

ETHNIC ORIGIN IN POLITICAL REPRESENTATION ORIGEN ÉTNICO EN LA REPRESENTACIÓN POLÍTICA

Josefina Nawa Bakale Ayingono

Universidad Nacional de Guinea Ecuatorial, Equatorial Guinea

[fyna_edu@hotmail.com] [<https://orcid.org/0009-0002-0399-906X>]

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ABSTRACT

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The representation of the State, as a manifestation of its political power, rests on the consent of the true sovereign and their guidelines for its legitimate exercise. Exercising such power effectively entails a great personal and professional responsibility that also requires leadership reflected in actions. Current Equatorial Guinean society lacks indicators that reflect its capacity to discern between leadership and mere followers or disorganization, and one of the causes is the correlation between ethnic origin and the perceived objectivity of those best qualified to lead or perform representative functions. Although ethnic identity is personal and private, national identity, for its part, is the secondary origin that permanently connects us to a specific territory among the subjects that make up the international community. The representation of the State must consider both identities: on one hand, having the presence of each ethnic group established in the country in the powers and organs of the State; and, on the other hand, designing a system of representation that recognizes those best qualified above ethnic identity, that is, meritocracy and ability. Article 9 of the Fundamental Law is essential for this matter, as in a broad sense it is a cornerstone for the adoption of integrative formulas and social cohesion.

RESUMEN

Palabras clave:

poder político, representación,
origen étnico, justicia social,
equilibrio.

La representación del Estado como manifestación del Poder Político de éste, descansa en el consentimiento del verdadero soberano y sus pautas para su ejercicio legítimo. Ejercer tal poder de manera eficaz y efectiva supone una gran responsabilidad personal y profesional que requiere además de un liderazgo reflejado en las acciones. La actual sociedad guineoecuatorial carece de indicadores que reflejen su capacidad de discernir sobre el liderazgo y el seguidismo o la desorganización, y una de las causas es la correlación entre el origen étnico y la objetividad en cuanto a quienes están mejor capacitados para liderar o ejercer funciones representativas. Si bien la identidad étnica es personal y privada, por su parte la identidad nacional es el origen secundario que nos conecta de manera permanente a un territorio específico dentro de los sujetos que integran la comunidad internacional. La representación del Estado debe contemplar ambas identidades: por un lado, tener presencia de

cada grupo étnico y asentado en el país en los poderes y órganos del Estado; y, por otro lado, diseñar un sistema de representación que reconozca a los mejor calificados por encima de la identidad étnica, es decir, la meritocracia y la capacidad. El artículo 9 de la Ley Fundamental es esencial para tal cuestión, ya que en sentido extenso es un eje para la adopción de fórmulas integrativas y de cohesión social.

Introduction

One of the supreme values of the Equatorial Guinean State is peace [Fundamental Law (LF) 2012, Art. 1.1]. The Fang people understood peace as the absence of conflict in a just and balanced environment. For Luther King, true peace is not simply the absence of tension, but rather the presence of justice. The Latin proverb *suum cuique* conveys the same idea, defining justice as the proportional value of giving each person what is due to them (according to their merit).

The concept of social justice is not foreign to our law, culture, and moral values. Similarly, the concept of merit was not unrelated to the attainment of benefits and/or proportional consequences.

The potential erosion of social justice can be traced back to the 1968 Constitution, Article 1 of which states that the Republic of Equatorial Guinea consists of two provinces: Río Muni and Fernando Poo. And according to Article 14, the Vice President must be a native of a province other than the one from which the President hails. This recognition, as an act of affirmative action, is related to Article 4 of the same law, which prohibits any act of ethnic discrimination. Although the goal was to ensure proportional representation for both provinces, it should be noted that the results have been positive primarily for two ethnic groups (the Fang and the Bubi).

Since 1968, inclusive and proportional mechanisms for all ethnic groups have been needed to mitigate structural inequalities in public representation. The 1973 Revolutionary National Constitution also prohibited discrimination on ethnic grounds, and the president was free to appoint the vice president from among the government ministers (Art. 48). This formula differs from the previous one in terms of the selection of the vice president, since in 1968 the goal was to preserve Fernando Poo's status, uphold the agreements on unitary independence, and recognize that—to prevent secession or a possible concentration of power by the natives of Río Muni—Fernando Poo must retain that constitutional privilege.

The 1982 Constitution did not follow either of the previous models (1968 and 1973), as it did not provide for the office of Vice President of the Republic: the President of the Republic was assisted by a Prime Minister (Art. 109) and could appoint a Vice President of the Council of State (Art. 101).

The 1991 Constitution reinstated the office of vice president (Arts. 32.1 and 33.3) and was retained in its most recent amendment in 2012 (current constitutional text, arts. 32.1 and 33.3). As was the case in 1973, there are no plans to appoint the vice president from a specific province. Since 1973, the 1968 formula has been applied to the appointment of the prime minister—who belongs to a different ethnic group than the president—resulting in a system of proportional representation favoring the Fang and Bubi ethnic groups at the expense of other recognized ethnic groups and communities.

Returning to the concept of social justice, two situations arise which, while not inherently contradictory in theory, can create tension in practice. The first would prioritize affirmative action over merit, potentially resulting in a disproportionate outcome (not giving each person what they deserve, but rather basing the selection on ethnic origin). The second would prioritize merit and apply the principle of "to each his due." The adoption of either of the two situations described has corresponding implications for society, as we will discuss below.

Theoretical Framework and Context

The undervaluing of leadership and meritocracy has been most clearly evident since 1967, during the Constitutional Conference (La Vanguardia Española, 1967), in which so-called leaders—artificially created by the colonists—participated in order to suspend or delay the issue of independence (Ndong Biyogo, 1977), or, if it were to succeed, to advocate for secession between Fernando Poo and Río Muni (Almazán Tomas, 2015). In practice, this meant putting personal interests above those of the new state, an attitude that took hold among prominent figures of the time and became entrenched in certain groups. Against all odds, a leader emerged during the campaign and won the 1968 presidential election (Ela Abeme, 1983). Without substantial support and with very limited resources, his abilities and skills would make him a force to be reckoned with against his opponents. As a skilled orator and a decisive and effective communicator, he inspired the *Youth on the March with Macías*, who were true followers of their leader.

According to Plato, in his work **The Republic**, leadership is not a matter of chance, and the most important quality of a leader is *not wanting to be one*, which means that recognition of their abilities is left to the judgment of others. By coining the idea that *"those who are not good at serving will not be good at ruling"*, Plato emphasizes that true leadership and the ability to govern are based on the experience of obeying and serving, which fosters an understanding of authority. A natural leader does not dominate or subjugate others, but rather guides them toward a common goal (keep in mind that the line between a leader and a tyrant can become blurred: when one ceases to serve the common good in favor of personal interests, a tyrant emerges). But if, as early as 1967, the oligarchs and those with vested interests in the country were already able to buy people's support and create artificial leaders to defend their interests, it wasn't long before the people of Equatorial Guinea would learn to use public policy for personal gain, rather than serving the common good through public policy.

General Thoughts on the Underestimation of Leadership.

In the 1980s, an ideology known as *Guineology* emerged, and one of its main contributions has been to strip the concept of leadership of all value, thereby giving rise to the figure of the chief. While some bosses are leaders, in this particular case, the boss does not demonstrate leadership but rather simply exercises control and authority by relying firmly on his position of superior strength and hierarchy.

Guineology, championed by its adherents as *the proper way of doing things*, has gained widespread acceptance in practice, with a focus on social justice. Consequently, the devaluation of ability and merit, or the suppression of creativity, creates widespread conditions that lead to the restriction of fair or equitable opportunities. In Fang philosophy, good leaders worked for the common good (the nkukum'a, or traditional chief or leader, served, cared for, and guided the people; not just anyone was suited for this role; it required prior recognition of virtues and abilities by the other members of the village), while bad leaders exploited the community to satisfy their personal interests (Kabunda & Santamaría, 2009). The latter were to be expelled for treason. For Plato, the goal of the state—in addition to the common good—was also the creation of a just and balanced society, and not the benefit of those in power.

The leader elected by the people governed in the *Abáa* (House of the Word or Assembly), which holds deep significance for the Fang people, as it is where they gather to discuss all matters concerning the community; on this subject, and by analogy, one may consult Rousseau's **Social Contract**), assisted by a Council of Elders established as a body

of political and judicial oversight. According to Eyama Achama (2014), the duties of the elected leader “were to ensure security, order, and well-being”; he could not perform duties that did not fall within his purview, and “the pursuit of the common good of the *ayong*” (tribe) had to take precedence:

The downfall [Royal Spanish Academy (RAE), 2024] of the leader in Guinean politics entails: a capricious interpretation of the law, a stagnant and unproductive system, petty internal power struggles, repetitive electoral rhetoric, and superficial populism that targets opponents rather than policies. Political parties (LF 2012, Art. 9.1) have become instruments that distort political opinion insofar as they not only express the preferences of their voters (Duverger, 1954), but also help to shape them (Martínez Sospedra et al., 2007). Ideological confusion—characterized by the superficial interactions that would naturally lead to political and electoral competition (Bartolini, 1993)—in a system without leaders and without clearly defined ideological distinctions (Nohlen, 1993) has facilitated the creation of a discourse designed to convince the masses. Citizenship, having become a market for votes and a necessary stepping stone to power, faces real risks such as political opportunism, alienation from the system (Long, 1990), or the adoption of policies that primarily benefit certain social groups (such as easy access to so-called “social housing” for the elites, or privileged access to scholarships for those with high incomes). These policies sound like they are for the people in theory, but in practice, they are out of reach, and people have little access to their benefits.

The consequence of a lack of leadership is a society overrun by political opportunism or so-called “men of variable geometry.” In an era that the so-called *critics*—detractors of the regime because they do not share its ideas or express dissatisfaction with its policies—have described as *an era of shamelessness*, a current cultural policy at odds with traditional values is emerging: the Fang people had a strong sense of shame instilled in them from childhood (Tessmann, 1913), as well as a sense of duty and honest work as a way of life, guided by ancestral norms, social structures, and a deep respect for their own lives and those of others.

The colonists quickly realized that, in order to exert control over the Fang people, they first had to break them down and corrupt them—the missionaries, acting as a vanguard or as the principal landowners in establishing the colony, compiled extensive records on the structured Fang society and devised a strategy of evangelism and baptism to strip them of their identity and dispossess them of their lands—. By the time of the Constitutional Conference, servility, flexibility, and ideological ambiguity were no longer unfamiliar concepts in certain political circles in the capital. Political maneuvering and rhetoric designed to capitalize on patriotic sentiment also made their way onto the scene. More recently, political alienation has emerged as a factor; according to Long (1990), this is an individual’s negative emotional response to the political system and its leaders.

The Role of the Leader and the Structure of Leadership Today.

Leadership, like any process, involves risks and takes a toll on both the leader and the system. To prevent such erosion, the alternation of power benefits everyone—not only as a democratic principle but also as a necessary renewal of public policies (LF 2012, Art. 36). With a constitutionally limited term of office, there will gradually be a greater inclination to act responsibly, strengthening accountability (a broad interpretation of Article 36), preventing the consolidation of authoritarian structures, and facilitating the participation of different political ideologies in representing the people.

Today, the role of a leader is no longer as necessary in an orderly, prosperous society that offers legal safeguards and certainty. The figure of the leader can lead to deception, to a collective dream that is sometimes detached from reality, paving the way

for the emergence of authoritarianism. An orderly society requires recognizing the merits and abilities of its members. For authors such as Rawls (1971), social order is not something natural, but rather is constructed through institutions, laws, customs, and beliefs that vary according to the historical and cultural context (Rawls, 1971). It is no mere anecdote that there is a risk the leader might adopt a paternalistic mindset, proclaiming himself the “father of the state”—and as such, he is applauded and never questioned. He becomes the head of state and supplants the true constituent power (the people; 2012 Constitution, Art. 2). Due to political opportunism, when faced with any policy aimed at sustainable development and progress, those responsible for and involved in such policies implement effective strategies that, rather than driving positive change in the relevant areas, ultimately serve only to boost their own personal finances and lifestyle. According to the Law on the Prevention and Combating of Corruption (Law No. 1/2021, dated May 10), the government’s goal is to promote good governance, transparency, and a culture of accountability in the management of public affairs.

The absence of leaders does not necessarily imply a lack of leadership, since leadership is also an organizational and directional approach, involving a legally and legitimately established distribution of power and collective responsibility. Article 31 of the Constitution recognizes the principle of separation of powers, and Article 32 of the Constitution establishes constitutional bodies that exercise state functions; furthermore, access to the branches of government is regulated by law (see LF 2012; Law Regulating Presidential Elections; Law Regulating Parliamentary, Municipal, and Referendum Elections). Many leaders who have not allowed themselves to be guided or influenced by external forces, or who have prioritized serving the people, have been eliminated. Notable examples include Patrice Lumumba (1925–1961), Amílcar Cabral, also known as Abel Djassi (1924–1973), and Thomas Sankara (1949–1987). This demonstrates the urgent need for a solid, legitimate legal framework and an orderly society capable of defending it. This process eliminates any risks associated with the presence or absence of a leader.

Political representation.

As long as ethnic origin remains a factor, political representation must be carefully structured and linked to the *suum cuique* in practice. Meritocracy and equal opportunities lead to development and social justice. Leadership must be of high quality, with candidates possessing the necessary skills to tackle the challenges and responsibilities that the position entails (see theories by authors such as John Kotter, Ken Blanchard, Max Weber, Bennis, and Daniel Goleman, among others). In a sovereign state (De Esteban, 1998), the exercise of political power is characterized as the authority to make final and effective decisions (Torres del Moral, 2004), and must respect constitutional guarantees (LF 2012, arts. (31 and 32) on access, exercise, limits, and term limits (Bakale Ayingono, 2025). National or state identity takes precedence over ethnic identity; the two coexist without being mutually exclusive, which serves as a safeguard for national unity as the supreme value of the State (LF 2012, Art. 1.1). In constitutional texts, only the People of Equatorial Guinea are recognized, which implies legal recognition of a single national identity, while ethnic identity remains within the private sphere of the citizen.

A unique national identity not only provides citizens with a sense of belonging and the corresponding legal status, but also reinforces common elements such as: history [Spanish territory (Law on the Organization and Legal Regime of the African Provinces, Framework Law on the Autonomous Regime of Equatorial Guinea, Law Authorizing the Government to Complete the Constitutional Process of Equatorial Guinea...), independent state], Spanish as the lingua franca (see constitutional texts), the Roman Catholic faith professed by the majority (the Catholic Church not only has extensive and preeminent

privileges in the country dating back to the colonial era, surpassing any other denomination, but there is also a close relationship between the Catholic Church and the public authorities), and the centralized legal system and public policies with nationwide scope. In contrast to the specific beliefs and values of each ethnic group, beginning in 1883 (during the colonial era), the Sagasta administration (Creus Boixaderas, unpublished, as cited in Álvarez Chillida, 2018) imposed different ones across the board on all citizens, aimed at Westernizing and Christianizing the population, always under the strong influence of the Catholic Church, whose role as the primary agent of colonial culture supported evangelization and cultural assimilation (Álvarez Chillida, 2018). The goal was to make “those indigenous people [...] good Catholics and, at the same time, good Spaniards, useful to the Motherland” (ACC, Sec. E, GF Series, box 6, envelope 30, folio 2, 1910, as cited in Álvarez Chillida, 2018). Despite the changes brought about by immigration and globalization, the people of Equatorial Guinea see themselves as a single nation: multi-ethnic and diverse. There are not several Guineas within one, but rather a single one, with legally established procedures for the exercise of political power. The *form of the state* (Torres del Moral, 2024) entails the consolidation of national sovereignty and forms of government. Therefore, defining the state based on an abstract and timeless concept implies that its structural elements remain constant over time (Torres del Moral, 2024).

Through state institutions, the Basic Law ensures national representation, regardless of ethnic origin or any other exclusionary factor. Article 9.2 of the LF reinforces this idea by stipulating that political parties must be national in character and scope, and by prohibiting them from being based on tribe, ethnicity, region, etc. Political parties thus function as a kind of relational mechanism between representatives and those they represent, in which the former bear a degree of responsibility for their actions, and the latter have mechanisms of control within the scope of their possibilities (Asensi Sabater, 1991). For this reason, the laws establish requirements for holding elected office (Organic Law 2012, Art. 35, and current electoral laws). The multiparty system (Political Parties Act, 2015) in and of itself provides a legal basis for addressing regionalism within political parties.

Indirect representation allows the representative to act on behalf of the represented party, but in his or her own name and under his or her own responsibility [“on behalf of the people of Equatorial Guinea” (Bakale Ayingono, 2025)]. Citizens do not directly enact laws or decide on policies; rather, their involvement begins and ends with participation in the electoral process (Direct and Indirect Representation, 2023). Citizen-initiated legislation is not recognized. Through electoral procedures, the sovereign people establish a system that guarantees the effective representation of majorities and minorities (a law is a decision that is binding on the majorities and minorities in the Chambers—contingent or temporary majorities and minorities that depend on the voters). Once elected, representatives are not ambassadors for their constituents; rather, they represent everyone and embody the will of the people. The active political participation of minorities must be guaranteed, and their concerns must be taken into account throughout the political process. It is therefore appropriate for the system to implement mechanisms to identify the best candidates and to ensure effective multiethnic representation.

Method

Based on observations of reality, supported by historical and contemporary archives, as well as other resources of various kinds, this study describes and analyzes an environment that allows for a specific examination of the social and legal context of ethnic origin in political representation. Experiencing that reality firsthand reinforces the analysis and allows for a thorough study, by comparing it with information sources and incorporating socio-legal arguments from an objective perspective.

The qualitative approach focused on analyzing and describing the constitutional reality from 1968 to 2012 reveals a series of shifting historical patterns, both in law and in practice. Thus, while the 1968 Constitution expressly established supposedly balanced representation formulas, the other constitutions do not provide for any such formulas, based on the idea that the position should go to the best candidate—or the one most aligned with the interests of the elected officials—provided that the candidates are members of the same political party. Experience shows that inclusive representation can occur at different levels and in different roles, and is not necessarily limited to specific positions. This makes it possible to propose a method that takes into account merit and proportional representation in any state body.

Based on the quantitative analysis, no representative formula (explicit or implicit) shows a higher efficiency percentage than any other. On the one hand, since 1968 there has been a significant centralization and concentration of power in single-person elected offices, as opposed to positions of trust that can be delegated. The same applies to the chairs of collegial bodies with respect to the other members of the Executive Committee. On the other hand, constitutions and other laws have recognized that elected officials and leaders of collegial bodies have full authority in the exercise of their functions; whereas officials in delegable positions of trust and other members of the governing bodies of collegial bodies have limited powers and are subject to supervised delegation, often without substantial regulatory support.

The mixed analysis generated from the survey of 50 people—of whom: 15 Fang, 12 Bubi, 8 Ndowe, 7 Bisio, 5 Annobonese, and 3 Creoles or Fernandinos—reveals a deep desire for inclusive political representation and recognition of the merit and ability of each citizen nominated to hold office. It also shows that some minority groups do not feel included in government decision-making and lack safe spaces or means to voice their concerns.

Direct contact with people from different ethnic groups and from both the workforce and non-working sectors has meant coming into contact with sensitive areas that are open to subjective interpretations. For this reason, the ethical considerations involved in handling personal data and sources require us to be rigorous, objective, and respectful.

The potential implications that may arise from this sociopolitical analysis could lead to a clearer understanding of the context and its evolution, offering or broadening perspectives and reflections on inclusive political representation and possible sources of tension. This is not a critique of the government's structure and management, but rather a study focused on possible approaches to proportionality and/or social justice. Moreover, the line of reasoning we aim to follow implicitly involves the concept of inclusive democracy and its impact on the society under study.

Results

An analysis of political representation reveals a sharp decline in inclusion. In 1968, there was a certain balance in terms of the representation of the two ethnic groups (Fang and Bubi): the Fang held the presidency of the executive branch, seven ministries, the vice presidency of the legislative branch, the presidency of the Council of the Republic, and the civil government of Río Muni. The Bubis held the vice presidency of the executive branch, three ministries, the presidency of the legislative branch, the presidency of the judicial branch, and the civil government of Fernando Poo. The Ndowe took on a ministry. No records have been found to support Annoboneses and Bisio's claim to hold any constitutional office. The Creoles (Fernandinos), a well-established and recognized group—though not indigenous to the region—assumed a government role (“The First Government of Equatorial Guinea,” 1968).

In 1973 and 1982, the Fang and Bubi ethnic groups continued to be the predominant groups. The Supreme Military Council was largely dominated by the Fang, with one military officer from the Bubi ethnic group standing out. The list of prime ministers alone (a position that was abolished from October 12, 1968, to August 15, 1982) clearly illustrates this dominance: of the eleven the country has had since 1968, four have been Fang and seven have been Bubi.

From 1982 to the present, the inclusion of the Bisio and Annobonese ethnic groups has been minimal, although it is evident that the Annobonese are no longer confined to their traditional ministerial department of fisheries. The Ndowe and Bisio have held various government posts, but their presence remains minimal. This same pattern is repeated in the other branches and bodies of the government, with the notable development that members of the Bisio family have held the position of Second Vice President of the Senate during their first term (2013) and currently hold the presidency of the Constitutional Court. People from Annobón are becoming more prominent in the judiciary and have held the position of director of the Ombudsman's Office.

Inclusion in political representation ensures balance and reflects the multi-ethnic reality. We must create spaces that adequately address and manage any differences or tensions that may arise. A striking example of how the exclusion or inadequate management of a multi-ethnic reality can bring down an entire system is Rwanda in 1994, where the genocide—rooted in the country's complex history of deep-seated ethnic and socioeconomic tensions, and fueled by divisive and manipulative colonial policies based on ethnic identities—resulted in one of the worst scenarios in recent history.

The approach currently being taken in Rwanda to curb the ethnic and political tensions that remain and pose ongoing challenges to reconciliation and national unity is to move toward a nation without ethnic groups. This principle has been enshrined in its 2003 Constitution (Rev. 2015) through several articles that prohibit discrimination and divisive practices. According to Kamanzi (2021), the state itself promotes the *ndi umunyarwanda* (“I am Rwandan”) or Rwandan nationality as the only acceptable identity and asserts that political discourse on identity must be strictly controlled for security reasons.

The situation in Equatorial Guinea is not as complex as that in Rwanda. Although the majority ethnic group has been dominant on the political scene, along with the main minority group, all ethnic groups have enjoyed the corresponding legal status as citizens, depending on the era. The legal system does not make distinctions based on ethnicity. The hospitable and welcoming nature of the majority ethnic group has been a decisive factor in maintaining multiethnic social balance.

Equatorial Guinean citizens have identified themselves first and foremost as natives of the State since the era of autonomy—certainly, the provincial era could be considered the embryo of that sense of identity, but the fleeting participation of the country's native inhabitants has left no records to support that assertion. As a Spanish overseas province (1959), the natives of Spanish Guinea began to play a role in the country's government and in other areas such as education and religion. They gradually became aware of their geopolitical reality, a development that can be glimpsed in December 1963 during the Referendum on Autonomy, in which eligible Guineans were divided in their opinions: some were in favor and others were against ("The referendum has been a true affirmation of Spanish Guinea's national consciousness," 1963). Merit and ability were common elements in sociopolitical life, while ethnic origin remained in the personal sphere. Despite the divisions that certain elites sought to create (Constitutional Conference, 1967), a sense of national identity was deeply rooted. Independence served to confirm this; Guineans identify themselves as natives of Equatorial Guinea or as "natives," implying that they are first and foremost citizens of the country, and only then do their personal circumstances—such as ethnicity—come into play. For example, young Guineans abroad—regardless of individual circumstances—often seek out other Guineans to form a community based on kinship, regardless of ethnic origin. Interethnic marriages, for example, have become an everyday occurrence rather than a rare phenomenon.

Discussion and Conclusion

Political approaches to balanced representation must include mechanisms for adaptation, taking into account the context and its complexities. One strategy of Equatorial Guinea's policy is the holding of National Dialogue Forums (Decree No. 102/2018 convening the Sixth National Dialogue Forum) between the government, public institutions, legally registered political parties, political leaders and activists, and civil society. The aim of these working groups is to bring the electoral bills in line with current realities and the demands of society. According to the decree convening the Sixth Committee, the rules governing discussions during the convened round of negotiations would allow for absolute freedom of expression, in accordance with the terms established by law, and would aim to identify any circumstances, causes, or attitudes that violate citizens' fundamental rights and freedoms and that could undermine the peace, harmony, reconciliation, and solidarity of the people. To that end, the Government of the Republic would adopt all political, legal, administrative, social, and humanitarian measures to facilitate the participation of all political actors living in exile abroad.

Ethnic identity predates the Republic, and the sociopolitical context is not insurmountable. The law is clear in its reference to the people of Equatorial Guinea: their right to property (Fundamental Law 2012, Art. 30.1 and 30.3), to freedom of movement and residence [Fundamental Law 2012, Art. 13.1. d)], etc. This abstract constitutional recognition of the people as a whole (sovereign and indivisible) reinforces national (state) identity and also protects ethnic identity (LF 2012, Art. 16.1) throughout the national territory.

Abstract visibility is realized through concrete public policies that are inclusive and representative of both majorities and minorities. Failing to take the multi-ethnic reality into account from the outset can lead to the majority occupying all spaces, thereby rendering minorities invisible in the process. Such a situation would gradually create unrest and tension, undermining social justice. The key is access: making room for

everyone, but ensuring that the results depend on each individual. That formula, striking a balance between social peace and *suum cuique*, would serve as a balanced measure of inclusive policies and the merit of each citizen.

An illustrative example: government-sponsored scholarships. Policies governing access to these resources must take into account the multi-ethnic reality. If the requirement is top grades, keep in mind that since the Fang make up more than 85% of the country's population, they can easily take all the scholarships, to the detriment of other ethnic groups. To avoid this risk, access quotas or proportional percentages can be established—that is, a specific percentage for each ethnic group. This would prevent minorities from being overlooked and ensure proportionality (social justice). Whether the recipient makes the most of the scholarship and builds a career or profession will depend on their ability or merit; this is the essence of *suum cuique* (to each his own). This formula is not only viable in our case (estimated population of 1,668,768 in 2024, according to data released by the National Institute of Statistics of Equatorial Guinea “INEGE” in 2025), but it is also timely as it serves as a bridge between inclusive representation and objectivity, and would address two current issues: first, who is best qualified to perform representative functions; and second, affirmative action to balance ethnic representation against the candidates' qualifications.

The provision adopted in the 1968 Constitution—which required the vice president to be from a different province than the president—reflected a reality that no longer exists. Currently, the country is divided into 8 provinces, and given that the predominant ethnic group is most likely to retain the presidency, the issue of the vice presidency would once again raise questions addressed in previous paragraphs, the answers to which reflect reality and would give all minorities the opportunity to hold those offices. Moreover, with three branches of government and several constitutional bodies, ethnic representation would be ensured. This should not be interpreted as applying to specific functions, and it should also avoid regionalism.

With regard to political representation, Equatorial Guinean society itself must begin to develop the ability to distinguish between leadership, blind following, and disorganization. When the true constituent embraces political ideologies without being able to engage in in-depth critical analysis, social ethics and morality are undermined (RAE, 2024). As a result, the people cease to exercise effective control and lose the ability to hold officials accountable. Similarly, other sectors related to social welfare—such as public health and quality public education—are also collapsing.

The electoral system must reflect the multi-ethnic reality—not to favor certain groups over others, but to balance the percentages so that everyone is given equal visibility from the outset, regardless of the results, since these depend on the electorate. As a political process that aims to provide a practical and comprehensive long-term solution and to give voice to all groups, its political benefits must be directed toward the common interest of the people and not toward private interests.

Nationality is not a cultural construct; it is the permanent bond that ties individuals to a particular state. That relationship is not based on ethnic identity, but rather on the territorial boundaries of the state itself as it exercises its authority over groups already settled within its borders and other groups that join over time (naturalized citizens). It is a bond that transcends time and space; it implies a set of rights and obligations for all people, without distinction. In other words, the duty to honor the State by exercising rights and fulfilling obligations rests with each and every one of its citizens, without distinction. Consequently, each and every citizen must be represented through public institutions and policies that reflect the multi-ethnic reality and are geared toward social justice.

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