



Situation Report

Date Issued: 16 September 2008
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Distribution: General
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Angolan legislative elections: Analysing the MPLA's triumph

Introduction

Angola's legislative elections on 5 September 2008 saw the ruling MPLA win a landslide victory with 82% of the vote, reducing the opposition to a residual political force. UNITA managed to get a mere 10.5% of the vote, the PRS 3%, and FNLA only 1%. President Jose Eduardo dos Santos's party is now able to change the constitution and govern without having significantly to engage in political debate with the opposition or civil society. The composition of the legislative branch will, therefore, experience a radical transformation compared with the situation after 1992, when the MPLA obtained 125 seats, UNITA 70, the PRS 6, FNLA 5 and a number of smaller parties secured one parliamentary seat each. The result of the latest elections will give the opposition an estimated total of only 40 seats out of the 223 available.

From a theoretical perspective, a victory on this scale is hardly conducive to the promotion of democracy in Angola, a country whose past has been marked by repressive governance, corruption, social and economic exclusion, mismanagement of natural resources and political marginalisation.¹

Because peace came only as a consequence of the military defeat of UNITA in 2002 there has been little incentive for the MPLA government to address the root causes of the protracted civil conflict or to promote true reconciliation through the integration of the defeated, or to form inclusive national forums from civil society, and promote broad-based political debate in order to create the conditions for transparent, just and accountable governance. The Angolan government needed to establish its democratic credentials with the international community, an important aspect for President dos Santos, who is concerned about his place in Angola's history. However, whether this overwhelming victory over the opposition will persuade the government to promote sustainable socioeconomic development as well as free and democratic institutions must be in doubt.

These polls provided an important opportunity for Angolans to experience elections as a constructive exercise of their citizenship rights, as a fundamental step towards the consolidation of peace and reconciliation, and the beginning of a new chapter in the country's history. There were high expectations entertained of these elections, as the population became more politically engaged, manifesting a sense of civic duty and an eagerness to participate in national politics. Some 40% of the electorate was voting for the first time, having been too young in 1992. Many will therefore have been disappointed as the opposition was crushed by means of a carefully orchestrated campaign of propaganda and intimidation,

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the partisan deployment of the State's information services and the co-opting of traditional authorities, which extended Luanda's control to the remotest areas of the country.

There was never any doubt that the MPLA would win the elections, but what was uncertain was whether it would secure a two-thirds majority in Parliament, given the composition of the young electorate, the disillusionment felt by the impoverished majority, the increase in conflicts over land between slum-dwellers and developers, and the increasingly visible accumulation of wealth by the ruling elite that is extravagantly paraded in Luanda. Many of the skilled Angolans and the small middle class outside the mainstream of the politically privileged were also disillusioned with the government. Given this unpredictability, especially in Luanda, where 21% of the electorate live, the MPLA to created the necessary conditions to guarantee an overwhelming victory. Through the manipulation of the media, the intimidation of the opposition, a nationwide campaign to install fear in the population, the organised disorder of voting in Luanda, and the co-opting of local authorities, the ruling party has guaranteed its rule for another 4 years.

Despite the cloak of legitimacy provided by reforms to improve the country's international image, including measures concerning fiscal transparency and the rapid rehabilitation of infrastructure, the control and heavy-handedness with which the Angolan government prepared its certain victory leaves questions about the prospects for democracy and inclusive prosperity.

Understanding the Angolan paradox: Root causes of the conflict

Between 1975 and 2002 Angola suffered one of Africa's longest and deadliest civil wars with only a few intermittent years of tense peace. The civil war in Angola was defined as a conflict fought by two mutually exclusive ideological, political and cultural blocs, aided by external interests. Antagonisms based on ethno-linguistic diversity, social and economic exclusion, inequality derived from class distinctions, and distortions in the distribution of resources have long facilitated the systematic violation of fundamental rights. These factors and the absence of a common normative system to establish guiding principles for the consolidation of peace have caused the failure of past peace processes and the quest for national unity.

In the 1960s three liberation movements surfaced in the country, each principally representative of an ethnic group, a social class and a region of the country. The National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA), was comprised mainly by the Bakongo (the third largest ethnic group that lived in the northwestern provinces of Zaire, Uige and Cabinda) and was rural in character. The Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) grew out of the urban centers by left-wing elites in Luanda and was comprised of mulattos, *assimilados*,² intellectuals and whites, even though its ethnic basis was Mbundu (provinces of Bengo, Luanda, Kwanza Norte and Malange). The Mbundu were the second largest ethnic group, representing 23% of the population, and had already integrated Portuguese language and culture into their way of life, a result of sustained interaction with the colonial power.³ The National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), had its base among the "indigenous rural communities" and the majority of the Ovimbundu (37% of the population) of the central high plateau (provinces of Huambo, Bié, Benguela, Moxico, and Cuando Cubango) and was led by Jonas Savimbi.

Beyond the ethnic diversity within Angola, society was characterised by the absence of intersections and social bridges between the different groups (partly due to rural isolation), which would later help to consolidate the exclusivity of MPLA and UNITA membership. Divisions were perpetuated in all strata of society, with both warring parties establishing their youth movements, women's organisations, and workers associations.

The political situation was further complicated during the Cold War by international forces, bent on defending their own geopolitical and strategic interests, fighting a proxy war in Angola. The nationalist forces became new recruits for the ideological

conflict of the superpowers, with the USSR backing the MPLA and later on, the USA, South Africa and China supporting UNITA.

The 1992 elections

In 1991 the Bicesse Accords brought about a political settlement between UNITA and MPLA, initiating the first democratic transition, and calling for constitutional reform, the creation of a unified army (the Angolan Armed Forces – FAA), and the holding of multiparty elections. On 29 and 30 of September 1992 presidential and parliamentary elections were held in a generally peaceful atmosphere, with 4.8 million Angolans casting their votes. The MPLA's 54% victory in the legislative polls secured it 129 seats in the 220-member parliament, while UNITA managed only 70 seats with 34% of the vote, and the remaining seats were allocated to the PRS, the FNLA and other smaller parties. The race for the presidency was much closer, however, with Jose Eduardo dos Santos receiving 49.6 % of the vote to 40% for Jonas Malheiro Savimbi. Because neither managed to get a majority a second round was required to be held within 30 days. This never happened, as UNITA and other opposition parties claimed that irregularities during the presidential and parliamentary elections rendered them invalid.

On 2 October 1992, the Joint Declaration of Angolan Political Parties, issued by eight of the opposition parties declared that the elections were fraudulent. Despite this and the fact that 1.2 million unused ballot papers mysteriously had disappeared, the United Nations declared the elections to be “generally free and fair”. The negotiations to peacefully resolve the impasse broke down on the 31 October when government troops and the Rapid Intervention Police (known as the ninjas) staged a brutal crackdown on the UNITA leadership, and the MPLA's *Jovem Justiceiros*⁴ carried out the “Halloween Massacre” of UNITA supporters in Luanda. The post-electoral war took on cruel and merciless dimensions, resulting between 1992-1994 in the killing of more than 300,000 Angolans, in political purges, revenge killings, and ethnic cleansing in cities and villages throughout the country⁵. Ovimbundu and Bakongo people were killed by government troops, and later UNITA began purging populations thought to be supportive of MPLA.

Subsequent years witnessed a remilitarisation of society, attacks on the civilian population by both UNITA and the MPLA, an aggravation of the culture of impunity, and UNITA's capture of 70% of the national territory, leading to the conversion of its guerilla forces into a conventional army. In response, the government created the Organisation of Civil Defence (ODC) by arming the civilian population. Between 1992 and 1994 UNITA troops retook the provinces of Huambo and Bie from government forces and proceeded to murder informers and supporters of the MPLA. Families disappeared, communities turned on each other, and for the first eight months of the occupation the population was living on the brink of starvation⁶. Today, the people from the Highlands who remember the cruelty displayed by UNITA recount this – a past the party's new leadership has been unable to comprehend or address.

Notwithstanding a professed will to negotiate, UNITA and the government continued to purchase large quantities of arms and continued to engage in sporadic but intense fighting⁷. In April 1997, the Government of Unity and National Reconciliation (GURN) was inaugurated, but the country remained physically and psychologically divided, and Savimbi's access to diamonds, and President Dos Santos's access to oil provided the wherewithal to continue fighting.

By the early months of 1998 it was apparent that a return to full-scale war was only a matter of time. The Lusaka Accord was formally broken in December 1998 when government forces recaptured the politically symbolic rebel strongholds of Andulo and Bailundo in the province of Huambo. This postponed indefinitely the option of negotiation, and Dos Santos now sought to remove Savimbi from the political scene, destroy UNITA militarily, and create a more manageable and more compliant opposition (the Luanda-based party Renovated-UNITA). The war that ravaged the country from 1998 until 2002 was fought with even greater brutality and destructive weapons. The rural areas were the most affected, with the laying

of 9 million anti-personal mines, the displacement of 4.1 million people because of the scorched earth tactics used by the government, and led to more than 450,000 taking refuge in neighboring countries.

The 2002 Luena peace accords

Peace came in February 2002 after UNITA's top leadership, including Jonas Savimbi, was ambushed and killed in the province of Moxico. The Memorandum of Understanding signed in March by UNITA and MPLA established that an Amnesty Law for all crimes committed during the conflict would be passed, that 5,000 UNITA soldiers would be integrated into the Angolan Armed Forces, and provided a timetable for the demobilisation of the remaining UNITA forces. As a result of the military defeat and the severe blow to the political structures of the party, UNITA was drastically weakened and its power to negotiate was reduced to compliance with government requests and demands.

With 90,000 soldiers and their 400,000 family members disarmed, UNITA struggled to redefine itself as a civilian organisation and needed quickly to fill the void left by the death of founder-president Jonas Savimbi. In 2003, both the MPLA and UNITA held their first post-war party Congresses, reaffirming Dos Santos's presidency of the MPLA, and transferring power from UNITA's interim leader General Paulo Lukamba "Gato" to his victorious rival in the party presidential elections, Isaias Samakuva.

The GURN defined a power-sharing agreement between UNITA and the MPLA as a result of the Lusaka Protocol (1994) that until these latest elections was still in effect. This was hailed at the time as an important concession on the part of the MPLA though it also benefited the ruling party. Since UNITA has been part of the GURN, which left it in the ambiguous position of being associated with the government and also trying to play the role of the principal opposition party. This arrangement undermined UNITA's autonomy and credibility and provided the Government with an opportunity to neutralise it on both fronts: as an opposition party and as part of the government⁸. In the eyes of the public UNITA members within GURN allegedly were just as corrupt and incompetent as some other members of government and were looked upon in this light by the general public. This seems to be one of the factors that weakened its position for these elections, its inability to define its national strategy that would classify it as an alternative political force.

Since 1997, UNITA had headed 3 ministries: Commerce, Tourism and Health. It had five Vice-Ministers: Finance, Defence, Social Reinsertion, Agriculture and Information (although in reality in each of the ministries there were the equivalent of one or two MPLA vice-ministers, which reduced UNITA's representative's role to that of administrator). The Governors of Cuando Cubango, Uige, Lunda Sul, were from UNITA as were the vice-governors of Kwanza Sul, Benguela, Huambo, Bie and Luanda.

The model of reconciliation adopted in 2002 was based on the Bicesse accords and the Lusaka Protocol, which formed the main pillars to the Angolan peace deal. These depended on the Joint Political and Military Commission to verify the process of disarmament and reintegration of former combatants,⁹ the holding of multi-party elections, participation in the administration of the country, and lastly the formation of the GURN. The life of the GURN has now been terminated by the recent elections, and the implications of this are serious. UNITA, and other smaller parties, cadres that belonged to the GURN and that have been part of this government for the last 11 years will no longer have any part in governing the country, any budgetary responsibility or authority (however minimal), nor any say in assessing the peace process and the future of the military. They will also stop receiving a salary and will be left without means.

Opposition parties: Internal divisions and fragmentation

Politics in Angola since independence have been dominated largely by the rivalry of the MPLA and UNITA, parties that had cemented their pre-eminence

in the elections of 1992. Irrespective of the irregularities that gave the ruling party a landslide win in the latest elections, the opposition failed to convince voters that it could provide a credible alternative to the MPLA. Internal divisions, allegations of receiving bribes from the government, lack of resources, in addition to the levels of political intolerance prevalent throughout the country, made the challenge of running against the MPLA virtually insuperable. The opposition's lack of cohesiveness, its inability to present the perception of capable leadership, and its inexperience in governing inevitably would have provided the MPLA a certain win, even without resort to fraudulent activities.

Ten parties and four coalitions competed in the 2008 elections, including the parties that have had representatives in Parliament for the last 16 years: the Social Renovation Party (PRS), National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA), the Liberal Democratic Party (PLD), the Democratic Renewal Party (PRD), the Party of the Alliance of Youth, Workers and Farmers (PAJOCA), Front for Democracy (FPD), the Democratic Party for Progress – Angolan National Alliance (PDP-ANA).

The FNLA, the third liberation movement in Angola, has become a small political force with despite its important history, divided by internal factionalism exacerbated by the death of its founder, Holden Roberto, in August 2007. FNLA's internal divisions began in 1998 when a reform movement led by Lucas Ngondo, believed to have been financed by the MPLA, formed FNLA Renovada. After Holden Roberto died last year, Ngola Kabango assumed the leadership of the party. Kabango, however, leads what is essentially a Bakongo movement, and being himself a Mbundu this split the Bakongo vote between the FNLA and the PDP-ANA.

In July 2004, PDP-ANA's charismatic leader and Member of Parliament, M'fulumpinga N'landu Victor was killed. Some believe this was a political assassination, although the government explained his death as an unfortunate attempt by criminals to steal his car. The movement has since been led by Daniel Mbindi, a leader who lacks his predecessor's ability to mobilize the masses.

The PRS, the third largest party, which won six seats in 1992, one more than the FNLA, by running on a federalist ticket, has as its support base the Chokwe communities, mostly from the diamond-rich provinces of Lunda Sul and Lunda Norte. The PRS was very active in mobilising a solid constituency and is generally perceived now as a credible nationwide opposition force. The FPD, composed of the most skilled cadres, intellectuals and university professors, the majority of whom had been supporters of the MPLA, will probably lose its only seat in Parliament, which will reduce the level of relevant political debate in the legislature.

Having been born in the slums of Luanda, the Angolan Party for Democratic Support and Progress (PADEPA) was considered among the minor parties the most likely to get seats in Parliament because of its brave and honest campaign strategy, holding protests and rallying the youth in the capital's slums. This party, too, was weakened by internal divisions, which saw the expulsion of founding president Carlos Leitao in 2007 following personality clashes with the present leader, Luis Silva Cardoso.

Within UNITA divisions have become an even more significant weakening factor. The loss of the vote from the Central Highlands was no surprise given the amount of effort invested by the government to control the post-war environment. Quartering areas in these provinces were promptly disbanded and the ex-combatants and their families dispersed throughout the country so that any form of past solidarity or attempts by the former rebels to organise themselves in accordance with their old military structures (as a form of community-building) was prevented. In 2003 and 2004, international NGOs and humanitarian agencies witnessed the resettlement of displaced communities, perceived as UNITA supporters, and ex-combatants into specific areas and completely unable to settle in other areas because of coordinated effort of local administrators and traditional leaders.¹⁰

In addition, there have always been tensions between the province of Huambo and Bie, described in Angolan popular terms as a 'culture of betrayal', which helps explain the internal divisions within UNITA with Samakuva hailing from Bie, and Abel Chivukuvuku from Huambo. An additional element that further complicates the possibility of bridging divisions within the opposition, in particular UNITA has been defections to the MPLA, allegedly following the lure of government funds. Although Samakuva managed to assist the former rebel movement make the necessary transition from a guerrilla force into a political party (he himself had been a diplomat and was not an active element of UNITA's military structure) he failed to reunite and "protect" the people of the Highlands or provide them with a new directing vision.

The result of these elections will force UNITA to rethink its strategy and approach, given that the Presidential contest will take place next year; the party will have to consider substantial changes to its leadership before then. Some believe that Abel Chivukuvuku, a charismatic man with a clear understanding of the urban mentality of Luanda, has the ability to carry the party forward, while others believe that Lukamba Gato, who led UNITA just after Savimbi's death in 2002 and signed the Luena Accords, can appeal to the party's grassroots and to former combatants¹¹.

MPLA and the Presidency

The Presidency today is the most powerful institution in Angola, where Jose Eduardo dos Santos is not only the Head of State, he is also the president of the party, the commander in chief of the armed forces, and the main 'advisor' to all other areas involved in running the country. For the last 33 years Dos Santos has kept the MPLA and the government in check by expanding a highly efficient system of patronage, through which incentives are provided to a loyal elite, some of whom (politicians, family members, and the military) have amassed immense personal fortunes¹². Groups affiliated to the MPLA, such as the youth league, JMPLA, its women's league OMA, and the Spontaneous National Movement, all contribute to the cementing of the party's influence at all levels of social life. Even the Jose Eduardo dos Santos Foundation (FESA) assists the President in blurring the separation of powers, and in "coordinating" civil society, and the private and public sectors¹³.

After the end of the war in 2002, the MPLA proceeded to recruit new members, in particular in those areas that had been traditional strongholds of UNITA, such as Huambo, and Bie. From a population of 16 million, the MPLA has 2.8 million active members. Following indications that he felt uncertain of achieving a clear victory at the ballot box, Dos Santos began to reshuffle his immediate entourage: he dismissed his chief of intelligence and reinforced the Cuanhama-dominated presidential guard with Cubans in late 2007.

It was important for the Angolan government to hold elections in 2008 because further delay would have harmed its international credibility, its national legitimacy and, by extension, the historic legacy of President dos Santos himself. These elections were intended to augment Angola's claims to the status of a regional power, and an important and respected economic partner. Presidential polls next year will complete this process.

The provisions and institutions for democratic elections in Angola are drawn largely from the Bicesse (1991) and Lusaka (1994) peace accords, which provided the necessary conditions for multiparty-elections, the formulation of adequate legislation, and a government of national unity.

Although the key institutions, such the National Electoral Commission and the Constitutional Court, and formal procedures were in place, however, there were several factors severely constraining the possibility of open and genuine political debate. The government retains the control of state resources (besides having a virtual monopoly on economic and mineral resources), and the media, including the radio stations, which have the widest national reach.

The Legal setting

Angola's political culture has been dominated by a highly centralised state and recurring periods of civil war, which have resulted in the gradual mutation of democratic institutions marred by distrust, patronage and clientelism, ineffective institutional checks and budgetary mechanisms, the amalgamation of the legislative, judiciary, executive, and the FAA and security forces that is subordinate to the most powerful institution: the Presidency.¹⁴

In theory, Angola has a semi-presidential system, but the reality is a functioning presidential system in which the head of state enjoys exclusive powers to nominate and dismiss the Prime Minister, the Cabinet, and provincial governors; this weakens the Parliament's mandate and ability to provide checks and balances to the executive. The national assembly's role in discussing issues such as the state budget has been limited, and therefore important considerations of how to redirect oil revenues to the provide basic services to the population are left in abeyance.

Now that the MPLA has an overwhelming parliamentary majority, it will be able to change the constitution, a step some Angolan analysts believe it might use to reduce the legislature's constitutionally protected powers, which currently provide for political 'cohabitation' should the President and the parliamentary majority come from different parties¹⁵. President dos Santos might not be willing to countenance any, albeit unlikely, real separation of powers that might challenge his authority and ability to conduct policy.

The legal setting has undergone a number of alterations since the last elections, in particular with amendments made in 2005 and 2006 to the electoral law, the media law, the law on voter registration and other legislation pertaining to the process of elections. Delays in procedural aspects of electoral organisation left the political parties with insufficient time to prepare their logistics. On 25 July, the newly appointed Constitutional Court pronounced its ruling on the number of parties qualified to participate, only five days before the official start of the month-long campaign. Further delays resulted and the amount of state-funding for political parties was stipulated only after the ruling. The difficulties of communication systems, of access to remote rural areas, and the pervasive culture of fear, further aggravated the effect of these time constraints on an opposition already at a disadvantage with regards to the MPLA's resources and organisation.

In late July the Council of Ministers, as opposed to the Parliament, approved the total amount of \$17 million for the electoral campaign of all ten political parties and four coalitions. This was a violation of the electoral law, which determined that funding should be provided at least 90 days before the election date. In this regard the ruling MPLA party was at an advantage since it controlled all the state resources, including the media, the treasury and public institutions. It is estimated that the MPLA's electoral campaign cost \$300 million, allegedly funded by donations from Sonangol and Endiama (the national diamond company), private companies and investors.

The Constitution determines that the National Assembly will have 223 seats, of which 130 would be allocated to national representation, 90 to representatives from the provinces, and three to representatives elected from the external vote of the Diaspora. An additional violation of the electoral law (Article 29/a, b, c of Law 6/05) was the decision to exclude the Angolan Diaspora from the voting process. This move was to impact particularly upon UNITA, many of whose members have lived in exile for several years or decided to leave the country after 2002.

The media: A vehicle for state propaganda

The onset of peace allowed the Angolan media to overcome some of the challenges to its transformation into a forum for public debate, but it continues to be seen as a vehicle for political rhetoric. The state controls the main media outlets: the Angop news agency, the Newspaper Jornal de Angola, the public television station

(*Televisao Publica de Angola*) and the national radio (*Radio Nacional de Angola*) that serves as the MPLA's mouthpiece. The private press is reduced to a small number of private newspapers, which circulate essentially only in the capital Luanda, and to two radio stations that cannot broadcast outside the capital. Throughout the war, the media was used as an ideological and military weapon reporting on important victories, concealing serious defeats, and was used to improve troop morale.¹⁶

During the run-up to election day the state media, the only outlets with a national coverage, intensified its propaganda in favour of the MPLA, curbing any possibility of diversity and pluralism of opinion. Election observers recognised that this monopoly was one of the elements threatening the fairness of the entire process, although on 5 August, when campaigning began, each party had been allotted five minutes per day on the radio and on television, in accordance with the principle of equality of treatment by the media.

In 2006 a new Press Bill was enacted in an attempt to further liberalise the media and protect freedom of expression and thought in Angola. This was a much needed step given that the window of opportunity created in 1991, before the first elections, to depoliticise the media and allow for private press to emerge was quickly closed when the war resumed. The new legislation is still restrictive, however, and includes provisions concerning the "duties" of journalists to provide "accurate" information in a manner that is not "disloyal"¹⁷. Journalists and editors face imprisonment, dismissal, intimidation or substantial fines if they defame the President or his representatives. A recent instance was the incarceration in June of Flisberto Graca Campos, the director of the private paper *Semanario Angolense*, on three accounts of libel.

Radio is the most effective form of communication and access to information in Angola, given the high illiteracy rates and the levels of poverty in the provinces, but all independent radio stations have been either shut down, had their broadcast range restricted, or have been silenced in some other way. In July, UNITA's *Radio Despertar* was ordered off the air for six months for allegedly extending its signal 400km beyond the capital city. The Catholic Church's *Radio Ecclesia*, one of the most outspoken media outlets, has since 1978 (date when it began suffering restrictions by the MPLA) fought to broadcast nationally and on FM. In November 2003 the Ministry of Information cautioned the church against broadcasting in the provinces, indicating that any attempt to do so would be an affront to the law and the State. The result was that during the elections the only information circulating throughout the country was controlled and manipulated by the MPLA, benefitting the ruling party by promoting all the new construction projects, and affirming that the only party prepared to rule was the MPLA.

Peace dividends: Economic growth and poverty

Economic mismanagement and endemic corruption has prevented the majority of the population from benefiting from the rapid economic growth propelled by the oil industry and the exploitation of other natural resources. The oil boom, coupled with China's willingness to extend billions of dollar loans, has allowed the government to operate outside the control of the international community. Freedom House estimates that more than \$1 billion in oil revenue disappears every year, an example of how opaque and inefficient the public finance system is¹⁸. Transparency International ranks Angola 147 out of 180 countries in the 2007 Corruption Perceptions Index. Disparities in wealth make Angola one of the most unequal countries in the world, ranking 16 from the bottom (at 162 out of 177) in the UNDP's Human Development Index for 2007.

Improvement in key social sectors has been negligible (outside the 3 main cities) with large percentages of the population, in particular in the semi-urban areas of Luanda and in the rural areas, having no access to clean water, sanitation, electricity, housing, employment, health or education. Angolans have seen little significant change since the end of the war and the majority find themselves living

in poverty with no hope of a job outside of subsistence farming (which accounts for 85% of livelihoods) and communities are still resorting to selling charcoal and firewood in order to manage one or maybe two meals a day. The economic boom propelled by the oil industry has not been used to address these levels of extreme poverty, which contrast starkly with the \$41 billion in revenues brought in by the oil industry in 2007, and are becoming harder for government to explain away. During the campaign, the government made ambitious promises of fighting poverty, creating jobs, building 1 million new homes, fighting corruption. It will now be put to the test to see if it delivers on these promises.

Harassment and Intimidation

Political harassment and intimidation have been widespread since the end of the war. Through a strategy of political violence, the politics of co-optation, the persecution of suspected opponents and the presence of members of the Information Services (SINFO), the MPLA managed to neutralise any form of serious opposition or political independence. The ODC civil militias, created in 1992, were legalised as part of the security forces in March of 2002 by the Ministry of Defense and have played an active role in defending the interests of the ruling party by inserting themselves strategically within rural communities. The agents of the organisation are all members of the MPLA and are known still to operate using the Marxist-Leninist tactic of installing fear. They played a very important role during the return and resettlement period of the war-affected masses through intimidation and low-level violence as a form of extending the government's effective control over the whole territory¹⁹.

In the run-up to the elections, the opposition was quite vocal about acts of political intolerance, accusing members of the MPLA, the JMPLA ruling-party youth league, and the ODC of killing its supporters, of physical violence, the sabotage of political activities, and the destruction of property²⁰. Through press statements or personal accounts, UNITA, FPD, PRS, PLD and PAJOCA accused the government of orchestrating this campaign of national intimidation and harassment.²¹ Politically motivated killings have been pervasive in peacetime, with UNITA claiming that in 2006 and 2007, thirteen party members were killed, a number that has risen significantly in 2008. Samakuva experienced an assassination attempt in March 2007 during a tour of the Kwanza Norte province.

The police force has also played a role in intimidating or being complicit in the harassment of opposition supporters, by turning a blind eye to politically motivated violence and attempts by MPLA supporters to disrupt the campaigning and rallies of provincial representatives from the opposition. The police are known to act with impunity, the most recent case being the Sambizanga shooting execution style of eight men in one of Luanda's slums.²² The opposition's efforts to mobilise support were also affected by being barred by mobs from accessing hundreds of villages.

In late August, the Angolan authorities escalated the campaign that began in May, to expel Congolese migrants in the north-western provinces of Lunda Norte, Lunda Sul, Uige and Zaire, increasing the total number of expellees to 85,000. The government officially justified these expulsions on the basis that these Congolese migrants were involved in illegal activities in the diamond-mining sector, in regions where an estimated 400,000 live. This move by the government to "sweep" certain areas bordering the Democratic Republic of Congo, including Angolan nationals of the Bakongo and Chokwe ethnic groups, was thought to be aimed at diluting support for opposition parties.²³

Information Services

An assessment of the hierarchy of power in Angola would have to put the Presidency at the apex, followed by the group of advisors to the President, who include the heads of the security services and the counter-information services. These special military and civilian bodies are entrusted to serve the

President, through a Chief of Services, presently General Manuel Helder Vieira Dias “Kopelipa”, to conduct external operations through the First Secretaries of each diplomatic mission abroad, pursue sophisticated misinformation strategies and tactics throughout the country, and centrally manage all the necessary resources needed to guarantee operational success. In essence this means that the information services’ importance exceeds that of most other government departments, given that the extension of state administration and control of the population is more effective through these services than through the ministries and provincial governments.

The Servico de Informacao (SINFO) is Angola’s main internal security organ, with the principal function of collecting intelligence and serving as a “political police force”. SINFO’s operations continue to be characterised by the organisational methods, techniques and practices of the Soviet, East German and Cuban state security models. SINFO played a significant role in these elections and during the last three years of preparation for the national polls by creating extensive and far-reaching networks of informers and installing a culture of fear in the population.

The trial and imprisonment in 2006 of General Fernando Miala, former intelligence chief and the main architect of the Service for External Security, sent a clear message that even the closest advisers to President dos Santos are expendable and that when too much power and influence is concentrated in one person that individual has to be “recycled”. Miala became a threat when he was perceived to be leading an ‘Africanist’ group within the security services (being himself a Bakongo) that clashed with Kopelipa’s ‘*mestico*’ (of mixed race) group. This is telling in that class and race play as great a role in the creation of loyalty and distrust as ethnicity and political affiliation.

The legislative elections were observed by a small group of missions that tried to reach as many areas as possible. Given the size of the country and problems of access exacerbated by poor infrastructure this proved to be a difficult task.²⁴ The European Union sent 40 long-term observers several weeks before the polling and 40 short-term observers days before voting; the Pan-African Parliament sent a mission of 15 observers and 11 support staff, the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP) sent 17 observers; SADC had a mission comprising 80 observers, the US diplomatic mission in Angola sent out a team of 40 observers, one or two groups from Angolan civil society authorised by the government; and finally there was a smaller observation mission from the African Union. No other observers were invited; notable omissions were the Carter Center, known for its rigorous observation, and the SADC–Parliamentary Forum, which had questioned the independence and impartiality of the Electoral Commission and the body that registered voters, in a report issued after a trip in March 2007. In addition, the Angolan Foreign Ministry issued a statement in late August restricting the movement of all the diplomatic missions in Luanda, whose personnel were not to travel outside the capital without applying for permission, ostensibly for their own safety.

Members of the Civil Society Electoral Platform, a group of independent national observers, were unable adequately to monitor the election because of deliberate obstruction by the CNE, as reported by a press statement from Human Rights Watch on 15 September. The impediments mentioned included difficulties in getting accreditation, which resulted in the number of civil society observers being reduced from 2,640 (number trained to observe) to only 1,300. The state media apparently issued a statement 12 hours before the opening of the polls informing that only 28 observers from the Platform would be monitoring the polling stations in Luanda instead of 370²⁵.

The observation missions from the European Union and the Pan-African Parliament highlighted several flaws in the electoral process, although they praised the peaceful manner in which they were conducted. The patience and civility demonstrated by the population, and the absence of violence, were quite extraordinary considering how tense the preceding days had been and how real the possibility of unrest. Most observation missions were apprehensive about

the control and misuse of the state media by the MPLA that indicated a clear bias towards the ruling party.

Concerns were raised about the composition of the National Electoral Commission (NEC) and its ability to serve as an impartial mediator as 8 of its 11 members were from the ruling party or from government institutions. The NEC, chaired by Caetano de Sousa, who also chaired the 1992 elections, was composed of two members nominated by the President, three from the ruling party, three from the opposition parties, one Supreme Court justice, one Ministry of Territorial Administration representative, and one elected by the National Council of Social Communication.

Reports surfaced from Angolan analysts indicating that when the rallies of the opposition managed to gather significant popular support and a high turn-out, the MPLA decided to discretely promote members of SINFO, the military and the Presidency to the NEC, to advise its president Caetano de Sousa, who also happens to be the Vice-President of the Constitutional Court. These included former members of the police, and technology experts. According to several journalists, these actions and the “confusion” strategy in Luanda were apparently devised after a poll, done in August by a Brazilian PR firm assisting with the MPLA’s campaign, showed results that did not please the ruling party²⁶.

In practice the structure of the NEC was the same in all 164 municipalities in the 18 provinces, and therefore heavily lopsided towards the ruling party. All parties had representatives in the Provincial Electoral Commissions (PEC) but these were only registered on 28 July at which point they had to indicate which were the representatives to be placed at each polling station. The opposition had no system of communication to allow for the distribution of thousands of people to be placed throughout the country to the more than 12,000 polling stations. They were restricted through funding problems and the inability to mobilise the amount of members needed to undergo civic education and receive accreditation in such a short time. The composition of the NEC and the misuse of the media were two of the main causes of concern among international observers.

The opposition representatives within the NEC were concerned about the control of the extra ballot papers, where they were kept, what happened to the extra ballots that were unused, and what was the exact number of ballots that had been ordered and printed. Each polling station was prepared to process 1,200 people, but this number could change depending on the different numbers voting in these areas. In terms of monitoring, the biggest challenge for the opposition were the big cities like Luanda and Lubango. There were 15% extra ballot papers ordered for each of the 12,000 polling stations to allow for more people to vote if the number exceeded 1,200, since the lack of electoral registers and maps prevented a definite indication of the number of voters in each area. In essence, if only 900 people voted then there was no way of controlling the additional 300 voting papers. This lack of transparency is a cause of concern for the credibility of these polls. Until 16 September, when all the votes had been counted and the MPLA given the electoral victory, the exact number of people that voted or abstained was still unknown²⁷.

There were problems within the whole electronic system, which proved to have functional difficulties before the elections, such as the inability clearly to indicate to voters at which polling stations they were meant to cast their ballot. The Personal Digital Assistants (PDA), meant to facilitate the use of the electronic system, were sent out only four days before the polls. By law all the parties had to have to receive electoral maps so that they could know where the polling stations were; these had to be distributed 25 days before the elections. In Luanda these electoral maps were never distributed, even though in the provinces the level of organisation had permitted the parties to get these in time.

Some members of the military and the opposition prior to the voting day also mentioned the issue of special urns as a matter of concern. Because all the deadlines established in the electoral law were not met the special urn was created allowing people to vote outside the municipal areas where they had registered. To

use the special urns it was originally stipulated that a form had to be filled out (this would include personal details) and then placed in an envelope that then went into a larger envelope with the ballot. There were two different groups to open the two envelopes and these groups reflected the composition of the CNE. After observers and the opposition voiced their concerns at how the special urns would violate the secrecy of the vote, the NEC decided to allow people to vote without filling in the form.

On 5 September voting began in all the provinces at around 7 am, with some minor delays reported, in a calm and orderly fashion. However, in the capital Luanda, logistical problems led to chaos. Luanda was considered the most unpredictable of all the provinces in terms of how the 2.3 million voters, 21% of the electorate, would vote, mostly because of rising frustration among the impoverished masses (70% of the inhabitants of the capital) that are the most exposed to the lavish wealth of the elite, who are seen as being part of the MPLA clique. Of the 1,522 polling stations in Luanda, 320 never opened because of lack of materials, several others began operating after 4 hours delay because they lacked ballot papers, urns, and other materials, which resulted in an unscheduled second day of voting. Of those 320 polling stations, 100 never opened on the second day of voting and because the remaining 220 lacked materials they were consolidated into 48 polling stations. An additional issue was that urns were left unguarded overnight because the accredited staff were so tired, after spending 24 hours in the polling stations without eating or drinking, that they fell asleep²⁸.

The chaos that ensued on voting day in the capital and the unscheduled second day of voting on 6 September prompted the opposition to cry foul. UNITA went as far as asking for a re-run in eight days and said it would submit an application to the courts to impeach the elections. The PRS, FNLA, and PDP-ANA also voiced their concerns, stating that the disorganisation in the capital was purposely created, specially in the highly-populated neighborhoods that were opposition strongholds like Quilamba Quiaxe, Sambizanga, Viana, Ramiros, Palanca and others. UNITA accused the government of deliberately creating this chaos in the voting areas where the MPLA was not expected to win a majority.

Civil society, independent journalists, and members of the church also drew attention to the government's concerted effort and policy of taming the rural population and inserting them into a "framework" that would assist them to vote for the MPLA. This "conditioning" was achieved through intimidation and threats of war, and through the *sobas* (traditional leaders in each village) who guaranteed the cooperation of the voters in their areas. The process of approaching the *sobas* in the provinces in order to include them in the clientelist network of the MPLA took a more coordinated approach with the creation of the *O Nosso Soba* (Our Soba) NGO. The traditional authorities became instruments in the government's post-war strategy to maintain its control but without the visible presence of the military. In some provinces, such as Lunda Sul and Moxico, *sobas* were caught on the day of voting with piles of previously marked ballot papers, which had been distributed by the government in the towns, municipalities and villages²⁹.

The ruling party openly co-opted and bribed traditional authorities, local administrators and voters with money, cars, computers, motorbikes, bicycles and promises of future benefits³⁰. *Sobas* and militant unaccredited elements of the MPLA stood near some of the polling stations observing how the population were casting their votes. Civil servants and the private sector were advised to vote for the MPLA if they wanted to keep their jobs. The Information Services (SINFO) extended their presence throughout the country to have representatives and informers in each commune of each municipality of the 18 provinces. Some provincial representatives from the opposition went as far as to state that there were SINFO operatives queuing in the lines with the rest of the civilians.

The military and the police, which together comprise more than 300,000 men, were instructed to vote patriotically. There was a nationwide campaign alerting the armed forces not to get involved in politics and reminding them of their duty

to their commander-in-chief (the President). What remains unclear was how the voting in the military barracks was monitored and if members of the armed forces were allowed to vote outside of their barracks.

In the northern enclave of Cabinda the government would face a difficult race, specially after the movement Front for the Liberation of Cabinda (FLEC), which fought for the secession of the oil-rich region until 2006, gave its vote to UNITA. Statements made by observers in Cabinda, and the opposition, accuse the MPLA of bringing in thousands of Congolese to vote for the ruling party from both the DRC and from Congo-Brazzaville. Although an EU observer only witnessed a camp housing 2,000 illegal voters, members of the opposition claim that there were as many as 50,000 Congolese present. Because the population of Cabinda boycotted the 1992 elections (with a turnout of 25,000 votes) the need to mobilise support and participation was fundamental. More than 140,000 were registered to vote in Cabinda.

UNITA, PRS and the other opposition parties that had declared these elections a farce ended up accepting the results and conceding defeat, explaining this decision on the basis of maintaining the peace and well being of the people.

As one of the two top oil-producers in Sub-Saharan Africa, Angola and, by extension the ruling MPLA, have considerable diplomatic clout related directly to its economic power, its pragmatic approach of diversifying its development partners, and the strength and size of its military. The government's strategy to ensure its survival and international relevance revolves around its pragmatic approach of normalising relations with countries it previously did not engage with, as in the case of the US, France and others. The country's main bargaining power resides in its natural resources. The power of oil, diamonds, and other resources has allowed Luanda to broker significant cooperation agreements with donors as diverse as China, Brazil, India and Europe. China in particular, with its liquidity and willingness to invest in infrastructure projects and extend credit-lines without political conditionalities, have increased Luanda's sense of invincibility.

Regionally, Luanda aims to play a larger role in defining the political, economic and security landscape of Southern Africa, in a direct bid to secure its interests and as an alternative to South Africa's hegemony³¹. Angola's foreign policy in the past led the government to extend support for other neighboring regimes in order to isolate UNITA, as in the case of the support given to President Sassou-Nguesso in Congo-Brazzaville and Laurent Kabila in the DRC. This tendency will continue even though UNITA has been neutralised but will shift its focus to projecting force in order to prevent instability from the Great Lakes region threatening its national security.

With the stability that this electoral victory affords the MPLA, Angola, which previously flexed its diplomatic and military muscle, will further entrench its influence in Sub-Saharan Africa through military and economic agreements. Apart from the training of the armed forces in Congo and the Democratic Republic of Congo, it has signed military agreements with several countries including Zimbabwe and Guinea Bissau. Luanda has also provided highly trained men that compose the largest and most important element of the presidential guards of both Congo-Brazzaville and the DRC. Although the government vehemently denies sending a battalion of Angolan police to Zimbabwe in 2007, Luanda did provide Harare with as many as 2,500 special paramilitary police as part of the "training exchange" agreement between the two countries.³² The decision to send these Israeli trained ninjas to support friendly governments will continue to be part of Angola's security strategy. Luanda will gladly fill the vacuum left by South Africa's perceived temporary weakness created by its internal power-struggles, and has already volunteered to deploy troops to the DRC's border with Rwanda to help stabilise the Kivu provinces.

The issue of Cabinda weighs heavily on relations with the two Congos that border the oil-rich northern enclave. Luanda's bid to integrate Cabinda has led

Conclusion

the government to strengthen relations with these neighbors by brokering deals related to mega-infrastructure projects like the 13km bridge over the Congo River, and the 40km road linking the Angolan provinces of Uige and Zaire to Cabinda that crosses through DRC territory.³³ The 2003 agreements between Angola, the DRC and Congo Brazzaville effectively isolated the FLEC separatists in Cabinda and further pressured the already fragmented separatists to declare a cease-fire.

Bilateral relations between Angola and several Western countries are becoming stronger. Construction contracts given to Portuguese companies in Angola, the importance of the receipts for the corresponding banks in Lisbon, and the private investment flowing into the country from its former colonial power have led Portugal to take all possible measures to secure this cooperation. Acting as a sovereign fund, Sonangol has also bought a percentage in the Portuguese oil company Galp and owns 49.99% of Portugal's largest listed bank, Millennium BCP. Equally, France has made important steps towards building a strategic alliance, in security terms on the continent, and financially. In May, French President Nicolas Sarkozy travelled to Angola with representatives from energy company Total/Fina/Elf, from Banque Societe Generale amongst others, where he signed several trade deals. Two months later, the French newspaper *Le Point* exposed a letter written by the French Defence Minister to a judge stating that the Angolagate scandal had never existed.³⁴ The defence of national interests by Western countries can explain the international community's benevolence in failing to criticise the MPLA's conduct during these polls. Although the EU observation mission began by expressing serious concern about the level of disorganisation in Luanda, it praised the peaceful environment in which people voted, although recognising that these legislative elections fell short of meeting international standards. Strong statements by some observers were later retracted or toned down.

Even though the Angolan elections failed to meet international standards, credit has to be given to the population and all the political actors for the peaceful manner in which they were conducted. The signal sent to the ruling party by the population is that they want peace, security, and economic participation. The MPLA now has all the leverage to deliver on the main area of concern in Angolan social life: poverty alleviation. It will be judged by its ability to widen its circle of beneficiaries to all individuals.

In view of this, it is the duty of the Angolan government, the African and the wider international community to ensure that:

- The democratic system functions with regular elections, every four years for legislative, and every five years for Presidential elections.
- That the holding in 2009 (as stipulated) of Presidential elections should address the main problems encountered during the legislative elections
- Concrete steps are taken to radically reduce imbalances in income, wealth distribution, and opportunities in order for the economic boom to also benefit the poorest segments of the population
- The depoliticisation of the military and security forces, severing their culture of impunity, and the demilitarisation of society, the disarmament of civilians, and the disbanding of the ODC

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1 See "Time for transparency" Global Witness, March 2004, www.globalwitness.org/media_library_detail.php/115/en/time_for_transparency, (accessed 13/10./09); See also: "Angola's choice" Reform or regress", *Africa Report* 61, April 2003, International Crisis Group, <www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?=1&id+1486>.

2 The 'assimilados' were the integrated, educated Angolans that had assimilated the Portuguese language, culture and habits, and were a fundamental part of the colonial structure in the cities.

3 See Hodges, Tony (2001) "Angola from Afro-Stalinism to Petro-Diamond Capitalism", African Issues Series, Bloomington: Indiana University Press

4 The Jovem Justiceiros, translated as the Young Justice-makers, was a group of MPLA supporters as young as 15 years old that were armed and mobilised to attack UNITA.

5 See Chabal, Patrick, Vidal, Nuno (eds), 2007, "Angola: The Weight of History", Columbia University Press

- 6 Interviews with civilians that lived through UNITA's two-year occupation of the Central Highlands, Huambo 4th September 2008
- 7 See Christine Knudsen, Alexander Mundt and I. William Zartman, *Peace Agreements: The Case of Angola*. Case Series 1, ACCORD, Natal, Republic of South Africa, 2000
- 8 Santana, Augusto (2006), "Political Parties and Political Evolution in Angola", p 23, EISA Report 28
- 9 Unlike previous peace agreements, the Luena Accords made no provision for monitoring by the UN, although UN observers were invited, and the process was managed solely by the FAA and financed by the government of Angola. The armed forces were therefore responsible for assisting the camps and securing provisions for the 90,000 soldiers and their 400,000 family members. The process was so badly mismanaged that when the humanitarian agencies managed to get access to the Quarters after a few months they encountered a humanitarian crisis.
- 10 Interviews conducted in 2004 in the provinces of Moxico and Huambo with international NGOs, ex-combatants in transit centres and displaced communities all indicated this discrimination in zones.
- 11 Anecdotal evidence gathered by the author in conversations with former UNITA generals and supporters in Luanda, 7 September 2008.
- 12 See Mabel Gonzalez Bustelo (2004) "Angola: Monarchy supported by oil companies", Peace Research Centre (CIP-FUHEM) <www.cipresearch.fulhem.es/pazyseguridad/docs/ANGOLA%20ING20K.pdf>
- 13 See Messiant, Christine (2001), "The Eduardo dos Santos Foundation: Or how Angola is taking over civil society" in: *African Affairs* Nr. 100
- 14 For details of the President's legal powers see Rainha, Paula, "Republic of Angola: Legal system and research", in *GlobalLex*, 2007 <www.nyulawglobal.org/globalex/Angola.htm>
- 15 Interviews with Angolan legal specialists and university lecturers, Luanda, 7 September 2008.
- 16 See Ismael Mateus (2004), *The role of the media during conflict and in the construction of democracy*, in *Conciliation Resources*, www.c-r.org
- 17 See *World Press Freedom Review 2007*, International Press Institute, www.freemedia.at
- 18 See *Freedom House, Freedom in the world – Angola, 2008*, <www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2008&country=7340>
- 19 Interviews with resettling groups (IDPs and returning refugees) in Moxico, April 2004
- 20 Accusations made by provincial secretaries of opposition parties, Huambo 4 September 2008.
- 21 Statements made to several observers, press releases in the Angolan private press by the opposition; also reported in a Human Rights Watch report three weeks prior to the election.
- 22 A widely discussed story in the print media of Luanda, both private and state-owned.
- 23 Interview with opposition supporters who had family members expelled during these campaigns, 6 September 2008.
- 24 Another difficulty for some African observation missions was the limited number of Portuguese speaking personnel. Most of the members were unable to read newspapers, understand radio or TV broadcasts, or assess the political climate.
- 25 See "Angola: Irregularities Marred Historic Elections. No independent oversight, media bias", Human Rights Watch press release, in <http://hrw.org/doc/?t=africa&c=angola>
- 26 Interviews conducted with Angolan journalists, Luanda 2nd September 2008
- 27 At the time of print
- 28 Accounts made by several civil society members that drove around the capital city at night, passing over 40 polling stations
- 29 Details given at a press conference by the PRS, Luanda 6th September 2008
- 30 Images of this were passed regularly on the national television station
- 31 This is particularly clear in Angola's insistence to belong to SADC and ECCAS simultaneously. With this strategy the country is setting the ground for a projection of its influence far beyond Southern Africa.
- 32 See "Ninjas in Zimbabwe", March 25, 2007 Strategy Page, in www.strategypage.com
- 33 See "Bid to integrate Cabinda extends Luanda's influence in DRC", *South Scan* 22/11 1 June 2007
- 34 'Angolagate' case involved Pierre Falcone and Jean-Christophe Mitterand and an arms-for-oil deal in 1994 amounting to over \$900 million, of which there are court records in France.