that is, allowing indigenous chiefs to perform most executive and judicial functions, and also recruit their population in the colonial militaries (Rubin, 1971: 74). French policy, by contrast, was focused on the closer integration of the colonies with the metropole. The mechanism for this was the policy of assimilation, by which Cameroonians who had received a western education (*évolués*) were granted French citizenship and the legal rights of Frenchmen, including appointments in the French military, participation in elections to urban councils and the French parliament. The unassimilated majority were to remain under traditional law. Though the French found it impossible to immediately dispense with the services of the German-era chiefs, they steadily reduced their autonomy and authority, treating them as petty bureaucrats who could be hired and fired at will. Despite the maintenance of the chiefs, the French administrative system was in practice 'quasi-direct' (LeVine, 1964: 92-98). The second focuses on labour policies and military recruitments. The main source of the unpopularity of indigenous law in French Cameroon was that it allowed the use of forced labour and forceful recruitment of local population into the military. The Germans had imposed a labour tax on the indigenous population and used the conscripted men to build the country's first roads, railways, plantations and for military assistance. The British abolished the system when they acquired Cameroon and, in its place, recruited workers and military men by offering good wages. In fact, plantation labour in British Cameroons was a relatively attractive prospect throughout the colonial period, and it attracted many migrants from southern Nigeria. The French, by contrast, swiftly re-imposed the labour tax in a disguised form, the prestastion, mostly for railway construction. The workers were unpaid and badly treated, with the death rate averaging around 60 per thousand workers (Deschamps, 1971: 104-110). The third deals with comparison of modern technologies. The German, British and French displayed different military technologies in colonial Cameroon. First World War was history's first high-tech war in Cameroon. As James Corum (1992: 18) noted, it "... constituted the most rapid

period of technological change in history." Two major technological waves between 1884 and 1916 altered forever the framework battlefield tactics in German Kamerun. The first wave ushered rifled weapons of increased firing speed and accuracy used by the Germans against indigenous resistance. The second wave that came with the escalation of the World War I in German Kamerun brought machine guns, and rapid-firing artillery. The new technologies, made coordination between the arms like-infantry, cavalry, and artillery successfulinbattle-ground. Despite all these, the German army remained handicapped by an institutional bias against many of the technical possibilities, and pursued instead largely tactical solutions to most of the problems of the modern battlefield (Dupuy, 1977: 169). As Holger Herwig noted, "In short, the Germans ignored technical innovation and mass production in favour of the hallowed concept of bravery in battle. In the process, they denied themselves mobility and flexibility at the operational level.' Hence, the infamous German failure to grasp the potential of the tank (Herwig, 1988: 94-95).The fourth treats comparison of colonial naval military operations. The strange issue surrounding the World War I in German Kamerun was that naval battle did not take place. Instead, sea power, in the form of the naval blockade of Germany, was a major decisive factors in the outcome of the war. The Germans, resorted to U-boats in a major way noticing it was more necessary to maintain their surface High Seas Fleet as a 'fleet in being,' rather than risking it in a decisive engagement. In the Atlantic, the British and the French started to develop countermeasures resulting in the doctrines of modern submarine and anti-submarine warfares, when U-boats started attacking Allied shipping (House, 1984: 7). In September 1914, the Germans had mined the Kamerun or Wouri estuary and scuttled naval vessels there to protect Douala, one of the colony's largest town and commercial centre in German Kamerun. The British and French military naval vessels bombarded towns on the coast and by late September had cleared mines and conducted amphibious landings in order to isolate Douala. On September 27, the city surrendered to Brigadier General Charles Macpherson Dobell, commander of the combined Allied force. The occupation of the entire coast soon followed as the French captured more of the territories to the south-east in an amphibious operation at the Battle of Ukoko (Moberly, 1931: 129). The fifth dwells on command, control, and communications**.** Effective, secured, and rapid communications were an important tool for the successfulmodern wars in colonial Cameroon. All sides exercised effective administration and control over a wide range of area with outdated communication technology (Travers, 1987: 18). The British and the French centralize both planning and execution at the highest levels, which in the end robbed other commanders of all initiative and made it almost impossible to exploit advanced tactical opportunities as they emerged. The Germans, on the other hand, retained a fairly high level of centralized planning, but pushed the execution down the chain of command as conceived. The Germans permitted their junior leaders on the spot far greater latitude in determining how to execute orders. Under the Germans, the system developed into what was called *Auftragstaktik* (mission-oriented tactics) (Lucas, 1925: 24). The last compares the military forces. The German military forces stationed in German Kamerun before the escalation of the First World War was 1,855 Schutztruppen (protection troops). However, after the start of war by mid-1915, the Germans were able to recruit an army of about 6,000. Allied forces on the other hand in the territories surrounding Kamerun were much larger. French Equatorial Africa alone could mobilize as many as 20,000 soldiers on the eve of war while British Nigeria to the west could raise an army of 7,550 (Killingray & Horne, 2012: 116).

Influence of Observation and Comparison on Postcolonial Military Reforms

Military reform was one of the key issues of Cameroon's drive to modernize and become a leading militarypower. When French Cameroun became independent on 1 January 1960 and reunified with British Southern Cameroons on 1 October 1961 to form the Federal Republic of Cameroon, most of the reforms in the military came as a result of observation and comparison of colonial militaries (Ndi, 2014: 51). However, following historical observation, it is evident that, Cameroon military has borrowed a lot from the French military. This can be observed from the rank structure of armed forces in Cameroon. For example, the high-ranking general officers in the army include the General, Lieutenant General, Major General, and Brigadier General, typical of the French military.

The Cameroon Air Force, along with the Cameroon Army, the Cameroon Navy (including the Naval Infantry), the National Gendarmerie, and the Presidential Guard make up the Cameroon Armed Forces. The Cameroon Air Force was established on 1 January 1961 as National Squadron (*Escadrille Nationale*), one year after French Cameroon gained its independence (Cherisey, 2017: 78-88). The first equipment which was three Max Holste MH.1521M Broussard was supplied by theFrench. In 1964 the air force was renamed National Aviation (*Aviation Nationale*), and in 1966 Cameroon Air Force (*Armée de l'Air du Cameroun*). Later orders from France included the Alouette II, Alouette III and Gazelle helicopters, and Fouga Magister and Dassault-Dornier Alpha Jet trainers. In 1977 two Lockheed C-130 Hercules entered service. Following this development, four turboprop de Havilland Canada DHC-Buffalos were ordered in 1981. In 1982 three twin turboprop Dornier Do 128s entered service for the maritime patrol role. The first battlefield action of Force was during an attempted coup in April 1984, when the air force stayed loyal to Paul Biya (Johnson, 1970: 18 -22). The armed forces number 14,200 personnel in ground, air, and naval forces. There are approximately 12,500 troops in the army across three military regions. Approximately 1,300 troops are part of the Cameroonian Navy, which is headquartered at Douala. Under 400 troops are part of the Air Force. There is an additional 9,000 paramilitary troops that serve as a gendarmerie (policing force) or reconnaissance role. The armed forces have bases spread all over Cameroon, while Air Force included three main aerial bases located in Yaounde, Douala, and Garoua. It has been an apolitical force, basically depending on the French defence capability. Although this dependence was reduced, French military experts continued to be closely involved in preparing the Cameroonian forces for deployment in conflict zones (Berghe, 1970: 10).

The influence of colonial military reform could also be observed from the main aerial bases found only in francophone part of the territory. The French's influence on postcolonial military has left the Anglophone portion or former British territories without military bases. The air force staffwas divided between the three bases of Yaounde, Garoua and Douala. The Yaoundé base was an helicopter and liaison platform; the Douala base was a logistical and tactical transport platform; and the Garoua base was an attack and training platform. The first two bases were timeworn. There were no stopping systems, radio-navigation installations, and lighting apparatus. No major investment was made for a long time. The Garoua base was the most modern and equipped and 'conforms' to North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) standards constructed by the Germans, following an invitation to tender. Large aeroplanes could land easily on this base. Finally, the Bamenda aerodrome could become a fourth aerial base, with the stationing of the airborne rifle commandos, with 60 people currently under the command of a lieutenant colonel assisted by eight officers to work at the site (Michel, 2007: 50-53). However, most of the military equipment used in post-independence Cameroon was acquired more from France than Germany and Britain. The air force has 6 Dassault/Dornier Alpha Jets (2 are currently inoperable) as attack aircraft; 3 Lockheed, C-130 Hercules and 1 Aérospatiale SA 330 Puma transport aircraft, 1 Piper PA-23, 1 Aérospatiale Alouette II, 2 Joker 300, 7 Humbert Tétras for training and 2 Bell 206 as observation and liaison aircrafts. The independently operated Presidential aerial squadron has 1 Grumman Gulfstream III, 1 Aérospatiale Dauphin and 1 Aérospatiale Super Puma, which are not part of air force equipment (Assensoh & Alex-Assensoh, 2002: 6). Maintenance of aircraft of this squadron is better than those of the air force in Cameroon.

CONCLUSION:

This paper has examined the history of colonial militaries and has demonstrated how the British and the French who scrambled for and failed to annex Cameroon in 1884 evaluated the military strength of the Germans before extending the First World War to German Kamerun. It has focused on the practices of observation and comparison of colonial militaries and how these practices influenced postcolonial military reforms in Cameroon. The study revealed that, the Germans resisted the French and the British military forces because they mastered the terrain and used weapons of bombardment, barrage, curtain-fire, mines, gas, tanks, machine-guns, and hand grenades. The study concludes that, despite renewed interest in analysing the different practices of military observation and comparison, as well as the British and French colonial military might, the legacy of German dominance remained evident, especially in

the military domain in the long 19th and early 20th century in Cameroon. The future of postcolonial Cameroon is uncertain, especially as the practices of Cameroon armed forces are influence by colonial military reforms.

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The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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