

Polity IV Country Report 2010: Cameroon

<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 15%;">Score:</td> <td style="width: 15%;">2009</td> <td style="width: 15%;">2010</td> <td style="width: 15%;">Change</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Polity:</td> <td>-4</td> <td>-4</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Democ:</td> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Autoc:</td> <td>5</td> <td>5</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Durable:</td> <td colspan="3">18</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tentative:</td> <td colspan="3">No</td> </tr> </table>	Score:	2009	2010	Change	Polity:	-4	-4	0	Democ:	1	1	0	Autoc:	5	5	0	Durable:	18			Tentative:	No			<p style="text-align: center;">Authority Trends, 1960-2010: Cameroon</p>
Score:	2009	2010	Change																						
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Durable:	18																								
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SCODE	CAO	CCODE	471	Date of Report	1 June 2011																				
Polity IV Component Variables																									
XRREG	XRCOMP	XROPEN	XCONST	PARREG	PARCOMP																				
2	1	4	2	3	3																				
Date of Most Recent Polity Transition (3 or more point change)																									
End Date		1 March 1992		Begin Date																					
				2 March 1992																					
Polity Fragmentation: No																									
Constitution																									
		1972																							
Executive(s)																									
		President Paul Biya (RDPC); initially gained office in November 1982 following the resignation of President Ahidjo; initially directly elected 1984; most recently reelected 11 October 2004, 70.8%																							
Legislature																									
		Unicameral: National Assembly (180 seats; directly elected; most recent elections, 22 July 2007) Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (RDPC): 140 Social-Democratic Front (SDF): 14 Other parties: 9 Vacant: 17																							
Judiciary																									
		Supreme Court																							

Narrative Description:¹

Executive Recruitment: Designation (3)

Since independence in 1960, Cameroon has had only two leaders. Paul Biya, the current president, gained office in November 1982 as the hand-picked successor to the Cameroon's first president, Ahmadou Ahidjo. With the resignation of Ahidjo in 1982, Biya set about the task of replacing the former president's northern allies with southerners like himself. In 1983 he accused Ahidjo of organizing a coup and forced him to flee the country. Until 5 December 1990, Cameroon was a one-party state controlled by the Cameroon National Union, later renamed the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (RDPC). Facing increasing social unrest, the RDPC-controlled legislature passed legislation legalizing political parties. However, following a

¹ The research described in this report was sponsored by the Political Instability Task Force (PITF). The PITF is funded by the Central Intelligence Agency. The views expressed herein are the authors' alone and do not represent the views of the US Government.

general strike called by the opposition in mid-1991, President Biya placed seven of Cameroon's ten districts under martial law, banning opposition activity. Restrictions were not lifted until late 1991. As a result, the main opposition parties boycotted the March 1992 legislative elections claiming that they had no time and no reasonable chance to organize an effective campaign.

The country's first multiparty presidential elections were held in October 1992 after having been originally scheduled for March 1993. The move was widely seen as a ploy by the president to take advantage of the earlier opposition boycott and consequent failure to register their supporters on electoral roles. Biya was declared the winner with only 40% of the vote amid allegation of massive fraud; the announcement was met with riots and the imposition of martial law in the main opposition candidate's home province. Cameroon's three main opposition parties boycotted the 1997 presidential elections after Biya refused to establish an independent electoral commission to oversee the balloting, resulting in a landslide victory for Biya (93%).

While Biya has demonstrated a penchant for manipulating elections to his own advantage, in December 2000 the National Assembly passed legislation that created a National Election Observatory. President Biya signed this legislation into law in January 2001 and the Election Observatory was implemented in October of that year. Despite these changes, little real gains have been made at liberalizing the political order. The 2004 presidential elections, won by Biya with 71% of the vote, were widely viewed as fraudulent. Although Biya was constitutionally prohibited from running for a third term in office, in 2008 the President's political party used its dominant position in the National Assembly to unilaterally amend the constitution and abolish presidential term limits. While President Biya has historically retained firm control over his political party, the RDPC, by playing rival factions against one another, in recent years his ability to do so has begun to weaken. As Biya ages (he is 77 in 2010), rivalries within the ruling party have become more intense and public as competing factions have sought to stake out their power in a post-Biya political landscape. While Biya's hold on power should allow him to win re-election in presidential elections scheduled for 9 October 2011 with little challenge, in 2010 internal criticism of the President had begun to surface. Most of this criticism has come from younger members of the ruling party who believe that they are being shut out of top leadership positions by old guard members close to Biya. These young party activists have denounced the President for failing to hold a RDPC Party Congress since 1996 and for allegedly rigging the party's internal elections. Conflicts between these factions within the RDPC can be found at both the local and national level.

Executive Constraints: Slight Limitations (2)

The president is head of state, head of government, and commander of the armed forces; he also exercises a wide range of strong, independent executive powers. The President retains the power to control legislation and rule by decree. No bills other than those supported by government have been enacted since 1991. The President has repeatedly used his control of the legislature to change the constitution in his favor. The legislature continues to be controlled by the president's own party, although the primary opposition party SDF increased its representation substantially in the 1997 elections, winning forty-three of 180 seats. These gains, however, were only temporary. By 2007 the SDF had lost all but fourteen seats, giving the RDPC more than a two-thirds majority, enough to unilaterally amend the Constitution. Although the National Assembly has on occasion decided not to enact legislation proposed by the executive, in practice the institution remains weak, largely because it meets only twice a year for sessions of no longer than 30 days. Between 1992 and 2009, the President initiated every bill passed by the National Assembly.

Parliamentary elections have been consistently marred by opposition claims of fraud and vote-rigging, and the opposition boycotted elections in 1991, 1997 and 2002. While in the 2002 elections the Supreme Court annulled election results in four constituencies, the court order did little to improve the system; the ruling party won sixteen out of seventeen seats in the re-run elections. As a result of the severe losses suffered during the boycotted 2002 election, the SDF ended its boycott shortly thereafter and participated actively in the 2007 parliamentary elections, although it proceeded to lose even more seats to the RDPC. The Supreme Court again annulled election results- this time in five constituencies, with re-runs scheduled to occur 30 September 2007. Although the Supreme Court's decisions to annul election results suggests a degree of independence, in practice the judiciary is subject to political influence and suffers from corruption and inefficiency.

Political Participation: Factional/Restricted Competition (6)

Although the government legalized opposition parties in 1990 after widespread protests, Cameroon's ruling political party, Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (RDPC), has remained in power since independence and has used its position of authority to restrict political access and activities of the opposition. The President's own ethnic group, the Bulu/Beti, is disproportionately represented in senior government, military and ruling party posts. It is commonly believed that any movement toward political liberalization will hurt the political and economic standing of the Bulu/Beti in favor of the large Bamileke and Anglophone cultural groups found in the west of the country.

There are over 250 ethnic groups in Cameroon. Cameroon was originally a UN Trustee Territory administered by France and the UK prior to its independence in 1960. In 1961 the northern region of British-administered Cameroon voted to become part of Nigeria while the southern region opted to join French-speaking Republic of Cameroon. The two regions subsequently merged and became the Federal Republic of Cameroon. However, in 1972 the country became a unitary state and was renamed the Republic of Cameroon. Over one-fifth of the total population currently lives in the English-speaking Northwest and Southwest provinces of the country. Separatist ambitions in these regions of the country have been running high since the mid-1990s.

Most opposition parties remain weak and disorganized; over seventy parties are registered. The main opposition party, the Social Democratic Front (SDF), which largely represents the interests of the English-speaking residents of the country, has managed to maintain its small presence in the legislature despite the government's concerted efforts to intimidate its leadership and limit its influence. Elections are generally marred by irregularities and allegations of fraud; complaints against the government's distribution of state campaign funds and access to the state-controlled media are common. Independent media outlets have found themselves subject to increasing political pressure in recent years. Pressure for government reform has come mainly from the opposition's ability to mobilize mass demonstrations.