



**EIFORCES'(International School for Security Forces)  
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# **INSIGHT**

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## **The Defence and Security Forces faced with the structural transformation of *Cameroon's* *economy in the 21st century***

For years, the primary responsibility of the Defence and Security Forces (DSF) has been to defend the state against internal and/or external aggression. This basic function has become almost irrelevant at the beginning of the 21st century, as the search for efficiency has ceased to be an exclusive requirement of the DSF. In an environment marked by a profound change in the role of the State and the underlying model of action, the DSF are no longer immune to the modernisation and reform movements that accompany State's mission<sup>1</sup>. Just like other members of the State, they are called upon to act in support of or to accompany the construction of a sustainable economic and social development environment as, while being proud of their firepower, the DSF must not lose sight of their responsibility in the nation's development process.

For more than a decade, Cameroon has been committed to the structural transformation of its economy, and during the 2009-2019 decade, it drew up the Strategy Document for Growth and Employment (DSCE), the implementation of which was to lead the country towards emergence by 2035. However, in 2019, it was observed that

this ambitious objective might not be achieved due to a number of dysfunctions and constraints, both endogenous and exogenous. A change of strategy and tactics was therefore essential, hence the development of the National Development Strategy 2020-2030 (NDS 30), which is intended to provide a strategic, tactical and operational corrective to the DSCE. In this renewed ambition, the DSF, with all its components, is called upon to play its part.

The purpose of this paper is therefore to shed light on the mission of the DSF in the implementation of the NDS30. In what areas and at what level can the DSF better contribute to achieving the objectives of the NDS30? This is a change in expectations of the DSF which, in view of a series of transformational reforms that they have undergone since 2001, must, over and above their mission of securing institutions, people and property, contribute to the production of national wealth or accompany it. Seen from this angle, the contribution of the DSF is valuable. It is necessary to understand the role assigned to them in order to ensure a public defence policy that guarantees an

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<sup>1</sup> S. Trosa (S.), « Réinventer l'État, ici et ailleurs », *État et gestion publique*, Paris, La Docu française, 1999, p. 239.

environment of economic prosperity with a view to achieving the goals of emergence by 2035.

## **I. The National Development Strategy (NDS 30) in brief**

Perceived as a remediation of the Cameroon vision of development and emergence, the NDS 30 is built on the lessons learned from the implementation of the DSCE. It takes over until 2030, with a view to achieving the 2035 Vision objectives, which aims to make Cameroon an emerging country, democratic and united in its diversity<sup>2</sup>. Produced under the coordination of the Ministry of Economy, Planning and Regional Development (MINEPAT) and approved by the Prime Minister, the NDS 30 is a document that takes into account the many challenges facing Cameroon.

A careful reading of this NDS 30 reveals four main pillars on which the government intends to rely to achieve the targeted objectives. These include *the structural transformation of the national economy; the development of human capital and well-being; the promotion of employment and economic integration; and governance, decentralisation and strategic management of the State*<sup>3</sup>.

However, this vision, which could be described as long-term, must be achieved by means of milestone objectives to be supported and sustained. In order to achieve the SDN 30 objectives, it will be necessary, among other things, to:

- - increase the share of the resources transferred to local authorities to at least 15% of the state budget by 2025;
- - increase the share of public orders for goods and services to at least 60% by 2025;
- - complete all ongoing projects and finalise all modalities for the full commissioning of infrastructure resulting from major first generation projects;
- - give priority to the Project-Finance and Public-Private Partnership approaches in the implementation of major projects
- - finalise land reform;

- - promote the emergence and support of national prototypes;
- - give priority to the maintenance of existing equipment and infrastructure<sup>4</sup>.

In the light of the above, it appears that NDS 30 is a vast programme that requires significant human, financial, technical, logistical and strategic resources (...) that the entire country must mobilise locally and externally, particularly through foreign partners and especially its rich and diverse diaspora.

At the local level, the institutions in charge of defence and security issues, namely the Ministry of Defence, the National Gendarmerie and the General Delegation for National Security (DGSN) have very quickly grasped the role that they must play in this vast development and modernisation project for Cameroon.

## **II. SND 30: Defence and Security Forces support in question**

National construction is a task that requires combined efforts from all structural components of the nation. With this in mind, the Ministry of Defence, on instruction from the President of the Republic, Head of the Armed Forces and Supreme Commander of the Police Force, decided on 6 April 2022, to set up a working committee to enable the DSF to better understand the role they should play in the implementation of the NDS 30.

Installed by the Minister Delegate at the Presidency in charge of Defence, Joseph Beti Assomo, the DSF Working Committee for NDS 30 was placed under the chairmanship of the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, General René Claude Meka. In the short term, this committee is expected to find answers to the Cameroonian army's military-industrial capacity development requirements. On this subject, the Minister Delegate at the Presidency in charge of Defence, during the installation of this working committee, recalled that "the Defence and Security Forces play a pivotal role in the process that allows a country to strengthen [...] the industrial sectors in

<sup>2</sup> Le Document de stratégie pour la croissance et l'emploi (DSCE) a été élaboré par le Ministère de l'économie Ministère de l'Economie, de la Planification et de l'Aménagement du Territoire (MINEPAT) en 2009 pour servir de boussole à l'ambition d'émergence du Cameroun à l'horizon 2035.

<sup>3</sup> Galilée Zoa, «SND30 : Une nouvelle stratégie de développement pour le Cameroun », <https://adi.cm/strategie-nationale-de-developpement-snd30-le-cameroun-se-met-a-jour-pdf/> , accessed on 11 June 2022 at 11:20.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

the march towards economic emergence"<sup>5</sup>. Beyond the role, nature and level of their contribution to the achievement of the SND 30 objectives, the other mission assigned to this committee is to find ways and means for the Cameroonian DSF to "conquer strategic autonomy, so as to no longer depend entirely on (foreign) partners for their defence equipment, thus sheltering themselves both from the contingencies and jolts and jolts of relations between States"<sup>6</sup>.

Such an ambition can only be achieved if the vast majority of the DSF become familiar with the content of NDS 30 in its entirety, especially in the areas under their responsibility. This is why the Minister Delegate at the Presidency in charge of Defence recommended to them to truly grasp the content of NDS 30. In so doing, the Cameroonian DSF could engage in a logic of developing military-industrial capacities following the example of what has been done for decades by the Egyptian army, a role that the Military Engineers have been trying to play locally in the civil engineering sector for decades.

In concrete terms, the contribution of the DSF is expected in an environment and context described in NDS 30. According to this document, Cameroon is facing exogenous and endogenous security challenges that are likely to hinder its march towards emergence. For this reason, intensifying the fight against insecurity, crime and terrorism is an indispensable condition for the efficient implementation of development policies. To this end, the government intends to include actions aimed at modernising the operational capacities of the DSF and their rise in strength within the framework of long-term planning and multi-year programming. Therefore, strengthening the Army-Nation link, by ensuring the irrefragable and professional behaviour of the Defence Forces, in order to ensure the unfailing collaboration of the population and facilitate the conduct of operations on the ground, would be considered.

With regard to fighting insecurity, crime and terrorism, interventions will aim to: (i) significantly reduce illicit financial flows and arms trafficking; (ii) curb all forms of crime, especially cybercrime; (iii) combat terrorism and strengthen

international cooperation in this area; (iv) prevent the indoctrination and recruitment of young people; (v) ensure maritime security along Cameroon's coasts; and (vi) supervise vigilance committees' activities.

With regard to law enforcement, the measures will consist of: (i) strengthening the public order and security system; (ii) supervising and developing the operational capacities of the municipal police; (iii) strengthening the preventive administrative police system; and (iv) intensifying the fight against juvenile delinquency and the phenomenon of gang delinquency.

At the same time, in order to pacify individual relationships and reduce the disorder observed in society, law enforcement units must, in strict compliance with the law, relentlessly punish daily violations of freedoms, routine offences and uncivil behaviour.

In terms of crisis prevention and management, many expectations are also placed on the Cameroonian DSF. To mitigate the devastating effects of social crises and disasters of all kinds, the preventive approach will be adopted. To this end, frameworks for citizen expression will be set up within the Regional and Municipal Councils. These frameworks will take the form of dialogue sessions on various subjects between elected representatives and citizens' representatives (civil society, religious communities, women's and youth groups, private sector, etc.). This proximity mechanism should allow, on the one hand, the populations to have at their disposal a legal and democratic channel to regularly present their aspirations to the leaders, and on the other hand, the local elected representatives to maintain and reinforce the link with the social groups in a permanent manner.

However, in the event of a social crisis, inclusive dialogue between all actors will always be favoured in order to find a lasting solution to legally expressed demands and avoid the outbreak of possible cycles of violence. The increase in humanitarian crises and natural and industrial disasters requires the strengthening of the civil protection system. The government intends to: (i) develop and implement a disaster prevention and management strategy; (ii) strengthen the crisis and disaster coordination and management system at

<sup>5</sup> BRM, « Au Cameroun, l'armée ambitionne désormais de jouer sa partition dans l'industrialisation du pays Business in Cameroon, Yaoundé, avril 2022, p.8.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

national, regional and local levels; and (iii) develop mass information and education programmes on civil protection. In addition, the authorities undertake to strengthen the humanitarian response and to promote the reintegration of internally displaced persons. Furthermore, for the return of peace to the North-West and South-West Regions, the Government will implement a Special Status for these two Regions, as well as a Recovery, Reconstruction and Development Plan (PRRD) for these two Regions and for the Far-North<sup>7</sup>.

Nevertheless, this framework outlined in the NDS 30 document finds an army that has long been committed to development through civil-military actions, reinforced by the series of reforms undertaken since 2001.

### **III. Participation in development to be consolidated**

For decades, the DSF in Cameroon have distinguished themselves through actions aimed at strengthening the Army-Nation link. Indeed, on the security front, the organisation of the national territory into five military regions with Yaounde, Douala, Garoua, Bamenda and Buea as command posts, allows them to be closer to crisis zones for a prompt reaction in terms of protecting the population, their property and the defence of the country's territorial integrity. Thus, they act in synergy to sustain peace and development; reduce the nuisance capacity of terrorists; fight against urban and rural crime; maintain law and order.

At the national level, they have been on the front line in the northern part of the country for almost a decade to counter the terrorist threat posed by Boko Haram on the borders with Chad and Nigeria. Against the same threat, they are mobilised within the Multinational Joint Force (MNF). They are also deployed in the North-West and South-West Regions, where separatist tendencies are rife.

Within the sub-regional framework, the Cameroonian DSF are deployed in the Central African Republic (CAR) to contribute to the efforts of the international community to restore peace in this neighbouring country that has been ravaged by an almost endless war. Beyond the objective of peace in CAR, the challenge is to protect the Cameroonian population from the threat of armed militias and Central African rebels on its borders and in the surrounding towns. It is also a matter of preserving peace within the country, the Central African sub-region and the continent in general, peace being a precondition for development.

In terms of local development, better than the DSCE, SND 30 gives the DSF the opportunity to become more involved in the economic transformation of the country. They must help politicians to create conditions for economic development and to carry out the numerous projects aimed at making Cameroon an emerging country. This expected action of the DSF alongside the population in view of the emergence is also perceptible through the Military Influence Operations (MIO) like the Civil-Military Actions (CMA) and PSYOPS (Psychological Operations). As the foundation of the Army-Nation concept, the activities carried out by the DSF in favour of the population contribute to the consolidation of peace and the promotion of development. These IMOs can be classified into two categories including permanent IMOs and temporary IMOs<sup>8</sup>.

Through the permanent IMOs, the MCOs have been implemented for decades on a permanent basis through military hospitals<sup>9</sup>, public schools and social centres built and managed by the DSF for the benefit of the population. The DSF also carry out temporary or ad hoc IMOs through donations and actions in the field of health, education, and military engineering activities<sup>10</sup>. In

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Economy, Planning and Regional Development (MINEPAT), *National Development Strategy 2020-2030* (SND 30), Yaoundé, MINEPAT, pp. 108-109.

<sup>8</sup> The Okweliens, « Les forces de défense et de sécurité (FDS) au service du peuple, pour la préservation de la paix sociale et de la cohésion nationale, gage de l'émergence du Cameroun, <https://www.theokweliens.com/les-forces-de-defense-et-de-securite-fds-au-service-du-peuple-pour-la-preservation-de-la-paix-sociale-et-de-la-cohesion-nationale-gage-de-lemergence-du-cameroun/>, site consulté le 12 juin 2022 à 9h 50 mn.

<sup>9</sup> Notamment à Douala ; Garoua ; Maroua et Yaoundé.

<sup>10</sup> The Okweliens, « Les forces de défense et de sécurité (fds) au service du peuple... », <https://www.theokweliens.com/les-forces-de-defense-et-de-securite-fds-au-service-du-peuple-pour-la-preservation-de-la-paix-sociale-et-de-la-cohesion-nationale-gage-de-lemergence-du-cameroun/>, site consulté le 12 juin 2022 à 9h 50 mn.



this respect, they often act as teachers, generous donors of classrooms, health centres, etc.

**Image 1: The modern commercial centre in Sangmélima built by the Military Engineers.**



Photo : Erel Djene, 19 March 2019.

In addition, they play an active role in strengthening the foundation of fundamental values such as patriotism, the construction of a national identity, the culture of patriotism and the promotion of respect for the hierarchy and republican institutions. They also contribute to the protection of the country's natural resources through fighting smuggling, maritime piracy; the protection of civilians and authorities during public events, such as the African Cup of Nations held in Cameroon from 9 January to 6 February 2022<sup>11</sup>.

For instance, at the level of the Police, efforts are being made to link up with the latest technologies. Since 22 August 2019, the Cameroonian police force has been equipped with a national video surveillance command centre in Yaoundé. Eventually, it is a network of images from a total of 7,000 video surveillance cameras to be deployed throughout Cameroon that the national video surveillance command centre will be called upon to collect. It stands out as the appropriate modern framework for crisis management and surveillance, beyond its determining contribution to the control and resolution of criminal situations, the regulation of road traffic and even the fight against urban disorder. It is a real leap towards modernity and the securing of an environment conducive to the

creation of wealth for the development of the national economy.

Moreover, an ultra-modern centre dedicated to the production of passports and travel documents has been built in Yaoundé and will be open to the public as from 1 July 2021.

**Image 2: The National Passport Production Centre, Yaoundé.**



Photo : Soul Image, 19 March 2021.

Inaugurated on August 25 of the same year by the personal representative of the Head of State, the Minister of State, Secretary General of the Presidency of the Republic (SGPR) Ferdinand Ngoh Ngoh, in the company of the Delegate General for National Security (DGSN) Martin Mbarga Nguélé, the National Passport Production Centre is endowed with cutting-edge technology that favours the speedy processing of passports, just as its innovative system offers important guarantees in terms of Cameroonian nationality protection.

With a capacity to enrol 1,000 users per day, this new centre is a step towards modernity and puts a stop to the hassles of users thanks to the automatic management of passport applications, which are now satisfied within 48 hours of enrolment.

For several years now, the DSF in Cameroon have also been committed to investing in the public communication field. The army and the police are increasingly communicating about themselves and their actions in favour of the population. They are also opening up to the nation

<sup>11</sup>CRD/EI FORCES Insight: "TotalEnergy AFCON 2021: making the security challenge a success", <http://www.eiforces.gov.cm/wpcontent/uploa>

[ds/2022/02/note-d%C3%A9clairage-du-CRDEI FORCES-CAN-2021.pdf](https://www.eiforces.gov.cm/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/note-d%C3%A9clairage-du-CRDEI FORCES-CAN-2021.pdf), accessed on 12 June 2022 at 2:30pm .

through open days, the digitalisation of their services, support for young entrepreneurial initiatives in digital innovation and artificial intelligence, particularly in the fight against cybercrime, and the public commissioning of surveillance solutions developed by young Cameroonians. All these actions are part of a logic of cohesion between the DSF and the population. They allow for the construction of an environment of peace and security, which is essential for the implementation and conduct of projects that should make Cameroon an emerging country by 2035, and for which the NDS 30 is the guiding compass.

Ultimately, it should be noted that the creation of an environment of peace and security is the responsibility of all components of society, especially the DSF. The implementation of the national development strategy SND 30 is no exception to this rule, as the support of the Cameroonian Defence and Security Forces is strongly required. Through the working committee set up on 6 April 2022 by the Minister Delegate at the Presidency in charge of Defence, the government wants to partially break with the non-resource-producing logic of the DSF so that they can contribute significantly to the development of the Cameroonian economy as stipulated in the new National Development Strategy of Cameroon (NDS30). This is an ambition that, in order to become a reality, will have to withstand the constraints of the political, social, economic and security environment, both national and international.

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