

EGMONT PAPER 98

ANGOLA'S AFRICA POLICY

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EGMONT

October 2017

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INTRODUCTION

Angola is experiencing an existential transition that will change the way power in the country is reconfigured and projected. The pragmatism and survivalist instinct that have defined its internal and foreign policies will be sorely tested under the reins of the new President, a financial crisis and regional turmoil. After almost four decades of rule under President Jose Eduardo dos Santos, the country inaugurated a new president in September 2017. This is an existential moment given the usurpation and on-going manipulation of power that the Dos Santos family and elite clan have sustained. During the 1975-2002 war, the ruling People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) developed and implemented Dos Santos' narrow vision for Angola with defence priorities and development of the oil sector at the forefront. In the war's immediate aftermath, the president built on his credentials as a peacemaker but failed to produce a peace dividend, pushing instead for mass development projects to aid the elite's extractive interests. During the oil boom years and development bonanza (2004-2012), Dos Santos further eroded the checks and balances of several organs of the state and personalised his control of the security apparatus and the economy. Since the 2014 oil crisis, efforts have veered towards securing regime survival at all costs, exposing many fragilities of the post-conflict state. The contradictions of the state project are increasingly exposed as the ruling party and its elite attempt once more to push for difficult changes in an exclusionary and opaque manner. The impact of a mismanaged transition would reverberate beyond Angola's borders.

Relations with key allies have formed a cornerstone of the regime's survival strategy. President Dos Santos has been the main architect of Angola's foreign policy and is expected, if his health permits, to continue holding this portfolio even after the former Defence Minister Joao Lourenco took over the presidency. Dos Santos retains the chairmanship of the ruling MPLA party, which will create two potentially incompatible power poles. Luanda's policy has centered on balancing conflicting and contradictory relations by setting aside ideological alignments for profitable and strategic calculations. This has led Angola to engage Russia, Israel, the United States, Portugal, numerous Arab states, Brazil, China and North Korea with differing transactional objectives. Its interventions in Africa have been aimed at deepening these alliances but also creating an adequate financial and diplomatic buffer to assert its own version of African solutions to African problems.

This Egmont Paper focuses on Angola's foreign policy in the African continent by assessing how its interventions are fuelled by different underlying interests in elite and regime survival. It argues that Luanda's policy towards the continent has demonstrated the continued objective of pairing privileged political access and clientelism with financial and elite interest, while starting to ground these in broader, more

structured, stabilisation efforts. Several failed policies have led to recalibrated approaches that have not always created permanence and wide-ranging leverage with key African capitals. Instead, Angola's policies may be surpassed by shifting dynamics as the continent faces new threats just as Angola struggles to ensure political continuity with its financial power heavily compromised. The very tools used to support its foreign policy to date (the strategy of President Dos Santos and the power of petro-dollars) are experiencing serious challenges and changes. This policy brief focuses on political and security calculations and briefly identifies the financial aspects that underlie Angola's foreign policy interactions. Multilateralism is balanced by bilateral imperatives that attempt but do not always succeed in positioning Angola as a powerbroker and kingmaker. It also briefly outlines the different forms taken by that strategy of creating dependence with key allies. The brief is divided into four sections that trace its operating principles, its approach to multilateral organisations, important failed policies and pivotal bilateral engagements with key client states and partners.

OPERATING PRINCIPLES: PERMANENT INTERESTS AND SHIFTING LEVERS

The experience of decades of proxy and direct involvement of forces and interests from Washington, Moscow, Pretoria, Havana, key African countries, Portugal and the UN during Angola's 1975-2002 civil war continue to influence Luanda's realpolitik approach to the world and in particular towards Africa. The country learned from Russia (in the post Cold War era) the virtue of remaining engaged even after a loss of power: essential in playing for long-term gains and building capacity to exert dominance and influence. The regime learned from the United States that permanent friends may not be as important as permanent interests, and that ideological rigidity will nullify important financial opportunities. It learned from Pretoria (under Apartheid) that being on the wrong side of history is a fatal mistake, and that liberation alliances (between the MPLA and the African National Congress or ANC) may not be a guarantee of unwavering support. It learned from Portugal that a small voice will remain small even when historical ties and spheres of influence are great. Finally, it learned from the UN that multilateral organisations can play key roles in ending conflicts – either intentionally or by default – and that sanctions, isolation, and diplomatic pressure can be effective as long as there is unity of purpose.

As a result, Luanda's foreign policy is built on two guiding principles that are direct remnants of its internationalised civil war: to play a role in the international arena and deflect any external interference. 'The presupposition remains that only those who are strong have a voice in the international community,' is an objective Luanda takes very seriously. Angola wants to assert its strength on the continent to project power internationally as it understands that only with powerful alliances can it buffer itself from intrusive financial and political interventions. By working within the global system of governance Angola will have more options. 'We believe that as a country we are only safe if we are with the international community at large.'¹ It also understands that expanding its power beyond the continent into Portugal and Brazil (as part of an expansionist strategy to financially secure political influence), while remaining Russia and China's most important partner in Africa (under different imperatives) will give it the necessary international projection it expects. This is reflective of Angola's desire to be seen as more than just an African country.

By balancing different partners, Angola aims to avoid serving just 'one master' and has managed to protect itself from external interference in domestic political issues and intrusive financial arrangements. Relationships are defined by Angola's standards, allowing it to retain the levers of control. It does not easily succumb to external pressures, given that it is not a major recipient of foreign aid and has the diplomatic

¹ Angolan Foreign Minister George Chikoty's speech to Chatham House, 20 February 2012.

clout of its mineral wealth. However, Luanda also understands that taking an isolationist and overtly independent stance will give it less diplomatic cover. Angola may be moving towards seeking greater cover from key allies as its economy weakens, its oil production slows, and it faces multiple internal political fronts.

In Africa, Angola wants to develop a network of client states in the same manner it has woven together tactical and strategic alliances nationally based on economic imperatives in exchange for loyalty. This is an expansionist agenda that was initially aimed at isolating the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) during the war and has evolved into leveraging influence in key capitals with the aim of later recalling their debt. By intervening to provide support to key African capitals, Luanda is attempting to create predictability and permanence of power. The Angolan government is also positioning itself strategically to be 'courted' by different international players to assert its influence; this confidence derives from its sense of exceptionalism.² Multilateralism enters Angola's strategic calculations when such fora can naturally press for defined interests. Luanda continues to believe that their ability to make decisive interventions multilaterally is limited.³

While Luanda does not push for a wide net of client relations with key states, it does identify specific countries for their comparative advantages. They fall under the principle of convergence of purpose: each serves different purposes and spans different regions. In Southern Africa, Luanda's security and financial relations with Mozambique and Zimbabwe are based on historical and ideological alliances as both countries are facing political turmoil. Angola has allegedly sent 'advisors' and police contingents to support the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and Mozambique Liberation Front (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique or FRELIMO) in stabilising their own political crises. In central Africa, Angolan relations with the two Congos are based on security concerns and national stability, driven by the need to control the leadership in both. Engagements with the Central African Republic (CAR) and Burundi are based on securing multilateral and more specific leverage with the UN and the African Union (AU). Luanda's interests in these countries are aimed at securing longer-term access and influence with key international actors and multilateral forums, while entrenching its proxy political interests. Angola views Burundi from the historical perspective of the 1998 Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) war and its antagonistic relationship with Rwanda; it is also using the Burundi and DRC crisis as a way of asserting its leadership within the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), while ensuring that it plays a role in defining the political landscape of its central African region. Luanda's interests in the CAR are tied to 1) its fear of the expansion of militant Islam into the region, 2) its mediating and stabilisation role vis-à-vis the UN and the AU, and 3) the underre-

² Luanda believes that its political trajectory and post-conflict reconstruction makes it exceptional among other African states.

³ Correspondence with senior Angolan security officer, 2016.

ported financial interests in the diamond sector. Angola's interest in several west African countries, also under the strategy of president-to-president and clientelistic relations, relates to its financial expansionist project, discussed further in this brief.

The surprising client relationship established with President Jacob Zuma since 2006 has a wider continental objective given South Africa's credibility on many multilateral fronts. President Zuma allegedly received financial aid (estimated to be US\$4 million, although the exact amount is unknown) from Angola to fight his legal battles against corruption charges resulting from the 2007 arms deal, and later in support of his bid for the presidency in 2008. A leaked intelligence report, the Browse Mole report, showed how the Angolan establishment planned to covertly support Zuma to further his presidential aspirations and edge out Thabo Mbeki, whose relations with Dos Santos were strained. Zuma has 'repaid' this support by providing Angola with a partnership that would give it greater influence but also includes more nuanced benefits such as the trilateral engagement with the DRC. In 2011, South Africa and the DRC signed the Memorandum of Understanding on the Grand Inga project and Pretoria is credited with having inserted Angola into the preamble, paving the way for Luanda's secured economic engagement and a transmission line that would pass through Angola,⁴ making it a major off-taker of energy.

Africa is also a platform for reaching international markets, diplomatic relations, and asserting a position of dominance. If Luanda can anchor its influence in key regions on the continent it can then use this dominance to project its interests globally, as demonstrated by its emerging partnerships with Portuguese and Chinese private and public investors. While it defines its rise as an African power, Luanda has far greater ambitions as demonstrated by its investments in Portugal, Brazil and elsewhere, and its previous partnership with the China International Fund (CIF). Angola's leap into the world economy began through its rapid expanse into Africa; it prioritised the economic aspect given its financial strength as an oil producer, but also the simplistic diplomacy of financial arrangements. Securing the same level of political and diplomatic influence would have required more time and far more complex lobbies. In this way, economic muscle can achieve direct political and diplomatic leverage with key African partners. Elite enrichment, through operations under the national oil company Sonangol and other instruments, is a key policy objective but falls outside the remit of this brief.

As a result of all these operating principles, Angola has no defined and ideologically driven foreign policy that exports coherent principles and objectives. Its pragmatism and realism leads it to craft tailored approaches. Yet several imperatives can be identified:

1. regime survival and the enrichment of the ruling elite;
2. continued influence with key trading partners China, Portugal and Brazil;

⁴ Interview Grand Inga financing institution, Johannesburg, 2016.

3. a non-aligned stance allowing it to have the United States as its key oil partner and Russia as its most dominant military partner;
4. immunity from external liberal pressures because of its petro-power and self-defined state-building project;
5. dominance in Africa and hegemonic influence in Central Africa, while securing key allies in different regions;
6. positioning itself as a model for an internal, albeit illiberal, model of peace-building for other African states to contrast with Western approaches;
7. instrumentalising its role in multilateral forums to pursue narrow bilateral interests yet failing to have a structured approach to the UN, ICGLR, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and the AU, making it an unpredictable partner, and
8. as an internal tool of stateness – by exposing nationally the successes it has abroad the government feeds the propaganda cycle of the 'Angola rising' narrative.

These imperatives expose the fragile basis upon which Angola's 'rising' power will gradually decline. Not all relationships can be based on monetary profit and elite survival, requiring more nuanced engagement instead. Contradictions will continue to emerge as Luanda projects power externally, while it postpones important reforms in an attempt to secure the necessary transformative elements nationally to strengthen its leadership, economy and security.

BILATERAL MISCALCULATIONS IN GUINEA-BISSAU AND COTE D'IVOIRE

Angola's foray into West Africa has previously been marred by miscalculations that have exposed its foreign policy contradictions. Its confidence led it to plough through regional interests and competing policies of countries that were undergoing political changes. Unable or unwilling to recognise these shifts, Angola was left isolated during its engagements in the Ivory Coast in 2010 and Guinea-Bissau in 2011. This led to the reformulation of the bilateral imperatives which may impact how it proceeds in supporting incumbents like President Joseph Kabila in the DRC who have become a political liability, and how it positions itself in countries that have on-going multi-lateral and regional stabilisation and political initiatives.

Angola's Security Sector Reform mission to Guinea-Bissau (*Missão de Cooperação Técnico-Militar à Guiné-Bissau* or MISSANG)⁵ in 2010 was an important first step in Luanda's exposure in a region that it did not dominate. It was aimed at protecting economic interests but also had geostrategic objectives. Angola's primary interest was to stabilise Guinea-Bissau in order to advance economic development priorities, in particular the Port of Buba project in which Angola had invested in 2011. The objective of entering Bissau was also tied to Angola's role and aspirations in the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC). The GGC, a regional bloc comprising of the DRC, Nigeria, ROC, Gabon, Cameroon, São Tomé e Príncipe, Angola and Equatorial Guinea, provides a strategic bridge between the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and ECCAS on oil policy coordination. Angola hosts the GGC in Luanda and aims to take a leading role by cementing its economic position in the region.

MISSANG was the first time Angola took on the responsibility to facilitate a security sector reform (SSR) exercise with the mandate to institute wide-ranging reforms that would have a political impact. Luanda committed over US\$100 million to the reform of the Guinean armed forces.⁶ Its assistance to Bissau had, however, started earlier in 2007 when the two capitals began discussing areas for economic cooperation. In 2010, the two countries signed a contract for the construction of the Buba port, which would cost US\$500-700 million.⁷ The port, which has the potential of creating an economic hub in the region, is of great economic and strategic interest for the investors who build and manage it. The port would be linked to Angola's other finan-

⁵ The objective was to reduce the army to a mere 3,000 troops, while demobilising the remaining forces and guaranteeing their reintegration with a pension fund worth \$45 million (contributed by Angola, Brazil and Portugal).

⁶ Angolan Foreign Minister George Chikoty's speech to Chatham House, 20 February 2012; it is unclear if this money was made available to Bissau as a repayable loan or if it was delivered as aid.

⁷ This would allow the port to cater for 60,000 ton ships during its first five years in operation and, at a later stage, ships of up to 240,000 tons. The project also included the construction of a railway to support trade from the port as it passed through Guinea Conakry to Mali.

cial interests in the extract of bauxite in the Boe region, with a railway and road linking Boe to Buba.

After the 2011 coup in Bissau, Luanda was placed in a very politically sensitive position. A full ground force invasion was considered to protect the constitutionally elected president; Luanda had 2,500 troops ready to deploy. However, Angola decided to withdraw the mission. A full military engagement would have faced logistical and operational issues given that Angola would have had difficulty maintaining the deployment without a regional landing base, although it could have potentially used Guine Conakry for operational support. Diplomats suggest that it was SADC that advised the president against this action because of reputational costs and worsening relations with ECOWAS and Nigeria. The withdrawal embarrassed Luanda. Angola now realises that it misread the region and Nigeria's reluctance to allow another African power to operate in its sphere of influence. As a result, Luanda began to rethink its bilateral military deployments, opting instead to engage on a basis that has greater multilateral support. Relations with Nigeria have started to improve but as Luanda begins to show renewed interests in Bissau this will be tested.

Despite this failed mission, Angola has continued to engage Bissau economically. In 2015, Angola reopened the Embassy in Bissau, which is currently run by an external intelligence officer. Angola's largest mobile phone company, UNITEL – which is owned by Isabel Dos Santos – was bidding to go back into Bissau as the third telecom service provider. Bauxite Angola (BA) announced in late 2014 that it was planning to invest US\$500 million to relaunch its mining interests in Madina Boe.⁸ BA was expecting to exploit the mineral resources, commercialise them and also prospect for other subsoil minerals. However, the oil crisis has dampened these ambitions, and Angola may seek other partners, particularly the Chinese, to fund these projects. Reports are emerging that ECOWAS Mission in Guinea-Bissau's (ECOMIB) financial difficulties could be rescued with Angolan funds, while the need to draw more troops from outside Nigeria could also create an entry point for Luanda. More importantly, as the internal dynamics within Bissau's ruling African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde or PAIGC) worsen, Luanda is being courted by the PAIGC leader to mediate the crisis. To date, Luanda continues to support Guinea-Bissau via its role in the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa or CPLP) and the AU but could in future move towards a greater bilateral role.

The political fallout that ensued when President Dos Santos stood behind Ivorian President Laurent Gbagbo after he had lost the 2010 election to Alassane Outtarra provided another important lesson. Luanda's first reaction was to send a military contingent of 300 men to protect Gbagbo in addition to shipments of arms in a policy

⁸ 'Bauxite Angola plans to resume mining in Guinea-Bissau', 4 September 2014, *MacauHub*.

of continued support for an old ally.⁹ When the AU, ECOWAS, and the international community declared their support for Ouatarra, Dos Santos began to reconsider his diplomatic position. A task force was created within the presidency and the Foreign Ministry in Luanda to deal with the Ivorian situation, although Gbagbo was captured before any real reversal of policy could occur. This cost Luanda its privileged relationship with Abidjan and the economic interests that came with this relationship as Ouatarra took the presidency. Before his downfall, Gbagbo had signed a deal with Sonangol worth US\$100 million to increase the Société Ivoirienne de Raffinage's (SIR) capacity. Sonangol, which has retained a 20% stake in SIR since 2000, was expected to continue expanding its interests in the country. However, the shadow cast by the Trafigure/Puma Energy (co-owned by Angolan oil company Sonangol) petrochemical waste dumping scandal and trial may also temper future investments.

Angola drew several lessons from this experience. Regardless of strong presidential ties, when a leader's political utility has expired and lost favour with the international and African communities, Angola will avoid being associated with a losing side. Since then, Luanda has tried through different means to improve relations with Abidjan although Dos Santos strongly disapproves of Ouattarra, who sent Gbagbo to be tried at the International Criminal Court. This experience also taught Luanda to ensure that economic interests are safeguarded by more than just presidential guarantees and niceties. This case in particular will resonate with current and future challenges Angola now faces with the two Congos. With regards to the experience in Guinea-Bissau, Angola has rethought its approach to multilateralism as the avenue to contain embarrassing political fallouts, but also as a way to continue pursuing narrow financial and security interests under the cover of regional/international initiatives.

⁹ President Houphouet-Boigny, like Lissouba and Mobutu, was a strong ally of Jonas Savimbi, which in turn led Luanda to support Gbagbo. Interview with UNITA's former foreign minister, January 2012.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO AND REPUBLIC OF CONGO: NATIONAL SECURITY INTERESTS

The Congos are for Angola a matter of national security and regime survival; this was the case in the 1990s and remains the case today. While eliminating support for rebel movements is no longer a driving force given UNITA's military defeat in 2002 and the weakening and fracturing of the separatist Front of the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda (FLEC), Luanda fears the spill over of migrants, refugees, insurgents and wildcat diamond miners into border areas that are antagonistic to the regime. Angola has cemented its influence in the Congos through its robust and large-scale military interventions in the 1990s. It was with Luanda's support that Laurent Kabila ousted Mobutu Sese-Seko in 1996. It was also with Luanda's support that Denis Sassou Nguesso took the presidency in the ROC after defeating Pascal Lissouba in 1997. In both cases, Angola's military, technical, financial and troop support for the insurrections secured their victories over long-standing incumbents. The driving force at the time was to cut UNITA's ability to use the Congos as rear bases, as logistics channels, and alternative markets to sell their diamonds. In 1998 Angola deployed 1,500 men in the DRC, together with Zimbabwean and Namibian troops. At the time, the Angolan Armed Forces (FAA) troops went as far as the Kivus.¹⁰ This second intervention was to secure Kabila's survival, which pitted Luanda against Uganda and Rwanda, a dynamic that is still relevant today. By 2001, Luanda was fully committed to guaranteeing a more malleable and dependable presidency under Joseph Kabila. Since then, Angola has been a key ally and pillar in maintaining Kabila in power. This commitment is rapidly shifting.

Angola is thought to still have a strong military presence, with troops fully deployed inside Congolese territory and using the means given by the government in Kinshasa:¹¹ 'Since the 1998 military intervention we [Angolan troops] never left the country'.¹² These are not the same troops as the 500 FAA officers in training at the Kitona base in the Bas-Congo province. While Angola has trained over 20,000 Congolese soldiers and an estimated 15,000 police,¹³ it has also allegedly maintained the deployment of the FAA brigade. Deployed with military intelligence capacity, they are used to support the presidential guard in Kinshasa and to control the level of internal dissidence within the Congolese governing alliance. Angolan military intelligence (the Serviço de Inteligência e Segurança Militar or SISM) helps to collect information and control emerging threats to Kinshasa. In 2006, Luanda helped Kabila defeat fighters loyal to Jean-Pierre Bemba; in 2008, Angola was accused of deploying

¹⁰ Interview with retired FAA General involved in the DRC war, Luanda, 2012.

¹¹ Interviews with various sources in the Angolan and South African military, 2015-16.

¹² Correspondence with a military intelligence officer, 2016.

¹³ Angolan Foreign Minister George Chikoty's speech to Chatham House, 20 February 2012.

troops against Laurent Nkunda.¹⁴ However, Luanda denies that it has any other troops aside from those used for training. In December 2016, reports emerged that Luanda was withdrawing its troops from the presidential barracks in Kinshasa in protest at the violence and Kabila's request for Rwanda's assistance.¹⁵ A few months earlier, Kabila had asked Luanda to increase the troop levels to stabilise the capital with between 200 and 300 FAA special forces troops.¹⁶ Currently, Luanda's strategy is to position a battalion of FAA special forces in the northern province of Uige ready to deploy if necessary;¹⁷ elsewhere, the brigades previously deployed in the neighbouring municipalities are on full alert.

While Luanda's interests in the DRC are not mainly driven by economic interests, the offshore border disputes over oil concessions add another dimension to relations. In 2007, a Joint Angolan-Congolese commission agreed to share equally the production of revenues from new oil wells in the Zone for Common Interest,¹⁸ but the deal has not resolved the territorial dispute. The DRC's access to the coast and its territorial waters pass through the narrow strip between Angola and the Cabinda enclave, while several of Angola's oil blocks surround Congolese territorial waters.¹⁹ Tensions between Dos Santos and Kabila reached a peak when the DRC called for international arbitration of the offshore maritime dispute in May 2009. The complaint lodged with the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf brought under dispute Block 15 – among others – one of Angola's most profitable oil fields.²⁰ The situation escalated with the mutual expulsion of migrant workers.²¹ Angola estimates the illegal mining of diamonds by Congolese prospectors has cost the country between US\$350 and US\$700 million annually.²² Kinshasa claims that Angola has been stealing thousands (potentially 100,000) of barrels a day of its oil. Angola requires Kinshasa's cooperation for two key infrastructure projects: the Angola-Cabinda road link passing 150km through Congolese territory, and the Congo River Canyon Crossing gas Pipeline linking Soyo to Cabinda. The pipeline facilitates liquefied natural gas exports from the existing Soyo plant and the forthcoming Soyo refinery,²³ both projects representing billions of dollars of future revenue for the Angolan state.

¹⁴ 'Angola disposta a aumentar a sua presença na República Democrática do Congo, 12 November 2008, *Publico*.

¹⁵ Correspondence with Angolan and South African military officers, January – February 2017.

¹⁶ Correspondence with former military intelligence officer, 2016-17.

¹⁷ Confidential Report, December 2016.

¹⁸ Stearns, Jason, 'Wikileaks: Angola – Congo Relations', 14 February 2011, Congo Siasa.

¹⁹ Crisis Group Africa Report N188, *Black Gold in the Congo: Threat to Stability or Development Opportunity?*, 11 July 2012.

²⁰ 'Throwing out the neighbours', *Africa Confidential* Vol 50(22) 6 November 2009.

²¹ It is estimated that since 2004 over 400,000 Congolese migrant workers have been expelled from the diamond fields. Stearns, Jason, 'Wikileaks: Angola – Congo Relations', 14 February 2011, Congo Siasa.

²² Crisis Group Africa Report N188, *Black Gold in the Congo: Threat to Stability or Development Opportunity?*, 11 July 2012.

²³ The Soyo refiner is expected to process 110,000 barrels of oil a day and become operational in 2017, 'Soyo Refinery in Angola will process 110,000 barrels of oil per day', 5 June 2015, *MacauHub*.

Luanda recognises that having such a 'dormant' giant as a neighbour requires a delicate political game to secure collaboration with Kinshasa and ensure that there is harmonious coexistence:²⁴ 'With 2500km of common border the DRC is our biggest security threat and we support Kabila because of interests'.²⁵ If the border areas become havens for roaming armed groups, given the difficult forested terrain and access to resources, this could contribute to overstressing the army's ability to secure the border and the enclave of Cabinda. Luanda believes that if Kinshasa were to erupt in a prolonged period of instability Angola could enter with a brigade and restore order in the capital.²⁶

Angola will not hesitate to act militarily in the DRC if it feels threatened, if it perceives Rwanda's aggression or if unrest in Kinshasa cannot be contained. However, it will not deploy to save President Joseph Kabila, instead pushing for an acceptable alternative to provide a policy of continuation. This policy may face different challenges as the DRC's political and security landscape is unravelling closer to the Angolan border. Before the Kasai instability, Angola had a contingency plan²⁷ to stabilise Kinshasa with the existing brigade and protect economic infrastructure such as the bridge over the Congo river, the Matadi port, Inga Dam, the Katanga mines and the areas bordering the Benguela railway. Since 2015, military exercises to protect the Benguela railway line have been occurring in the Luau area of Moxico province, which borders the DRC. This plan may now have changed because of the increasing instability along the borders of the northern Angolan provinces. Military sources reveal that there is fighting between Angolan forces and rebels of the Kamwima Nsapu movement. The Lundas provinces – where the largest number of refugees (estimated at 25,000) are entering from the conflict in the Kasai provinces – are home to Angola's largest diamond reserves and are a key part of the strategy to appease Angolan generals through business dealings. The Lunda Chokwe, known for their hostility to Luanda, resent the government's heavy hand in diamond dealings and their levels of poverty; their demands for federalism have also remained unheeded. Local authorities are concerned that familial and ethnic links between communities across the border will bring in more unregistered refugees, adding to the volatility of the area. The concern is that the local alluvial diamonds may be used by insurgents (as was the case with UNITA) to purchase arms and increase their capacity to keep waging their rebellion. Further waves of refugees and a greater focus on protecting the borders will add to the security concerns surrounding levels of popular frustration following the disputed August 2017 elections.

²⁴ Interview FAA General, Luanda, 2015

²⁵ Interview retired FAA General, Luanda, 2012

²⁶ Interview retired FAA General, Luanda, 2012

²⁷ interview retired FAA General involved in the DRC intervention, Luanda, 2012

Although Luanda has framed its approach to Kinshasa more recently with the rhetoric of multilateral cooperation, it is expected to be guided by national security priorities. Efforts to support the National Episcopal Conference of Congo's (CENCO) mediation in 2016 allowed Luanda to show it was ready to become part of a consensus-based solution to secure a peaceful transition. Yet frustration with Kabila's inability to contain the situation, and the recent announcement that elections will only be held in 2018, will certainly push Luanda towards a more forceful position. The recent public and unprecedented criticism by Dos Santos' son-in-law Sindika Dokolo of Kabila's government and the handling of the Kasai crisis has been interpreted as a position endorsed by Luanda. Dokolo is believed to be close to key opposition figures including Olivier Kamitatu and Moise Katumbi. Luanda will not risk instability in Kinshasa or the unpredictability of a new president whom it does not control.

Relations with the ROC have faced different challenges. Angola's intervention in 1997 in support of Denis Sassou Nguesso against President Pascal Lissouba was aimed at denying UNITA access to rear bases but was also to ensure that political loyalty in Brazzaville would close off Congo to any other rebel groups. Angola views relations with Brazzaville from the viewpoint of Cabinda. Luanda's security forces are also reported to have maintained a presence in Brazzaville as guarantors of Sassou Nguesso's security,²⁸ despite Luanda's announcement that it was withdrawing 1,000 troops from Brazzaville in December 2002. This withdrawal coincided with the mass deployments of troops into Cabinda to summarily end the FLEC insurgency. In 2006, as Luanda was trying to secure a peace agreement with a FLEC faction, it was also signing a cooperation agreement with Brazzaville to train Congolese special forces.

Despite the 'political debt' that Sassou Nguesso has towards Dos Santos, relations have soured over the years. They have deteriorated over the resurgence of the FLEC insurgency in 2016 and over regional issues, in particular the CAR, with Luanda perceiving the situation as a 'turf' issue. The 2015 Nairobi-based negotiation led by Sassou collided with Dos Santos' agenda of pushing for President Catherine Samba Panza to remain in power. Yet in 2016 the two capitals reached a new understanding as Sassou Nguesso was preparing his third term bid, which led the Congolese president to approach his Angolan counterpart to ensure that Luanda would not interfere in the elections in exchange for a harder crackdown on FLEC and greater cooperation on economic and regional issues. Cooperation in joint oil exploration projects was expected to further cement relations between Brazzaville and Luanda. Both countries agreed in mid-2015 to jointly exploit the Lianzi oilfield, creating the first cross-border offshore energy development. The project is worth US\$2 billion, and estimates suggest that there are 70 million barrels of oil to explore.²⁹ However,

²⁸ 'Lessons from Luanda', *Africa Confidential* Vol54:22, 31 October 2013

²⁹ 'Angola and Republic of Congo launch joint oil production', 31st March 2015, *MacauHub*.

the recent increase in FLEC guerrilla and sabotage attacks in Cabinda have contributed to strained relations. Luanda has consistently been accused of staging raids into Congo; it will continue to defend its right to pursue enemy forces, as seen with its continued 'rendition' process of capturing or killing FLEC commanders in both Congos.

Maintaining a strong presence in the two Congos will remain a priority for Luanda in leveraging considerable political influence with the respective capitals. Determining the political design of both Congos is a key aspect of its policy in the region, one that is uniquely bilateral despite the veneer of multilateral cooperation. Luanda is already thinking about the alternative leaders it could back to maintain primacy and influence over these two capitals and their political future as Sassou and Kabila are no longer able to provide the necessary assurances of political stability.

MULTILATERAL ENGAGEMENTS: AU, REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS AND THE ICGLR

Bilateralism has dominated Angola's international and regional engagements but a growing appreciation of the utility of multilateral forums has developed in recent years. The multilateral shift is aimed at enhancing the space to manoeuvre and protect specific interests. As part of Angola's objective to achieve diplomatic cover, it is also an extension of the country's ability to engage and steer diverse objectives. By playing a role in such fora Angola also learns about the different dynamics and policy positions of key countries: 'Engaging with the AU and SADC is like an early warning system; it helps us avoid taking measures that won't work or know when the situation is volatile and takes new contours'. Angola's engagement with the AU has only recently become a proactive relationship with an increased focus on navigating the difficult terrain of African multilateralism. Engagement at the AU level has in the past been perceived as neither effective nor internationally relevant.

The ruling elite perceives the AU summits as meetings of enemies and friends that have double agendas and will not implement that to which they've agreed.³⁰ This is in line with Angola's strategic use of multilateral forums, while it engages bilaterally to achieve results. Although in the past Angola has chosen not to commit to certain policy imperatives that could lead to internal contradictions, it did recognise the newly independent Republic of South Sudan, despite the 50 years of war it sustained in Cabinda with the secessionist FLEC movement. Luanda is showing that it may be willing to conform to more mainstream AU positions and take shelter in the safety of these political postures, while not making them a tenet of its own foreign policy. Angola's push for Mrs Dlamini Zuma's election as chairperson of the AU Commission was a joint effort with South Africa on the basis that SADC had never had an elected AU head from its region. The support for Mrs Zuma's election was aimed at removing Jean Ping's 'European' bias from the Commission but also at providing Luanda with privileged access. The support for the nomination of Antonio Guterres as secretary general of the UN reflects the same objective.

In its relations with regional organisations, Angola has sought to determine the rules of engagement and deployed its petro-capitalist power to avoid placing itself in a position of weakness politically, economically or militarily. This has been the case in Luanda's engagement with the SADC and the ECCAS. Since 2010, Luanda has actively participated and contributed large troop contingents to the SADC and ECCAS brigades, and taken part in joint training exercises. Projecting the power of its military and ensuring its geostrategic position drives this military engagement. Angola's priority in the area of peace and security will always be defined as an

³⁰ Interviews with diplomats and FAA Generals, Luanda, 2015.

economic investment, although it does not define security within a broader development agenda. Its peace and security engagement is aimed at creating the political and regional space to pursue economic interests; several countries are used as springboards into different regions and financial investments. Luanda perceives SADC to be better organised than ECCAS, which initially led Angola to pay more attention to the Southern African bloc as easier to engage. In this way, Angola has wanted to keep the DRC under the direct influence of SADC and stay clear of the problems of ECCAS by dealing with less difficult political navigations and contradictory positions. In each region Angola has taken a renewed mediating role: in the SADC region Luanda has prioritised engagement with the DRC and to a lesser extent Burundi, and in the ECCAS region Luanda has joined forces with Chad and Congo with the intention of stabilising the CAR.

Angola has been reluctant to join SADC's Free Trade Agreement and has been slow to respond to the regional integration process that established a customs union and envisages a monetary union. Luanda could play a hugely important role in SADC's economic project given the economic complementarity with its neighbours. This, however, would expose Luanda to the need to compromise with a development agenda and a political architecture that would test the limits of its 'democratic' transformation. So far, Angola has participated in large infrastructure projects in the region including the Lobito transport corridor (linking Angola, the DRC and Zambia), and the Trans-Cunene corridor (between Angola and Namibia). The transport networks Angola is spearheading could potentially collide with South Africa's regional trade interests. Botswana, the DRC, Zambia and Zimbabwe have relied on the port of Durban to export their minerals but could in the future begin using the alternatives supplied by Angola.³¹ Once the Lobito deep water port and the 200,000 barrel a day refinery are completed, this would allow the link to the existing railway system (the 1,300km Benguela railway) to facilitate exports from mineral rich Katanga in the DRC and the copper belt in Zambia.³² In April 2012, a US\$2.5 billion Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between Lusaka and Luanda for the construction of a 1,400km oil pipeline connecting Lobito to Lusaka.³³ Luanda also committed to supplying Zambia with refined petroleum products. This was expected to come online in 2016, though the recent oil crisis may have delayed the construction.

Angola's interest in ECCAS is twofold: it wants to take the hegemonic reins of the organisation and to be a conduit between other interventions in the region. While it

³¹ Placido dos Santos, Gustavo, 'Angola: Towards Supremacy in Sub-Saharan Africa?', *Portugal Journal of International Affairs*, Spring/Summer 2014.

³² China has played a vital role in this transport link by investing \$6 billion in the 600km railway from Katanga to the border town of Dilolo and onto the Angolan Benguela railway. 'Angola's Chinese-built rail link and the scramble to access the region's resources', 26 February 2014, Wits Journalism China-Africa Reporting Project.

³³ 'Zambia and Angola sign \$2.5 billion Oil Deal', 16 April 2012, *Lusaka Times*.

is active in ECCAS and has the stated objective of 'becoming the boss of the region',³⁴ it is not party to the CEMAC monetary community which could leave Luanda outside a strongly integrating force and thus prevented from becoming the hegemon of Central Africa. Luanda believes it can play this leadership role on the basis that it has the most developed economy of the region and has the strongest military capacity. The establishment of the regional brigade and the Multinational Force of Central Africa (Force Multinationale de l'Afrique Centrale or FOMAC) has been hampered by serious financial and logistics difficulties with a budget of US\$18 million (compared to SADC's US\$45 million and ECOWAS' US\$121 million).³⁵ Despite this, the standby brigade has the Angolan General Savihemba as its chief of staff. Angola understands that the institutions in that region are heavily influenced by France.³⁶ Efforts to normalise relations with France since the Angolagate fallout have been slow and further strained by competing agendas in the CAR, although more aligned on Burundi. Other countries in the region understand that for Angola to maximise its role it will need to bridge the divide that persists with Paris.³⁷

Luanda recently made a large payment to ECCAS covering the last four years in arrears, signalling a renewed commitment to operate under the organisation. This comes as Luanda has taken an active role in the CAR mediation effort that has transitioned from its usual bilateral nature to a joint approach under the AU involving ECCAS, Chad and Congo. Angola's initial engagement with CAR fell within its traditional pursuit of preferential relations with the then CAR Interim President Catherine Samba Panza. In 2014, Luanda signed a US\$10 million MoU in humanitarian aid and support to the political authorities³⁸ as it was considering sending in a police contingent and military company as part of a bilateral SSR arrangement. Angola revealed its intention to contribute troops to the UN Mission MINUSCA in 2015 but the process stalled at the UN level because of alleged political undercutting by western powers.³⁹ This blockage was perceived as having been driven by the French in an attempt to keep Angola outside the region. The perception in Luanda was that obstacles were placed in front of this deployment, beginning with the ECCAS intervention during Bozize's presidency. The lack of foresight by New York to facilitate Angola's contribution to a peacekeeping mission was a mistake that may dissuade Luanda from considering future deployments.

Given its military and strategic airlift capacities, Angola could be an important contributor to peace and security operations in Africa. Its fleet of Russian IL-76

³⁴ Interview with key presidential advisor, Luanda, 2015.

³⁵ Meyer, Angela, 'Peace and Security Cooperation in Central Africa', Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, Upsalla, 2011, p. 17 and 27.

³⁶ Drivers of Change Angola, *Position Paper 3: International Relations, Regional Security and Development*, January 2008, Dfid.

³⁷ Correspondence with senior ECCAS official, April 2017.

³⁸ 'Angola, CAR sign legal instruments for bilateral cooperation', 5 March 2014, Angop.

³⁹ Interviews with diplomats, Paris and Geneva, 2016.

aircraft and its combat experience of rapidly deploying troops and hardware into different war zones remains a vital selling point. However, when future deployments occur, more care will need to be taken to understand Angola's concerns in peace-keeping. One issue that arose during MINUSCA's brief foray was the issue of mandate and the command of forces. Negotiating the mandate became a problem as the military chiefs in Luanda did not think the mandate reflected the situation on the ground. The UN apparently wanted two battalions sent to the north of the CAR but with a peace mandate rather than the ability to use force as understood by the Angolans. Logistical incapacity and limitations in several areas were also raised as Angola wanted to be coordinated with the UN but not under the UN.

Luanda's current efforts in the CAR are steering towards bringing the remaining two large armed groups (Seleka and Bozize-aligned Anti-Balaka) into the peace agreement and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) process. The talks are being mediated by General Andre Oliveira Sango, head of Angola's External Intelligence service, with several discreet meetings in Luanda and Benguela in December 2016. One area of concern that will collide with Angola's approach of general amnesty for all groups is the demand for justice and the UN push to establish a criminal court for the CAR. Angola is using its own experience, which will fall short of acceptable transitional standards of peace, reconciliation, accountability and democratic reform. As with previous engagements, Angola's diplomatic efforts bring economic attachments. Reports in 2015 pointed to negotiations involving Isabel Dos Santos, who controls Angola's diamond industry and now heads Sonangol, in setting up a state diamond-marketing company.⁴⁰ Having allegedly pledged US\$11 million to such efforts, as well as having lobbied the Kimberly Process to establish a 'green zone' for diamond mining when Angola held its chair in 2015, Luanda will still face serious resistance from France about venturing into the diamond sector in CAR.

In January 2014 Luanda took on the presidency of the ICGLR and has been credited with having an impressive convening power by hosting large-scale summits in Luanda. Angola has used its power in the ICGLR, where the country is now in its third year as chair, to strengthen its role in the region with the AU and the UN. It strategically began to engage with regional 'enemies' in appeasing tensions and guaranteeing stability in its neighbours; it began engaging Rwanda in May 2014 and signed a cooperation framework to defuse tensions and improve relations with Kigali. Uganda and Angola signed several agreements strengthening bilateral cooperation. However, relations with Kigali have since soured following the Burundi crisis. Angola is thought to have supplied President Nkurunziza both with diplomatic cover blocking any peacekeeping force, and potentially with financial support and weapons,⁴¹ though none of this is confirmed. As a result, Angola seems to take

⁴⁰ 'Diamonds' Best Friend', *Africa Confidential* Vol 56(6) 20 March 2015.

⁴¹ Correspondence with retired Burundian diplomat, 2016.

contradictory positions in central Africa, pushing for change in some capitals, while assisting the incumbent in others. Future and sustained engagements in multilateral forums may assist in aligning strategies that complement political shifts across the region, while allowing Luanda to retain the necessary bilateral link to enhance its options and influence. Angola's adherence to the principles and values pillaring these multilateral arrangements should be encouraged so that it plays a constructive role and circumvents its realpolitik tendencies, in particular as it takes on greater mediation and stabilisation roles.

CONCLUSION

Luanda will continue to exert and seek to extend its influence throughout Africa with the aim of furthering its economic and security interests. Its growing multilateral engagement reflects a concerted effort to become a leading continental power broker, although it will face several challenges to its mediation and securitisation efforts in several regions. Its previously financially dominated foreign policy simplified issues through the lens of transactional politics. However, not all problems can be resolved financially and through client relationships. Opaque bilateral security and economic arrangements, including Angola's propensity for president-to-president economic deals, may be further challenged by new leaders and regional integration projects in particular. As it ventures into political conflict and peace and security issues, Angola will face the many shortcomings of its own war-to-peace transition as it attempts to export its lessons, failing to understand the much-needed nuances of power-sharing, peace missions and democratic transitions. The government's desire for greater international recognition and relevance may also open new avenues for Western partners to influence its policies in ways that serve mutual interests. However, if Angola decides to embark on the adage of 'when failing domestically to pursue an aggressive foreign policy', this may introduce a different dynamic for the Congos and relations with key partners. A shift might also be expected if the new President Joao Lourenco begins redefining Angola's priorities in ways that shift from those defined under Dos Santos. The unprecedented agreement achieved with Washington in April 2017 for military cooperation may be an indication of this potential shift.

The transition Angola is undergoing should not be underestimated. The four-decade reign of Dos Santos is ended as the country faces a financial and political elite crisis. Stronger opposition parties and expectations for reform will further place pressure on the new president, who will have to carefully navigate a difficult MPLA setting, a potentially divided security apparatus, and governance through redundant and disempowered state institutions. Opposition parties, led by UNITA, jointly claimed that the ruling MPLA stole the August 2017 elections bringing to the fore a serious crisis of legitimacy for Lourenço⁴². As the architect of Angola's foreign policy President Dos Santos revealed a unique astuteness and pragmatism to balance different interests. His successor Lourenco is now facing internal challenges and may not have the luxury of time and financial liquidity to redefine Angola's foreign policy. Efforts should remain focused on bringing Angola into a multilateral setting that will allow it to play a constructive role in central Africa and beyond as a contributor to UN and AU peacekeeping missions. While Luanda's experience in the past may have revealed some difficulties, it still retains the potential to alter key dynamics in political crises due to historical, political and financial relations.

⁴² ISS Today: Angola's Elections trigger crisis of Legitimacy, 8 September 2017, Institute for Security Studies

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ISBN 979-10-96843-11-4

© Egmont Institute, October 2017

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