When Adaptation Preserves Continuity: Adaptive Statecraft and the Limits of Institutional Transformation in Cameroon

Professor Alain Nako Kofele Martin

Department of Public Governance, International Governance Institute UK/ Cameroon

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ABSTRACT

States that face political crisis must decide not only how to respond, but how far the response should go and possibly how it can alter the arrangements through which they govern. This distinction matters because institutional activity can be extensive without in itself redistributing strategic authority. Governments may however introduce new procedures, create consultative forums or assign additional responsibilities to subnational institutions, while still retaining the established relationships that coordinate those changes. It is in this light that Adaptation and transformation are however related, but to a greater extent are not interchangeable outcomes.

The rationale of this article is to develop and demonstrate that distinction through Cameroon's response to the Anglophone crisis between 2016 and 2025. It does this by examining three forms of state responses: securitised intervention, the Major National Dialogue of 2019, and the decentralisation reforms that introduced a special status for the North-West and South-West Regions, with each of these responses involving a change in the state's governing repertoire. Furthermore, the legal reforms introduced in particular, created differentiated regional institutions and additional competences, such that the argument is no more about if nothing changed or changed but rather, the question is whether if these changes substantially reorganised the relationships through which strategic authority and administrative coordination were exercised.

The article brings State Governance Logic (SGL) into conversation with historical institutionalism and scholarship on state capability, with SGL directing attention to the inherited institutional relationships through which political pressures are interpreted and translated into action. It is in this sense that adaptive statecraft is used, in the bid to describe the practical work of modifying governing responses within those conditions. Institutional transformation, by contrast, requires evidence of a substantial change in the distribution of authority, discretion, resources or coordination. The analysis identifies a recurring pattern of bounded adaptation: even where new instruments and institutions are introduced, they remain embedded in a constitutional and administrative architecture that continued to affirm the primacy of the central state. This work is therefore a theory-building interpretation of documentary evidence, not a claim that the formal record alone can establish every dimension of implementation.

Keywords: adaptive statecraft; State Governance Logic; institutional adaptation; institutional continuity; institutional transformation; historical institutionalism; postcolonial state; Cameroon; Anglophone crisis

INTRODUCTION

States are often judged by how they respond to new pressures, yet while a response can be energetic and consequential, it could equally leave the institutional relationships that organise authority largely intact. This creates a problem for accounts of institutional change: what should count as transformation, and what should be understood as adaptation within an enduring framework?

The distinction is not simply semantic; it demonstrates how a new policy may change how a government acts without changing who has the authority to set its direction. A decentralisation law may establish new regional bodies and assign them additional responsibilities while still retaining central-state roles in coordination and oversight. A dialogue process may create a channel through which grievances are heard without transferring

constitutional authority to the participants. These outcomes would neither be identical nor would they be adequately captured if we treat every institutional innovation as transformation.

Cameroon's Anglophone crisis offers a useful case through which we examine this problem. Beginning with protests in 2016 over the treatment of the English-language educational and legal systems, the crisis developed into a wider conflict over political recognition, territorial governance and the state's response to dissent, with the government's responses on the issues of concern, centred on security intervention, the Major National Dialogue in 2019, and a revised legal framework for decentralisation, which included special status for the North-West and South-West Regions. These measures differed in form and should not be collapsed into a single policy.

This article interrogates the issue of state adaptation's preserving of institutional continuity rather than it's producing of institutional transformation, with further inquiry centred on how inherited governing relationships shape the range of responses available to the state. I use adaptive statecraft in this paper to refer to the political and administrative work of modifying responses under pressure while state Governance Logic is deployed to identify the institutional relationships through which pressure is filtered, prioritised and made governable. Note that the concepts are connected, but they do different analytical work.

Furthermore, we can deduce that the central claim of this article is deliberately narrower than an assertion that Cameroon's reforms failed . This is because the documentary record shows changes in the instruments of intervention, in the channel of political consultation, and in the formal architecture of regional governance. This therefore provides a stronger basis for arguing that these changes were accommodated within an enduring state framework rather than it would be to conclude that practical authority never shifted in any respect. The article therefore distinguishes documented legal design from claims about implementation and interprets continuity as a pattern to be assessed, not assumed.

The contribution of this article appears in significant ways, primarily it offers a relational criterion for distinguishing adaptation from transformation; then uses SGL to connect inherited institutional arrangements to the choices made under pressure; and eventually develops a comparative proposition about how states can accommodate demands for change while preserving central coordinating relationships. The Cameroon case examined in the confines of this work, does not establish a universal rule, but rather clarifies a question that comparative research can test elsewhere.

The Anglophone crisis in Cameroon provides a particularly useful setting in which we examine this problem, wherein, following the escalation of protests and political contestation from 2016, the state did not remain institutionally static but displayed responses that moved through security interventions, political dialogue and significant territorial and administrative reforms. One such major reform was the Major National Dialogue, which was convened in 2019 within the constitutional framework and explicitly addressed decentralisation, local development, education, justice, reconstruction and other dimensions of the crisis (Presidency of the Republic of Cameroon, 2019a). To further buttress the reform posture, the subsequent General Code of Regional and Local Authorities created a differentiated framework for the North-West and South-West Regions, including additional competences and distinctive regional institutions (Republic of Cameroon, 2019). The puzzle is therefore not why the state failed to change, because it did, but rather what those changes altered in the underlying relationships through which political authority was organised.

This article therefore asks: Under what conditions does state adaptation preserve institutional continuity rather than produce institutional transformation? A secondary question follows: How does State Governance Logic shape the form and limits of adaptive statecraft in Cameroon?

I use the term adaptive statecraft to describe the political and administrative work through which authorities modify governing responses under changing conditions, while maintaining sufficient institutional continuity to preserve governability. The concept does not imply that adaptation is progressive, democratic or successful, because a state can adapt coercively, selectively or defensively. Adaptive statecraft therefore concerns the organisation of adjustment, not its normative desirability.

The article goes further to distinguish the concept of Adaptive statecraft from State Governance Logic, with SGL identifying the patterned institutional relationships through which inherited arrangements condition how political pressures are interpreted, prioritized and translated into governing responses. On the other hand , adaptive statecraft describes the modification of those responses under pressure. Institutional transformation is not transformation nor a higher degree of adaptation, but rather It is a different institutional outcome, occurring when adaptation substantially reorganizes the governing relationships through which authority, responsibility, discretion, resources or coordination are exercised.

The central proposition of this work is therefore that the greater the extent to which adaptive responses remain bounded by inherited governing relationships, the greater the likelihood that adaptation will preserve institutional continuity rather than produce institutional transformation.

It is in this light that this work makes three significant contributions. Firstly, it distinguishes adaptation from transformation by treating transformation as a relational rather than merely formal outcome. Secondly, it connects State Governance Logic to adaptive statecraft by specifying how inherited institutional relationships condition the range and form of adaptation. Thirdly, it shows through the Cameroonian case, how substantial policy and institutional movement can coexist with continuity that is embedded in strategic authority and administrative coordination.

The foremost argument within the postulations of this submission, does not suggest that the reforms examined here are meaningless or merely symbolic. The claim is rather narrower: in that their transformative reach remained bounded because the underlying distribution of strategic authority and administrative coordination was not fundamentally reorganised.

From Institutional Change to Adaptive Statecraft

Historical institutionalism provides the starting point within our theoretical perspective, because it treats institutions as arrangements shaped by earlier choices, political conflict and sequences of change. Furthermore, it postulates that these arrangements influence later possibilities without determining them mechanically. Mahoney (2000) and Pierson (2000), for example, show why the effects of institutional choices can accumulate over time, while Thelen (1999) explains the value of examining institutional development as a historical process rather than as a series of isolated rreforms.

A further contribution of this literature is its account of gradual change as put forth by Streeck and Thelen (2005) and Mahoney and Thelen (2010) which distinguish processes through which institutions can change incrementally, including layering, drift, conversion and displacement. The implication is important here: because it demonstrates that continuity and change may coexist, and the introduction of a new institution does not by itself tell us whether the older arrangement has been displaced.

The question pursued here as we can clearly see is that, under sustained political pressure, why might a state alter the instruments through which it governs while still retaining the relationships that determine strategic direction and coordination? Answering this key interrogation requires attention both to institutional inheritance and to the choices made by political and administrative actors as they respond to pressure.

Adaptive statecraft therefore is the name accorded to that practical work of adjustment even though It does not replace historical institutionalism or offer a new typology parallel to layering, drift, conversion and displacement. Rather, it directs attention to the relationship between a pressure, the response selected by governing actors, and the institutional relationships that response modifies or leaves in place. The concepts of historical institutionalism actually help identify how arrangements change; while adaptive statecraft focuses on how governing actors work within and around inherited arrangements when under pressure.

A further theoretical strengthening brings to light the work of Andrews, Pritchett and Woolcock (2012, 2017) as they question reform approaches that privilege formal organisational models over the capacity to solve context-specific problems. Their work makes adaptation central to understanding how state capability is built, however the present article asks a different, complementary question: one where authorities can modify their response, and under what conditions does that adjustment leave the distribution of governing authority

substantially unchanged? Important to note, is that, This article does not equate adaptation with successful problem-solving, nor does it assume that continuity is evidence of capability.

Consequently, the analytical division of this work is thus threefold; Historical institutionalism foregrounding institutional inheritance and processes of change, State Governance Logic identifying the patterned relationships through which governing pressures are interpreted and processed and Adaptive statecraft describing the modification of responses under those conditions. Institutional transformation therefore seems to be an outcome to be demonstrated by tracing whether authority, discretion, resources or coordination have been substantially reorganised.

Our contribution is not to claim that these concepts displace existing theories but in connecting them around a specific empirical puzzle: wherein visible institutional adjustment may occur without an equivalent reorganisation of strategic authority. This formulation makes it possible to examine both change and continuity without treating either as the automatic consequence of the other.

State Governance Logic and Adaptive Statecraft

In examining the asymmetry of political pressure, it can be deduced that, its emergence is not through an institutional vacuum but specific-centric demands. When demands for decentralisation encounter existing territorial administrations; and demands for recognition meet established constitutional categories; or when challenges to public order are processed through inherited security and executive structures, the dilemma of priorities then arises, as states interrogate which problems become priorities, which institutions are mobilised and which kinds of response appear available.

State Governance Logic therefore refers to the patterned institutional relationships through which political pressures are interpreted, prioritised and translated into governing action. It is not a synonym for state rationality, which concerns the purposes or calculations that inform state action but rather refers to the institutional pathways through which those purposes are pursued, including relationships of authority, administrative coordination and territorial governance.

Adaptive statecraft, on the other hand, concerns the work of modifying governing responses within those pathways. It may involve a change in instruments, a new channel of consultation, a revised allocation of tasks or the creation of additional institutions. Such changes may eventually transform the wider architecture, but that result cannot be inferred from the existence of a new policy or organisation alone.

This relationship between SGL and AS, can be expressed as a heuristic sequence: where political pressure is processed through State Governance Logic; conditioning authorities to adjust their responses through adaptive statecraft; with the adjustment producing continuity, transformation or a combination of the two. This is an analytical guide, not a deterministic causal model.

This sequence leaves room for agency and contingency with SGL not predetermining a single response, and adaptive statecraft not guaranteeing that the inherited arrangement will survive. However, political contestation, implementation choices and cumulative institutional effects can alter the trajectory with the task being to establish empirically, which relationships change and which endure.

This distinction also prevents the analysis from collapsing institutional pattern, political purpose and practical action into one concept. The distinction shows that State rationality concerns the ends or calculations that inform action; SGL concerns the institutional relationships through which action is organised; and adaptive statecraft centring on the adjustment that go with practice. Keeping these levels separate makes it easier to explain how a state can respond to pressure without assuming that the response has transformed the state itself.

It is in this light, that A reform cannot be classified as transformative solely because it creates an institution, revises a legal framework or reallocates administrative tasks, because transformation is assessed relationally.The relevant question is therefore whether it substantially changes relationships of strategic authority, discretion, resource control or coordination.

The Adaptation-Continuity Paradox

As states are pressed to respond, established arrangements may no longer contain political demands or resolve conflicts, whereas at the same time, governing authorities may seek to preserve the institutional coherence through which they exercise power and coordinate action. Adaptation therefore takes place in the space between these pressures: the need to respond and the preference, capacity or institutional tendency to retain existing relationships.

The resulting tension is the adaptation-continuity problem, in which an institution may be altered precisely so that the wider governing architecture can endure. A dialogue can bring grievances into an official process while remaining within the existing constitutional framework. A decentralisation reform can recognise territorial and linguistic particularity while retaining national-level coordinating roles. Such outcomes should be examined rather than treated as proof either of transformation or of mere symbolism.

Three mechanisms guide the analysis. They are sensitising concepts, not mutually exclusive categories, and the documentary evidence must determine whether they are present.

First, authority preservation refers to the retention of strategic decision-making within established centres of state authority. It is compatible with the delegation of tasks or the creation of new forums. Its analytical significance lies in whether those changes alter who ultimately determines the direction and limits of governance.

Secondly, administrative continuity refers to the persistence of established relationships, routines and coordination structures alongside new arrangements. This suggests that formal reform may change responsibilities on paper while practical authority and administrative dependencies remain connected to existing hierarchies. The latter claim, however, requires implementation evidence and cannot be established from legislation alone.

Thirdly, institutional layering describes the addition of new arrangements alongside existing ones rather than their wholesale replacement. Layering may be transformative over time if new arrangements accumulate, acquire resources or displace older practices. In the Cameroon episodes examined here, the strongest documentary evidence concerns the addition of new instruments and differentiated regional institutions within the continuing constitutional order.

These mechanisms provide a disciplined way to assess bounded adaptation where governing instruments change, but strategic authority and coordination remain largely anchored in established relationships, with the evidence supporting continuity alongside adaptation.

Continuity is therefore not defined as an absence of change, but rather the finding of relationships that remain in place after a particular adjustment has been effected. This distinction is especially important where legal change is clear but the evidence about implementation is uneven.

Cameroon as a Theory-Building Case

The Cameroon case is useful because the Anglophone crisis generated multiple forms of pressure over an extended period. As protests by teachers and lawyers in 2016 centred in part on the treatment of the English-language educational and legal systems, this subsequently broadened into a struggle over recognition, security, territorial governance and the terms of national integration. The shifting of Government responses over time, created an opportunity to compare different governing instruments within the same wider crisis and situations of pressure

The analysis therefore focuses on three episodes which are not equivalent events: the turn toward securitised intervention, the Major National Dialogue of 2019, and the legal reforms on decentralisation and Special Status. The first concerns the operational repertoire of state intervention; the second created a formal channel for political consultation; while the third changed the legal architecture of regional governance. Their

differences make it possible to ask whether distinct forms of adaptation produced similar or different effects on governing relationships.

The study uses documentary analysis of legal texts, official statements and policy material, read alongside the scholarly and policy literature cited in the article. The analysis therefore distinguishes the state's declared objectives, the institutional mechanisms formally created, and the conclusions that can reasonably be drawn from those materials.

Each episode is examined through four questions: what pressure was being addressed; what response or institution changed; what evidence indicates a shift in governing relationships; and what evidence indicates continuity? This common set of questions supports comparison without assuming that every response has the same causal mechanism.

Adaptation in this light is identified where the instruments, procedures or institutional arrangements of governance were modified. Continuity is identified where the documentary record shows that key relationships remained embedded in the established constitutional and administrative framework.

The Cameroon case is not presented as statistically representative of postcolonial states, its purpose is theory-building: to specify a distinction and show how it can be investigated in a case where political pressure produced visible changes but the allocation of authority remained contested.

Adaptation Under Pressure

Securitised adaptation

The escalation of the crisis from late 2016 changed the state's mode of intervention as seen in its handling of claims.Grievances were initially expressed around the Common Law tradition, the English-language educational subsystem. Human Rights Watch's account of the late-2016 protests and early-2017 crackdown, alongside the International Crisis Group's 2017 analysis, documents the early shift from sectoral grievances to a broader political and security crisis (Human Rights Watch, 2018; International Crisis Group, 2017). With the change in framing , came the adjustment of state institutions and instruments, which became central to the response.

The crisis response included security deployments, restrictions on public activity and interruptions to internet access in affected areas. Human Rights Watch documents the January 2017 internet shutdown and reports on security-force conduct during the early crisis; its later reporting also documents abuses and restrictions affecting the Anglophone regions (Human Rights Watch, 2018, 2021). These sources support the claim that the response included coercive and information-control measures, but they do not establish every deployment or restriction across 2016–2025. The analysis therefore treats these examples as evidence of the early security-centred turn, rather than as a complete chronology of state action.

The change most clearly visible in the material examined is the prioritisation of security and public-order instruments. The state's operational repertoire expanded and the crisis was treated increasingly as a challenge to territorial authority.

This episode is consistent with authority preservation, with the response altering the means through which the state asserted authority; This is evidence of continuity in the formal governing architecture, not proof that no practical redistribution of discretion occurred.

Dialogic adaptation: the Major National Dialogue

The Major National Dialogue, convened from 30 September to 4 October 2019, represented a different kind of response. In his message of 10 September, President Paul Biya announced a dialogue under the leadership of the Prime Minister and identified decentralisation, local development, education, justice, reconstruction and related questions among the subjects for discussion. The announcement situated the process within the Constitution (Presidency of the Republic of Cameroon, 2019a).

The dialogue created a formal political channel beyond the security and administrative measures that had become prominent. Its convening and stated agenda were meaningful institutional actions even though their significance should not be erased by the fact that the process did not resolve the conflict.

The institutional boundary is also clear in the official announcement: the dialogue was to take place within the constitutional framework. That condition did not predetermine the content or effect of every recommendation, but it established the formal setting in which proposals were to be considered. The dialogue itself did not create an authority independent of the state's constitutional institutions. Assessments of the process's inclusiveness and practical consequences require engagement with participants' accounts and independent analyses, not official statements alone (Presidency of the Republic of Cameroon, 2019a).

This episode illustrates the difference between providing a channel for institutional inclusion and redistributing decision-making authority. The dialogue expanded the range of mechanisms through which claims could be discussed, but the available evidence does not establish that it transferred strategic authority from the constitutional or territorial order to a new institution.

Territorial and institutional adaptation: decentralisation and Special Status

Decentralisation and Special Status provide the clearest example of formal institutional change, under Law No. 2019/024 of 24 December 2019 instituting the General Code of Regional and Local Authorities. In the official English text, Section 2 states that local authorities must act with due respect for national unity and solidarity, territorial integrity and the primacy of the State; Section 3 recognises special status for the North-West and South-West Regions based on their linguistic specificity and historical heritage (Republic of Cameroon, 2019, Sections 2–3).

The Code establishes differentiated regional institutions, including the Regional Executive Council, and creates the Public Independent Conciliator under Section 367 (Republic of Cameroon, 2019, Sections 328, 332–371; Ministry of Decentralisation and Local Development, n.d.). These provisions changed the formal architecture of regional governance and should not be described as merely symbolic.

The existence of these new competences does not by itself settle the question of transformation but establishes that some responsibilities and institutional forms were differentiated. To determine how far strategic authority shifted in practice would require evidence about budgets, staffing, decisions, implementation and the interaction between regional bodies and representatives of the State. The legal text alone cannot answer all of those questions. The Code therefore combines differentiated regional governance with an explicit affirmation of the wider state framework.

Institutional layering is therefore a useful interpretation of the formal design: differentiated arrangements and additional powers were added within the existing constitutional order. This does not establish that central control was unchanged in every practical domain. It shows that the legal reform combined recognition of regional particularity with an explicit affirmation of national unity, solidarity and the primacy of the State. The relationship between those provisions and the actual exercise of regional authority remains an empirical question.

The case is consequently best understood as a coexistence of change and continuity in which the Special Status altering the formal territorial architecture and creating meaningful regional competences is envisioned at the same time, that the legal framework did not replace the sovereign constitutional order within which those competences operate. Whether implementation has produced deeper redistribution should be assessed with evidence beyond the statute itself.

When Adaptation Preserves Continuity

The comparison identifies three distinct adaptations and one shared feature: each response modified the instruments through which the state addressed the crisis, while each remained formally located within the existing constitutional order.

political pressure | Adaptive response | What changed | What remained | Interpretation

The comparison also cautions against two opposite errors, with the first being to treat every reform as proof of transformation; and the second is to dismiss reforms as cosmetic because the wider state architecture endured. Security intervention changed the operational repertoire, the dialogue established a formal channel for consultation, and Special Status differentiated regional institutions and competences. Each was a real change, though the kind and scale of change differed.

On this reading, the three episodes demonstrate adaptation without clear evidence of equivalent transformation in the formal governing relationships. The conclusion is not that transformation was impossible or absent in every domain, but that it cannot be inferred simply from institutional innovation.

The pattern may be described as bounded institutional movement: changes that altered the state's response while remaining within an enduring constitutional and administrative framework. The concept is useful precisely because it preserves the significance of institutional change while asking which relationships that change did, and did not, reorganise.

The Limits of Institutional Transformation

The case points to three possible mechanisms behind bounded adaptation: authority preservation, administrative continuity and institutional layering. They are related explanations, not independently proven causes, with the evidence being strongest for the formal architecture and weaker for claims about the day-to-day exercise of administrative discretion.

Authority preservation may make reform more acceptable to established centres of power when new instruments do not fundamentally relocate strategic decision-making.

Administrative continuity can also constrain the effects of reform, Existing chains of responsibility, budget processes and staffing arrangements shaping how new mandates operate. This mechanism is plausible in the case, but a firm conclusion about its operation requires implementation evidence that maps those relationships over time. The article therefore treats administrative continuity as an explanatory proposition for further investigation rather than a fully demonstrated finding.

Layering is the most directly visible of the three mechanisms in the legal design of Special Status. New regional bodies and competences were added within the wider national framework. Such layering is not necessarily a stable endpoint: over time, new institutions may acquire authority or resources that change the balance between old and new arrangements. Whether that has occurred in Cameroon requires longitudinal evidence beyond the law's original design.

These mechanisms suggest how adaptation may recur without resolving the political tension that prompted it, A response may add institutional capacity or create a new channel for claims, while leaving some underlying disputes over authority and recognition unsettled. This is a proposition about the possible relationship between adaptation and recurring pressure, not a claim that every later episode of conflict was caused by the limits of the reforms.

Bounded adaptation should not automatically be equated with incapacity but the ability to modify policy and create institutions,which may in itself reflect a capacity to respond. Yet responsiveness and transformation are different criteria: a state may be able to adjust its instruments while remaining unwilling, unable or institutionally constrained from redistributing authority. The case requires these possibilities to remain open rather than assuming one motive.

The analytical point is that the capacity to change a response does not, on its own, establish a capacity to reorganise the relationships through which that response is governed.

DISCUSSION: ADAPTIVE STATECRAFT AS GOVERNED ADAPTATION

The Cameroon case supports an account of adaptive statecraft as adjustment conducted within inherited governing relationships with the concept useful only if it is kept distinct from a general claim that governments are flexible or capable.

First, adaptation and transformation should not be treated as points on a single scale. While adaptation describes a change in response; transformation describes a substantial reorganisation of the relationships through which authority is exercised. A response may lead to transformation, but the latter requires evidence about altered authority, discretion, resources or coordination rather than an inference from policy novelty.

Secondly, continuity is not automatically failure. While institutional continuity may preserve coordination and administrative memory, it may also limit the range of solutions available to a political conflict. The analytical task is to identify which relationships endure and to assess their consequences, rather than to value continuity or change in the abstract.

Thirdly, formal reforms need to be assessed alongside implementation. This is particularly important for decentralisation: although legal competences matter, the distribution of effective authority also depends on finance, personnel, administrative practice and the ability to make consequential decisions. In the absence of those materials, the distinction between legal design and practical effect must remain explicit.

Fourthly, SGL and adaptive statecraft have separate explanatory roles. SGL directs attention to inherited institutional relationships that shape how political pressure is processed. Adaptive statecraft captures the adjustments made by governing actors within that setting. Together they provide a framework for examining how institutional inheritance and political action interact without reducing one to the other.

Finally, the case generates a comparative proposition rather than a universal law: where strategically important centres of authority remain institutionally protected, governments may be more likely to accommodate pressure through new instruments or layered institutions than through wholesale redistribution of authority. Testing this proposition requires comparison across cases and attention to implementation, political contestation and changes over time.

Cameroon should not be treated as a proxy for all postcolonial states. The value of the case lies in sharpening a question for comparative research: under what conditions do states accommodate demands for change by adjusting governing instruments, and when do those adjustments become a reorganisation of the relationships through which the state governs?

CONCLUSION

A state’s ability to adapt does not necessarily mean that it has transformed the relationships through which it governs.

Cameroon’s response to the Anglophone crisis illustrates the distinction, where Security-centred intervention changed the instruments of state action, the Major National Dialogue created a formal channel for political consultation, and the decentralisation reforms and Special Status introduced differentiated regional institutions and additional competences. However, while these changes were consequential at the level of governing instruments and legal design, The question is what those changes actually transformed.

The evidence reviewed here shows that the reforms were introduced within an enduring constitutional order that continued to affirm national unity, territorial integrity and the primacy of the State. It does not establish that practical authority remained unchanged in every domain, because that would require a fuller body of implementation evidence. The more defensible conclusion is that formal adaptation is clear, while an equivalent reorganisation of strategic authority is not demonstrated by the sources examined.

The article has distinguished changing a response from changing the governing relationships through which the response is organised. The former is adaptation; the latter, where substantial, is institutional transformation.

State Governance Logic helps identify why the distinction matters. Inherited institutional relationships shape how political pressures are interpreted and which responses become available. Adaptive statecraft, on the other hand, has described the work of adjusting those responses. Transformation must then be assessed by examining whether the adjustment reorganises the relationships themselves.

The implication is not that states should always pursue transformation rather than adaptation because Continuity can support governability, and adjustment may allow institutions to respond without collapse. The analytical risk is to assume that visible responsiveness is sufficient evidence of deeper institutional change.

The Cameroon case suggests instead that substantial institutional movement can coexist with continuity in the formal architecture of strategic authority. That finding remains open to refinement through further evidence on implementation, but it establishes the value of distinguishing adaptive statecraft from institutional transformation.

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