



THE REVOLT AGAINST THE EMPIRE: MINORITY GROUPS' REBELLION AGAINST THE BRITISH RULE IN NIGERIA, 1900 – 1920

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Abstract

By 1914, when the First World War broke out, almost all of Nigeria was under British colonial control. At the same time, the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates of Nigeria consolidated British colonial rule. Despite this impeccable achievement, the colonial government was confronted with the herculean task of establishing effective control over many communities throughout the country, especially among the minority ethnic groups. This paper examines the trends of rebellions among many indigenous communities in response to British domination of their territories. The paper adopts a content analysis approach to the data used in writing this article.

Keywords: Amalgamation, Colonialism, Mutiny, Rebellion, Revolt

Introduction

Throughout the nineteenth century, with the notable exceptions of the Crimean War, 1853–56, and the Franco-Prussian War, 1870–71, the European powers had either been at peace or had fought only ill-equipped groups in colonial wars since the end of the Napoleonic Wars at Waterloo in 1815 (Pelz, 2016). The establishment of European colonial empires in the second half of the 19th century greatly diverted the attention of the great powers from the hegemonic contradictions and political inconsistencies prevalent in continental Europe at the time. However, by 1914, many other circumstances in Europe had intensified and ignited the outbreak of the First World War (Nigerian Colonial Annual Report, 1914). Therefore, the outbreak of this War in 1914 exposed the (masked) imbalance of forces among the Europeans and the manifestation of political uncertainties on the continent. In Nigerian history, the year 1914 would remain unforgettable because it started with the amalgamation of the two separate Administrations of Northern and Southern Protectorates of Nigeria into a single Colonial administrative unit for the first time since the establishment of “Pax Britannica” in the opening years of the 20th century. Towards the end of 1914, Nigeria, as a British colonial territory, was also dragged into the war. The area served as a sensitive source of human and natural resources for prosecuting the war against the neighboring German Colony of the Cameroons and elsewhere (Nigerian Colonial Annual Report, 1914). In addition, the British colonial government relied heavily on its colonies for both financial and human resources to wage war against Germany, which had a similar colonial design and disposition in its West African colonies of the Cameroons and Togo.

Nigeria at the Outbreak of the First World War

By 1914, when the war broke out, almost all the territories within the borders of the present-day Federal Republic of Nigeria were brought under the effective control of the British colonial forces (Alade, 1996). Although pockets of resistance to British colonial intrusion persisted into the mid-



1920s and beyond, the British succeeded in establishing an effective colonial administrative structure, the Indirect Rule system. For example, among the *Tiv*, *Jukun*, *Chamba*, etc., the British had been grappling with the military component of the conquest of Tiv land up to 1914, when the First World War broke out. To be specific, as late as 1912, the British were making complete preparations for the "Ogoja–Munshi" expedition of July 1912 (Makar, 1994). With the forcible subjugation of these groups, the colonial government had the opportunity to exercise tremendous control over the entire country of Nigeria (Wycliff, 2021). Ironically, it was from these groups that Britain obtained its largest contingents of troops during the Second World War (Barraclough, 1964). Initially, Sub-Saharan Africa was thought to be exempt from the epicenter of the conflicts because its colonies and protectorates were considered outside the crisis's scope (Crowder, 1985). However, when the war broke out in Europe in 1914, English and French troops prepared to seize the four German colonies in Africa (German East Africa, German South-West Africa, Togoland, and Cameroon). Hence, France and Britain adopted a strategy of taking the war to German colonial territories to destroy Germany's African communication system and principal ports (Wycliff, 2021; Crowder, 1985). The colonial empires of France and Britain found it inevitable to mobilize African contingents to assist them in their imperial war efforts. Therefore, it is worth noting that the Europeans started the war, but colonial peoples were mercilessly dragged into it (Pelz, 2016).

The Involvement of Nigerians in World War WWI

Following the amalgamation of the two Nigerian protectorates on 1st January 1914, the military forces of the southern and northern protectorates were merged and placed under a single command. The differences in conditions of service in Northern Nigeria and the South were henceforth unified (Nigerian Colonial Annual Report, 1914). The Marine Departments of Northern and Southern Nigeria were also amalgamated on January 1st, 1914, and placed under the command of late Lieutenant R.N. Child, who died during the Cameroon campaigns. Therefore, the newly formed Nigerian Regiment (NR), which was an amalgam of the defunct southern and northern protectorates' regiments, was vested with the difficult task of providing internal security to the colonial government, and also to contribute to containing the German threats in the Cameroons, Togoland, and German East Africa when the violent conflict of 1914 started (Dule et al., 1992).

The roles and contributions of Nigerians in the execution and victory of the War were evident from the outset. The Colonial Office made it mandatory for the colonial Government in Nigeria to assist with all the resources at its disposal (Nigerian Colonial Annual Report, 1914). Therefore, this shows that Britain relied heavily on its colonies for both financial and human resources to wage war against Germany at that time. This is because, at this time, it was the first duty of every Colony to render all the assistance within its power to the Imperial Government (Nigerian Colonial Annual Report, 1914). In line with the above demand, the government of Nigeria resolved that Nigeria's revenues should henceforth be paid annually into the Imperial Treasury and made available to the colonial government's war effort (Nigerian Colonial Annual Report, 1914). In other words, Nigeria offered to pay the colonial government a large sum to finance the war. In addition, Nigeria had a predominant share in the Cameroon campaigns, which involved heavy financial liabilities and significant loss of life, and several Nigerian officers were lent to the naval and military forces. Undoubtedly, this put a heavy burden on the country, but one which, in the opinion of the then British colonial government, is not heavier than it could reasonably bear in the future, looking to the enormous possibilities of wealth and development which may justly be anticipated when the War is over.

The burden of funding the war was not confined to governmental institutions in colonial Nigeria; individual and corporate businesses were not spared either. It was shouldered by both the governments and private holdings. This was highlighted by the rate of private contributions recorded



at the time, which was estimated to reach £16,412 (Nigerian Colonial Annual Report, 1914). The emirates of the north remained uncompromising supporters of the colonial government throughout the war. By August 1914, there were about 49 separate Treasuries in Nigeria, with aggregate revenue of £326,508. The Native Administrations of the two amalgamated Protectorates contributed £38,000 to these reserves by the end of 1915 without trenching on them (Nigerian Colonial Annual Report, 1914). Besides all this, Nigeria made enormous contributions to Britain's war effort (Gavin and Oyemakinde, 1980). The Northern Emirs contributed £38,000 to the cost of the war from funds in the Native Authority Treasuries, in addition to many large and spontaneous gifts, such as £1,000 from the Sultan of Sokoto, drawn from his private savings. The emirs also assisted in supplying carriers, food, and other necessities to demonstrate to the British colonial government the extent of their cooperation with the British Empire (Nigerian Colonial Annual Report, 1915).

The Minority Groups' Rebellions during World War I

Apart from the financial gestures from the local rulers, they also played a greater role in controlling the general breakdown of law and order in the protectorates. As noted earlier, when the First World War broke out, colonial conquests and domination were still underway. This meant that in some areas there were incidents of sporadic outbreaks of skirmishes and intolerance among some Nigerian groups, especially those with less sophisticated indigenous political structures. Such incidents persisted until 1915 due to the withdrawal of colonial troops and the shortage of political officers, many of whom were serving in the Cameroons (Nigerian Colonial Annual Report, 1915). These scenarios sparked persistent rumors that the British were about to abandon the country. Therefore, many Nigerian groups deemed it appropriate to return to pre-conquest rivalries and exploitation (Nigerian Colonial Annual Report, 1915). In this regard, it is notable that the groups nearer to the German frontier, particularly in the Cameroons, who could appreciate the contrast between British and German rule, gave loyal and ungrudging assistance to the British against the German propaganda machine (Wycliff, 2025; Nigerian Colonial Annual Report, 1915). In August 1915, about 200 Europeans, official and unofficial, enrolled as volunteers at the principal centers and worked with enthusiasm to become efficient soldiers, while the Nigerian peoples in the coastal towns came forward as Special Constables to contribute to the war effort. For example, in places like Lagos and Calabar, due to the areas' vulnerability, constant drills were carried out (Nigerian Colonial Annual Report, 1914).

Between 1900 and 1910, the Nigerian colonial military force consisted of two Regiments: the Northern Regiment and the Niger Coast Protectorate Regiment, which was the Nigerian component of the West African Frontier Force (W.A.F.F.). The Northern Regiment was composed of 2,797 other ranks, comprising 1,738 *Hausas*, 362 *Kanuris*, 15 *Fulanis*, 121 Senegalese, and others. At the same time, the Niger Coast Protectorate Regiment was composed of 191 *Yorubas*, 284 *Hausas*, 18 *Nupes*, 46 Sierra Leoneans, 12 Gold Coast, 2 *Itsekiri*, 11 Igbos, 3 Liberians and Cameroonians, 16 *Binis*, and 18 *Igalas* (Ukpabi, 1989). When the war commenced, the initial contingents from Nigeria comprised 1,300 *Hausas*, 1,156 *Yorubas*, 380 *Kanuris*, 351 *Fulanis*, 91 *Nupes*, 21 Igbos, and representatives of other Nigerian ethnic groups, numbering about 400 fighters. Later, some important groups, such as the Tiv from Benue and the *Dakarkari* or *Lelna* from *Alela* or Zuruland, in present-day Kebbi State, were brought in to checkmate religious dominance by the Muslim contingents, with non-Muslims (Hussaini, 2016).

The assumptions here might not be unconnected with Islamophobia due to the Turkish involvement in the war, considering the possible sympathy this might generate among the Muslims of the Nigerian protectorates. This is because during that time, one primary concern of the Allied powers was that Turkish entry on the German side might encourage dissidence among their Muslim subjects.



However, although Turkey's call for worldwide Jihad against the infidel was not seriously answered, the Allied powers remained alert. In northern Nigeria, the British took some measures to neutralize the nationalists and the Emirs. Therefore, between 1914 and 1918, almost 13,980 Nigerian soldiers were recruited and fought for Britain in the First World War (Hussaini, 2016).

But the total number of Nigerian recruits and conscripts who were involved in actual combat during the 1914 – 1918 conflicts was about 5000, including 320 reservists and about 400 gun carriers. About 172 British commissioned and non-commissioned officers commanded the Nigerian contingents. In addition, a detachment of 33 British police officers and 2,100 Nigerians was involved. Major areas of conflict where Nigerians were massively involved in the name of the British Crown were Tanzania, Togo, and Cameroon, and it involved almost all 13,980 Nigerian soldiers (Dule et al., 1992).

In the Emirate parts of Northern Nigeria, however, there was no unrest, despite a severe famine coinciding with the outbreak of the war. The loyalty of the population, who learnt to appreciate the advantages of British rule, was, however, amply proved, and there was a real and widespread detestation of the Germans and their methods in Africa (Nigerian Colonial Annual Report, 1914). German agents started spreading false and confusing rumors among the non-Muslim groups of central Nigeria that the British were leaving Nigeria because, in Europe and Cameroon, there were serious setbacks. This led to the resurfacing of revolts against the country's existing order. Although none of these revolts were thoughtfully organized, a large number of punitive expeditions were conducted to restore order. Over 400 German prisoners of war and deported persons were received from Duala and temporarily housed in a camp at Ibadan and at other centers. These prisoners were accorded courteous and hospitable treatment, especially the women, some of whom were hospitably entertained by the Mission Societies. The best arrangements possible in such difficult circumstances were made for their comfort, both in Nigeria and on the homeward voyage. In this case, about 768 men, 33 women, and eight children were deported to England from Nigeria (Nigerian Colonial Annual Report, 1914). Also, many German firms in Nigeria were initially allowed to continue their business despite the hostilities, on condition that they would never assist Germany. However, when it appeared that some among them had endeavored to incite the local population to rebellion, it was decided that their activities be terminated, and a Receiver was appointed. Was appointed to wind up their businesses.

At the outbreak of war, the greater part of the Marine Department was sworn in as a "Marine Contingent," and some 12 vessels and a large part of the personnel were sent to assist the Naval Forces engaged in operations against the German Cameroons. The main function of the "Marine Contingents" was mine sweeping and other operations of war. They were employed at high pressure in strengthening river vessels to carry heavy guns, in the manufacture of kites for mine sweeping, and in the repair of damaged vessels, etc. (Nigerian Colonial Annual Report, 1914). The first theatre of the war where Nigerian contingents started military operations was in Togoland, where some units of the force were sent to reinforce the Gold Coast Regiment that was assisting the French in their invasion of the German Togoland, which culminated in German capitulation at Sammia in August 1915, and from there they were directed to invade and capture the German Colony of Cameroons (Dule et al., 1992).

The casualties at the end of the war were enormous, with about 150,000 African soldiers and carriers losing their lives during the war. Since the beginning of the War, it appeared that the colonial authorities were not very mindful of the socio-economic condition of the recruits because the carriers suffered particular hardships, and it was estimated that at least 45,000 died from diseases in the campaigns. Even the way they were fed was of great concern, because at times the ration for Nigerian foot soldiers was only half a pound of rice a day, with nothing to go with it (Dule, et al, 1992). When



the war started, there were about 14,785 African troops in West Africa alone. It was, however, decided that the number should reach 50,000 during the 1915 – 16 recruitment campaigns (Dule, et al, 1992). African local Chiefs, who were the colonial agents, served as a medium for recruitment through which a large number of soldiers and carriers were formally conscripted. In this way, African local chiefs were given quotas of men to fill. On their own side, they adopted several strategies, like rounding up strangers and formerly enslaved people, to avoid enlisting their relatives (Crowder, 1985). However, one side effect was that the recruitment campaigns led to revolts and insurgency in some areas. For example, in central Nigeria, areas like the Tiv, Idoma, and Jukun experienced difficulty with recruitment because the colonial government had been fighting local populations in its attempts to establish an effective colonial system (Gumh, 2012).

Local Reactions to Colonial Domination during the First World War

After the outbreak of the war, colonialism was challenged by the people, and the colonial forces responded accordingly. There were incidents of outbreaks of revolts and insurgency in many parts of Nigeria. The cause of the revolts, in most cases, was the conscription of men for service as soldiers and carriers (Crowder, 1985). However, it is wrong to assume that the causes of the widespread revolts and protest movements throughout the colonial empires during the war were always directly connected to the war itself. In some cases, what were considered revolts were only a continuation of primary resistance movements against colonial occupations, since, up to that time, many areas in the colonies and protectorates were not effectively occupied. In the Niger –Delta areas of the Southern Nigerian Protectorate, there appeared to be an Apocalyptic movement, which was the widespread movement led by one Garrick Braide Elijah II, who preached the end of British rule in the country (Crowder, 1985). In the southwestern part of the protectorate of Southern Nigeria, the semi-independence enjoyed by the Egbas, which they lost during the war, sparked an uprising (Crowder, 1985). A similar situation was also witnessed in Owerri Province, where a group of Igbo people revolted against colonial domination of their territories (Crowder, 1985).

Economic hardship also provoked resistance and rebellion in many areas of Nigeria; for example, in Yorubaland (Western Nigeria) and the Niger Delta, incidents occurred due to the exclusion of German traders from the palm oil market. The exclusion of Germany from trade in the Allied colonial territories led to economic depression in the first year of the war. The Iseyin riot of 1916 was due to colonial taxation and the powers given to traditional rulers through the Indirect Rule system in the Western Region. These revolts were put down ruthlessly by the colonial authorities. Rebels were forced to join troops, flogged or even hanged, chiefs exiled or imprisoned, and villages razed to the ground to serve as a warning (Crowder, 1985). However, not all protests were violent. Protest migration occurred where large numbers of people migrated to nearby territories, and young men mutilated themselves to avoid enlistment (Crowder, 1985). In many cases, the motives for revolts and protests were mixed. Some sought to regain lost independence; others opposed recruitment and wartime measures such as compulsory recruitment and forced labor; others reacted to economic hardships occasioned by the war; and others were instigated by German sentiment (Crowder, 1985).

Following the outbreak of the War and subsequent colonial policies on the mobilization of workforce and resources for the War, there were serious consequences on the side of the Africans as well as on the other side of the divide. In the initial stage, many colonial political officers were recruited and sent to the war fronts. The result of Europeans' withdrawal from colonial service to join the war fronts was a showdown, if not a complete halt, to the essential services they provided. However, jobs hitherto reserved for Europeans were filled by educated Africans, which helped secure the elite's loyalty during the war. The attitudes of many groups in the Nigerian territories forced the colonial



government to undertake punitive military operations against certain sections of the population. In the southern parts of Nigeria, for instance, there were a series of such operations before and during the war. For example, on 6th February, 1915, a force of six infantry sections was detailed to deal with the turbulent Sonkwala groups on the German frontier, which had threatened the boundary survey and attacked Government messengers. They completely surrendered by 16th March, 1915, and accepted terms that included the surrender of guns, the construction of roads and rest-houses, and the payment of two years' annual tax. Their casualties in the encounter amounted to 69 killed and wounded on the part of Sonkwala (*Nigerian Colonial Annual Report*, 1914). In the Udi district, there was widespread unrest throughout 1914. The town of Oye was attacked, and 30 people were killed and wounded because of attempts by the people to attack the soldiers on patrol. The operations lasted for a fortnight (*Nigerian Colonial Annual Report*, 1914).

More serious disturbances took place later in the neighborhood of Akebi in the same district, where 16 Hausa traders were murdered during the October 1914 crisis in the area. A strong force of over 200 troops was dispatched to restore order. In October 1914, the people of Kwaie murdered 41 people, amongst whom were two Native Court clerks, five Court messengers, and seven Hausas. Troops and police were at once dispatched to the scene of the outbreak, and met with the most determined opposition, which collapsed towards the end of the month. All the murderers were rounded up, tried by the Supreme Court, and 42 were sentenced to death. It seems not improbable that this and other symptoms of unrest were due, more or less directly, to the action of German traders, who were shortly after removed from Nigeria (*Nigerian Colonial Annual Report*, 1915). At Awka, in the Onitsha Province, the troops were attacked by the peoples of Atchina and Arikpo, and colonial troops responded appropriately; the operations lasted from 17th to 24th September, 1915. The rebels suffered 36 casualties. At Obubra, in the Calabar Province, it was found necessary during March 1915 to call in troops to quell inter-town fighting, in the course of which many people were killed on both sides (*Nigerian Colonial Annual Report*, 1915).

At the outbreak of the war, the police force was partially mobilized, and by Order in Council, it was directed to serve with the military forces of the Colony and Protectorate. For several months, police were actively engaged in the repression of internal disturbances of a serious nature, particularly in the Owerri Province. The affected districts were Aba, Opobo (Ogoni), Okigwi, Orlu, Owerri, and Bende; in the first three cases, punitive measures were deemed necessary (*Nigerian Colonial Annual Report*, 1915). Although much of the uprising was planned in the south, it is erroneous to assume the north was unaffected. In the Northern Provinces, particularly in the Agatu District of the Bassa Province in January 1915, there was an outbreak of inter-ethnic fighting, and some towns were reported to be in a state of anarchy. A police patrol was swiftly sent to restore normalcy in the area, in which one Agatu man was killed. Similarly, operations were undertaken against the Verre and Lala groups in the Yunguru district of the Yola Province in March and April, 1915, with the object of quelling disturbances which had arisen from the murder of the District Headman and 17 of his followers. This was followed by an attack on the fort at Pirambi, held by a detachment of the W.A.F.F. The casualties were estimated at over 200 rebels killed. Three casualties were recorded, while three soldiers were wounded, and more than 50 people, who were sympathetic and supportive of the British, lost their lives (*Nigerian Colonial Annual Report*, 1915).

Another incident in the vicinity of Pirambi was an attack on a patrol team that visited the Katakwe and Kaleri Districts in the Bauchi Province in May 1915 (*Nigerian Colonial Annual Report*, 1915). The team was attacked by the Katakwe people, who were constantly reported as lawless and unfriendly to their neighbours and travelers. Another attack on a police patrol team also took place in the Mumuye District of the Muri Province when it came into conflict with the local people in June



1915, and in the encounter, five locals lost their lives (Nigerian Colonial Annual Report, 1915). In the Dukawa portion of the Yauri Emirate, Kontagora Province, the Assistant District Officer and the indigenous head of the district were attacked when they were on a mission to arrest two criminals in June 1915. The troops, however, retaliated, and five local people were neutralized. In the same month, the southern Haraba people of the *Munshis* in Muri Province attacked a party sent to arrest six town headmen. In the process, about 20 local people were neutralized (Nigerian Colonial Annual Report, 1915). These kinds of rebellions remain so outrageous and rampant that almost all over the protectorates, tensions were brewing with dangerous intensity. Therefore, the attention of colonial authorities remains divided between addressing internal challenges on the one hand and executing the Great War on the other.

Also, among the people of Mada in Lafia Division of Nassarawa Province, there was an outbreak of hostilities due to requests by the colonial authorities for the payment of outstanding tax proceeds in June and July, 1915. This necessitated the dispatch of troops to enforce payment of outstanding tax for 1913 by 6 Mama Villages and 20 Mada Villages. The results of this encounter were detrimental to the indigenous people, because almost five people lost their lives, and two people were wounded. In October 1915, an army patrol team, with the assistance of police, was sent to the Districts of Kotonkarfe, Niger Province, and Umaisha, Nassarawa Province, to quell disturbances among the Bassa people, who had begun rampaging against their neighbors and any possible soft target within their reach. This is because it was rumored among them that all the British officials in Nigeria had gone to war with the Germans and had been exterminated, and they thought the opportunity might be turned to their advantage; they raided neighboring groups. In the encounter, 34 Bassa people were killed, and some were wounded. The local Political Agent received an arrow wound in his foot, and six of the Kotonkarfe people were wounded and one killed by the insurgents. The officer in command received a slight arrow wound, and the colonial authorities considered this uprising a provocation; they therefore proposed fines amounting to £238 on the twenty-seven villages affected (Rabe, 2024a).

Similar to the above development, the Police patrol team conducted persistent surveillance. In one such visit, a police patrol team visited the Bassa Province in October and November 1915 to quell an uprising by the Bassa-Nge ethnicity, who launched a sudden attack on Mr. Crowper, the Assistant District Officer, and six police patrol officers. Mr. Crowper had two carriers, a servant, and a boy killed, a policeman was severely wounded, and four carriers went missing. After the crisis, the 12 towns involved were fined £204 as a punitive measure. It was, however, discovered that the cause of the outrage was that a German trader had told the Bassa-Nges that the Germans would be in their country in the next three months, since the English were being defeated. He advised them to pay no taxes and told them the Germans would give them what they wanted. The Bassa-Nges were believed to have lost 12 people (Nigerian Colonial Annual Report, 1915; Rabe, 2022). Related to this disturbance was another crisis that occurred in the Tangale-Waja District of the Bauchi Province, in Gombe Division, in November 1915. In this affair, a section of the Tangale people attacked one local official and another peaceful village, killing 11 villagers and wounding 12 others. However, a police patrol team was sent against them, and the aggressors were killed, and several were wounded in the clashes. Consequently, nine more were killed, and seven were wounded when they attempted to evade arrest from the police patrol team (Nigerian Colonial Annual Report, 1915).

Throughout 1915, nine minor police and military patrols were undertaken in the entire Northern Provinces, necessitated by disturbances caused by the war in the Cameroons and by disturbances and internal skirmishes in many non-Muslim districts, which could not be regularly visited owing to the paucity of political officers. Of the nine patrols mentioned above, five were attended to by the police and the remaining four by the Nigerian Regiment. However, in the Southern Provinces, about 11



police and military patrols were undertaken throughout the above-mentioned period. Of the 11 patrols mentioned above, only three were the most important. They were the ones conducted against the Ezza, Okigwi, and Okwoga peoples. Even these were subdued by the patrol teams (Nigerian Colonial Annual Report, 1915). Evidently, it was later discovered that the majority of these petty uprisings were due to unrest caused by the War and rumors of the British defeat by the Germans.

In another instance, the war exposed Europeans' schema of fighting one another, which was not experienced during the colonial conquests. That demystified the European aura of superiority, and the Africans stopped seeing the Europeans as special people. Furthermore, the Nigerian peoples realized that they were responsible for suppressing various revolts against the British colonial authority during the war, just as they had been instrumental in the European conquest of colonial territories. The First World War also posed a fundamental challenge to the British and French colonial ideologies because President Woodrow Wilson of the United States of America introduced the mandate system, which was applied to the German colonies after the war. This system-imposed restrictions on the activities of the colonial powers, especially in the Mandate territories; however, both Britain and France maintained their imperial rule, often violently suppressing any challenge (Kitchen, 2014; (Rabe, 2024b). When the victorious powers signed the Treaty of Versailles to end the war, they laid down the principles of the peoples' right to self-determination, which excluded the colonized African nations.

The whole idea of getting fighting men was characterized by practices such as inducements from recruiting parties, pressure on local community elders, and what amounted to press gangs on the local population. The different uses to which these colonial armies were put are also striking. For Britain, non-white colonial troops, except the Indian Corps on the Western Front from 1914 to 1915, were used for combat outside Europe, primarily in the Middle East and Africa. However, contingents from Britain's colonies were mobilized first to defend the empire and later to expand it. However, Britain's decision to use colonial resources to finance the First World War (1914-1918) created a situation that shaped how the people of the colonies viewed British administrations in their territories in subsequent years of the colonial period (Kitchen, 2014).

When the war ended, the pressing question for Britain was how to demobilize its vast imperial armies. Returning soldiers proved not just a logistical nightmare, particularly given the post-war shortage of merchant shipping, but were also a potential source of domestic unrest in almost all the colonies affected by the war in the British Empire (Kitchen, 2014). It is imperative to realize that the First World War forced Europeans to conscript colonial soldiers to meet their rising workforce demands. However, Great Britain adopted a policy of refusing to use "Aboriginal" (African) troops in Europe, and it was only in 1916 that the British Empire raised West African units and sent them, together with West Indians, to East Africa (Morrow Jr., 2010).

When the war ended in 1918, many colonial soldiers, however, believed that demobilization could not come fast enough. Large numbers of troops from the British Empire were retained after the end of hostilities to serve in occupation roles. Much of Britain's newly acquired Middle Eastern empire was garrisoned by Indian "Sepoys," so that the British Army could be demobilized first. At the same time, colonial troops served as substitutes until the peace settlements were clarified (Smith, 2004).



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