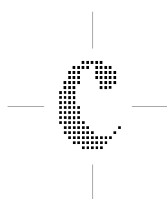


Working Paper Series

Working Paper 6

War Without End?
The Political economy of
Internal conflict in Angola

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1 Introduction ¹

Few states present such stark contrasts as Angola. On the one hand, the country possesses an abundance of natural resources, on the other, it is plagued by armed conflict and poverty. Over the last quarter century it is estimated that 1.5 million lives have been lost in a war which seems without end.

Angola's impressive deposits of minerals include prodigious amounts of diamonds, of which it is by value the world's fourth main producer. In addition, Angola has rich and largely still unexploited offshore oil deposits, making the country the second largest producer of petroleum, after Nigeria, in sub-Saharan Africa.

Despite these riches, social and development indicators suggest that for ordinary people Angola is one of the worst places in the world to live. The country's rate of child mortality, with more than a quarter of all children dying before they reach the age of five, is one of the highest in the world and its average life expectancy is one of the lowest. Infrastructure has been badly damaged in the war and social services such as health and education are poorly developed or non-existent.

The war itself has consumed a substantial portion of the country's resources while only enriching a small number of its citizens. This has not always been the case. Indeed, the nature and context of war in the country has changed significantly since the early 1970s.

The conflict in Angola has passed through a number of distinctive phases. It began as an anti-colonial war between the Portuguese and three main liberation armies contesting control of the country. The colonial period ended suddenly and inconclusively, leaving the three main contenders to fight it out for control of the newly independent state. With each side backed by the resources and support of one of the adversaries in the Cold War, the conflict quickly developed into a fight between the proxies of the major powers.

The end of the Cold War saw the beginnings of negotiations to end the conflicts generated through it – Angola was no exception. Except the conflict here has proved remarkably resilient to any form of resolution.

The war has continued partly because there has been popular disaffection with the role of the Angolan government and partly because both sides to the conflict can continue to fund their war-making through the exploitation of the country's natural resources.

¹ This paper has been written in the framework of the research project entitled 'Coping with Internal Conflict Project' (CICP) executed by the Conflict Research Unit (CRU) of the Netherlands Institute of International relations 'Clingendael' for the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The CICP consists of four different components, namely 'Power Sharing', 'Political Military Relations', 'Political Economy of Internal Conflict' and 'Resources, Entitlements and Poverty -related Conflict'.

It has also been published by the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) as a country report.

Unburdened by the ideological strictures of the Cold War, Angola has rapidly developed into a classic resource conflict where one of the key objects of making war has become the control of resources and their exploitation. This has enriched some – generals on either side and a range of economic middlemen, many of them from outside of Angola – but continued to impoverish ordinary Angolans.

The war has now reached an important turning point with the rebels being forced to the west of the country. While government now holds the major towns, the areas in between are effectively open for any side to exploit. The *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola's* (The National Union for the Total Liberation of Angola – UNITA) conventional capacity for war making, which was probably exaggerated in the first place, has been shattered. UNITA has withdrawn to the bush and over the Zambian border, continuing however to conduct hit and run attacks.

Even should the war be ended through a decisive defeat of UNITA (which on current evidence appears unlikely) or through some form of negotiated peace deal (the possibility of which has been excluded by the government, although statements to this effect are inconsistent) the reclaiming of the countryside and the delivery of even basic social services to the poor will be a massive undertaking. The weight of history in Angola is heavy, even if the current war is driven through interests of profit and plunder, accumulated experience and a legacy of mistrust compound attempts at peace making.

While the government has a new found international legitimacy, outside of the major towns in the interior, rule through the barrel of a gun will prevail for the foreseeable future. International sanctions targeted at UNITA's sale of diamonds to fund its war effort and greater austerity measures driven through the newly implemented International Monetary Fund (IMF) monitoring programme will have the unintended consequence of fewer resources to those at the working end of the conflict, holding out the possibility that the scope and the scale of the banditry intrinsic to war making in Angola will increase. These factors may change and perhaps isolate the war to the hinterland, but probably not end it.

The war has now given rise to a network of criminal operations, both inside and outside of formal government structures, who supply and thereby sustain the conflict. Given the resources generated in this way, these operations have established themselves securely in the sub-continent, and will not be easily eradicated. One danger is that the end of the war will see an increase in purely criminal activities. Already on the war's front line – although this term is in itself alien to the fluid engagements fought in Angola – it is often difficult to distinguish the criminal actions of ordinary bandits from the activities of the warring parties.

Resolving the conflict then is likely to be a long and painful process, and not a short and decisive victory on either the battlefield or at the negotiating table. The most appropriate strategy now must be to isolate the factors that drive the conflict, including much greater transparency in respect of how the country's oil resources are spent. There are however some positive signs: an apparent willingness by UNITA to talk if the government wishes, a growing (although still muted) criticism of government by journalists, church and civil society groups, promises of a change of the constitution (which may in itself take the form of negotiations, albeit under a different guise), and the possibility of elections in 2001. These factors suggest that the next couple of years in Angola will be decisive in determining whether or not the country can achieve a state of permanent peace.

2 Country Profile ²

Angola is a large country, the fifth largest country in sub-Saharan Africa (after Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad and Niger) with a land area of 1.25 million square kilometres, which is about the same size as Spain and France combined. As a result the country has long (and difficult to protect) borders with four states: 2511 kilometres with the Democratic Republic of Congo, formally Zaire (of which 220 kilometres forms the boundary of the Cabinda enclave); 201 kilometres with the Republic of Congo (Brazzaville); 1376 kilometres with Namibia; and, 1110 kilometres with Zambia.

The country's geography – and as a result some of its key political and social divides – is dominated by a single feature. A narrow low lying plain extends along the length of the coast in a band of between 50 to 100 kilometres, rising steeply into an escarpment, which levels out into a plateau, the *planalto*, which covers four fifths of the country, and extends eastwards to the other side of Africa.

The coastal plain is generally hot and dry, while the *planalto* is cooler and receives far more rain. Angola also traverses a series of latitudinal climate bands – hot humid tropical conditions in the north give way to a cooler humid zone in the central *planalto* and finally a hot dry zone in the south, which becomes desert in the south-west.

There is a long rainy season, beginning usually in October and continuing until April. Almost no rain falls during the rest of the year. The rainy and dry seasons are important in determining the periods of greatest military activity in the country, with most government offensives taking place in the dry season when the roads are passable.

The temperate climate in many parts of the country and the richness of the soil make Angola particularly favourable for agricultural production, with the country being potentially one of the richest farming areas in sub-Saharan Africa. Indeed, until the mid-1970s it was a large exporter of agricultural products, including food. Since then however Angola has become a net importer of food, with cash crop production having all but collapsed in most parts of the country, due to the war. Arable land is estimated to be between 5 and 8 million hectares, of which only about 1.5 million hectares are currently under cultivation. Along the 1650 kilometres of coastline are some of the richest fishing waters in Africa. Over-fishing, mainly by foreign fleets, has seriously diminished these resources in recent years.

² This section is based on a number of documents that provide similar background information on Angola. In particular, I have made extensive use of an unpublished UNICEF report, *Angola in Historical Perspective*, which provided valuable data and insights. Also used, were: The World Bank Group, *Angola at a Glance*, 09/07/200; Angola, *The World Factbook 2000*, Barry Turner (ed), *Southern Africa Profiled*, London, Mac Millan, 2000; International Monetary Fund, *Angola: Statistical Annex*, IMF Staff Country Report No 99/25, April 1999; and, The Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country: Profile: Angola*, 1998-99.

Angola is characterised by an impressive spectrum of mineral resources. These include deposits of gold, manganese, copper, lead, zinc, tin, wolfram, vanadium, titanium, phosphates, marble and granite. The country's interior, in particular the north-eastern provinces of Lunda Norte and Lunda Sul, have rich diamond deposits. These exist both in alluvial deposits, which are found in the beds and banks of rivers and former river courses, created over millions of years by river flow and erosion, and in kimberlite deposits, deep diamond bearing shafts. The alluvial deposits are relatively easy to mine, requiring few skills and capital ensuring that the diamonds represent an important source of income not only for UNITA and government interests (including the Angolan army) but also for small prospectors working in the area. Some of the key engagements of the war have been fought over who controls access to the diamond bearing areas of the country.

Whatever the richness of the country's natural resources, it is oil which is now the mainstay of the Angolan economy. Oil production is almost exclusively off-shore and thus requires large scale capital and technical inputs. This has had two important implications. First, oil production has been almost untouched by the war, and while oil wealth dominates the economic activity of the country it employs very few Angolans. Angola's oil is of a high quality (it is light with a low sulphur content) and geographically well situated for transport at a low cost to the major markets of North America and Europe. Unsurprisingly there is considerable interest in the country's oil wealth; oil executives describe it as the 'hottest new place in the world to search for hydro-carbons'³ with one prominent company describing Angola as 'The North Sea of the South'.⁴

Given the richness of the country's resources and the geographic size of the country, Angola has a relatively small population of just over 10 million in July 2000. This is however an estimate given that there has been no national census since 1970. A number of other sources, including some used by the United Nations, place the figure for the population in 1996 as 12.5 million.

Even more uncertain are estimates as to the changing geographic location of the population. The war-related displacement of the Angolan people has compounded the normal process of rural exodus present in other developing countries, resulting in very rapid urbanisation. The overall extent of this movement of peoples is unclear. It is estimated that by 1994 just over 40% of the population were living in urban areas, in contrast with just over 10% in 1960 and 14% in 1970. By 1996 some estimates placed the population of Luanda at around 2.55 million, a quarter of the total population. The city is now ringed by dense shanty towns with appalling living conditions. One impact of the war is that there is significantly fewer young men compared to young women; in the 20 to 25 age group it is estimated that there are only 71 men for every 100 women.

Most of the population of the country is concentrated along the coastal plain and in the western *planalto*. While population densities range from 35 to 40 people per square kilometre in the west-central provinces of Huambo and Benguela (and is just over 1000 per square kilometre in Luanda), only 2 to 3 people per square kilometre live in the provinces of the east (Kuando Kubango, Moxico, Lunda Sul and Lunda Norte). The east of the country therefore is characterised by large tracts of unpopulated land and forests, difficult to occupy in force for sustained periods of time and conducive to guerilla warfare.

³ Interview deputy-general manager of major oil company, Luanda, 10 October 2000.

⁴ The phrase is used by BP Amoco.

Angola has three broad ethno-linguistic groups, the Ovimbundu, Mbundu and Bakongo, although determining their act size remains a matter of conjecture. Nevertheless, the three ethnic groups appear to remain important points of identity for ordinary Angolans, providing the core constituencies for the three main nationalist movements at the time of independence. Rapid urbanisation and the growing influence of the Portuguese language (ironically a trend which increased after independence) may have blurred some of the boundaries.

Ethnic identities however remain important points of affiliation across the various political movements. This is most clear between those peoples along the coastal strip (the Mbundu in particular) who were under the longest and most intense exposure to Portuguese language and culture and who have traditionally supported the *Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola* (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola – MPLA). And those in the interior, such as the Ovimbundu, whose heartland is the rich farming areas of the central-west *planalto* and the industrial cities of the west, who have traditionally supported UNITA.

While social conditions are probably better for at least a proportion of those who live in Luanda than the more dire conditions of the interior, Angola's social indicators point to the extent of the social crisis in the country. Most badly affected are vulnerable groups, particularly women and children. UNICEF's child risk measure which takes into account factors such as the child mortality rate, the percentage of children underweight and the percentage of children not attending school gives Angola the worst rating (96/100) in the world. The under five mortality rate is now generally accepted as providing an indication of the overall well-being of children: in Angola in 1992 there were 274 deaths for every 1000 births before the age of five, meaning that on average 25% of all children born in Angola never live to see their fifth birthday. In most developing countries child mortality figures are much higher for rural than urban areas. In Angola, reflecting the rapid extent of urbanisation and the lack of social services, rural and urban child mortality rates are similarly poor.⁵

Epidemic emergencies and resurgent diseases in Angola represent a very real threat to the survival of children. These include measles, polio, tuberculosis, sleeping sickness, cholera, leprosy and meningitis. 'The threat of epidemics and resurgent diseases', a UNICEF report concludes, 'is closely linked to shortfalls in vaccination coverage, poor environmental hygiene and lack of information and capacity for implementing epidemic control measures'.⁶

Angola also faces an acute problem of malnutrition. By the end of May 2000, the World Food Programme were feeding an estimated 1.5 million people. The problem is specifically severe in areas that have been affected by the war. In the city of Melange in the centre-north of the country that was besieged when the war resumed in 1992, the rate of malnutrition for children under 5 reached 34%, with 20% suffering severe malnutrition. While such figures are startling, of greater concern is the long-term impact of endemic conflict in the country on levels of malnutrition. There are three main internationally accepted standards for protein energy malnutrition: stunting (low height for age); underweight (low weight for age); and wasting (low weight for height). The national rates for each of

⁵ The data on the position of children in Angola, including that on malnutrition, is drawn from an unpublished UNICEF document, *The Present State of Angola's Children*. The report is undated. See also UNICEF Emergency Campaigns, *Angola: Donor Update*, 22 September 2000.

⁶ UNICEF, *The Present State of Angola's Children*, op. cit., p. 8.

these measures among children in Angola in the mid-1990s are startling: 53% stunted, 42% underweight and 6% wasted.

These measures provide only some insight into the social problems wrought by the war and government mismanagement in Angola. They are particularly severe given two closely inter-related factors. The long-term nature of the ongoing conflict in Angola and the dramatic economic and social collapse which occurred in the country in the early 1990s as the war resumed once again. The origins of the war and failed attempts at peace and the causes of the country's social and economic implosion are examined in the sections that follow.

3 From Colonialism to Conflict

The nature of the process of the country's colonisation, the subsequent hasty withdrawal of the colonial power and super-power competition during the Cold War had a decisive impact on shaping the nature of the conflict in Angola.

A European presence in what is today Angola stretches from 1482 when the Portuguese first reached and began exploring the northern Angolan coast. Just under 100 years later a Portuguese settlement was established at Luanda. For the next three centuries the colonisers, in varying levels of strength, controlled a thin strip of territory along the coast north and south of Luanda. A few settlements were also established inland.

The central focus of the Portuguese colony in Angola was the slave trade until slavery was eventually abolished in the 19th century. During this period however more than 4 million slaves were transported from what is today Angola to the new world, and mainly to Brazil. The slave trade caused deep internal strife among the various chiefdoms that controlled the area, as each sought to strengthen their rule and profit economically from an increased output of slaves. Such tensions were exacerbated as arms and munitions were increasingly acquired by some groups.⁷

Paradoxically the slave trade prepared the way for the formation of Angola in two important ways. First, it destroyed the social and political organisations of the kingdoms of the interior, and second, it provided the broad boundaries of present day Angola; the geographic expanse of the country being roughly the area from which the Portuguese had drawn slaves over the centuries.⁸

More extensive European settlement was heralded both by a decline in the slave trade and the requirement to make the colony economically profitable as well as increased competition from other European powers as Africa was divided between them. When Angola's border were defined, through a series of treaties between 1880 and 1920, they left one small part of the country, Cabinda, up the north coast, separated from the rest of Angola by a small sliver of land which gave the then Belgium Congo access to the sea.

The economic interests of the territory now focussed on farming and the mining of diamonds, which by the late 1940s had become the colony's main export. The Portuguese system of colonisation was one of 'direct rule' with the lines of authority drawn from Lisbon to the most remote village in the interior. There was subsequently little intervention in the system through the 'divide and rule' policies practiced elsewhere through traditional chiefs.⁹ Taxes were administered on ordinary Angolans with

⁷ For an overview see John Iliffe, *Africans: The History of a Continent*, Cambridge, University of Cambridge Press, 1995, pp. 127-158.

⁸ Lawrence Henderson, *Angola: Five Centuries of Conflict*, New York, Cornell University Press, 1979, p. 98.

⁹ See Roland Oliver and Anthony Atmore, *Africa since 1800*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994.

the dual aim of raising revenue to cover government expenses and forcing people into formal economic activity.

From 1950, the Portuguese encouraged European settlers to Angola, with the colony having a population of just under 350 000 whites by 1974. Portuguese colonial policy effectively created different classes of citizens; Africans who attained a particular level of education were given the status of *assimilado*, being in theory equals with the white colonists. But the poor provision of education to ordinary Angolans (only 15% could read or write by 1970) meant that only a tiny and privileged few acquired any special status.¹⁰

Agriculture dominated the economic output of the colony, with coffee being the most important single export, until the rise of the oil industry that began with the start of oil production in Cabinda in 1968. By 1973, oil had become the most important export commodity followed by coffee and diamonds.

In the period from 1920 to 1960, the Angolan economy succeeded in enriching only a small number of people – largely whites and a tiny African elite – with the remainder of the population becoming increasingly impoverished. The overall standard of living of Angolans declined as the cash economy grew and as commercial farming reduced the land available for subsistence agriculture. Contract labour (combined with the price of goods in the formal sector) did not compensate for the loss of production in the subsistence economy.¹¹

Angola and other Portuguese colonies were regarded as integral parts of Portugal and no steps were taken to facilitate self-rule, despite armed resistance to the colonial occupation from the early 1960s. Political opposition (as was the case in Portugal itself) was ruthlessly suppressed, although by the early 1970s the war in Angola was virtually a stalemate, and a drain on Portuguese resources.¹²

Three movements, each with roots in different geographical locations in the country and who drew supporters from different ethnic groups, had fought the Portuguese (and to a lesser extent each other) to attain independence: the MPLA; the *Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola* (FNLA – National Liberation Front of Angola); and, UNITA. In addition, a secessionist group, the *Frente de Libertação do Enclave do Cabinda* (FLEC – Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda) sought to establish the oil rich Cabinda enclave as a separate country.

Given their centuries of engagement in Angola, the departure of the Portuguese was sudden, with their being little time (and no real inclination) to facilitate a smoother transfer of power.

Following a coup in Portugal in April 1974 that overthrew the Salazar dictatorship, hasty arrangements were made to dispose of the country's colonies which had become an increasing burden on the metropole. Angola was granted independence on 11 November 1975. The rival nationalist groups engaged in fierce fighting in the months before independence day and foreign backers – the Soviet Union and Cuba in the case of the MPLA and the United States in the case of the FNLA and later UNITA – provided resources, weapons and in some cases troops to their selected allies. As independence day approached and fighting intensified there was a large scale exodus of Portuguese, who in many cases destroyed whatever they could not take with them.¹³

¹⁰ UNICEF, *Angola in Historical Perspective*, unpublished and undated, p. 8.

¹¹ Henderson, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

¹² See WS Van Der Waals, *Portugal's War in Angola: 1961-1974*, Rivonia, Ashanti, 1993.

¹³ The classic account of this period is Ryszard Kapuscinski, *Another day of Life*, London, Penguin, 1988.

At independence day (which in fact took place twelve hours before the scheduled event) no mention was made of those competing for the control of the country and the last Portuguese High Commissioner announced simply that the country was being handed over to 'the Angolan people'.¹⁴ Zairian and South African troops intervened to assist a (fragile) FNLA-UNITA alliance while Cuban troops arrived to assist the MPLA. Aided by massive transfers of Soviet arms, the MPLA gradually gained the upper hand and by early 1976 most of the country was under their control.

Holding Luanda was (and has remained) the key to the MPLA strategy. By holding the capital, the MPLA would be perceived as the government in power, and dismiss their opponents as rebel groups operating in the bush. 'He who holds Luanda holds Angola – Luanda is Angola' was the comment of an old observer of the country's continuous wars.¹⁵ In addition, the MPLA seized control of most of the country's urban settlements. The huge tracts of land in-between however remained if not contested, than free zones that nobody effectively governed. The existence of this hinterland has provided the depth into which any defending army can melt away, regroup and attack once again.

In control of Luanda and the urban areas of the country the MPLA established a one party political system and centralised administration – greatly aided by the colonial model, but lacking any of its administrative experience.

The hasty departure of the Portuguese meant that it was not only a question of ideology but of necessity that the new government seized all of the country's assets. While there were some notable success stories – for example, school enrolment grew dramatically from the mid-1970s and the vaccination of children against infectious diseases increased – the dead hand of the MPLA bureaucracy soon stilted economic growth. Some pragmatic economic decisions were made however, leading to one of the ironies of the Cold War – the oil installations of Chevron-Gulf, a huge American oil company, being protected by Cuban troops against an insurgent attack covertly sponsored by the United States.

Following independence, Cuban troops remained in the country and the Angolan army was strengthened. South Africa carried out a series of incursions into southern Angola, often with the aim of destroying the capacity of the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) to wage war in Namibia, but also in support of UNITA in a bid to destabilise the MPLA government.

By 1984 UNITA was active in every province in the country.¹⁶ The struggle in Angola assumed the clear dimensions of a superpower competition when from 1986 the Reagan administration began covertly supporting UNITA¹⁷ and Soviet arms supplies to the MPLA were increased to match this threat. The overall result was military stalemate on the ground. The FNLA ceased to be an effective fighting force after 1976 while the Cabinda separatists continued a lonely (and not very effective) struggle for the liberation of the enclave.

¹⁴ W. Martin James III, *A Political History of the Civil War in Angola: 1974-1990*, New Brunswick, Transaction, 1992, p. 64.

¹⁵ Interview, company security advisor, Luanda, 11 October 2000.

¹⁶ A detailed if turgid overview of the military operations of the first Angolan civil wars is to be found in, John Turner, *Continent Ablaze: The Insurgency Wars in Africa 1960 to the Present*, Johannesburg, Jonathan Ball, 1998, pp 100-125.

¹⁷ The classic account of this programme is John Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, London, Futura, 1979.

In areas under UNITA control the organisation boasted that it had established a 'sophisticated socio-economic infrastructure' which, while the extent of the initiatives are exaggerated did include schools, health services and agricultural projects. Dozens of UNITA students were sent abroad to various universities. UNITA also established a 'capital', Jamba in south-eastern Angola.¹⁸

The country as a whole continued to suffer from the guerilla war and an economy driven through centralised planning. In 1985 earnings from oil production were in the region of \$ 2.2 million of which expenditure on the military consumed approximately 70%, leaving precious little for the improvement of the social conditions under which ordinary Angolans lived.

The MPLA were deeply factionalised (as the party has remained to today) and government was often harsh in its crackdowns on opposition. Throughout the 1980s however both President Agostinho Neto and then José Eduardo dos Santos adopted a pragmatic approach to diplomacy to the West and South Africa, attempting both to delink UNITA from its allies and acquire much needed technology and capital investment. In this it was only partly successful, although in some cases outright commercial interests prevailed – Chevron-Gulf for one retained cordial relations with the MPLA throughout this period.

Unsurprisingly, the end of the Cold War altered the strategic position of the combatants in the ongoing Angolan war. The decline of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War allowed the superpowers to disengage, and with the help of the old colonial power Portugal to push the parties towards a peace settlement. This was greatly facilitated by an agreement signed in December 1998 between Angola, South Africa and Cuba which linked the holding of elections in Namibia to the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola.¹⁹

The Cuban withdrawal was completed by mid-1991 and monitored by the first UN verification mission to Angola, UNAVEM I. Prospects for peace in Angola and the southern African region as a whole appeared to be significantly enhanced. It was not to be.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

¹⁹ For an insiders account with a melodramatic title, see Chester Crocker, *High Noon in Southern Africa: Making Peace in a Rough Neighbourhood*, Johannesburg, Jonathan Ball, 1992.

4 Cycles of Conflict ²⁰

Talks between UNITA and the MPLA in Bicesse in Portugal were completed in the course of 1991 which resulted in the Bicesse Accords. A cease fire was implemented by both parties and the UN established a new mission to Angola, UNAVEM II. There remained however deep mistrust between UNITA and the government which cast a shadow over attempts to implement the Bicesse agreement.

These problems were compounded by the UN intervention in the country, which despite the large geographic area in which it would have to work, as well as the scope and difficulties of the task it was asked to carry out, were assigned only 350 military and 125 police observers.

The provisions of the Bicesse Accords were also hopelessly ambitious for a country which had experienced almost non-stop civil war since independence. In a matter of only 16 months a wide variety of individual procedures (each a tremendous challenge on their own) were to be completed. These included the quartering, disarming and demobilization of troops, the forging of a new unified armed force, the reestablishment of state administration across the country and the holding of presidential and parliamentary elections, a process which in itself was completely alien to any form of governance experienced before in Angola. Unsurprisingly, the implementation of the schedule agreed to at Bicesse fell hopelessly behind.

Most critically no flexibility or conditions had been entertained for the holding of elections in September 1992. Thus, these went ahead despite the reality of two rival armies remaining intact, in occupation of particular areas, and easily mobilisable should a satisfactory result not be achieved at the ballot box. UN assistance to help organise the elections was tiny: 'A mere 89 civil servants were deployed for all electoral activities in the six regional centres and 18 provincial capitals throughout the country'.²¹

Elections went ahead nevertheless. The MPLA won 54% of the parliamentary vote, UNITA 34% and an array of smaller parties 12%. Dos Santos won 49% of the votes in the presidential election, narrowly missing obtaining an absolute majority, and thus necessitating a second round of voting to determine an outright winner, as stipulated in the country's election law. Savimbi acquired 40% of the votes.

²⁰ There are a number of accounts of the post 1990 breakdown in the peace process and subsequent conflicts: Margaret Anstee, *Orphan of the Cold War*, New York, St Martins Press, 1996; Karl Maier, *Angola: Promises and Lies*, London, Serif, 1996; Judith Matloff, *Fragments of a Forgotten War*, London, Penguin, 1997; Victoria Brittain, *Death of Dignity: Angola's Civil War*, London, Pluto, 1998; Human Rights Watch, *Angola Unravels: The Rise and Fall of the Lusaka Peace Process*, New York, 1999.

²¹ Dennis Jett, *Why Peacekeeping Fails*, New York, St Martin's Press, 1999. Jett provides a useful overview and critique of UN peacemaking and peacekeeping efforts in Angola and Mozambique.

The peace process rapidly spiraled out of control. Although the UN declared the elections to have been largely free and fair, UNITA alleged widespread electoral fraud and remobilised its forces. The result was one of the most costly periods of conflict in the country's already bloody history. Between November 1992 and November 1994 at least 100 000 people were estimated to have been killed, thousands displaced and the country's infrastructure effectively destroyed.

The 1992 to 1994 conflict marked a watershed in the history of war in the country. Stripped of superpower support, both sides exploited the country's national resources to sustain the conflict, beginning a process where war and accumulation of resources became almost inseparable.

The war itself was marked by two important factors. First, the conflict shifted from the remote rural areas of the country where it had been contained before, to more heavily populated and developed areas such as the Bengo-Cuanza Norte border, Soyo, Cuanza Sul, the Benguela-Huambo-Kuito axis and northern Huíla. Second, UNITA effectively laid siege to a number of large towns, including Huambo, Kuito, Malange and Menongue.²²

These two features ensured immense human suffering of the civil population. It ensured also that the dispensing of food and medical assistance (where available) became a highly politicised process granted on condition of political support and withdrawn as punishment. Thousands of civilians died as a result of malnutrition and many were severely injured or killed by landmines, deployed heavily by both sides during the course of the conflict.²³

Formal talks to end the conflict began in Lusaka, Zambia in late 1993. These continued, as did the fighting, until November 1994, when the Lusaka Protocol was concluded. During this period, the government spent enormous amounts of money on a formidable array of weaponry and by the time the Protocol was concluded, the military balance had shifted dramatically in the MPLA's favour, ensuring that UNITA was eager to conclude a deal.

But the breakdown in the earlier peace process had left a legacy of mistrust; voices on both sides (but particularly government given its recent military gains) argued for the continuation of the conflict until the opposition was crushed. The negotiations continued however and a deal patched together.

A new innovation in the Lusaka Protocol which the MPLA recognised as an important incentive to a conclusion of a peace deal, was the inclusion of UNITA in a newly constituted government. The process of implementation of the Lusaka Protocol was as complex as Bicesse. Given high levels of distrust, both parties had requested a reinforced and more active UN presence. In February 1995, the Security Council authorised the establishment of UNAVEM III, with a maximum deployment of 7000 soldiers, 350 military observers and 260 police observers.

The peace process gave rise to two important oversight structures, one internal, the other external. A Joint Commission involving representatives of both the government and UNITA, and chaired by the UN Secretary-General's special representative, was meant to monitor and remove blockages to the peace process. A 'Troika' of foreign observers from the United States, the Russian Federation and Portugal had observer status on the Joint Commission, but also acted as key behind the scenes players, cajoling the parties towards implementation.

²² Covered in Turner, *op. cit.*, pp. 151-165.

²³ See Philip Winslow, *Sowing the Dragon's Teeth: Land Mines and the Global Legacy of War*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1997, which despite the title focus on the landmine crisis in Angola.

Significantly in neither the Bicesse nor the Lusaka agreements were there significant inclusions of outside interests such as the church in the peace process. This was a key oversight, there was little middle ground between the parties, and they had only their own interests to take into account, when complying with the peace deal.

As it was, the grounds for the establishment of democracy were weak – the activities of the fledgling free press were restricted, the economy remained on a war footing, few social services were provided to the majority of the population and both sides (although especially UNITA) retained the option of returning to war, should the peace process fail.

On top of all of this the UN did not distinguish itself. While the Secretary-General's special representative, Alioune Blondin Beye, worked tirelessly (although not always without criticism), it was clear that lessons from other peacekeeping operations were not applied: 'One observer in Luanda described the deployment of the various battalions as being for cosmetic purposes, largely in provincial capitals and without relation to the quartering areas for the demobilisation of troops or to routes of retreat should the fighting break out again'.²⁴ Earlier mistrust of UN interventions were reinforced and remains strong among individuals on both sides to this day.

Implementation of the Lusaka Protocol occurred slowly. In April 1997, UNITA deputies elected in 1992, finally took their seats and UNITA members entered a Government of National Unity and Reconciliation.

Even by this time, however, the critical military tasks of quartering UNITA troops, including selected UNITA personnel in the Angolan army and the demobilisation of troops (including child soldiers) had not been fully completed. A review of a month by month account of developments, shows how contested the process was.²⁵ UN officials warned again and again that UNITA soldiers being confined to the quartering areas were often local militia or just ordinary people pressed ganged into doing so, and not the movement's most battle hardened troops.

Although the overall extent of UNITA's conventional weaponry appears to have been consistently exaggerated, it was clear that the armaments being handed over to UN control were nothing near what UNITA possessed. Both sides were also documented as committing human rights violations during the period in which the Lusaka Protocol was being implemented.²⁶

The death of UN special representative, Beye, in an aircrash in Ivory Coast in mid-1998 marked the beginning of the implosion of the peace process. Intermittent although fierce engagements between UNITA and government troops degenerated again into all out civil war when UNITA mounted an assault in December 1998, to which government troops counter-attacked. The country was again at war – a conflict which has continued to this day.

Parallel to the war however, and intimately related to it, significant economic shifts have occurred since the conflict restarted after the failed election in 1992. These have had, and will continue to have, profound impacts both on the nature of the conduct of the war, as well as the prospects for peace.

²⁴ Jett, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

²⁵ A detailed and useful month by month overview is available by consulting the *Angola Peace Monitor*, Action for Southern Africa, <http://www.anc.org.za/angola>

²⁶ Human Rights Watch, *op. cit.*

5 The Political Economy of War

Angola, despite its wealth, has been in economic crisis from independence. This is the result of a number of factors: the sudden exodus of the Portuguese and the poor management and consequently troubled process of immediate post-independence political transition; a long history of economic mismanagement; and, ongoing war in the country with available financial resources being spent on military equipment rather than on social services or on initiatives aimed at enhancing the prospects for economic growth.

The immediate aftermath of independence saw a mass departure of the Portuguese who had dominated the country's formal economic activity. Crop production declined, the rural marketing system collapsed and a large number of factories closed. By 1977 (only two years after independence) the index of manufacturing production had fallen to only 28% of what it had been in 1973.²⁷

The outcome of the government's programme of nationalisation during 1976 and 1977 was a large state sector which included a state oil company, state diamond company, various agricultural concerns as well as a number of state manufacturing enterprises.

While nationalisation removed competition it was not, as in other communist countries, replaced by any formalised system of centralised planning or production targets. There was a dire shortage of skills not only to complete the planning process but to manage the newly nationalised state entities themselves. In any event, there was little incentive to produce – operating deficits were simply financed from the central fiscus. Importantly however economic pragmatism prevailed in the oil sector, with foreign investors being encouraged to explore opportunities in Angola.

An extensive system of price controls was also implemented. These covered almost all available products and combined with an administratively set system of exchange rates (which did not change between 1977 and 1991) tried to stem inflationary pressures. The outcome was massive distortions in prices and shortages in food and products in parts of the country.

Significantly such experiments with economic planning had two important and inter-related impacts.

- First, they created an extensive parallel, informal and black market economy, which encouraged profit making by individuals at the expense of the state. The overall result was the development of complex and underground networks of economic exchange.
- Second, a massive and inefficient state sector charged with regulating all aspects of economic life, in the context of a declining economy, was a recipe for the development of extensive corruption at all levels of the society.

Continued growth in military expenditure as the war ground on, the financial bolstering of the loss-making state enterprises, price subsidies, the low level of state income outside of the oil sector, all

²⁷ UNICEF, *Angola in Historical Perspective*, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

Table 1 *The important of the oil sector in the Angolan economy, 1991 – 1999* ³¹

| | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 |
|--------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Production * | 497 | 549 | 505 | 551 | 617 | 681 | 713 | 739 | 764 |
| % value of exports | 93.9 | 93.2 | 97.4 | 96.2 | 94.6 | 94.0 | 92.4 | 87.2 | 87.8 |
| % of govt revenues | 48.6 | 75.2 | 81.2 | 88.9 | 86.9 | 89.2 | 82.0 | 75.0 | ** |
| % of GDP | 19.6 | 35.8 | 40.2 | 56.6 | 55.8 | 58.1 | 47.9 | 37.4 | 61.3 |

* in thousands of barrel per day

** no data available

The majority of oil production is located off-shore Cabinda province. Crude reserves are also located onshore around the city of Soyo, offshore in the Kwanza Basin north of Luanda, and offshore of the coast north and south of Luanda. These areas have been divided into a series of exploration blocks. Foreign oil companies are expected to pay a non-recoverable ‘signature bonus’ for the right to operate

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

²⁹ Peter Fabricius, Twenty-Five Years of War: Angola’s Perpetual Problems, in *SA Yearbook of International Affairs 2000/01*, Johannesburg, South African Institute of International Affairs, 2000, p. 276.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Data contained in the table is compiled and calculated from the following sources: UNICEF, ‘Angola in Historical Perspective’, *op. cit.*, p. 19; International Monetary Fund, *Angola: Recent Economic Developments*, IMF Staff Country Report No 00/111, August 2000, pp. 30, 33 and 41; and, Global Witness, *A Crude Awakening; The role of the oil and banking industries in Angola’s civil war and the plunder of state assets*, 2000, unnumbered pages, but data contained under the heading, ‘Significance of the oil industry to the Angolan economy’.

in one of the blocks. In 1999, a total of \$ 900 million in payments for Block 31-33 helped to finance the government's military operations.³²

The oil industry has introduced other distortions into the Angolan labour market. While it employs very few Angolans, mostly in administration and security positions, these people are disproportionately well paid in comparison to the rest of the population. An oil company secretary can earn in the region of \$ 1000 a month, much higher than any other sector, no matter how skilled. The presence of oil dollars has also raised prices and introduced a parallel (or more accurately, a dominant) dollar economy. Luanda, despite its grinding poverty, is one of the most expensive cities in the world to live.

The offshore nature of Angola's oil resources has meant that oil production, while helping to fund the war, has been largely untouched by it. Oil revenues have been essential in funding the military expenditure for the conducting of the war against UNITA. Financing of arms purchases and short term oil backed loans have typically bypassed the accounting procedures of the central bank or finance ministry and are channeled through the state oil company, Sonangol and the presidency itself. International banking officials in 1999 estimated that a \$ 900 million windfall in oil earnings was not recorded in the published budget.³³

Table 2 provides some indication of the extent to which government revenues have been used for defence and security related expenditure; on average this is around a third of the total budget. As the table shows, significant proportions of this expenditure however has not been recorded in the official budget over the last number of years. In contrast, only a small proportion of the national budget is used to fund much needed social services such as health and education.

Critical to the Angolan government's ability to finance its war effort has been the necessity of securing lines of credit. Given a history of defaulting on its loans, the government has acquired short term loans at high interest rates which are mortgaged against future oil production. A significant proportion of the overall national budget, between 10% and 20% over the last five years, is used to service debt.

Table 2 *Angolan government expenditure 1995-1999*³⁴

| | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 |
|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|
| <i>Defence as % of total budget*</i> | 31.4 | 33.5 | 40.0 | 27.2 | 41.0 |
| (Proportion of this unrecorded) | (48.8) | (26.3) | (18.2) | (13.8) | (0.0) |
| As % of GDP | 18.0 | 19.2 | 22.4 | 11.4 | 21.7 |
| <i>Social spending as % of total budget</i> | 14.0 | 9.3 | 13.4 | 11.8 | 9.4 |
| Of which education | 5.1 | 4.4 | 5.0 | 6.2 | 4.8 |
| Of which health | 5.7 | 2.9 | 3.1 | 3.3 | 2.8 |
| <i>Debt servicing as % total budget</i> | 18.9 | 20.0 | 10.0 | 16.6 | 10.7 |

* Includes public order

³² United States Energy Information Administration, *Angola*, July 2000, p. 2.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ IMF, *op. cit.*, August 2000, p. 43.

Unsurprisingly, an industry which is located off-shore, generating a phenomenal amount of wealth, which in turn is channeled through a small elite, has been a recipe for corruption.

Nowhere is this clearer than in the linkage between oil money and the buying of military equipment. Equity partners in two of the exploration blocks (32 and 33) are closely associated to the arms trade, and not oil exploration. Senior generals in the Angolan army are also alleged to have made large profits through acting as middle men for military supplies, and pocketing a handling fee. For a small elite within the Angolan government the conduct of the war is highly profitable.³⁵

Acquiring armaments has not been difficult. After the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, international arms markets were filled with surplus weaponry. Much of these was of East European origin, where given economic constraints in the post-communist era, weapons factories continued to produce at the same level as before. In addition, in order to meet treaty requirements and bring in much needed hard currency, there has been a need to dispose of stockpiles. Reducing the supply of arms in Europe has paradoxically increased their availability and reduced their price in Africa.³⁶

If oil revenues have been the almost exclusive funding source for the government's military campaigns, diamonds have been a key source of revenue for UNITA. The rebel movement has historically occupied the diamond rich north-east of the country and the stones have been sold to middle-men who pay in cash or directly with military hardware.

Global Witness has estimated that \$3.7 billion in diamonds were sold by UNITA between 1992 and 1998, the money being largely used to buy arms.³⁷ The Global Witness figure is probably an overestimate however. While determining an exact figure is difficult, it is estimated that Angola's total production of diamond per year has been in the region of \$600 million. Although its control of the diamond mining regions have fluctuated with the fortunes of war, observers close to events, suggest that on average UNITA controlled just over half the country's diamond production, worth approximately \$300 – 320 million a year. As UNITA was never likely to be paid market related prices in the murky world of sanctions busting and arms for diamond deals, it is probable that the organisation seldom earned more than \$200 million a year in diamond sales, given a figure of \$1.4 billion between 1992 and 1998. Much less than the Global Witness estimate, if these calculations are correct, but enough to run a damaging military campaign.

UNITA's position has shifted dramatically since then and three important recent initiatives are likely to limit the ability of the organisation to continue to fund its military campaign with diamonds.

The first is an international driven effort to ensure a system of certification for diamonds, so that stones from conflict ridden areas cannot be sold on world markets. The global campaign on this issue has been highly successful, skillfully conducted by Global Witness³⁸, widely supported in the West, and a diplomatic triumph for the Angolan government.

³⁵ Global Witness, *op. cit.*

³⁶ Mark Shaw, *The cost of war and the price of peace: The political economy of crime and conflict in sub-Saharan Africa*, unpublished paper, South African Institute of International Affairs, April 2000, p. 3.

³⁷ Global Witness press release, 'Is the price of diamonds too high? How Angola's return to war has been funded by the international diamond trade', 14 December 1998.

³⁸ See Global Witness, *Conflict Diamonds: Possibilities for the identification, certification and control of diamonds*, June 2000.

Second, and closely related to the international efforts around diamond certification, has been the tightening of sanctions against UNITA. In April 2000, the UN Security Council voted unanimously to tighten sanctions against the rebel movement in response to violations of the Council's three previous sanctions resolutions against UNITA.

At the centre of this was a hard hitting report of a committee, headed by Canada's ambassador to the UN, Robert Fowler, concerning sanctions busting in support of UNITA.³⁹ While there have been few practical outcomes of the report, the publicity associated with it, and its approach of 'naming and shaming' perpetrators, may undercut UNITA's support still further. While the report contains a useful overview of the means through which UNITA acquired arms and other supplies, the committee was criticised for speaking only to UNITA dissidents, although it would presumably have been difficult to engage directly with UNITA in the bush. Whatever its flaws however the report signified the growing international isolation of Savimbi and UNITA.

Third, and perhaps least important given the chaotic nature of government administration in Angola, has been attempts to improve Luanda's own system of diamond certification. The system's weaknesses have allowed UNITA and private smugglers to sell diamonds into the official government buying network. There has long been suspicions of a connivance, based on the profit motive, between government officials and UNITA.

Observers in Angola suggest however that while these interventions would make it much more difficult for UNITA to sell diamonds, all the gaps could never be closed. Unofficial diamond prospectors (who could be linked to UNITA) will simply sell into the official system: 'You can't stop UNITA digging and you can't stop Ascorp [official government agency charged with buying diamonds through 47 buying offices] buying. UNITA funds their war and the government funds its war, all within the same circle'.⁴⁰ As it is, the government's own certificate issuing system (despite the reforms) is vulnerable to corruption. 'It would not surprise me at all', said a senior UN security official who travels widely across the country, 'if UNITA is right now selling diamonds to the Angolan government in Luanda'.⁴¹ Thus, while UNITA's capacity for waging war may be undercut, it has not been dismantled altogether.

The capture of diamond rich areas by government forces has ensured that new players have entered the market. Army generals are said to control some of the mines or indeed have an interest in their successful operation; the army's chief of staff, for example, owns a private security company that protects one mine.

The war therefore continues to generate wealth for some, while leaving the majority of Angolans in abject poverty. A prominent member of UNITA's parliamentary group suggests that before 1990 the pilfering of state resources on both sides of the conflict was contained given that the ideological differences between the opposing sides gave combatants and their leaders a clear vision to fight for. Now there is no such compunction.⁴² An Angolan working for a donor organisation in Luanda put it this way: 'It is one thing when citizens break the law, it is quite another, when those in charge, meant

³⁹ *Report of the Panel of Experts on Violations of the Security Council Sanctions Against UNITA*, United Nations Security Council, March 2000.

⁴⁰ An employee on the Catoca diamond mine in Angola, quoted in Lara Paulson, 'Rich pickings in Angola', *Focus on Africa*, October – December 2000, p. 36.

⁴¹ Interview, Luanda, 12 October 2000.

⁴² Shaw, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

to enforce the law, flout it — there is very little that we, as ordinary citizens, can do'.⁴³ What then are the prospects for peace?

⁴³ Interview, Luanda, 10 October 2000.

6 Prospects for Peace

Significant developments over the last number of months have seen UNITA suffer some critical military reverses. However, as the conflict moves onto the borders of neighbouring states, new dangers of a further regional expansion of the war could present themselves.

In the first exchanges after war broke out again in December 1998, UNITA acquitted itself well. The Angolan army however had been weakened by recent profiteering from arms sales, which had diverted funds from the purchase of additional military hardware. By April 1999 this problem had been resolved with the purchasing of military equipment being placed directly under General João de Matos, the Angolan army's formidable chief of staff. Initial set backs were soon reversed. De Matos then mounted a three pronged attack against the UNITA strong holds in Bailundo and Andulo which were successful. De Matos has subsequently been dismissed. While it is unclear exactly why, it is possible that this relates to his own belief that at some point negotiations with Savimbi are inevitable.

Nevertheless before his dismissal, the Angolan army's battle performance appeared to have been greatly improved through the obtaining of high quality intelligence information, and its effective use. The overall strategic aim of the government offensive has been to secure the countries northern, eastern and western borders. This had largely been achieved as by late 2000 the Angolan army advanced decisively to the Zambian border. In late September, the town of Cazombo was taken, considered important because of the presence of an airstrip capable of receiving large quantities of supplies.

Securing the borders is always going to be difficult. While one western diplomat suggested that most road crossings could be monitored, preventing the bringing of heavier supplies, such as fuel trucks, a UN official familiar with the area, said that the length of border was porous in many places, and systems would be established to ensure supplies would get through. Thus, the October report of the UN Secretary-General to the Security Council points out that UNITA has apparently 'opened a corridor' in the north-eastern region 'to move supplies from the Democratic Republic of Congo'.⁴⁴

It is clear however that UNITA has substantially rethought its strategy following both its military and (perhaps more seriously in the long run) its diplomatic reverses. UNITA's approach now seems to be two-fold.

The first leg of UNITA's strategy is a return to hit and run guerilla tactics. As UNITA's back has been pushed against the western border of the country, so attacks on food and military convoys within the centre of the country have been increased. There is some evidence that UNITA commanders have been given the order to operate independently, and so these spoiling actions are a result. Equally critical however is the requirement for supplies, hence attacks on humanitarian convoys — although it

⁴⁴ *Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Office in Angola*, United Nations Security Council, 10 October 2000, p. 3.

is often difficult to distinguish these from ordinary cases of banditry or actions by Angolan army units, themselves short of supplies.

The Angolan army's capacity for counter-insurgency warfare is significantly less than for conventional forms of conflict. It has seldom distinguished itself in this role, and while it is said to have foreign advisors to assist (although from where is not clear), this is unlikely to alter in the short to medium term. While morale is higher than usual following the success of the most recent campaign, these gains could be undercut in a long and morale sapping guerilla struggle. Counter-insurgency will be less about the purchase of fancy new equipment, and more about getting into the bush in search of guerilla's – a prospect that will not appeal to most units of the Angolan army.

The second leg of UNITA's strategy appears to be to widen the war further into the region, to the advantage of the movement. A significant number of UNITA members appear to have crossed over into Zambia following the Angolan army's most recent advance. In many cases, observers suggested that UNITA did not put up much of a fight and simply 'melted away' rather than confront the advancing Angolan army head on.⁴⁵ It is possible that some attempt will be made to mount cross-border incursions into Angola – the country's long border being difficult to secure – and thus continue the war from outside.

These developments further expand the Angolan conflict into neighbouring states. Already the Angolan army has intervened to the north in the Republic of Congo (Brazzaville) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to deny rear areas to UNITA. A successful campaign against UNITA has also been fought from Namibian soil (and with the assistance of the Namibian army) against UNITA units in Cuando Cubango province.

Ominous warnings to the Zambian authorities not to assist UNITA guerilla's who have crossed over from Angola suggest that there is a very real danger of increased cross-border tensions on Angola's western most border. Indeed, sources close to UNITA suggest that the organisations strategy may be designed to achieve exactly that, an internationalisation of the conflict, bringing both publicity and forcing the Angolan government's hand in violating the territory of a neighbour, with whom Luanda has not always had cordial relations.

On the face of it, none of this bodes well for peace. Yet there are some reasons to be hopeful. Savimbi himself appears to have told outsiders who have seen him in the recent past, that he is willing to negotiate. While this may well be a tactic to end the war to enable UNITA to regroup, it could also be a genuine belief (although past experience mitigates against this) that the country has been at war long enough.

Though the MPLA government has firmly ruled out any further negotiations with Savimbi, some options remain. Against this background, a recent statement by Dos Santos is important. This is to the effect that 'dialogue would be pursued with those who embrace peace, recognize the legitimate authority of the country and wish to contribute to the consolidation of democracy, reconstruction and development of Angola'.⁴⁶ While observers in Luanda have mixed feelings (partly because of the

⁴⁵ Interview, UN security official, Luanda, 11 October 2000. The interviewee noted that there had been no 'collateral damage' which would have indicated that this and some other towns further west had been fiercely contested.

⁴⁶ *Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Office in Angola*, United Nations Security Council, 10 October 2000, p. 8.

contradictory positions taken by other senior government officials) about the meaning of the statement, it does leave the door slightly ajar, although it seems clear that while the government may want to talk, it will be unwilling to 'renegotiate' the provisions of the Lusaka Protocol. But, Dos Santos has also suggested that the country's constitution requires review. This, a senior western diplomat points out may be an opening which would allow the inclusion of UNITA without going through the formal rubric of negotiations. A further territorial expansion of the war to Zambia, may once again encourage international pressure for some kind of engagement between the parties. It is too early to tell at this stage, and too much anti-negotiations rhetoric has tied the hands of most players, including the Security Council, suggesting that it will take time (and an up-scaling of the war in the east, perhaps in Zambia itself) for this to be achieved.

Without a formal cease fire (which can probably only be achieved with some kind of negotiated settlement) a decisive defeat of UNITA looks unlikely. The organisation has the capacity according to observers to continue a disruptive (although limited) guerilla war into the future, and as has been argued, will be in a position to raise some limited financing.⁴⁷

The recent defeats and withdrawals by UNITA suggest however that all has not proceeded according to plan. One significant change, according to UNITA sources, is that the new commanders now being used by UNITA do not have strong relations with the local populace in areas where they have been operating. That suggests not only that UNITA is not the same organisation it was when it scored decisive victories against the Angolan army in the early 1990s, but that UNITA itself may make a more concerted attempt to engage with the citizenry in areas where it operates. Despite this however, and paradoxically, the sustained government offensive to the east has shifted military resources out of the centre of the country, leaving these more vulnerable to attack.

Savimbi's strategy then, according to one western official, will be to 'spoil the government's party'.⁴⁸ By all accounts that may not need much spoiling.

At the front Angolan army units are often more predatory occupiers than liberating crusaders, social conditions in the cities and towns remain frightful and there are fledgling but significant opposition voices emerging. In response, the governments tabling of a harsh new press law for discussion has been met with mixed feelings – almost all parties interviewed suggested that the new willingness to debate policy with broader interest groups was to be welcome, yet the contents of the law themselves suggest 'old style authoritarian knee jerk responses to criticism'.⁴⁹

The strongest card in the MPLA's deck is that it has won some important diplomatic victories and has built strong relations with the West, particularly the United States, while effectively isolating UNITA. Although for its part UNITA often seems only too willing to act in ways which enhance its outcast status, including the perpetration of gross human rights violations, such as the recent attack on

⁴⁷ UNITA's continued capacity to wage war is explicitly recognised in the Secretary-General's October 2000 report to the Security Council.

⁴⁸ European Ambassador, Luanda, 11 October 2000.

⁴⁹ Almost the same phrase was used in three interviews, Luanda, 9-12 October 2000. This quote comes from a Western diplomat.

an orphanage in the province of Huambo as well as continued allegations of abduction of children for use as porters and eventually for military service.⁵⁰

Obviously better relations between the US and Luanda have not been driven exclusively by MPLA diplomacy. American strategic oil interests are at stake, with it being predicted that eventually 10% of US oil consumption will be sourced from Angola. But America's friendly engagement may in itself pose significant challenges for the Luanda elite, whose own human rights record is shaky. US support while favouring Luanda – despite some in the Angolan government's residual belief that the US still has a soft spot for UNITA, and that this will be worsened by a Republican administration – is unlikely to be completely unconditional. It is no surprise that senior American policy makers (although admittedly from the Clinton administration) point to the growing role of civil society and the church, the increasing stridency of the press and the importance of the Angolan government's engagement with the IMF as hopeful signs for the future. All of these developments are not greeted with unified applause by Angolans who benefit from the status quo.

Whatever its foreign relations successes, the Luanda government has always had a strong authoritarian tendency. This is an inheritance from the colonial regime as well as subsequent period of Soviet Bloc influence. Recent signs of the regime opening up and appearing to be more tolerant to criticism of its actions are difficult to read. They have been followed for example by the persecution of some journalists and other repressive measures. It is probably too early to tell although at least some Angolans suggest that there is an authentic will to evolve, even if this often has contradictory consequences as internal factions fight it out for influence.

The implementation of an IMF Staff Monitored Programme, for example, has highlighted divisions in the always fractious MPLA. The IMF programme is critical however to the longer term economic viability of Angola – if it succeeds it will lead to the rescheduling of the country's debt burden in a coordinated manner, opening the way for reduced interest payments and more concessional loans. Yet, for vested interests it holds some dangers, including an audit of the oil and diamond sectors and the privatisation of state owned companies. Greater transparency in the public accounts is also likely to be a significant threat to the small coterie around the presidency itself.

It must be emphasised that the IMF programme is not a stand alone and linked to the preparation of a World Bank-led poverty reduction strategy. The implications are important: first, in principle, Angola will have access to development resources that will offset austerity measures and other reforms. Second, debt rescheduling will free Angola from relying on very expensive commercial credit, but will require increased financial transparency and accountability.

Whether the IMF process can be kept on track is far from clear; already the date for the mid-term review of the programme has slipped past with no delivery from government and the Minister of Finance changed in a cabinet reshuffle (although the reasons for this in the byzantine politics of Luanda are difficult to discern). There may also over time be significant costs for the already hard pressed population through the introduction of austerity measures as agreed with the IMF. These will serve to undermine the position of the government further, undercutting government's will to implement the reforms.

⁵⁰ *Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Office in Angola*, United Nations Security Council, 10 October 2000, p. 4.

Whatever the case, the Angolan government is often driven by a 'war logic'⁵¹ – making immediate short term gains, rather than formulating a clear economic or other strategy for the longer term. Thus, because negotiations with the IMF brought the benefit of improved external perceptions of the Angolan government at a time of critical diplomatic manoeuvring against UNITA, only time will tell whether the agreement will be stuck to. Despite the oil windfall however, the position of the Angolan economy is so dire that, foreign observers in Luanda almost unanimously agree, that government 'as no choice'.⁵²

Despite the massive oil wealth being generated, life for ordinary Angolans remains poverty stricken. Many, particularly those in conflict areas, survive on the hand outs of aid agencies. The role of aid agencies in the conflict, while essential in many areas in ensuring that ordinary Angolans do not starve to death has unintended consequences. First aid agencies provide a source of patronage to those who can influence where aid is distributed and secondly the provision of aid itself freeing the government of any responsibility to its own citizens. In a series of bizarre exchanges the Luanda government has accused aid agencies of not supplying food and other essentials to citizens in distress. In at least one instance aid agencies have had to bring pressure to bear on government to repair landing strips to ensure that the supply of food keeps getting through. The role of aid agencies will remain paradoxical – essential in the short term, but damaging to long term prospects in the country by allowing the government to relinquish some of its core responsibilities.

Much stock is placed by outsiders in the growing role of church and civil society groups in urging a peaceful resolution to the conflict. A Congress for Peace held in July 2000 in Luanda received international attention. Angolans are more sanguine, pointing to fragmented opposition politics and more importantly the degree of division within the church. Yet, it is true to say that one of the missing dimensions to earlier attempts at peace, where that they only involved those engaged (and in many cases benefiting from) the war and excluded the church and civil society. An essential element of continued foreign engagement with Angola must be dialogue and support of these groups. The stronger their institutional base when opportunities for ending the war present themselves, the more useful the role they are likely to play. It is also true (and government seems to have realised this) that such groups are unlikely to go away and may become more effective over time in mobilizing the hard pressed citizenry.

For the moment, long years of war have spawned powerful interests which support it's continuance and criminal networks which are both generated by the conflict and sustain it. Wider developments in southern Africa suggest that criminal networks have assumed a prominent position. Criminal groups (in many cases just a loose affiliation of individuals seeking profit) vary in size, although they tend to be small, based on family community or tightly constituted ethnic links. Those generated by the war in Angola link neatly into this regional network. According to police intelligence sources, old connections between Portuguese nationals resident in South Africa and Angolans or between old elements of the South African security establishment and their UNITA counter-parts have

⁵¹ UN official, Luanda, 10 October 2000.

⁵² Western diplomats, Luanda, 10-11 October 2000.

been used to procure minerals, drugs or weapons.⁵³ There are thus some important continuities between operations which supplied UNITA in the past, and those that are ongoing.

The linkage between ongoing conflicts and criminal networks requires much greater attention. On current evidence it appears that these are a complex combination of individual military actors, external business operators and government officials. Discerning legitimate from illegitimate activities in this context is difficult. This is even more the case where informal or 'shadow' economic activities are the source of livelihood for many ordinary Angolans. It is too early at this stage of the investigation to provide an accurate typology of these networks, but it is clear that many have close links to South Africans or expatriate people living there.

New profits, outside of the war economy but benefiting from the instability generated by the conflict, are being made. For example, drugs coming from Brazil (with whom Angola has historic ties) are transited through Luanda to the more lucrative markets of South Africa.⁵⁴ Weakening these networks will play an essential part in undercutting the profits made from the war. One important and under-analysed dimension in this regard is the possibility of strengthening regional policing arrangements. In addition, and although these are far from watertight, some useful beginnings have been made with the high profile campaigns around 'conflict diamonds', but these are not enough. Greater oversight of how oil revenues are accounted for and spent, is the most important lever to improving issues of governance and transparency In Angola. It is for this reason that the IMF process is critical.

Outside of the capital however and at the working end of the war different forces are at work. Lines of command between headquarters and the field have weakened and the independence of local commanders greatly enhanced. The result is that the armies have become predatory (or even more so than in the past), eeking out a living in the field, and both fighting the enemy for the control of resources as well as concluding (locally brokered) 'peace' agreements, bartering with each other for food and fuel, and ambushing humanitarian convoys.

Ironically, the advances of the Angolan troops right onto the eastern border, has brought them into sparsely populated areas where, insiders say, there are few resource advantages to be gained. At the limit of their logistical supply chain, and with few profits to be found for themselves, the deployment of government troops will be difficult to maintain indefinitely.

This fragmentation will make the war harder to resolve and in the longer term may finally reduce the conflict to its most basic form – organised banditry in the country's hinterland, continuing Angola's centuries old tradition of economic predation. This suggests that the conflict may over time degenerate into a much more complex series of 'turf' wars between warlords or criminal groups. Perhaps the most important indicator of this development will be the loosening of lines of command between army headquarters in either case and the greater independence of field commanders not only in planning military operations but ensuring their economic survival. The removal of Savimbi himself, given his almost mythical status for survival, would probably weaken UNITA considerably, but, in the

⁵³ See Mark Shaw, 'Dirty Business: Southern Africa's network of organised crime,' in *Traders: Journal for the Southern African Region*, October 2000 – January 2001.

⁵⁴ Gary Lewis, *Mission Report: Angola*, United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, Pretoria, March 2000.

words of a humanitarian aid official working in the east, could also lead to ‘a few little Savimbi’s who carry on his work’.⁵⁵

Ending the war on a formal level will probably (although now it is almost a ritual to deny that this is the case) require some kind of peace deal between the parties, even if this does not take the form of structured negotiations as they have occurred before. Dos Santos’ promise of an election in 2001 appeared to be an attempt to encourage a belief that the Luanda elite would pursue a democratic course. However, this offer has already been withdrawn although it was always only speculation, based as it was on the condition that the internal situation should have stabilised. This is far from the case, and the MPLA government appears less ready to test public opinion on its (non) performance than many outsiders had hoped.

For the moment however, as is pointed out above, the war in Angola has expanded beyond its borders. Angolan army troops have played an important role in propping up the regime of Laurent Kabila in the DRC, and troop levels have been reinforced following the assassination of Kabila and the installment of his son as the country’s ruler. Both the DRC and Angolan war are lapping over the frontiers of Zambia and the possibility remains that the regional dimension of the war may expand further. What is increasingly clear also is that the region’s conflicts are closely connected. Zimbabwe, whose economy is now beginning to implode, is an ally of the Luanda government and also has troops in the DRC. A resolution of the crisis in Zimbabwe and the conflict in Angola are now therefore increasingly linked to the achievement of peace in Congo-Kinshasha.

On current evidence achieving peace in Congo and thus resolving the impasse in Angola and Zimbabwe do not look promising. Close ties between Zimbabwe’s Robert Mugabe and Dos Santos and a joint suspicion of South Africa, as the regional super power, complicates the regions politics. Pretoria may only be allowed to act as a regional mediator once parties to all of the conflicts agree that peace should be achieved. In the DRC there it does appear as if the Angolans and Zimbabweans (particularly the latter, giving the growing crisis at home) wish to withdraw. But a series of attempts at peace have yet to bear fruit.

⁵⁵ Interview, Luanda, 12 October 2000.

7 Conclusion: Explaining the Conflict

Given this broad overview of the conflict in Angola how has the conflict been explained in the academic literature? More importantly, given the aims of the current project, what areas of the conflict have been poorly researched?

Much has been written about the war in Angola since its origins.⁵⁶ The literature, like the conflict it reflects, is divided into a clear set of time periods. While perhaps less important in the current context, a number of critical studies of Portuguese colonialism trace some of the root causes of the conflict to the harsh nature of the ‘occupation’ and the fostering of class and ethnic divisions within the society which have sustained the conflict. There is a series of prominent studies on the overthrow of Portuguese rule and the difficult first few years of the new state.⁵⁷

There is of course substantial literature on the nature of the conflict between the MPLA and UNITA during the course of the Cold War. Explanations for the ongoing war however are heavily (and rightly given the period) coloured by the Cold War. Thus, Angola is typically described as a ‘proxy’ war with the superpowers providing resources and material to either side.⁵⁸ The role of lesser powers such as Cuba and South Africa whose troops were engaged in Angola also receive attention.⁵⁹ The conclusions however of this literature (whatever ideological angle it takes) is either that the Angola war could not be resolved until the super powers (and others such as South Africa disengage) or that, although this is stated less often given that few considered it an immediate possibility, that the war in Angola could not itself be ended until the Cold War was over.

The end of the Cold War had, as is outlined above, important implications for Angola. A series of peace plans and UN sponsored missions aimed to resolve the conflict. There is a growing body of important work now available which points out the failings of these initiatives. Indeed, some academic studies come quite clearly to the conclusion that peace could have been achieved in Angola had the peace process been approached differently or had the UN (and by implication other states) invested more heavily in it.⁶⁰ While not strictly academic literature a series of personal memoirs of those

⁵⁶ A short select bibliography covering some of the major works written on the recent Angolan conflict is attached. The footnotes of the report often cover more recent literature, often in the shape of reports rather than academic articles or books, which are of importance in understanding more recent trends in the conflict.

⁵⁷ The best is the two volumes by John Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution, Volume I: Anatomy of an Explosion*, Cambridge MA, MIT Press, 1969; and *The Angolan Revolution, Volume II, Exile Politics and Guerilla Warfare*, Cambridge MA, MIT Press, 1978.

⁵⁸ See Micahel Wolfers and Jane Bergerol, *Angola in the Frontline*, London, Zed, 1983. Keith Somerville, *Angola: Politics, Economics and Society*, London, Pinter, 1986.

⁵⁹ An important work in this regard is: William Minter, *Apartheid's Contras: An Inquiry into the Roots of War in Angola and Mozambique*, Johannesburg, Witwatersrand University Press, 1994.

⁶⁰ Probably the two most important works in this regard are: Jett, *op. cit* and Human Rights Watch, *op. cit*.

involved in the peace process are important to understanding the period as they suggest the difficulties experienced on the ground.⁶¹ Although there appears to be a degree of consensus among both academic commentators and practitioners that simply not enough, particularly in the provision of troops, to ensure that peace was achieved.

The failure of attempts at peace and the ongoing (and changing) war has given rise to a more recent literature, much of it produced by non-government organisations or human rights groups, which paint the conflict as a 'resource war'. That is, driven by oil and demands with at least some prominent players on both sides have an interest in war, which is profitable for them, rather than the achievement of peace.⁶² While this, as this report argues clearly, is certainly a factor in the conflict it may have been over-emphasised. Partly this is because of a focus on ending the trade in 'blood diamonds' and the massive public campaigns around this factor in the West. To some extent this approach does undercut the role of the conflicting parties themselves in sustaining the conflict, and future histories of Angola are likely to take a much more balanced view of the causes of the war, than a simple resort to explanations which argue that it is fuelled by resources.

If human agency is a factor in the war however, no where is this more clearly illustrated than in the large amount of material (much of it now dated) on Savimbi himself. Original works provided a rose tinted view of Savimbi as an independent and aggressive commander seeking a country free of domination.⁶³ More recently he is almost consistently portrayed as an evil and intransigent bully boy hungry for power. In contrast there are few (if any) detailed studies available of the nature of the government in Angola, including perhaps most surprisingly a noticeable dearth of literature on Dos Santos who has played a prominent (and often wily) role in the life of the state.

This broad overview of the available literature, as well as the scan of the conflict above, suggest some important areas where little research has been done. Perhaps most important in the context of this study has been any detailed coverage of four factors.

First, while much attention has been paid at a high level to the role of oil and diamonds in driving the conflict, there has been little attention given to the political economy of war at the micro-level. How ordinary military units on both sides survive in the field, for example, or to what extent the conflict is breeding new or taking advantage of old criminal networks to sustain itself. The 'criminalisation of the conflict' is in itself an important area of study. In some ways, as a recent review of organised crime points out, it may be impossible in the longer term to distinguish between armed insurgency groups and criminal organisations.⁶⁴ At least one unintended impact of sanctions against UNITA has been to force 'trade' with the organisation underground, encouraging rather than preventing illicit activity. Local criminal networks will in the longer term be critical to understanding the nature of the conflict, particularly, as is suggested above, if it fragments further.

Second, there is very little academic literature available which traces in detail the regional dimensions to the conflict. Given the Luanda government's oil wealth and UNITA's highly mobile

⁶¹ Important in this regard is Anstee, *op. cit.* and Matloff, *op. cit.*

⁶² The most well known are the reports of Global Witness, see footnotes 30 and 37 above.

⁶³ Widely read in South Africa was, for example, Fred Bridgland, *Jonas Savimbi: A Key to Africa*, London, Coronet, 1986. For a more critical account see, Elaine Windrich, *The Cold War Guerrilla: Jonas Savimbi, the US Media and the Angolan War*, New York, Greenwood Press, 1992.

⁶⁴ United States Government, *International Crime Threat Assessment*, 2001, p. 11.

nature, the war has been an expansionist one, spilling over into a series of neighbouring states. In some ways (although this too should not be over-emphasised) resolving the conflict in Angola would, given the fact that Angolan troops are active in almost all neighbouring states, have important implications for peace in the region as a whole. Thus, the regional dimensions of the Angolan war in the most recent phase of the conflict, including the operation of cross-border criminal networks, is of critical importance.

Third, While much has been written about the war itself, there is surprisingly little available on the military machines of both sides. There is for example no detailed study of the Angolan army itself, or for that matter of UNITA's current organisation and capacity. This are important gaps in a war that has been one of the most brutal in the post-Cold War world. Such a focus assumes particular importance given growing evidence that individual units and commanders in both forces have greater independence in the conducting of operations than ever before. That raises the importance of their obtaining resources to sustain themselves. Whether this will develop into a general system of 'warlordism' across the country remains unclear, however current information suggests that both armies are beginning to change in ways which may have significant long term implications for the nature of the conflict itself.

Finally, while much has been made of the nature and protests of Angolan civil society, it has received almost no attention at all from academic analysts. This is a serious oversight given that many commentators on the current state of the country suggest that church and other groups have a critical role to play in the peace process. Perhaps also requiring of attention is the related sphere of small scale business (some would say survival) strategies of ordinary Angolans. These economic networks must be understood, not only because they link to some of protagonists of the conflict but also because they will be an essential element in building an Angola free of war.

It would be perhaps ambitious to assume that these four areas would be covered in detail in the literature. For one, they are relatively new and research attention has been dominated by other questions (such as the high level political economy of the war itself), for another, in almost all cases, although less so in relation to the question of civil society, access and research work is difficult. Despite this however these remain essential focus areas if a more accurate understanding of the political economy of war and its implication for the future of conflict in Southern Africa is to be grasped.

Select Bibliography

The following is a list of some of the most important academic work on the Angolan conflict used in the writing of this study. The selection has been chosen to cover various aspects of the country's history of conflict and is not comprehensive in some areas, such as the colonial period. A number of personal memoirs have also been included as they provide a useful insight into the nature and brutality of the war. Additional documentation, reports and unpublished material is to be found in the report's footnotes.

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- A useful month by month account of the Angolan conflict is provided by Angola Peace Monitor found at www.anc.org.za/angola.