

Equatorial Guinea

Rice

Equatorial Guinea was a colony of Spain until 1968. Spain, under pressure from the United Nations and from nationalists within Equatorial Guinea, granted the country its independence and held a referendum so that the citizens of Equatorial Guinea could approve a democratic constitution. Prior to independence, Equatorial Guinea had self-rule (from 1963 until independence), under Prime Minister Bonifacio Edu. The first President elected (who took power upon independence) was Francisco Macias Nguema, who initially did not have a party affiliation. By 1970, Nguema had banned all parties aside from his new Worker's National United Party (PUNT). In 1971, he abolished parts of the constitution, and in 1972, he assumed complete control over the government and gave himself the title "President-for-Life".

It should be noted that Geddes did not code any particular regime type for Equatorial Guinea, but we treat the Nguema period as a personalist regime. First, although he was affiliated with the Worker's National United Party (PUNT), which was declared to be the only party legally permitted, this party was created by him after his accession to power, indicating a personalist rather than a single-party regime. Also, on May 7, 1971, he issued Decree 415, which repealed parts of the 1968 Constitution and granted him "all direct powers of Government and Institutions", including powers formerly held by the legislative and judiciary branches, as well as the cabinet of ministers (Muller, 2011: 434). This also suggests that the leader, not the party, had complete control over the government. Second, facing an attempted coup led by Foreign Minister Ndongo Miyone in 1969, he arrested and executed some 200 individuals including Ndongo. The "continuous political purge" went on until 1979 during which anyone suspected of opposing Macias Nguemo's regime was killed (Jackson and Rosberg 1982, 247). This murder symbolizes his dictatorial power. According to the U.S. Department of State, "the Macias regime was characterized by abandonment of all government functions except internal security, which was accomplished by terror; this led to the death or exile of up to one-third of the country's population. (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/7221.htm>)." Third, Macias Nguemo was a mainland Fang (Muller, 2011: 434). The Fang are one of the two basic ethnic groups in the country along with the Bubi, which is the minority. As soon as Macias Nguemo came to office he "installed 7,000 of [his] Fang supporters in government positions in the capital (Jackson and Rosberg 1982, 246)." The domination by one clan is one of the characteristics of a personalist regime (Geddes, 72).

In 1979, Nguema was overthrown in a military coup led by Teodoro Obiang Mbasogo, a nephew of Macias Nguema, who assumed control of the government, initially as the head of a Revolutionary Military Council, then as the head of a Supreme Military Council from 1982 until 1989. Obiang Mbasogo had actually been appointed by his uncle to lead day-to-day affairs of the country (Jackson and Rosberg 1982, 248), but after the coup he arrested his uncle and had him tried. This leader transition raises the question of whether Macias Nguemo's personalist regime ended with Obiang Mbasogo's assumption of power and whether we should code a SOLS change here. While it is true that Obiang used violence to remove Macias Nguema and had him tried, Obiang Mbasogo was also a relative of Macias Nguema and had been appointed by him to high military rank. Most importantly though, following the coup, Obiang Mbasogo left the power structure of Nguema largely in tact. Like his uncle before him, Mbasogo's pillars of support consisted of the Esangui clan, the army and Macias' Juventud en Marcha youth organization

(Rake 2001; 81, East & Thomas. 2003; 161 Europa Publications. 2004; 373). Obiang's rule served to entrench the family's power. Thus, we code the personalist regime of Macias Nguema as continuing with Obiang Mbasogo and we code no SOLS change here.

Under Obiang Mbasogo, a new constitution, drafted with the assistance of the UN Commission on Human Rights, was approved in 1982, and the Military Council was abolished in 1989. In 1987, Obiang Mbasogo changed his party affiliation from the military to PDGE. Mbasogo was elected President in the first elections held since 1968, now as a member of the PGSE (the Democratic Party of Equatorial Guinea, which was the only legal party until 1993). In 1991, single-party rule was officially abolished, but Mbasogo has maintained the real authority, which has resulted in his being reelected several times, most recently in 2009. He remains in power in the present day.

Geddes does not provide guidance as to Equatorial Guinea's regime type under Obiang Mbasogo, but we treat his regime as another personalist regime. First, although he was affiliated with a political party, the PDGE, he created it after his accession to power. Second, he appointed his relatives as members of the cabinet. For example, after the presidential election of 2002, although Mbasogo had promised to appoint a government of national unity, he reappointed Rivas to head a reshuffled cabinet that was again dominated by the PDGE and included two of Mbasogo's sons. Geddes (72) put less weight on party "if the dictator's relatives occupied high offices".

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