

CONSTITUTIONAL LAW

THE POLITICAL EVOLUTION OF CAMEROON SINCE 1960

Introduction

Cameroon gained independence from France on January 1, 1960. Since then, the country has undergone significant political evolution, shaped by various factors, including colonial legacy, regionalism, and globalization.

Early Years of Independence (1960-1972)

1. **Federal System:** Cameroon adopted a federal system of government, with two states: East Cameroon (formerly French Cameroon) and West Cameroon (formerly British Cameroon).
2. **Ahmadou Ahidjo:** Ahmadou Ahidjo became the first president of Cameroon, serving from 1960 to 1982.
3. **One-Party System:** In 1966, Cameroon became a one-party state, with the Cameroon National Union (CNU) as the sole party.

Unitary State and Centralization (1972-1982)

1. **Unitary State:** In 1972, Cameroon adopted a unitary state system, abolishing the federal system.
2. **Centralization:** The government centralized power, reducing regional autonomy and increasing the president's authority.

Paul Biya's Rule (1982-Present)

1. **Paul Biya:** Paul Biya became president in 1982, following Ahidjo's resignation.
2. **Multiparty System:** In 1990, Cameroon transitioned to a multiparty system, allowing opposition parties to participate in elections.
3. **Economic Liberalization:** Biya's government implemented economic liberalization policies, opening up the economy to international trade and investment.

Contemporary Politics (1990s-Present)

1. **Electoral Reforms:** Cameroon has implemented various electoral reforms, including the creation of an independent electoral commission.
2. **Opposition Parties:** Opposition parties have gained prominence, with some winning seats in parliament.

3. Anglophone Crisis: The Anglophone crisis, which began in 2016, has posed significant challenges to the government, with demands for greater autonomy or independence for the English-speaking regions.

Conclusion

Cameroon's political evolution since 1960 has been shaped by various factors, including colonial legacy, regionalism, and globalization. The country has transitioned from a federal system to a unitary state, and from a one-party system to a multiparty system.

Key Takeaways

1. Cameroon gained independence from France on January 1, 1960.
2. The country has undergone significant political evolution, including the transition from a federal system to a unitary state.
3. Paul Biya has been president since 1982, implementing economic liberalization policies and transitioning to a multiparty system.

Discussion Questions

1. What were the key features of Cameroon's federal system, and why was it abolished?
2. How has Paul Biya's rule impacted Cameroon's politics and economy?
3. What are the main challenges facing Cameroon's government today, and how can they be addressed?
4. What role have opposition parties played in Cameroon's politics, and what are their prospects for the future?
5. How has the Anglophone crisis affected Cameroon's politics and society?