

The arms dilemma: resources for arms or arms for resources?

Hannelie de Beer and Virginia Gamba

The military coup in Portugal in April 1974 not only shook the foundations of NATO but also altered the strategic balance of power in Southern Africa. The Angolan race for power that started in 1975 also served to reassert the influence and status of the Soviet Union in the East-West balance of power. It is debatable whether the actual events unfolding in the 1974–1976 history of Angola would have occurred as they did if these had not coincided with a particularly strategic moment in the East-West ideological confrontation. The Soviet-Cuban intervention in Angola, the direct South African and indirect American/Chinese presence in Angola amongst others, are better explained as a chapter in Cold War history than as a struggle of peoples for independence and power. Likewise, the dozen years that followed the intervention are better seen in the context of local rivalries, in terms of regional influence, and in the light of the superpower stalemate which characterised the era. Although superpower and regional politics go a long way in explaining the continuation of war in Angola without exhausting its warring parties, it cannot explain the reasons why the Angolan scenario continues with such equal force as this chapter is being written.

The end of the Cold War was marked by disillusion with global ideological confrontation and the exhaustion of proxy struggles, as well as a new sense of global insecurity. The ensuing shifts in direction and emphasis ushered in new actors and new strategies with the continuation of global competition. Used to capitalising on the different opportunities in their battle to survive, the Angolan warring parties were superbly adapted to benefit from the post Cold War environment using it as a multiplier force for war rather than as an excuse for peace.

This chapter attempts to show that the will and urgency for war, although not entirely dependent on material resources, is invariably affected by them. It also attempts to demonstrate that the renewable tools for the Angolan war are nothing more nor less than the practical adaptation of existing means to pursue the object of war, and that the object of war itself has become indistinguishable with the means needed to keep the war going.

11th November 1975

During July 1974 the new Portuguese government announced that Angola, Guinea Bissau and Mozambique would shortly be granted independence, a move that inevitably led to a power struggle within Angola and further afield. By August, two of the major armed nationalist movements of Angola had installed themselves in the capital, Luanda, which became a centre for increasingly violent competition. On 15 January 1975, the Portuguese government, *Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola* (MPLA), *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola* (UNITA) and the *Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola* (FNLA) signed the Alvor Agreement to establish a transitional government and an independence process. On paper, the three nationalist organisations would be the only legal representatives of the Angolan people, would work together in peace and create a combined defence force consisting of 8 000 combatants from each of the three and 24 000 Portuguese troops. Not surprisingly, given the circumstances, peace never materialised and the three movements remained as uncooperative as ever. There was something though, that all three agreed upon, that 11 November 1975 would be the definite date for the independence of Angola. The scramble for power was on. And since the scramble for power clearly showed that possession of the capital city on that date would provide a strategic advantage, the fight for Luanda intensified. War broke out between the MPLA, FNLA and UNITA as the groups fought for dominance in preparation for the Portuguese departure.

But this was a war that was not only fought by Angolans. In varying degrees of intensity, the Soviet and Western blocks, regional powers such as South Africa, and interested parties such as Cuba, used the Angolan race for independence as pieces of a chess-game. Despite strong competition, the Soviet Union managed to reassert its power. Its decision to act drastically in Angola was motivated by a feeling of perceived loss of influence in the Third World. The need to reassert Soviet reliability for the benefit of Third World governments and liberation movements underscored the USSR's need to restore credibility in balance-of-power considerations. The opportunity was exploited to full advantage when the United States coincidentally entered the quagmire in 1975.

The Soviet Union had few ties remaining in Africa. The USSR had experienced major setbacks in Ghana, Mali, Zaïre and the Sudan; and Soviet relations with Egypt had deteriorated. Furthermore, both the Chinese gains in Zambia and Tanzania and the popularity of the People's Republic of China among Southern African liberation movements challenged the Soviet position in the area.¹ By 1975, Chinese-American collusion was also apparent in their joint covert support for the FNLA.²

Events in Portugal posed a problem. The fall of the radical government in that country was perceived as a Soviet acceptance of the defeat of a client state by some. If Angola followed the same path, the ability of the USSR to support a client could be called into question. This was a sensitive issue in Africa, as evidenced

by Soviet failures in the Congo and Ghana in the 1960s. In contrast, effective support for the weak MPLA could boost the Soviet image as a leader of world revolutionary movements. A defeat for the MPLA could lead future liberation movements to seek the support of the People's Republic of China and thus diminish Soviet ability to influence events in Southern Africa.

On the Soviet domestic front, a weak stand on Angola by Brezhnev would provide ammunition to elements opposed to *détente* within a leadership already inflamed by Soviet setbacks in Egypt, Portugal and Chile. A decision on Angola might affect the outcome of the 25th Party Congress, due in October 1975, for this was the first party congress to take place since the intensification of *détente* in 1972.

The Soviet-Cuban intervention was not part of a deliberate test of a grand Soviet design in Africa. It proved to be the product of several external factors. The stakes were high, but by the skilful exploitation of opportunities on the unstable African political scene, and by a continuous assessment of the perceived risks in the intervention, the Soviets scored a major victory. The intervention in Angola bestowed upon the USSR a new image, namely that of a dependable ally and supporter of black states in Southern Africa.³

Above all, the magnitude of the Soviet commitment in Angola demonstrated the global capabilities and willingness of a superpower to intervene. It confirmed United States analysts' belief that the Soviet Union had made major strides towards the acquisition of effective long-range sea and airlift capabilities; and it demonstrated the effectiveness of Soviet decision-making, especially their correct assessment of the United States response. Here, according to Valenta, it is worth noting that during the major Soviet-Cuban escalation in the intervention of December 1975, there was a brief halt of two weeks (December 9 to 25).⁴ It is likely that the leadership was re-evaluating its policies in light of the United States public warnings that Soviet actions in Angola threatened United States-Soviet relations. Nevertheless, when the United States senate voted on December 19 to cut off covert aid to the FNLA and UNITA (because of fears of a new Vietnam) the Soviets and Cubans resumed their operations in Angola.

The role of Cuba in Angola is debatable. There has been much discussion of the 'independence' of Cuban activities in Angola since 1975. There are arguments that Castro was following his own power projection in Angola, whereas others deny any Cuban role independent of the USSR. The Cuban presence in Angola became massive with time but the ability of Cuba to retain or exploit that presence without the full support of the Soviet Union has never been doubted. The confirmation that Cuba could not operate to that level in isolation of the Soviet Union eventually came with the end of the Cold War. As the Soviet Union lost ground and interest in Africa, the Cuban presence in the continent all but disappeared.

From the Western point of view, Angola was directly involved in most sensitive issues in Southern Africa; both Zaïre and Zambia depended on the Benguela railway as the main outlet for the copper belt. In 1975, President Kaunda of

Zambia was South Africa's main hope for a policy of *détente* with black Africa. General Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaïre was the 'main ally' of the United States in Africa and the main African supporter of the 'pro-western' FNLA forces. Aside from these, the reasons for South African involvement varied from fear of an MPLA victory that would bring about a Marxist government to the real need South Africa had to improve its counterinsurgency operations *vis-à-vis* the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO). The SWAPO factor led to the South African Defence Force (SADF) launching Operation Savannah on 27 March 1975, which lasted until 17 March 1976. Last but not least was the strategic importance of the Angolan coastline in relation to the North Atlantic security equation and the control of the seas in the wake of the oil crisis and Middle East war of the early seventies.

The United States failed to recognise the vulnerability of the Portuguese regime at home and its relationship with the African colonies during the early 1970s was based on a belief that it was necessary to maintain good relations with the Portuguese dictatorship.⁵ The strategic importance of a base in the Azores, both during the Berlin crisis and the Yom Kippur war, reinforced this view. Problems regarding the United States stand on the Portuguese regime were highlighted by Portugal's membership of NATO. Once the dictatorship was ousted, the United States was hindered from taking a firmer attitude toward both Portugal and Angola by the United States perspective of *détente*. Thus, Henry Kissinger, because he needed to demonstrate that *détente* worked, especially at the time of the Helsinki Accords, thought it easier to deal with the Portuguese Communist party through Moscow.

The fall of the Portuguese radicals in the summer of 1975 did not increase the involvement of the United States in Angola since it coincided with the Vietnam debacle of April 1975. In the wake of Vietnam and, later, Watergate, United States policymakers operated under considerable constraints, and their only reaction to the escalation of Soviet-Cuban aid in Angola was to provide covert assistance to the FNLA from Zaïre. American attitudes encouraged the Soviet leadership to believe that the United States was unlikely to make a major issue of the Angolan situation.

After the South Africans invaded Angola in October, the political risk of the Soviet Union offending the rest of Africa decreased. The Soviets also capitalised on the South African intervention by identifying United States support for the FNLA-UNITA forces with South Africa. On 11th November 1975, the Soviet Union recognised the MPLA as the sole Angolan government, defying the Organisation for African Unity's (OAU) recommendation that "No State should recognise any liberation movement in the event of the latter declaring unilateral independence."⁶

Under Soviet pressure, in January 1976, the OAU arranged for an Extraordinary Summit Conference to discuss the Angolan situation. In order to speed the defeat of the FNLA and UNITA forces and grant the MPLA a decisive victory before the conference, a further escalation of Soviet-Cuban involvement was necessary. This Soviet-Cuban intervention, and the Soviet diplomatic offensive in

Africa, gradually brought victory to the MPLA. With the defeat of the FNLA and the retreat of UNITA in January 1976, the OAU recognised the MPLA, on 11 February 1976, as the sole legitimate government of Angola.⁷

With the recognition came legitimacy and this provided the MPLA with a multiplier force. It set the stage for ongoing war where the magnitude and quality of arms would become indispensable for its grip on power. Similarly, competition for resources with which to procure arms that might prove decisive in war, became a priority for UNITA. The resource war of Angola had begun although it would only be identified as such when the trappings of the Cold War were laid to rest and greed, crime and power finally came into their own.

Arms to break a stalemate

The pursuit of arms to sustain conflict in Angola from 1976 to the end of the millennium can roughly be divided into three phases: the superpower stalemate (1977–1985); the decline of the bipolar structures culminating in the end of the Cold War (1986–90); and the post Cold War environment (1991–2000).

After 1976, the Soviet Union followed its success in Angola with even more dramatic global moves such as the invasion of Afghanistan in 1978. After the soul searching inevitably linked to two national disasters – the loss of Saigon and the Watergate scandal – the United States started to pull out of its quagmire of self-flagellation. Two events assisted the end of this exercise: the Iranian revolution and the failed attempt mounted by President Carter to extricate hostages from that intolerable situation. The American public's tolerance for constant humiliation was wearing thin. More preoccupying still, the strategic balance between the Soviet and American arsenals seemed to be in peril, as United States strategic dominance was challenged.

Between 1976 and 1980, the strategic doctrines of the two superpowers underwent dramatic shifts. For the United States this was the era of nuclear parity and conventional inferiority, war surviving capacity and the doctrine of limited strategic options. The emphasis was on proportionality. The end of *détente* meant the conventional rearming of Europe, the end of arms control talks and the general reinforcement of NATO. While this was going on, the tactical alliance with the People's Republic of China was consolidated so as to disperse the efforts of the common opponent, a tactic well known in the environment of strategic tripolarity.⁸ The Soviet Union and its satellites had now achieved nuclear parity and conventional superiority, and adopted a war-winning strategy, including the capability of firing first if necessary – long a monopoly of the Americans. They could therefore embark on important projections of power and influence, most notably in Angola and Afghanistan. Thus ended a decade of 'peaceful co-existence'. By 1979 with insurgencies on the rise in the soft underbelly of the United States, most notably in Nicaragua, the stage was set for the stakes to increase. If Ronald Reagan had not existed at that time, he would have had to be invented.

Inevitably, Angola was part of this gigantic stage. Following the Soviet advantage, the period from 1976 to 1979 saw an extensive re-organisation of the Angolan army, the *Exercito Popular de Angola* (EPA), into infantry brigades along conventional Soviet lines. But the rigid structure lacked an effective counter-insurgency capability. Soviet advisors were attached to each brigade.⁹ Since the Angolan air force, the *Força Aerea Popular de Angola*, FAPA, lacked qualified personnel, Cuban, Eastern European and other African pilots filled the gap while the Soviet Union ran the air logistics until late in the 1980s.¹⁰ Throughout these years, equipment and war materiel continued to arrive in Luanda. In fact, the influence accrued by the Soviet Union and its proxies in supporting what was the *weakest* of the Angolan liberation movements continued to serve a dual purpose. It generated credibility for Soviet support of insurgencies worldwide, and, at the same time, ensured a constant ideological and financial dependency by sustaining a weak government in power.

Perhaps the fact that the MPLA was weak and needed the physical and material support of strong allies to sustain its cause best explains the tenacity and continued activity of opponent forces of which UNITA became the largest by 1976. Preparing itself for a long haul, Savimbi regrouped UNITA in Bié province and established an insurgent network in the central highlands, soon extending it southward into Cuando Cubango. The army was reorganised into Fronts and Military Regions and followed the guerrilla strategy outlined in the 'Cuanza Manifesto' which included hit-and-run attacks on economically important infrastructure such as the Benguela Railroad that linked landlocked Zambia with the Atlantic.¹¹ Strategically, the UNITA leadership exploited the bipolar competition by ensuring continued support for its war effort while also tapping into African regional politics and priorities to sustain itself. Among these, South Africa proved to be the strongest regional actor, not surprisingly, since it had the most to lose.

The strategic retreat of the South African forces from Angola in 1976 did not last long. In subsequent years MPLA support to SWAPO and eventually to the African National Congress (ANC) would ensure that South Africa remained deeply engaged in Angola. In response to SWAPO operations, the SADF launched a series of ever-larger conventional cross-border operations, apart from ongoing smaller operational activity in the area. In parallel with the increased South African engagement, Cuban numbers increased from 4 000 in 1978, to 19 000 in 1979, to 21 000 in 1980 and 23 000 in 1981.¹²

With the military defeat of the FNLA literally hours before independence, the United States shifted its support to UNITA. Although the Carter administration's attitude towards the MPLA was very different from that of its predecessor, indirect support to UNITA continued. With the approval of the United States and France, Morocco started to provide military assistance and training for UNITA in October 1977. According to Wright the United States also obtained 600 tons of weapons via China for UNITA which was delivered in 1979. Despite this, UNITA experienced a constant shortage of trained light infantry units until the early 1980s. Its guerrilla units were also at a disadvantage when facing motorised

(*Forças Armadas Populares de Libertação de Angola*) FAPLA units supported by tanks, artillery and aircraft. In fact, by 1979 FAPLA and its Cuban allies had succeeded in containing UNITA forces and reopened the Benguela railway line. In 1979 Savimbi moved his headquarters from Huambo to Jamba in south-east Angola. UNITA clearly lacked the ability to capture FAPLA garrisons and engage in anything but insurgent tactics. As a result, South Africa started a secret programme to support UNITA by using units such as 32 Battalion to capture FAPLA garrisons in southern Angola and then hand them over to UNITA.¹³ UNITA would itself develop the capacity to attack and capture garrisons by 1983–84.¹⁴ By that stage UNITA was active in Cuando Cubango province in the south-east, Moxico province in the east, along virtually the entire Zambian border, and the Huíla province on the central plateau, in addition to its involvement in the diamond fields in Lunda Sul and Lunda Norte.¹⁵ South African operations in Angola were often conducted in collaboration with UNITA and military advisors were appointed to Savimbi. Although combat support operations between SADF and UNITA took place on several occasions and the SADF also trained maintenance and repair personnel, its most crucial role was that of logistic supply. The latter continued, together with training, until Namibian independence. The UNITA strategy and the South African needs ensured the maintenance of UNITA as a significant fighting force. It also drained the Cuban effort in Africa in a slow but sure manner. Fundamentally, it bought time for the United States to swing back into the picture with considerable vigour.

The victory of Ronald Reagan in the 1980 United States presidential elections set the scene for the repeal of the Clarke amendment, the resumption of limited United States assistance to UNITA and a policy of ‘constructive engagement’ that would link a Cuban withdrawal from Angola to Namibian independence. Savimbi had already paid an unofficial visit to Washington the previous year. Apart from offering direct assistance, the United States encouraged South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Zaïre and Israel to support UNITA.

Between 1980 and 1985, the Reagan administration feverishly tried to recoup the reverses that the United States had suffered in the recent past. To recover lost ground Presidential Directive 59 followed, eventually leading to a doctrine that emphasised defence and survival as registered in the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) commonly known as ‘star wars’. The United States also embarked upon the nuclear and conventional rearmament of Europe and the reassertion of a first nuclear strike capacity. But these moves needed time for implementation, particularly in regard to the deployment of nuclear arsenals. It is therefore not surprising that a number of stop-gap measures were simultaneously undertaken – measures that would support the belief that the ‘West’ was still fighting fit. Aside from the consolidation of the ‘China’ card and the resurrection of the Rapid Deployment Force, the most important of these measures was the public spousal of a ‘new’ counterinsurgency doctrine, that of Low Intensity Conflict (LIC).

Armed with LIC doctrine, the United States no longer shied away from publicly admitting its support for ‘freedom’ movements worldwide. It also generated the

belief that insurgency against communist governments had to be created where it did not exist. The emphasis on human rights protection during the Carter years was replaced by the Reagan administration's posture *vis-à-vis* right-wing military and authoritarian governments worldwide. More importantly, it also generated concrete support for the Contras in Nicaragua and the Mujahedin in Afghanistan, among others. This new environment was reinforced by more aggressive and assertive defence policies from United States allies and friends as seen in the Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon and the British defence of the Falklands.

Following the unveiling of LIC strategy, the Angolan war acquired new proportions and both the South Africans and UNITA obtained a respite although this did not mean that Soviet and Cuban support of the MPLA would be reduced; it was merely balanced out. This could mean only one thing, the Angolan arms race would continue.

In 1981 FAPLA replaced its old T-34 tanks with T-54/55s which were used operationally in 1983. Older armoured personnel carriers (APC) were replaced with BTR-60s and more artillery pieces such as 122mm D-30 howitzers and 122mm BM-21 multiple rocket launchers (MRL) were received. The D-30 gave the force an artillery capability of approximately 15km and the BM-21s an area bombardment and stand off capability of between 11 and 20 kms. MiG-21 aircraft were replaced with MiG-23 and Su-22 ground attack aircraft were introduced into the Angolan air space.¹⁶ The new tanks, armoured personnel carriers and multiple rocket launchers were ill suited to the terrain and the enemy. Thus, despite the improved firepower and conventional capacity, FAPLA found it difficult to conduct counter guerrilla tactics that UNITA, by necessity, had become so skilled in during the last four years.

In 1982, UNITA standardised its units and deployment across its operational areas. Each military region was provided with units consisting of dispersed guerrilla formations (15 to 50 troops each), 150-man guerrilla companies and 500-man strong semi-regular infantry battalions, reinforced with artillery (mortars, rocket launchers or small-calibre field guns) for attacking fixed FAPLA positions. UNITA now had armed forces numbering almost 30 000 and had developed its own special forces or commandos that provided it with the ability to infiltrate enemy positions and perform specialised small team operations. The following year UNITA numbers swelled to 35 000 combat ready troops and that amount almost doubled by 1987–88. It received anti-tank weapons from South Africa as well as captured 82mm B-10 recoilless guns mounted on Unimog trucks for its anti-tank units in the same year – essential for countering FAPLA's deployment of its new T-54/44 tanks. By mid-1983 UNITA had extended its sphere of influence to cover most of the area south of the Benguela railway line.¹⁷

FAPLA too was reorganising following its setbacks in the preceding years, bolstered by the decision by the Cuban forces to once again participate in offensive operations. By November 1983 FAPLA was restructured into more than 70 brigades, all equipped with Soviet and Warsaw Pact equipment. Reorganisation again took place in 1984 in an effort to fill both the conventional and counter-

insurgency roles. Despite its increase in firepower, logistics remained a serious problem.¹⁸ During May 1984 FAPLA launched the first of four major attempts, one each year, to penetrate and occupy UNITA territory in Cuando Cubango and Moxico provinces. By September the offensive had petered out and FAPLA withdrew. But Soviet equipment (estimated worth more than US \$1 billion) continued to pour into Angola between January 1984 and August 1985. By now FAPLA had 30 MiG-23's and 8 Su-22's aircraft, 33 Mi-24, 27 Allouette, and 69 Mi-8 and Mi-17 helicopters. It also had an estimated 350 T-55, 150 T-34 and 50 PT-76 tanks.¹⁹

Not connected to, but emulating the Soviet worry at the steady progress of 'Western' reassertion of global power, in June 1985, FAPLA launched its second major offensive against UNITA in southern Angola with the assistance of 50 000 Cuban troops and territorial forces. The operation into the Cazombo salient in the east succeeded but that towards Mavinga in the south-east was repulsed with South African assistance.²⁰ Government troops retreated to Cuito Cuanavale and Menongue. Meanwhile, as Soviet and Cuban support of an increasingly overt Marxist MPLA became evident to a conservative Reagan administration, the United States Senate voted to repeal the Clark Amendment in 1985 and UNITA soon received Stinger shoulder-fired surface-to-air missile, TOW anti-tank missiles, 106mm anti-tank recoilless rifles, ammunition and fuel. UNITA's new anti-aircraft capability represented a genuine threat to FAPLA aircraft and the anti-tank capability was vital in containing ground assaults.²¹

In parallel with negotiations on the independence for Namibia, fighting between Cuban/FAPLA and South African forces in southern Angola intensified during the late eighties. While the SADF stockpiled UNITA, the Soviet Union replaced FAPLA's extensive losses incurred during the 1985 offensive. The extent to which the MPLA was able to mortgage its future income in order to purchase arms is obvious when one considers that it bought more than US \$1,5 billion worth of weapons and equipment at this point. This included T-55 tanks, BTR-60 armoured personnel carriers, BRDM-2 armoured cars, the new BMP-1 infantry fighting vehicles, artillery pieces such as BM-14 and BM-21 multiple rocket launchers and SA-8 as well as SA-13 surface-to-air systems. BMP-1s became the standard fighting vehicle and increased the force's mobility. M-46 field guns replaced older models and gave FAPLA the advantage of artillery with a maximum range of more than 25km. Combat helicopters (Mi-24) and ground support aircraft were also sent to Angola²² and added a valuable air attack capability. In December 1985 Soviet General Konstantin Shaganovitch was appointed supreme commander of all FAPLA and foreign forces, backed by 950 Soviet officers posted to operational and training commands. Cuba's expeditionary troop numbers were raised to 45 000, largely focussing on protective tasks to free FAPLA for offensive operations. In response to these arms purchases and restructuring, South Africa, already deeply involved in joint operations, stepped up its training of the UNITA command cadre.

Decline in bipolar interest and the rise of alternatives

The period between 1986 and 1990 was characterised by a decline of superpower interest in the Angolan conflict induced by changing balance of power considerations, the economic exhaustion of the Soviet Union and its allies and the end of the Cold War itself. Inevitably, this decline in extra-continental support for the Angolan warring parties, mostly based on ideological and power-play motivations, gave way to a second set of interests in the Angolan conflict; this time, regional. It also concentrated the minds of the Angolan warring parties behind one pressing objective: that of decreasing their dependency on superpower physical support and constant arms procurement.

Zimbabwe had already become independent in 1980. The negotiated independence processes that led to the emergence of Namibia; the end of conflict in Mozambique; and the end of apartheid in South Africa, which eventually led to the triumph of the ANC in the 1994 elections, punctuated the changes in the regional situation. By the same token, African strongholds in the Cold War struggle began to crumble, a situation that would see the demise of Mobutu Sese Seko in the late nineties. In the void of superpower interest, the dynamics within the region started to make themselves felt.

Sensing the end of affairs, as they knew it, the Angolan warring parties began an early scramble for the possession and control of the resource-rich areas of Angola. They were determined to tap into the necessary resources as early as possible, even if it meant buying their way into continuing conflict. This does not mean that there was no exploitation of resources by warring parties before 1988. This always existed, but as of 1986 there was a deliberate concentration on procuring a foothold in these regions, the extent of which only became evident at the start of the United Nations missions. It is interesting to note that roughly at the same time as the peace processes in Angola commenced; those on Mozambique were also being discussed. The question begs to be asked whether the different results of UN operations in Angola and Mozambique – one failed, one successful – were at least in part related to the fact that Mozambique is rich in prawns and peanuts, while Angola is rich in oil and diamonds.

By 1986/87, new equipment gave FAPLA tremendous conventional capabilities in terms of mobility, added long distance artillery and area bombardment as well as anti-aircraft capabilities. But effectiveness was undermined by the low morale of the troops. The tanks, multiple rocket launchers, armoured personnel carriers and infantry-fighting vehicles also tended to confine FAPLA to roads and conventional war tactics. The newly acquired equipment however proved useful when FAPLA and approximately 15 000 Cuban troops again launched an assault against UNITA in south-east Angola from Cuíto Cuanavale in August 1987 to 1988. Having learnt from the disasters of 1985, FAPLA had prepared well for the offensive but the operation was halted in mid-September when South Africa intervened directly in support of UNITA. Eventually FAPLA retreated to Cuíto Cuanavale having suffered extensive losses. Although the South Africans surrounded Cuíto they did

not succeed in taking the town in a belated offensive. Following a November 1987 meeting between Presidents Castro and dos Santos in Havana, Cuba started sending an additional 15 000 troops to Angola, arriving early the following year.²³ The Cuban forces adopted an aggressive military deployment and the SADF was forced to withdraw to Namibia. The events at Cuíto were widely interpreted as something of a watershed for the South Africans, although only Cuban intervention had managed to salvage a stalemate from sure defeat for FAPLA.

Although much less than that provided to the MPLA by its allies, UNITA received about US \$250 million in covert aid from the United States in the years 1986 to 1991²⁴ and indeterminate but certainly substantially more support from South Africa. UNITA also enhanced its conventional capacity by capturing equipment from FAPLA. An example is the capture of a platoon of T-54/55 tanks, which was used to reinforce its forces in December 1987 in its effort to capture Munhango.²⁵ Meanwhile the United States resumed its “constructive engagement” talks between Angola and South Africa over Namibia while simultaneously continuing to provide military aid to UNITA. UNITA operations along the Zairian border, particularly in Malange, Uíge and Zaire provinces escalated. FAPLA reorganised again in 1988 to 1989 and now had 80 brigades assisted by 20 military task forces and nearly 120 000 troops. By the time of the Cuban withdrawal in terms of the New York Accord and despite its previous losses, FAPLA could largely continue the fight on its own.²⁶

The Brazzaville Protocol, agreed to on 13 December 1988, outlined the procedure for the withdrawal of the 50 000 Cuban troops over 27 months and for Namibian independence. On 22 December 1988, the New York Accords were formally signed between South Africa, Cuba and Angola. Namibia was to become independent. The Cubans and the African National Congress were to leave Angola. South Africa was to end its support of UNITA – although that from the United States would increase. The United Nations was to oversee events. A small team of military monitors (UNAVEM) were deployed to Angola early in 1989 to observe the withdrawal of the Cuban troops.

Having secured the independence of Namibia, pressure for an internal settlement in Angola and a reduction in tensions in the sub-continent increased. Talks between the MPLA and UNITA were held under Portuguese auspices and, following intense United States pressure, dos Santos and Savimbi met for the first time in Gbadolite on 22 June 1989 in the presence of 18 African heads of state. The subsequent cease fire quickly collapsed.

In December 1989 FAPLA launched an offensive (Operation *Ultimo Assalto*), aimed at capturing first Mavinga and then Savimbi’s headquarters in Jamba. FAPLA managed to cross the Lomba river and briefly occupy the Mavinga airstrip but the offensive bogged down in the rain by March of the following year. During May 1990, UNITA recaptured Mavinga when FAPLA had to redeploy troops to Uíge, north-east of Luanda to respond to the dramatic escalation of UNITA operations in the area.²⁷

The post-cold war environment

Voting patterns in the United Nations Security Council started to change with UNIFIL (UN Interim Force in Lebanon). In 1987 the Council set unanimously the framework for the ending of the Iran-Iraq war and the same year the permanent members started their cooperation as a group. These developments, closely associated with the demise of the Cold War, had an immediate impact on Africa and changed the nature and dimensions of what was originally perceived as an international emergency measure; that of multinational peacekeeping operations. With the end of the Cold War, the United Nations began to attract more attention as a possible vehicle for collective security. This was felt more readily in the field of conflict resolution: Namibia, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Cambodia, Mozambique, Somalia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The possibilities initially seemed endless and a new resolve to act towards the consolidation of peace soon evolved into a feeling of collective responsibility for the achievement of peace.

International peacekeeping gradually expanded as a concept to include peace-making, peace-building, and finally, peace-enforcement. The Namibian operation, the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG), still reflected a number of traditional tenets for peacekeeping, but from ONUSAL and ONUCA (United Nations Operation in El Salvador and United Nations Operation in Central America) onwards, United Nations operations became more complex, bigger, and more multifunctional. UNTAC (United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia) immediately afterwards became probably the largest United Nations operation in a transitional society, and although peacemaking and peace building were added as components of traditional peacekeeping it was still dependent on the clearly expressed will of all parties to end hostilities. The existence of a ceasefire, of a 'peace to keep', had always been a priority when the Security Council mandated operations up to that date. Nevertheless, soon this would change as reflected in the failed operations of Somalia and Yugoslavia, among others, where United Nations personnel were mandated without such a caveat.

Nevertheless, the United Nations capability to interpose forces between warring parties in the post Cold War environment not only led to expanding concepts, it also led to accrued experiences. With the greater experience by multinational forces on a wider variety of cases, a number of issues that had not previously been considered before as vital to peacekeeping began to emerge. The need to monitor human rights abuses, to protect vulnerable populations, to implement the disarmament and demobilisation of warring factions, and ultimately the need to provide emergency government structures in post-conflict situations emerged as questions which no one could answer but which were not seen as obstacles for action. As a result, many operations mandated in a hurry for the best of reasons sometimes failed to achieve results. It soon emerged that a fundamental cause for this was the inability of peacekeepers and/or peacekeeping mandates to take disarmament and demobilisation as seriously as they deserved.

Angola was no exception to the new willingness of the United Nations to act on the side of peace. Mozambique and Angola both commenced peacekeeping operations at roughly the same time. Nevertheless, although peace in Mozambique ultimately prospered, the same was not to be in Angola.

Six rounds of peace talks took place between April 1990 and May 1991 at which point the signature of the Bicesse Accords in Portugal on 15 May 1991, brought a respite to the Angolan war. Portugal hosted the negotiations with observers from the United States and the Soviet Union – an arrangement to become known as the observing Troika. Furthermore, the Troika agreed on a ‘Triple Zero’ clause which indicated that none of the three powers would engage in the sale or transfer of arms to the warring parties in Angola. Bicesse also provided for a cease fire, disarmament, the confinement and demobilising of the 152 000 armed forces of the MPLA and UNITA, the formation of a new 40 000 strong national army, the *Forças Armadas Angolanas* (FAA), with an equal number of soldiers from UNITA and the FAPLA, and the need for multi-party elections monitored by the United Nations.²⁸ The MPLA would remain the legal government, with responsibility for running the country while preparations for elections were made. In preparation for democracy the Angolan People’s Assembly subsequently amended the Constitution (during March 1991 and again in September 1992) and passed a series of laws to allow for a nominal multi-party system. Although three factors contributed to the agreement, namely the balance of military power between FAPLA and UNITA, the indications by the Soviet Union and Cuba that they wanted to reduce their financial commitments to Angola and the end of the Cold War, Bicesse was also a triumph for diplomacy. Finally, it also provided UNITA with an opportunity to gain power through the ballot box – an outcome widely expected by the United States and Savimbi alike.

A small UN Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM II) was deployed in a monitoring role under the UN secretary-general’s Special Representative for Angola, Margaret Anstee. Significantly, UNAVEM II did not have any powers to enforce compliance with the military and political processes. With a US \$118 million budget and a total of 350 military observers and 126 police observers it had limited capacity. In March 1992 the mission’s mandate was enlarged to include the observation and monitoring of the elections negotiated under the Bicesse Accords, but remained inadequately funded and staffed for the task despite the addition of 100 electoral observers. The day before elections started the MPLA and UNITA announced the formation of a new national army, but only 8 800 out of the projected 40 000 troops had actually reported for the force.²⁹

Eduardo dos Santos, the leader of the MPLA, won the presidential elections in September 1992. By the narrowest of margins, he failed to achieve an absolute majority, requiring a second round of presidential elections. The MPLA also won the legislative competition, receiving 54% of the vote, against UNITA’s 34%. Even before the results were announced Savimbi retreated to Huambo. Shortly thereafter MPLA forces attacked and destroyed UNITA’s offices in Luanda, killing or capturing almost all of its military and civilian cadres in the capital. Within a month the war had re-started, lasting until November 1994.

The UN secretary-general reported to the Security Council on 25 November 1992 that a root cause for the deterioration in the security situation had been the incomplete fulfilment of key provisions of the Peace Accords. Ineffectual demobilisation and disarmament was another serious contributing factor.³⁰ Of the 34 425 weapons collected from UNITA troops and police in the disarmament effort, 97% were personal or light crew weapons and between 30 to 40% were old and/or unserviceable.³¹ These problems would continue during the UNAVEM III mission.

During January 1993 UNITA pushed into the rest of the diamond area in the north-east, took the important oil town of Soyo and seized the strategic airport of Cuíto Cuanavale. In desperation the Angola government hired a South African private military company, Executives Outcomes Limited, to rebuild the FAA.³² Executive Outcomes was contracted to train 5 000 troops from the FAA's 16th Regiment and 30 pilots, but also to direct front-line operations against UNITA.³³ Executive Outcomes employees also participated in operations such as the recapture of Soyo in May 1993 – although UNITA recaptured the town after the mercenary contingent withdrew. It is important to note however, that although the subsequent Lusaka Protocol stipulated the “repatriation of mercenaries”, 400–500 Executive Outcomes personnel worked with FAA until January 1996.³⁴

By now, the only significant change in the Angolan situation was that of diplomatic recognition of the MPLA government by the Clinton administration which subsequently also lifted the arms embargo against the Angola government. With four-fifths of the country under his control, Savimbi announced a unilateral ceasefire in September 1993. It was ignored by the MPLA.³⁵ The extent of MPLA arms purchases during this period is evident from the fact that external debt, as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product, almost quadrupled, as did military spending.³⁶ FAA commander General João de Matos also embarked upon a restructuring programme of his forces. By the end of 1993, FAA had grown to 85 000 troops and more were in training. In the same year, Belarus supplied twenty-one BMP-1 armoured personnel carriers to boost FAA's mobility while Bulgaria sold light weapons and ammunition to the government. The FAA arms build-up exceeded that of the mid/late 1980s reaching an estimated level of US \$2 billion.³⁷ By the autumn of 1993 the military tide was turning and in November the following year Savimbi had to retreat from Huambo. Yet UNITA would retain control of a large portion of the diamond areas, which, by mid 1996 were worth an estimated US \$1 million a day “...flown out to Zaïre from the airports under UNITA control such as Andulo, Bailundo and Negage, despite the UN presence in those places.”³⁸

As the war continued the importance of diamonds as a source of revenue increased for the rebels. UNITA procured most of its weapons during 1993 to 1994 in Eastern Europe (Bulgaria and Ukraine), including mortar bombs, anti-tank weapons, anti-aircraft weapons, grenades, various types of ammunition and a variety of small arms and light weapons. In September 1993, the UN imposed arms, military equipment and fuel sanctions on UNITA but still with the hope of bringing Savimbi back to the negotiating table.³⁹

UNITA meanwhile had been adding a conventional capability to its guerrilla forces. The fighting after the 1992 elections appeared to demonstrate that it would not be able to turn the tide conclusively without a conventional capacity. The result was the establishment of conventional units such as the 3rd Motorised Brigade.⁴⁰ UNITA's new units created a degree of balance in military power between the two forces. It also provided new challenges for the UNITA logistical system, particularly regarding fuel. UNITA's advantage lay in the rebels' lack of dependence on the conventional capacity, which could only be used when fuel supplies were available and the terrain suitable. Nevertheless, UNITA always retained the option of reverting to guerrilla warfare. Over-confident of his new capabilities Savimbi sought to hold towns such as Huambo and Soyo, providing concentrated targets for FAA and adding to the destruction of these cities as rural warfare moved to urban areas. By the second half of 1994, UNITA had lost most of the key towns due to the involvement of Executive Outcomes and the MPLA purchases of new weapons from Brazil, Spain, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Uzbekistan and China.⁴¹ As usual, UNITA resorted to its tried and tested guerrilla tactics.

The Lusaka Protocol was signed in Zambia in November 1994 when UNITA was under extreme military pressure. The Protocol sought to expand and implement the Bicesse Accords. Following the initialling but prior to the formal signing of the Protocol the government continued to fight for Huambo, Soyo and Uige in what UNITA saw as a violation of the spirit if not the letter of the Lusaka process. It was probably not surprising that Savimbi did not personally attend the signing ceremony, leaving it to a subordinate, Eugénio Manuvakola, to sign on his behalf. This was an ominous start to the vaunted peace process.

The Lusaka Protocol was intended to commence a power-sharing process. Military issues addressed in the Protocol included integration of UNITA generals and troops in the government's armed forces, demobilisation under UN supervision and the repatriation of mercenaries. Political issues included the United Nations mandate (UNAVEM), the role of the peacekeepers, the completion of the electoral process and national reconciliation. A Joint Commission consisted of the United Nations, the Angolan government and UNITA, with the United States, Portugal and Russia (successor state to the Soviet Union) acting as a Troika to oversee the implementation of the Lusaka Protocol. But the Troika proved to be a weak institution and apart from confusing the oversight role of the United Nations also undermined the peace process when the Soviet Union and Portugal, despite the Triple Zero agreement of Bicesse, sold military equipment to the Angolan government while the United States was widely suspected of covertly funding UNITA.

Compared to the previous UN mission, UNAVEM III was much larger, costing some US \$1,5 billion over four years and had as many as 7 000 troops, 350 military observers, 65 mine sweeping experts, 260 civilian police and 100 staff members in Angola.⁴² Despite this commitment by the international community the peace process unravelled from the start. Deployment was delayed and the UN systematically turned a blind eye to acknowledged breaches of the Protocol by

both parties.⁴³ Furthermore, as the first combatants entered the assembly camps for disarmament and demobilisation, as early as January 1995, it became clear that there was going to be little demobilisation and almost no disarmament.

Meanwhile, with cash from its oil industry, the government continued with major arms procurement in 1995/96. One hundred BMP-2 infantry fighting vehicles arrived in Luanda and US \$300 million was spent on MiG-23 and Su-22 aircraft, Mi-17 and Mi-24 attack helicopters. Approximately a dozen Pilatus PC-7 training aircraft were bought from Switzerland. Aircraft, vehicles and artillery from Brazil, helicopters, air-to-ground missiles and a variety of ammunitions from France as well as AK-47s, Ural trucks, rocket-propelled grenades, mortars, ammunition, T-55 tanks and fighter aircraft from Russia followed. Since UNITA still dominated nearly 70% of the rural areas and prevented the government from using the roads, much of the procurement was used to ensure air supply to FAA forces and civilian inhabitants of major towns such as Saurimo, Kuito, Luena, Malanje and Uige.⁴⁴

By controlling many of the diamond fields in the Lundas, UNITA was also able to continue with its conventional arms procurement in 1996/97, although not nearly to the same extent as the government. The movement acquired at least one BM-27 multiple rocket launcher from Ukraine as well as a SA-6 surface-to-air missile system and BMP-2 infantry fighting vehicles from Bulgaria.⁴⁵ The BMPs added to UNITA's mobility, but also added to the pressure on fuel supplies.

By mid 1997, the pressure was building up once again and reports cited troop mobilisation, movement of military equipment and forced conscription by both sides. UNITA and FAA launched attacks especially in the northern provinces. During June FAA captured 10 to 15% of the diamond producing areas controlled by UNITA and thus expanded government control over a corridor from Dundo to Luena.⁴⁶ In August 1997, the Angola government claimed that UNITA had 35 000 armed troops, although military analysts and diplomats in Luanda estimated the rebel strength at between 15 000 to 25 000.⁴⁷ Further sanctions against UNITA followed in October 1997 as the rebels continued to flaunt the Lusaka Protocol. The sanctions included banning foreign travel by senior UNITA members and closing UNITA offices abroad.⁴⁸ But the effect of the sanctions was limited. The arms race continued and the peace process was all but dead.

Violence increased in frequency and brutality as the year progressed and UNITA started to re-occupy those areas it had already ceded to the Government. By June 1998, the Angolan government began serious preparations to return to war. Finally, a precipitating occurrence: on 27 June 1998, the UN Special Representative to Angola, Alioune Blondin Bêye, died in an air crash in Côte d'Ivoire. Indications and preparations for war increased. United Nations sanctions were imposed on UNITA in July 1998. The aim was to limit UNITA's capacity to buy weapons and therefore international pressure was used to defer purchase of UNITA diamonds and selling of mining equipment to UNITA with little effect. The so-called 'Fowler Commission' was appointed to advise the UN on their implementation.

The signs that preparations for war were gathering speed were evident. In August 1998, for example, the Russia's Defence Minister, Igor Sergeev, visited Angola and the two countries signed an agreement for the repair, servicing and modernisation of different kinds of weapons of Soviet and Russian origin. Angola's Russian debt already stood at US \$6 billion. It was agreed that Russia would participate in oil refining and diamond producing ventures as part payment for military support.⁴⁹ On 8 October 1998 the secretary-general of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, said, "It is widely assumed that the Angolan Armed Forces are preparing for a possible major military action" against UNITA strongholds.⁵⁰

The peace process had effectively already collapsed when, at the opening of the MPLA's Fourth Congress in Luanda on 5 December 1998, President dos Santos called for the termination of UNAVEM III's successor the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola (MONUA) and an end to the Lusaka peace process. MONUA withdrew for safety from all UNITA-held areas on 6 December. The war which followed was characterised by both sides laying mines, extensive use of aircraft by the government on UNITA positions and the indiscriminate shelling of MPLA-held towns such as Malange, Kuito and Huambo by UNITA long-range artillery.⁵¹ Following the shooting down of two United Nations chartered aircraft, the UN secretary-general decided that MONUA could achieve little and recommended that its mandate be terminated on 26 February 1999 to be followed by a phased withdrawal. The Joint Commission, which had overseen the implementation of the peace accords, had long since ceased to function.

The failures of UNAVEM II, UNAVEM III and MONUA occurred for many different reasons but one of them was the lack of willingness of the parties to take disarmament and demobilisation seriously, and the lack of commitment in the UN itself to pursue these objectives. With the resumption of war in Angola by early 1999, it seemed that part of the United Nations failure was directly related to the parties' intention to use the 'lull' in hostilities during UNAVEM II and III to re-equip and re-train in order to escalate the level of the fighting to gain decisive victory. The warring parties seem to have exploited the international attention awarded to them by UNAVEM II and III to obtain clear political and military objectives. The Angolan government, conscious of the fact that it had retained power over the years due to external support, attempted to freeze this status through the United Nations operations. UNITA, on the other hand, used the defects in the United Nations mission, particularly related to disarmament and demobilisation, to buy time to re-equip and re-train in the hope of escalating conflict and acquiring a decisive victory when the time was ripe.

As it was, the renewal of war in Angola not only demonstrated that UNITA was fully prepared to resume fighting but that the government had ample initiative to pursue military rather than political alternatives at that time. The latter factor takes into account the shift in regional geopolitics concurrently affecting Zaïre – which had become the Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo) when Mobutu Sese Seko was removed from power and replaced by Kabila in 1997.

Resources for arms or arms for resources?

By the middle of 1999 violence had spread to Angolan provinces in the north and west. The humanitarian aid agencies had not foreseen the resumption of war and were caught unprepared for the demands that followed. The government was unwilling to allow "... right of access or safe corridors to reach the hundreds of thousands of displaced in the government occupied towns and provincial capitals without compromising the international boycott against dealing with the militant wing of UNITA."⁵² In September 1999 Operation Restore eventually saw the government seize Bailundo and Andulo with its large airport. UNITA was forced to retreat from the Central Highlands and revert to guerrilla war tactics. As sporadic attacks, ambushes and mine laying gathered pace UNITA sought to keep the Angolan armed forces off balance to delay the expected resumption of a full-scale offensive. Seeking to maintain pressure on UNITA the government launched a new front from Namibia, capturing UNITA's former headquarters, Jamba, during December 1999. However, the yearly rainy season and logistical problems subsequently bogged down the FAA conventional forces, making them targets for UNITA guerrilla forces.

Ultimately, UNITA remains. Speaking to the editor of the Portuguese newspaper 'Folha 8' during May 2000 Savimbi was forthright. "We have not been defeated. We have lost a battle ... There can be no real peace in Angola without UNITA's participation. ... We are part and parcel of the problem, and so we should be part of the solution.... neither the MPLA nor UNITA can annihilate one another."⁵³

What most fail to say, however, is that the fight will continue as long as both sides have the ambition and the resources to wage and pay for war. In Angola, both sides to the conflict have demonstrated their knowledge of this fact by concentrating their efforts on the maintenance, recovery or capture of territories rich in mineral resources since the late 1980s. They have consistently used these resources to buy weapons, and to support an increasingly corrupt elite on both sides. The result is a country awash with weapons with a warring elite that cares nothing for its people.

It is virtually impossible to assess the number of small arms and light weapons in circulation in Angola after two decades of war. Aside from old stocks of small arms re-circulating within Angola, there are constant inflows of illicit small arms into Angola through its porous borders. These movements are facilitated by the existence of increasingly well organised transnational criminal organisations, widespread corruption, and the existence of well established covert arms supply networks across a region of vast borders with little potential for effective physical control. While most arms are flown in from Eastern European suppliers, not all stop in Angola. Weapons flowing out of Angola into northern Namibia and Zambia, for example, are being constantly reported. The symbiosis between the conflict in Angola and that in the DR Congo, Rwanda, Uganda, northern Namibia and western Zambia is such that the movement of small arms, ammunition and other commodities associated either with the war effort itself or with those

'items' needed as currency bartering in order to pay for military materiel (such as diamonds, endangered species, and rare woods) have expanded the existing smuggling pipelines.

As regards the Angolan government's conventional weapons procurement, most of the lethal equipment bought in the last year was obtained in transactions with Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and North Korea, whereas some of the non-lethal equipment came from countries as far afield as Brazil and Switzerland. The International Institute for Strategic Studies in London estimated that the government's military expenditure was US \$400 million in 1995 and US \$450 million in 1996.⁵⁴ The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute estimated that the MPLA's military expenditure was US \$400 million in 1997 and US \$840 million in 1998. According to the Russian press, Angola closed a contract with Russia for US \$1 billion of weapons (mainly aircraft) in 1998.⁵⁵ However, Western military intelligence analysts put the figure at "several hundred thousand million US dollars".⁵⁶ According to the official budget of 1997/8, only US \$302 million (11,1%) of the total budget of US \$2,6 billion would be spent on defence. This figure indicated an increase of 8% from 1996/7.⁵⁷ The March 1999 provisional budget of US \$5,1 billion showed that the largest part of it would be used for defence. Information indicated that the Angolan government earmarked US \$500 million of the US \$900 million of oil signature bonuses in 1999 for FAA equipment acquisitions. Angola's oil production has also been used as collateral and thus the government receives very little current revenue from its oil sources and will not do so for several years to come.

On the UNITA side, Global Witness estimated that the rebel group obtained a minimum of US \$3,7 billion between 1992 to 1998 from diamond sales.⁵⁸ This figure excludes revenue from other sources or interest generated in overseas bank accounts. It is claimed that UNITA was also involved in the ivory trade and selling of hard wood. A large amount of this income must have been used to buy military equipment if one considers that a single Konkurs anti-tank missile costs US \$15 000. UNITA must also pay substantial premiums on the purchase price and carrier costs of equipment due to the UN sanctions. But, over the years UNITA did not only acquire all of its heavier conventional weapons and equipment by buying it from (mostly) Eastern European countries. It also bought weapons from FAA members or captured military hardware from FAA units. This point was illustrated by Colonel Kallias, a former UNITA soldier, who testified to the Fowler Commission that UNITA purchased only five T-64 tanks and that the rest of the tanks in its arsenal were captured from the government.⁵⁹ Both the government and UNITA regularly claim that they capture large stocks of equipment from the other⁶⁰ while new equipment keeps pouring in.

At the end of the day, the war continues with increasingly sophisticated weaponry. The weaponry itself can sometimes assist in forecasting the type of arms cycles yet to come. The recent 1999 acquisition of air capacity by the FAA is a case in point. In early 1999, newly procured aircraft indicated the emphasis on air capacity. Aircraft subsequently played a decisive role in the success of the offensive

against Andulo and Bailundo during 1999. Russian pilots and maintenance technicians who were part of Su-27 deals, for example, enhanced the effectiveness of the new equipment. The procurement of liquid air fuel bombs also played a crucial role in the victory at Bailundo/Andulo and will play a major role in future operations. The IL117 radar systems were also an important acquisition as the Angolan government now has theoretically more than 80% cover of its air space. As UNITA does not have a fighter capability, the main aim of the radar systems is to monitor and curb aircraft movement to UNITA. The advanced laser-guided target sighting systems on the T-72 tanks will make the tanks a much more lethal weapon, especially with the specialised training provided to the T-72 tank crews by Russian trainers.

It is quite possible that UNITA's purchases have consistently been exaggerated for a variety of reasons. According to unconfirmed information, UNITA has acquired 10 FROG 3/7 surface-to-surface missiles from North Korea, and although there were supposed to have been delivered in April 1999, they have not been used. It is known that UNITA acquired a number of Konkurs anti-tank guided missile systems from Belarus in order to counter the FAA mechanised offensive.⁶¹ Anti-air, anti-tank and a small number of surface-to-surface missiles as well as a number of armoured personnel carriers and some artillery pieces were flown into UNITA controlled areas since the middle of 1998. It was also reported that UNITA has obtained MiG-23 fighter aircraft and Mi-24 attack helicopters from the Ukraine through an European intermediary.⁶² However, the aircraft have not been seen in Angola and other information indicated that the MiG-23 aircraft were based at Ndola airport in Zambia as part of the Zambian Air Force to patrol the UNITA logistical lines and the ownership was undetermined.⁶³ The extravagant claims of the Angolan intelligence services that UNITA has acquired large quantities of tanks and even MiG fighters are doubted.

But paying for war, and making money out of war, are not the only consequences of the way Angola is mortgaging the future of the Angolan people in the pursuit of sophisticated war. There are also indirect consequences. War material is accompanied by other types of influence as seen, for example, in the arrival of several foreign specialised trainers such as the 40 Russian armour specialists and Russian pilots and maintenance technicians⁶⁴ in Angola. South African, East European and Cuban soldiers provided various specialised services and operational advice to FAA in 1999.⁶⁵ Another example is the project to relocate maintenance and repair facilities for former Soviet Bloc equipment in Luanda.⁶⁶ The FAA has also approached several private companies to provide specialised military services and as an example a deal between FAA and the US company Military Professional Resources, Inc (MPRI) was discussed in 1999,⁶⁷ but it did not realise because the Angolan government could not come up with the necessary funds. The provision of training is also high in the agenda for both warring parties and this in itself can assist in the perpetuation and expansion of the Angolan situation further afield. For example, as a result of the conflict, the expertise of the soldiers and the weapons available to the fighting forces in Angola, UNITA as well as FAA, have become involved in conflicts in Central Africa. FAA assisted the Kabila forces

during its take over of Kinshasa in 1997 and is still assisting the forces against the new rebel onslaught. It also played an important role in the Sassou-Nguesso coup in Congo-Brazzaville and is still playing a major role in the country. On the other hand UNITA assisted the Mobutu forces during the final stages of the rebel march against Kinshasa and is now supporting the rebel forces fighting Kabila. It was also involved in training Hutu and Burundian rebels and supplying weapons to them since 1995.⁶⁸ Finally, the Angolan conflict has also spilled over into northern Namibia and western Zambia.

Conclusion

A reading of the drawn-out history of the Angolan conflict and the resources needed to sustain it can clearly be separated into two different periods: one which was run on the political fuel of the Cold War ideological struggle, and a subsequent phase dominated by economic imperatives. In many regions, the Cold War proxy struggle exhausted itself with the subsequent lack of interest from international actors. In Angola, the opposite seems to have taken place. The country's vast riches, managed and exploited by a handful of people bent on total control allowed for war to continue.

Since 1992 UNITA has consistently controlled 70% of Angola's diamond production, generating US \$3,7 billion in revenue, enabling them to maintain their war effort. Their outputs have been channelled through various means as is clearly shown in the Fowler Report of 2000. Aside from the diamond trade itself, UNITA has also built up substantial investment portfolios abroad to supplement these revenues. By the same token, the ongoing war has also benefited a select elite in the government side. All war economies benefit small groups of people and Angola is no exception. In the case of the Angolan government, oil revenues and oil-backed loans from foreign banks between the state oil company Sonangol, the palace, and the central bank create a 'circuit' which has funded arms purchases of up to US \$1 billion per year. With this war economy circuit in place, it is difficult to provide a radical overhaul of public finances that the humanitarian situation and the re-scheduling of debt for Angola entail.⁶⁹

The dynamics of this conflict have also torpedoed every single peace agreement and international peace mission in Angola since 1991. Finally, the war in Angola has also infected the region. New weapons to fuel that conflict are incessantly bought and paid for either with direct payments from Angolan natural resources or indirectly by bartering in terms of future exploitation. The stark realities surrounding weapons, war and money have serious consequences for Angola and its immediate neighbours.

Endnotes

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- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 K Maxwell, *The Thorn of the Portuguese Revolution*, *Foreign Affairs*, no 54, New York, Winter 1975–6.
- 6 EK Lawson & T Henriksen, *Soviet and Chinese Aid to African Nations*, New York, 1980, as quoted in Gamba, op cit.
- 7 Gamba, op cit, pp 17
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 JW Turner, *Continent ablaze: The Insurgency War in Africa – 1960 to the Present*, Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg, 1989, pp 101, 104–105.
- 10 Ibid, pp 101 & 106.
- 11 Ibid, p 103; F Bridgeland, *Jonas Savimbi, A Key to Africa*, Macmillan, Braamfontein, 1986, pp 194–218, 231–3.
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- 13 Ibid, p 83, Turner, op cit, pp 101–102.
- 14 Turner, op cit, pp 45.
- 15 Ibid, pp 45, 101–102.
- 16 Ibid, pp 42 & 46.
- 17 UNITA: *Identity of a Free Angola*, Jamba, Angola, UNITA, 1985, pp 29–30; F Bridgeland, *War for Africa*, Ashanti, Gibraltar, 1991, pp 268–9 & 285; Steenkamp, op cit, p 137; Turner, op cit, pp 110 & 112; *Africa Defence Journal*, Paris, December 1983, p 25 and January 1984, p 21.
- 18 Turner, op cit, pp 103 & 114.
- 19 P Stiff, *The Silent War – South African Recce Operations 1969–1994*, Galago, Johannesburg, p. 530; Turner, op cit, pp 103, 110 & 113–114; *Africa Defence Journal*, Paris, December 1983, pp 24–25.
- 20 FAPLA had repeatedly tried to take Mavinga (March 1981, May 1981 and July 1982) with its strategically important airbase from where supplies could be flown in from Zaïre and South West Africa/Namibia. Stiff, op cit, p 351; Human Rights Watch, *Angola Unravels: The Rise and Fall of the Lusaka Peace Process*, New York, 1999, p 13.
- 21 Information was proved to John W Turner, courtesy of IFF and Free Angola Information Service (FAIS) Washington, DC; Wright, op cit, p 127; Turner, op cit, p 113.
- 22 Stiff, op cit, p 533.
- 23 F Bridgeland, *War for Africa*, Ashanti, Gibraltar, 1991, p 45; Wright, op cit, p 131; Human Rights Watch, *Angola Unravels*, op cit, p 1.
- 24 US assistance to UNITA: Before the Clarke amendment (1974 and 1975) US \$31,7 million. The Clarke amendment was in force from 1976 to 1985. Thereafter:
1986: US \$15 million
1987: US \$15 million

- 1988: US \$30 million
1989: US \$50 million
1990: unknown
1991: unknown
US \$30 million
Stiff, op cit, p 150; Wright, op cit, pp 125–6.
- 25 Steenkamp, op cit, p 153; UNITA communiqués 22 and 23 December 1987 as sighted in Turner, op cit.
- 26 Turner, op cit, pp 115–6, 118; S Cleary, Angola – A case study of private military involvement, in J Cilliers & P Mason (eds) *Peace, Profit and Plunder? The Privatisation of Security in war-torn African societies*, Institute for Security Studies, Pretoria, 1999, p 144.
- 27 Turner, op cit, p 119.
- 28 A 6 000 person navy and a 4 000 person air force was to be formed from government forces. Wright, op cit, p 159.
- 29 Ibid, p 167.
- 30 Document UN S/24858, 25 November 1992.
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- 34 A Vines, Mercenaries and the Privatisation of Security in Africa, in G Mills & J Stremiau (eds), *The Privatisation of Security in Africa*, Johannesburg, South Africa Institute of International Affairs, Johannesburg, 1999, pp 47–80 as cited in Human Rights Watch, *Angola Unravels*, op cit, p 19.
- 35 Cleary in Cilliers & Mason, op cit, p 157.
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- 38 V Brittain, *Death of Dignity – Angola’s civil war*, Pluto Press, London 1988, p 89.
- 39 *Letter dated 10 March 2000 from the Chairman of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to Resolution 864 (1993) concerning the situation in Angola addressed to the President of the Security Council*, Fowler Commission, United Nations, S/2000/203, 10 March 2000; *United Nations report exposes arms-for-diamonds scandal*, Middle East Intelligence Wire, Africa News Service, 3 April 2000.
- 40 Equipped with twenty-six BMP-2 armoured personnel carriers, nine T-62 tanks, eighteen AGS-17 automatic grenade launchers, twelve 82mm mortars, nine BM-21 multiple rocket launchers, nine 122mm Grad P multiple rocket launchers, nine 23mm ZU-23s and a D-30 artillery battery. Institute for Security Studies, *A Luta Continua? Angolan Situation Report*, October 1999, Halfway House, Annex A, pp 12–13.
- 41 Wright, op cit, p 186.
- 42 One of the reasons for the change to the UN Observer Mission in Angola (MONUA)

in June 1977 was the estimated US \$1 million per day costs.

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- 58 Global Witness, *A Rough Trade*, London, 1998, p 3.
- 59 Fowler Commission, op cit, p 7.
- 60 Two examples of claims by the warring parties were that the MPLA government captured BMP-2 armoured vehicles, D-30 guns, T-64 tanks, BM-21 multiple rocket launchers, ZU-23 anti-aircraft guns and SA-16s since December 1998 from UNITA. UNITA claimed in a communiqué in June 1999 to have captured several FAA equipment pieces including 90 armoured personnel carriers (including BMP-1 and BMP-2s), 21 tanks (including T-55, T-62 and T-72 tanks), 21 ZU-23mm anti-tank guns and eight BM-21 multiple rocket launchers during the first five months of 1999. There have also been claims that FAA commanders sold equipment to UNITA commanders in the field, but it is difficult to confirm this.
- 61 Information supplied by J Smith, Midrand, September 1999.
- 62 Stratfor, *Angolan War Intensifies – Backed by Whom?* 13 May 1999.
- 63 Information supplied by J Smith, Midrand, May 1999.
- 64 *Ibid*, September 1999.
- 65 Institute for Security Studies, *A Luta Continua?* op cit, Annex A, pp 5–6.
- 66 *Ibid*, p 6.
- 67 US diplomat talking to Human Rights Watch, Luanda, August 1998.
- 68 Human Rights Watch interviews with a European diplomat, Kinshasa, 9 March 1995;

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- 69 V Gamba & R Cornwell, *Regulation and Self Regulation of Private Sector Transactions*, paper presented in April 1999 in London for the meeting on Economic Agendas in Civil Wars.