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INTRODUCTION

The Angolan government's foreign policy since independence has been crafted primarily as a response to various domestic and international pressures that threaten its existence. Specifically, Angola's foreign policy aims to enhance the regime's ability to win the civil war that started on the eve of independence. To achieve this basic foreign policy objective, Angola has sought, first and foremost, to create a favourable regional environment.

The argument presented in this article is that the domestic, regional and international dimensions of Angola's foreign policy are worth examining in an attempt to determine the many dimensions of this policy. In particular, Angola's foreign policy should be seen as a reflection of the unique circumstances under which the country emerged as an independent state and the strategic choices made by the new regime upon gaining independence. Although Angola's post-colonial circumstances required pragmatic foreign policies to ensure survival, the Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA) regime is yet to achieve its major domestic goals. Specifically, Angola's civil war continues to threaten the country with internal collapse and international irrelevance.

FOREIGN POLICY OPTIONS: THE DOMESTIC RATIONALE

Angola's current domestic condition and its international position are particularly regrettable, since the country was expected to achieve a measure of international relevance when it attained independence in 1975 after a 14-year anti-colonial struggle. This expectation was neither unfounded nor unrealistic given Angola's considerable natural resource endowment, including vast deposits of oil and diamonds. Unfortunately, such expectations were shattered in the process of decolonisation. This process was precipitated by a military coup that deposed the regime of Marcelo Caetano in Portugal on 25 April 1974. The coup leaders were mostly military officers who opposed the old regime's colonial policies. Therefore, one of their main objectives was to end costly colonial wars quickly. Thus, Portugal placed its colonies on the fast track to political independence. The former colonies of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Mozambique were granted independence without major problems. This was facilitated by the unity within their respective liberation movements. Angola's situation — where three armed liberation movements representing different ethnic and ideological constituencies were unable to find agreement on a common approach to decolonisation and beyond — was considerably more complex. Predictably, Angola's decolonisation process quickly degenerated into civil war as the three liberation movements attempted to grab power — forcefully and individually — from the departing colonial authorities.

Each of the three liberation movements attempted to grab power with the help of foreign allies. Consequently, Zaïrian troops invaded Angola from the north in support of the Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola (FNLA) while South African troops invaded from the south in support of the União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA). However, only the MPLA — given its ethnic powerbase around the capital city of Luanda — succeeded in seizing and maintaining itself in power with the help of Cuban troops. Since the outcome of the Angolan conflict was expected to have significant geostrategic implications for Southern Africa, Angola quickly became an important Cold War battleground. Both the United States and the former Soviet Union used ties developed with the FNLA and MPLA during the anti-colonial war to intervene in the civil war. However, compared to Soviet and Cuban support, American support to the FNLA was at best ineffective. In the aftermath of the Vietnam debacle, the US was averse to major foreign military interventions. However, as will be discussed below, the US and South Africa continued to pursue destabilisation strategies — carried out mainly through UNITA — aimed at toppling the young Marxist-Leninist regime that took power in Angola once Portugal departed.

Angola's foreign policy, then, can be best understood in terms of the MPLA regime's survival strategies since gaining power. For example, while its ideological background predisposed the new regime to intervene in the liberation wars against settler minority rule in Southern Africa, these struggles were understood to be directly connected to the regime's own long-term survival. In other words, support for the liberation of Zimbabwe, Namibia, and South Africa constituted an overt attempt to influence Angola's regional environment by supporting revolutionary change in neighbouring states that exhibited hostile intentions and/or provided support and sanctuary for UNITA and the FNLA. The expectation was that, once liberated,

these countries would provide the necessary military, economic and diplomatic assistance to enable the MPLA to solve its domestic problems.

The domestic problems that have conspired to weaken the MPLA regime have not been confined to the military domain. Although the civil war frustrated the new regime's statebuilding project, economic mismanagement also seriously weakened the Angolan state. The new regime did not have the resources to fill the administrative void left by departing colonial administrators. The mass departure of the settler community also hastened the breakdown of the Angolan economy. It was therefore not surprising that the post-colonial state in Angola never really had the capacity or competence to exercise authority beyond the capital city and provincial capitals. International non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and, more recently, the United Nations have been carrying out most tasks commonly associated with the state, especially in rural areas affected by the war. The rudimentary bureaucracy functions on a quasi-voluntary basis partly because the state is not able to provide full remuneration to its employees. Consequently, bureaucrats resort to extorting bribes and/or joining the informal sector to survive. The collapse of key sectors like health care, education, transport, communications and banking has accompanied the breakdown of the rule of law.

Given this domestic context, characterised by war and other forms of decay, a dynamic foreign policy was seen as an important tool to help the new regime to create the necessary security environment to solve its myriad of domestic problems. For the new Angolan regime, an improved security environment entailed fundamental changes in Southern Africa.

REGIONAL ENVIRONMENT

At independence, important regional actors — South Africa and Zaïre — overtly supported the MPLA's main internal adversaries. The new Angolan regime understood that its ability to establish a viable state depended, to a considerable degree, on its ability to help establish friendly regimes in both neighbouring states. For the next two decades, the MPLA regime endeavoured to achieve this objective by actively helping domestic opponents of both regimes. In the end, Angola achieved its foreign policy objectives, albeit at a devastating cost. Angola's foreign policy toward apartheid South Africa involved open and unconditional military and diplomatic support for both the African National Congress (ANC) and the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO).

South Africa's response to this aggressive foreign policy by the new Angolan state came in the form of the so-called 'total strategy', a desperate set of policies aimed at ensuring the survival of the apartheid system through a combination of reform and repression. The main proponents of the total strategy argued that the source of instability and conflict — both inside South Africa and in the region — was neither apartheid nor colonialism, but external intervention. Therefore, it was necessary to ensure that neighbouring states refrained from actively supporting the armed liberation struggle in South Africa and Namibia and that no 'communist' power gained a

political or military foothold in the region. Consequently, Angola's policies posed a direct threat. To counter it, South Africa further expanded its security and military apparatus both to suppress opposition at home and destabilise the region. As South Africa's principal enemy in the region, due to its position as the main SWAPO sanctuary and an important ANC base, as well as its ideological orientation and economic potential, Angola suffered the brunt of the apartheid regime's total strategy. South Africa used two main instruments to threaten Angola's territorial integrity:

frequent, well-planned military invasions deep into Angolan territory; and

the instrumentalisation of UNITA as a proxy in its regional destabilisation policies.

This strategy resulted in tremendous devastation both in terms of human lives lost and infrastructure destroyed. Between 1975 and 1989, South Africa mounted large-scale military invasions of Angola annually. These invasions, carried out under the pretext of responding to increased SWAPO attacks in northern Namibia from bases in southern Angola, usually involved several South African Defence Force (SADF) infantry battalions, paratrooper units, tank battalions, long-range artillery groups and military aircraft squadrons. The duration varied according to the real objective of the mission. Thus, for example, missions to destroy SWAPO bases did not take as much time as fighting alongside UNITA to prevent advances by Angolan government troops.

South Africa also successfully transformed UNITA into a proxy army to execute the apartheid regime's destabilisation strategy within Angola. Although virtually destroyed by MPLA and Cuban troops in 1975-6, UNITA was reorganised into a significant military force by 1979. Consequently, by the end of the 1970s, while MPLA government and Cuban troops were preoccupied with building massive defensive systems to deter South African military aggression, UNITA had initiated movement northward from its bases in the south-east to consolidate new positions in central Angola along the Benguela Railway. This was particularly important for the implementation of South Africa's strategy, since UNITA's military actions effectively rendered the vital railway — one of the region's major transportation links to the Atlantic ocean — inoperable. Moreover, UNITA was planning military operations farther north with the objective of disrupting both oil and diamond exploration.¹

UNITA's operations in northern Angola were being facilitated by Mobutu's Zaïre. Like South Africa, Zaïre's support of UNITA was a response to Angola's aggressive foreign policy in the region. Like its stance toward South Africa, Angola's foreign policy toward Zaïre was driven by the desire to protect the young state's territorial integrity. In fact, immediately after independence and in the aftermath of the ill-fated Zaïrian invasion in support of the FNLA, Angola's first president, Agostinho Neto attempted to normalise relations with Zaïre. For Neto, the normalisation of relations with Zaïre was a pragmatic goal, an essential first step to enhance Angola's own security. To normalise relations with Zaïre, Neto was prepared to expel a separatist movement from the Zaïrian province of Shaba (former Katanga) that had been based in Angola since colonial times. In return, Mobutu promised to expel the FNLA from its bases in Zaïre. The Zaïrian president kept his promise to close all FNLA bases in Zaïre, expel its leaders and severely curtail the activities of its sympathisers remaining in the country. Neto, however, was not able to deliver on his side of the bargain. Instead, two major military incursions into Zaïre by the secessionist rebels based in Angola took place in 1977 and 1978. The second invasion of Shaba seriously threatened the Mobutu regime and Western interests in Zaïre.

Mobutu's allies — including the US, France, Belgium and Morocco — promptly came to his rescue and quickly pushed the invading forces back to Angola.

The invasion of Zaïre from Angola provided Mobutu and his Western allies with a convenient excuse for continued intervention in Angola. Within a Cold War context, Angola's actions — whether with or without Cuban and Soviet consent — were seen as an attempt to expand the former Soviet sphere of influence into Central Africa. Consequently, and predictably, the US and its allies responded with massive military support for Mobutu. Even more significant for Angola, Western intelligence services accelerated efforts to provide training and weapons to UNITA through Zaïre. This Western-Zaïrian-UNITA connection seriously weakened the new Angolan state and constituted a major threat to its territorial security, exactly the reverse outcome of what Neto had intended.

Angola's relations with Mobutu's Zaïre remained severely strained through the 1980s and 1990s as Zaïre became not only the preferred conduit for American weapons and supplies to UNITA, but also a convenient transit port for UNITA's diamond-smuggling operations. In the 1990s, however, after the end of the Cold War, Mobutu's kleptocratic and undemocratic regime became an embarrassing liability to its main international supporters, including the US. Without external support and with mounting internal problems, Mobutu was toppled in May 1997. Angola and several other states in the region, including Rwanda and Uganda, were instrumental in overthrowing Mobutu by providing direct military support to the forces led by Laurent Kabila. Finally, for the first time since independence, Angola had a friendly government in Zaïre, now renamed the Democratic Republic of Congo. As far as Angola's domestic security was concerned, the last regional vestiges of the Cold War had disappeared. However, as will be discussed below, the removal of Cold War constraints did not necessarily lead to a substantial improvement in Angola's security situation. In spite of the MPLA's best diplomatic efforts, the post-Cold War simply heralded new dynamics of insecurity for Angola.

THE INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT: COLD WAR CONSTRAINTS

At the international level, Angola became an important battleground of the Cold War. As a Soviet and Cuban ally, Angola was regarded by most Western powers, especially the US, as an unfriendly state. It is worth recalling that one of the major US foreign policy goals during the Cold War was to contain the spread of communism around the world. Since the Angolan government was perceived to be communist, the US was willing to support UNITA in its attempt to overthrow the regime.

Ironically, Agostinho Neto sought to navigate the turbulent period of the Cold War by adopting a non-aligned foreign policy discourse even if, in practice, the MPLA could not realistically hope to

abandon the Soviet embrace without threatening its very survival. As it happened, Neto did not live long enough to make those policy changes — both in the domestic and foreign policy realms — which he is rumoured to have been contemplating before he died in September 1979, less than four years after taking office. He was succeeded by José Eduardo dos Santos, a Soviet-trained petroleum engineer.

Dos Santos quickly abandoned any pretence of non-alignment in favour of even closer ties with the former Soviet Union and Cuba due to a quickly deteriorating domestic situation. Unlike his predecessor, Dos Santos was prepared to give greater latitude to the Soviets in determining the main guidelines of the new state's domestic and foreign policy. Previously disappointed with Neto's flirtation with non-alignment, the former Soviet Union welcomed this new foreign policy orientation as Angola provided an important base in Southern Africa from which to affect change during a period of great instability caused by both regional and Cold War dynamics. The former Soviet Union was particularly interested in influencing events in South Africa, the richest and most developed state in the subregion, to fulfil its self-proclaimed role as the vanguard of 'third world' liberation movements and oversee the implementation of the Soviet model of political, economic and social development.

Cuba also provided additional support for Dos Santos. Despite its own serious domestic and international problems, Cuba was willing to provide various types of assistance to Angola and other developing countries to further its own foreign policy objectives including, primarily, an assertion of its leadership in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).² However, given their own problems and limitations, neither the former Soviet Union nor Cuba could solve the MPLA's domestic problems. In particular, they could not help to solve Angola's economic problems, nor could they prevent UNITA from becoming a growing threat with Zaïrian, South African and American assistance.

Beginning in the early 1980s, the US pursued a clear and unambiguous policy to overthrow the MPLA regime and bring UNITA to power either through ballots or bullets. The Reagan Doctrine, conceived as a global strategy to provide overt American support for anti-communist guerrilla movements around the world,³ had an almost immediate impact on the Angolan civil war as UNITA became a major recipient of sophisticated American weaponry, including Stinger anti-aircraft missiles that upset the air supremacy once enjoyed by the MPLA government. Consequently, all major military offensives mounted by the MPLA/Cuban/Soviet forces to dislodge the Angolan rebels from their bases in southern Angola ended in failure. Eventually, the involvement of external forces on the side of the MPLA and UNITA created a military stalemate on the ground that facilitated the search for political solutions to the conflict. Thus, in May 1991, the MPLA and UNITA signed the Bicesse⁴ peace accord to end the civil war. The accord, however, ended only the proxy war stage of the conflict. In November 1992, in the aftermath of a failed electoral process, the MPLA and UNITA initiated another round of fighting, this time using mostly domestic resources — oil and diamonds — under their respective control.

In combination, the domestic, regional and international environments severely restricted

Angola's foreign policy options during the 1970s and 1980s. However, important changes at the international and regional levels — brought about by the end of the Cold War and the dismantling of the apartheid regime in South Africa — were expected to improve Angola's foreign policy environment. Angola attempted to reap important dividends by taking advantage of new, more favourable regional and international environments to redirect its foreign policy toward enhancing the regime's ability to make peace at home. Ironically, South Africa, Zaïre and the US would feature prominently in international efforts to achieve peace for Angola.

PEACEMAKING AS A FOREIGN POLICY CHALLENGE

Continuing direct engagement by Cuba and South Africa on the side of their respective clients — the MPLA and UNITA — rendered both combatants incapable of achieving a decisive military victory in the 1980s. Instead, protracted military engagement by these subimperial interventionist states was causing increasingly unbearable casualties on both sides. Consequently, given the military realities on the ground and the momentous political changes taking place at the international level, both Cuba and South Africa accepted the inevitability of a negotiated framework for regional peace involving both the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola and the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 435/78 regarding Namibia's independence.⁵

On 22 December 1988, the governments of Angola, Cuba and South Africa signed the New York Accord that provided a timetable for the phased withdrawal of 50 000 Cuban troops from Angola over a period of 27 months in return for the implementation of the UN plan for Namibia's independence. On the surface, the New York Accord was a major diplomatic coup for Angola in as much as it removed the South African military threat from Namibia. Moreover, independence for Namibia would deny UNITA of vital supply routes in the south. In a wider regional context, this represented another important step in liberating Southern Africa from settler minority rule, a development that was expected to pay immediate domestic security dividends for Angola. However, as far as Angola was concerned, the New York Accord was fatally flawed because it excluded UNITA. Thus, instead of speeding up the resolution of the civil war in Angola, it forced UNITA to rethink its military and political strategies. At a military level, UNITA moved a considerable portion of its operations away from its traditional bases in the south-east into the north and north-east. This placed UNITA both closer to the Zaïrian border and in control of important diamond-producing areas. By moving north, UNITA also hoped to achieve important political goals. It could now claim that its struggle against the regime was deeply implanted in most of the country's provinces.

The failure to include UNITA in the talks leading to the New York Accord was a result of the Angolan government's paradoxical insistence on separating domestic from regional issues when, all along, the MPLA stressed the interconnectedness between its domestic security predicament and the wider regional dynamics. In any event, the negotiations were conducted along two tracks. Track I involved negotiations regarding the removal of Cuban troops from Angola in return for South African withdrawal from Namibia and independence for this country.

Track II entailed consultations aimed at achieving national reconciliation between the MPLA and UNITA. Ideally, both would be pursued simultaneously. However, since the parties to the negotiation had previously agreed that the question of national reconciliation for Angola was an internal matter, no pressure was put on either the MPLA government or UNITA to settle their differences within the framework of the negotiations.

Track II led nowhere because, at the time, the Angolan government was not prepared to end the war through political means, since this would require negotiating a comprehensive powersharing framework with UNITA. For the MPLA, negotiations with UNITA were still contrary to the constitutional principles of the "people's republic." As President dos Santos explained, "the Angolan state is a one-party state and so the acceptance of such a political organization [UNITA] is out of the question."⁶ Instead, as in more recent pronouncements, he suggested that his government would seek "national harmonization" — through a policy of clemency and the reintegration of UNITA members into Angolan society — that would eventually lead to an end of the civil war. As the president suggested, "the idea is to bring all Angolans together under the same anthem and flag, under the same state."⁷ This position was based on the assumption that UNITA did not constitute a legitimate political force, because it was armed and financed by outside forces.

Dos Santos and his government were planning to address the possibility of ending the civil war only after a regional peace accord was signed. Thus, Angola's main diplomatic efforts were directed at ensuring that the New York Accord was fully implemented. The MPLA government believed that, even without Cuban support, its armed forces could crush the rebels once the SADF withdrew from Namibia. In the words of an Angolan government spokesperson, "if we resolve this problem with South Africa, the internal peace process will move very quickly and neither negotiations nor any other kind of agreement with UNITA will be necessary."⁸

With a regional peace plan in place, the MPLA was convinced that UNITA would "cease to exist in a year"⁹ through a combination of political and military operations. This approach to internal conflict resolution was seriously flawed, since it gravely underestimated UNITA's political and military strengths and resourcefulness. Even before the signing of the New York Accord for peace in Southern Africa, Jonas Savimbi rejected the Angolan government's approach for ending the civil war through harmonisation and clemency, declaring prophetically and ominously that "there will be no peace in Angola without UNITA."¹⁰

Savimbi appeared confident about his chances of survival, if not victory, because the MPLA government's diplomatic efforts — especially peace with South Africa — had not succeeded in immediately isolating UNITA. In fact, South Africa's role as UNITA's main supporter was simply taken over by the US through Mobutu's Zaïre. Since peace with South Africa did not result in the outcome expected by the MPLA government, Dos Santos had few options other than a return to diplomacy to end the civil war. This time, Angola's diplomatic efforts aimed to secure wide African involvement in its search for peace with UNITA.

NO 'AFRICAN SOLUTION' FOR ANGOLA'S DOMESTIC PROBLEMS

Profound changes at the international level forced Angola to redouble its efforts in searching for

peace within a wider continental framework. To this end, President dos Santos invited eight African heads of state¹¹ to Luanda on 16 May 1989 to discuss ways to end the war.¹² The framework for peace that emerged from this summit envisioned, for the first time since the civil war began, 'national reconciliation' and suggested the possibility of direct dialogue between the warring parties. As a result of this summit, Dos Santos and Savimbi met for the first time on 22 June 1989 in Gbadolite, Zaire at a special summit of African heads of state convened by Mobutu.

The Gbadolite summit's apparent peace breakthrough, however, did not last. Its participants — including the African heads of state — had different interpretations of what they had agreed upon. The final communiqué stated that all the parties had reached agreement on three points: a mutual desire to end the war and effect national reconciliation;

the proclamation of a cease-fire effective from 24 June 1989; and

the establishment of a mixed UNITA-MPLA commission under the mediation of President Mobutu to negotiate the political future of Angola.¹³

However, this directly contradicted President Mousa Traoré's version of events. Traoré, then acting president of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), claimed that the leaders gathered at Gbadolite had discussed and agreed on six points:

an end to armed opposition;
security for Savimbi and his followers;
the voluntary and temporary withdrawal of Savimbi;
the granting of a post to Savimbi;
the integration of UNITA elements; and
the conditions for their integration.¹⁴

UNITA categorically rejected this interpretation. The rebels' version of events was closer to that expressed in the final communiqué and was corroborated by Mobutu, the summit's host, who asserted that the agreement included "nothing about exile" for Savimbi.¹⁵ Amid diverging interpretations of what was pledged at Gbadolite, Dos Santos returned to Luanda seriously weakened politically. The Gbadolite fiasco seemed to indicate the futility of diplomatic efforts to end the conflict. In response to this diplomatic failure, the MPLA launched a major military offensive against one of UNITA's most important bases at Mavinga on 18 August 1989. Again, this offensive ended in failure partly due to the effectiveness of American military assistance to UNITA.

In an attempt to salvage some of the spirit of reconciliation displayed at Gbadolite, a follow-up summit of African leaders took place in Harare on 22 August 1989. Savimbi was not invited to participate partly because President Mugabe, given his alliance with Dos Santos in the Angolan conflict, was not willing to give the Angolan rebel leader the benefit of the doubt as Mobutu had been. The Harare summit's final communiqué revisited Gbadolite and asserted that three

additional principles, previously undisclosed, had been agreed upon at the earlier summit: respect for the Constitution and laws of the People's Republic of Angola; integration of UNITA into existing MPLA institutions; and acceptance of Savimbi's temporary and voluntary exile.¹⁶

This African stance regarding ways to end the Angolan conflict reflected some of the Angolan government's long-held views on how to deal with its domestic problems. In this sense, the outcome of the Harare summit constituted another important diplomatic triumph for the MPLA. However, by embracing the MPLA's approach to conflict resolution, African leaders could only focus on one facet of a complex situation. For example, they failed to grasp the crux of the matter, that Savimbi was not likely to abandon his lifelong quest for personal power and a dominant position for his party in Angolan politics. Any framework for peace that included the disintegration of UNITA and exile for Savimbi has little chance of success. In fact, as later events would show, not even direct superpower involvement succeeded in persuading Savimbi to change his position.

SUPERPOWER INVOLVEMENT: CARROTS, NO STICKS

After Harare, the next major opportunity to resolve the Angolan civil war occurred both as a result of Luanda's diplomatic efforts and as an outcome of the new post-Cold War relationship between the US and the former Soviet Union with behind-the-scenes diplomacy involving various regional and global actors. The decision by the US and the former Soviet Union to press the MPLA government and UNITA to begin direct talks on national reconciliation came at a meeting between former American Secretary of State, James Baker, and his Soviet counterpart, Eduard Shevardnadze while both attended Namibia's independence ceremonies in March 1990. For both the US and the former Soviet Union, at the end of the Cold War, Angola could provide a good opportunity to repeat the collaboration that hastened Namibia's independence. To this end, the superpowers signalled to both the MPLA and UNITA that major diplomatic rewards would be forthcoming with the successful completion of a peace process in Angola. For example, the American government promised diplomatic recognition once free and democratic elections were held.

Another positive external factor was Portugal's willingness to become involved in helping its former colony to settle the turmoil that followed the granting of independence. For many years, Portugal had distanced itself from the civil war that had erupted in the wake of independence. Several factors — including its ability to communicate with both sides, a desire for a higher diplomatic profile, a sense of guilt for abruptly leaving Angola without preparing a peaceful transition, and a yearning to regain a business foothold in the former colony — contributed to thrust Portugal back onto the diplomatic centre stage in attempts to sort out the legacy of settler colonial rule in Angola.

On 25 April 1990, the Angolan government announced that it would enter into direct talks with UNITA mediated by the Portuguese government to "find the path to national reconciliation in Angola."¹⁷ However, friction and confrontation characterised these talks, like much of the

relationship between the two sides. The seemingly intractable barriers separating the warring factions were set aside only due to direct American and Soviet intervention. In a co-ordinated diplomatic offensive — symptomatic of the end of the Cold War — James Baker and Eduard Shevardnadze called Jonas Savimbi and Pedro de Castro van Dunem to Washington where both were informed that no additional military and financial aid would be forthcoming to continue the war.

Instead of providing the financial and military means to sustain the civil war in Angola, the US and the former Soviet Union strengthened their collaborative engagement in the peace process. In fact, the US and the former Soviet Union, along with Portugal, formulated the main documents for negotiations between the MPLA government and UNITA. These documents covered five basic political principles and technical-military issues: Angola would become a democratic and multiparty state.

The international community would guarantee a cease-fire.

There would be free and fair elections in Angola, verified by the international community.

The signing of a cease-fire agreement would be preceded by an accord on the date for free and fair elections.

All military assistance from abroad would stop once a cease-fire accord was signed.¹⁸ These principles formed the basis for the Bicesse Peace Accord signed in Portugal on 31 May 1991 by Angolan President dos Santos and UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi. In principle, this peace accord appeared solid. Still, much like the ones before, the accord was doomed from the beginning because UNITA perceived it as another attempt by the MPLA regime to prolong its hold on power. In other words, there was little goodwill at the domestic political level to support a lasting settlement of the civil war. Although both the MPLA government and UNITA participated in the implementation of the Bicesse accord, it amounted to no more than a tragic exercise in make believe intended to satisfy the demands of the international community, particularly those of the US. Predictably, once the internationally supervised process resulted in UNITA's defeat at the polls, Savimbi removed his generals from the embryonic unified army and sent them back to war. Tragically for Angola, the international community — especially the UN and the guarantors of the peace process (the US, the former Soviet Union and Portugal) — was not ready to exercise a military option to prevent a renewal of the conflict.

The MPLA regime was able to withstand the post-electoral crisis of 1992 partly because the international community remained diplomatically engaged in the complex Angolan situation even after UNITA unilaterally abandoned the peace process. This continuing engagement, the result of intense diplomatic efforts by the MPLA, eventually persuaded UNITA to return to the negotiating table in 1993. Exploratory talks were held in Addis Ababa before peace talks resumed in Lusaka under UN mediation.¹⁹ After more than a year of negotiations both parties signed a powersharing agreement commonly referred to as the Lusaka Protocol.²⁰ Yet, as this document establishing a new framework for peace was about to be signed, government troops removed UNITA from most of the areas it had captured in 1992 including the rebels' headquarters at Huambo.

Predictably, like all other previous attempts to bring peace to Angola, the Lusaka Protocol failed to deliver. Despite Savimbi's public embrace of Dos Santos in Lusaka on 6 May 1995 and the promise to co-operate in the consolidation of peace, he never returned to Luanda to participate in a government of national reconciliation as stipulated by the Lusaka agreement. Instead, UNITA continued to prevent the Angolan government from extending state authority into rebel-controlled areas. Exasperated by UNITA's intransigence, the Angolan government has adopted a two-pronged strategy to destroy the rebels. At the political level, the government has announced that it no longer recognises Savimbi as a legitimate interlocutor. Instead, the MPLA government will attempt to implement the Lusaka Protocol in co-operation with a breakaway rebel faction, UNITA-Renovada, led by Eugenio Manuvakola, a former UNITA secretary-general who defected to Luanda in 1997. At the military level, the government has successfully undertaken to evict UNITA from key strategic areas in the central plateau. Thus, in October 1999, the rebels suffered a major setback when they lost their military headquarters at Bailundo and Andulo.

It would seem that, after 25 years of civil war, the MPLA government has partly achieved its main goal: the enfeeblement, if not destruction, of its domestic security threat — UNITA in 1999 — by helping to change the unfriendly regimes in the subregion — Zimbabwe in 1980, Namibia in 1990, South Africa in 1994, Zaïre (now the DRC) in 1997, and Congo-Brazzaville in 1998. However, the current euphoria gripping Luanda may be both premature and misplaced. UNITA has demonstrated its ability to adapt to changing circumstances — both favourable and, as currently, adverse — and to continue causing trouble at home for the foreseeable future.

FRIENDLY NEIGHBOURHOOD, TROUBLED HOME

In pursuit of its often obscure vision for Angola, UNITA has been forced to weather considerable adversity. Survival as a military force, if not relevance as a political movement, invariably required willingness to accept manipulation as a tool of external forces — from Portuguese colonial administrators, the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), to the South African apartheid regime. This propensity to embrace an assortment of strange bedfellows, in combination with its brutal guerrilla tactics at home, has given UNITA an unenviable reputation. Notwithstanding its international pariah status and recent military setbacks at home, there is little evidence to suggest that UNITA is a spent force. Indeed, it can be argued that, unlike in 1975-76, when it was saved from complete destruction at the hands of MPLA and Cuban forces by the apartheid regime, UNITA is currently better capable to remain relevant domestically even without direct external support. As discussed above, UNITA has been able to accumulate considerable financial resources by exploiting Angola's vast diamond resources. Now, these resources can be used to finance the rebels' demonstrated ability to conduct protracted guerrilla warfare combined with intermittent conventional engagements for political/propaganda purposes.

Ironically, UNITA's newly found 'independence' highlights an important flaw in the Angolan government's overall approach to its security predicament. Although the MPLA government is

now surrounded by friendly states, security for the Angolan state remains as elusive today as it was 25 years ago. In other words, fundamental changes at the regional level did not result in enhanced security for the regime. Why? The domestic environment did not remain as static as the MPLA anticipated. For example, UNITA has been able to outgrow its puppet condition. It is now attempting to survive without strings attached to external powers. Equally important, a quarter century of civil war has seriously undermined the Angolan state's ability to perform its basic functions, especially in the domain of economic management and the provision of social services. In sum, as far as its domestic security is concerned, the MPLA's position remains precarious, notwithstanding the collapse of unfriendly regimes in Southern and Central Africa.

Since changes in the region did not produce the anticipated level of security for the MPLA regime, and given the unlikely scenario that UNITA will be eliminated as a source of insecurity, reconciliation and peace will ultimately entail direct negotiation with the rebels on a new political architecture for Angola that allows for a more equitable national redistribution of power and wealth.

Paradoxically, the next inevitable peace process may yet produce better results than previous attempts, because both warring parties are no longer deeply exposed to external pressures. In other words, the end of the proxy stage of the war may herald real possibilities for peace in Angola. In this new stage, Angola's foreign policy can still play a useful role. Specifically, it could seek to engage states in the region that have successfully managed reconciliation and peace processes — like South Africa and Mozambique — for inspiration, if not facilitation.

CONCLUSION

Civil war has dominated Angola's post-colonial history. Consequently, the Angolan state is yet to fulfil its development potential at home, let alone play an important role abroad. Given the complex regional and international facets of Angola's conflict, the MPLA government has used foreign policy as an important tool to help enhance its domestic security. More specifically, Angola's foreign policy since independence has focused on helping to accelerate the collapse of unfriendly regimes in the region — like apartheid South Africa and Mobutu's Zaïre — that provided support and sanctuary to UNITA, the main source of domestic instability.

Much to the MPLA's frustration, the fundamental changes it helped to engender for the region have not ushered in a new era of peace in Angola. In fact, the country's agony does not seem to have an end in sight. This article has suggested that the MPLA government overemphasised the connection between regional changes — however fundamental — and domestic security. Although friendly regimes in the region might provide Angola with an external environment conducive to tackling difficult domestic problems, this is not a sufficient condition for reconciliation and peace at home. Domestic peace requires much more, including an inclusive political system with a wider space and greater role for civil society; the re-establishment of the rule of law; and the responsible and accountable use of the country's natural resources, especially oil and diamonds.

The human and material losses incurred during Angola's civil war will continue to affect the viability of the state for decades to come. Therefore, Angola's foreign policy must be redesigned as a tool to help the state reconstitute itself as a first step to an eventual and relevant participation in both regional and international affairs. For Angola, this process of reconstitution can best be achieved through greater diplomatic and economic involvement at the regional level. In particular, Angola must learn from the experience of other countries in the region — like South Africa and Mozambique — that have found ways to overcome the legacy of many years of internal conflict.

NOTES

UNITA wanted to shorten the regime's life by disrupting its main sources of foreign exchange — the oil and diamond industries — even if this conflicted with Western economic interests.

S N MacFarlane, Soviet-Angolan relations, 1975-90, in G W Breslauer (ed), Soviet policy in Africa, University of California, Berkeley, 1992, p 87.

Ibid, p 290.

Bicesse, on the outskirts of Lisbon, is where the peace accord was signed.

C Crocker, High noon in Southern Africa: Making peace in a rough neighborhood, W W Norton, New, York, 1992, pp 506-511.

Reuters, 1 October 1988.

Ibid.

Reuters, 23 November 1988.

L N Kiambata, former Angolan Ambassador in Zambia, quoted by Reuters, 11 December 1988.

Ibid.

The presidents of Congo, Gabon, Mozambique, São Tomé and Príncipe, Zaïre, Zambia and Zimbabwe attended this summit.

African leaders appeared to be genuinely interested in helping Angola, partly as a reward for its frontline role in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa.

The text of the Gbadolite Declaration was broadcast on Radio Nacional de Angola, 23 June 1989.

Mousa Traoré, interview with Radiodiffusion-Television Malienne, 23 June 1989.

The Washington Post, 25 June 1989, p A21.

Text of communiqué, quoted by ZIANA/PANA, 22 August 1989.

Pedro de Castro van Dunem, Angola's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Associated Press, 25 April 1990.

Radio Nacional de Angola, 23 January 1991.

The US, Russia and Portugal participated in the talks as observers.

Under the terms of the Lusaka Protocol, UNITA would be awarded four ministerial portfolios, seven state secretariats, six ambassadorial positions, three provincial governorships, five deputy-governorships, 30 district administrator positions, and 35 deputy district administrator positions.