



HSC: Historical Security Council

Student Officer: Burak Yıldırım

Issue: The Angolan Civil War (1975-2002)

TIMUN '25 

Turkish International Model United Nations



Committee: Historical Security Council
Issue: The Angolan Civil War (1975-2002)
Student Officer: Burak Yıldırım – Vice President

I. Introduction

After the end of centuries of Portuguese colonial rule, Angola was left with no official authority and three militant groups that fought for independence from Portugal, all seeking power. Being in the midst of the Cold War, it wasn't long before global superpowers were meddling in the power struggle. With the US and its allies supporting the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), and the USSR and its allies supporting the Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), Angola became a battlefield of two global superpowers, each wanting Angola to become its ally.

The war, from 1975 until the late 80s, was marked by clashes and coup attempts, with the MPLA controlling the capital and claiming that they were the official government, while the UNITA clashed with its MPLA troops. Later, with the Cold War settling down in the late 80s, foreign intervention reduced and a short-lasting ceasefire was signed, followed by UN-supervised elections that were not accepted by the UNITA to be legitimate.

With UNITA resuming fighting, the support it has gotten from the US has vanished, and it has been sanctioned by the UN. Another attempt at peace came with the Lusaka Protocol, which promised the integration of UNITA politically into the Angolan government. However, it also failed to be effective due to arms smuggling, distrust, and lack of oversight. The UNITA has since kept fighting against the MPLA under the leadership of the founding Jonas Savimbi, with the group gaining strength through illicit arms and diamond trade.

The UN-sanctions, alongside the fact that this is a civil war, has caused an undeniable humanitarian issue to arise in the region. Not only is the political instability detrimental to the economy, but the presence of militant groups have also significantly decreased the quality of life in the region. As is often the case, during this period of unrest, human rights have been ignored to the detriment of civilians and precautions must be taken to better the situation.

II. Key Vocabulary

Proxy War: A proxy war is defined by Britannica as “a military conflict in which one or more third parties directly or indirectly support one or more state or nonstate combatants in an effort to influence the conflict's outcome and thereby to advance their own strategic interests or to undermine those of their opponents.”



(Britannica). In the Angolan Civil War, the extensions of many other conflicts can be seen. With the US and the USSR supporting opposing sides, it is apparent that this conflict is closely related to the Cold War. Moreover, though, the Angolan Civil War is also an extension of the strained relations between apartheid South Africa and Cuba. The two countries support opposite sides to prevent the other from gaining influence. Finally, in the early years of the war, the sour relations between the USSR and the PRC are also apparent, with the PRC supporting FNLA and UNITA to fight against the Soviet-backed MPLA.

Blood Diamonds: The United Nations defines blood diamonds as “any diamond that is mined in areas controlled by forces opposed to the legitimate, internationally recognised government of a country and that is sold to fund military action against that government.” (Britannica). Blood diamonds are an important part of many conflicts in Africa and have formed the main income for UNITA since the withdrawal of US support.

Arms Trafficking: Arms trafficking refers to the illegal movement of weapons and ammunition across borders. After the implementation of UN sanctions, countries that wished to support UNITA resorted to illicit arms trading. The trafficking needed to support a rebel group usually requires large shipments of guns. Many countries were accused of shipping arms illicitly to the UNITA territory in Angola.

III. Involved Countries and Organisations

Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA)

The MPLA was one of the key groups that fought in the Angolan War of Independence against Portuguese colonial rule during the 1960s and early 1970s. Following the country's independence in 1975, the MPLA became the dominant force and has governed Angola continuously since the start of the civil war. Initially, adopting a Marxist-Leninist ideology, it received substantial military support from Cuba and the Soviet Union. The group later abandoned its Marxist-Leninist stance around the time when the USSR collapsed. The group has gotten increasing recognition throughout the civil war. Now, it governs most of Angola with diplomatic relations with most UN Member States.

National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA)

UNITA was another major nationalist movement that emerged during the struggle against Portuguese colonial rule. Founded in 1966 by Jonas Savimbi, UNITA developed into a force competing for control of Angola after the end of colonial rule. UNITA has been active in the civil war since the very beginning in 1975. Despite initially having a communist ideology, UNITA quickly changed its stance to a more anti-communist one to get increased support from the USA. It was also supported extensively by South Africa, which aided it with a large number of troops. In the early 90s, following its failure to comply



with the Bicesse Accords, it lost most of its support and has since financed itself through the sale of blood diamonds.

National Liberation Front of Angola (FNLA)

The FNLA was one of the three movements to oppose Portuguese colonial rule, originally founded in the early 1960s under the leadership of Holden Roberto. Rooted in Northern Angola and drawing much of its support from the Bakongo ethnic group, the FNLA was a significant actor in the Angolan War of Independence alongside the MPLA and UNITA. Perhaps the least significant of the three groups in the civil war, the FNLA, with its anti-communist stance, initially gathered support from the USA. However, suffering an early defeat in the civil war, it lost its military influence.

United States of America (USA)

Being one of the most significant third parties in the conflict, the USA, fearing a Soviet ally forming in Angola, initially supported the FNLA. However, to further reduce the risk of an MPLA victory, it also supported UNITA. Later in the war, it supported UNITA extensively and opposed the communist MPLA's authority. Although the aid given to UNITA was limited and covert for a while, it later became even more significant with the lifting of the Clark Amendment. The support that the USA gave to UNITA was at an all-time high during the Reagan administration, with Reagan calling the group "freedom fighters".

Despite the support the USA gave to UNITA, the USA accepted the admission of Angola to the UN "out of respect for the sentiments expressed by [its] African friends". Later on, with UNITA failing to abide by the Bicesse Accords, and with the Cold War simmering down, the USA no longer supported UNITA and recognised the MPLA as the legitimate Angolan government.

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)

The USSR, being the other global superpower to meddle in this conflict, supported the MPLA government, aiming to establish a communist ally in Africa. USSR and its allies provided the MPLA with arms and military personnel. The MPLA partially owes its early success to the support given by the USSR. However, as the 1980s approached, the MPLA's relationship with the USSR weakened. MPLA grew dissatisfied with the amount of Soviet support, while the USSR complained that the MPLA was trying to get the USA to support it. The relations worsened until the fall of the USSR. By then, the MPLA had already abandoned communism. The Russian Federation did not engage much in the war



People's Republic of China (PRC)

The PRC's relations with the USSR during the Angolan Civil War were increasingly sour, and this shaped how it would act in its policy in Angola. China supported the FNLA and UNITA against the MPLA, wanting to prevent Soviet influence, which it called social imperialism.

South Africa

South Africa was one of the most significant actors in the civil war, taking a stance against the MPLA, which it saw as a threat due to its pro-Soviet and pro-Namibian independence stance. South Africa provided direct military assistance to UNITA, including weapons, funding, and troops, most notably during major battles such as Cuito Cuanavale in the late 1980s. South Africa's involvement was also tied to its policy of maintaining regional dominance and protecting the apartheid regime from Soviet-backed neighbours. However, after suffering heavy losses and facing mounting international pressure, South Africa eventually withdrew from Angola.

Cuba

Being an ally of the USSR, Cuba was one of the most influential foreign actors in the Angolan Civil War, providing significant support to the MPLA. Cuba has sent tens of thousands of troops since the beginning of the war. This aid played a crucial role in securing the MPLA's control of Luanda and its establishment as the government. Cuban forces were directly involved in several key battles, especially at Cuito Cuanavale, where their presence helped force South African forces to retreat. Nelson Mandela even claimed that this victory "destroyed the myth of the invincibility of the white oppressor," and weakened the apartheid regime. Later on, Cuba withdrew its forces from Angola under the New York Accords.

IV. Focused Overview of the Issue

1. Leading up to the war

As colonialism was on the verge of collapse in Africa, Angola was seeking independence from Portuguese colonial rule. In this fight, between 1961 and 1974, three main actors fought for independence from Portugal: the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), the National Liberation Front of Angola (FNLA), and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA).

Following a coup in Portugal, Angola finally succeeded in its 13-year-long war of independence and was freed from Portuguese rule in 1974. Negotiations for the future of Angola were being conducted, and the Alvor Agreement was signed, which promised shared governance between the three groups and



Portugal. However, the transitional government was not to last long, with the MPLA, UNITA, and FNLA growing increasingly distrustful of each other.

As Angola was just being freed from colonialism, the three movements that once fought against the Portuguese for its liberation were all seeking to be the sole authority. The MPLA, UNITA, and FNLA were now, with the common enemy gone, on the verge of a bloody civil war.

2. Proxy War

Starting in the middle of the Cold War, this conflict, as many at the time, was just as much of a proxy war as it was a civil war. The MPLA, with its Marxist ideology, was quick to garner Soviet support, and the USA supported, at least early on in the war, the anti-communist FNLA. The USA, fearing Angola becoming a Soviet ally, also supported the UNITA, which was Maoist in the war of independence, but abandoned the ideology for a more anti-communist one to get increased US support.

Apart from the main actors in the Cold War, the MPLA was also supported by Soviet allies, especially Cuba. UNITA was supported by apartheid South Africa. Mao Zedong's PRC, opposing Soviet expansion, supported the FNLA and the UNITA. In addition to these nations, other countries also supported these groups with military trading and arms smuggling, which will be mentioned in detail later in the report.

It is also important to note that the MPLA and UNITA were supported early on by Cuba and South Africa, respectively, with Cuban intervention increasing from military advisors to tens of thousands of soldiers in response to the South African Defence Forces' (SADF) involvement before US and USSR involvement.

3. 1975-1989

With increasing foreign support, the groups gained strength until 1975, when armed conflict began. It was in this early period that Cuban support established the MPLA as the de facto government. Cuban forces pushed back the SADF forces and both UNITA and FNLA, establishing MPLA control in Luanda. Having control of the capital, Luanda, the MPLA declared independence and claimed to be the government of Angola, which was recognised by many African nations. Agostinho Neto, the president of this new country, the People's Republic of Angola. Meanwhile, UNITA also declared independence and called itself the Social Democratic Republic of Angola, under the leadership of Jonas Savimbi. Despite also declaring itself the government, the FNLA had a short influence in the war, joining forces with UNITA after an early defeat.

In 1977, the Interior Minister Nito Alves gained power and followers called Nitistas in the MPLA. Neto, becoming distrustful of Alves, abolished the ministry, which resulted in Alves attempting to arrest Neto in a meeting but failing to do so due to a location change. The MPLA later dismissed Alves in a vote.



Following this, some of Alves' followers in the military attempted a coup. They freed some imprisoned Nitistas in an attack on a prison and they took over a radio station to announce the coup. The government responded by arresting and killing thousands of Nitistas, with an estimated 30,000 killed according to Amnesty International. Two years after the coup, Neto died and was replaced by José Eduardo dos Santos.

In most of the 80s, the conflict became more of a proxy war than ever, with MPLA and UNITA trying to get more and more support from the USSR and the USA, respectively. By this time, Angola was a key part of the Cold War. It was also during this period that the Clark Amendment, banning US support to Angolan parties, was lifted. Hence, UNITA was at an increased effort to gather support from the US public, especially influential conservatives who are more likely to support the anti-communist group.

Throughout 1987, SADF and MPLA troops were clashing in bigger and bigger wars. One of these attacks, by the UNITA and the SADF on an MPLA base in Cuito Cuanavale, was the biggest war in Africa since WW2. This 14-year period of fighting resulted in the death of 500,000 people in Angola.

4. 1989 and after

As the war approached a brief period of peace, talks in New York resulted in the withdrawal of foreign troops from Angola. The Security Council passed Resolution 626 and established the peacekeeping force, United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM).

After a long period of fighting in the past decades, the parties decided to hold diplomatic talks upon the invitation of the President of Zaire, now the Democratic Republic of Congo. This was soon after both Cuba and South Africa started withdrawing their troops. Both dos Santos and Savimbi were in attendance at the peace talks. A ceasefire was brokered, but misinterpretations over whether Savimbi had accepted going into exile made the ceasefire short-lasting. The ceasefire achieved in 1989 barely lasted a month, and the fighting resumed.

In 1990, as the Cold War started to settle down, Angola transformed into a more democratic country, with the MPLA abandoning Marxism as its ideology and establishing the multi-party system. Following this, the parties once again held talks, this time in Portugal. The resulting Bicesse Accords promised the integration of UNITA as a political party into the elections and parliament, and its soldiers' addition to the army. The elections were conducted under the supervision of the United Nations Angola Verification Mission II (UNAVEM II) and were considered free and fair, despite some issues with reaching some UNITA-controlled regions. The results of the first round showed dos Santos of the MPLA to be victorious. UNITA protested the results, calling it fraudulent, and pledged to resume combat. No second round was held.



Immediately after this, the government started a purge on UNITA supporters and approximately 10,000 were killed in what came to be known as the Halloween Massacre. Fighting resumed following the brief attempt at peace. The Security Council implemented embargoes on UNITA through Resolutions 1173 and 1295. Later in 1994, the Lusaka Protocol, which also promised the integration of the UNITA into the government and army, was signed but failed due to a lack of trust. The fighting has since continued despite the collapse of the USSR and the withdrawal of US support

V. Important Events & Chronology

Date (Day/Month/Year)	Event
10/12/1956	The MPLA was founded
04/02/1961	The Angolan War of Independence began
1961	FNLA is founded
13/03/1966	UNITA was founded
25/04/1974	A coup in Portugal topples the regime, and the new regime retreats from Africa
15/01/1975	The Alvor Accords are signed, detailing the transition plan for Angola
07/1975	MPLA captures Luanda
23/10/1975	South Africa intervenes in the conflict
11/11/1975	MPLA declares the People's Republic of Angola
09/02/1976	The Clark Amendment becomes US law, prohibiting US support for UNITA
27/05/1977	The Nitistas attempt a coup d'état
10/09/1979	MPLA leader and Angolan President Neto dies, and is replaced by dos Santos
07/1985	The Clark Amendment is lifted
14/08/1987 – 23/03/1988	The Battle of Cuito Cuanavale
22/12/1988	The New York Accords are signed, bringing the withdrawal of foreign troops from Angola. UNAVEM is established
22/06/1989	The Gbadolite Declaration is made, establishing a ceasefire
31/05/1991	The Bicesse Accords are signed, and UNAVEM II is established
29/09/1992 – 30/09/1992	The elections are held, and dos Santos is victorious
30/10/1992 – 01/11/1992	The Halloween Massacre takes place



19/05/1993	The US recognises the MPLA as the legitimate Angolan government
31/10/1994	The Lusaka Protocol is signed

VI. Past Resolutions and Treaties

- [UNSC Resolution 626](#)
- [UNSC Resolution 1127](#)
- [UNSC Resolution 1173](#)
- The Alvor Agreement - this agreement tried to establish a transitional government after the end of colonial rule.
- The New York Accords - the accords outline the withdrawal of foreign troops from Angola in addition to other issues like Namibian independence
- Gbadolite Declaration - the first attempt at a ceasefire since the start of the civil war
- Bicesse Accords - Elections and the integration of UNITA into the government are decided
- Lusaka Protocols - another attempt is made at creating a government, like in the Alvor Agreement

Although the treaties were ratified by both the MPLA and UNITA, their implementation often lacked oversight, and nothing was keeping the parties from resuming fighting. Hence, the treaties failed to make a lasting peace in the region

VII. Failed Solution Attempts

There have been many attempts at creating a government where both the MPLA and UNITA can be represented. The Alvor Agreement and the Lusaka Protocol both had the aim of creating a balance of power, with both parties having ministers. These attempts failed as the parties were becoming increasingly distrustful of each other after years of fighting and had incompatible ideologies, with the MPLA being Marxist for a long time. Coming to the Bicesse Accords, it was perhaps the closest Angola has been to peace since before the war. Elections were held under a relatively peaceful atmosphere, and the MPLA candidate won with around 49% of the votes. UNITA, however, protested the results and called the elections fraudulent despite UN observers deeming them generally fair and free.

The failure of UNITA to abide by the Bicesse Accords resulted in it being embargoed by the UN and the US recognising the MPLA. However, the MPLA, despite now having no strong foreign support, continued its actions with the money it earned from the mines it controls.



VIII. Possible Solutions

A transitional government and an election having proved ineffective previously, the remaining solutions seem to be to drive UNITA into defeat by eliminating its funding and aiding the MPLA government. Considering that the MPLA gets most of its funding from the sale of blood diamonds and buys arms from foreign nations. The Security Council has implemented certification for Angolan diamonds through Resolution 1173, but UNITA was able to fund its activities through diamond mines. Hence, it is clear that the sources of the diamonds, especially those leaving conflict zones, should be checked clearly, and diamond companies should be held accountable for breaching such protocols. With reduced funding, it is unlikely that the UNITA will be able to fight for long. As an additional benefit, such a protocol may help other African countries in conflict in similar ways.

Additionally, another possibly effective but violent solution could be to aid the MPLA in securing its authority over the diamond mines and the territory controlled by UNITA. This process can provide a victory for the MPLA but risks more damage to civilians, costs more money, and only benefits this conflict. It is also plausible to do both of these at once, adding protocols to detect blood diamonds while also aiding the Angolan government against UNITA.

IX. Useful Links

- [The Angolan Civil War – A Cold War Microcosm? In - Linz](#)
- [The Origins of the Angolan Civil War International Politics and Domestic Political Conflict 1961-1976](#)

X. Works Cited

“ANGOLA.” *Hrw.org*, 2025, www.hrw.org/reports/1989/WR89/Angola.htm. Accessed 24 Aug. 2025.

“Angola - Communist Nations.” *Countrystudies.us*, 2025, countrystudies.us/angola/111.htm. Accessed 24 Aug. 2025.

“Arms Trade [Angola: Arms Trade A].” *Hrw.org*, 2025, www.hrw.org/reports/archives/africa/ANGOLA94N.htm. Accessed 24 Aug. 2025.

Bailey, Thomas. “The Angolan Civil War: 26 Years of Fighting | TheCollector.” *TheCollector*, 2024, www.thecollector.com/angolan-civil-war-fighting-26-years/. Accessed 24 Aug. 2025.

Baugh, L Sue. “Proxy War | Definition, History, Examples, & Risks.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 31 Aug. 2023, www.britannica.com/topic/proxy-war. Accessed 24 Aug. 2025.



- “Congressional Record - 101st Congress (1989-1990) - THOMAS (Library of Congress).” *Archive.org*, 2025, web.archive.org/web/20140810210840/thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?r101:E16OC0-475: Accessed 24 Aug. 2025.
- “Fifty Years Ago, Angola Looked Forward to a False Dawn.” *Jacobin.com*, 2025, jacobin.com/2025/01/angola-portugal-alvor-agreement. Accessed 24 Aug. 2025.
- “Historical Documents - Office of the Historian.” *State.gov*, 2025, history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1977-80v16/d37. Accessed 24 Aug. 2025.
- “History of U.S.-Angola.” *U.S. Embassy to Angola and Sao Tome and Principe*, 4 Oct. 2024, ao.usembassy.gov/our-relationship/history-of-u-s-angola/#:~:text=In%20response%2C%20U.S.%20President%20Bill,to%20accept%20a%20negotiated%20settlement. Accessed 24 Aug. 2025.
- “Peace Accords for Angola (Bicesse Accords) | Peacemaker.” *Un.org*, June 1991, peacemaker.un.org/en/node/9614. Accessed 24 Aug. 2025.
- The. “Blood Diamond | Conflict, Trade & Human Rights.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 28 Sept. 2011, www.britannica.com/topic/blood-diamond. Accessed 24 Aug. 2025.
- The Gbadolite Declaration on Angola*.
- Thornton, John Kelly, and William Gervase Clarence-Smith. “Angola | History, Capital, Flag, Map, Population, Language, & Religion.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 26 July 1999, www.britannica.com/place/Angola/Angola-in-the-21st-century. Accessed 24 Aug. 2025.
- “UNAVEM II.” *Un.org*, 2025, peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/past/Unavem2/UnavemIIB.htm. Accessed 24 Aug. 2025.