

Libreville energy independence

Gabon is a developing country, ranking 123rd in the Human Development Index. It is one of the wealthiest countries in Africa in terms of per capita income; however, large parts of the population are very poor. Omar Bongo came to office in 1967 and created a dynasty, which stabilized its power through a clientist network, France.

Pygmy peoples in the area were largely replaced and absorbed by Bantu tribes as they migrated. By the 18th century, a Myeni-speaking kingdom known as the Kingdom of Orungu formed as a trading centre with the ability to purchase and sell slaves, and fell with the demise of the slave trade in the 1870s.

Explorer Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza led his first mission to the Gabon-Congo area in 1875. He founded the town of Franceville and was later colonial governor. Some Bantu groups lived in the area when France officially occupied it in 1885.

In 1910, Gabon became a territory of French Equatorial Africa; a federation that survived until 1958. In World War II, the Allies invaded Gabon in order to overthrow the pro-Vichy France colonial administration. On 28 November 1958, Gabon became an autonomous republic within the French Community, and on 17 August 1960, it became fully independent.

Opposition to PDG continued after the April 1990 conference, and in September 1990, two coup attempts were uncovered and aborted. With demonstrations after the death of an opposition leader, the first multiparty National Assembly elections in almost 30 years took place in September-October 1990, with PDG garnering a majority.

In June 2010, a partial legislative by-election was held, marking the emergence of the Union Nationale (UN) coalition, primarily comprising defectors from the ruling PDG party following Omar Bongo's death. The contest for the five available seats saw both the PDG and UN claiming victory, underscoring the political tensions that persisted in the aftermath of the presidential transition.

The political landscape was further disrupted in January 2019 when a group of soldiers attempted a coup against President Ali Bongo. Despite initial unrest, the coup ultimately failed, but it highlighted the ongoing challenges facing Gabon's political stability.

Against this backdrop of political volatility, Gabon achieved significant milestones on the international stage. In June 2021, it became the first country to receive payments for reducing emissions resulting from deforestation and forest degradation. Additionally, in June 2022, Gabon, along with Togo, joined the Commonwealth of Nations, signalling its commitment to multilateral engagement and cooperation.

After President Omar Bongo was re-elected in 1993, in a disputed election where only 51% of votes were cast, social and political disturbances led to the 1994 Paris Conference and Accords. These provided a framework for the next elections. Local and legislative elections were delayed until 1996-1997. In 1997, constitutional amendments put forward years earlier were adopted to create the Senate and the position of Vice President, and to extend the President's term to seven years.¶17¶93;

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