

Pre Colonial period

As evidenced by remains found in Luanda, Congo and the Namibe desert, the area currently known, as Angola has been inhabited since pre-historic times. However, it was only until thousands of years later, at the beginning of recorded history, that more developed societies arrived in the area. The first to settle were the Bushmen, who were known to be great hunters. Physically they were similar to the pygmies in size and had light brown complexions.



At the beginning of the sixth century AD, a darker complexioned, more technologically advanced people began one of the greatest migrations in history. They were the Bantu, and they came from the north, probably from somewhere near the present-day Republic of Cameroon.

The Bantu had mastered metal working technology. When they reached what is now Angola they encountered the Bushmen and other ethnic groups considerably less advanced than them. They quickly dominated these groups with their superior knowledge of metalworking, ceramics and agriculture. Over the course of centuries the Bantu established them in the region and gave rise to a number of different groups, who over time took on different ethnic characteristics, some of which persist to this day.

The first large political entity in the area, known as the Kingdom of Congo, appeared in the thirteenth century and stretched from Gabon in the north to the river Kwanza in the South, and from the Atlantic in the West to the river Cuango in the East.

Their wealth came mainly from agriculture. Power was in the hands of the "Mani," aristocrats who occupied key positions in the Kingdom and who answered only to the all-powerful King of the Congo. Mbanza was the name given to a territorial and ruled by a Mani; Mbanza Congo, the capital, had a population of over fifty thousand in the sixteenth century.

The Kingdom of Congo was divided into six provinces and included some dependent kingdoms, such as Ndongo to the South. Trade, based on highly productive agriculture and increasing exploitation of mineral wealth, was the main economic activity of the region.

In 1482, Portuguese caravans commanded by Diogo Cao arrived in the Congo. Other expeditions followed and close relations were soon established between the two states. The Portuguese brought firearms and an interesting religion; in the return, the King of the Congo could offer slaves, ivory, and minerals. The

King of the Congo was soon converted to Christianity, and adopted a similar political structure to the Europeans; he became a well-known figure in Europe, to the point of receiving missives from the Pope.

To the south of the Kingdom of the Congo, around the river Cuanza, there were various important states, of which the Kingdom of Ndongo, ruled by the Ngola (King), was the most significant. At the time of the arrival of the Portuguese, Ngola Kiluange was in Power, and by maintaining a policy of alliance with neighbouring states, managed to hold out against the foreigners for several decades. Eventually he was beheaded in Luanda. Years later, the Ndongo rose to prominence again when Jinga Mbandi, Known as Queen Jinga, took power.

A wily politician, she kept the Portuguese in check with carefully prepared agreements. After undertaking various journeys she succeeded in 1635 in forming a grand coalition with the states of Matamba and Ndongo, Congo, Kassanje Dembos and Kissamas. At the head of this formidable alliance, she forced the Portuguese to retreat.

Meanwhile, Portugal had been occupied by Spain, and their overseas territories had taken second place to their internal affairs. The Dutch took advantage of this situation and occupied Luanda in 1641. Jinga entered into an alliance with the Dutch, thereby strengthening her coalition and confining the Portuguese to Massangano, which they fortified strongly, sallying forth on occasion to capture slaves in Kuata Kuata wars. Slaves from Angola were essential to the development of the colony of Brazil, but the traffic had been interrupted by these events. In 1648 a large force from Brazil under the command of Salvador Correia de Sa re-took Luanda, leading to the return of the Portuguese in large numbers.

Jinga's coalition began to fall apart; the absence of the Dutch allies with their firearms, and the strong position of Carreia de Sa, delivered a deadly blow to morale of the indigenous forces to an attempt to capture the island of Luanda, occupied by Correia de Sa, but they were defeated and lost their independence. The Kingdom of Ndongo likewise submitted to the Portuguese Crown in 1671.

Early Colonial Period:

When Portuguese mariner Diego Cao landed at the mouth of the Congo River in 1483, two distinct African Kingdoms ruled the region. The Kingdom of the Bakongo reigned in the north. The Quimbundos Kingdom, also known as Ndongo, dominated in the western and central areas. The land of the Quimbundos was called "Ngola". The land, taking its name from the King, became Angola.

Portugal's initial interest was limited to establishing a coastal base to provide provisions for its ships sailing around Africa to the Far East. At first, the

Portuguese had friendly relations with the Bakongo rulers. Catholic missionaries began arriving and the Bakongo King soon converted to Christianity.

At the same time, however, the Portuguese began buying slaves from African chiefs to work on sugar plantations in Sao Tome Prince and Brazil. As the transatlantic slave trade grew, so did tension between the Portuguese and both the Bakongo and Ndongo Kingdoms. In 1526, the Bakongo King wrote to the Portuguese King to tell him the slave trade must end. The Portuguese refused. For the following 140 years African resisted Portuguese rule.

It was not until after the Portuguese defeated the Dutch, their main rivals, in 1648 that Lisbon began seriously consolidating its colonies. The Portuguese finally conquered the Bakongo in the Battle of Ambuila in 1665. Portugal, however, did not manage to extend complete administrative control throughout Angola until the beginning of the 20th Century.

Resistance Movement:

Portugal ruthlessly suppressed African Nationalism throughout the first half of the 20th Century. In 1951 Portugal decided to treat Angola as an overseas province. This gave rise to a new surge of nationalistic fervour. In the next years three main opposition groups emerged.



In 1956 Africans and mixed-race mestiços founded the People Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). Its leadership fled to neighbouring countries after a Portuguese crackdown on the movement in 1961. The MPLA mounted guerrilla incursion from the Congo into the enclave of Cabinda and from Zambia into eastern of Angola.

The MPLA guerrilla forces had little impact beyond these peripheral areas. Moreover, the MPLA was cut off from its main supporters, the Mbundu people of Luanda and the northwestern provinces. Although it was not overtly Marxist before independence, the MPLA received military and diplomatic support from the Soviet Union. Agostinho Neto, the son of an Mbundu Methodist pastor, was president of the MPLA from 1962 to 1979.

A group of Bakongo nationalists formed the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA) in 1962 after a failed uprising in the northwestern corner of the country. The FNLA, under the leadership of Holden Roberto, operated from bases in Zaire. Holden Roberto was related by marriage to Zaire's Mobuto Sese Seko. The FNLA was the only Angolan Organization given sanctuary in Zaire. Both the United States and China gave some help to the FNLA but, crippled by

internal strife, the FNLA was never able to get any popular support outside of the Bakongo community.

A split within the FNLA led to the formation of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) in 1966. Jonas Malheiro Savimbi, a graduate of the University of Lausanne and member of the country's huge Ovimbundo tribe, was the FNLA's foreign minister until 1964. Savimbi, who had almost no external support, focused his energy on building a political base among the Ovimbundo, Angola's largest ethnic group. Neither the MPLA nor the FNLA had any support from the Ovimbundo.

The end of Colonial Rule:

In 1974, a group of young Portuguese colonels overthrow the Lisbon government. The coup precipitated the collapse of Portuguese empire as the new government hastily granted independence to its colonies. Following negotiations in Portugal, Angola's three main opposition parties agreed to establish a transitional government in January 1975. Within two months, however, the FNLA, MPLA and UNITA were fighting each other and the country was well on its way to being divided into zones controlled by rival political groups.

By the end of the year more than 90 percent of the white settlers had left Angola, draining the country of most of its skilled and semi-skilled work force. Many of the 300,000 departing Portuguese deliberately destroyed some of the country's infrastructure rather than turn factories, plantations and transportation over to the Angolans.

The superpowers were quickly drawn into the conflict, which became a flash point for the Cold War. The United States supported the FNLA and UNITA. The Soviet Union supported the MPLA. At the same time South Africa saw Angola as the front-line between itself and militant Black Nationalism.

Angola bordered Namibia, which at the time was a South African Colony. South Africa supported UNITA in the south. In October 1975, South Africa backed an FNLA and UNITA offensive against the MPLA. South Africa troops pushed north. The MPLA called for and received military assistance from Cuba. On the eve of independence thousands of Cuban combat troops began to arrive in Angola.

Despite the hostilities granted Angola its independence on November 11, 1975. It transferred sovereignty neither to the transitional authority nor to one of the independence movements, but rather to the "Angolan People."

The MPLA takes over:

The MPLA, which controlled Luanda, immediately proclaimed the People's Republic of Angola. Agostinho Neto became the first president. The MPLA embraced communism and changed its name to the MPLA-Worker's Party

(MPLA-PT). Portuguese businesses were nationalized. Neto wanted to create a homogeneous, disciplined party along the lines of the Soviet model. He reduced the size of the party and organized its entire member in cells, which reported to a pyramid of party committees.

When Neto died in 1979, the MPLA Central Committee chose Jose Eduardo dos Santos as president of the party and head of state. Born in Luanda in 1942, dos Santos had escaped to Zaire in 1961 in the wake of the Portuguese crackdown on the MPLA. He eventually made his way to the Soviet Union where he graduated as a petroleum engineer from the Oil and Gas Institute of Baku in Azerbaijan in 1969. Dos Santos became Angola's first Foreign Minister after independence and in 1978 he was named Minister of Planning.

The war with UNITA:

South Africa withdrew its troops from Angola in March 1976 when it became clear that the United States was not going to militarily oppose the Cuba presence in Angola. This allowed the MPLA to extend its control throughout Angola. Nevertheless, it faced resistance from the defeated movements that reverted to guerrilla warfare. Only UNITA, proved able to build support and attract foreign assistance.

With South Africa support, Jonas Savimbi established a base at Jamba in the southeast corner of the country. In addition to supplying arms, fuel and food to UNITA, South African air and group forces also intervened on behalf of the guerrilla forces during major battles. South Africa backed UNITA in order to weaken the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO), which was fighting for the independence of Namibia from bases in southern Angola.

By the mid-1980s UNITA was operating in most provinces. In 1986, the United States, which was the only Western country not to recognize the MPLA at the time of Angola's independence, began providing military assistance to UNITA as part of a global strategy to support anti-communist guerrilla movements.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the End of Apartheid:

Political changes in both the Soviet Union and South Africa dramatically altered the situation in Angola as the 1980s drew to a close. The Soviet Union became increasingly reluctant to fund the MPLA's war effort. At the same time the collapse of communist governments in Eastern Europe undermined the MPLA's Marxist ideology.

Meanwhile, winds of change were also blowing across South Africa. The white government began losing interest in the battles in Angola and Namibia. South Africa withdrew its troops from southern Angola in 1988 and signed an agreement with Angola and Cuba, which mandated the withdrawal of Cuban

troops from Angola. The agreement paved the way for Namibia's independence in 1990.

MPLA and UNITA begin negotiations:

The MPLA recognized that it needed to revise its political thinking and also come to terms with UNITA. In 1990, the Central Committee renounced Marxism Leninism in favour of democratic socialism and a mixed economy. This paved the way for negotiations with UNITA.

The military stalemate, couple with nudging by their foreign allies, pushed the MPLA and UNITA towards peace talks. A year of negotiations held under the auspices of the Portuguese Government, with the United States and the former USSR as observers, ended in the signing of the Bicesse Accords in May 1991. The settlement promised a cease-fire, the integration of government and UNITA troops into one army, the end of outside military assistance to the two parties, the restoration of government administration in rebel-controlled areas, the release of political prisoners and POWs and free and fair multi-party elections.

The MPLA underscored its commitment to reform by passing legislation introducing a multi-party system. It promulgated laws guaranteeing freedom of expression, assembly, demonstration and association. The assembly passed legislation providing for freedom of the press and the right to strike. Under the press law, private newspapers and magazines were published for the first time since independence. New legislation also stated that the economy would be "based on the coexistence of diverse forms of property". By law, the state would protect foreign investment and foreign property.

Numerous small parties emerged in the wake of the reforms. For the first time, Angolans established non-government organizations and independent professional associations. Government Radio and TV coverage became more even-handed. The MPLA also opened up its membership and expanded the Central Committee.

The Peace Process:

A Joint Political-Military Commission (CCPM), which included representatives of the government and UNITA, as well as Portugal, the United States and the former Soviet Union, supervised the peace process. A United Nations Observer mission was to monitor the process. The UN Angola Verification Mission II (UNAVEM II) followed on the heels of an earlier UN group that had verified the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola. UNAVEM II included several hundred military, police and civilian observers.

Political distrust, logistical difficulties, and merger international support for the process led to an uneven implementation of the peace accords across the

country. UNITA refused to allow the Government to restore its administration in many areas. The UNITA forces failed to hand over much of their heavy weaponry and the MPLA suspected that UNITA kept secret forces in reserve, outside the confinement areas. Tens of thousands of troops remained in politically aligned camps on eve of the elections.

The September 1992 Elections:

Despite the formidable problems, Angola's first multi-party and parliamentary elections were held on September 29-30, 1992. About 91% of the country's 4.82 million registered voters cast their ballots to elect representatives to a four-year term in parliament and a new president who would hold office for five years. Eleven candidates stood for president while 17 parties and one coalition group vied for 220 seats in the national assembly.

When the ballots were counted, President dos Santos had won 49.57% of the votes, just short of the 50% needed to avoid a run-off election. Savimbi had 40.07 percent of the votes. The MPLA won the parliamentary elections with 53.74 % of the vote while UNITA received 34.10%. The election gave the MPLA an absolute majority of 129 seats in the national Assembly. UNITA won 70 seats. Ten other parties shared the remaining 21 seats. UNITA's support came from the Ovimbundu heartland in central Angola.

UNITA Rejects the Elections and Returns to War:

The United Nations declared the elections generally free and fair on October 17, 1992. UNITA, however, claimed there had been widespread fraud and accused the government of "stealing" the elections. Savimbi pulled his generals out of what was supposed to be the country's new unified armed forces. He mobilized his troops and began a military offensive throughout the country.

Although government forces successfully expelled UNITA from Luanda and the provincial capitals in the next few months, Savimbi's troops took control over large sections of the countryside. By mid-1993 the war was exacting a terrible toll. The United Nations estimated that 1,000 people were dying each day, many from starvation and sickness.

UNITA has about 40,000 soldiers. This army is equipped with heavy artillery and missile systems, as well as armoured vehicles. The United States halted all military assistance to UNITA in 1991 and South Africa says it no longer provides any support to the rebels. Therefore, UNITA is largely relying on weapons stockpiled before the 1991 peace agreement. It is also buying some arms on the open market with money it gets from diamond mining in areas under its control.

The United Nations Security Council repeatedly condemned all military offences and demanded that UNITA abide by the results of the election. In September

1993, the UN Security Council imposed an arms and petroleum embargo against UNITA.

The United States Recognizes the Government of Angola:

Savimbi has lost most of his international support since the 1992 election. Many countries, including the United States, Russia and the frontline states -- South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Lesotho and Mozambique -- blamed him for not abiding by the election results and restarting the war.

Government Forces Gain Ground:

The balance of military power shifted towards the government in 1993 and 1994. The government purchased tanks, armed personnel carriers and other heavy weaponry to enable the Armed Forces of Angola (FAA) to attack UNITA installations. Some analysts estimate the war effort will have cost the government the next three to seven years of earnings from its oil industry.



Peace Talks Resume:

Several United Nations attempts to resume negotiations between the Angolan government and UNITA failed. Finally, at the end of October 1993, new peace talks began in Lusaka, Zambia. Within a month the Angola government and UNITA had agreed to accept the general framework of the 1991 Peace Accords. The agreement included the re-establishment of the 1991-1992 cease-fire; the withdrawal, quartering and demilitarization of UNITA forces; the disarming of civilians; and the resumption and completion of the integration of military forces into one national army.

Talks stalled in early 1994 as the two sides wrangled over the integration of UNITA ministers in the national government; political decentralization; and other measures sought by UNITA to ensure it had an important role in the new political system.

Ultimately, the Government of Angola and UNITA signed the Lusaka Protocol on November 20, 1994. The Protocol provided for the participation of UNITA in the government as well as for the possibility of a second round of presidential elections. A new cease-fire went into effect and the United Nations announced it would send a larger mission to help implement the accords.

UNAVEM III:

The UN Security Council adopted resolution 976, establishing UNAVEM III on

February 8, 1995. The resolution calls for the maximum deployment of 7000 military personnel, 350 military observers, and 260 police observers in addition to international and local civilian staff. Its mandate depends on the implementation of the Peace Accords, the Lusaka Protocol and relevant Security Council resolutions by the Government of Angola and UNITA.

The new mission is to verify and monitor the cease-fire, the disengagement of forces, and the completion of the formation of the national army as well as the neutrality of the national police force, the disarming of civilians, and the extension of the state administration. UNAVEM III will also coordinate humanitarian efforts related to the peace process and support and verify the entire electoral process. (See Security Council Resolution 976).

The UN Secretary General's Special Representative to Angola, Alioune Blondin Beye, heads UNAVEM III.

As of September 26 nearly 5,000 UN military and police observers had been deployed to 55 sites outside Luanda. In addition, nearly 2,000 military personnel had been deployed. While quartering and demobilization of former combatants has been proceeding at a slower pace than anticipated, the peace process has made steady progress since resolution 976 was adopted.

To demonstrate to the international community and to the Angolan nation their commitment to peace and to accelerate implementation of the peace process, President dos Santos and Jonas Savimbi met three times since the signing of the Lusaka Protocol; for the first time on May 6 in Lusaka, again on August 10 in Franceville, Gabon, and in Brussels on September 25 where they jointly met with donors at a UNDP-sponsored conference.

In each meeting, the President and Mr. Savimbi met privately to discuss political and military developments. In his July 17 report to the Security Council, the UN Secretary General noted that the "general atmosphere of mistrust between the Government and UNITA is diminishing, particularly since the meeting in Lusaka" of President dos Santos and Mr. Savimbi. In addition, as part of the integration of UNITA into the national government, as called for under the Lusaka agreement, the Angolan government has offered one of two vice presidency positions to Mr. Savimbi and UNITA. On August 13, following his meeting with President dos Santos, Mr. Savimbi declared "the war...is over."

Both the Government of Angola and UNITA have good reasons to end the devastating civil war. The government has recaptured almost all the cities and other key areas lost to UNITA in the 1992-1993 period. The Luanda leadership seeks to avoid an endless, un-winnable guerrilla war. UNITA cannot win on the battlefield and probably will not be able to negotiate a better settlement than the Lusaka Protocol.

The 7,000-strong UN force is about the same size as the peacekeeping force

sent to Mozambique. In contrast, UNAVEM II had only 500 military and police observers. Moreover, UNAVEM III, unlike UNAVEM II, will have a mandate to control, rather than simply monitor, key aspects of the peace accords, such as the disarming, quartering and demobilization of UNITA troops.

Finally, the second round of presidential elections would not take place unless the United Nations is convinced the Government of Angola and UNITA has implemented the Lusaka Protocol.