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SUMARIO / SUMMARY / RESUMO

Editorial

We are pleased to present the 2026 issue of Law and International Politics, a journal that reaffirms its commitment to the dissemination of scientific knowledge and the analysis of contemporary legal phenomena. The articles in this issue offer innovative and interdisciplinary perspectives that enrich the study of law, philosophy, and politics, reflecting the challenges and transformations of an increasingly complex and globalized world, as well as the constant evolution of legal science as a tool for understanding and addressing the challenges of our time.

The first article examines the impact of using ChatGPT in legal education, particularly on the development of critical thinking among law students in Bolivia. Based on a quantitative study, the authors find that, while artificial intelligence facilitates access to information and supports various academic activities, its intensive use can lead to dependence and impair the ability to analyze information independently, highlighting the need to integrate these tools through pedagogical strategies that strengthen critical legal reasoning.

The second article offers a critical reflection on shared responsibility in education, questioning the tendency to attribute learning problems to a single party. From a hermeneutic perspective, this study analyzes the relationships between school, family, and society, highlighting the need to build an educational system based on cooperation, dialogue, and shared commitment in order to achieve a more inclusive, participatory, and socially just education.

The third article analyzes the representation of the state in the context of Equatorial Guinea, highlighting the importance of reconciling ethnic diversity with the principles of merit and competence in the exercise of public power. The author reflects on the legitimacy of leadership, social cohesion, and the construction of an inclusive national identity, proposing that state representation incorporate both the diversity of the groups that make up the nation and objective criteria for suitability to perform public functions.

The fourth article addresses the challenges that artificial intelligence and algorithmic systems pose to the protection of fundamental rights and the role of constitutional justice. Based on an analysis of the Brazilian experience, the author examines the role of constitutional courts in relation to automated decisions that may affect principles such as equality, due process, and transparency, proposing the development of a digital constitutionalism focused on inclusion, accountability, and algorithmic justice.

The fifth article analyzes Angola's role in conflict resolution in the Great Lakes Region, with a particular focus on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo between 2014 and 2023. Through a historical and documentary review, the study highlights the significance of Angolan diplomacy and its participation in regional mediation mechanisms, emphasizing its contribution to efforts toward peace, stability, and cooperation in one of the most complex and strategic regions of the African continent.

The final article in this issue examines the role of cultural diplomacy in China’s international projection and in the consolidation of the so-called “Chinese Dream.” Based on an analysis of its main soft power strategies, the study shows how culture has become a key tool for strengthening the Asian country’s global influence, while also reflecting on the challenges this policy faces in light of the tensions and dynamics of contemporary geopolitical competition.

The articles included in this volume reflect the thematic and methodological diversity that characterizes contemporary legal and political research. From the challenges posed by artificial intelligence to fundamental rights and education, to studies on political representation, governance, international conflict resolution, and social responsibility, the authors offer valuable insights into the transformations our societies are undergoing. With this new issue, Law and International Politics reaffirms its commitment to disseminating high-quality scholarly knowledge and promoting forums for critical reflection that contribute to strengthening the rule of law, democracy, and international cooperation.

Dr. Roberto García Lara
Editores Jefe / Editors in chief / Editores Chefe

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USE OF CHATGPT AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF CRITICAL THINKING IN LAW STUDENTS IN COCHABAMBA

USO DE CHATGPT Y SU INFLUENCIA EN EL DESARROLLO DEL PENSAMIENTO CRÍTICO EN ESTUDIANTES DE DERECHO EN COCHABAMBA

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ABSTRACT

The incorporation of generative artificial intelligence tools in higher education is transforming traditional university learning dynamics. In this context, the present study aimed to analyze the association between the use of ChatGPT and the self-perception of critical thinking development among Law students in Cochabamba, Bolivia. The research adopted a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional descriptive design. The population consisted of Law students from four private universities in Cochabamba, from which a non-probabilistic convenience sample of 111 participants was selected. Data were collected through a structured six-item questionnaire using a five-level Likert scale, which demonstrated high reliability ($\alpha = 0.954$). The results showed that 77% of students frequently use ChatGPT for academic tasks. Likewise, 76% considered that this tool facilitates rapid access to legal information, although they indicated that it does not significantly contribute to the development of solid legal arguments. Additionally, 68% acknowledged that frequent use of ChatGPT may generate academic dependency and reduce the intellectual effort required to analyze legal problems autonomously. Pearson's chi-square tests confirmed statistically significant associations ($p < 0.001$) between frequency of use, academic dependency, and the perception of an adverse effect on critical legal reasoning. The study concludes that, although ChatGPT is a useful resource for obtaining information quickly, its intensive use without adequate pedagogical guidance is associated with difficulties in the development of critical thinking in legal education. Therefore, the study recommends integrating this tool critically and responsibly into educational processes.

Palabras clave:

RESUMEN

La incorporación de herramientas de inteligencia artificial generativa en la educación superior está modificando las formas de aprendizaje. En este contexto, la presente investigación tuvo como objetivo analizar la asociación entre el uso de ChatGPT y la autopercepción del desarrollo del pensamiento crítico en estudiantes de Derecho Cochabamba, Bolivia. El estudio se

ChatGPT, inteligencia artificial, pensamiento crítico, educación jurídica, estudiantes de derecho.	desarrolló bajo un enfoque cuantitativo, con diseño de corte transversal. La población estuvo integrada por estudiantes de la carrera de Derecho de cuatro universidades privadas de Cochabamba, seleccionándose una muestra no probabilística por conveniencia conformada por 111 participantes. La recolección de datos se realizó mediante un cuestionario estructurado de seis ítems con escala Likert de cinco niveles, el cual presentó alta confiabilidad (α = 0,954). Los resultados evidenciaron que el 77% de los estudiantes utiliza ChatGPT para desarrollar actividades académicas. Además, el 76% considera que la herramienta facilita el acceso rápido a información jurídica, aunque no fortalece significativamente la elaboración de argumentaciones legales sólidas. Asimismo, el 68% reconoce que el uso frecuente de ChatGPT puede generar dependencia académica y disminuir el esfuerzo intelectual necesario para analizar problemas jurídicos de forma autónoma. Las pruebas de chi-cuadrado de Pearson confirmaron asociaciones estadísticamente significativas ($p < 0{,}001$) entre la frecuencia de uso, la dependencia académica y la percepción de afectación del razonamiento jurídico crítico. Se concluye que ChatGPT constituye un recurso útil para obtener información rápida; sin embargo, su uso intensivo sin orientación pedagógica adecuada puede dificultar el desarrollo del pensamiento crítico en la formación jurídica.

Introduction

The emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) in contemporary educational settings represents one of the most disruptive and controversial phenomena of recent decades; in particular, the advent of natural language generation tools such as ChatGPT has redefined the boundaries between technology-mediated learning and the autonomous development of higher-order cognitive skills. In the context of higher education, this transformation takes on complex dimensions that go beyond the mere incorporation of new teaching technologies, as it raises fundamental questions about the quality of learning, academic integrity, and—of particular concern—the cultivation of critical thinking as a core competency of all university education. In the field of law, where legal reasoning, argumentation, and statutory interpretation form the core of professional training, the impact of these tools is particularly significant and warrants a rigorous and contextualized analysis.

The exponential development of generative AI has given rise to a technological ecosystem in which tools such as ChatGPT have become integrated almost spontaneously into the academic practices of college students. Ardisana and Millet (2024) document that the use of these technologies in higher education is growing and will continue to rise, since they offer students the ability to generate texts, draft executive summaries, answer questions, receive bibliographic guidance, and produce high-quality translations in remarkably short amounts of time.

Far from being neutral, this technological availability has profoundly transformed students' relationship with knowledge and with the processes of constructing academic knowledge. In line with this approach, Cornejo Álvarez et al. (2025) note that college students view ChatGPT as a highly efficient tool for searching for and synthesizing information; however, they also caution about its limitations in generating accurate and well-reasoned responses, which highlights a tension between the tool's perceived usefulness and the cognitive depth required by a college education.

This tension takes on a particularly problematic dimension when examining the impact of ChatGPT on the development of critical thinking, Saldaña Mendez et al. (2024) warn that some students are becoming increasingly dependent on ChatGPT, and that this dependence may negatively affect the development of the professional skills that are intended to be cultivated at each level of a university degree program. The convenience offered by the tool acts as a mechanism that reduces cognitive effort, placing students in a comfort zone that can inhibit essential processes such as analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and the creation of original knowledge.

In the same vein, Morán-Ortega et al. (2024) identify faculty concerns that students will use these tools as a quick fix—thereby depriving them of the opportunity to acquire fundamental skills in critical areas and hindering the development of critical thinking and problem-solving—as one of the main barriers to generative AI in higher education. This dependence on technology not only compromises individual academic performance but also threatens the well-rounded education of future legal professionals, whose work requires precisely the ability to argue, debate, and construct complex legal reasoning in situations of high regulatory uncertainty.

The problem is exacerbated when considering the implications of this phenomenon for academic integrity. Puche Villalobo (2025) determined, through a correlational study conducted at universities in Venezuela, Colombia, and Peru, a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.980 between the use of artificial intelligence and academic fraud, indicating a very strong positive relationship and suggesting that the increase in the use of AI tools is significantly associated with a rise in academic dishonesty, Among the types of fraud identified are the generation of complete papers without any genuine personal contribution, automatic paraphrasing to avoid plagiarism detection, the fabrication of data, and the presentation of AI-generated work as one's own.

For his part, Navarro-Dolmestch (2023) proposes calling this form of academic dishonesty "authorship simulation," noting that detecting it is particularly complex because plagiarism-detection software is unable to identify paraphrasing performed using algorithmic tools, nor can it determine whether a text was produced by an automated generation application, this undetectability represents a major institutional challenge that jeopardizes the validity of evaluation processes and, ultimately, the credibility of the academic degrees awarded.

From a pedagogical perspective, the phenomenon described raises questions that go beyond simply regulating the use of technological tools, Pech-Rodríguez et al. (2025) point out that the introductions generated by ChatGPT consist predominantly of general information and do not reach the level of critical argumentation; furthermore, in its current state, the platform has significant limitations when it comes to addressing complex problems, especially those that require highly complex inductive, deductive, or analogical reasoning. This observation is particularly relevant in legal education, where the ability to analyze cases, construct arguments, and anticipate legal consequences constitutes the core competencies of the discipline.

Quinto Arias et al. (2025) point in this direction by noting that, while AI represents an opportunity to strengthen legal education by facilitating legal research, the analysis of laws and case law, and the drafting of legal documents, its effective and ethical implementation requires coordinated action by multiple stakeholders in the educational ecosystem, including the government through clear policies, institutions of higher education through specific guidelines, and students through training in academic values.

The ethical dimension of ChatGPT's use in higher education cannot be overlooked in any serious analysis of the phenomenon. Otero-Escobar and Suárez-Jasso (2025) report that college students, while recognizing ChatGPT as a valuable academic resource due to its usefulness, effectiveness, and ease of use, also express concerns regarding potential dependence on the tool, its impact on the originality of their work, and academic responsibility; Furthermore, they identify the need for greater individual and collective ethical awareness, proposing that responsibility must be shared and promoting the transparent use of the tool. The emerging awareness among students themselves regarding the ethical dilemmas associated with the use of AI suggests that the problem is not solely technological or pedagogical, but essentially formative and axiological.

In line with this perspective, Ardisana and Millet (2024) conclude that education in ethical values is the most viable long-term solution for addressing academic dishonesty resulting from the irresponsible use of AI, and that it is necessary to design more complex teaching assignments that require a level of creative effort that is still beyond the capabilities of artificial intelligence.

The situation described takes on a particular character in the Bolivian context and, more specifically, in the city of Cochabamba. In a study focusing on graduate programs in this city, Berbety Claros (2025) identifies significant gaps in students' methodological training: 71.2% consider their training to be inadequate, 68.2% report a low level of methodological knowledge, and 72.4% indicate that they almost never receive guidance from their advisors. These structural conditions of educational deficits create particularly fertile ground for a problematic increase in reliance on tools such as ChatGPT, since students—in the absence of rigorous academic guidance and with limited access to up-to-date literature—may turn to AI as a quick fix that meets the immediate demands of academic work without contributing to the development of their research and argumentation skills.

In this context, the purpose of this study is to analyze the association between the use of ChatGPT and law students' self-perception of their critical thinking development in the city of Cochabamba, with the aim of understanding the patterns of use of this tool in local legal education, identifying its relationship with higher-order cognitive skills, and proposing pedagogical guidelines that allow for harnessing the potential of AI without compromising the development of the argumentative and analytical competencies that are inherent and indispensable to the practice of law.

Critical Thinking: Operational Definition and Dimensions in the Legal Field

Critical thinking has been defined by Facione's Delphi Project (1990)—the most widely cited expert consensus in higher education—as "the reflective and purposeful judgment manifested in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation" (p. 2). This definition was adopted as an operational reference in this study because of its multidimensional nature and its applicability to legal reasoning.

In the specific context of legal education, these dimensions are expressed as follows:

Table 1.

Dimensions of Critical Thinking and Its Legal Expression (Facione, 1990)

Dimension (Facione, 1990)	Expression in Legal Education
Interpretation	Understanding laws, case law, and legal doctrine
Analysis	Identifying Premises and Arguments in Legal Texts
Evaluation	Assessment of the logical soundness of the parties' arguments
Inference	Drawing Legal Conclusions from Facts and Rules
Explanation	Drafting resolutions, opinions, and original arguments
Self-regulation	Critical review of one's own reasoning when solving cases

Note: Dimensions of Critical Thinking and Their Legal Expression (Facione, 1990), author's own work, 2026.

Specific Risks of LLMs in Legal Practice and Education

The integration of large language models (LLMs), such as ChatGPT, into legal education poses risks that go beyond general academic dependence; in the field of law, these risks take on a specific professional and ethical dimension that warrants a detailed analysis:

a) Hallucinations and false citation of regulations. LLMs can generate citations to regulations, statutes, or court rulings that do not exist or have been repealed, presenting them as if they were true (Bender et al., 2021; Dahl et al., 2024). In the Bolivian context, where the ability to verify case law in open-access systems is limited, this risk is particularly significant: a student could include fabricated legal references in an essay or legal opinion without anyone being able to easily detect them.

b) Systemic biases in legal reasoning. LLMs are trained on text corpora that are predominantly from English-speaking countries and the common law tradition. This introduces biases into the reasoning generated when applied to civil law systems such as

Bolivia's, particularly in areas such as constitutional law, agrarian property, or the norms of indigenous and peasant justice (Bender et al., 2021).

c) Apparent authority of the generated text. The fluency and syntactic coherence of ChatGPT's responses may be interpreted by students as an indicator of legal correctness. This illusion of authority inhibits critical evaluation of content and can carry over into evidentiary reasoning: the student accepts as valid whatever sounds plausible (Hildebrandt, 2018).

d) Impact on the presentation of evidence. The analysis and evaluation of evidence—one of the core aspects of legal work—requires contextualized inductive reasoning, the weighing of testimony, and the application of the standard of conviction. These tasks require skills that LLMs simulate but do not genuinely perform, which poses a risk if students rely on AI to develop argumentative strategies (Vargas and Jaramillo Restrepo, 2024).

It includes a presentation of the document and an analysis of the literature on the topic, with special emphasis on previous research that justifies the study and that will later be compared and contrasted in the discussion of the results.

All text is in 12-point Cambria font, with single line spacing and no spacing between paragraphs.

Method

The study adopted a quantitative approach; in this regard, Neuman (2014) argues that "quantitative research is an investigative strategy based on numerical measurement and statistical analysis to identify patterns of behavior and test theories" (p. 45). This approach aimed to objectively examine the association between the use of ChatGPT and self-perceived critical thinking. The study design was a descriptive cross-sectional study. In this context, Kerlinger and Lee (2000) explain that "descriptive designs measure variables independently, and although they do not necessarily incorporate formal hypotheses, these are implicitly articulated in the research objectives" (p. 456). This design made it possible to collect data at a specific point in time to describe perceptions and usage patterns without manipulating variables.

The group consisted of law students from four private universities in the city of Cochabamba, Bolivia. Non-probability sampling was used to select the participants. According to Babbie (2020), in this type of sampling, "units are selected based on non-random criteria, which means that not all elements of the population have the same probability of being chosen" (p. 193). Specifically, a convenience sample of 111 participants was used. Patton (2015) notes that this "type of sampling involves selecting cases that are readily available and accessible to the researcher" (p. 265). The inclusion criteria were: (a) be enrolled in a law program with at least one year of college experience, and (b) have regular access to artificial intelligence tools.

A structured questionnaire was used to collect data. Creswell and Creswell (2018) "define this instrument as a written form that presents participants with a series of questions or statements to which they must record their responses, allowing the researcher to obtain quantifiable data" (p. 124). The questionnaire consisted of six items using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree; 5 = Strongly agree), designed based on the dimensions of critical thinking identified by Facione (1990) and their application to legal reasoning. The instrument demonstrated high internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of $\alpha = 0.954$. Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) state that reliability refers to "the degree to which measurements are free from random error and, therefore, produce consistent results; the alpha coefficient is one of the most commonly used measures for estimating this reliability” (p. 212). It is recognized that alpha values greater than 0.90 on short scales may reflect some redundancy among items (Streiner, 2003); therefore, future versions of the instrument should undergo confirmatory factor analysis to verify its construct validity. Regarding sample size for this type of analysis, Guest et al. (2006), in their study on data saturation in qualitative research (although the context is different, it is often cited to justify the robustness of findings with specific samples), provide a framework for justifying the adequacy of data in social research. Finally, as an initial step to ensure content validity, the items were reviewed by two experts in legal education prior to their administration.

Results

The results obtained in this study are as follows:

Question 1. Do I use ChatGPT frequently to complete assignments, conduct research, and work on academic papers for my law degree?

Table 2

Frequent Use of ChatGPT for Academic Tasks

		Frequency	Percentage
Valid	Strongly disagree	5	5%
	Disagree	8	7%
	Neutral	12	11%
	Okay	38	34%
	I completely agree	48	43%
	Total	111	100%

Note: Data on the frequent use of ChatGPT for academic tasks, compiled by the author, 2026.

According to the survey, 43% of respondents said they strongly agreed that they frequently use ChatGPT to complete assignments, conduct research, and work on academic projects in their law program; this was the highest percentage, a finding that shows that a large proportion of students have incorporated this tool to support their learning and academic activities.

Second, 34% said they agreed with the frequent use of ChatGPT in their academic work, confirming the positive trend toward the use of artificial intelligence tools in the university setting.

On the other hand, 11% of the participants expressed a neutral opinion, indicating that they do not have a clear stance on its frequent use or that they use it only occasionally.

7% said they disagreed and 5% said they strongly disagreed—the lowest percentages in the survey—which shows that only a minority of students do not use ChatGPT or do not agree with using it in their academic work.

Question 2. Does ChatGPT make it easier for me to quickly find legal information, but not help me develop my own solid legal arguments?

Table 3
ChatGPT and Its Role in Obtaining Legal Information

		Frequency	Percentage
Valid	Strongly disagree	4	4%
	Disagree	9	8%
	Neutral	14	12%
	Okay	41	37%
	I completely agree	43	39%
	Total	111	100%

Note: Data on ChatGPT and its role in obtaining legal information, compiled by the author, 2026.

According to the survey, 39% of respondents said they strongly agreed that ChatGPT makes it easier for them to quickly obtain legal information, but that it does not necessarily help them construct their own solid legal arguments. As this was the highest percentage, this result reflects that students recognize the tool's usefulness in quickly accessing information.

Second, 37% agreed with this statement, confirming that a large proportion of students view ChatGPT primarily as a resource for obtaining information, rather than as a tool that directly contributes to the development of complex legal arguments.

On the other hand, 12% of respondents remained neutral, suggesting that this group does not have a clear position on ChatGPT's influence on the development of legal arguments.

Eight percent said they disagreed and 4% said they strongly disagreed—the lowest percentages in the survey—indicating that only a minority believes ChatGPT could contribute to the development of their own legal arguments.

Question 3. Has my regular use of ChatGPT made me dependent on it and reduced my effort to think, analyze, and solve legal problems on my own?

Table 4
Academic dependence resulting from the use of ChatGPT

		Frequency	Percentage
Valid	Strongly disagree	7	6%
	Disagree	10	9%
	Neutral	18	16%
	Okay	36	32%
	I completely agree	40	36%
	Total	111	100%

Note: Data on academic dependence resulting from the use of ChatGPT, compiled by the author, 2026.

According to the survey, 36% of respondents said they strongly agreed that their regular use of ChatGPT has led to a certain degree of dependence and has reduced their effort to think, analyze, and solve legal problems on their own. As this is the highest percentage, this result suggests that a significant portion of students perceive that constant use of this tool may affect their academic autonomy.

Second, 32% said they agreed with this statement, which reinforces the idea that frequent use of ChatGPT could be creating a certain degree of dependence in the legal learning process.

On the other hand, 16% of respondents remained neutral, indicating that this group does not have a clear position on whether or not the use of the tool affects their ability to analyze and reason legally.

Nine percent said they disagreed and 6% said they strongly disagreed—the lowest percentages in the survey—which shows that a minority believes that using ChatGPT does not lead to dependence or reduce their intellectual effort in solving legal problems.

Question 4. Do I believe that using ChatGPT has negatively affected my ability to reason, argue, and interpret legal rules critically and independently?

Table 5

Perception of Impact on Critical Legal Reasoning

		Frequency	Percentage
Valid	I completely disagree	8	7%
	Disagree	15	14%
	Neutral	20	18%
	Okay	35	32%
	I completely agree	33	29%
	Total	111	100%

Note: Data on the impact of perception on critical legal reasoning, compiled by the author, 2026.

According to the survey, 32% of respondents agreed that the use of ChatGPT has negatively affected their ability to reason, argue, and interpret legal norms critically and independently; this was the highest percentage, a finding that suggests a considerable number of students perceive that frequent use of this tool may influence the development of their legal analysis skills.

Second, 29% said they strongly agreed with this statement, which reinforces the perception that the use of ChatGPT could have negative effects on legal reasoning when used on a regular basis.

On the other hand, 18% of respondents remained neutral, indicating that this group does not have a clear position regarding the impact of this tool on their ability to reason and analyze legal issues.

Finally, 14% said they disagreed and 7% said they strongly disagreed—the lowest percentages in the survey—which shows that a minority believes that the use of ChatGPT does not negatively affect their ability to reason and argue legally.

Question 5. Have I used ChatGPT—or do I know classmates who use it—to submit academic papers as if they were their own work, without disclosing it?

Table 6

Undeclared Use of ChatGPT in Academic Papers (Falsification of Authorship)

		Frequency	Percentage
Valid	Strongly disagree	7	6%
	Disagree	12	11%
	Neutral	16	14%
	Okay	40	36%
	I completely agree	36	32%
	Total	111	100%

Note: Data on the undeclared use of ChatGPT in academic work (simulated authorship), compiled by the author, 2026.

According to the survey, 36% of respondents agreed that they have used ChatGPT—or know classmates who have used it—to submit academic papers as if they had written them themselves without disclosing this fact; this was the highest percentage. This result shows that a significant proportion of students acknowledge the existence of this practice within the academic sphere.

Second, 32% said they strongly agreed, which reinforces the perception that the undeclared use of artificial intelligence tools in academic work is relatively common among students.

On the other hand, 14% of respondents remained neutral, suggesting that this group does not have a clear position or lacks direct knowledge of these types of practices.

Eleven percent said they disagreed, and 6% said they strongly disagreed—the lowest percentages in the survey—indicating that a minority believes this type of use of ChatGPT does not occur or is not common in academic settings.

Question 6. Do I believe that universities should incorporate specific ethics training on the responsible use of artificial intelligence into legal education?

Table 7

The Need for Ethics Training on the Responsible Use of AI

		Frequency	Percentage
Valid	Strongly disagree	3	3%
	Disagree	5	5%
	Neutral	10	9%
	Okay	35	31%
	I completely agree	58	52%
	Total	111	100%

Note: Data on the need for ethics training on the responsible use of AI, compiled by the author, 2026.

According to the survey, 52% of respondents said they strongly agreed that universities should incorporate specific ethics training on the responsible use of artificial intelligence into legal education; this was the highest percentage. This result shows that most students consider it important for universities to promote an education focused on the appropriate and responsible use of these technological tools.

Second, 31% agreed with this statement, which reinforces the need to include educational content that guides students on the ethical use of artificial intelligence in the academic and professional fields of law.

On the other hand, 9% of respondents remained neutral, indicating that this group does not have a clear stance on incorporating this type of training into the university curriculum.

Five percent said they disagreed and 3% said they strongly disagreed—the lowest percentages in the survey—which shows that only a minority does not consider it necessary to include ethics training on the use of artificial intelligence in legal education.

Statistical analysis of association (chi-square tests)

Table 8.
Association Between Frequent Use of ChatGPT and Academic Dependence

	Value	gl	Asymptotic significance (two-sided)
Pearson's chi-square	225,787[a]	16	,000
Plausibility Ratio	201,103	16	,000
Line-by-line association	64,934	1	,000
Number of valid cases	111		

Note: Data on the association between frequent use of ChatGPT and academic dependence, compiled by the author, 2026.

Pearson's chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 225.787$; df = 16; $p < 0.001$) confirms the existence of a statistically significant association between the frequency of ChatGPT use and students' self-perceived academic dependence. The null hypothesis of independence is rejected, indicating that the two variables are not statistically independent.

Table 9.
Association Between Academic Dependence and Perceived Impairment of Legal Reasoning

	Value	gl	Asymptotic significance (two-sided)
Pearson's chi-square	288,999[a]	16	,000
Plausibility Ratio	233,833	16	,000
Line-by-Line Association	66,196	1	,000
Number of valid cases	111		

Note: Data on the association between academic dependence and the perceived impact on legal reasoning, compiled by the author, 2026.

Pearson's chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 288.999$; df = 16; $p < 0.001$) confirms a statistically significant association between academic dependence on ChatGPT and the perceived impact on critical legal reasoning. The null hypothesis of independence between the two variables is rejected. It is important to emphasize that these studies establish a statistical association, not causation.

Discussion

The results of the study show that the use of ChatGPT has become a common practice among law students in Cochabamba, as 77% of respondents said they agreed or strongly agreed with using this tool to complete assignments, research, and academic papers. This finding is consistent with the observations of Ardisana and Millet (2024), who argue that the use of generative artificial intelligence tools in higher education is steadily increasing due to their ability to facilitate text production, information synthesis, and rapid searches for academic content. In this regard, the results confirm that artificial intelligence has begun to be naturally integrated into the academic practices of college students, changing traditional ways of accessing knowledge.

However, the results also show that students view ChatGPT primarily as a useful tool for quickly obtaining legal information, but not necessarily as a resource that contributes to the development of sound legal arguments; in fact, 76% of respondents said they agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. This result is consistent with the findings reported by Pech-Rodríguez et al. (2025), who note that texts generated by ChatGPT tend to present content based on general information, without reaching deep levels of critical reasoning; in the legal field, this limitation takes on particular significance, since legal education requires the ability to interpret laws, analyze cases, and construct complex lines of reasoning.

Furthermore, one of the study's most significant findings relates to the perception of academic dependence resulting from frequent use of ChatGPT: 68% of students indicated that regular use of this tool has reduced their effort to analyze, reflect on, and solve legal problems independently. This finding is consistent with the observations of Saldaña Méndez et al. (2024), who warn that excessive use of artificial intelligence tools can lead to dependence among students and hinder the development of cognitive skills that are essential to their professional training. In the case of legal education, this situation is particularly concerning, since critical thinking is a core competency for the practice of law.

The statistical analysis conducted using the chi-square test identified a significant association between frequent use of ChatGPT and academic dependence ($\chi^2 = 225.787$; $p < 0.001$), as well as between this dependence and the perceived impact on legal reasoning ($\chi^2 = 288.999$; $p < 0.001$). These associations support the concerns raised by Morán-Ortega et al. (2024), who argue that one of the main risks of the indiscriminate use of artificial intelligence tools in higher education is a reduction in students' cognitive effort; it should be noted that, given the study's descriptive, cross-sectional design, these findings establish statistical associations and do not allow for the inference of causal relationships.

In the specific context of Cochabamba, these findings take on even greater significance when considering the structural weaknesses in academic training identified in previous studies. Berbety Claros (2025) notes that a significant proportion of graduate students in the city perceive deficiencies in their methodological training, which may encourage the intensive use of tools such as ChatGPT as a means of filling gaps in their education.

The results also reveal the existence of practices related to the undeclared use of artificial intelligence, as 68% of students reported having used ChatGPT—or knowing classmates who use it—to submit assignments as if they had written them themselves. This finding is consistent with the findings of Puche Villalobo (2025) and with the concept of "simulated authorship" proposed by Navarro-Dolmestch (2023). In addition, the specific risks posed by LLMs in the legal field—such as the generation of nonexistent legal citations ("hallucinations"), biases inherent in systems trained on legal traditions different from the Bolivian one, and the illusion of authority created by the generated text—represent additional challenges that warrant attention in legal education (Bender et al., 2021; Dahl et al., 2024; Ferretti & Bublitz, 2023).

Finally, one of the most significant findings of the study is the broad consensus—83%—regarding the need to incorporate ethics training on the responsible use of AI into legal education. This finding is consistent with the findings of Otero-Escobar and Suárez-Jasso (2025), who note that students themselves recognize the importance of establishing clear ethical guidelines for the use of AI tools. Ardisana and Millet (2024) argue that education in academic values and digital ethics is a fundamental strategy for preventing the inappropriate use of these technologies.

Conclusions

This study found that the use of ChatGPT is widespread among law students in the city of Cochabamba, indicating that this artificial intelligence tool has become a regular part of their work on assignments, research, and academic papers. The results show that a significant proportion of students use this technology to quickly access legal information, confirming that AI tools are transforming traditional learning dynamics in higher education.

However, the study's findings also show that, while ChatGPT facilitates access to information, its frequent use is associated with difficulties in developing fundamental skills in legal education, particularly with regard to constructing sound legal arguments, independent legal reasoning, and the critical interpretation of legal norms. A significant number of students recognize that regular use of this tool can lead to academic dependence and reduce the intellectual effort required to analyze and solve legal problems independently.

Statistical analysis confirmed statistically significant associations ($p < 0.001$) between frequent use of ChatGPT, the development of academic dependence, and the perceived impact on critical legal reasoning. These results suggest that the intensive use of artificial intelligence tools, when not accompanied by appropriate pedagogical strategies, is associated with difficulties in developing the higher-order cognitive skills essential to legal professional education. It should be emphasized that, given the study's cross-sectional, descriptive design and the use of self-report as a measurement tool, the findings should be interpreted as indicators of association and perception, and not as evidence of causal relationships.

Furthermore, the research revealed instances of undeclared use of ChatGPT in the preparation of academic papers, which poses significant challenges to academic integrity in higher education institutions; this phenomenon highlights the need to review university assessment mechanisms and strengthen a culture of academic responsibility.

Furthermore, one of the study's most significant findings is the broad consensus among students regarding the need to incorporate specific ethics training on the responsible use of artificial intelligence into legal education; the majority of participants believe that universities should take an active role in guiding the appropriate use of these tools, promoting principles of transparency, academic honesty, and intellectual responsibility.

In this regard, it is concluded that the main challenge for institutions of higher education is not to restrict or prohibit the use of artificial intelligence tools such as ChatGPT, but rather to integrate them critically and responsibly into educational processes. This involves developing pedagogical strategies that foster critical thinking, intellectual autonomy, and ethical reflection, ensuring that artificial intelligence is used to complement learning rather than as a substitute for the process of academic reasoning that characterizes university-level legal education.

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WHO IS TO BLAME? A CRITICAL VIEW OF SHARED RESPONSIBILITY IN CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION

¿DE QUIÉN ES LA CULPA? UNA MIRADA CRÍTICA A LA CORRESPONSABILIDAD EN LA EDUCACIÓN CONTEMPORÁNEA

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ABSTRACT

In contemporary educational debates, the search for those responsible for low academic performance and school challenges has become a recurrent discourse. Teachers often blame parents for the lack of support at home; parents hold teachers accountable for failing to motivate or understand their children; students are criticized for apathy or disinterest, while the educational system is accused of being bureaucratic and ineffective. This article offers a critical and reflective perspective on educational co-responsibility, understanding that learning and formation are complex processes that require the active and committed participation of all involved actors. From a hermeneutic and qualitative approach, the study analyzes the tensions that arise within the relationship among school, family, and society, and examines the structural, cultural, and ethical factors that influence the delegation of responsibilities. The analysis argues that education cannot be reduced to a game of blame but demands a collective commitment grounded in cooperation, empathy, and continuous pedagogical dialogue. It concludes that only through a genuine sense of co-responsibility where each actor assumes their role with ethical awareness, reflection, and community engagement will it be possible to advance toward a transformative, inclusive, participatory, and socially just education.

Palabras clave:
responsabilidad educativa, corresponsabilidad, cultura escolar, relaciones escuela-familia, ética docente.

RESUMEN

En el debate educativo contemporáneo, la búsqueda de responsables ante los bajos resultados académicos y las problemáticas escolares se ha convertido en un discurso recurrente. Los docentes suelen culpar a los apoderados por la falta de apoyo en el hogar; los apoderados responsabilizan a los profesores por no motivar o comprender a sus hijos; los estudiantes son señalados por su apatía o desinterés, mientras que el sistema educativo es acusado de burocrático e ineficaz. Este artículo propone una mirada crítica y reflexiva sobre la corresponsabilidad educativa, entendiendo que el aprendizaje y la formación son procesos complejos que requieren la participación comprometida y activa de todos los actores involucrados. Desde un enfoque hermenéutico y cualitativo, se analizan las tensiones que surgen en la relación entre la escuela, la familia y la sociedad, y se examinan los factores estructurales, culturales y éticos que inciden en la delegación de responsabilidades. El estudio plantea que la educación no puede reducirse a un juego de culpas, sino que demanda un compromiso colectivo sustentado en la cooperación, la empatía y el diálogo pedagógico permanente. Se concluye que solo mediante una corresponsabilidad genuina donde cada actor asuma su rol con sentido ético, reflexivo y comunitario será posible avanzar hacia una educación transformadora, inclusiva, participativa y socialmente justa.

Introduction

Between Blame and Responsibility: Tensions in the Contemporary Education System

Education, rather than merely a process of transmitting knowledge, is a profoundly human social practice, imbued with values, emotions, and shared responsibilities. It brings together different perspectives, expectations, and tensions that reflect not only the reality of the classroom but also the patterns of thought that underpin society. Within this context, the question "Whose fault is it?" has become a recurring refrain and, in many cases, a refuge from the complexity of contemporary educational problems.

In recent decades, the search for someone to blame has largely replaced collective reflection. Teachers blame a lack of family commitment; parents blame the school for students' poor performance or lack of motivation; students attribute their difficulties to the rigidity of the system; and educational institutions cite bureaucracy to justify their limitations. Each actor seems to look the other way, and so the question "Whose fault is it?" becomes a symbolic strategy for avoiding self-criticism and shifting blame.

This trend is not coincidental, but rather a reflection of a social context characterized by fragmentation, pressure to produce results, and a loss of trust among educational stakeholders. Standardization policies, accountability systems, and media discourse have helped to entrench the idea that academic failure is the result of individual failings rather than structural causes. As a result, education is perceived as a series of personal mistakes rather than as a collective phenomenon that requires cooperation and dialogue.

Freire (1997) warns that any form of education that limits itself to assigning blame forfeits its liberating potential. Emancipatory education—the kind that transforms and humanizes—requires recognizing that learning is a collective act, that no one educates themselves or educates others without mediation. In this sense, guilt, as a cultural construct, acts as a divisive force; whereas shared responsibility—understood as an ethic of mutual care and shared commitment—represents an opportunity to rebuild the fabric of education.

In the Chilean and Latin American context, this issue takes on particular significance. Structural inequality, the administrative burden on teachers, and growing social distrust of educational institutions have created a situation in which the teaching profession is caught between its calling and the need to be accountable. As Bolívar (2015) argues, contemporary education systems have transformed professional responsibility into a form of control, in which teachers are evaluated more for meeting performance indicators than for educating students. This shift has eroded the ethical meaning of educational work, reducing the teaching profession to a technical and bureaucratic role.

Similarly, the discourse of blame permeates everyday interactions in the classroom and within the school community. Parent-teacher meetings, institutional reports, and analyses of results tend to focus on the question "Who failed?" rather than asking "What can we improve together?" This dynamic perpetuates a punitive mindset that stifles critical thinking and discourages cooperation. As Fullan (2014) points out, when educational improvement is based on fear or suspicion, innovation comes to a standstill and collective learning is undermined.

Given this situation, there is a need to rethink educational responsibility as a shared endeavor, in which each stakeholder—teachers, families, students, institutions, and the government—consciously assumes their role. Shared responsibility does not seek to eliminate individual responsibility, but rather to contextualize and complement it within a network of moral interdependence. From this perspective, education is viewed as an ethical and political act that requires collaboration, empathy, and dialogue, rather than punishment or blame.

This article aims to critically analyze the discourses and practices that underpin the culture of blame in the educational sphere and, at the same time, to explore shared responsibility as a possible path toward transformation. Through a hermeneutic approach and documentary analysis, grounded in teaching experience in vulnerable contexts, this study seeks to understand how the logic of blame is constructed, reproduced, and can be overcome in contemporary schools.

This reflection aims to contribute to the academic and professional debate on the moral purpose of education, promoting a perspective that goes beyond the search for culprits and embraces shared responsibility as a more humane and just way of educating. In the words of Freire (1997), *"education is an act of love and, therefore, an act of courage"*; an act that requires everyone's participation, because no one educates alone, and no one can be saved without others.

The complexity of this scenario has been further compounded by the social, cultural, and technological transformations that characterize the 21st century. Contemporary schools no longer face only the challenge of imparting knowledge, but also that of responding to new demands related to social interaction, inclusion, cultural diversity, social-emotional well-being, and civic education. These demands have significantly raised the expectations placed on educational institutions, creating tensions between what society expects from schools and the actual capacity for action of the various stakeholders involved.

In this context, families have also undergone profound changes. The diversity of family structures, work demands, economic insecurity in some sectors, and the growing influence of digital technologies have changed traditional forms of educational support. Although family involvement continues to be recognized as a key factor in academic success, the specific conditions under which this involvement can take place are becoming increasingly diverse. Consequently, simplistically attributing responsibility for learning exclusively to the family or the school means ignoring the complexity of the social processes that influence contemporary education.

Furthermore, the spread of information and communication technologies has profoundly transformed the way children and young people access knowledge. School is no longer the primary source of information; instead, it has become one of many spaces where learning and meaning are constructed. This reality has redefined the role of teachers, who are no longer limited to conveying content but must instead guide, support, and develop critical thinking skills that enable students to function in increasingly complex and changing environments. However, this transformation has not always been accompanied by the necessary institutional and educational conditions, giving rise to new tensions regarding educational responsibilities.

Added to this is the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on education systems worldwide. The prolonged closure of schools forced much of the teaching and learning to take place at home, clearly highlighting the interdependence between schools and families. During this period, many teachers had to quickly adapt their teaching practices, while families took on the role of academic mentors—a task for which they did not always have enough time, resources, or preparation. This experience highlighted both the strengths and weaknesses of shared responsibility in education, demonstrating that educational processes depend on a complex network of relationships and mutual support.

Various international organizations have pointed out that today's educational challenges cannot be addressed from fragmented perspectives. UNESCO (2021), for example, highlights the need to forge a new social contract for education, based on cooperation, democratic participation, and shared responsibility among all stakeholders in the educational community. Similarly, the OECD has emphasized that the most effective education systems are those capable of fostering strong bonds of trust and collaboration among schools, families, students, and public authorities.

The scholarly literature has also highlighted the importance of viewing education as a collective responsibility. Epstein (2018) argues that partnerships between schools, families, and communities are one of the most important factors in promoting successful and sustainable educational trajectories over time. From this perspective, family involvement should not be viewed as an external obligation or as an extension of schoolwork at home, but rather as a form of collaboration based on shared goals and mutual recognition of abilities and responsibilities.

Similarly, Bryk & Schneider (2002) emphasize that relational trust is a fundamental resource for school improvement. When teachers, families, and students build relationships based on respect, communication, and cooperation, they are better able to collectively address educational challenges. Conversely, when mistrust, suspicion, or the search for someone to blame prevail, the chances of transformation are significantly reduced.

In this regard, shared responsibility in education emerges as a conceptual and practical alternative to the limitations of approaches centered on assigning blame. Rather than assigning blame to individuals for school-related problems, this approach aims to recognize the interdependent nature of educational processes and promote forms of participation that strengthen cooperation among the various stakeholders. Education, understood as a shared social responsibility, requires the simultaneous commitment of teachers, families, students, institutions, and public agencies, each contributing according to its specific expertise and capabilities.

Therefore, before asking who is responsible for educational problems, it is necessary to understand the social, cultural, and institutional conditions that influence the construction of those responsibilities. Only on the basis of this understanding will it be possible to move toward more collaborative, equitable, and sustainable forms of educational coexistence—ones capable of replacing the logic of blame with a genuine culture of shared responsibility.

Method

A Hermeneutic-Documentary Approach to Interpreting Discourses on Blame and Educational Responsibility

This study is based on a qualitative methodology of a hermeneutic-documentary nature, aimed at understanding the meanings and tensions that arise around guilt and responsibility in the educational context. Rather than describing facts or measuring behaviors, the aim is to interpret the discourses and practices that shape contemporary educational culture, recognizing that all understanding is a situated, historical, and ethical act (Gadamer, 2002).

The choice of hermeneutics stems from the need to address an essentially symbolic phenomenon: educational guilt. This cannot be reduced to empirical data or statistical categories, because it resides in language, emotions, and the normative frameworks that structure school life. In line with Ricoeur (1999), it is assumed that language not only reflects reality but also shapes it; therefore, analyzing discourses on responsibility involves examining how institutions construct their own truths.

The analytical framework consists of normative and theoretical texts that engage with one another and with teaching experience:

- National policies issued by the Chilean Ministry of Education (MINEDUC, 2019, 2023).
- Reports from international organizations such as UNESCO (2019, 2022), the OECD (2021), and ECLAC (2022).
- Contributions from leading figures in contemporary educational thought: Freire (1997), Bolívar (2015), Fullan (2014), Hargreaves (2021), and Tedesco (2000).

These texts were selected for their relevance to understanding how responsibility is distributed within educational systems and how the search for someone to blame becomes normalized. The review was not limited to a literal reading, but rather involved a dialogic exercise in interpretation, in which each document was compared with the others and with the researcher's professional experiences.

Teaching experience, gained in schools with high levels of social vulnerability, is incorporated as an epistemological—rather than anecdotal—component. From this vantage point, the author-researcher analyzes how institutional policies and discourses play out in everyday practice, highlighting tensions, contradictions, and opportunities for transformation. This implication acknowledges, following Freire (1997), that "no one conducts research from a position of neutrality," because every act of knowledge is also an act of commitment.

The analytical process was organized as an interpretive spiral:

1. Comprehensive reading of regulatory and theoretical texts.
2. Identification of emerging categories related to blame, the fragmentation of responsibility, institutional trust, and shared responsibility.
3. A reflective synthesis of theory and practice, contrasting findings from the literature with educational experience.

The validity of the study is based on three fundamental criteria:

- Theoretical coherence, which ensures consistency between the hermeneutic approach and the study's objectives.
- Interpretive transparency, expressed through an explicit description of the reflective process and the categories that guide the discussion.
- Ethical rigor, understood as respect for the individuals and institutions involved and as a commitment to interpretive truth rather than empirical verification.

This methodology recognizes education as a field of contested meanings, where blame and responsibility are constantly negotiated. For this reason, the method is not conceived as a rigid sequence, but rather as an open, reflective process that integrates theory, experience, and ethics.

In this way, research also becomes an act of moral reconstruction: a critical analysis that seeks to understand how a culture of blame arises in education and how it can be replaced by a practice based on shared responsibility.

Although the study does not aim for statistical generalizability, interpretive validity was ensured through three strategies:

(a) theoretical consistency between the concepts under analysis and the emerging categories;
(b) critical comparison with recognized conceptual frameworks; and
(c) the researcher's reflective self-reference, in which the researcher acknowledges his or her role as an active participant in the educational phenomenon being analyzed.

Research ethics were addressed in accordance with the principles of respect, confidentiality, and interpretive fidelity. Since this research is based on experiences and documents, no personal or sensitive data was included, ensuring a responsible and respectful approach.

In short, the hermeneutic method made it possible to reconstruct the pedagogical meaning behind the discourses of guilt, in order to reframe them in terms of shared responsibility and transformative commitment. This approach aims to generate knowledge that can be applied to teaching practice, rather than to produce universal truths.

Results

The results stem from the integration of documentary analysis and educational experience. Far from being merely a list of empirical findings, they are presented as interpretive categories that reveal how the concept of guilt and responsibility is shaped in contemporary schools. Four main dimensions emerged from the review and reflection: (1) the fragmentation of educational discourse, (2) the transfer of responsibility, (3) the crisis of institutional trust, and (4) the need to rebuild shared pedagogical responsibility.

Fragmentation of Educational Discourse

An analysis of ministry documents, improvement plans, and teachers' statements reveals a persistent disconnect between institutional expectations and pedagogical realities. While public policies emphasize accountability and achievement standards, teachers' day-to-day experience is marked by administrative overload, a lack of resources, and the emotional strain resulting from societal demands.

This gap creates a sense of professional isolation, and as a result, the search for external "culprits" becomes a defense mechanism in the face of institutional powerlessness. The documents reviewed (MINEDUC, 2023; UNESCO, 2022) reveal a tendency to implicitly hold teachers responsible for academic failure, while overlooking the structural conditions that contribute to inequality. When internalized, this mindset reinforces extreme self-expectations and fuels a culture of burnout.

Transfer of Liability

The second category identified relates to the phenomenon of responsibility transfer, understood as the symbolic shifting of blame onto other actors. In school settings, teachers often attribute learning difficulties to a lack of interest or a lack of family support; parents, in turn, blame teachers for failing to motivate their children; and educational institutions shift the pressure onto teachers, citing their "vocation" as a justification for their excessive workload.

This circular dynamic creates a system in which no one fully assumes their role. As Bolívar (2015) points out, shared responsibility requires breaking away from the logic of blame in order to move toward building an "educational 'we.'" However, the individualistic culture fostered by academic competition and comparative assessments hinders this transition.

Crisis of Institutional Trust

The hermeneutic analysis revealed a profound crisis of trust among educational stakeholders. Families perceive the school as distant or inflexible; teachers feel that society does not value their work; students feel disconnected from the institution. This loss of mutual trust is one of the main obstacles to building effective shared responsibility.

The literature agrees that trust is the foundation of all sustainable educational improvement (Fullan, 2014; Hargreaves, 2021). However, external monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, combined with media coverage that often undermines the legitimacy of teaching, have eroded the sense of community. Teachers are shifting from being agents of change to policy implementers, and families are shifting from being collaborators to being demanding.

Rebuilding Pedagogical Joint Responsibility

Finally, the results point to the need to reestablish pedagogical co-responsibility as an ethical and operational principle. This involves moving toward models of genuine collaboration between schools and families, centered on horizontal communication, mutual respect, and shared learning.
Educational experience shows that when teachers and parents are able to build relationships based on trust and a shared purpose, students develop a greater sense of belonging and commitment to their learning.

This reconstruction also calls for a thorough review of the role of the state and of educational policies. It is not just a matter of delegating responsibilities, but of ensuring the structural conditions that make shared responsibility possible: institutional time set aside for collaborative work, teacher training in empathetic communication, and policies that value community participation.

In summary, the results reveal that a culture of blame acts as a symbolic barrier that hinders educational improvement. Overcoming this culture will not be achieved through more rules or controls, but rather through an ethical and relational shift: recognizing that education is a shared responsibility and that transformation begins when each stakeholder takes on their role with humility and commitment.

Discussion and Conclusions

From Human Nature and Cognitive Dissonance to Shared Responsibility in Education

Reflection on guilt in education cannot be reduced to an institutional analysis; it also requires an understanding of the human condition. In anthropological and psychological terms, guilt is a moral emotion that arises when a person perceives that they have violated a value or a norm. However, from an educational perspective, blame often becomes a defense mechanism: a way to protect one's self-esteem by shifting responsibility onto others. This shift has deep roots. As Festinger (1957) points out, human beings tend to avoid cognitive dissonance—that is, the psychological discomfort that arises when beliefs and actions do not align. In the field of education, this dissonance manifests itself when the stakeholders—teachers, families, or institutions—recognize, even if only implicitly, that they are not fully fulfilling their role, but are unwilling to accept this inconsistency.

Thus, blaming others (the system, the home, the student, or the teacher) reduces internal conflict by offering an emotionally comfortable—though intellectually poor—explanation. This psychological phenomenon fuels a culture of guilt, because it allows people to maintain a semblance of personal consistency without assuming collective responsibility. A sort of *tacit pact of self-exoneration* takes shape: each actor preserves their moral integrity by shifting the burden onto the others. In Ricoeur's words (1999), unprocessed guilt turns into resentment, and resentment prevents us from understanding and transforming.

Cognitive dissonance also explains the tendency to drop out or give up when faced with educational challenges. When a teacher, administrator, or family member feels that their efforts are not yielding visible results, they may experience frustration and discouragement. To reduce the discomfort, the subject reinterprets the situation: “It’s not worth trying,” “Students don’t want to learn anymore,” “Families don’t cooperate,” “The system is against us.” These phrases are not mere excuses; they are unconscious strategies for emotional self-regulation that alleviate the tension between duty and helplessness. However, in doing so, the individual ends up relinquishing his or her moral agency. As Bauman (2002) points out, liquid modernity has diluted the bonds of responsibility: each person acts as if the solution did not depend on themselves, but rather on an institutional abstraction that is always absent.

In schools, this logic translates into fragmented practices: teachers who teach out of a sense of obligation, families who delegate responsibility without providing support, students who learn out of fear of punishment, and school administrators who design policies without considering the reality of the classroom. The result is an educational community that coexists without ever truly coming together. Guilt thus becomes a shared language that everyone speaks, but that no one translates into commitment. The paradox is that this defensive rhetoric seeks to protect the dignity of those involved, but ends up eroding the fabric of trust that underpins the educational mission.

Overcoming this dynamic requires a paradigm shift: moving from “It’s not my fault” to “I am part of the solution.” Shared responsibility in education is presented here as an ethical and pedagogical alternative. It is not a matter of eliminating guilt—an emotion necessary for moral learning—but rather of transforming it into critical awareness. Shared responsibility requires recognizing the interdependence among stakeholders and accepting that every action (or inaction) has consequences for others. Gadamer (2002) noted that understanding is not justifying, but rather accepting the other’s point of view as a possible truth. In that sense, educational responsibility cannot be imposed from the outside, but must be cultivated from within the individual’s ethical core.

The ethics of care (Noddings, 2012) complements this perspective by situating the educational relationship within the realm of empathy and reciprocity. Taking responsibility does not mean taking the blame for others' mistakes, but rather responding to others with commitment and respect. When a teacher acknowledges their limitations but continues to seek new strategies, or when a family, despite its shortcomings, maintains an honest dialogue with the school, an act of shared responsibility takes place: both recognize their vulnerability and, at the same time, their power to bring about change.

From a structural perspective, institutions must foster spaces for dialogue where this awareness can be cultivated. Education policies based solely on accountability perpetuate this dissonance: they demand responsibility without creating the conditions for exercising it. Instead, a policy of shared responsibility must combine support, reflection, and shared evaluation, recognizing that trust cannot be decreed but must be built.

From a Culture of Blame to an Ethos of Shared Responsibility in Education

The question “Whose fault is it?” has become an accepted framework for interpreting school life. On a symbolic level, it functions as a mechanism that imposes moral sanctions, regulates expectations, and stabilizes—at least on the surface—unresolved structural tensions. From the hermeneutic perspective adopted here, this is not a discursive accident but a cultural habit that shapes the interpretation of educational events: when unsatisfactory results emerge, the first reaction is to identify a subject to whom causality and blame can be attributed. Based on a review of the literature and contextual analysis, it can be concluded that this culture of blame is reinforced on three fronts: (a) the excessive emphasis on technocratic accountability, (b) the fragmentation of roles among schools, families, and the state, and (c) the erosion of trust as a pedagogical and social bond (Bolívar, 2015; Fullan, 2014; OECD, 2021; MINEDUC, 2019, 2023; UNESCO, 2019, 2022).

The Blame Mechanism: Anatomy of an Institutional Habit

In light of Foucault (1975), the modern school not only teaches content; it also produces subjects under regimes of visibility and judgment. The proliferation of indicators, rankings, and protocols transforms evaluation into a space where accountability is individualized and context is rendered invisible. When a class performs poorly, the focus shifts to the teacher (their "classroom management"), then on the student (their "motivation"), and finally on the family (their "support"), but rarely on structural conditions: school segregation, inequitable funding, intensified teacher workloads, or policies that dictate rather than empower (ECLAC, 2022; MINEDUC, 2019).

This pattern is not merely rhetorical. It has practical consequences: it shifts professional energy away from pedagogical inquiry and toward defending one's own innocence. Instead of asking *what* aspects of the instructional design or institutional support need to be adjusted, the focus is on *who* should be held accountable for the outcome. The cost is twofold: it impoverishes the pedagogical conversation (because it is reduced to judgments) and it weakens cooperation (because each participant defends their position). Freire (1997) offers an epistemological solution: to shift the focus of the conversation from blame to critical praxis—understood as reflection and transformative action—where mistakes do not lead to criminalization but do entail a commitment.

Fragmentation of Roles and Blurring of Responsibility

An analysis of policies and reports reveals a consistent discourse on "collaborative work" and the "educational community," but the concrete implementation of these concepts remains fragmented (UNESCO, 2019, 2022; MINEDUC, 2023). Schools are expected to simultaneously meet curriculum requirements, manage student interactions, submit administrative reports, and achieve standardized test scores; families are expected to provide ongoing support; and the government is expected to provide regulation, funding, and oversight. In practice, each actor operates according to different evaluation criteria, with incentives that do not always align. The result is a kind of "spun-out" responsibility: everyone is responsible for everything, and, paradoxically, no one takes full responsibility for anything.

On this point, Tedesco (2000) offers valuable insight: when technical efficiency replaces the educational purpose, the goals become blurred, and the school retreats into measurable tasks that are not necessarily meaningful. Hargreaves (2021) adds the emotional dimension: teaching becomes intense, with expectations piling up that exceed the limits of professional control. In this context, blame serves as an outlet: it offers a quick—albeit simplistic—explanation for failure.

Pedagogical Trust: The Missing Moral Infrastructure

A review of the evidence and current practices shows that trust is the element that has been most eroded and, at the same time, the one most needed for improvement (Fullan, 2014). Without trust, evaluation becomes scrutiny; dialogue, an argument; and coordination, compliance. The crisis of confidence stems not only from adverse personal experiences, but also from a governance model that prioritizes external control over the development of internal capacity. The result is an ecosystem in which mistakes threaten professional and parental identities, rather than fostering organizational learning.

Rebuilding trust does not mean abdicating responsibility. This involves redefining it as a promise that can be fulfilled among actors who recognize their interdependence: the school promises quality education and care; the family promises realistic and respectful support; the government promises conditions of equity and support. When these promises are kept, trust becomes the moral foundation of school life.

Shared Responsibility: An Ethical, Political, and Pedagogical Shift

Shared responsibility does not mean diluting responsibilities into a "everyone and no one" scenario. It is a compromise-based design that clearly allocates tasks, acknowledges power imbalances, and establishes mechanisms for mutual support. From the perspective of the ethics of care, the educational relationship is not contractual but relational: it is woven through the recognition of the other as a subject of dignity and knowledge (Noddings, 2012). In practical terms, this means:

- Reframe assessment as a formative conversation: shared evidence, collaboratively developed criteria, and areas for improvement with specific goals (not just broad standards).
- Institutionalize opportunities and spaces for collaborative work (teachers–families–support teams) that are neither incidental nor voluntary, but rather an integral part of the school's design.
- Develop professional capacity (continuing professional development, communities of practice) focused on solving real-world problems, not just on complying with requirements.
- Aligning policies with practices: autonomy with support, accountability with guidance, and requirements with resources (UNESCO, 2022; MINEDUC, 2023; OECD, 2021).

This shift requires distributed leadership (Bolívar, 2015): not a leadership style that centralizes decision-making, but rather a pedagogical approach that empowers shared voices and responsibilities. It also involves shifting from "dealing with blame" to managing learning: where the central question is not *who was at fault*, but *what we need to change together*.

5. Implications for the parties involved: taking responsibility without bearing the burden, responding without assigning blame

- Teachers. The challenge is twofold: to maintain professional standards while also safeguarding emotional well-being in the workplace. Shared responsibility encourages us to engage in hopeful self-reflection: recognizing areas for improvement, seeking support, documenting evidence, and sharing it. Professionalism is strengthened through community, not in isolation (Fullan, 2014).
- Families. Sharing responsibility does not mean shifting the school's role to the home, but rather opening channels for parents to contribute their knowledge, time, and perspectives, with realistic expectations. Schools should teach students how to support others, not just ask for support.
- Students. Stop treating them as objects of evaluation and recognize them as agents. Giving them a voice in setting goals, criteria, and evidence fosters a sense of belonging and reduces the tendency to place blame on others.

- Status. Public accountability cannot be achieved through oversight alone; it requires a level playing field (funding, training, social-emotional support, and intersectoral networks). A state that shares responsibility "demands and empowers": it balances accountability with capacity building (OECD, 2021; ECLAC, 2022).

Operational Criteria: From Concept to Design

To ensure that shared responsibility is not merely a slogan, we propose verifiable criteria for implementation:

1. Explicit definition of roles and expected deliverables for each stakeholder (what each will do over the next 90 days and what evidence they will provide).
2. Shared guidelines for family support (frequency, type of support, channels) that take sociocultural diversity into account.
3. Short improvement cycles (plan–do–review–act) led by teaching teams with management support, documenting adjustments and results.
4. Guidelines for shared responsibility (school–families–students) with institutional status: public agreements, monitoring, and feedback.
5. Systemic formative assessment: reports that include not only scores, but also actions taken, lessons learned from mistakes, and next steps.

These criteria translate ethics into organizational architecture, avoiding the "moral trap" of demanding unconditional collaboration.

Limitations and Scope of the Approach

Like all interpretive research, our analysis does not aim to make statistical generalizations; rather, it seeks to make a phenomenon intelligible and to offer avenues for action. Its strength lies in the coherence between the framework, methodology, and situated interpretation. There are still avenues for future research: case studies of schools that have transitioned from a judgmental approach to one of collaboration; the impacts of short-term improvement cycles involving family participation; or comparative analyses of policies that foster (rather than merely control) shared responsibility.

In light of this journey, we maintain that education is not strengthened by assigning blame, but by sharing commitments. A culture of blame, while it may offer quick explanations, undermines pedagogical judgment, erodes trust, and delays necessary changes. Shared responsibility, on the other hand, requires a more difficult kind of courage: taking responsibility together with others. It means taking responsibility for one's own part, acknowledging the parts of others, and creating the conditions for those parts to be fulfilled.

For this reason, we propose understanding educational responsibility as a public promise: what schools can reasonably deliver, what families can sustain within their actual means, what students can take on with support, and what the government must guarantee so that these expectations do not remain mere rhetoric. Only then will assessment once again become learning, leadership once again become service, and the school once again become a community.

From an ethical standpoint, this conclusion can be summarized as a warning and a hope. The warning: Blame divides; it turns participants into adversaries and shuts down educational dialogue. Hope: Shared responsibility brings people together; it reorganizes efforts, redistributes decision-making power, and creates the moral climate for learning. In closing, and without straying from an academic tone, it is worth recalling the principle that guides our conscience:

"For each one will bear his own burden" (Galatians 6:5, RVR1960).

Not as a call for isolation, but as a reminder that each part is indispensable and, at the same time, insufficient without the others. A quality education begins there: where responsibility and care go hand in hand

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ETHNIC ORIGIN IN POLITICAL REPRESENTATION
ORIGEN ÉTNICO EN LA REPRESENTACIÓN POLÍTICA

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ABSTRACT

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.

Palabras clave:
poder político, representación, origen étnico, justicia social, equilibrio.

RESUMEN

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 guineoecuatoriana 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: Rio 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.

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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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CONSTITUTIONAL JURISDICTION IN TIMES OF ALGORITHMIZATION: LIMITS AND POSSIBILITIES FOR THE PROTECTION OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS IN THE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

JURISDIÇÃO CONSTITUCIONAL EM TEMPOS DE ALGORITMIZAÇÃO: LIMITES E POSSIBILIDADES PARA A PROTEÇÃO DE DIREITOS FUNDAMENTAIS NO AMBIENTE DIGITAL

JURISDICCIÓN CONSTITUCIONAL EN TIEMPOS DE ALGORITMIZACIÓN: LÍMITES Y POSIBILIDADES PARA LA PROTECCIÓN DE LOS DERECHOS FUNDAMENTALES EN EL ENTORNO DIGITAL

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ABSTRACT

The growing automation of decision-making in the public and private sectors through algorithmic systems and artificial intelligence (AI) has had significant impacts on fundamental rights and on the way the democratic rule of law is structured and exercises judicial oversight. This article analyzes the role of Brazilian constitutional jurisdiction in the face of the challenges posed by the algorithmization of decisions and its repercussions on principles such as equality, due process, and transparency. Using a qualitative and theoretical-analytical approach, based on an analysis of decisions by the Federal Supreme Court (STF) and national and international literature, this study seeks to understand how constitutional jurisprudence can establish normative parameters to ensure effective protection of fundamental rights in the digital context. It is concluded that the STF must adopt a dialogical and anti-discriminatory stance, guided by a digital constitutionalism committed to inclusion and algorithmic justice.

Palavras-chave:
jurisdição constitucional, inteligência artificial, direitos fundamentais, constitucionalismo digital.

RESUMO

A crescente automatização de decisões no setor público e privado por meio de sistemas algorítmicos e de inteligência artificial (IA) tem provocado impactos significativos sobre os direitos fundamentais e sobre o modo como o Estado Democrático de Direito se estrutura e exerce o controle jurisdicional. Este artigo analisa a atuação da jurisdição constitucional brasileira diante dos desafios impostos pela algoritmização das decisões e suas repercussões sobre princípios como a igualdade, o devido processo legal e a transparência. A partir de uma abordagem qualitativa e teórico-analítica, com base na análise de decisões do Supremo Tribunal Federal (STF) e na literatura nacional e

	internacional, busca-se compreender de que forma a jurisdição constitucional pode construir parâmetros normativos para assegurar uma tutela efetiva dos direitos fundamentais no contexto digital. Conclui-se que o STF deve assumir uma postura dialógica e antidiscriminatória, orientada por um constitucionalismo digital comprometido com a inclusão e com a justiça algorítmica. **RESUMEN**
Palabras clave: jurisdicción constitucional, inteligencia artificial, derechos fundamentales, constitucionalismo digital.	La creciente automatización de las decisiones en los sectores público y privado mediante sistemas algorítmicos e inteligencia artificial (IA) ha tenido un impacto significativo en los derechos fundamentales y en la estructura y el ejercicio del control judicial del Estado de Derecho democrático. Este artículo analiza el desempeño de la jurisdicción constitucional brasileña ante los desafíos que plantea la algoritmización de las decisiones y sus repercusiones en principios como la igualdad, el debido proceso y la transparencia. Mediante un enfoque cualitativo y teórico-analítico, basado en el análisis de decisiones del Supremo Tribunal Federal (STF) de Brasil y literatura nacional e internacional, busca comprender cómo la jurisdicción constitucional puede construir parámetros normativos para garantizar la protección efectiva de los derechos fundamentales en el contexto digital. Concluye que el STF debe adoptar una postura dialógica y antidiscriminatoria, guiada por un constitucionalismo digital comprometido con la inclusión y la justicia algorítmica.

Introduction

The consolidation of the digital society and the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) have profoundly transformed the social, political, and legal dynamics of contemporary democracies. The integration of algorithmic systems and automated models into public and private decision-making, while promising efficiency, speed, and accuracy, also poses new risks to the effectiveness of fundamental rights. The replacement of human decisions with computational processes—which are often opaque and incomprehensible—raises questions about the legitimacy, transparency, and impartiality of these decisions, especially when they affect sensitive areas such as access to social benefits, freedom of expression, privacy, and due process.

In Brazil, the impact of the use of algorithms in decision-making directly challenges the role of the Federal Supreme Court (STF), an institution that serves as the guardian of the 1988 Constitution and the protector of fundamental rights and guarantees. The STF is called upon to reinterpret the Constitution in light of technological changes and to mediate the tensions between innovation and the preservation of democratic values. In this regard, the central research question guiding this study can be formulated as follows: How has the Brazilian constitutional judiciary responded to the ethical and legal challenges posed by algorithmization, and what are the limits and possibilities for the protection of fundamental rights in the digital environment?

Recent scholarship has focused on understanding the role of legal institutions in this new context. Zuboff (2020) coined the term “surveillance capitalism” to describe the logic behind the massive collection and commercialization of personal data, which turns citizens into objects of control and behavioral prediction. Sousa (2022), in turn, argues that constitutionalism needs to “rebuild itself digitally,” incorporating new dimensions of rights protection that encompass the information space and the impacts of artificial intelligence. Streck (2023) and Nunes (2024) expand on this discussion by arguing that the STF should adopt a dialogical, counter-majoritarian, and anti-discriminatory hermeneutic approach, aimed at establishing normative standards that limit the use of exclusionary technologies and ensure the transparency and explainability of algorithms.

In light of this, the overall objective of this study is to analyze how the Brazilian constitutional judiciary—particularly the STF—has responded to the challenges posed by the automation of public and private decisions, assessing its limitations and potential for protecting fundamental rights in the digital environment, and proposing guidelines for proactive, transparent, and democratic judicial action. Among the specific objectives, the following stand out: to identify and examine STF decisions involving the use of digital technologies and artificial intelligence; to critically evaluate how such decisions address issues such as privacy, equality, explainability, and due process; to analyze the STF’s counter-majoritarian and dialogical role in the face of technological transformation; to discuss the concept of algorithmic due process and its constitutional implications; and, finally, to propose theoretical and normative guidelines for the consolidation of a digital constitutional jurisdiction focused on algorithmic justice.

This study adopts a qualitative approach that is exploratory and descriptive in nature, as this is the most appropriate method for analyzing complex social phenomena that require contextual interpretation and an understanding of the legal and political meanings attributed to judicial decisions. The central method is the hermeneutic-critical approach, guided by the understanding that law is an interpretive and historical phenomenon, whose validity stems from its ability to engage with the transformations of reality. According to Minayo (2022), qualitative research seeks to understand phenomena in depth, emphasizing the symbolic dimensions and the meanings that participants attribute to their actions. In the same vein, Streck (2023) emphasizes that critical constitutional hermeneutics requires moving beyond formalism, since interpreting the Constitution is a political and ethical act that must take into account the contexts in which it is applied.

The technical procedures used consist of three main steps. The first is a documentary analysis, which involves examining Federal Supreme Court decisions related to the use of digital technologies and artificial intelligence, such as ADIs 6387/DF, which established data protection as a fundamental right, and 5527/DF, which addressed the Brazilian Civil Rights Framework for the Internet. The second is a literature review based on Brazilian and international authors who address digital constitutionalism, algorithmic justice, and the role of the judiciary in the face of automated decision-making, such as Streck (2023), Sousa (2022), Nunes (2024), Pasquale (2015), Eubanks (2017), and Zuboff (2020). The third stage is thematic content analysis, based on Bardin's (2016) method, which is used to identify and categorize the main discursive themes present in judicial decisions and doctrinal texts.

The analysis will be conducted based on five previously defined theoretical categories: algorithmic opacity, referring to the lack of transparency and auditability in automated systems; automated discrimination, which examines the reproduction of social inequalities through algorithmic decisions; digital due process, which analyzes the need for review and justification of automated decisions; *institutional accountability*, which investigates the responsibility of public and private actors for the use of AI; and the digital counter-majoritarian function, which encompasses the role of the STF as a protector of fundamental rights in the face of new forms of technological power.

The triangulation of empirical data (court decisions), normative data (laws and treaties), and theoretical data (specialized literature) will enable the development of a critical and constructive analysis. The study thus seeks to understand not only how the STF has responded to technological changes, but also how it should act to ensure the primacy of fundamental rights in a landscape marked by automated decision-making and algorithmic surveillance.

This methodology aims to demonstrate that constitutional jurisdiction must go beyond the role of a mere textual guardian of the Constitution and assume an interpretive and political function geared toward building an effective digital constitutionalism. The expected outcome is to demonstrate that, given the growing presence of algorithms in the state's decision-making structures, the STF needs to establish a doctrine of constitutional algorithmic justice that combines innovation, ethics, and the protection of human rights, ensuring that technology remains subordinate to human dignity and democratic values.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is grounded in the intersection of constitutional law, the philosophy of technology, and the theory of justice, with an emphasis on the transformations brought about by algorithmic society and the advancement of artificial intelligence in public and private management. The automation of legal and administrative decisions introduces a new type of rationality—technical and statistical—that puts strain on the pillars of the democratic rule of law. As Streck (2023, p. 80) notes, "the contemporary challenge facing constitutional jurisdiction is to understand that power manifests itself not only in classical political forms, but also in codes, data, and algorithms."

Contemporary literature recognizes that, in order to maintain its regulatory and emancipatory function, the law must reinterpret its foundations in light of new forms of digital power. Accordingly, this framework is organized around three main themes: digital constitutionalism and the transformation of constitutional jurisdiction; the STF's counter-majoritarian and dialogical role in the technological age; and the risks of opacity and algorithmic discrimination. These three pillars are interrelated, forming a theoretical framework that seeks to understand how the Federal Supreme Court (STF) can serve as a bastion of ethical and legal resistance in the face of the automation of decisions and the concentration of information.

Digital Constitutionalism and Constitutional Jurisdiction

Throughout its history, constitutionalism has always kept pace with changes in political and social power. While the focus in the 19th century was on controlling sovereign power, and in the 20th century on consolidating fundamental rights and social democracy, the 21st century presents the challenge of controlling a new form of power: algorithmic power. This power, which stems from the technical capacity for data processing and decision automation, calls for a thorough review of the role of constitutional institutions and the scope of constitutional jurisdiction (SOUSA, 2022).

Digital constitutionalism is emerging as a response to this new configuration of power. According to Sousa (2022, p. 61), it "aims to restore the balance between freedom and control in a society governed by data and mediated by algorithms." The proposal calls for extending constitutional principles to digital relationships, recognizing that the information sphere is a new arena for the exercise of power and, therefore, must be subject to fundamental safeguards and judicial oversight.

Zuboff (2020) identifies this logic as surveillance capitalism, characterized by the private appropriation of personal data as a source of profit and a means of social control. The use of algorithmic systems to predict and manipulate behavior threatens individual autonomy, making an institutional response grounded in constitutional values essential. The right to privacy, informational self-determination, and the principle of transparency thus take on the role of "new foundational rights" of digital constitutionalism.

In this context, constitutional jurisdiction becomes a key arena for democratic resistance. Streck (2023) notes that digital constitutionalism is not merely a thematic update of constitutional law, but a "hermeneutic shift" that requires the incorporation of technological categories into legal reasoning. Constitutional interpreters must understand that algorithms, no matter how sophisticated they may be, are human creations and, therefore, must be subject to the same ethical and legal constraints that govern the actions of the State.

Galindo (2024) reinforces this idea by referring to "oblique legality"—that is, a form of legality displaced from traditional institutional spaces and operated by technical and invisible systems. This legal framework requires constitutional measures capable of shedding light on areas of uncertainty, ensuring democratic oversight of automated decisions. Thus, digital constitutionalism proposes not only a normative transformation of constitutional jurisdiction, but also an epistemological one: from the oversight of the text to the oversight of technology.

Digital constitutionalism has emerged as a theoretical and normative response to the growing influence of technology on social and political life. Sousa (2022) defines it as a movement aimed at "rebuilding constitutional guarantees in the face of new forms of informational and technical power" (p. 59). The digital revolution has shifted the balance of power from the state to technology corporations and algorithms, creating what Zuboff (2020) calls surveillance capitalism, in which personal data is converted into assets for control and profit. This new context requires that constitutions cease to be mere texts that limit the power of the state and instead protect individuals against informational domination and constant surveillance.

In this context, constitutional jurisdiction serves as a mediator between the human and the technological, and must ensure that innovation occurs without sacrificing the principles of dignity and freedom. Streck (2023, p. 83) argues that "the Constitution should be interpreted in light of a digital hermeneutics that understands technology as a concrete dimension of contemporary power." This means that the Federal Supreme Court cannot limit itself to technical neutrality; on the contrary, it must act proactively to define the ethical boundaries of the use of artificial intelligence by the government and in society.

Digital transformation also challenges the very epistemological foundations of constitutional law. According to Galindo (2024), we are living in an era of "oblique legality," in which decisions that impact fundamental rights are made by automated systems without human intervention. This reality calls for a new constitutional pact: one based on transparency and accountability. Constitutional review should cover not only laws and normative acts, but also technological infrastructures and decision-making architectures that, in practice, have legal effects on citizens.

Furthermore, the incorporation of technology into constitutional law broadens the scope of fundamental rights. The protection of personal data, recognized by the STF as an autonomous right in ADI 6387/DF, now forms part of the core of digital constitutionalism. As Nunes (2024) notes, this is "a new paradigm of informational citizenship," in which an individual's autonomy depends on the control they exercise over their own data. Constitutional jurisdiction, therefore, must not only interpret existing law but also establish normative standards that ensure the ethical governance of information, thereby strengthening the rule of law in a technologically mediated environment.

The STF's Counter-Majoritarian and Dialogical Role in the Democratic Rule of Law

The counter-majoritarian function is one of the most debated aspects of modern constitutional jurisprudence. Traditionally, it refers to the role of the Federal Supreme Court (STF) as the guardian of fundamental rights in the face of potential political majorities. However, in the digital society, this role is expanding: in addition to protecting political minorities, the STF must protect vulnerable individuals and groups against algorithmic domination and informational technocracy.

According to Streck (2023, p. 79), "the counter-majoritarian function should be understood today as a cognitive counterweight," that is, a check not only on parliamentary majorities, but also on the statistical and probabilistic majorities that inform automated decisions. Because algorithms operate based on historical data patterns, they tend to reinforce mainstream behaviors, resulting in silent and invisible exclusions. Thus, constitutional jurisdiction must ensure that public reason is not supplanted by algorithmic reason.

This transformation requires that the counter-majoritarian function also become dialogical. According to Nunes (2024, p. 64), "the judiciary cannot isolate itself from technology; it must engage with it, understand its language, and establish ethical guidelines for its use in the public sphere." A dialogical approach does not undermine judicial authority; rather, it legitimizes it, as it demonstrates openness to the pluralism of knowledge that characterizes the digital age.

The STF, therefore, must act as an institutional mediator between the technical expertise of corporations and the fundamental rights of citizens. This calls for new approaches to constitutional interpretation that can address issues such as algorithmic transparency, the auditability of AI systems, *accountability* in technology, and digital due process. As Gouvêa and Castelo Branco (2022) note, the democratic legitimacy of the STF will depend on its ability to establish standards of oversight that are both legally sound and technologically informed.

Recent cases, such as ADI 6387/DF, which recognized the protection of personal data as an autonomous fundamental right, demonstrate that the Court is already beginning to establish a body of case law focused on digital constitutionalism. However, there are still gaps regarding the definition of criteria for explainability and the review of automated decisions, which are essential for the full exercise of due process.

Thus, the STF's counter-majoritarian and dialogical role in the contemporary world consists of safeguarding fundamental rights against the arbitrariness of machines and ensuring that technology serves democracy—and not the other way around. This requires a critical constitutional hermeneutics capable of recognizing that the oversight of algorithms represents a new frontier in constitutional review.

The counter-majoritarian function is one of the central tenets of constitutional jurisdiction. She ensures that the Federal Supreme Court can protect minorities and correct structural injustices caused by political power. In the digital context, this function takes on new dimensions: algorithms and automated systems become new forms of the majority, based not on public deliberation but on statistics and behavioral patterns. Nunes (2024, p. 64) warns that "algorithms establish a kind of silent majoritarianism, in which decisions are made without debate, under the guise of technical neutrality." Thus, it is up to the STF to prevent this "technocracy of probabilities" from undermining democratic logic.

Anti-majoritarian action must, however, be complemented by a dialogical approach. According to Streck (2023), the STF cannot be an isolated court; it must engage in dialogue with civil society, the academic community, and the technology community itself. This openness to dialogue legitimizes the Court and enables the development of an inclusive constitutional hermeneutics capable of understanding the social effects of innovation. The dialogical function also involves recognizing that the Constitution is an open-ended project, constantly adapting to new forms of power and domination.

The rise of digital technology presents the STF with a twofold task: to protect rights and to educate society, through institutional channels, about the risks of automated decision-making. According to Gouvêa and Castelo Branco (2022), the Court should establish ethical and procedural guidelines for the use of algorithms in public administration, ensuring that automated decisions respect due process, the requirement to provide reasons for decisions, and social oversight. This includes the recognition of digital due process, in which every citizen has the right to understand and challenge the decisions made by intelligent systems.

Furthermore, the STF's role as a counterweight to the majority and as a forum for dialogue is consolidated as an educational function. When ruling on landmark cases involving technology, the Court not only resolves specific disputes but also establishes normative values that guide society. This educational dimension is essential for building a digital constitutional culture based on public trust and the explainability of decisions. As Streck (2023, p. 92) notes, "the Constitutional Court must be the ethical beacon that prevents technology from stifling humanity." Thus, the STF's legitimacy will depend on its ability to reconcile technology, democracy, and justice, reaffirming the principle that no algorithm stands above the Constitution.

Algorithms, Opacity, and Automated Discrimination

Algorithms, although they are products of mathematical rationality, are built on historical data, selection criteria, and statistical inferences that inevitably bear social, cultural, and political imprints. This observation has led authors such as Eubanks (2017) and Pasquale (2015) to debunk the myth of algorithmic neutrality. According to Eubanks (2017), the automation of decision-making in public policy and judicial systems often transforms structural inequalities into "technical decisions," reinforcing biases against minorities and marginalized groups.

Pasquale (2015) refers to this phenomenon as the "*black box society*," in which decisions made by automated systems are not subject to public scrutiny. This lack of transparency undermines the principle of transparency and weakens democratic oversight, as it prevents citizens from understanding the reasons behind decisions that affect them. From a constitutional perspective, this situation violates the right to adversarial proceedings, to a full defense, and to the provision of reasons for decisions—pillars of due process as provided for in Article 5, subparagraphs LIV and LV, of the Federal Constitution.

In the Brazilian context, the General Data Protection Law (LGPD) (Law No. 13,709/2018) represented a significant step forward by establishing, in Article 20, the right to review automated decisions. However, as Teixeira *et al* note. (2022), the effectiveness of this right depends on the role of the constitutional court, which is capable of interpreting the provision in light of the principles of human dignity and equality. This means that it is up to the STF to ensure that the review is not merely formal but substantive, guaranteeing access to the code, logic, and decision-making criteria of automated systems.

Automated discrimination is a real risk in digital societies. Algorithms used for recruitment, credit approval, facial recognition, or setting judicial priorities can perpetuate racial, gender, and class biases. According to Streck (2023, p. 91), "digital democracy depends on the ability of constitutional law to identify and correct these new forms of discrimination, which are not expressed in unjust laws, but in biased codes and data."

Thus, the challenge for constitutional jurisprudence is to develop a model of algorithmic justice (Pasquale, 2015) that ensures explainability, accountability, and non-discrimination in automated processes. This implies that the STF must take a proactive stance, guiding the public administration and the private sector in adopting ethical practices for the use of AI, as well as in establishing protocols for algorithmic auditing and technological transparency.

Overcoming opacity and algorithmic discrimination is essential to realizing digital constitutionalism. As Zuboff (2020, p. 422) concludes, "without a strong constitutional right, surveillance becomes a form of government and the citizen is reduced to mere data." Thus, it is up to the constitutional courts to ensure that technology serves the causes of freedom and equality, reaffirming the principle that human beings—and not algorithms—must remain at the heart of the constitutional order.

The growing use of algorithms and artificial intelligence systems in public and private management has brought to light a central problem: algorithmic opacity—that is, the inability to understand how these decisions are made and what criteria are used. Pasquale (2015) referred to this condition as a "*black box society*," characterized by automated decisions that escape democratic control. This lack of transparency directly threatens due process, as it prevents citizens from learning the reasons behind a decision and from exercising their right to a defense.

Eubanks (2017) demonstrates that the automation of public policies can transform historical inequalities into seemingly neutral mathematical patterns, a phenomenon he calls the automation of inequality. By using biased and historical data, algorithms tend to reproduce and perpetuate racial, gender, and socioeconomic discrimination. Streck (2023) points out that "the myth of technological neutrality is one of the most sophisticated forms of contemporary injustice, as it masks human bias under the guise of objectivity."

In the Brazilian context, Article 20 of the General Data Protection Law (LGPD) guarantees the right to review automated decisions, representing a significant regulatory advance. However, as Teixeira et al. point out, (2022), the effectiveness of this right depends on the role of the constitutional court, which must ensure transparency, access to information, and algorithmic *accountability*. In exercising its oversight function, the STF has a responsibility to ensure that the systems used by public agencies are auditable and consistent with the constitutional principles of dignity and equality.

Overcoming opacity and algorithmic discrimination requires a new constitutional pact on technological justice. This involves creating public protocols for auditing algorithms, adopting criteria for explainability, and strengthening democratic digital governance. As Zuboff (2020, p. 422) concludes, "without a strong constitutional right, surveillance becomes a form of government and the citizen is reduced to mere data." The challenge for constitutional jurisprudence is, therefore, to ensure that technology remains a tool in the service of freedom, rather than a mechanism of social control. Thus, digital constitutionalism must establish itself as an ethical and legal response to the complexity of informational power, reaffirming the law's commitment to justice, transparency, and equality.

Method

This study adopts a qualitative, exploratory, and descriptive approach, which is appropriate for analyzing complex phenomena involving the relationships between technology, law, and society. According to Minayo (2022), the qualitative method makes it possible to understand meanings and interpretations, rather than simply quantifying data. This perspective is essential when seeking to examine how constitutional jurisprudence addresses the use of algorithms in public and private decision-making.

The research method is hermeneutic-critical, drawing inspiration from Streck's (2023) contributions on the need for a constitutional hermeneutics committed to the realization of fundamental rights. This methodological approach makes it possible to interpret the meaning of the Federal Supreme Court's (STF) decisions not only in their legal literal sense, but also in their political and technological context.

Three main technical procedures were used: (a) a documentary analysis focused on reviewing and systematizing Supreme Federal Court (STF) decisions involving the use of digital technologies, data protection, and artificial intelligence, such as ADIs 6387/DF and 5527/DF; (b) a literature review covering national and international scholarship on digital constitutionalism, algorithmic justice, and technological jurisdiction; (c) thematic content analysis, as defined by Bardin (2016), which consists of categorizing ideas and arguments based on units of meaning.

The development of the study's analytical framework was guided by five main categories: 1. Algorithmic opacity – lack of transparency and auditability; 2. Automated discrimination – the reproduction of structural inequalities; 3. Digital due process— guaranteeing review and justification of automated decisions; 4. *Institutional Accountability* – accountability of public and private actors; 5. Digital Counter-Majoritarian Function – The Role of the STF in Protecting Rights in the Digital Age.

The triangulation of empirical data (case law), normative data (laws and treaties), and theoretical data (scientific literature) lends the research interpretive validity, in accordance with the criteria of coherence and consistency proposed by Flick (2018). Thus, the study does not seek to quantify phenomena, but rather to critically understand how the Brazilian constitutional jurisdiction responds to the ethical and legal challenges posed by automated decision-making.

Results

An analysis of the decisions of the Federal Supreme Court (STF) revealed significant progress and gaps in the protection of fundamental rights in the face of algorithmization. Among the key outcomes, the consolidation of the fundamental right to personal data protection (ADI 6387/DF) stands out, as it is recognized as an essential tool for preserving dignity and privacy. This decision marks a milestone in the transition toward Brazilian digital constitutionalism, in which technology is understood as a sphere within which human rights apply.

However, the results also indicate that the STF has not yet developed a consistent body of case law on algorithmic due process. The decisions analyzed show a trend toward emphasizing proportionality and formal legality, but they fail to directly address issues such as algorithm explainability, discriminatory biases, and public audit mechanisms.

According to Streck (2023), "technological neutrality is a dangerous legal myth, as it masks the power dynamics embedded in the code." This concern is borne out in cases where automated decisions were accepted without requiring full transparency, which highlights a gap in judicial oversight of algorithmic justice.

On the other hand, the STF has shown increasing sensitivity to the ethical and social dimensions of technology, especially in cases related to digital privacy and the use of data by public agencies. This openness to dialogue points to the possibility of establishing a proactive and inclusive constitutional jurisdiction capable of balancing technological efficiency and fundamental guarantees.

Based on the analytical categories, three emerging guidelines for strengthening digital constitutional jurisdiction were identified: 1. Mandatory algorithmic transparency in public decision-making; 2. Judicial oversight of the social impact of technologies; 3. An anti-discriminatory interpretation of the Constitution that recognizes the risks of automated exclusion.

These results demonstrate that the STF's work is still in its early stages, but point toward the development of a model of constitutional algorithmic justice, as advocated by Pasquale (2015) and Zuboff (2020), in which technology must be subject to democratic ethics and the protection of human dignity.

Concluding Remarks

The findings suggest that the Brazilian constitutional judiciary faces one of the greatest challenges in its history: protecting fundamental rights in an era of automated decisions based on data and algorithms. While technology brings efficiency, it also gives rise to new forms of inequality and opacity, requiring the Federal Supreme Court to provide an institutional and interpretive response consistent with the democratic rule of law.

According to Sousa (2022), digital constitutionalism should not be viewed merely as an adaptation, but as "a normative reconstruction of the public sphere in the face of algorithmic logic." Thus, the STF must shift from a reactive stance to a proactive and rights-protecting one, assuming the role of an ethical mediator between innovation and justice.

Strengthening algorithmic due process is a central element of this new jurisdiction. It ensures that every automated decision can be understood, reviewed, and challenged, while preserving the dignity and autonomy of individuals. Furthermore, the development of judicial protocols for transparency and the auditing of public algorithms is an essential step toward the democratic oversight of technology.

Based on theoretical and empirical analyses, it is argued that constitutional anti-discrimination jurisprudence should be guided by three pillars: (i) the explainability of algorithmic decisions; (ii) social inclusion and the protection of vulnerable groups; and (iii) the accountability of entities that use AI in sensitive contexts. This triad reflects constitutional law's commitment to digital justice and substantive equality.

In short, the future of constitutional jurisdiction will depend on the STF's ability to integrate technological ethics into its counter-majoritarian role, ensuring that the digital transformation takes place in accordance with the constitutional values of freedom, equality, and human dignity. The challenge is not to resist technology, but to enshrine it in the constitution, guiding its use toward the promotion of democracy and human rights.

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ANGOLA´S ROLE IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN THE GREAT LAKES REGION: THE CASE OF THE RDC (2014-2023)

O PAPEL DE ANGOLA NA RESOLUÇÃO DE CONFLITOS DA REGIÃO DOS GRANDES LAGOS: O CASO DA RDC (2014 À 2023)

EL PAPEL DE ANGOLA EN LA RESOLUCIÓN DE CONFLICTOS EN LA REGIÓN DE LOS GRANDES LAGOS: EL CASO DE LA RDC (2014 A 2023)

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on "Angola's role in conflict resolution in the Great Lakes Region: the case of the Democratic Republic of Congo 2014-2023". Based on this theme, the approach adopted is qualitative in nature, seeking to understand the political and diplomatic context through a detailed analysis of the meanings, motivations, and values underlying the events studied. Documentary and historical methods were used, with emphasis on bibliographic and documentary data collection instruments. Based on this data, it was confirmed that most current conflicts are located on the African continent, with the Democratic Republic of Congo, Angola's neighbor, being one of the countries that causes great instability in the Great Lakes Region. During its two terms at the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), Angola played an important role in African regional organizations, specifically in mediating conflicts in the Great Lakes Region, neutralizing the negative forces of the March 23 Movement (M23) in the DRC and the ceasefire in the Central African Republic (CAR), weakening the Allied Armed Forces (ADF), and ensuring that the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) voluntarily surrendered their weapons.

Palavras-chave:
Conflitos, RDC, Angola, resolução, política externa

RESUMO

O presente artigo debruçou-se sobre “o papel de Angola na resolução de conflitos na Região dos Grandes Lagos: o caso da República Democrática do Congo 2014-2023”. Com base ao tema referenciado a abordagem adotada é de natureza qualitativa, buscando compreender o contexto político e diplomático por meio de uma análise detalhada de significados, motivações e valores subjacentes aos eventos estudados. O mesmo recorreu-se a métodos documentais e históricos, com realce aos instrumentos de recolha de dados bibliográficos e documentais. Face a estes dados, confirmou-se que a maior parte dos conflitos actuais estão localizados no continente africano, sendo a República Democrática do Congo, vizinha de Angola, um dos países que causa grande instabilidade na Região dos Grandes Lagos. Angola durante os seus dois mandatos na Conferência Internacional dos Grandes Lagos (CIRGL), desempenhou um papel importante nas organizações regionais africanas, concretamente na mediação de conflitos da Região Grande Lagos, neutralizando as forças negativas dos Movimentos 23 de Março (M23) na RDC e o cessar-fogo na República Centro Africana (RCA), no enfraquecimento das Forças Armadas Aliadas (ADF) e para que as Forças Democráticas de Libertação do Ruanda (FDLR), entregasse voluntariamente as armas.

RESUMEN

Este artículo se centra en «El papel de Angola en la resolución de conflictos en la región de los Grandes Lagos: el caso de la República Democrática del Congo 2014-2023». Con base en este tema, el enfoque adoptado es de naturaleza cualitativa, buscando comprender el contexto político y diplomático a través de un análisis detallado de los significados, motivaciones y valores subyacentes a los eventos estudiados. Se utilizaron métodos documentales e históricos, con énfasis en instrumentos de recolección de datos bibliográficos y documentales. A partir de estos datos, se confirmó que la mayoría de los conflictos actuales se ubican en el continente africano, siendo la República Democrática del Congo, vecina de Angola, uno de los países que genera mayor inestabilidad en la región de los Grandes Lagos. Durante sus dos mandatos en la Conferencia Internacional sobre la Región de los Grandes Lagos (CIRGL), Angola desempeñó un papel importante en las organizaciones regionales africanas, concretamente en la mediación de conflictos en la región de los Grandes Lagos, neutralizando las fuerzas negativas del Movimiento 23 de Marzo (M23) en la República Democrática del Congo y el alto el fuego en la República Centroafricana (RCA), debilitando a las Fuerzas Armadas Aliadas (FAA) y asegurando que las Fuerzas Democráticas para la Liberación de Ruanda (FDLR) entregaran voluntariamente sus armas.

Palabras clave:
Conflictos, RDC, Angola, resolución, política exterior.

Introduction

This article examines Angola's role in conflict resolution in the Great Lakes Region: The Case of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2014–2023. This study is the result of research conducted using various sources, which provide information on Angola’s role in conflict resolution in the Great Lakes region. It lists theoretical suggestions for resolving issues related to the topic, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Since the late 1950s and early 1960s, following its independence, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has been plagued by conflicts stemming from power struggles, which were influenced by the foreign (Belgian) presence, aimed at maintaining control over the country’s natural resources. In turn, these conflicts have led to internal instability and security threats to other neighboring countries and the region (Junior, 2021). Nevertheless, Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which are neighboring countries, share a long land border. “These two countries have peaceful relations; however, a major internal conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo could endanger the surrounding areas, especially Angola” (Sita, 2017, p. 6). Angola knows that unresolved conflicts near its borders can have consequences within its territory (Ibid., 2017).

Like the DRC, Angola has also experienced a significant period of conflict. After gaining independence in 1975, the country endured 27 turbulent years, largely due to the effects of the Cold War and the civil war that ravaged the country until 2002, when the Luena Memorandum was signed (Jovita, 2017). The country has demonstrated that it is possible to resolve political and military issues without the use of force, relying on negotiation as a means of resolving its conflicts rather than war (Armando, 2021). The country has played an important role in African regions, focusing on resolving regional conflicts. For example, the actions taken as chair of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), a forum chaired by Angola for two consecutive terms from 2014 to 2017.

In fact, the Angolan government has focused its regional foreign policy on the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC), and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), arguing that surveillance and the strengthening of security within the framework of international law serve as a means to facilitate the functioning of subregional organizations as instruments of regional cooperation in the region (Armando, 2021).

Accordingly, this article aims to understand the role played by the Republic of Angola in the process of neutralizing negative forces in order to promote greater political and democratic stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. As such, it serves as an important academic tool, as it aims to contribute to future studies or research on Angola’s role in conflict resolution in the DRC, in the fields of International Relations and Political Science. Furthermore, this article contributes to the recognition of scientific studies already conducted on Angola’s role in the conflicts in the African Great Lakes region. Researching and discussing Angola’s role in conflict resolution in the Great Lakes region—and specifically in the DRC—during the study period from 2014 to 2023 proved to be a challenge, as the research revealed a scarcity of academic work on the subject; therefore, this study aims to help fill that gap.

To this end, the overall objective is to analyze Angola’s role in conflict resolution in the Great Lakes Region from 2014 to 2023. The specific objectives related to the desired outcomes include:

- Explain the real motivations behind Angola's interest in resolving conflicts in the Great Lakes region;
- Assess Angola's performance in mediating conflicts in the region following its dual chairmanship of the CIRGL.

The Origins and Causes of Conflicts in the Great Lakes Region

This region has been plagued by various waves of conflict that have lasted for more than five decades. These conflicts have deep roots; some are legacies of colonialism—notably the partition of Africa—while others arise from the dynamic nature of social circumstances, particularly the presence of various ethnic groups, diverse rebel groups in the region, and the authorities' inability to exert control over the entire region (Brinco, 2020). Accordingly, Silva (2012) describes the conflict in the Great Lakes region as a multifaceted conflict—one that is ethnic, nationalist, and economic in nature, with regional impacts, affecting the security of the countries in the region (Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo).

Based on the foregoing, the mineral resources found throughout most of the region constitute one of the world's largest reserves of natural resources, second only to the Middle East. The author cited above points out that this aspect alone explains the reasons that formed the basis of the major disputes during the colonial period among the colonizing powers (Brinco, 2020). Despite its natural resources, the Great Lakes region "is characterized by extreme poverty, hunger, disease, and the breakdown of families" (Brinco, 2020, p. 24). These problems have increased significantly in the region due to a number of "*internal and external"* factors, primarily the greed of government officials, who are enriching themselves at the expense of the people (Ibid., 2020).

In the domestic context, the characteristics of regional governments fall far short of what is desired, especially when it comes to building democracies. In many countries in the Great Lakes region, presidents become a sort of "owner" of their country by refusing to step down from office. If we look at the countries in this region, this fact is confirmed: although many countries have achieved independence since the 1960s, most have had only two or three presidents, a fact that shows how difficult it is to relinquish power in the countries of the African Great Lakes region (Tavares, 2007).

Furthermore, natural resources are often controlled by so-called warlords, who are supported by governments and politicians incapable of governing their countries, thereby causing civil unrest (Madeiros, 2010).

According to Londa (2019), cited by Brinco (2020, p. 27), he emphasizes above all "the misallocation of resources as one of the main factors contributing to conflicts in the Great Lakes countries, coupled with the fact that some ethnic groups feel disadvantaged compared to others." Consequently, the rise of religious movements—not only within Islam but also among other religions present in the region, as highlighted by Tavares (2007)—is one of the factors contributing to the region's insecurity, and in some cases, this has led to a kind of confrontation among them. This led to the emergence of rebel groups making demands of their government (Brinco, 2020).

In the international context, "in Africa, particularly in the Great Lakes countries," assets and liabilities from colonial rule were inherited. "Because many of the conflicts that occur in the region can be explained by the historical context that allowed two peoples with distinct cultures to coexist" (Brinco, 2020, 27). In turn, this idea—on the one hand, because the Berlin Conference held in 1884–1885 was an important milestone on the African continent, as it led to the partition of the continent; on the other hand, because it was the reason certain conflicts arose in the Great Lakes region— since the demarcation of these borders did not reflect the political, economic, social, and cultural realities of the colonized peoples (Ibid., 2020).

However, the boundaries established by the countries participating in the Berlin Conference resulted in different ethnic groups from various countries—each with their own distinct customs and traditions—coming to share the same regions, as peoples of the same territory or state, subject to the same government and similar administrative regulations (Sacalumbo, 2016). “The desire to explore the African continent was so great that the European powers did not question the extent of the damage they might cause” (Artur, 2018, p. 21).

> In Europe, the thirst for land in Africa was already almost palpable. There were some conflicting claims that needed to be resolved, and, obviously, it was urgent to establish some basic rules for the final division of the African spoils; Bismarck offered to host a diplomatic conference in Berlin to discuss some of these issues. For Leopoldo, the conference was yet another opportunity to strengthen his position in the Congo. (Artur 2018, p. 21)

As a result of European greed and a lack of understanding, various types of conflicts have arisen on the African continent, some of which are conflicts in the Great Lakes region. These take many forms, ranging from border disputes between countries to conflicts over natural resources, as well as ethnic and cultural conflicts, which are often fueled by colonialism. A policy was implemented that would ultimately divide the continent and force these countries to maintain relations with their former colonies (Artur, 2018).

Accordingly, “The bitter legacy of the colonial system—which gave rise, first and foremost, to ethnic conflicts—has left its mark on Africa’s political, economic, and social history, and one of the best-known examples is the conflict in Burundi and Rwanda” (ibid., p. 21). “Now classified by many as an ethnic conflict—since it involves two groups, the Tutsis and the Hutus—the disputes between these two tribes have been described as one of the greatest conflicts in the Great Lakes region,” as noted by Nyer (2009), cited by Miranda (2018, p. 14). These conflicts trace their origins to 1994, when one of the greatest genocides in human history took place, in which more than 1,000,000 Tutsis were killed, following the assassination of former Hutu leader Juvenal Habyarimana, who was returning from a trip to Tanzania, where he had signed a peace agreement. Unfortunately, things did not go as planned; his plane was shot down, resulting in his death (Miranda, 2018).

In light of these events, many survivors of this genocide were forced to flee to neighboring countries, such as Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Uganda, where they became victims of persecution (Artur, 2018). Their presence led to conflicts in other parts of the Great Lakes region, particularly in the Kivu provinces of the DRC, for which then-President Mobutu was blamed for siding with the Tutsis. For many Congolese, the conflicts in North Kivu and South Kivu only broke out because Rwandan refugees crossed the border to escape the genocide and brought with them long-standing rivalries (Miranda, 2018).

Consequently, it is generally accepted that the greatest mistake made in the management of the refugee camps was the failure to identify and separate extremist members of the Hutu militias and the former Rwandan government from the rest of the refugees (Miranda, 2018). The author points out that “as a result of this failure, discrimination arose between Congolese Tutsis, Rwandan Tutsis, and Rwandan Hutus, who laid claim to the Congolese areas where they had settled” (p. 14). The lack of national cohesion in North Kivu has caused many hardships for the Congolese population; unfortunately, one of these hardships is the rape of women (Miranda, 2018).

“These disasters have been denounced by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and the United Nations. "In 2009, more than 7,500 cases of violations committed by militias and the Congolese regular forces were reported" (Valenzola, 2014, p. 79). The fact is that the causes of these wars have been more complex than ethnic rivalries; proof of this is that some militias, such as the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of the Congo (AFDL)—an opposition force to President Mobutu—had members from various ethnic groups: Hutus, Rwandan Tutsis, and Congolese Tutsis (Miranda 2018). However, "this coalition advanced through the territory, scoring victories against the Congolese army and attacking refugees." "It was a war known as the First Congo War, which only ended when rebels led by Laurent Kabila seized power" (Aguilar & Pereira, 2014, p. 3).

The Regional Role of Angolan Diplomacy and Its Interests in the Great Lakes Region: The Case of the DRC

"Angola's foreign policy is characterized by its realpolitik[1] approach and by the diversification of its international relations, which protects it from excessive dependence on the West" (Oliveira, 2015, p. 239). Consequently, Angola has been developing strategies to improve its reputation in order to diversify its relations with rapidly developing countries (Oliveira, 2015).

At the regional level, Angola has adopted a policy of integration. It, in turn, belongs to several regional groups, including the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR). The former President of the Republic, José Eduardo dos Santos, stated that Angola's foreign policy continues to be guided by direct action aimed at strengthening understanding and cooperation among countries and preserving international peace, stability, and security (Kissaca, 2017). This statement, made in 2011, continues to shape Angola's foreign policy and the defense of the state's sovereignty (Miranda, 2018).

Angola "is committed to a policy of improving its international reputation." "In recent years, Angolan diplomacy has stood out and raised the country's profile internationally" (Miranda, 2018, p. 36). This role is linked to his commitment to conflict resolution, particularly the work he has been carrying out at the CIRGL during his presidency. All of these actions taken by Angola led to it receiving overwhelming support (190 votes out of 193 cast) from the United Nations member states to become a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for the second time on October 1, 2014, for a two-year term (MIREX, 2023). Thus, "these two simultaneous appointments of Angola to the United Nations Security Council and the ICGLR have brought the country into the spotlight of international relations, affirming Angola's pivotal role in the sub-Saharan region" (Miranda, 2018, p. 36).

Angola is a peaceful country whose stability depends heavily on both its immediate and more distant neighbors; the author cited above points out that, in addition to ensuring security, Angola is also interested in increasing its influence in the Great Lakes region and, consequently, in the DRC. During its presidency of CIRGL, Angola took the opportunity to assert its influence on political decision-making in the region (Miranda, et al., 2018).

Angola and Its Co-Chairmanship of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (2014–2017)

Angola assumed the presidency of the CIRGL from January 10 to 15, 2014, for a two-year term, "at the 5th Conference of Heads of State and Government of the CIRGL, held in Luanda, under the theme: 'Promoting peace, security, stability, and development in the Great Lakes region.'" (Pedro & Garcia, 2020, pp. 848–49). The authors note that Angola assumed the presidency of the Organization and that the various member states

[1] **Realpolitik,** a word of German origin meaning "realistic politics," refers to politics or diplomacy based primarily on practical considerations, rather than ideological notions.

also committed to complying with all the Conference's decisions and to working toward peace, stability, and socioeconomic development in the region (Armando, 2021).

In light of this, "the impact of this rotation stems primarily from the fact that Angola has fostered dialogue and consensus among countries in the Great Lakes region, with the aim of developing a common strategy to maintain and preserve peace and prosperity in the Great Lakes region" (Armando, 2021, p. 47). During its presidency, Angola has been addressing issues that affect the region's peace process and stability—issues related to political divisions in the region—while emphasizing the promotion of youth employment as a key pillar for effective peace and security in the development of the RGL, and paying special attention to security issues as a central focus of its presidency (Pedro & Garcia, 2020; Armando, 2021). Consequently, (Ngeli 2021) states that

> Angola's former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Gorge Rebelo Chikoti, traveled to several countries in the region from February 10 to 15, 2014 — Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, Sudan, the Central African Republic, and the DRC — with the aim of assessing the situation in light of the implementation of the recommendations from the 5th Summit held in Luanda in 2014 under the aforementioned theme. He sought to ascertain *in loco* the status of the Executive Secretariat. (p. 39)

During its first term at CIRGL, "Angola hosted a tripartite mini-summit on June 6, 2014, attended by the Republic of the Congo and Chad, with the aim of examining the causes of and solutions to problems in the Great Lakes region" (Pedro, 2019, p. 329). Also on June 11 and 13, 2014, in Luanda, "a meeting was held between the defense ministers and the chiefs of staff of the member states of the CIRGL, where they discussed issues related to defense, security, economic development, and crime" (Armando, 2021, p. 49). In this context, Miranda (2018) points out the following:

> During its first term, Angola took on many challenges, including that of neutralizing the rebels in eastern DRC. Having monitored, throughout its term, the process of disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, reintegration, and renewal of the former M23, as well as the attempt to neutralize the FDLR and the Allied Defense Forces (ADF)—since, at a second joint meeting held in Luanda, between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the ICGLR and SADC, on July 1 and 2, 2014, an ultimatum was issued to the FDLR and ADF forces to observe a ceasefire and surrender voluntarily; otherwise, military action would be taken against the insurgent forces operating in the region. (p. 44)

Nevertheless, "during the 3rd meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the CIRGL and the SADC, held from September 18 to 20, 2014, the level of voluntary disarmament by the FDRL during the six-month period allotted to this organization was assessed" (Armando, 2021, p. 51). As the six-month deadline set by the ultimatum expired on January 2, 2015, the ADF and the FDLR continued to sow terror, even though the latter had begun to surrender voluntarily in exchange for negotiations with the CIRGL and the SADC. On the offensive, the FARDC, with the support of MONUSCO, launched Operations SOKOLA1 and SOKOLA2 to neutralize the two hostile forces. All of these actions, carried out with Angola's support in its capacity as chair of the CIRGL, helped to calm the situation in eastern DRC, although much remained to be done—such as accelerating the process of Disarmament, Repatriation, Reintegration, and Resettlement (DRRR) for former M23 combatants; although the group had been dismantled, there were still occasional incidents of attempted attacks (Miranda, 2018).

Thus, at the end of its first term and based on the results achieved, "Angola assumed a new term on June 14, 2016, during the Sixth Conference of Heads of State of the CIRGL; under the rotating system, Angola was to be replaced by Kenya" (Pedro & Garcia et al., 2020, p. 45). According to (Miranda, 2018), Kenya, with the assistance of several countries in the organization, asked Angola to continue the programs outlined in the previous mandate and to place greater emphasis on the situation in the DRC. Thus, the

Angolan presidency moved forward with the plans presented during the previous term—which will be outlined in more detail later—and emphasized the conditions in the DRC, as highlighted by Miranda (2018).

> During this second term, Angola placed greater emphasis on political issues in the DRC, but also continued its efforts to counteract the negative forces in its neighboring country. At the regular meeting of the Chiefs of Staff of the CIRGL held on May 23, 2017, the objective was "to analyze the security and humanitarian situation in the Great Lakes region, particularly in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo." The former chairman of the CIRGL Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, Geraldo Sachipengo Nunda, called for special attention to be paid to the resurgence of the M23 in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. (p. 45)

CIRGL (2017) reports that more than 800 former M23 members disappeared from the Bihanga camp in Uganda, where they had taken refuge. Although the FDLR had surrendered, the FDLR-FOCA alliance and the Mai-Mai attacked the FARDC in Kitshanga on May 8, 2017, killing two police officers and four civilians. The likelihood of these militias reemerging was very high, especially given the Disarmament, Demobilization, Repatriation, Reintegration, and Resettlement (DDRRR) process, unless the circumstances that led to their emergence—namely, the DRC's extreme fragility—are addressed. Its appearance does not change, which is the main weakness of the DRC (Ibid., 2018).

Angola's Position in the CIRGL Following Its Two-Year Presidency

After its dual presidency at CIRGL, Angola did not stand still. His position was therefore to continue working toward conflict resolution in the region. With Congo-Brazzaville holding the presidency of the CIRGL, the situation in the DRC remained tense during the organization of the 2018 elections (Armando, 2021). When former President Joseph Kabila announced his intention to run for a third consecutive term, the President of the Republic of Angola, João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, met with his counterpart from Congo-Brazzaville, Denis Sassou Nguesso, to participate in a virtual debate on the Great Lakes region with Joseph Kabila, and took this opportunity to discuss Kabila's political future, as it was considered the fundamental basis for determining the region's future; President Kabila refused to step down after serving two consecutive terms, a situation that created instability in the region and in the country (Armando, 2021).

In turn, a new date has been set for the upcoming elections: December 23, 2018. Angolan President João Lourenço called for a national dialogue between the government, the opposition, and civil society, with the aim of organizing the elections (Miranda, 2018). This event marked an important milestone in the Angolan government's commitment to resolving conflicts in the Great Lakes region. Furthermore, on November 20, 2020, Angola assumed the organization's interim presidency for the second time for the next two years, following the end of Congo-Brazzaville's term, during the 8th Conference of Heads of State and Government of the CIRGL, under the motto: "To continue supporting the implementation of the Pact on Security, Stability, and Development in the Great Lakes Region," by strengthening economic cooperation and regional development, Angola was assured that it would once again be ready to serve as a support group for all member states (Jornal Angola, 2020).

According to Deutsche Welle (WD, 2023)[2], the eastern part of the DRC was attacked again in late 2021, leading to an increase in violence as the rebel group March 23 Movement (M23) seized territory in the region. In fact, tense situations continued to arise

[2] **Deutsche Welle,** is a German term meaning "German Wave," an international broadcaster based in Germany that airs television, radio, and online programs and offers content in 30 languages.

in 2023, with the M23 still heavily involved in the eastern regions of the DRC, which once again necessitated the convening of a mini-summit on February 17, 2023, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on peace and security in the Great Lakes region.

The heads of state and government attending the conference mandated Angola, in coordination with former Kenyan President Uhru Kennyatta—acting as the coordinator appointed by the East African Commission—to maintain contact with the leader of the M23 rebel group in order to convey the decisions made at the Addis Ababa Mini-Summit. In light of these responsibilities, Angola has been in contact with the M23 leadership since February 28 of that year (DW, 2023).

According to Teté António, Minister of Foreign Affairs, a ceasefire has been announced several times since the M23 resumed its activities in November 2021, but it has not been honored; fighting has escalated between the DRC and Rwanda, which Kinshasa has once again accused of supporting the M23 (Miranda, 2018; WD, 2023).

However, as a result of intense fighting followed by several rounds of negotiations, the Angolan Presidency announced that a Contingent to Support Peacekeeping Operations of the Angolan Armed Forces (CAOMPFAA), consisting of approximately 500 soldiers, would be sent to the DRC, and this was carried out following approval by the Angolan National Assembly, pursuant to Article 5, paragraph 1, of Law No. 5 of June 21 on the Deployment of Angolan Military Contingents and Forces Abroad (DW, 2023). Accordingly, António Furtado, Minister of State and Head of the President's Security Office, stated that the purpose of this unit was to secure the M23's cantonment areas and protect the members of the "Ad Hoc" Verification Mechanism, which is tasked with monitoring compliance with the ceasefire. On the other hand, despite certain limitations acknowledged by the Angolan government, these were viewed as the final active measures aimed at maintaining stability in the DRC until the end of the election period in December 2023 (DW, 2023).

Angola's Limitations in Establishing Peace in the DRC

It is argued that during its chairmanship of the bloc, Angola sought to respect the sovereignty of the ICGLR member states, did not interfere in the internal affairs of the DRC, and did not intervene without authorization, respecting the limits of the prerogatives that the DRC had delegated to the ICGLR when it became a member of that organization (Armando, 2021). The author emphasizes that Angola's intervention was through diplomatic channels.

In this regard, CIRGL's decisions do not override the national sovereignty of the organization's members; therefore, its recommendations remain purely advisory. Given that relations between states are based not on subordination or dependence but on equality, and that peaceful coexistence among states requires respect for sovereignty—so that no state or organization encroaches upon the sphere of another state, as clearly stipulated in the United Nations Charter (Mazzuolli, 2011). However, it is important to note that, in the context of conflict resolution, CIRGL's interventions have been repeatedly hindered by the overt resistance of militias in that region. The support provided to militias and their interest in remaining in eastern DRC has often hindered the establishment of dialogue with the ICGLR. Since it is a very rich area, and this has a lot to do with illegal logging (Miranda, 2018).

Method

This study aimed to examine Angola's role in conflict resolution in the Great Lakes region: the case of the DRC (2014–2023). It sought to understand the political and diplomatic context through a detailed analysis of current situations in the region, as well as the motivations and underlying values behind the events studied.

In this case, the present study is qualitative in nature. According to Alvarenga (2012), in qualitative research, the results are presented in narrative form, including descriptions of interviews or observed situations and behaviors, and often include specific summaries of the collected data. Thus, to establish a theoretical foundation, documentary and historical methods were employed, with an emphasis on tools for collecting bibliographic data available in various databases, electronic repositories, and official documents in Angola, such as: reports, diplomatic dispatches found in the Ministry of Defense Library, articles from the Angolan newspaper, TV Zimbo, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MIREX), the libraries of the Angolan Armed Forces (FAA), and CIRGL, which served to enhance the analysis of the subject matter and provide a revised and expanded perspective based on the sequence of objectives outlined in this study.

Results

Research findings "are of little use unless the relevant data are communicated to the general public and, in particular, to the scientific community" (Freixo, 2018, p. 253).

Based on the topic, the overall objective was to analyze Angola's role in conflict resolution in the Great Lakes Region from 2014 to 2023. Consequently, the results were highlighted based on the specific objectives that guided this study:

1- Explained the real motivations behind Angola's interest in resolving conflicts in the Great Lakes region; the *"geostrategic"* reasons—based on expanding its influence in the Great Lakes region and aligned with its defense, development, and diplomacy framework—constituted the primary interest behind the Angolan state's involvement in the path toward resolution and, consequently, the achievement of effective peace in the region, as referenced by Miranda (2018; DW, 2023); nevertheless, the Great Lakes countries neighboring Angola, especially the DRC, have strong ties to Angola's seven border regions; thus, a major internal conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo could endanger the surrounding areas of Angola" (Sita, 2017, p. 6). This is evident and very important and interesting for Angola, as it is a country that plays a major role and has extensive experience in conflict resolution in this region.

It is worth noting that Angola's actions as a member of the African Union (AU), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), and the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC) have demonstrated its interest in security and defense issues on the continent and in various regions.

2- After assessing Angola's performance in mediating conflicts in the region following its co-chairmanship of the CIRGL, Angola's Minister of Foreign Affairs considered it positive, noting that, following its co-chairmanship of the CIRGL, Angola did not remain stagnant in its conflict resolution efforts (MIREX, 2023). Consequently, Armando reports that his stance was to continue working toward conflict resolution in the region. Under Congo-Brazzaville's presidency of the CIRGL, the situation in the DRC remained tense during the 2018 elections, with conflicts intensifying significantly each year (Armando, 2021; MIREX, 2023).

Consequently, the Angolan government launched a series of programs aimed at reestablishing the foundations for a peaceful and constructive dialogue between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, in order to reduce tensions between the two neighboring countries stemming from the resurgence of the M23 (Armando, 2021). However, during the dialogue, the Angolan government acknowledged that it faced limitations in establishing peace due to the need to respect sovereignty, and that it would intervene in internal affairs only with the prior authorization of the Congolese government (Ibid., 2021). However, these limitations posed obstacles for CIRGL; in fact, its decisions were blocked on several occasions due to resistance from militias in the region (Miranda, 2018).

Discussion and Conclusions

Due to the complexity of the topic, the results were analyzed qualitatively and aligned with the objectives described above. First and foremost, Angola's interest in resolving conflicts in the region stems from the moral strain caused by the conflict there, as it is a concern for the entire international community and especially for the countries in the region. Angola's position is perfectly understandable, given that the ongoing conflict in the DRC affects the security of their shared borders, undermines the hard-won peace in Angola, and considers these borders to be a vital area. For the Angolan government, the main objective was to achieve disarmament and, consequently, to ensure the maintenance of peace.

The findings indicate that "geostrategic" reasons have thus consistently shaped the Angolan government's approach to resolving regional conflicts, with the aim of establishing peace along its borders, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Second, in light of the findings outlined above, it can be confirmed that, in conflict mediation in the region, Angola plays a pivotal role in neutralizing negative forces in the DRC; throughout its two terms on the ICGLR, it has contributed to the neutralization of the M23 in the DRC, the ceasefire in the CAR, and the weakening of the ADF, as well as the FDLR's voluntary surrender of its weapons (Miranda 2018).

However, it is capitalizing on its political influence in the regions by ensuring that general elections are held in the DRC in the near future; nevertheless, on the one hand, the Angolan armed forces' presence in the border areas is unprecedented in its aim to ensure security in these areas and prevent unpredictable situations during the early stages of the conflict. On the other hand, the findings indicate that Angola's performance, viewed from a broader perspective, has brought new momentum and visibility to the CIRGL and has ensured that the issue of conflict resolution in the Great Lakes Region occupies a prominent place on international peace and security agendas (Miranda, 2018).

It can be concluded that it was necessary to conduct a research study that adhered to the defined scientific methods proposed from the outset. In turn, this research begins to demonstrate the importance of the subject under study—namely, Angola's role in conflict resolution in the Great Lakes region—while simultaneously situating the study within the framework of the "international" study program focused on the Democratic Republic of the Congo (2014–2023); where the problem manifests itself with the greatest intensity. It was possible to confirm that conflicts in the Great Lakes region currently exhibit a high incidence of conflicts of interest, meaning that many are fighting to preserve strategic territory and, consequently, others are fighting to maintain power; Another related factor is the misallocation of resources, which Londa (2019, cited by Brinco, 2020, p. 27) attributes to the fact that "these reasons are related to the fact that some ethnic groups feel disadvantaged compared to others." These factors have contributed significantly to the conflicts in the Great Lakes region, a situation that political scientists view as serious—as in the case of the DRC, which exhibits characteristics similar to those mentioned above.

Therefore, it can be concluded that Angola has managed to play an important role on the African continent with regard to peacekeeping operations because, in a very subtle way, it has used every possible means to neutralize insurgent groups (M23) and avoid the use of force in conflict resolution. Angola has invested heavily in diplomacy, in its broadest sense, and has also prioritized frequent meetings among regional leaders to resolve conflicts, as António Carvalho (2014) pointed out. In other words, having defense and security structures such as the Angolan Armed Forces (FAA), which have extensive experience in matters of peace, internal security, and regional security. It was concluded that Angola plays a key role in countering negative forces in the DRC and has leveraged its political influence in the region to ensure that general elections are held in a stable environment in the short term in that country.

Finally, the data collected also confirm that the objective was to use its influence to stabilize this highly troubled region while maintaining its territorial integrity. Although their efforts have not been sufficient to establish lasting peace in the region, as similar signs are still evident today. On this basis, regional security organizations and member states need to promote and implement, specifically, a culture of peace that fosters sustainable development. It is clear that the issue of the DRC is an international matter that requires diplomatic intervention due to the situations that have been occurring in this region.

As such, this article serves as an important academic tool, contributing to future studies or research on the topic in the fields of international relations and political science. The conflicts in the region and in the DRC therefore represent an ongoing challenge for Angola and for the member states to find a peaceful solution, since the matter is not yet resolved and requires further investigation and input.

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THE CHINESE DREAM AND CULTURAL DIPLOMACY
EL SUEÑO CHINO Y LA DIPLOMACIA CULTURAL

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: This article examines the strategic function of cultural diplomacy in realizing the "Chinese Dream," the national rejuvenation project that seeks to reposition China as a leading global power. The study starts from the premise that culture has been instrumentalized as an essential vector of Chinese soft power, aimed at reshaping international perceptions and legitimizing its geopolitical rise. Method: The research is based on a qualitative analysis of official documents, speeches by Chinese leadership, and specialized academic literature. Case study methodology is employed, focusing on emblematic initiatives such as the Confucius Institute network and the Belt and Road Initiative, to deconstruct the mechanisms, narratives, and objectives of contemporary Chinese cultural diplomacy. Results: The analysis reveals a coordinated, multifaceted strategy where cultural diplomacy operates as a transmitter of a narrative of peace, mutual development, and civilizational exceptionalism. The results indicate significant success in expanding Chinese influence in Global South regions, while in the West, resistances persist, associated with perceptions of propagandistic instrumentalization and a lack of reciprocity in cultural exchange. Discussion: It is concluded that cultural diplomacy is an indispensable pillar for the "Chinese Dream." However, its long-term efficacy is contingent on its ability to foster a genuinely bidirectional dialogue and manage the inherent tension between its projection of harmony and the realities of geopolitical competition.

Palabras clave:
diplomacia cultural, sueño chino, poder blando, relaciones internacionales, narrativa nacional.

RESUMEN

Introducción: Este artículo examina la función estratégica de la diplomacia cultural en la realización del "Sueño Chino", el proyecto de rejuvenecimiento nacional que busca reposicionar a China como potencia global líder. El estudio parte de la premisa de que la cultura ha sido instrumentalizada como un vector esencial del poder blando chino, dirigido a remodelar percepciones internacionales y legitimar su ascenso geopolítico. Método: La investigación se basa en un análisis cualitativo de documentos oficiales, discursos de liderazgo chino y literatura académica especializada. Se emplea el estudio de casos, centrándose en iniciativas emblemáticas como la red de Institutos Confucio y la Iniciativa de la Franja y la Ruta, para deconstruir los mecanismos, narrativas y objetivos de la diplomacia cultural china contemporánea. Resultados: El análisis revela una estrategia coordinada y multifacética donde la diplomacia cultural opera como transmisora de una narrativa de paz, desarrollo mutuo y excepcionalismo civilizatorio. Los resultados indican un éxito significativo en la ampliación de la influencia china en regiones del Sur Global, mientras que en Occidente persisten resistencias asociadas a percepciones de instrumentalización propagandística y falta de reciprocidad en el intercambio cultural. Discusión: Se concluye que la diplomacia cultural es un pilar indispensable para el "Sueño Chino". Sin embargo, su eficacia a largo plazo está sujeta a su capacidad para generar un diálogo auténticamente bidireccional y gestionar la tensión inherente entre su proyección de armonía y las realidades de la competencia geopolítica.

Introduction

The "Chinese Dream" of national rejuvenation, championed by Xi Jinping, seeks to reposition China as a leading global power. Cultural diplomacy plays a crucial role in this strategy by projecting an attractive image of China to the world. This article analyzes how the "Chinese Dream" influences China's cultural diplomacy strategies and evaluates its effectiveness.

The Chinese Dream: Ambitions and Context

The "Chinese Dream" is a term used to describe China's vision of becoming a leading global power in all areas. It is a national ambition that seeks to revitalize the nation and restore its place in the world after a century of humiliations and challenges.

It is a political and nationalist concept coined by President Xi Jinping that encapsulates China's ambition to become a leading global power in all areas. It is a vision that seeks to revitalize the Chinese nation, restore its historical prestige, and consolidate its position in the world order.

In essence, the Chinese Dream represents China's aspiration to achieve a "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation."

The "Chinese Dream" is a long-term vision that aims to restore China's global dominance and the power and influence it enjoyed centuries ago. It is a powerful story that combines real life, the contemporary era, and a worldview. China, on the other hand, dreams of:

- Overcoming the shame of the "Century of Humiliation," an era of instability and foreign domination that greatly affected China's national identity.
- China must become the undisputed leader in the global economy, politics, and technology, thereby challenging U.S. hegemony.
- Unite behind the PCC leadership and support its government to achieve economic success and national development.
- Promote Chinese culture to make it a global benchmark and strengthen national identity.

The Historical Context: The Century of Humiliation

The Century of Humiliation was a Dark Age in Chinese history, and in this context, the term will be used to describe a period of Chinese history spanning roughly from the mid-19th century to the mid-20th century. During this period, China suffered a series of humiliations and acts of aggression at the hands of Western powers and Japan, which led to a significant erosion of its sovereignty and a profound national crisis.

Among the causes of the "Century of Humiliation" was the decline of the Qing Empire. During the Qing Dynasty, which ruled China for more than two centuries, the empire was in a state of decline, with a corrupt bureaucracy, a stagnant economy, and an inability to adapt to the challenges of modernity.

The Qing Dynasty, weakened by corruption and inefficiency, faced technologically superior Western powers that imposed unequal treaties and established spheres of influence. China's predominantly agricultural economy was unable to compete with the industrial powers, and the lack of national unity made it easier for foreign powers to invade. Resistance to modernization and a clinging to ancestral traditions also hindered China's development. Taken together, these factors made China vulnerable to foreign exploitation and internal instability, marking a period of great humiliation in its history.

The Taiping Rebellion, a large-scale religious uprising, further weakened the empire and exacerbated internal instability. At the same time, nationalist movements emerged that sought to modernize China and resist foreign interference. Figures such as Sun Yat-sen became symbols of the struggle for independence and national unity.

Foreign powers, such as Great Britain, France, Russia, Germany, and Japan, took advantage of China's weakness to impose their interests. Through unequal treaties, they secured territorial concessions, trade rights, and spheres of influence. These powers fomented internal divisions in China and supported various political factions in order to weaken the imperial government and secure their own interests.

This period of humiliation had a profound impact on China's national identity and motivated many intellectuals and leaders to seek ways to modernize and strengthen the country. The experience of the "Century of Humiliation" remains an important theme in Chinese national narrative and has influenced China's policies in the 21st century.

Social inequalities are another cause; deep-seated social inequalities and the oppression of peasants created an atmosphere of instability and discontent.

Foreign interventionism, when Western powers—such as Great Britain, France, and Russia, as well as Japan—took advantage of China's weakness to impose unequal treaties, demanding reparations, territorial concessions, and spheres of influence.

During the Opium War, which was triggered by the Chinese government's ban on opium, China suffered a humiliating defeat, and the war paved the way for greater foreign interference.

This had severe consequences, such as the loss of territory; China lost large swaths of territory, including Hong Kong and Taiwan, and was forced to grant concessions in major cities such as Shanghai and Tianjin.

The imposition of unequal treaties, which limited China's sovereignty by granting foreign powers extraterritorial rights and customs privileges.

It also led to the weakening of the imperial system; the prestige of the Qing Empire was severely damaged, which undermined its authority and hastened its downfall.

Another significant consequence was the rise of Chinese nationalism; the humiliation China suffered during this period sparked strong nationalist sentiment and a desire to modernize and strengthen the country.

It wasn't all negative; it left a legacy known as the "Century of Humiliation," which left a deep mark on the Chinese national consciousness. Communist leaders have used this historical period to justify the revolution and the building of a strong and powerful China. The desire to regain lost greatness and avoid future humiliations has been a driving force in Chinese foreign policy for decades.

So, to understand the Chinese Dream, it is necessary to understand the historical context that shaped it. The "century of humiliation" was a period of great risk for China, characterized by interference from external powers, the loss of territory, and unbalanced decision-making processes. This experience left a deep scar on China's national consciousness, giving rise to resentment and a desire for revenge.

It has been demonstrated through experience that this has shaped the DNA of the Chinese nation; this is why the "Chinese Dream" bears that name. The strength and imbalance inherent in its DNA and culture can give rise to an unprecedented present.

The Chinese Dream refers, in part, to a response to this humiliating past. In its quest for national strength and international recognition, China seeks to overcome the traumas of the past and demonstrate to the world its ability to be a major power.

This has profound implications for both China and the international order.

For China:

- Support the financial transition toward a model based on innovation and technology.
- It creates a desire to have more relationships and a better life.

- Centralization of power within the state and restriction of individual freedoms for the sake of stability and development.

On behalf of the international list:

- It opposes U.S. hegemony and promotes a multilateral international order.
- Promote the establishment of international institutions and rules that reflect China's interests.
- It highlights fierce competition between China and the United States in various fields, ranging from the economy to technology and geopolitics.

In short, the Chinese Dream is a powerful vision of the future that aims to transform China into a world power. It stems from China's shameful past, and its consequences are being felt both at home and abroad. Cultural diplomacy plays an important role in realizing this dream by creating a positive image of China and attracting other countries to its platform.

Cultural Diplomacy: An Essential Tool

Cultural diplomacy is a strategy that uses cultural factors—such as technology, knowledge, and the exchange of languages and culture—to influence the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of others. Unlike traditional diplomacy, which focuses on relations between governments, cultural diplomacy seeks to engage the public and build lasting relationships based on mutual understanding and cooperation. Chinese cultural diplomacy has several key objectives:

- To present a positive and modern image of China, reject negative stereotypes, and showcase a dynamic and evolving world.
- To develop friendly and cooperative relations with other countries, especially developing countries.
- Promote Confucian values such as unity, dignity, and respect for authority, and set an example for other countries.
- To make Chinese culture a global benchmark and increase the number of people who learn and speak Chinese.
- Promote foreign direct investment and attract foreign students and experts to China.

To achieve these goals, China uses a variety of resources:

Cultural centers around the world that teach the Chinese language and promote Chinese culture. Scholarship and Exchange Program:

- It offers study opportunities and scholarships to Chinese students and professionals.
- They invest in foreign media, such as television and newspapers, to spread their message.
- To produce and distribute film and television programs that promote Chinese culture.
- They organize cultural events such as festivals and exhibitions to showcase the diversity and richness of Chinese culture.
- It collaborates with foreign universities to create joint research programs and promote research.

Cultural mediation is different from traditional diplomacy:

Cultural mediation and traditional diplomacy, although both seek to influence international relations, operate at different levels and with different objectives. Traditional diplomacy focuses on relations between states, negotiating political, economic, and military agreements through official channels. His approach is pragmatic and aims to protect national interests. Diplomats negotiate treaties, resolve disputes, and represent their countries on the international stage.

Cultural mediation, on the other hand, operates on a more personal and social level. It focuses on building bridges between different cultures, promoting mutual understanding and intercultural dialogue. It uses cultural elements such as art, education, sports, and academic exchanges to promote understanding and cooperation. Unlike traditional diplomacy, cultural mediation does not necessarily seek to reach specific political agreements, but rather to create a climate of trust and mutual respect that can facilitate future negotiations.

Cultural mediation focuses on the relationship between governments, whereas cultural mediation focuses on the relationship between people.

It focuses on short-term political and economic issues, whereas traditional negotiations aim to build long-term relationships based on trust and understanding.

The traditional approach uses tools such as treaties and diplomatic agreements, while the traditional approach uses tools and knowledge.

Figure 1

Main Differences Between Cultural Mediation and Traditional Diplomacy

Característica	Diplomacia tradicional	Mediación cultural
Sujeto	Estados	Personas, culturas
Objetivo	Intereses nacionales	Comprensión mutua
Herramientas	Canales oficiales	Elementos culturales
Naturaleza	Formal	Informal
Enfoque	Política	Intercultural

Note. Source: Mediation Models on SlideShare https://es.slideshare.net/slideshow/modelos-de-mediacin-51779884/51779884.

In short, while traditional diplomacy focuses on state interests and uses official channels, cultural mediation seeks to build bridges between cultures and people, using cultural elements as tools for dialogue and cooperation.

The Intersection: The Chinese Dream and Cultural Diplomacy

Cultural diplomacy and the Chinese Dream form a strategic alliance that has redefined China's projection of power on the international stage. By using culture as a tool of "soft power," China seeks not only to restore its historical prestige, but also to shape global perceptions of its rise as a world power. Through initiatives such as the Confucius Institutes, investment in cultural projects worldwide, and the promotion of cultural exchanges, China projects a positive and appealing image while promoting its values and traditions.

The central goal of this strategy is to strengthen China's national identity and restore the pride that was wounded during the "Century of Humiliation." By highlighting its rich history and culture, China seeks to legitimize its position in the world order and challenge Western cultural hegemony. In addition, cultural diplomacy serves to build bridges with other countries, foster cooperation in various fields, and create an environment conducive to China's economic and political interests.

It is important to note that China's cultural diplomacy is not an isolated initiative, but rather part of a broader national project known as the "Chinese Dream." This ambitious goal aims to revitalize the nation and elevate it to the status of a leading global power in all fields. Cultural diplomacy, by helping to build a positive image of China, plays a vital role in realizing this dream.

However, China's cultural diplomacy also faces challenges and criticism. Some observers warn of the risk that culture could be used as a propaganda tool to impose a particular worldview and stifle cultural diversity. In addition, China's growing influence in the cultural sphere has raised concerns about cultural homogenization and the loss of cultural identity in some countries.

The Chinese Dream intertwines in a unique dance with cultural diplomacy, forming an unbreakable bond. Their shared goal: to paint a captivating picture of China on the world stage, while quietly expanding its influence. Cultural diplomacy: the key to realizing the Chinese Dream.

The synergy between the Chinese Dream and cultural diplomacy manifests itself in various ways. Cultural diplomacy lends legitimacy to China's global ambitions by portraying the country as a benign and cooperative actor on the international stage. Through culture and cultural exchanges, China is able to draw other countries into its sphere of influence, building relationships based on trust and cooperation. In addition, cultural diplomacy helps enhance China's soft power—that is, its ability to influence other countries through attraction and persuasion rather than coercion. Both tools draw on a shared narrative that highlights China's achievements and its vision of a better future for the world.

China has implemented several strategies to integrate the Chinese Dream with cultural diplomacy.

This ambitious infrastructure project connects China with Asia, Africa, and Europe, boosting trade, investment, and cooperation. The Belt and Road Initiative has not only an economic focus but also a cultural one, as it facilitates exchanges among diverse civilizations.

In the realm of soft power, China is making significant investments in public diplomacy to project a positive image of the country abroad. This includes the use of media, social media, cultural exchanges, and scholarship programs. In addition, Confucian values—such as harmony, hierarchy, and respect for authority—are promoted as an alternative to Western values. China seeks to position these principles as a source of wisdom and stability in an increasingly unstable world.

Specific Case Studies

1. China has made significant investments in Africa, financing major infrastructure projects and providing development assistance. At the same time, it has promoted Chinese culture through Confucius Institutes and cultural cooperation programs.
0. In Latin America, China has forged strong economic and political ties with several countries by financing infrastructure projects and purchasing raw materials. It has also promoted Chinese culture through cultural centers and exchange programs.
0. In Asia, China has strengthened its ties with its neighbors and promoted regional integration through mechanisms such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

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Analysis of Key Narratives and Messages

The central idea of Chinese cultural diplomacy revolves around the concept of a community with a shared future, where all countries can benefit from cooperation and joint development. Other important messages include:

- Peace and Development: China positions itself as a champion of peace and development, in contrast to the more aggressive policies of other powers.
- Non-interference in internal affairs: China respects the sovereignty of nations and does not attempt to impose its political model.
- Win-win cooperation: Collaboration with China is beneficial for all participating countries.

In short, the link between the Chinese Dream and cultural diplomacy is a key strategy for China's rise as a global power. By combining geopolitical ambitions with cultural tools, China aims to build a multipolar world in which it plays a central role.

I*mpact and Repercussions*

The "Chinese Dream" cultural diplomacy program has had a profound and multifaceted impact both domestically and internationally. Domestically, it has served as a powerful tool for strengthening national identity and patriotism among Chinese citizens. By promoting China's values and history, the program has strengthened the legitimacy of the communist regime and mobilized civil society around a common national project.

On the international stage, China's cultural diplomacy has succeeded in transforming the country's image, presenting China as a civilization rich in history and culture and as a responsible global actor. This has allowed it to expand its cultural influence around the world, especially in developing countries, and has strengthened its bilateral relations with numerous countries. In addition, it has been an effective tool for promoting China's economic interests by facilitating the export of cultural products and attracting tourists.

In the long term, the goal of Chinese cultural diplomacy is to build a community with a shared future, based on Chinese values and principles. This ambition poses a direct challenge to Western cultural hegemony and offers an alternative to traditional development models. However, this strategy has also drawn criticism and faced challenges. Some observers warn that China's cultural diplomacy may be used as a propaganda tool to conceal the country's internal problems and promote an idealized view of China. In addition, there is concern that the spread of Chinese culture could lead to cultural homogenization and the loss of cultural diversity in other countries.

In conclusion, the Chinese Dream's cultural diplomacy program is an ambitious and complex initiative with a significant impact on international relations. While it has made significant progress in promoting Chinese culture and strengthening the country's image, it also poses challenges and sparks debate regarding the nature and objectives of this strategy.

Cultural Dimensions and Values

China's cultural diplomacy, as part of its soft power strategy, is rooted in a rich cultural and philosophical tradition that seeks to connect with audiences around the world. It is not just a matter of promoting cultural elements, but of creating a carefully crafted narrative in which cultural values and identities are intertwined with geopolitical objectives.

Although harmony and cooperation are key values, Chinese cultural diplomacy goes beyond that. Emphasis is placed on the idea of a community with a shared future, where all countries can benefit from cooperation and joint development. This narrative aims to position China as a reliable and constructive partner on the international stage.

In addition, values such as the following are promoted:

- Confucianism: The Confucian principles of hierarchy, loyalty, benevolence, and righteousness serve as the foundation for building interpersonal and state relationships based on trust and mutual respect.
- Legalism: Legalism, which emphasizes social order and the importance of laws, is used to justify China's authoritarian development model and promote stability and prosperity.
- Taoism: Taoism, with its emphasis on harmony with nature and the pursuit of simplicity, is used to promote a more sustainable lifestyle that is in balance with the environment.

Adapting Chinese culture to different contexts is a complex process that requires a deep understanding of local cultures. China seeks to strike a balance between promoting its own values and adapting to the needs and expectations of its partners. This process is carried out by:

- Cultural syncretism: Chinese culture blends with local elements to create new forms of cultural expression that appeal to local audiences.
- Location: Messages and cultural products are tailored to the specific characteristics of each market, using language and symbols that are familiar and relevant to the audience.
- Intercultural dialogue: Dialogue between different cultures is promoted to foster mutual understanding and build relationships based on respect and trust.

Cultural exchange goes beyond the simple exchange of cultural goods. It is a process of building mutual understanding and transforming identities. Intercultural dialogue, for its part, is a key tool for overcoming prejudices and building relationships based on respect and understanding.

It is understood that Chinese cultural diplomacy is a complex strategy that combines cultural, political, and economic elements to project a positive image of China to the world and strengthen its position on the international stage. By promoting universal values such as harmony, cooperation, and respect for diversity, China seeks to build a community with a shared future and consolidate its leadership in the 21st century.

Key Actors and Internal Dynamics

Chinese cultural diplomacy is a coordinated effort involving a variety of actors, each with specific roles and objectives. Collaboration among these stakeholders is key to the success of this strategy.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has evolved from a revolutionary movement into one of the most powerful and influential political forces in the world. Its role as a key player on the global stage has been cemented in recent decades, particularly through its growing economic power, its increasing geopolitical influence, and its ambitious diplomacy.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) plays a central role in the formulation and implementation of China's foreign policy, including cultural diplomacy. It establishes general guidelines, defines strategic objectives, and oversees the implementation of policies. Through its United Front Work Department, the CCP coordinates the activities of the various actors involved in cultural diplomacy.

State-Owned and Private Companies:

- State-Owned Enterprises: Companies such as Sinopec, PetroChina, and China State Construction Engineering Corporation play a key role in the Belt and

Road Initiative by financing and building infrastructure in various countries. At the same time, these companies help promote Chinese culture and values through their activities.

- Private Companies: Private companies such as Huawei, Alibaba, and Tencent have achieved remarkable success on a global scale, enhancing China's image. These companies not only export products and services, but also invest in research and development, driving innovation and international collaboration.

Cultural and Educational Institutions

- Confucius Institutes: These cultural centers, supported by the Chinese government, have become a symbol of China's cultural diplomacy. Confucius Institutes teach the Chinese language, promote Chinese culture, and organize cultural events.
- Private high schools: Online or private language schools that set an essential standard for language and cultural learning, preparing students to build connections with China.
- Chinese Universities: Universities in China offer a wide variety of degree programs in Chinese and attract a large number of international students. In addition, these institutions participate in joint research projects with foreign universities and organize conferences and seminars.

The media are tools for shaping narratives and public opinion, and they are particularly important for the analysis in this article. On the one hand, China's state-run media, particularly CCTV and Xinhua, are used to promote a positive image of the country and disseminate the key messages of cultural diplomacy. On the other hand, the country also invests in foreign media; for example, it buys television channels and newspapers so that its narratives can reach a larger audience.

The internal dynamics of Chinese cultural diplomacy are characterized by four main features:

First, centralized coordination; second, public-private cooperation; third, flexibility; fourth, competition. First, “cultural diplomacy is subject to strict oversight by the Chinese Communist Party…”. In China, culture is an effective tool for achieving strategic objectives set by the state—objectives that individual departments should not interfere with. As a result, all branches of cultural diplomacy work together under the unified leadership of the Chinese Communist Party.

This means that China's cultural diplomacy is a complex and multifaceted endeavor involving a variety of actors. Through coordination and adaptation to local conditions, China has been very successful in projecting its influence globally.

Future Outlook

China's cultural diplomacy will continue to evolve, facing both opportunities and challenges. Trends such as digitization and globalization will expand the influence of Chinese cultural diplomacy, but they will also expose it to more intense scrutiny and competition. As Chinese cultural diplomacy exerts a more significant influence on international relations, new dynamics of power and cooperation will emerge. Some possible scenarios for the future of Chinese cultural diplomacy include even greater integration of cultural diplomacy with other foreign policy tools, even more vigorous competition with other powers, and greater sophistication in the management of intercultural relations.

In recent decades, China has sought to establish ties with Latin American countries and has been highly successful in doing so. As part of its strategy, China has long implemented various initiatives and programs that have helped the country project a positive image and strengthen its relations with countries in the region. In this regard, we will examine the main effects of this strategy:

For example, the strengthening of bilateral relations

- Economic cooperation: Chinese investments in infrastructure and growing trade with many Latin American countries have complemented cultural diplomacy as a means of strengthening economic cooperation.
- Cultural exchange: Through cultural exchange programs, scholarships, and the establishment of Confucius Institutes, a greater understanding of both Chinese and Latin American cultures has been fostered.
- Public diplomacy: China has succeeded in building a favorable image in South America, where it has established itself as a reliable partner willing to cooperate in various areas.
- Soft power: One of the ways or methods used to increase China's soft power in the region—which has made it possible to challenge traditional American influence—has been cultural diplomacy.

The Expansion of Chinese Influence

- Culture of Diplomacy: Highlighting the role of Chinese influencers in soft power strategies in the region, in a challenge to U.S. hegemony.
- Diversification of international relations: Latin American countries have diversified their foreign relations, seeking new opportunities for cooperation beyond the United States and Europe.
- Reducing dependence on the U.S. U.S.: On certain occasions, Chinese cultural diplomacy has played a role in reducing Latin American countries' dependence on the United States, both politically and economically.

In other words, based on the above, Chinese cultural diplomacy has had a profound influence on Latin America, changing bilateral dynamics and redefining the regional political landscape. However, it is also important to examine the challenges and risks of this strategy and the future of this relationship.

Venezuela has been a prime example of Chinese cultural diplomacy in Latin America. Bilateral relations, which have grown stronger in recent decades, have been characterized by intense economic interdependence and China's growing cultural influence. Mega-infrastructure projects, energy cooperation, and cultural exchange programs have also been the hallmarks of this relationship. However, this strategic alliance has had its share of blessings and challenges.

On the one hand, cooperation between Venezuela and China has enabled the South American country to secure financing for development projects and, in turn, has strengthened its position on the global geopolitical map. On the other hand, Chinese investment in infrastructure has led to sustained economic growth and an improvement in people's quality of life. In particular, cooperation in the energy sector ensures that China has access to oil and that the Venezuelan government receives crucial revenue.

On the other hand, falling oil prices and international sanctions have tested Venezuela's ability to meet its financial obligations. Furthermore, the lack of transparency in some agreements and the concentration of economic power in the hands of a few Chinese companies have sparked criticism and debate within Venezuelan society.

Looking ahead, the relationship between Venezuela and China will face a complex landscape fraught with uncertainty. Venezuela's economic recovery will depend largely on the government's ability to implement structural reforms and diversify its economy.

For its part, China will need to adapt its cultural diplomacy strategy to the new realities in Venezuela and seek ways to mitigate the risks associated with this relationship.

The case of Venezuela illustrates both the opportunities and the challenges of Chinese cultural diplomacy in Latin America. Although this strategy has allowed China to strengthen its presence in the region, it has also raised concerns about the sustainability of this relationship and its impact on the sovereignty of the recipient countries.

In the future, the relationship between Venezuela and China will face a complex situation fraught with uncertainty. Venezuela's economic recovery will depend largely on the government's ability to implement structural reforms and diversify its economy. For its part, China will need to adapt its cultural diplomacy strategy to the new realities in Venezuela and seek ways to mitigate the risks associated with this relationship.

In conclusion, the case of Venezuela illustrates both the opportunities and the challenges of Chinese cultural diplomacy in Latin America. While this strategy has allowed China to strengthen its presence in the region, it has also raised concerns about the sustainability of this relationship and its impact on the sovereignty of the recipient countries.

To navigate today's complex geopolitical landscape, it is vital to understand Chinese cultural diplomacy. To the extent that this state policy has fundamentally revolutionized the dynamics of how China presents itself to the world and has reshaped international relations, analyzing its mechanisms, values, and intentions allows us to anticipate trends and strengthen our international relations and political decision-making, while also promoting intercultural understanding. In an increasingly interconnected world, an understanding of this form of diplomacy provides us with a key tool for engaging in an informed and constructive way in the shaping of the future.

Discussion and Conclusions

Although China's cultural diplomacy has made progress in some countries, its effectiveness varies by region and context. The narrative of the "Chinese Dream" may be appealing in developing countries, but it is met with skepticism in the West. The implications of these findings for Chinese foreign policy and international relations in a multipolar world are discussed.

The Chinese Dream and cultural diplomacy represent an ambitious strategy by China to project its power globally. As China continues its rise, cultural diplomacy will play an increasingly important role in shaping the world order. However, the long-term success of this strategy will depend on China's ability to adapt to an ever-changing international environment and to address the legitimate concerns of other countries. In a future marked by growing competition among major powers and geopolitical uncertainty, cultural diplomacy could become a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it can serve as a bridge to build trust and cooperation among different civilizations. On the other hand, it could exacerbate divisions and fuel tensions. The future of international relations will depend largely on how China and the West manage this complex relationship, in which cultural diplomacy plays a fundamental role as a tool of soft power and as an ideological battleground.

The growing reliance on digital technologies, such as social media and artificial intelligence, has expanded the tools available to Chinese cultural diplomacy, but it has also posed new challenges related to privacy, security, and the manipulation of public opinion.

Ultimately, the Chinese Dream and its cultural diplomacy represent one of the most significant challenges of our time. The questions we have raised are just a few of the many we must consider as we navigate this new and complex international landscape. Are we ready for the changes ahead? How can we build a more just and equitable future in an increasingly interconnected world?

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