Government

Executive
The President is both head of state and head of government, as well as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. The President appoints the Cabinet and the position of Prime Minister holds little power. The government is effectively junior to the Presidential Office and many have argued that the office controls the apparatus of the state without being held accountable by parliament or party. Among the powerful figures within the Presidency are the Chiefs of the Civil and Military Houses (Casa Civil and Casa Militar).

Since 1997 there has been a cross-party Government of National Unity and Reconciliation (GURN) dominated by the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). The main opposition party, UNITA, has had a number of ministers in the GURN, and has no plans to withdraw as of mid 2004.

Legislature
The national legislature is the National Assembly of 220 seats. Since the end of the war, it has established a Constitutional Commission to develop a new Constitution.

Local government
Angola is divided into 18 provinces, 164 municipalities, and 578 communes. A governor heads each province, and administrators head the lower levels. There is no formal state representation at the level of villages or urban neighbourhoods. The President appoints all these officials.

The 1990s saw partial political liberalization coupled with the government’s growing revenues from oil, allowing it to remain insulated from public accountability and able to continue to wage war against UNITA. As the international community largely blamed UNITA for the continuing war, the MPLA-government finally won international recognition from the United States and other erstwhile adversaries. After the collapse of the Lusaka Protocol in 1998 the government pursued a strategy of achieving peace through military victory.
Security forces

The MPLA's military wing during the liberation struggle, the Popular Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola (FAPLA), became the national army after independence. The military were extremely powerful – with civilian control diminishing after the South African incursions in the early 1980s. They managed to secure many of the government's resources, spending heavily on military hardware.

As a result of the Bicesse Accords the military was reformed to integrate a portion of UNITA's forces into the newly named Angolan Armed Forces (FAA) in late 1992. When the country returned to war, the government relied heavily on the paramilitary Rapid Reaction Police (PIR), or 'Ninjas' (created in 1992) and armed partisans to combat UNITA and its supporters. Integration was unsuccessfully attempted again after the Lusaka Protocol. Despite this, many FALA officers and soldiers joined the FAA in the course of the 1990s as a result not only of the demobilization and integration agreements, but the haemorrhaging of support for Savimbi as UNITA ground towards defeat.

The FAA is one of the largest and most experienced armies in Africa, with an estimated strength of around 100,000. The FAA absorbs a large portion of national income. Defence and security spending accounts for 32 per cent of the government's 2004 budget. It has been active outside Angola's borders, for instance in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in 1997 when it helped Laurent Kabila overthrow President Mobutu (returning in summer 1998 in Kabila's defence against Rwandan and Ugandan-backed rebels). The government announced their full withdrawal in January 2002.

Angolan movements

MPLA

The Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) has governed Angola since independence. Its roots lie in the growing movement for Angolan independence that evolved in the 1950s in clandestine activity in Luanda and among Angolan students studying in Lisbon. It is generally said that Ilídio Machado, Viriato da Cruz, Matias Migueis, Higino Aires and André Franco de Sousa formed the MPLA out of existing groups (notably the Party of the United Struggle of Africans of Angola and the Communist Party of Angola) in December 1956. Others question whether the MPLA as such can be said to have really existed before 1960.

Activity began to flourish after violence broke out in February 1961 when a Luanda prison holding political prisoners was attacked. The MPLA later claimed to have been behind the attack, although it is more likely that the attack was carried out by unconnected elements.

The MPLA established its first base in exile in Leopoldville, Zaire (now Kinshasa in the DRC) in 1962. In the same year, Viriato da Cruz was replaced as Secretary-General by Mário Pinto de Andrade, who ceded the presidency to Agostinho Neto, who had established nationalist and populist credentials – helped by being black rather than mestizo. In mid-1963 Da Cruz had led a defection from the MPLA to the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA), causing fighting on the streets of Leopoldville. These tensions contributed to the Organization of African Unity's (OAU) recognition of FNLA leader Holden Roberto's self-styled Revolutionary Government in Exile (GRAE) as the sole Angolan liberation movement in 1963, leading to the MPLA's expulsion from Leopoldville. Using Brazzaville (Congo) as a base, the MPLA gradually re-established itself. In 1964 the OAU recognized the MPLA as a legitimate movement and gradually transferred support away from the GRAE. Cuban and Soviet support for the MPLA started in the 1960s.

The MPLA's internal problems re-surfaced in 1973-74. The 'Eastern Revolt' led by field commander Daniel Chipenda unsuccessfully challenged Neto's leadership, resulting in Chipenda joining the FNLA and taking his forces with him. A different kind of revolt followed the next year: the 'Active Revolt' was a political critique of Neto’s leadership, a non-violent attempt by Mário de Andrade and other intellectuals to change the direction of the movement. Many of the protagonists were imprisoned or exiled until an amnesty in 1978.

As conflict with Portugal subsided after the revolution in 1974, the MPLA signed the Alvor Accords with its rivals in January 1975. Tensions between the liberation movements ignited soon afterwards, and the MPLA spent most of 1975 struggling for control of the country. Cuban and Soviet support helped it achieve control of the capital at the moment of independence. In 1976 the OAU and UN recognized the MPLA as the legitimate government of Angola.

In May 1977 Nito Alves, a charismatic military commander and government minister with a militant following in Luanda's muzseques (slums), led a coup d’état attempt against the MPLA leadership. The Alves faction came out in support of a more African-centred focus in the party rather than the perceived mulato domination. The purging of this faction and the
restructuring of the party meant dismantling evolving popular democratic structures. The leadership set about building up a political system centralized around the party’s Central Committee and the President.

At the MPLA’s first congress in December 1977, the movement transformed itself into a Marxist-Leninist party comprising “workers, peasants and revolutionary intellectuals” re-named the MPLA-PT (Partido de Trabalho - Workers’ Party). Mass bodies like the Organization of Angolan Women (OMA), and the National Union of Angolan Workers (UNTA) became a key feature of its organization. At the same time, membership was declining and was most concentrated in Luanda and other Kimbundu regions. By the time José Eduardo dos Santos succeeded Neto after his death in 1979, membership had declined to 16,500 from 60,000 in 1975.

In the late 1980s Dos Santos began to consolidate his personal power over the party and the government. But even at the signing of an accord at Gbadolite in 1989, he did not have important parts of the party behind him in accepting the need to negotiate with UNITA.

With the demise of the Cold War and the wave of democratization in Africa, the MPLA made numerous reforms in the 1990s. In 1990 it dropped Marxism-Leninism in favour of ‘social democracy’. In 1991 civil society organizations outside the party were legalized and a special congress attempted to broaden the party’s appeal. Marcolino Moco, an Ovimbundu, and reformer Lopo do Nascimento were elected to senior posts. In May, as the Bicesse Accords were signed, one-party rule formally ended.

UNITA

The National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) was formed in 1966 after founder Jonas Savimbi broke away from the FNLA. Savimbi, an Ovimbundu, was dissatisfied with the Bakongo dominance of the FNLA, its military ineffectiveness, the American influence and the authoritarian leadership of the party’s founder, Holden Roberto. UNITA established itself as an ‘Africanist’ party emphasizing ethnic and rural rights in contrast to the urban and ‘Westernized’ outlook of the MPLA. UNITA’s international support swung from China, to South Africa, Zaire and the US. In the early years, Savimbi’s charisma and his image of standing up for the underdog gave him extensive support in central and southern Angola, especially among the Ovimbundu, who make up 40 per cent of the Angolan population.

After signing a ceasefire agreement with the Portuguese in June 1974, Savimbi established his headquarters in Nova Lisboa (now Huambo), and began to create a local party apparatus. He built up an array of supporters, including some of the white settlers. Several foreign media reports, reiterated by the MPLA, alleged that during the first half of the 1970s UNITA had been cooperating with the Portuguese military based in eastern Angola, as well as with some white timber merchants and the Portuguese secret service. Above all Savimbi anticipated that extensive Ovimbundu support would be the basis for post-independence electoral victory. His promotion of Ovimbundu ethnic consciousness became more pronounced as his support base became more regionalized in the clash between liberation movements. Savimbi cultivated a relationship with the Protestant leadership and co-opted many Ovimbundu organizations, widening the division between the Ovimbundu elites and the state.

When the Alvor Accords broke down and the country was engulfed in civil war, UNITA received support from South Africa, but was driven from Luanda, and lost the initiative. Following the MPLA’s victory, UNITA was initially forced away to its base in Huambo. However, it regrouped and began an economic sabotage campaign in 1977, broadening with the direct support of South Africa after 1983, and the US.

From 1979, UNITA established a self-styled ‘autonomous region’ called the Free Lands of Angola, with Jamba as the capital. By 1989 it reputedly had a population of 800,000 to a million, and education and health services were delivered. While the centralist MPLA ‘re-educated’, UNITA mobilized village communities by working through ‘traditional’ leadership. On the other hand, UNITA could also be very brutal, terrorizing rural populations and starving out besieged towns.

UNITA had the features of a party, with a central committee, a political bureau, a Secretary-General, and ‘mass organizations’ for women and youth. As a fighting organization, UNITA and its military wing, the Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola (FALA) were closely connected, with its highest military officers in the political bureau. However, the most important feature was the concentration of authority in the figure of Savimbi, both President of UNITA and Commander-in-Chief of the FALA. He kept a tight grip on power, and was ruthless in exercising it. There were regular purges of the leadership, with long serving figures removed, sometimes tortured and killed.

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Some non-Ovimbundu members resented the power of the inner circle of ethnic Ovimbundu loyal to Savimbi, particularly family members (e.g. his nephew General “Ben-Ben”) and others from Andulu, the area of his birth (e.g. General “Bock”). There were some dissonant factions in the mid-1980s that also complained that he had ‘sold out’ to South Africa. Former high-ranking leaders like António da Costa Fernandes accused Savimbi of using witchcraft trials, and the dismemberment, drowning and burning as witches of political critics. On the other hand, his manipulation of folk beliefs, especially those dealing with witchcraft, enhanced his appeal among rural supporters. International support, though, was damaged, especially after allegations that Savimbi had been behind the killing of former aides Tito Chingunji (negotiator at the New York Accords in 1988), Wilson dos Santos, commander António Vakulukutu and others.

UNITA’s strategy for the 1992 elections was an ‘us’ against ‘them’ campaign (rural poor against educated urban) which did not run well in more politically sophisticated towns such as Luanda, Malange and Benguela. But UNITA proved it could organize a campaign and field candidates across the country, and win sizeable majorities in core provinces. Meanwhile the MPLA was able to run a campaign of inclusion, welcoming Fernandes and fellow dissident Miguel N’zau Puna – who had left UNITA accusing Savimbi of secretly planning to return to war if he lost – into the party. When the MPLA won, Savimbi alleged that the elections had been fraudulent, and amidst large-scale street violence, UNITA returned to war. It was soon in command of much of the country, but was increasingly isolated internationally and gradually lost ground, leading to the signing of the Lusaka Protocol in November 1994.

UNITA’s engagement with peace initiatives such as the Lusaka negotiations reflected Savimbi’s leadership style. The protocol and rank of negotiators changed frequently, as Savimbi manoeuvred for maximum leverage, and punished people not seen to be perfectly loyal. Notable figures in the teams were mainly drawn from UNITA’s military, including for Lusaka Vice-President António Dembo, Chief of Staff General Arlindo Pena “Ben Ben”, General Paulo Lukamba “Gato”, Jorge Valentim, Eugénio Ngolo “Manuvakola”, but also overseas representatives (e.g. London’s Isais Samakuva) and a Portuguese lawyer, António Oliveira. Savimbi did not personally sign the Lusaka Protocol, leaving it to Manuvakola (who was later put in prison by Savimbi for three years), UNITA’s 70 opposition MPs did not take up their seats in Parliament as Angola once again moved back towards war.

With many of its members increasingly disillusioned, UNITA fractured. The main body (Savimbi’s followers) fought on from 1998–2002. A Luanda-based group calling itself UNITA-Renovada (‘renewed’) broke away in September 1998, led by Manuvakola and Valentim. The government considered UNITA-R the only legitimate interlocutor to complete the peace process, but most saw the group as a stooge of the MPLA. 54 UNITA deputies disassociated themselves from UNITA-R and reaffirmed Abel Chivukuvuku (formerly Savimbi’s personal envoy to the President) as their leader.

UNITA’s ability to compete militarily with the government gradually collapsed in the 1998–2002 phase of the war as it lost more and more territory and suffered increasingly from defections. A return to more dispersed guerrilla tactics did not turn the tide, as improved enforcement of UN sanctions started to hit its supply networks.

Savimbi was finally killed in February 2002. Vice-President Dembo died days later, allegedly of natural causes. Secretary-General Lukamba Gato took over. Chief of Staff Abreu “Kamorteiro” signed the Lueno Memorandum in April. Demilitarization occurred quickly, beginning in August 2002 with the integration of UNITA’s troops into the FAA, followed by the demobilization of all but 5,000 of them.

In July 2002, the different UNITA factions reunified under a single authority, the ‘Political Commission’, and in June 2003, at the first party congress after Savimbi’s death, Isais Samakuva easily defeated Gato to be elected UNITA’s new leader.

FNLA

In the 1950s Bakongo émigrés originating from the north-west of Angola established the Union of the Peoples of Northern Angola (UPNA), which soon became the Union of the Peoples of Angola (UPA) as it became more oriented towards Angolan nationalism. Leader Holden Roberto had established a far higher international profile by the early 1960s than the more dispersed MPLA leadership, and already had links with the US. He had also turned to armed resistance and in the late 1950s the UPA was a known name among young militants in many parts of the country. After the MPLA had successfully – if dubiously – claimed responsibility for the 4 February 1961 prison attack in Luanda, the UPA led attacks in the north in March. From the UPA base in Kinshasa, Roberto set up the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA) in 1962. He was also the first to establish a Revolutionary Government of Angola in Exile (GRAE) the same year.
Supported by Zairean President Mobutu Sese Seko, the FNLA waged a low-key guerrilla war in northwestern Angola. Support waned in the late 1960s and early 1970s as the OAU transferred support to the MPLA. Its fortunes revived in the early 1970s with renewed support from Zaire and the US, but Zairean and South African military backing was not enough during the 1975-76 war, and the FNLA was virtually destroyed as a fighting force.

Roberto was exiled to Paris in 1979, and although a few thousand troops remained in northern Angola, they did not control territory. In 1984 many accepted a government amnesty. Roberto returned to Angola and stood in the 1992 presidential elections, obtaining only 2.1 per cent of the vote, while the FNLA won five Assembly seats.

The FNLA is now largely irrelevant. In September 1998, a 51-strong caretaker committee publicly removed Holden Roberto and replaced him with Lucas Ngonda. In response, Roberto expelled the members of the caretaker committee, calling their actions unconstitutional. After various failed mediation attempts, the party was re-united in April 2004.

**FLEC**

The Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda (FLEC) was formed in 1963 from a number of smaller organizations fighting for Cabindan independence from Portugal, including the Movement for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda (MLEC) and the Alliance of Mayombe. FLEC was led by Luís Ranque Franque, and created a ‘Government of Cabinda in Exile’ in 1967.

FLEC was banned by Portugal in 1974, and responded by developing a military wing. After exclusion from the Alvor talks in 1975, it attempted to seize control of Cabinda in November with support from Zaire. MPLA and Cuban forces defeated the separatists, who have since operated a low intensity guerrilla war, including abduction of expatriate oil, construction and timber workers.

The Cabindan insurgency has been characterized by factionalism, and FLEC has fragmented numerous times. In 1977, a split led to the creation of the Military Command for the Liberation of Cabinda (CMLC). In 1984, FLEC divided into FLEC-FAC (Armed Forces of Cabinda) led by Henriques Nzita Tiago and FLEC-Renovada (FLEC-R), led by António Bento-Bembe.

Other factions have included the Democratic Front of Cabinda (FDC), the UNCL (based in Libreville, Gabon), UNALEC and FLEC-Lubota (led by Francisco Xavier Lubota). Attempts to reunite the movement have failed. All factions have their bases outside Cabinda. The Paris-based FLEC-FAC is more militant and has more fighters than FLEC-R. Numbers can only be estimated, but it was thought FLEC-FAC had 600-1000 men under arms in the mid-1990s. It claims a Federal Republic of Cabinda under the Presidency of Tiago, which, however, seems to exist only on paper and on the internet.

FLEC-FAC escalated its activities after the 1992 elections, taking control of much of the rural interior, while the government increased troop numbers in Cabinda to 15,000 by mid-1993. UNITA supported the insurgents during 1993-94. The government announced talks with FLEC-FAC in March 1994, but these never took place. Recently further divisions have arisen over whether to discuss autonomy instead of full independence.

Bembe’s FLEC-R has a history of attempting negotiation, such as the ceasefire it signed with the government in September 1995. This led to a further agreement in May 1996, but conditions deteriorated as the FAA pursued the FLEC-FAC, and in response to the government’s lack of interest FLEC-R carried out numerous attacks in 1997.

FLEC-R has split again, with Bembe’s FLEC Platform claiming to be the natural descendent of Franque’s original FLEC. Franque reportedly participated in exploratory talks with the government in Luanda in August 2003.

FLEC-R, now calling itself FLEC, has created a government in exile, based in France. Like all FLECs, FLEC-R sees the territory as a Portuguese protectorate that was not legally integrated into Angola, and in 2003 called on Portugal to help it conduct a referendum on its future.

Since the government launched a major offensive in late 2002, a number of FLEC officers have publicly defected to the FAA, but rumours of FLEC’s downfall have not yet translated into a tangible reality, and the secessionist groups continue to be active. Civil society groups in Cabinda and Luanda mobilize around human rights abuses in the FAA campaign.
**International involvement**

**Portugal**

Portugal was awarded the colony of Angola at the 1884-85 Berlin Conference, 400 years after its first contact with people in the Kongo basin. With the settler population growing, it had no intention of allowing Angolan independence until a bloodless coup in Lisbon in April 1974 by leftist elements of the armed forces.

The new regime helped to negotiate the Alvor Accords between the competing liberation movements in January 1975. MPLA-sympathizers within the transitional administration were hostile to certain white settlers whom they saw as the worst face of Portuguese colonialism, leading to a deep crisis of authority. There had been long-standing connections between the anti-fascist forces in Portugal centred around the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) who supported the MPLA.

Relations between Portugal and Angola were strained in the ten years following independence, as Angola suspected the former colonial power, and especially Prime Minister Mário Soares (one of the architects of the Alvor Accords) of encouraging the US not to recognize the MPLA and to support UNITA. There were also many retornados (returned white settlers) in Portugal unhappy with decolonization and the Marxist MPLA-regime. Lisbon increasingly became UNITA’s second base.

Relations began to improve after Cavaco Silva became Prime Minister in 1985, enabling Portugal to assume the role of mediator. Silva set out to gain the MPLA’s trust, whose leaders increasingly saw Lisbon as a vehicle for rapprochement with the US in an era when lasting Soviet support was looking less guaranteed. Silva’s resistance to the strong pro-UNITA lobby in Lisbon achieved this goal, but after the failed Gbadolite talks in 1989 it became clear that the Portuguese government also needed to come to a new accommodation with UNITA if it were to assume a larger mediating role. Savimbi was allowed to visit Lisbon in early 1990, and media restrictions were eased.

With the MPLA’s preferred ‘African solution’ exhausted after Gbadolite, it was faced with the unappealing prospect of negotiations with UNITA under US mediation. Instead it looked to the Portuguese, an option equally acceptable to the two superpowers, as Portugal was not in a position to alter international events nor did it have a clear vested interest in the victory of either belligerent.

The Portuguese team, led by Secretary of State Durão Barroso, organized several rounds of talks between April 1990 and May 1991 that led to the signing of the Bicesse Accords. Portugal remained a member of the Troika of countries assisting in and monitoring the Angolan peace process. It continues to have closer ties with Angola than other European countries.

**USA**

From the 1960s to the early 1990s, US involvement in Angola was guided by Cold War considerations. Attracted by the oil and diamond wealth, the US supported Portugal in its struggle to control Angola for most of the 1960s. For a while under President John F. Kennedy, however, there was also a degree of support for anti-colonialism as well as anti-Communism, which led to the establishment of links with the FNLA.

The US assisted the anti-Communist movements in Angola during the civil war of 1975-76. However, at a crucial stage, in December 1975, the Senate passed the Clark Amendment, terminating covert assistance to anti-Communist forces in Angola. With the FNLA effectively defeated, and acceptance of the Marxist regime inconceivable, US support began to turn towards UNITA around 1977, and in 1985, with the repeal of the Clarke Amendment, substantial US aid was brought in via Zaire.

With the Soviet Union weakening, the US took the opportunity to play mediator, hosting talks in New York between Angola, Cuba and South Africa in December 1988. However, US policy remained strongly in favour of UNITA and support reached around US$90m in 1990. While the US promoted an end to the war, a stronger UNITA was presented as necessary for the transition to political pluralism. The US helped guide the parties towards the Bicesse Accords in 1991, and fully expected UNITA to win the 1992 elections. UNITA’s return to war after its controversial defeat was the beginning of the end of its friendship with the US, and after failed peace talks in Addis Ababa and Abidjan in 1993, the US finally established full diplomatic relations with the MPLA government.

The US played a role in bringing UNITA back to the negotiating table for Lusaka, but was the MPLA government’s most important ally by the end of the decade, partly due to the growing importance of Angolan oil.
USSR/Russia

Soviet financial, diplomatic, and arms delivery assistance to the MPLA began in the 1960s, but remained covert and insufficient to allow the MPLA to challenge the Portuguese. Support reached a low ebb in 1973 in the midst of two revolts against Neto's leadership, and was resumed only once his position was secure. During the civil war of 1975-76, the USSR airlifted heavy armaments to the MPLA in the crucial months just before and immediately after independence, helping to secure the fledgling regime. With its superpower rivals still reeling from Vietnam, the USSR established closer relations with the MPLA from 1976 with a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation.

The USSR provided essential financial and military support to the Angolan government throughout the 1980s. Relations with the regime were not always smooth, with suspicions of Soviet support for the Alves coup attempt in 1977, and a purge of the more pro-Soviet figures in the 1985 party congress. In the late 1980s it became clear that the MPLA government could not rely on Soviet support indefinitely, as the USSR began to seek a detente with the US. The USSR (and later Russia) took its seat as one of the Troika countries that assisted the peace agreements of 1991 and 1994, a role that continued up to the Luena Memorandum of 2002.

Others

Angola’s neighbours have played significant roles. Ethno-political ties between Bakongo peoples were among the reasons that led President Mobutu's Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo) to support the FNLA. Mobutu’s influence with other African leaders like Kaunda of Zambia and Nyerere of Tanzania was crucial in the FNLA’s revival in the early 1970s. Roberto also used Zairean support to strengthen ties with China, and even to control the FNLA internally, when Zaire sent troops to put down a mutiny in the FNLA’s armed forces in 1973. Mobutu intervened directly in the conflict of 1975, sending troops to support the FNLA against the MPLA. Zaire provided a channel for renewed US support for the FNLA, and helped draw in South Africa, which welcomed the opportunity to be seen fighting alongside a black African nation.

After his effective defeat in the civil war, Mobutu soon came to terms with the MPLA government, sealing the demise of Roberto as a serious player in Angolan power struggles. Relations declined again after 1981, as Mobutu began to assist US destabilization policies and Zaire became an important ‘rear-base’ for UNITA, especially after 1986, when it served as a conduit for illegal diamond sales and an entry point for equipment. Mobutu took the opportunity to assume the role of mediator in 1989 when he hosted the Gbadolite talks, but Portugal took over this position in the lead up to the Bicesse Accords. Mobutu’s fall in 1997 was a serious blow to Savimbi.

Zaire also gave considerable support to FLEC, as did Congo (Republic of Congo – Brazzaville), both of which had aspirations to dominate an independent Cabinda, if not annex it. Both countries reacted positively to the proclamation of independence of the ‘Republic of Cabinda’ by the Kinshasa-based FLEC at an OAU summit in August 1975. Yet Brazzaville was supporting NZ'ita Tiago’s rival FLEC faction, and also the anti-secessionist MPLA (as a Soviet-backed regime, this was part of Brazzaville’s rivalry with US-backed Zaire which supported the FNLA). Both countries eventually dropped their support for Cabinda independence and to the various FLEC factions.

Apartheid South Africa also intervened against the MPLA on several occasions, motivated by the desire to have a friendly non-communist regime in Luanda that would not harbour SWAPO (South-West African Peoples’ Organization, Namibia’s liberation movement) guerrillas. It began small-scale military intervention in 1975 in the name of protecting its investments in the Cunene River hydroelectric project, but increasingly trained UNITA and FNLA groups. In October, South African Defence Force (SADF) troops joined the UNITA/FNLA offensive. At first the strategy was to help UNITA reclaim as much territory as possible in the run up to possible negotiations, and then withdrawing, but the focus became instead the push up to Luanda as Zaire/FNLA pushed down from the north (worrying Savimbi who feared a plot to get the FNLA into power). The operation failed to prevent the MPLA retaining control of Luanda, and critically undermined geopolitical support for the MPLA’s rivals.

The SADF pulled out in March 1976, but South Africa sustained low-level aggression for many years after and became a major player again in the war during the 1980s. UN pressure led to the Lusaka Accord of 1984, in which the South Africans agreed to withdraw and Angola to stop assisting SWAPO, but the SADF was back again in 1985 to support UNITA forces against a major Cuban-backed FAPLA drive. In 1987-88, fighting in the south of Angola culminated in the siege of Cuito Cuanavale by South African and UNITA forces. The brutal military stalemate that followed was a fatal blow to its hopes of military victory in Angola. The New York Accords of December 1988 saw the independence of Namibia.
On the opposite side of most of South Africa’s interventions was Cuba. Cuban interest in the MPLA had begun with Che Guevara’s visit to Central Africa in 1964-5. In the 1975 war, Cuba intervened on the MPLA’s behalf by sending first military advisors, and then troops, supposedly in response to South African intervention (although the decision to do so probably came earlier, as had the MPLA’s requests for help). They increased troop numbers from around 1,000 in October, to 14,000 by February 1976. The first elite troops dispatched helped hold Luanda in time for independence on 11 November. Cuban support also helped consolidate the USSR’s commitment. In the years after independence, Cuba provided indispensable non-military support to the MPLA regime, sending architects, engineers, teachers, doctors, civil servants and others to build the new country. Cuba’s military presence gained added importance for the government in the 1980s when Cuban forces were often engaged in fighting with the South Africans and troop strength reached around 50,000.

By the 1990s, Cuba was no longer of much use to the MPLA. The change in the MPLA’s priorities was signalled once and for all in December 1995 when Angola controversially failed to vote in the UN General Assembly against the US’s blockade of Cuba, infuriating President Fidel Castro.

**Multilateral actors**

The United Nations adopted a monitoring and verification role after the New York Accords in 1988. The United Nations Angolan Verification Mission (UNAVEM I) (December 1988 - May 1991) was established to verify the phased and total withdrawal of Cuban troops from the territory of Angola. UNAVEM II (May 1991 - February 1995) was intended to verify the arrangements agreed by the Government of Angola and UNITA for monitoring the ceasefire and the Angolan police during the ceasefire period, and to observe and verify elections. In February 1995 UNAVEM III was authorized by the Security Council to assist in the restoration of peace and the process of national reconciliation. It was replaced by the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola (MONUA) on 30 June 1997, which was closed down in July 1999 after being forced to pull out as the last hopes of peace evaporated.

A small UN Office in Angola (UNOA) was established in 1999, replaced after the Luena Memorandum by a larger mission (UNMA) for six months. After February 2003 the head of the UN’s Development Programme (UNDP) became the most senior official of its reduced presence in Angola. Progress in implementing peace is no longer brought before the UN Security Council.

The UN imposed an important set of sanctions against UNITA from 1993, tackling among other things UNITA’s military supply lines, travel by its officials, the freezing of its bank accounts, and the prohibition of uncertified diamond exports. The sanctions were poorly enforced until 1999 when a report by new sanctions committee chairman Robert Fowler recommended more stringent enforcement procedures. Sanctions were fully lifted in November 2002.

Other active UN agencies have been the Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Unit (UCAH), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have had difficult relations with the Angolan government, while succeeding in pushing for numerous structural reforms. In the early 1990s, the World Bank channelled much of its aid through international NGOs, both because it considered the government corrupt and because it was trying to seek legitimacy at a time when its structural adjustment policies were under fire. This contributed to the large growth of the humanitarian sector, which by the end of 1995 was one of the biggest employers in Angola, infuriating President Fidel Castro.