

Background Guide
Princeton Interactive Crisis Simulation 2005

REPUBLIC OF ANGOLA



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REPUBLIC OF ANGOLA

Dear Delegates,

Hi, and welcome to PICSIM! My name is Syon Bhanot, and I will be you're thrillingly adept chair in our PICSIM recreation of the Angolan Council of Ministers. A little about myself: I am a junior (class of '06) here at Princeton, and I am Majoring in Public Policy and International Affairs in the Woodrow Wilson School Undergraduate Program. I am specifically focusing on investigating and formulating American Foreign Policy in the Middle East. I am currently vice-president of the Princeton International Relations Council, the group that runs this conference and attends numerous others representing Princeton University. When I'm not worrying about the world, I like to play guitar, watch baseball and football, read, eat, sleep, and pursue the opposite sex. Well, that's far more than enough about me: suffice to say, I look forward to meeting you all, and I'm sure we'll get along swimmingly.

As for our committee, I would like to say that I for one am thrilled about the committee. Angola is a complex and interesting nation, which is rife with internal turmoil and humanitarian crises. We as a group will have our hands full addressing the plethora of issues that face this nation, as well as with addressing Angola's issues with neighboring nations and NGO's. I encourage you all to come to the conference fully versed in the history and political situation in Angola. Our committee will run more smoothly if everyone is on the same page: this background guide (which is only a starting point, mind you) should help you get a better understanding of Angola and the situation there. Please read it. If anyone in our committee does not know what "UNITA" is by the time they arrive, I will probably storm out of committee and watch 'Da Ali G Show' in protest. Don't make me do that.

Guys, it's going to be great. I intend on running a loosely organized Cabinet-style committee: just so you know, I will be playing the role of the Angolan president, and you will all be my ministers. Together, we will work to promote Angolan interests and better the position of our nation, both internally and on the world stage. If you have any questions at all, please email me at sbhanot@princeton.edu – in fact, email me to say hello even if you don't have questions! I love emails from strangers! Once again, I look forward to meeting you all personally, and I can't wait for our terrific weekend together in February. See you soon!

Sincerely,
Syon Bhanot

ANGOLA



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I. A Brief History

Angola is a nation with a tumultuous history. The first inhabitants of modern day Angola are thought to have been hunter-gatherers (called “Bushmen” by Europeans) who were partially displaced in the 13th Century by West Africans. These Bantu-speaking Africans set up a number of powerful kingdoms in the area through the 17th Century. The critical time in Angolan history came, however, in the late 15th Century, when Portuguese explorers made their first contact with Angola. By 1575, the Portuguese had colonized Angola. Portuguese rule in Angola was very bad for the people of Angola for a number of reasons. First of all, the Portuguese used the people of Angola as a slave pool for their far more lucrative colony in Brazil. This continued until slavery was outlawed in the mid-1800’s, but even then, working conditions for the people of Angola continued to be atrocious. Furthermore, Portugal was itself a relatively underdeveloped colonial power, and as a result, it was unable to provide satisfactory levels of economic and industrial stability to Angola. As a result, Angola was less prepared to be a fully capable nation when it finally did gain its independence. Nevertheless, Portuguese colonial rule over Angola remained until the middle of the 20th Century.

Once other nations in Africa began to gain independence in the 1950's and 1960's, Angolans began to resent the oppression of Portuguese colonialism. Three rebel groups rose up in opposition to the occupiers: the Marxist Popular Liberation Movement of Angola (MPLA), the CIA-backed Front National for Liberation of Angola (FNLA) and the Capitalist National Union for the Independence of Angola (UNITA). These groups, despite different political backgrounds, worked together to fight for Angolan independence from 1961 to 1974. In 1975, Angola was granted independence from the Portuguese, and the MPLA gained control of the government. In October 1976, the MPLA leader, Agostinho Neto declared Angola a republic and himself the president. Neto was succeeded in 1979 by the man who remains president of Angola to this day, Jose Eduardo dos Santos. What followed was decades of political instability and internal conflict in Angola as the different political factions fought for power.

The two primary groups involved in the struggle for power over the past 3 decades are the MPLA and UNITA. In a way, the clashes in Angola represented a microcosm of the Cold War; the MPLA was supported by the Russians and the Cubans, who provided troops and financial assistance to the group. Meanwhile, UNITA, under the leadership of Jonas Savimbi, sought and received international support from South Africa and the United States. South Africa, worried about the spread of communism, provided UNITA with troops, weapons and money in the 70's and 80's. Meanwhile, US Presidents Bush and Reagan, seeing UNITA as a champion of democracy against the evils of communism, sent UNITA 250 million dollars from 1986-1991.

In 1992, Angola held its first multi-party election: the MPLA appeared to win, but UNITA would not concede. UNITA took up a forceful resistance to the Angolan government, and by the end of 1993, they controlled 70% of the country. The MPLA fought back with strong force, and in November 1994, UNITA leaders signed an agreement with the MPLA whereby they laid down their arms and took governmental positions. Things appeared to improve, as a national unity government was installed in 1997. However, the political ambitions of minority groups in Angola continued to manifest themselves in the form of active resistance.

By 1998, Savimbi had rearmed the rebels, and returned to a state of war with the government of Angola. Fighting continued until 2002, when Savimbi was shot dead; a ceasefire was negotiated, and UNITA gave up its armed fight, accepting a role as a major opposition party. The political situation appears to be normalizing into the modern day, but there is still concern that the Angolan president, Jose Eduardo dos Santos, does not allow truly democratic processes.

II. Problems/Issues in Angola

- 1) **Internal civil war and insurgencies:** Civil War has been the way of life in Angola since it gained independence. Not only has the quarreling between the ruling MPLA and the insurgent UNITA groups caused political instability, but it has led to the death of over a million Angolans in the past quarter century. This

internal strife has led to a number of other problems in Angola, and though things appear to be improving following the death of UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi in 2002, there is no question that the danger of continued internal conflict could arise at any moment and disrupt Angola's shaky tranquility.

- 2) **The Economy:** The Angolan economy has been hit hard by the internal strife in Angola over the past 30 years. Currently, subsistence agriculture is the primary occupation for over 80 percent of the Angolan population, and 70 percent of the population remains below the international poverty line. Oil remains a critical source of revenue, with almost half of the nation's GDP coming from oil exports. Meanwhile, Angola must import the bulk of its food and material goods from elsewhere (primarily Portugal, South Africa and the United States). To complicate the economic situation further, Angola suffers from widespread corruption, which has made it difficult for the nation to take advantage of its wealth of natural resources, which include gold, diamonds, fish, oil and lumber. Meanwhile, rampant inflation must be quelled: progress has been made on this front, as inflation has fallen drastically over the last few years, but it remains disturbingly high (106% in 2002). Essentially, Angola's economy is recovering from decades of internal turmoil, and should internal forces in Angola destabilize yet again, the economy is likely to suffer major setbacks.
- 3) **Land mines:** One of the most disastrous remnants of the civil wars in Angola is the continued presence of land mines throughout Angola; the majority of these land mines were placed by UNITA rebels during their insurgency against the government. Angola has an estimated 10-15 million land mines, and an amputee population of over 70,000 (1 out of every 400 people). Unfortunately, land mines represent the greatest danger to children, who are often too young to read warning signs posted near unsafe areas. Furthermore, land mines are far more likely to kill children than adults. Clearly, this issue continues to affect the nation, and will for the foreseeable future, as land mines are very costly to remove or disarm.
- 4) **Refugees:** Angola shelters refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo, while a number of Angolan refugees reside in neighboring states. Furthermore, there is a significant possibility that events in neighboring nations could make the refugee issue even greater.
- 5) **Health issues and poverty:** As mentioned above, approximately 70 percent of Angolans live below the international poverty line. But Angola is stricken with a number of other health concerns. Infant mortality hovers around 20% of live births, and life expectancy is approximately 37 years. Furthermore, around 4% of adults are infected with HIV/AIDS. Infectious diseases also run rampant in Angola, with typhoid fever, malaria and trypanosomiasis the most prevalent.
- 6) **Oil:** With the United States looking to reduce its dependency on Middle Eastern oil, the nation has shown interest in Angola's huge offshore reserves. This will

likely manifest itself in the form of an increased role taken by the United States and other Western powers in Angolan economic affairs.

- 7) **Marxism v. Westernization:** The oil issue is a piece of a larger ideological struggle within Angola: the one between Marxism and Westernization. The increasing role of the United States and other Western powers in Angolan economic issues is likely to further this longstanding identity crisis within Angola, which began when the Angolans gained independence in 1975. Following independence, UNITA fought for capitalistic liberalism while the MPLA fought for Marxism, and this fight continued throughout the civil war. The insertion of Cuban forces in the 1980's to aid the MPLA government of Angola serves as another example of this clash as it was played out on the ground in Angola. Essentially, Angola is attempting to move forward with Marxist ideologies, as evidenced by the political dominance of the MPLA, but Angola is still heavily reliant on the West (approximately half of Angola's exports go to the United States). This conflict is sure to play a major role in Angolan politics in the foreseeable future.
- 8) **Corruption:** Angola is currently ranked as the 4th most corrupt nation on earth by Transparency International, and the Committee to Protect Journalists calls President dos Santos "one of the world's ten worst enemies of the press." Angola has a long history of political and economic corruption, and this issue will most certainly hurt it in the long run. The government of Angola is undoubtedly very crooked; it is rife with mismanagement and cronyism, and this makes Angola's government extremely unstable, inconsistent and ineffective.
- 9) **Cabinda:** This northern province of Angola is suffering from an ongoing struggle for independence from the rest of Angola. Cabinda is detached geographically from the rest of Angola: it is separated from the rest of the country by the Democratic Republic of Congo. The liberation movement, called the Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda (FLEC), has been sporadically active since Angolan independence in 1975. However, despite the efforts of the citizens living in Cabinda to split off from the rest of Angola, they have been unable to do so to this point. MPLA forces, with Cuban help, have been effective in keeping the province from seceding. However, the FLEC rebels remain a force in the province of Cabinda to this day.

III. The Current Government

Angola's current government is a republic, with a strong presidential system. It is, ideally, a multiparty democracy, though many have stated that the current regime, led by Jose Eduardo dos Santos is corrupt and undemocratic. The nation's capital is Luanda, which is located on the West Coast, bordering the Atlantic Ocean.

The current government's makeup has the MPLA firmly in charge, with 129 of the 220 seats in the unicameral National Assembly. UNITA occupies 70 seats, with minority

groups occupying the remaining seats. The last presidential election was held in 1992, with Dos Santos earning 49 percent of the vote to 40 percent for UNITA founder and leader, Jonas Savimbi. A run-off was necessary, but Savimbi repudiated the results and continued fighting the government, giving Dos Santos a victory. Clearly, the nation of Angola is not unified behind its leader, and internal strife remains.

IV. A Summary and a Look to the Future

The future of Angola is unclear. On the one hand, following Savimbi's death, the political situation has improved in that internal dissent has calmed in favor of cooperation. However, the nation remains torn by a number of rifts which threaten to produce instability in the near future. For one thing, the nation is woefully impoverished, with health statistics and economic situations that are startling, even for a third world nation. There are two main reasons for this situation: the first is the terrible corruption in the nation. Angola has copious amounts of natural resources, but corruption by government officials keeps the income gained through these channels from ever reaching the poor and needy. The second reason, arguably the best reason to explain Angola's problems, is the long civil war in the nation, which has sapped its resources and made economic and social development very challenging.

Angola is at a crucial crossroads now. It must either reform its governmental institutions to allow for greater openness and an elimination of corruption, or it will regress into more civil unrest and instability. The nation is frail and the slightest political happening could easily lead to immediate instability and internal conflict. Angola is a nation with the resources to stabilize and strengthen itself internally; however, it will take a major effort by the government and the people to reform the already existing institutions. If this is not done soon, the future for Angola looks bleak indeed.