



Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca  
**Faculty of European Studies**

**TEZĂ DE DOCTORAT**  
**DOCTORAL THESIS**

**Long Abstract**

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2020



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**Intercultural Economic Diplomacy and Cross-  
Cultural Encounters in Central Africa after the  
Discovery of Natural Resources - The Case of  
Equatorial Guinea**

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**INTERCULTURAL ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY AND CROSS-CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS IN CENTRAL AFRICA AFTER THE DISCOVERY OF NATURAL RESOURCES – THE CASE OF EQUATORIAL GUINEA**

**Abstract**

In the mid-1990s, the international community’s attitude toward Equatorial Guinea (EG) dramatically changed. Discovering oil and gas in its territory transformed EG from an impoverished and marginal country to one of economic potential.

EG once depended on external aid until the discovery of its natural resources, leading to a life-changing increase in government investment and attractive economic opportunities.

International factors sought to join the economic boom. Countries implemented economic diplomacy strategies, alerting local decision-makers to the changes needed in EG’s international conduct.

Implementing EG’s economic plan continues with the government’s efforts to strengthen the country’s newfound pride and formulate its national identity. EG has increased its diplomatic activity, including intensive involvement in international forums.

This research focuses on EG’s international relations, before and after the economic change, and the intercultural encounters in Central Africa with international factors. By focusing on the local perspective, the research expands existing knowledge about the situation in EG and decision-making processes. The research conclusions, and the model of intercultural economic diplomacy for Central Africa that emerges from them, will serve diplomatic and business factors in furthering a sound economic strategy for the region.

The research and data collection took place in EG and was conducted using a qualitative approach that included semi-structured in-depth interviews, analysis of historical and contemporary documents, and a focus group. The data analysis was done following the grounded theory. The research population included participants from key positions in past and present governments, senior officials of international organisations, and senior state employees.

The findings provide new insights regarding the country’s history and life before and after the discovery of oil. The findings describe the region’s cultural context and characterise the modern diplomatic and business environment.

The research conclusions further elucidate the decision-makers’ considerations and the unique characteristics of the region. The research adds a Central African perspective to the existing knowledge of international relations and offers tools to be used by both Central African and international actors.

*Keywords:* economic diplomacy, international relations, intercultural differences, Equatorial Guinea, Central Africa, natural resources, intercultural economics



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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In the mid-1990s, the attitude of the international community toward Equatorial Guinea (EG) completely changed. EG transformed from a poor country on the margins of the political agenda to an influential actor in African politics and a focus of economic attractiveness. Countries and international organisations that had not paid particular attention to EG in the past began to make efforts to upgrade the level of bilateral diplomatic and economic relations.

Since it gained independence from Spain in 1968, and until the oil and gas discovery in the mid-1990s, EG suffered years of poverty and dependence on foreign aid. In the mid-1990s significant deposits of oil and gas were discovered, and life in the country has changed completely. The poorest country in Africa soon became the third-largest oil exporter on the continent. In the new economic situation, EG has the highest national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita in Africa. Rapid economic progress began to show in all aspects of life, and the national mood turned optimistic. After the discovery of its natural resources, the small, marginal state has reached new potential for economic cooperation with many international factors.

EG, a country with only 1.2 million inhabitants, gained independence from Spain in 1968 after one hundred and ninety years of colonial rule and is the only Spanish-speaking country on the African continent. The Guinean people convey fond memories from the era of Spanish colonisation, and resigned to the violent dictatorial regime that characterised the first decade of independence. Until the discovery of natural resources, the state was in deep poverty and unable to provide essential public services to its citizens. The discovery of natural resources radically changed the economic situation, and the country's leadership, with the assistance of international organisations, formulated the National Economic and Social Development Plan 'Horizon 2020' (African Development Bank, 2013). With its significantly growing state revenue, the government began investing in civilian and public infrastructure, as well as in the military and security sectors.

The extensive investment in infrastructure and the increasing public sector budget is evident and apparent to each visitor to the country. The increase in state revenue, the massive investment in infrastructure, and the developing market demands have created abundant new and attractive economic opportunities for countries and business entities. Consequently, the unique situation has forced EG to change its

conduct within the international system. The present research attempts to understand the various considerations and interests in the process of EG's new integration into the international system.

In order to understand the considerations and motives of the leadership, this research utilised theories from the field of international relations, especially the Realism theory. Realists see human nature as the basis for understanding international relations in light of the notion that human nature works to promote only its own interests. Realism anthropomorphises states and assumes that they also work to promote only their own interests (Wohlforth, 2016).

Discovering its natural resources and the economic shift that followed led to a change in the international community's attitude toward EG. Countries began exerting their influence, using economic diplomacy tools to increase involvement in the economic process taking place in the country. New economic opportunities in Central Africa, resulting from the discovery of natural resources, are a focus of attraction for various international factors, including and business entities (World Bank, 2020).

Dependency and world system theories provide necessary explanations and assist in understanding economic processes between central and peripheral countries (Wallerstein, 2012). This research used these theories to better understand the economic relationships between EG and other international actors and to clarify the considerations and motivations of the involved parties.

The cross-cultural encounters, occurring locally and outside Central Africa, have the potential for misunderstandings and errors in judgement arising from an unfamiliarity with the cultural differences and various interests of each actor. To explain cultural phenomena, and to better understand the cultural component of the relations, the research used Hofstede's cultural dimension theory (Hofstede, 2011) and its subsequent theories of human values (Schwartz, 2012) and cultural compass (Ronen and Shenkar, 2017).

## **Research Focus**

The research focused on the relations between EG and the international community before and after the discovery of natural resources. The discovery of natural resources has led to profound economic and social change in the country, as well as making it a focus of commercial interest for many international entities. The research focused on the attempt to understand the difference in the global attitude toward EG



after the radical change in its economic situation, and on the intercultural aspects of the international encounters in Central Africa.

The research was conducted in EG and included interviews with past and present ministerial-level decision-makers, senior civil service officials, and representatives of UN organisations operating in the country. The study also included document analysis of material from national archives and focus group analysis for validating the information and adding more perspectives from a different population.

### **Researcher's interest**

My interest in the research has evolved over the last two decades, where I have been engaged in diplomacy and international relations as part of my past official positions in the Israeli Foreign Service and currently in consulting in a business setting for governments and international organisations in Africa. I noticed a large difference between the way the local population in the less developed areas perceives its situation compared to how things are seen in more developed regions.

Many African countries feel exploited by more developed countries, whether the European countries, that ruled the area in the past, or new powers like the US or China (Terreblanche, 2014). Dependency and world-system theories (Wallerstein, 2012; Amin, 2015) describe the phenomena and provide explanations to the economic and political situation resulting from the dependency relations of the developed world and the African continent. Many African people think their fate should have been entirely different. These African peoples believe that the tropical weather, the good and fertile soil and the variety of nature's treasures should have made Africa a vibrant and attractive continent.

However, according to the African Development Bank (2020), the economic situation on the African continent is still not right. Many of the inhabitants continue to suffer from extreme poverty. Despite the growth experienced by several countries, only in a few cases has there been a decline in poverty rates and inequality indices. Investment in education and professional training in Africa is the lowest in the world. There is not enough skilled workforce to enable the desired economic growth, and strategies for education and training at the national level need to be formulated.

Improving the continent's economic situation and raising the standards of living of the inhabitants require greater government involvement in economic processes.

Governments have a role in public and private sector relations both as a regulator and as a partner (African Development Bank, 2020).

Within the continent, the Central African region is considered particularly vulnerable. EG, which I have come to know intimately over the past decade, is a prominent example of a country who saw a change in the international community's attitude only when there was a change in the economic situation. When the oil was discovered, and the new economic potential was clear, many countries and other international actors sought closer relations with EG and to capitalise on the oil boom.

My acquaintance with decision-makers in EG offered a unique opportunity to learn first-hand the economic and social processes that Guinean society underwent since the discovery of oil. Moreover, I had the chance to understand the decision-makers' considerations and the way they perceive foreign involvement in the region.

Interested countries implemented an economic diplomacy strategy that was not fully understood by Central African decision-makers. The encounters between locals and foreigners, and their cultural aspects, create a working environment which needs to be followed by those trying to be successfully active in the region.

Central Africa has significant economic potential, and this research intends to provide tools for all parties involved, to better understand each party's way of thinking and interests. Undoubtedly, increasing the economic involvement and social responsibility of the international community will lead to a better realisation of the economic potential of Central Africa. It will bring the much-needed improvement to the living conditions of its inhabitants.

### **Researcher's Position**

This research deals with intercultural economic diplomacy in Central Africa through the case of EG and does not attempt to analyse, praise or criticise EG's external policy or internal conduct. EG is exposed to international criticism on various issues related to government and leadership activities, national priorities, matters related to integrity, transparency, ethics, human rights and more. This criticism is usually being answered directly by the state through various communication channels (Government of Equatorial Guinea, 2020). Nevertheless, EG is an example to other Central African countries on various issues, including economic planning, diplomacy and international conduct.

Throughout the research, an attempt was made to understand the country's motives and interests and to analyse the diplomatic and economic involvement of international actors in the region.

One of the methodological challenges of the qualitative research is to find harmonic engagement, integration, and empathy on the one hand, and indifferent and critical thinking on the other (Shkedi, 2003). In this research, the participants are past and present high-level government officials. The researcher's experience in consulting the government, familiarity with the participants' environment and constraints, together with the less subjective perspective of an external advisor, created a suitable position for the research.

Furthermore, the purpose of the qualitative description is to take the reader into the observed environment. The intention of this thesis is to present rich and descriptive data so the reader might better understand the current ecopolitical events in EG. Methodologically, this means that the researcher has to learn the language of the informants, including body language and other gestures (Patton, 2015). In the present research, the fact that I have been working in EG for the past decade was very helpful in accessing and interpreting the data collected for this study. The intent of the participants—including body gestures, nuances and the use of linguistic, ethnic dialects—was well understood and helped to create the complete picture reflected in the research findings.

### **Gap in Knowledge**

The research opens a window to the unique perspective of the people of EG, and through them to the cultural and economic environment prevailing in Central Africa. The historical facts are accurately documented in most literary sources, but almost without local interpretation of the events. Hence, it is difficult to understand from the existing literature how reality is perceived and interpreted by the inhabitants. There is also a need for more knowledge about Central African culture and its characteristics (Ronen and Shenkar, 2017). The intention of the current research is to provide further information on the unique norms and values of the regional cultures, which is needed to further compare societies and national cultures. The current research contributes to the existing knowledge of the regional customs, enabling the better use of current cultural and anthropological models in the Central African region.

According to Soobramanien (2011), there is insufficient research regarding economic diplomacy in Central Africa in the post-colonial era, hence the knowledge gap. The ecopolitical involvement of developed countries in the region, and the dependency relations between central and peripheral countries and its expressions in Central Africa, have not yet been fully explored. The current research aims to provide the interpretation given by the Central African peoples to the situation.

### **Research Goals**

The main goal of the research is to develop a model of intercultural economic diplomacy for EG, with recommendations based on the country's unique characteristics.

This model is suitable for use in the entire Central African region, compatible with the many similarities of the region's countries and peoples.

The secondary research goals:

1. To describe the historical and cultural context of EG and the changes since the discovery of oil and gas;
2. To define the unique characteristics of the cultural and business environment of modern EG;
3. To understand the intercultural economic relations between EG and the international community.

### **Main Research Question**

What components might comprise a model of intercultural economic diplomacy for Central Africa (in the case of Equatorial Guinea)?

Subsidiary research questions:

1. What are the changes that took place in EG after the discovery of the natural resources?
2. What are the unique characteristics of the cultural and economic environment of modern EG?
3. What are the intercultural economic relations between EG and the international community?

In order to understand the country's considerations and conduct, it is essential to explore its history and culture. The first research question collects data on the pre-

colonial situation, social changes during the Spanish colonisation era, and the current processes in the country and society. Using this information will elucidate the country's interests in the post-colonial period, before and after the discovery of oil.

The data collected through the second research question will describe the unique characteristics of the business and culture environment in EG, using information and data obtained from local sources, in combination with relevant existing literature. This definition will be as authentic as possible and will not be affected by the stigmas and prejudices toward the region.

The third research question collects the necessary data from local sources to describe the role of EG in the international system, at the global and regional levels, before and after the discovery of natural resources. The information allows us to describe the economic interests of the various parties and the way EG interprets the conduct and involvement of international factors in the region.

### **Thesis structure**

**The first chapter** reviews the latest and most relevant literature regarding the research topics. This chapter begins by presenting the theories in use in the research to understand phenomena and processes. The chapter then reviews relevant literature on Africa's place in the international system, history and economics of the Central African sub-region, and EG. The review continues with environmental changes since the end of colonialism. The chapter reviews modern diplomacy, economic diplomacy and cultural diplomacy. In the end, the chapter focuses on the intercultural encounters in Central Africa, along with and issues related to intercultural economics and communication.

**The second chapter** describes the methodology used to conduct the research. The chapter explains the reasons for choosing the qualitative approach and describes the research design, data collection process and method of data analysis. The research population was carefully selected, and the chapter details the different considerations and the selection process.

**The third chapter** presents the findings that emerged from the in-depth interviews, the document analysis, and the focus group discussions, and divides them into themes and categories. The findings are presented according to research questions. The findings show the local perspective of the informants. One main point of strengths

and uniqueness of the research is to provide a platform for local officials to present their interpretation of events and their unique perspective.

**The fourth chapter** includes a discussion of the findings. This chapter consists of the researcher's interpretation of the findings, together with an attempt to explain why these specific findings were obtained. The connection between the findings and relevant literature is examined, and the findings are analysed in accordance.

**The fifth chapter** presents, according to the research questions, the conclusions that emerged from the discussion of the findings. The conclusions of the research enabled the development of an evidence-based strategy of an intercultural economic policy designed for the Central African region.

### **Importance of the Research**

The research and its conclusions are of great importance to international factors which are in contact with the Central African region, or factors which identify an economic potential they wish to examine. The research supports existing theories in international relations, extends the knowledge available in the literature and provides practical tools for factors operating in the region. The research conclusions will serve as a useful tool for formulating a strategy for a proper activity in the area. Various countries, in particular European countries, recognise the economic potential inherent in the Central African region and seek to enhance cooperation with local governments. The research will be useful for European countries, especially those who have ruled the region in the past, in learning how the locals understand and interpret the collective colonial history. The research provides practical tools and recommendations for businesses as they formulate a marketing and penetration strategy for local markets and obtain tools regarding how to conduct the connection with government officials. For the researcher's community, the research is unique by providing an insight into the perspectives of locals and their interpretation of historical events and current processes. The research improves existing cultural tools for a better understanding of the regions' cultural norms and values and enable more accurate appreciation of national cultures in Central Africa.

*Keywords:* economic diplomacy, international relations, intercultural differences, Equatorial Guinea, Central Africa, natural resources, intercultural economics

## **CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES**

### **2.1 The Conceptual Framework- Main Theories**

#### **Dependency and World System Theories**

These theories will explain the economic phenomena in which, despite the wealth of natural resources, Central African countries remain poor and less developed. The phenomenon was first defined by Prebisch and Singer (Dosman, 2008). They described a mechanism whereby poor countries export raw materials to developed countries, and finally the repurchase it with added value at a higher cost. Economists have suggested various solutions to the problem, and from this theory developed the world system and globalisation theories (Amin, 2014). Immanuel Wallerstein describes the importance of the labour component and the rise of capitalism. Western European countries have taken advantage of the end of the age of feudalism to expand their economic influence in the world and spread the industrial revolution and capitalism. Wallerstein says capitalism is organised around the division of labour at the regional and non-state levels. In world-system theory, there are three dimensions - centre, periphery, and division of labour, and is characterised as one unit in which there is a division of labour and a variety of different cultural systems, which create mechanisms that divide the added value from the centre to the periphery (Wallerstein, 2012).

#### **Realism**

The Realism theory assists in understanding the conduct of the President of Equatorial Guinea in the international arena. The theory explains the state's need to gain power, leaders' considerations and their behaviour. Realism sees human nature as the basis for understanding international relations, in light of the perception that a man is working to advance his interests. Accordingly, the actions of the leaders and the conduct of the states can be understood (Frei, 2016). According to Schweller (2009), neo-classical realists provide a causal chain that has three phases: independent variable (relative power of states in anarchical international system), mediating variable (transmitting factor that filters systemic pressures), and dependent variable (results of foreign policy).

#### **The Hofstede Model and Intercultural Evaluation**

The Hofstede model and its subsequent developments allow to compare cultures and explain different behavioural phenomena based on cultural differences. Hofstede

describes six cultural dimensions by which different national cultures can be compared (Hofstede, 2011). Based on Hofstede's theory, researcher Shalom Schwartz developed the theory of basic human values that allows measuring the relation to the most widely recognised universal values in the different cultures (Schwartz, 2012). These theories served as the basis for cultural mapping of the world (Ronen and Shenkar, 2017). The use of these theories in the research will help to define the characteristics of local culture and enable the analysis and understanding of the intercultural encounters that occur in Equatorial Guinea.

## **2.2 The Concepts**

Culture: Culture has many definitions, all of which describe a collective phenomenon that can be associated with different collectives made up by a variety of individuals. This research draws on Hofstede's definition whereby culture is the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others (Hofstede, 2011).

Cross-cultural differences: Differences in traditions, norms, beliefs, and values that vary between nations, peoples, ethnic groups, and different language speakers. Cross-cultural differences cause a distinctive perception of reality by individuals in various situations since the interpretation given to situations by humans depends on their cultural background (Hofstede and Bond, 1988).

Intercultural economics: Area of knowledge of economics that examines the relationship between culture and economic outcomes. Intercultural economics attempts to provide explanations for questions such as why nations with similar characteristics have different economic performance, and why economic cooperation will be valid between certain countries and but may experience difficulties with other countries. The cultural component should be part of the economic analysis to avoid misinterpretation of events (Rongxing, 2012).

Central Africa: The sub-region of Central Africa includes 11 countries that comprise the Economic Community of Central African States- ECCAS. The countries of the region are close to the equator on the drainage basins of the Congo and Chari rivers and share similar economic, demographic and cultural characteristics as well as shared history (UN Economic Commission for Africa, 2020).



Equatorial Guinea: The only former colony of Spain in Africa, a small country with 1.2 million inhabitants. Gained independence in 1968 and experienced political and economic crises. Equatorial Guinea was considered one of the world's most impoverished nations. In the mid-1990s, significant oil and gas deposits were discovered, and the country went through a socioeconomic change. The attitude of the international community toward the country has also dramatically changed (African Development Bank, 2013; Frynas, 2004).

Discovery of natural resources: An event of great importance for every economy, and especially for a small country in Central Africa. The Central African region is abundant in natural resources, and its discovery has caused a significant change in the economy (Soobramanien, 2011). In the second half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, the most influential resource for Central African economics has been oil. Equatorial Guinea's economy was significantly affected by the discovery of oil and gas in its territory (Frynas, 2004).

Tribal society: In anthropology, a tribe is defined as a human social group, a social identity that is not a political entity. A tribal society is made up of different ethnic groups of identical and social cohesion with unique characteristics. In Central Africa, the boundaries of the countries were set by colonial European countries without consideration to the tribal living areas, so that different ethnic groups live under a uniform political identity (Austen and Headrick, 1983).

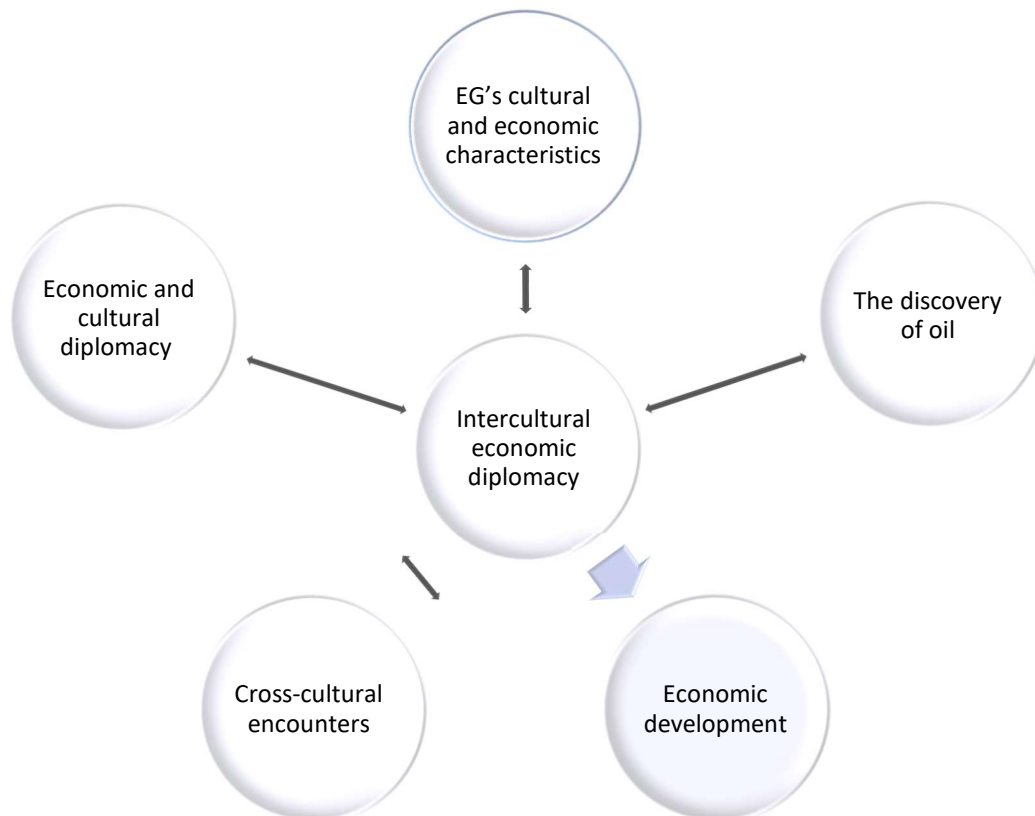
Postcolonialism: The historical period after the end of Western colonialism in Africa. Postcolonialism is a generic name for the system of theories dealing with local heritage during and after liberation from European colonial rule, the formation of national identity and how peoples and individuals who lived under foreign rule reconfigured their identity (Young, 2016). This research uses a broad definition of postcolonialism that also includes relationships with international factors after the Central African countries gained independence.

Economic diplomacy: Economic diplomacy is the use of a variety of economic tools to advance national interests. Under the definition of economic diplomacy are all international economic activities of countries, including trade, taxation, and customs

policies, loans, investments, foreign aid, agreements and treaties, and more (Bayne and Woolcock, 2017).

**Figure 1.1**

*The Conceptual Framework: A Visual Model*



The visual model illustrates the way concepts interact and form a base of knowledge upon which the model of intercultural economic diplomacy for Central Africa relies. At the basic level, recognition of ideas from the fields of economic diplomacy and intercultural economy is required, through which one can understand the countries behaviour and the challenges of work in a different cultural environment. The understanding of the challenges requires a definition of culture and intercultural differences. The research is conducted in EG, and therefore, requires knowledge of the region. The research focused on the postcolonial period when countries of the region began to form relationships with international factors and to create a national identity despite being tribal societies. The discovery of natural resources is a formative event in which we examine international relations in Central Africa.

Ultimately, the research will develop a model of intercultural economic diplomacy for Central Africa, based on the local perspective and interpretation of processes and events. The goals of this research can be achieved by using qualitative multi-stage multiple method research (Strauss and Corbin, 2015). The next chapter will describe the methodological considerations that underpinned this research and the actual data collection process in Equatorial Guinea.

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 The Research Paradigm: Qualitative Approach**

The research was conducted in the qualitative approach, and a case study was employed. The qualitative research paradigm allows for the understanding of personal experiences, actions, and reasons, rather than for examining existing theories or results (Hays and Wood, 2011). In other words, qualitative research mainly seeks to understand in depth the way people perceive and interpret the world of content from the participant's point of view (Weil, 2005).

My experience in working with the government of Equatorial Guinea for more than ten years has taught me that in the region, the locals attach great importance to personal connection. Therefore, a data collection method based on interpersonal interaction is very well suited to the local mentality. The data were gathered through semi-structured in-depth interviews, document analysis and a focus group discussion. Interviews were conducted with senior government officials in Equatorial Guinea who have been active in recent decades, and with key actors in the country's economy. The research has examined official records documenting the economic decision-making processes of the country following the discovery of oil and gas, as well as data from international organisations.

### **3.2 Case Study**

Since this research sought to explore the historical and cultural context of Equatorial Guinea in order to gain insights into intercultural economic diplomacy following the discovery of oil, a case study was chosen as an approach. A case study assumes that it is possible to investigate a specific case and learn about an entire group. The case study is characterised, amongst other definitions, as a study whose boundaries are determined by time, place, and participants (Sabar-Ben Yehoshua, 1990).

Yosifon (2016) describes the course of a case study in which data are collected in the field. The researcher then analyses and tries to understand the actions of the subjects, and finally identifies patterns that deepen the understanding of a phenomenon. Robert Stake (2005) developed a typology for three types of case studies- internal case study, instrumental case study, and collective case study. As in Stake's typology, in this research, the case study begins with an understanding of decision-making processes in Equatorial Guinea and its reality, and concludes regarding decision-making in

Central Africa, and subsequently the processes of intercultural economic diplomacy in the region.

### 3.3 The Research Design

The research involved four stages. Table 2.1 illustrates the research design that guided this study, and presents the different stages of the research and the research tools in use in each stage.

**Table 2.1**

*Research Design*

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Aim</b>	<b>Research tools</b>	<b>Research population</b>	<b>Data analysis</b>
1	To describe historical, economic and diplomatic processes	Semi-structured interviews. Document analysis.	12 interviewees. Ministerial level, senior officials in the civil service.	Content analysis
2	To examine the intercultural-economic relations of EG and the international community.	Semi-structured interviews. Document analysis.	12 interviewees. Ministerial level, senior officials in the civil service.	Content analysis
3	To define the unique characteristics of the cultural and business environment of modern EG.	Semi-structured interviews.	12 interviewees. Ministerial level, senior officials in the civil service.	Content analysis

4	To develop a working model for Central Africa.	Semi-structured interviews. Focus group discussion.	12 interviewees. 5 participants in focus group.	Content analysis
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### 3.4 The Sampling Method

In qualitative research, the goal of the research plays a vital role in the selection of a suitable sampling strategy. Patton (2015) suggests several options to select an appropriate sample: 1. To choose the most successful or unsuccessful cases; to select typical cases. 2. Cases with a maximal variation. 3. Specifically intense cases. 4. Cases which are as different as possible, to disclose the range of variation and differentiation in the field. 5. Critical cases, with particular opinions or expertise. 6. Cases are chosen according to convenience. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), qualitative researchers usually work with small samples of informants and perform an in-depth study of them, in their original environment.

In this research, past and present decision-makers were interviewed regarding their understanding of history, their perception of internal and external political processes, their point of view on the local culture, and more. The intention was to gather data from different points of view regarding the same issues. Therefore, the maximum variation strategy was found suitable for this research.

### 3.5 The Research Population Profile

The group of interviewees includes 12 participants who have served in key positions in the past and present governments of Equatorial Guinea. The interviewees include government ministers, senior civil servants, ambassadors, diplomats, and businesspeople, as well as senior officials in UN agencies. The interviewees' group includes eight men and four women, belonging to different ethnic groups, ranging in age from 33 to 72 years. The focus group had 5 participants, most of them in their 30s, belonging to different ethnic groups. All focus group participants currently work in Equatorial Guinea's Foreign Office and have significant international experience.

### 3.6 Method of Data Analysis: Content Analysis

The data analysis method used in this research was taken from the grounded theory and is also called ‘coding’. The coding method is also called ‘categorisation’ (Shkedi, 2003). According to Strauss and Corbin (2015), coding describes the series of operations during which data are broken down, conceptualised, and assembled in new ways, and is a central process in which theories are built from the data. Coding is an organised process that allows researchers to reconstruct and control the research data. Other concepts of organisation of data may be used but are expected to lead to the same storyline.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

### 4.1 Findings Emerging from Research Question 1

What are the changes, in the economic, social, and diplomatic aspects, that took place in Equatorial Guinea after the discovery of natural resources?

The content analysis was conducted on the data collected through the semi-structured interviews with past and present government members and high-level officials, and document analysis. The content analysis yielded two themes, each containing three categories. Table 3.1 presents the themes and categories that emerged from the content analysis.

**Table 4.1**

*Changes That Took Place in EG After the Discovery of Oil and Gas*

<b>Theme 1</b>	<b>Theme 2</b>
<b>Political and Economic Changes</b>	<b>Social and Cultural Changes</b>
1. From dependence to independence: <i>‘After the discovery of oil, we are helping other countries’.</i>	1. The traditional family structure: <i>‘The discovery of oil undermined the traditional family structure’.</i>
2. Implications on decision-makers: <i>‘With the discovery of natural resources, the conception of decision-makers has changed’.</i>	2. Ethnicity in the changing environment: <i>‘The discovery of oil creates common interests’.</i>

3. Improvement in the standard of living: <i>‘With the discovery of oil, people felt joy and anticipation toward the coming change’.</i>	3. The creation of national identity: <i>‘The colonial powers tried to blur national identity’.</i>
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#### 4.2 Findings Emerging from Research Question 2

What are the unique characteristics of the cultural and economic environment of modern Equatorial Guinea?

The content analysis was conducted on the data collected through the semi-structured interviews with past and present government members—high-level officials in the public sector and senior UN officials—and content analysis. The content analysis yielded two themes, each containing two categories. Table 3.3 presents the themes and categories that emerged from the content analysis.

**Table 4.2**

*The Unique Characteristics of the Cultural and Economic Environment of Modern EG*

<b>Theme 1</b>	<b>Theme 2</b>
<b>Characteristics of the economic environment</b>	<b>Characteristics of the cultural environment</b>
1. Business culture: <i>‘It was like giving food to a hungry person’.</i>	1. Culture of Guinean society: <i>‘There is a work ethic problem here’.</i>
2. Business environment: <i>‘The countries of the Central African region have a unique business mentality’.</i>	2. Affinity for tradition: <i>‘The absence of traditional culture is a prominent feature’.</i>

#### 4.3 Findings Emerging from Research Question 3

What are the intercultural economic relations between Equatorial Guinea and the international community?

The content analysis was conducted on the data collected through the semi-structured interviews with past and present government members and high-level



officials, and document analysis. The content analysis yielded three themes, each containing two categories. Table 3.5 presents the themes and categories that emerged from the content analysis.

**Table 4.3**

*The Intercultural Economic Relations Between EG and the International Community*

<b>Theme 1</b>	<b>Theme 2</b>	<b>Theme 3</b>
<b>Economic relations</b>	<b>Diplomacy</b>	<b>Intercultural relations</b>
1. Economic relations before the discovery of natural resources: <i>'EG begged for donations and help'</i> .	1. Regional diplomacy: <i>'EG is considered to be a major player in the sub-region'</i> .	1. Cultural diplomacy: <i>'culture as diplomacy'</i> .
2. Economic relations after the discovery of natural resources: <i>'many factors want to enjoy the fruits of growth'</i> .	2. International diplomacy: <i>'A proof of the new diplomacy is, for example, the membership in the Security Council'</i> .	2. The importance of international image: <i>'A positive image is essential, and we put many efforts into this'</i> .

#### **4.4 Focus Group Discussion**

The focus group was asked to address two questions related to the proposed working model for Central Africa. Data from the discussion was arranged as much as possible following categories that emerged from the personal interviews.

The questions are:

- What recommendations would you give to a country, international organisation, or business corporation, wishing to work in the country but unfamiliar with the local culture?
- What components might comprise a model of intercultural economic diplomacy for Central Africa (in the case of Equatorial Guinea)?

**Table 4.4***Themes and Categories Emerging from the Focus Group Discussion*

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Categories</b>
Theme 1: Components of the intercultural economic diplomacy model for Central Africa	Business culture: <i>'We tend to mix professional and private life'</i> .
	Business diplomacy: <i>'Understand the geopolitical environment'</i> .
	Cultural diplomacy: <i>'Through cultural activity foreigners might get to know us'</i> .
	Regional diplomacy <i>'allows us to increase our influence'</i> .
Theme 2: Recommendations toward work in Central Africa	Business environment: <i>'We are a specific market with unique characteristics'</i> .
	Culture of the Guinean society: <i>'Nepotism is very strong in our culture, and that is a problem'</i> .

#### **4.5 Integrative Findings**

The findings section includes items that have been discussed during the in-depth interviews, throughout document analysis and in the focus group discussion. Out of all the findings, the integrative findings relevant to the research questions have been selected and were discussed in the next section. The following is a list of findings, arranged by research questions:

##### ***Integrative Findings Emerging from Research Question 1***

What are the changes, in the economic, social, and diplomatic aspects, that took place in Equatorial Guinea after the discovery of natural resources?

- a. From dependence into independence: EG became financially and economically independent and changed from a surviving country into a country that can support others.

- b. Implications on decision-makers: the decision-makers' attitude has changed: more economic cooperation with the international community and, at the same time, increased attention to internal public opinion.
- c. Improvement in the standard of living: the discovery of oil has had a positive impact on life in the country; accordingly, the future looks more promising.
- d. The traditional family structure: the family's occupational structure has changed. The family still sees its absolute commitment to helping its members, but this phenomenon has significant social implications.
- e. Ethnicity in the changing environment: the discovery of oil has reduced ethnic tensions. Everyone has a chance to succeed due to personal skills rather than tribal affiliation.
- f. The creation of national identity: the government is facing a complicated challenge to create and strengthen national identity and to reduce tribal affiliation and influence.

### ***Integrative Findings Emerging from Research Question 2***

What are the unique characteristics of the cultural and economic environment of modern Equatorial Guinea?

- a. Business culture: rapid economic development has engendered cooperation with many countries, but there are still cultural gaps and differences in business mentality.
- b. Business environment: after the economic change, a business environment with attractive economic opportunities was created. There is a need to learn the gaps amongst cultures and the different characteristics of the business environment. Local interests must be considered.
- c. Culture of Guinean society: The local culture is characterised by unskilled human capital and a low work ethic. Educated people want to work only in government or oil sectors. There is a common perception that people should get government services for free, and oil revenues should be shared amongst everyone. Foreign knowledge and expertise are valued.
- d. Affinity for tradition: Colonialism has pushed out local traditions. To this day, the change in language, culture and religion is evident. In addition, the accelerated development has had a devastating effect on traditional agriculture.

### ***Integrative Findings Emerging from Research Question 3***

What are the intercultural economic relations between Equatorial Guinea and the international community?

- a. Economic relations before the discovery of natural resources: EG played no significant role in regional and global politics. EG was isolated, in need of donations and had difficulty obtaining credit in international markets.
- b. Economic relations after the discovery of natural resources: the economic relations with the international community improved. EG became more independent and transformed an inferior position into a position of power. The general attitude in the international arena toward EG was changed, however, criticism of the state's leadership arose.
- c. Regional diplomacy: EG became a player in African politics. EG contributes to humanitarian projects and is involved in African Union projects. Its improved status is also seen in hosting African Union summits. Regional integration contributes to the economy, the international image, and increases political influence.
- d. International diplomacy: for EG, it is important to increase its presence in the international arena and to participate in global forums. Countries are using diplomatic tools to advance economic interests, and EG should do the same.
- e. Cultural diplomacy: Intercultural relations with the international community are not mutual. These gaps create unfair criticism toward EG and over-involvement of international factors. Familiarity with local culture and mutual cultural understanding are essential. Countries play a role in promoting cultural understanding.
- f. The importance of international image: International image is important to decision-makers. The country invests effort in creating a positive image. The Guineans believe the negative image is an obstacle to development and international integration. EG is participating in international events and forums, hoping to positively affect its image.

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Conclusions Emerging from Research Question 1**

The findings emerging from this study show that the discovery of natural resources has changed EG into a supporting country on the way to forming its new foreign policy and economic diplomacy strategy. Moreover, the findings indicate that the discovery of natural resources is associated with a change in decision-makers' attitude. Evidently, the new reality has made decision-makers understand that global cultural environment expects full transparency in government activities. Furthermore, the discovery of oil is characterised by an immediate positive effect on the standard of living and a rise in expectations for a better economic situation.

The findings further suggest that the discovery of natural resources has prompted profound social change that is still at its beginning and is associated with intensifying a sense of national unity and pride amongst the Guinean people. Nonetheless, ethnic inflexibility is still dominant, but there is a process of strengthening national identity. The data gathered for this research suggest that the combination of flexible ethnicity and open nationalism in Central Africa reduces the likelihood of border disputes and increases regional stability and economic potential.

### **5.2 Conclusions Emerging from Research Question 2**

The findings emerging from this research show that discovering natural resources prompted rapid social change and the need to create an intercultural economic diplomacy to maximise the opportunities provided by the discovery of oil in EG. Furthermore, the findings indicate that the discovery of natural resources created an economic opportunity that necessitates a shift in diplomacy, i.e. from the national economy into intercultural economic diplomacy. The data gathered throughout this research suggest that discovering natural resources has proved challenging. A tension of growth now exists between EG's traditional economy—characterised by low work ethic and nepotism—and an economy that draws on skills, knowledge, and appropriate training. The findings further suggest that the discovery of natural resources is associated with abandoning traditional economy and embracing international economy.

This research question addresses the economic and cultural characteristics of modern EG, following the discovery of oil and the economic change that followed. The

economic change has turned EG into a country with opportunities for many potential partners.

### **5.3 Conclusions Emerging from Research Question 3**

The findings emerging from this research indicate that the discovery of natural resources has aroused a change in the international image of EG. There is a palpable national shift from marginal political and economic importance to potentially becoming a valuable player on the international economic scene. The findings further suggest that the discovery of natural resources has prompted change in economic policy from the local traditional economy to intercultural economic diplomacy. Nonetheless, the discovery of natural resources is associated with improving regional politics and thus promoting EG's diplomatic status in the region. Evidently, the findings indicate that discovering natural resources directly relates to EG's advancement in world politics as an influential economy, one that necessitates an immediate economic diplomacy strategy. The findings show that discovering natural resources has triggered the opportunity to expose cultural norms and thus enhancing mutual cultural understanding. The data gathered in this research suggest that discovering natural resources relates to increased transparency in government, intensive public diplomacy activities, and an increased presence in international forums. Expected to enhance EG's international image, these activities contribute to the advancement of its economic interests. This research question deals with the intercultural economic relations between EG and the international community after natural resources discovery. With the discovery of oil, EG's regional and international image became an important contributing factor to attracting foreign investment and giving rise to national pride.

For the Guinean people, the attention received from the international community following the discovery of oil is an opportunity to expose the local culture and to increase mutual understanding. Guineans understand that they need to help foreigners to know the local culture and, at the same time, they need to open up and get to know other cultures.

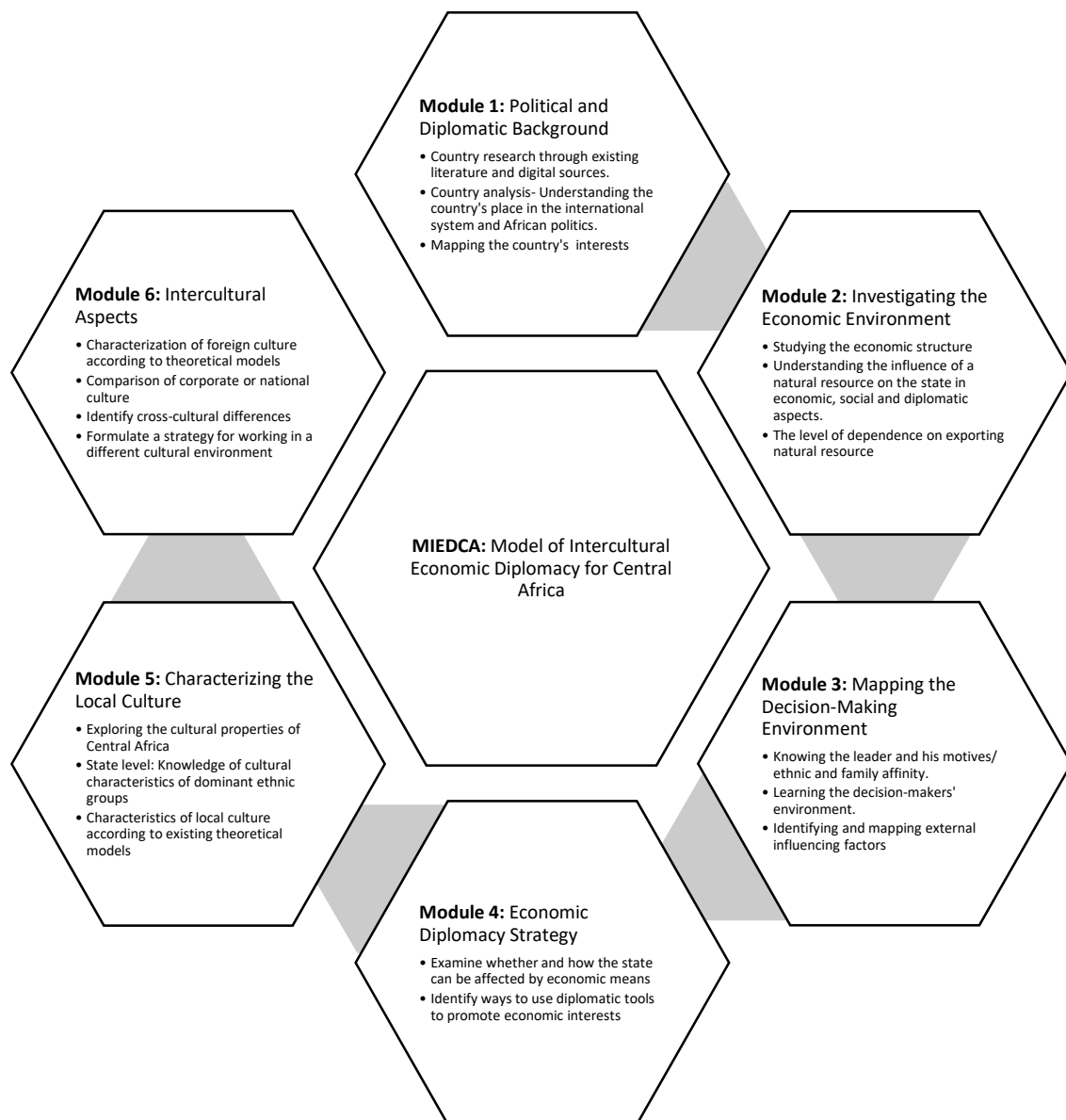
For the government, international image is a priority. Decision-makers understand that a more positive international image will contribute to advancing the economy by helping attract foreign investments and developing new economic collaborations.

## 5.4 Conceptual Conclusions: Rethinking Intercultural Economic Diplomacy for Central Africa

The research enabled the development of an evidence-based strategy for an intercultural economic policy for the Central African countries. Following the discovery of a significant natural resource in their territory, such a policy would provide an economic potential for state and business entities. The research offers tools that can be modelled for activity in the area. Figure 5.1 illustrates the Model of Intercultural Economic Diplomacy for Central Africa (MIEDCA).

**Figure 5.1**

*The Model of Intercultural Economic Diplomacy for Central Africa (MIEDCA)*



The Model of Intercultural Economic Diplomacy for Central Africa (MIEDCA) as presented in Figure 5.1 provides a new conceptual framework for international factors interested in operating in the region, as well as for Central African countries and organisations seeking to collaborate with external factors. Given the fact that continuous contact with government ministries is the main feature of working in the region, the model is also suitable for implementation by business entities. The model combines local recommendations and many years of practical experience with existing theories of international relations, economics and cross-cultural research.

The model comprises the following six modules. The model offers workflow method that enables the gathering and analysing of information, understanding regional characteristics and providing tools for formulating an optimal proactive strategy.

### **Module 1: Political and Diplomatic Background**

After selecting the target country or area, the next step is to gather information. At this point, before arrival in the area, the information is obtained from existing literature, the internet, or other digital sources. The information will be analysed in order to understand the country's position in the international system and the variety of forces that affect it. The goal is to have a preliminary mapping of the country's interests in the international arena.

### **Module 2: Investigating the Economic Environment**

The main goal of this phase is to study the local economic structure based on official information published by the state or international organisations. The information gathered will be used to learn and understand the influence mechanism of a natural resource on the state in economic, social and diplomatic aspects. The following two economic parameters must be recognised and studied: 1) the degree of dependence of the state's economy on the export of the natural resource; 2) the level of economic exposure to fluctuations in prices of commodities and exchange rates of its natural resource.

### **Module 3: Mapping the Decision-Making Environment:**

Most Central African countries are a presidential republic. This governance method means that the president is a central leader and holds extensive governmental powers. To a large extent, understanding the president's motives, considerations, including the



personal ones, and familiarity with his immediate surroundings will enable a better understanding of the state's conduct. Getting to know the president begins by leadership profiling. It is essential to know how the leader's personal history is combined with the history of the country and region. Also, his ethnic affiliation and his connections with the ethnic group and the extended family must be understood.

#### **Module 4: Economic Diplomacy Strategy**

For countries and international organisations looking to develop activity in Central Africa, economic diplomacy offers a variety of tools. At the political level, it is advisable to elaborate a strategy of economic diplomacy and to examine the possibilities of influencing the country through economic pressure levers and incentives. On the economic level, the possibility of promoting economic interests is explored through political pressure, incentives or support in the international arena.

On the other hand, for the Central African countries, the use of economic diplomacy tools is an opportunity to gain support in various international forums. This support could be achieved with the assistance, in international forums, of factors that operate on their territory.

#### **Module 5: Characterising the Local Culture**

The key to successful activity in the area is the ability to adapt to work in a different cultural environment. In order to succeed in bridging cultural gaps between societies with different social norms, it is recommended to study the cultural characteristics of the Central African region. The study is done through the existing literature, through the findings of the present research and via information obtained from local sources.

#### **Module 6: Intercultural Aspects**

The purpose of this phase is to characterise the intercultural encounter and to increase mutual understanding towards collaboration. Foreign culture will be characterised according to theoretical models with the same tools used to characterise culture in the African country. A comparison will be made between the different national cultures, and a framework will be created to identify differences and cross-cultural gaps. Given the data obtained, a strategy and recommendations for working in a different cultural environment will be formulated.

## **5.5 Practical Implications and Recommendations**

The research products are a valuable tool for those seeking to operate in Central Africa. The research provides a concise description of the historical and cultural context of the region. Familiarity with the region, its history, geography and culture is recommended for locals and foreigners. Many Central Africans think foreigners underestimate their culture. This phenomenon is seen as condescending, a reluctance to study the local culture and a lack of understanding of the region. The research defines the cultural and business characteristics of the work environment in the region. In addition to using existing theoretical tools, the research suggests a model with which cultures can be evaluated. The research describes the economic relations between EG and the international community and how local decision-makers perceive this aspect. These descriptions are an essential tool for the effective planning of an economic diplomacy strategy. The model developed in the research is a practical data-based tool. Working according to the model will help to study the region, improve intercultural communication, and to overcome obstacles that arise from a lack of mutual understanding.

The new economic reality has met EG unprepared to face modern labour world challenges. The economy was based on traditional sectors, typical to the Central African region, and a workforce without sufficient professional abilities. In order to adapt EG's economy to the realities of the modern world, the government must support the professional advancement of human resources and encourage the creation of other economic sectors, excluding the oil sector.

## **5.6 Limitations of the Research**

Four research limitations will be outlined. The first stems from the fact that this is qualitative research and the number of informants is not high. A second limitation is the research tools: interviews, document analysis and focus group. Various research tools have been used to strengthen the validity of the data. However, additional research tools, such as quantitative methodology on a broader population, can diversify the findings. A third limitation is the researcher's position. Considerable effort has been made to find with the informants the Golden Path through engagement, integration, and empathy, on the one hand, and to objectively logical and critical thinking on the other hand. A fourth limitation is generalisability, and in the present research, it is of dual significance. The first is the ability to generalise from the research population to the

general population. The other is the generalisation of the conclusions drawn based on data from EG to other Central African countries.

### **5.7 Contribution to the Knowledge**

The research contributes to the existing knowledge in international relations on the Central Africa. The findings and conclusions of this research reinforce existing theories and provide them with a significant and unique example, from a geographical area that is not the centre of attention. By using local sources and informants, the research gives an accurate view of local interests and understanding of the local interpretation to past events, diplomatic processes and economic issues. The research adds to existing knowledge of the inhabitants' way to understand the history and many authentic details. In many aspects, these views are different from the picture that emerges from the known literature. The conclusions and the theoretical model in the field of international relations are of great importance in formulating an effective economic diplomacy strategy suitable for the cultural and business environment in Central Africa. In the cultural aspect, there is a significant contribution to the existing knowledge as it describes cultural characteristics of EG and the Central African region. The research reveals new aspects of local culture and helps define its characteristics. This information allows analysing cultural norms and values more precisely. It will enable them to be assimilated into existing theoretical models used to study cultures or to compare national cultures and different societies.

### **5.8 Future Research**

Central African countries are relatively young and, at least according to their perception, are not yet in place in the international system. The knowledge available in international relations research for the region needs broadening and a better understanding of the leaders' considerations and the interests of countries. The present research is qualitative and based on a limited research population. It is suggested that further research be conducted in a quantitative methodology on a broader population. During the present research, emerged the need for a better understanding of the post-colonial relationship between the Central Africa and Europe and the current interests of the parties. Recently the region has been on the political and economic agenda and is expected to be more attractive with changes in power relations between international key players.

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