SOUTHERN AFRICA: CIVIL SOCIETY, POLITICS AND DONOR STRATEGIES

Angola and its neighbours — South Africa, Namibia, Mozambique, Democratic Republic of Congo and Zimbabwe

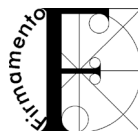# Southern Africa: Civil Society, Politics and Donor Strategies

ANGOLA AND ITS NEIGHBOURS — SOUTH AFRICA, NAMIBIA, MOZAMBIQUE, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO AND ZIMBABWE

Edited by
Nuno Vidal with Patrick Chabal

Media XXI & Firmamento

CONTENTS

III – SOUTHERN AFRICA CONTEXT
SOUTH AFRICA, NAMIBIA, MOZAMBIQUE, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO & ZIMBABWE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

PREFACE

This book is part of a research project initiated in September 2004 by the Catholic University of Angola and the University of Coimbra, Portugal. The project represents a process of reflection and publication on democratisation and development in Angola and southern Africa; it has hosted two international conferences in Luanda (August 2004 and September 2008) and published two books: *O Processo de Transição para o Multipartidarismo em Angola* — The Multiparty Transition Process in Angola (Luanda 2006, 2007 & 2008) and *Sociedade Civil e Política em Angola, enquadramento regional e internacional* — Civil Society and Politics in Angola within a regional and international framework (Luanda 2008 & 2009). In 2009, the University of Wageningen joined the project.

After the 2008 conference and throughout 2009, it was believed that it would be useful, indeed necessary, to bring the analysis, reflection and discussion which had been developing to one of the principal international donors, the European Parliament. This resulted in the organisation of a new international conference, *Southern Africa: civil society, politics, development and donor strategies*, at the European Parliament in Brussels on November 17, 2009, and in the publication of this book.

We are dealing with a long-term process which seeks to bridge the scientific academic arena with that of organisations, with activism and civic advocacy developing in spaces beyond universities, incorporating NGOs, associations, community-based organisations, the media, trade unions and the Churches, in the hope of stimulating wider discussion, reflection and action on development and democratisation in Africa.

It is well known that Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) are often critical of universities for being inward looking and for a perceived inability to become more objectively active in the societies in which they are engaged. Equally well known are the academic world's reservations about the research, reflection and documentation developed by CSOs, as well as academic caution about incursions into activism on contemporary political and economic life, always a sensitive issue in African societies.

Uniting these arenas, which have mostly stayed apart from each other, within a joint project of collaboration and interaction, of research, analysis, reflection and action, is a risky and ambitious challenge. It is one, however, which the promoters of this project thought necessary and urgent, given the complexity and scope of the problems which contemporary African societies face in terms of democracy and development. The present situation calls for greater and more determined efforts to unite and involve all social sectors, where universities are the key reference points as centres of analysis and support for sustainable action.

This was the basis upon which this project and book adopted a methodology bringing together civil society, academics and activists from various African countries, seeking to cross-fertilise and learn from different experiences. Coming from different socio-professional backgrounds, the contributing authors to this publication present papers which reflect varying perspectives, approaches and treatment of the issues and countries analysed.

Structured around the stated objectives, the book begins with a general introduction to the theme by Patrick Chabal, a well known and leading scholar on African studies, offering analysis of political transition and civil society in Africa. The book is then divided into three chapters, two of these dedicated to Angola and the third on a range of countries in southern Africa.

Chapter One analyses Angola from the perspective of internal socio-economic and political organisation in relation to external or international issues and actors. The chapter comprises texts by authors who have studied and worked on Angola for many years. David Sogge, Bob van der Winden and René Roersma are well known consultants with a range of published reports and articles on Angola, all of whom worked for various international organisations in Angola and other African countries. Kristin Reed and Maliana Marcelino Serrano are academics whose recent doctoral theses dealing with Angola are of significant importance and impact, and are the fruit of intense field research in areas of the country where little research has been conducted.

Chapter Two deals primarily with Angola from the perspective of internal power relations, and also addresses external issues where relevant. The chapter presents opinion that is deeply influenced by the experience of the authors in question, all of whom have a long background of civic and political activism in Angolan civil society organisations, while some are also academics of renown. This is the case for Justino Pinto de Andrade (political analyst and commentator for a number of newspapers and *Radio Ecclesia*, and professor and director of the Faculty of Economics at the Catholic University of Angola), and also for Fernando Macedo (ex-president of Association Justice Peace and Democracy and professor at the Lusíada University of Angola and the University of Agostinho Neto). Fernando Pacheco is a well known civil society analyst with many published works and vast experience of working with rural communities. He was a founding member and president for many years of ADRA (Action for Rural Development and Environment), one of the largest Angolan NGOs, and a reference point internally and externally. Sérgio Calundungo and Carlos Figueiredo are also prominent members of ADRA, both with great experience of working with international NGOs and with rural and peri-urban communities, and frequent participants in national and international opinion forums on Angola. Both have published regularly in this area. Benjamim Castello is a member of Angola Jubileu 2000 and is employed by the Ministry of Agriculture. He has worked for a number of national and international NGOs and has a long record of civic activism, with extensive participation in national, regional and international meetings on development and civil society in Africa. Michael Comerford did his doctoral thesis on the Angolan peace processes, with particular attention to the role of the churches in the resolution of conflict. He has also worked with NGOs in Angola and in the southern Africa region.

The third and last chapter focusing on southern Africa presents analysis by specialists from different countries who, in the majority of cases, follow the general rule of combining civic activist engagement with academic investigation. Dale McKinley, as well as having a doctorate in political science, is a committed activist in the South Africa Indaba Social Movements, and is involved in various political

and civic activities in the poor townships of Johannesburg. He has numerous academic publications and commitments across South Africa and beyond. Henning Melber, a member of SWAPO in Namibia during the liberation struggle, also has a doctorate in political science and a range of academic publications dedicated to the analysis of post-independence Namibia. Manuel de Araújo and Raúl Chambote are Mozambican academics, members of the Centre for Mozambican and International Studies. Both are currently concluding their doctoral theses in London on contemporary Mozambican social and political reality. Manuel de Araújo also had a political career as a FRELIMO parliamentarian. Leo Zeilig is a researcher at the University of the Witwatersrand and the Centre for Sociological Research in Johannesburg, and his work deals with political transition in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Elinor Sisulu, Pascal Richard and Steve Kibble wrote the text on Zimbabwe, and their work is the combined opinion of three activists with different careers who came together in the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, an international alliance of activists and organisations concerned with the defence of human rights in Zimbabwe. Elinor Sisulu is a well known human rights activist, while Pascal Richard and Steve Kibble have had academic careers, and are both currently involved in political-civic activism. The three are frequently present in regional and international meetings discussing these issues, as well as various human rights advocacy activities inside and outside Africa.

Introduction

Patrick Chabal
King's College London

INTRODUCTION

POLITICAL TRANSITIONS AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN AFRICA

Patrick Chabal
King's College London

If democratisation is in part a way for civil society to play a greater role in public life, what impact have recent political transitions, including elections in Angola, had in southern Africa? The question is important because that country is coming out of a long history of civil strife and needs to rebuild its society. But it is also of some consequence for the future of southern Africa because most political theorists see multiparty polls as the main avenue allowing for the emergence of an active civil society. What, therefore, can the experience of Angola tell us about the existence, role and future of civil society in the region and, more generally, in Africa? And what light can the experience of post-colonial Africa shed on the current transitions in Angola?

These questions are simple enough to ask but complicated to tackle — and this for two sets of different reasons. The first is that the history of Angola may turn out to make it a case apart, sharing little with other countries in the region. It may be difficult to compare its evolution to that of its neighbours. Hence it will be necessary to examine in some detail the trajectory of the country before embarking on any comparative exercise. The second is that there is no working consensus on what civil society actually is, even if the concept is freely used by Africanist scholars, journalists and NGO experts. Here too, we will need to work out more clearly what it is that civil society can mean in contemporary Africa.

I shall not in this Introduction attempt to give a history of Angola, an account of the civil war that ended in 2002 or of the political events that marked the period 1991-2002. This information is to be found in a previous volume.[1] I will instead concentrate attention on the question of the relevance of civil society to political transitions within the ambit of the evolution of Africa's post-colonial politics. In other words, I want to try to understand how the so-called Angola exception fits with regional and continental

---

[1] Patrick Chabal & Nuno Vidal (eds.), *Angola: the weight of history* (London/New York: Hurst/Columbia University Press, 2007)

development in Africa. Indeed, it is one of the arguments of this Introduction that the reluctance to study Angola within the wider African context is responsible for the failure to understand its evolution more clearly.

But first I must provide a few definitions if we are not to be left in great uncertainty. What do we mean when we speak of democracy and civil society? Although these concepts are rarely discussed explicitly in the literature, which itself is a problem, there is an implicit consensus in Africanist writing. *Democracy* is essentially conceived in procedural terms: a constitutionally sanctioned system of multiparty elections in which there is freedom of political participation and competition; where elections are (reasonably) free and fair; where presidential and government changes are directly the result of the elections; and where these transitions take place peacefully and in an orderly fashion. *Civil society* is most often defined as those societal organisations that are not competing directly for political office and whose aims are charitable, developmental or advocatory. Accordingly, a vigorous civil society is one in which civil society organisations (or CSOs) are seen to be free to organise, act and operate without fear of intimidation or violence.

My remarks are in three parts. First, I shall discuss the assumptions behind the study of transitions to democracy (or what is sometimes called 'transitology') with respect to the relationship between civil society and democracy. Second, I shall examine the evidence with regard to the evolution of civil society in contemporary Africa. Finally, I shall bring the analysis to bear on Angola, and ask what effect the holding of multiparty elections might have had on the role civil society could play in 'democratisation'.

I

The study of democratic transitions has a long, and chequered, history in comparative politics. Its origins are to be found in the aftermath of the Second World War when political scientists were trying to come to terms with the consequences of communist and fascist totalitarianism. However, it really evolved into a genuine academic field of study when in the seventies the three main European authoritarian polities (Greece, Spain and Portugal) moved to a democratic multiparty political dispensation. It was then consolidated analytically to account for the transitions towards democracy that took place in South America from the eighties onwards. From a conceptual perspective, therefore, it was these experiences that provided the theoretical templates for the explanation of what was called the third wave of democratisation — namely, the democratic transitions in Asia and Africa.

Although the genealogy of 'transitology' is not directly relevant to our discussion here, I want to point out its main assumptions, since it is those very assumptions that are applied to Africa generally and to Angola more specifically. The first is that democracy is path driven: democratic practice brings forth benefits that call for more democracy — both individuals and institutions see merit in democracy, which results in further democratic consolidation. Second, the best way to democracy is the free expression of *multiparty* politics — whatever the pitfalls of multiparty mobilisation, it is still the best way to channel political demands. Third, democratisation opens up *space* for CSOs — the regular holding of elections allows for debate and advocacy in ways that would not otherwise be possible. Finally, democratisation is conducive to more *accountable* politics — which eventually result in greater governmental commit-

ment to economic development (usually taken to mean better conditions of life).

What is immediately apparent about those assumptions is that (1) they are derived from the experience of democratisation in the Western world and (2) they are causally debatable. We know that democracy as it is currently practised in the West evinces historically rooted procedural forms that have (eventually) resulted in more accountability and more development. However, this does not mean that democracy if of necessity limited to a single format. Nor, more importantly, does it imply that accountability and development are only possible in Western-type of democracies. Therefore, the notion that it is possible to define a democratic 'blueprint' that can be applied anywhere and that will result in greater accountability, development and civility is simply a supposition.

Although much writing has advanced a causal relation between democratisation and economic growth, it is simply impossible to demonstrate that a system of regular multiparty elections is conducive to more development than other political dispensations. Moreover, the lessons of history do not support such contention. In Europe, economic growth predates democratic politics. The current democracy we enjoy in the West was the result, not the pre-condition, of development. In southeast Asia, high levels of economic growth were achieved in distinctly authoritarian countries (South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Malaysia). Here too, it is the emergence of middle classes made possible by economic growth, which led to increasingly insistent demands for greater democratisation. Of course, this does not mean that democracy might not be desirable on other, more normative, grounds but that is a different question.

Whatever one's view on the intrinsic value of democracy, I look now at how current conceptions of democratisation affect our understanding of the politics of civil society in Africa. On the one hand, it is argued that the emergence and gradual strengthening of CSOs have contributed powerfully to the democratisation of the continent. Indeed, many see the origins of the democratic wave, which swept Africa from the late eighties, as the direct outcome of the mobilisation of civil society. On the other hand, there is currently a powerful presumption that democratisation, in the form of multiparty politics, opens up greater space for civil society. This in turn brings about more accountable governments and frees up the market, which then drives economic growth. Once released from the yoke of one-party states, civil society can surge forward and promote greater freedom, which leads to a self-reinforcing virtuous spiral of political and economic development.

The belief in the importance of the role of civil society is such in development circles that present mechanisms (most notably the World Bank's Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, or PSRPs) for the disbursement of foreign aid require civil society validation of development plans. What this means in practice is that governments must go through a formal consultation process, in which CSOs are given an opportunity to scrutinise development policies, before the international community validates aid transfers to the countries concerned. On the face of it, therefore, democratisation in Africa makes possible the formally institutionalised contribution of civil society to policy making. In this reading, democratisation is seen to have brought about the full participation of CSOs, to the obvious benefit of the country as a whole.

It is useful to raise two questions about this interpretation of recent politics in Africa. The first has to do with the extent to which both democratisation and the implication of CSOs in politics are genuinely the result of societal mobilisation. The second is whether the impact of civil society activism is as straightforward as is implied by this reading of the last twenty years.

On the first issue, it seems there is some confusion between cause and effect. Historically, it can be shown that the calls for democracy and the emergence of CSOs were primarily due to pressure from the international community, which despaired at the lack of development in an Africa of single-party states. It is only after aid conditionalities required multiparty elections and civil society participation that these changes actually took place. As assistance became predicated on such conditionalities, most governments in Africa had no choice but to comply since they could not function without foreign aid. On the other hand, countries like Angola that can avoid conditionalities can, and do, resist democratisation. Of course, where there are no political freedoms it is difficult to gauge public demand for reform but equally it is not possible to assume that such demands would be for the kind of democratisation advocated by the West. People may have other ideas of how best to improve their living conditions.[2]

Concerning civil society activism, it is far from clear that it has a decisive influence on the politics of accountability and development. Here too, there is plenty of evidence that both the types of CSOs that are set up and the policies they advocate are largely driven by the considerations of the donor community. This is not surprising since most CSOs in Africa are funded from outside. Whatever the aims of the international community in this regard, it cannot simply be taken for granted that the role of organisations that are primarily linked to their foreign donors are the best vehicles for the representation of the views of ordinary men and women and of policies they most desire. Indeed, the fact that such CSOs are very largely accountable to outsiders turns out to be a real problem, which most development assistance experts ought not to neglect.

II

Having teased out the assumptions behind current conceptualisations of democracy and civil society, I now move to an analysis of the evolution of civil society in contemporary Africa. Ten years ago, *Africa Works* spoke of 'the illusions of civil society'.[3] In a nutshell, the argument was that there could not be in contemporary Africa a civil society in the sense in which it is understood in the West — and this for two sets of reasons. The first was that in Africa society was not functionally dissociated from the state, since the realm of politics was not independent from the social, economic and cultural spheres. The second was that most CSOs were either funded from outside or conceived domestically as political instruments by those who founded or directed them. The result was that, with some rare exceptions, CSOs were prone to the same neo-patrimonial and clientelistic dynamics as all other political institutions. In that

---

[2] On the question of what it is that 'ordinary' people actually want, see my new book: *Africa: the politics of suffering and smiling* (London: Zed Press, 2009).
[3] Patrick Chabal & Jean-Pascal Daloz, *Africa Works: disorder as political instrument* (Oxford: James Currey, 1999), chapter 2.

sense, civil society was an integral part of the fabric of formal and informal organisations through which power was exercised in contemporary Africa.

This was not to deny that there were in Africa a large number of individuals who were committed to civil society activism as practised in the West. Nor was it to neglect those domestically rooted (professional, vocational or religious) organisations that gave voice to those who were not represented in everyday politics. It was simply to point out that there was little scope in contemporary Africa for the type of civil society that, as happened in Eastern Europe in the 1980s, could play a decisive political role in the substantive transformation of the political system. Therefore, the expectation that CSOs could *both* give expression to the various sectors of society and remain independent from the politics of the ruling elite was in our view not warranted. We suggested it was more important to understand how power was exercised than to hypothesise a sudden, somewhat miraculous, transformation of society that could *ipso facto* democratise politics in Africa.

Since the publication of the book many have argued that we were wrong on at least two counts. The first was that there were in Africa a number of independent organisations that operated outside the purview of the state and were openly critical of government. The second was that CSOs clearly played a major role in the democratisation of politics on the continent, either directly through electoral campaigns or indirectly through their influence on policy. On the surface this may look to be true but the interpretation of what is going on is not so straightforward. Or, to put it another way, the dynamics of the relationship between civil society and state may not be what they appear to be — namely the gradual assertion of civil society in a game of increasingly democratic politics. A number of processes seem instead to comfort our original thesis.

One is that many CSOs are political parties in disguise, designed to ease the accession of their leaders to political posts. Another is that not a few CSOs are taken over by political elites and thereby instrumentalised politically. Yet another is that numerous CSOs are set up purely for the purpose of tapping into foreign funding, since in the last two decades an increasing proportion of donor aid has been channelled directed to 'civil society'. Furthermore, a number of CSOs have come to life as a result of the determination of the donor community to put specific issues (e.g., decentralisation, gender) on the agenda. Finally, and paradoxically in view of the 'theory' of civil society to which the West pays lip service, the few grassroots community organisations that have not been instrumentalised politically are in jeopardy today because they do not meet the criteria of Western bureaucratic organisation and accountability and are therefore not entitled to outside funding.

Broadly, what we see in Africa is that it is not helpful to conceive state and civil society as separate. They must instead be analysed as two facets of the political process as it has unfolded in the last twenty years under the influence of the international community. The discourse of democratisation and civil society has led to the mirage that the actual nature of politics has changed, whereas in truth only its appearance has mutated. Or rather, the Western template has been adapted to the political, social and cultural realities of contemporary Africa. Donors may like to think that civil society stands outside the purview of state politics, reflecting the opinions and demands of those who are not represented in 'official' politics. In fact, and this is critical, both the

population at large and the political elites look upon CSOs as players in the larger political game in which all (including the state) are involved.

Multiparty elections and the emergence of CSOs funded from outside have changed the aspect of the political game but they have not brought about a *systemic* transformation of that political game. In Africa, it remains as true today as it was forty years ago that power is about the control of resources. Accordingly, there is only one possible ambition for politicians, and that is to control the state. Multiparty elections complicate the game and lead to increasingly acute competition, or even violence, but they are merely an additional obstacle on the road to the capture of power.

There is no place for an opposition, as there is in Western democracies; not even for coalition government — as we see today, for example, in Kenya and Zimbabwe — where outside pressure has resulted in hybrid governments that are unlikely to work and may not last long. Politics is about winner-take-all. What passes for civil society may affect the way in which political contests occur and may provide additional channels of political progress for politicians and their supporters. It does not alter the nature and the purpose of politics. Nor does it affect fundamentally the fabric of the exercise of power.

If we understand that state and civil society are inextricably bound within a given political, social and cultural matrix, then it will be easier to assess the potential role of civil society in Africa's political transitions. Let us first leave aside the Western normative presumption that civil society might in some sense keep the political game on the straight and narrow — act as a check on the politicians, as it were. This, as I have explained is not possible in present circumstances. Let us also discard the notion that civil society participation in politics can be read as evidence of 'democracy' since what is on offer today in Africa is not Western-style democracy but more or less democratic accountability. Let us finally do away with the argument that only a 'vibrant' civil society can ensure 'proper' democratisation — both what 'vibrant' and 'proper' mean are entirely determined by Western expectations and do not match realities on the ground.

In the circumstances, what is today called civil society is in effect a conglomerate of three separate types of organisation.

The first are the CSOs created and financed by outside donors, whose *raison d'être* is primarily to meet the expectations, and demands, of the international community. They represent today the majority of organisations that are seen by the West to act as civil society.

The second consists of professional, vocational and economic associations (e.g., lawyers, journalists, businessmen, chambers of commerce, churches, trade unions), which bring together those who share work, professional activities or spiritual activities. Although these do have common interests, which bind them together, they remain entwined in the politics of clientelism and reciprocity that mark African societies.

The third is made up of grassroots groupings set up locally for economic, social or cultural purposes (the three are not easily dissociated) — these include burial

associations, *tontines*, age groups, cooperatives, water management groups, ethnic groupings, etc. They appear to be the least conspicuous and the most 'disorganised' of all CSOs.

Nevertheless, it is in my view only the third group that qualifies as an embryo 'indigenous' civil society since it is the only one that is rooted in the autonomous expression of those who are trying to reconcile practical needs with the deployment of the socio-cultural means available to them. It is thus of particular concern that such groupings are almost entirely neglected by donors who have made it their mission to argue, and support financially, African civil society.

Thus, the argument that civil society is necessary for democracy rests on a double sleight of hand. The first is that what obtains today in Western democracies is a requisite to, rather than the result of, democratisation as it occurred historically in the West. But in truth, in the West civil society did not preside over democratisation; it became possible once democratisation was taking place. The second is that the priority in Africa is for donors to create, fund and sustain CSOs on the Western model. What would be required instead would be to respond to the genuine demands made by those organically rooted associations that are the sinews of every day local politics and socio-cultural concerns. Whether such demands include a call for democracy in the form of multiparty elections is doubtful but they would certainly support greater ('traditional' or 'modern') forms of accountability.

III

The case of Angola is in many respects very different from that of the rest of Africa. I have written elsewhere of the factors that make that country distinct from most others and I shall not rehearse these points again.[4] I want instead to explain why I think that Angola is not so different as to merit a *sui generis* approach. Or rather I would like to show that Angola's distinctiveness is best understood within a comparative African perspective. Of all the factors that set the country apart from its neighbours, three might be thought to have decisive influence on the question of civil society: the distinctiveness of the Luanda Creole elite that controls power; the long history of (anti-colonial and civil) war; and the possession of immense oil (and diamond) reserves. I discuss their respective importance before I move to a more general assessment of the relationship between civil society and democratisation.

Both the distinctiveness and the dominance of the Luanda Creole elite are not to be disputed; they are historical facts that continue to affect the social and political complexion of the country and will have decisive influence on what happens for years to come. However, if one considers them as an ethnic, rather than a separate racial and/or cultural group, then their uniqueness begins to pale. There are, or have been, in Africa similar groupings, which have held prominent social, economic and political power. They include, of course, the various 'Arab' Muslim communities of traders on the East African coast, who were prominent until the consolidation of colonial rule — and remain so in places like Zanzibar. On the other side of continent, one could mention the American Creoles in Liberia, who held power

---

[4] Patrick Chabal & Nuno Vidal (eds.), *Angola: the weight of history* (London/New York: Hurst/Columbia University Press, 2007), Introduction.

until Doe overthrew the regime, or the various Creole communities to be found on the West coast of Africa (from Mauritania to Guinea), including the four Communes of Senegal and early Sierra Leone — many of which had disproportionate economic or political sway.

The point here is not so much to try to minimise the specificities of the Luanda Creoles, whose own make up is in any event quite complicated, but simply to register the important fact that they ought not to be viewed as though they were unique in Africa. This is important not just because this point is almost never made — most of those who write on Angola are Lusophone specialists — but because such an approach makes it possible to set the evolution of Angola within a broader African perspective. If the present Luanda Creoles are not as distinct as they are thought to be — both by themselves and by outsiders — then it becomes possible to envisage a future in which their identity and their privileged position in society might change — as has happened to similar groupings elsewhere. It may be that such change will take nothing short of a revolution but it ought not to be excluded on the spurious historical ground that the Luanda Creoles have an innate (or permanent) right to rule.

A closer analysis of the political system over which the Creole elites preside in Angola makes plain that it is by no means unique in Africa. In point of fact, it can be seen as a variant of the patrimonialism that is to be found in all countries, albeit in different guise. The main features of that dispensation is that politics is a zero-sum game; that the rulers control the country's resources and dispose of them in ways that ensure both legitimacy and support as *required* for the purpose of staying in power; that incumbent regimes are undefeated in elections except on those rare occasions when the opposition is strongly united; and that opposition politics is primarily a means of coming to power so as to have access to public resources. Notable about such politics is that, regardless of the impact of multiparty elections, regime changes have failed to bring about a systemic transformation that would have strengthened institutionalisation, encouraged economic development, brought about an acceptance of the rules of democratic political change and provided a recognised autonomous space for civil society.

What appears to be distinct about the Luanda Creoles is the result of the combination of specific historical factors, which have conspired to make them appear immutably central to the country's fate. Of particular importance is their uninterrupted domination of the Luanda region and its hinterland since the sixteenth century and their ability to keep a hold on both economic and political power. Equally, their links with Brazil and Portugal have brought them great rewards. Historically, their access to the cultural and educational prizes available under colonial rule ensured their dominance in all social and political activities for which such knowledge was an asset. Finally, their ability to negotiate with the Portuguese during the final colonial convulsions placed them in the seat of power, giving them a decisive advantage over their rivals. Moreover, their agility in deploying the universalist discourses of non-racial/ethnic politics has made them more recognisably 'modern' than their erstwhile, ostensibly more 'traditional', UNITA rivals.

Looked at in another way, however, the Luanda Creoles behave like any other ethnic group in Africa. Admittedly, the criteria of belonging are not those that come most

readily to mind when thinking of ethnicity. But this is only because most analysts continue to operate with a restricted and unhistorical notion of ethnicity — of which the belief that it is fixed and unchanging is the key. In fact, we know that ethnicity is but one of many markers of identity; that it is contingent and fluid, constantly re-defined by circumstances; and that it becomes politically salient when it is used instrumentally for partisan purposes. If ethnicity has become so significant in post-colonial Africa it is precisely because it has been used as the vehicle for political competition — not because it has expunged the other markers of identity.

The Luanda Creole ethnic group has in this respect been both flexible and fluid, enabling new, and then 'newer', Creoles into the fold over time in the full knowledge that such new members retained links with other social, or even ethnic, groupings. The defining criterion in this respect has not been race or geographical origins but allegiance to the regime in place and more particularly to the President. Seen in this way, it is clear that the operative notion of 'ethnicity' has been used creatively in order to incorporate newcomers into one of the various patrimonial circles, which are at the heart of the Angolan political system. In a well-rehearsed clientelistic practice, those who have given allegiance to the Creole ruling elite have been allowed entry into that ethnicity, as it were — thus making for a degree of elasticity that has facilitated the exercise of patrimonial rule. It may well be that changes in the future will completely re-define Creole ethnicity but for the time being this is a useful way of conceptualising it.

The special place of the Luanda Creoles has been consolidated by the other two factors that are specific to Angola: the long history of war and the possession of huge natural resources.

The fact that the MPLA, the political expression of the Creoles, was able to emerge from the anti-colonial struggle as a supposedly 'modern' party representing the non-ethnic and non-racial groupings that sought a promising socialist future helped legitimise its nationalist standing. Although it lacked the legitimacy of the uncontested nationalist voice of other African anti-colonial movements, the MPLA could portray itself as the only party dedicated to building an Angola on the template of the more advanced (socialist) countries. This may not have made it more acceptable in those parts of the country that supported the rival FNLA or UNITA. But it made it easier to project a modernising national image that made light of a past, which other ethnic groupings tended to see as that of an exploiting (and, to them, mainly 'foreign') aristocracy.

Paradoxically, the consequence of being ostracised by the United States (which nevertheless continued to do business with the regime) as a communist or Soviet stooge lent a further badge of universal modernity to a party that was often seen inside the country as merely opportunist. So that the legitimacy of the MPLA did not primarily come from its nationalist credentials, which were violently contested in Angola, but from a discourse and image that were made on the world scene amidst the fury of the Cold War. This was further comforted when the MPLA regime won the contentious 1992 multiparty elections, which bestowed upon it the newly acquired legitimacy of a democratically elected government. It sealed the transformation of a Marxist-Leninist vanguard party into the party of a newly liberalised political system now managing a 'capitalist' economy.

I will not discuss here further the political effects of the war, which others (most notably Christine Messiant) have already explained, but will focus instead on its implications for civil society in Angola. The conflict that ravaged the country between 1975 and 2002 established a war situation, which made possible the suppression of any dissenting opinion and of any social group autonomous from the regime. Even the Catholic Church, which had always been an important actor in Angolan society and (sections of which) had given support to the anti-colonial struggle, was marginalised for much of that period. Other, less historically rooted, organisations were simply not allowed any public space or expression. Civil society during that period was conceived purely in terms of the projection of the MPLA, the only legitimate voice against the internal enemy. Indeed, the imposition of total state control over civil society, which followed the Nito Alves alleged coup attempt in 1977, was not notably relaxed until 1991. The resumption of war after the 1992 elections made possible the continuation of such control, albeit in less repressive garb.

The war, therefore, provided justification for a state of affairs in which there was no room for the expression of 'civil' society, since in that situation the danger of the internal enemy trumped any other claim for liberty. In this respect, it can be argued that such a long period of civil conflict, unheard of anywhere else in Africa (except Sudan), contributed to creating a uniquely entrenched political system that could not countenance the expression of any societal autonomy. This established practices of totalitarian reflexes that were similar to those found in the former Soviet regime or in some other communist regimes.

The substance of these practices was not changed after the transition to a more 'liberal', political and economic order, even if the language was inflected to pay heed to the new official ideology. The combination of a repressive Stalinist past and a history of controlling dissent in the name of the war against the domestic foe have brought about an approach to civil society that is almost unremittingly hostile. To put it plainly, the regime is simply not used to a civil society it does not control — as is made abundantly clear by the role given to the Eduardo dos Santos Foundation that presides over a massively rich and powerful 'official' civil society.

This situation may appear unique in Africa but it is in fact the combination of two processes that are familiar on the continent. The first is a patrimonial system in which the ruler distributes public resources as is required for placating clients and staying in power. The extent of patrimonial distribution is dictated by the type of resources available and the range of support needed. The second is the conviction that there is no need for an autonomous public space for a civil society outside the reach of the political arm of the state. This is because in a patrimonial system, where vertical links are the pillars of politics, society's political voice transits directly from bottom to top by way of the networks that link rulers and followers/clients. By definition, networks combine the public and private, the political and the socio-economic, in ways that by-pass the standard distinction between state and civil society.

A comparative interpretation of Angola's recent history would stress that the war made manifest and more acute a tendency towards a type of patrimonial politics that has no need, or respect, for civil society as it is understood in the West. However, the processes involved are the same as found elsewhere. What is

different is that the restrictive nature of Angola's patrimonialism and the extent of the regime's distaste for an autonomous civil society have been exacerbated to a virtually unprecedented degree by the third factor mentioned above: the availability of enormous natural resources. In most other countries, where such resources are either not available or not so easily controllable by a tiny ruling circle, the demands of patrimonialism and the pressure from society are more insistent and less easily dismissed.

It is indeed access to oil and the instrumentalisation of Sonangol that have made possible the consolidation of the domination of the Luanda Creole elite in the shape of a narrow presidential ruling clique. The fact that this clique is able to channel the revenues from oil into the reproduction of a political system that ensures their hold on power has had dramatic consequences for Angolan society.

First, the regime has been able to restrict clientelism to a series of narrow concentric circles of clients, among which there is constant rotation (hence reducing the possibility of organised opposition). It thus holds the key to the well-being of all those who benefit from governmental largesse or favours. Second, the regime has had no need to cater for society as a whole in order to maintain support. The war meant that all Angolans had to choose: either with the MPLA or becoming enemies. Since the end of the conflict, the choice remains almost as stark: only the MPLA holds the promise of economic reward. Finally, the regime has been wealthy enough to avoid World Bank or other international conditionalities and even to escape close scrutiny of its economic manipulations and political authoritarianism.

Far from being unique, the Angolan regime has demonstrated how elite control of certain national resources (most notably oil) can indulge the extremes of patrimonial practices that are to be found all over Africa. Whilst the combination of a tightly controlled and efficient patrimonial political system is not often found on the continent, the logic of that system is common enough. In turn, the fact that the MPLA regime is so relentlessly hostile to the emergence of an autonomous civic space, or civil society, has to do with a well-founded fear of a serious challenge to its narrow social base and its shallow political legitimacy. The callous neglect of society, which has been the hallmark of the regime for decades, has created a situation in which the population regards support for the MPLA purely in instrumental terms. The 2008 elections forced the regime to give some attention to the voters' demands but it is still not prepared to countenance political opposition, or even criticism, from civil society.

What, then, are the key issues about the nature and role of civil society in contemporary Angola? Or, to put it another way, what are the questions we should be asking if we want to make sense of the type of political transition that is presumed presently to be taking place? There are, it seems to me, two sides to this issue: one has to do with what are the possible foundations of civil society, given the long history of division and violence in Angola; the second whether civil society as it has emerged since the end of the war in 2002 can contribute to a renewal of political practices in the country. It is useful to distinguish between the two, even if they are obviously inter-related, because there is today a tendency to assume a role for civil society that neglects to take into account the historical factors — factors, which place considerable limits on what might be achieved.

A number of recent events combine to give the impression that there is emerging in Angola a strong civil society. The end of the conflict has made possible the organisation of numerous civilian organisations both in the cities and in the rural areas. Foreign NGOs have been relatively free to develop their activities throughout the land. A large number of foreign companies (very many of which are Chinese) are now involved in the rebuilding of the country. Projects mushroom everywhere. The 2008 elections brought acute attention to the socio-political situation in the country. Parties formed and mobilised. Discussions about the role of civil society are permanent, as this volume illustrates. Many foreign journalists and experts come to the country to appraise the situation and give advice. Finally, the oil industry is thriving, bringing in much extra income that filters (albeit in mysterious ways) into society. There was indeed a spending spree during the electoral period.

All in all, it appears that Angola is 'normalising' — an impression that is reinforced by the architectural symbols of modernity now sprouting in the capital. It is in many ways a heady atmosphere, made all the more real by the promise of change embodied in the holding of the long-delayed elections. One can hope; perhaps one must hope. However, a more careful look at the situation ought to bring on more realism. Not only is this an excessively optimistic reading of current events, but there is no good historical ground for thinking that radical changes can take place — however much they may be desirable. A comparative examination of Angola helps to understand why there is very little scope in the country for a civil society that could inflect its political course. This is not because of a lack of potential but because of specific historical factors.

The best way to conceptualise the present state of Angola is to see the country in a state of *arrested development* — and arrested for two different reasons.

First, the imposition of formal colonial rule following the Berlin Conference (1884-85) stopped the process of inter-ethnic competition that was taking place in the area following the end of slavery. That period saw enormous socio-economic and political disruption, from which arose considerable hostility between the Ovimbundu peoples of the highlands, the Luanda Creole community and the northern BaKongo populations. Colonial rule accentuated these divisions and at the same time it 'froze' the ethnic, social and political character of the territory into this strongly tripartite configuration.

It is of course impossible to know what would have happened in the area if the Portuguese had failed to colonise the territory, or if it had been colonised differently by another European power. What is certain, however, is that Portuguese domination brought about a colony of settlement in which few opportunities were offered to the *indígenas* and where colonial policies did little to integrate the peoples of the country more tightly together. This left a legacy of competitive bitterness between the different domestic socio-political constituencies, which was aggravated by the anti-colonial movement and the ensuing civil war. Above all, and this is the most relevant point here, it prevented the development of a *national* civil society after independence. As a result notions of identity and ideas of the public good are not shared widely enough, even if there has long been universal longing for peace and well-being.

Second, the legacy of violence and civil war is pernicious and has also contributed to arrest the country's development in ways that are not propitious to the emergence of a civil society. Here there are three processes at work. One factor is that there is now an accumulated capital of hostility, even hatred, which will take a generation to work itself through. Placid surfaces are obscuring more subterranean currents of resentment, which could easily explode if the promises of a better life are not realised. Added to this, the violent suppression of political dissent since 1977 has also suspended the free flow of political debate within the MPLA itself, thus stoking more anger. The quiet waters of the post-2008 elections are deceptive.

Another factor is an ossified political system, which operates as though the ruling party was still justified in behaving as the only legitimate political organisation in the country. The legacy of war serves those in power who maintain that opposition to the MPLA is, somehow, 'treason'. Although this discourse is presently more muted, since the MPLA has won the elections, it is an effective bar to many of the activities that would make possible the emergence of a more autonomous civil society. The last factor is that the victory of one party in the civil war comforts the views and practices of those who were on the 'right' side of history. There is no reason for the victor to compromise. Nor is there any reason it should welcome the growth of an active and autonomous civil society now that it has so decisively won the elections.

Angola is thus in a time warp, as it were, as yet not fully engaged in the politics of post-colonial Africa. In this respect, it stands in relation to its African neighbours somewhat in the way Poland, Hungary or Czechoslovakia stood in relation to their Western European neighbours in the eighties: similar but different, congealed in old-style authoritarian politics that have had their day. Of course, the difference is that order was maintained by the Soviet bear next door whereas in Angola it is achieved by Presidential rule — which, however, some in Angola see as 'foreign' too. The more significant difference between the two cases, however, concerns society. Whereas in the three East European countries, there was a strong historically rooted civil society, which was instrumental in toppling the Communist regimes and ushering in democracy, such is not the case in Angola.

Angola is on the cusp of major changes but these are not likely to be either as sweeping or as rapid as most observers are inclined to believe. So long as the regime remains in place, there is no reason to think that the current political dispensation, sensitive as it may occasionally be to outside pressure, will enable the emergence of a strong and autonomous civil society. Looking at the experience of post-colonial Africa as a whole, it is also unlikely that multiparty elections will contribute substantively to a change in either the nature or the role of civil society in years to come. In the immediate future, a regime change is not likely because of the oil rent but without such a change there is little scope for CSOs to operate outside the strictures of the political system in place.

I – Angola

PUBLIC SPACE AND INTERNATIONAL INTERESTS

Nuno Vidal
David Sogge, Bob van der Winden & René Roersma
Maliana Marcelino Serrano
Kristin Reed

THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONALISATION OF PATRIMONIALISM IN AFRICA. THE CASE OF ANGOLA[1]

Nuno Vidal
*Faculty of Economics,
University of Coimbra*

Introdution

This chapter (divided in two parts) examines development assistance strategies towards sub-Saharan Africa over the past thirty years, with particular reference to Angola.

Part one summarises the evolution of development thinking and the strategies that have influenced major international donor agencies, from the 1980s onwards, including neo-liberal and neo-Marxist approaches. During the first transition phase it is argued that civil society held a central role in development assistance thinking (offering perspectives such as participatory development, *empowerment* and development from below) but ended by again conceding its place to the State, with a gradual acceptance of neo-liberal currents of thought (in its most moderated, social-democratic, form).

The neo-liberal/social democratic current refers to what has become known as Institutionalist Thinking, promoting institutional support to beneficiary States through the national budget. Civil society is restricted to exercising a supportive and complementary role, by contributing to government policies. The notion of civil society has gradually been losing ground to the wider and more flexible concept of Non-State Actors (e.g. Cotonou Agreement), which is inclusive of the business sector. Contrary to stated objectives, the end result of these strategies will not be the gradual and progressive reform of beneficiary regimes and systems, but rather their strengthening by means of bureaucratic and legal change, progress and modernisation. Patrimonial and clientelistic structures, now operate within an international globalised context and various interrelated public/private, African/foreign entities, remain untouched. To date, the net result of new Institutionalist Thinking is the institutionalization of neo-patrimonialism in Africa.

Part two takes Angola as a case study, where the effects of evolving donor strategies, as described in part one, are concretely seen. The period in which CSOs, Civil Society Organisations, took the lead in donor strategies (from the beginning of the transition in 1990 until the mid-late 90s), has given way to the State reassuming centre stage (since the end of the 1990s). Substantial change in the national and international context, married to Institutionalist Thinking, leads many inter-governmental organisations and international NGOs into promoting a position of *'constructive engagement'* between CSOs and the State, as well as promoting representative and unifying structures for CSOs. Various programmes and initiatives drive this new agenda forward, the most problematic being the European Union's Programme of Support to Non-State Actors. Critical CSOs characterise such a strategy as collaborationist, one of apolitical homogenisation, induced subordination and cooptation. This results in humanising regime appearance without changing it, while the plight of the neediest in countries where the human development ranking dignifies no one, and the exercise of human rights is restricted, sees no substantial improvement.

PART - I

Apparent Agents of Democracy in Africa

With the end of the Eastern Bloc and the wave of transitions in Africa in the 1990s, we witnessed the hope-filled 'theorisation' of the transformative role of three structuring agents of democracy: political opposition parties, an emerging business movement, and civil society (in its diverse facets: media, NGOs, associations, Churches, and unions to some degree, all consciously monitoring management of public affairs). These agents of 'democracy' would supposedly be capable of developing their 'role' in Africa, if guaranteed civil and political liberties (freedom of association and expression), economic freedoms (freedom of initiative and private property), and institutionalised processes for the peaceful handover of power, through frequent, free and universal multiparty elections.

Almost two decades after the transition process began, the reality has revealed itself to be rather different. The engagement of these three agents was not exactly what had been expected.

Somewhat deceptively in the vast majority of cases, the behaviour of political opposition parties and elections failed to bring substantial change, especially since so few opposition parties rose to power. The same appropriation and private distribution of public funds prevailed, with perhaps some greater inclusion of beneficiaries but without ever altering the deep socio economic imbalances which characterise neo-patrimonial systems, impeding development processes as currently understood.

Realising that opposition parties would not effect change, 'hope' gravitated to the emerging business class (drawn from informal markets), where one could apparently see entrepreneurial traits of a 'Schumpeterian' nature which, given the opportunity to express itself freely and legally, would create a strong middle class, capable of challenging *status quo* fundamentals. Once again results disappointed: the supposed entrepreneurs of the informal market did not evolve into modern business people nor did they give birth to a new and productive system.

Instead one witnessed the privatisation of State assets for the benefit of the old political guard, also now in business, but more likely to accumulate capital rather than saving, investing and being productive. Above all they were more willing to align with foreign capital and favour an extraverted economic orientation (e.g. Congo-Brazzaville, Angola, Mozambique, Zambia).[2]

In the first half of the 1990s, the failure of the transformative role of opposition politics and of the apparently emerging business class became clear. This left CSOs, which had come to exercise a role in social service provision in various African countries, substituting many State functions, and implementing local participatory development strategies (e.g. Angola, DRC, Mozambique, Liberia, and Sierra Leone). In spite of many weaknesses and constraints, various national and foreign NGOs came to play a role in political criticism, monitoring and proposing public policies, often replacing opposition parties, which were generally ineffective, concerned as they were to secure access to the distribution of spoils of public resources.

Until the late 1990s, the greatest engagement in promoting and defending democratic values, as well as development support and investment in the social services, were to be found within CSOs and the Churches. These became the preferred channels of assistance, seen as more credible than the State, which was increasingly immersed in serious corruption and diversion of development funds.[3] While assuming greater aid delivery effectiveness to beneficiary populations, investment in CSOs in Africa presented certain advantages to the donor community, with national CSOs working in partnership (under 'tutelage') with international NGOs — employing thousands of expatriates from major donor countries to supervise expenditure and projects, apparently contributing to capacity building local partners.

This increased CSO involvement was accompanied by a process of reflection and 'theorisation' by various currents within international development thinking on civil society. During a period of political and ideological thawing, and of change in the international context, the concept began to be moulded and shaped from different perspectives.

Neo-Marxist developmentalist thought of the late 1970s and 80s engaging on issues of *empowerment*, participative development, and reform of the international institutions of power, acknowledged popular resistance within the space for civil society, and of the possibility for more effective and stable gradual and peaceful 'revolution' by the impoverished majorities exploited and oppressed by authoritarian regimes (military and civilian). These were to be united within a civically conscious movement seeking to reform political and economic power relations,[4] where the local linked up with regional and international levels (e.g. the World Social Forum process, which started in Brazil in 2001, would be an example of this globally aware and organised process).

---

[2] In non-socialist countries, this privatisation process in favour of the political elite (which some of my interviewees in Angola ironically described as the 'primitive accumulation of capital') as seen with Nigeria in 1967, led to the Nigeriaisation of the economy as stated by Gowon, or in the case of the former Zaire, with the 'Zaireanisation' of Copper, decreed by Mobutu in 1975.

[3] See, for instance, the paper of Maliana Marcelino Serrano in this volume.

[4] Vidal, Nuno, *Strategies of participatory development stimulating entrepreneurial abilities: the 'Kuije 91' project in Malange/ Angola* (Lisbon: ISCTE, 1997) MA dissertation.

By contrast neo-liberal thinkers explored civil society from a different perspective, emptying it of its ideological baggage and of a macro-structural power relations analysis, at the national (of so-called developing countries), regional or international levels. Civil society came to be understood within an instrumentalist and functional view of democracy, from a micro, short-term and sectoral dimension. It faced a multiplicity of gradual reformist functions, from the implementation of social projects for needy populations, to monitoring authorities and public services in specific sectors (health, education, environment, agriculture, food security, etc.), in order to make them more *accountable*. It also served as the space for the exercise of freedom of expression, association and initiative, alleviating tension within historically authoritarian societies, favouring greater political, economic and social stability, and supporting the peaceful exchange of power between opposing parties. Here we have a division between 'orthodox'[5] and moderate tendencies, which adopted a social-democratic character, sometimes also called Institutionalist Thinking which prevails within major international organisations and donor agencies, and is visible in such key reference documents as the Cotonou Agreement and the Millennium Declaration.[6]

With little funding and few opportunities for action, Neo-Marxist strategies were replaced by those of neo-liberals. The rise of neo-liberal strategies (moderate social-democratic form) is owed above all to the growing influence of this perspective within the structures of major international organisations and principal donors (European Union, United Nations, World Bank, IMF, USAID, bilateral cooperation and development agencies, and innumerable international NGOs). The prevailing notion of civil society was clearly western, neo-liberal, techno-bureaucratic, reformist, but always from a short-term sectoral and micro perspective, within specific communities, as I now discuss.

The loss of civil society prominence and the dominance of the State — neo-liberal/social democratic Institutionalist Thinking

Different factors would lead to change in development thinking and strategies in the late 1990s, with the State slowly returning to centre stage at the expense of civil society. From a civil society perspective, regardless of a decade long investment and activities conducted, CSOs manifested certain inadequacies and were far from being the pivotal agent of social and political change that was unrealistically expected from them. They revealed themselves to be highly dependent on external finance, and on imposed outside agendas, which were regularly altered by partners and the donor community in response to the 'fashions' of the time (malaria,

---

[5] Echoed in the work of Collier and others; see Collier, Paul & Venables, Tony, *Trade and economic performance: does Africa's fragmentation matter?*, Oxford University Economics Department, May 2008 unpublished, available at http://users.ox.ac.uk/~econpco/research/africa.htm; also Collier, Paul, "Naive faith in the ballot box: the catastrophe in Congo is a grave international failure. Hasty elections can make things worse", *The Guardian* (3 November 2008); Anten, L., *Strengthening Governance in Post-Conflict Fragile States*, Clingendael issues paper (9 June, 2009); Herbst, Jeffrey & Mills, Greg, "There is No Congo", *in Foreign Policy*, web exclusive, publication accessed on August 15, 2009, located at http://www.foreignpolicy.com

[6] See, "The Cotonou Agreement"; *Partnership Agreement ACP-EC*, signed in Cotonou on June 23, 2000, revised in Luxembourg on June 25, 2005 (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2006), located at http://ec.europa.eu; United Nations Millennium Declaration, General Assembly Resolution A/55/L.2, September 18, 2000, located at www.un.org/millennium/summit.htm; *The Cotonou Agreement, A User's Guide for Non-State Actors*, compiled by the European Centre for Development Policy Management (Brussels: ACP Secretariat, November 2003) accessed at www.acpsec.org.

HIV, environment, civic rights, electoral education, etc.). Also in many cases there was significant overlap with political power, and many suffered from the same clientelistic culture prevalent in the governing sphere of the State.[7] Finally, most CSOs would not survive without external finance.

CSOs difficulty in networkingacting at the national, regional and international levels was also clear, partly explained by the international donor strategy dominated by neo-liberal, micro, sectoral and short-term perspectives. Furthermore, a national CSO policy and strategy (ideology) to clearly and independently share joint principles and positions regarding donors and international partners, was poorly defined or non-existent. The best functioning national and regional networks were those dealing with specific areas (e.g. HIV-AIDS, gender, land), but once they engaged a wider political context, relating poverty to existing political systems, donor strategies, regional geo-strategic interests, or economic and political relations with other states, such initiatives tend to become fragmented and ineffective.[8]

Even for the minority who had coherently engaged in participative, communitarian, bottom-up, and empowering development strategies — producing encouraging results at a local level, in resolving concrete community problems (e.g. more participative organisation within decision making structures, management of local health posts, schools, sanitation, reclaiming basic community public services, etc.) — had failed to generate a national dynamic enabling them to work for substantive change at the macro governance level, even less to change political and economic structures. What was absent at the community level and in the CSO leadership, was a qualitative 'reflection-action' leap from the micro level (local communities and immediate problems) to the macro (national, governance, State organisation). Social interrelations remained very fragmented, as did 'public/national' solidarity and awareness.[9]

From the perspective of those who controlled the State, while donors strategies of channelling aid through CSOs had strengthened them at certain levels (namely it their role of monitoring public policies) and made it more difficult to appropriate and divert part of these funds, in many respects it also engendered less accountability and expenditure by government, with public social sectors increasingly supported by international organisations. Decreasing public expenditure left more public resources available for appropriation at a central level. Such a strategy also further weakened government awareness and sensitivity towards the social sectors and needs of the poor — the majority.

Added to these realities in the 1990s were the growing phenomena of warlordism and criminalisation of the State (e.g. Liberia, Sierra Leone, DRC, Nigeria),[10] and possible Somalisation of other countries, a process which tended to transform modern patrimonialism into what I term post-modern patrimonialism.[11]

---

[7] See the Introduction by Patrick Chabal and chapter by Carlos Figueiredo in this volume.

[8] Ahmed Motala, Nuno Vidal, Piers Pigou & Venitia Govender *An Assessment of Human Rights Defender initiatives in Southern Africa*, a report for the Netherlands Institute of Southern Africa, NiZA (Amsterdam: NiZA, June 2005).

[9] Vidal, Nuno, *Strategies of participatory development*, *op. cit.*; Vidal, Nuno, 'Modern and Post-Modern Patrimonialism in Africa: the Angolan case' in *Community & the State in Lusophone Africa*, edited by Malyn Newitt with Patrick Chabal & Norrie MacQueen (London: King's College London, 2003), pp. 1-14.

[10] Reno, William, *Warlord Politics and African States* (London: Lynne Rienner, 1998).

[11] Vidal, Nuno, 'Modern and Post-Modern…*op. cit.*

It was within this context that Western 'developmentalist' currents of thought (of a neo-liberal/social democratic inclination), and different strategies for action in Africa, rediscovered the necessity to improve and invest heavily in the modern bureaucratic-administrative State. These strategies were visible in various State-building programmes dealing with the national budget, which gained currency in the late 1990s (with the World Bank Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers). During the first decade of the new century, they were further evident in such key aid strategy documents, as the Declaration on Harmonisation adopted in Rome (February 2003), the Marrakech Roundtable on Managing for Development Results (February 2004),[12] the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005), the Accra Agenda for Action (2008),[13] and the previously mentioned Cotonou Agreement (2000 & 2005) and Millennium Declaration (2000).

Such strategic repositioning was operationalised throughout this decade in different programmes (especially the European Union), whose major new idea is the gradual substitution of the concept of civil society by the concept of Non State Actors, including traditional CSOs, Churches, trade unions, and surprisingly, the private sector.[14] In this way, the private sector would apparently become more involved in making the corporate social responsibility agenda a reality, becoming jointly accountable in solving the social problems of the poorest (clearly a social-democrat argument). Thus, a broad partnership strategy for development was supposed to come into existence, involving the State, donor and Non State Actors, visible internationally in such generalised and depoliticised objectives as the *Millennium Development Goals* (2000), focusing more on manifestations of poverty (insufficient education, gender inequality, infant mortality, deficient maternal healthcare, HIV and malaria, environmental issues), than on its causes (political-economic structures and power relations at national, regional and international levels).

In this way, the State reclaimed its primordial place within donor strategies. The development assistance of major donors became a process of greater articulation between donors (Paris Declaration principles on 'harmonization' and 'alignment'),[15] supporting beneficiary State budgets and development programmes, with absolute respect for sovereignty, a concept abandoned in Europe but restored for Africa by the European Union:

> *States shall determine the development strategies for their economies and societies in all sovereignty* (Cotonou Agreement, article 2).[16]

---

[12] The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness expresses the international community's consensus on the direction for reforming and managing aid delivery to achieve improved effectiveness and results. It is grounded in five mutually reinforcing principles: *Ownership* - partner countries exercise effective leadership over their development policies and strategies, and coordinate development actions; *Alignment* - donors base their overall support on partner countries' national development strategies, institutions, and procedures; *Harmonization*: donors' actions are more harmonized, transparent, and collectively effective; *Managing for results* - Managing resources and improving decision making for development results; *Mutual accountability* - Donors and partners are accountable for development results. The Declaration on Harmonisation and the Marrakech Roundtable report are available at http://www.aidharmonization.org/

[13] The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action, located at http://www.oecd.org/

[14] See *The Cotonou Agreement, A User's Guide for Non-State Actors*, compiled by The ECDPM - European Centre for Development Policy Management (Brussels: ACP Secretariat, November 2003) located at www.acpsec.org.

[15] See Part II of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (especially pp. 4-7) at http://www.oecd.org/

[16] See *The Cotonou Agreement, A User's Guide… op. cit.*, article 2, located at www.acpsec.org.

A complementary role was reserved for civil society in partnership with the private sector, given its potential contribution to national development strategies:

> …*the Parties recognise the complementary role of, and potential for, contributions by non-state actors to the development process* (article 4).[17]

Various CSOs were listened to within this process, but the CSOs present in Accra stated they were 'disappointed that our views on previous drafts have not been taken into account, and that the Accra Agenda for Action as it stands, promises little change'.[18]

Irrespective of the various regimes' anti-democratic 'sins' (DRC, Congo-Brazzaville, Gabon, Zambia, Mozambique, Namibia, Angola, etc.), donor strategies generally agreed to work with the holders of State power, 'hopeful' for gradual reform within these regimes through institutional strengthening, assistance and cooperation, and the adoption of legal frameworks and principles based on a legal State in the modern (Western) sense. The process of transition towards democracy in the long term would also hopefully count on the progressive restructuring of regional structures, such as the African Union, and the adoption of general democratic principles for its members, such as respect for Human Rights and maintaining the practice of frequent multiparty elections.

This strategic repositioning of the State, ignores deep political issues on how power relations are structured: at national level — the appropriation and very unequal distribution of public resources; at the regional level — where similar regime leaders mutually protect each other in regional institutions of international standing (e.g. the role of the AU in the Zimbabwean or Kenyan crisis); or at the international level — external commercial and financial relations regarding natural resource exploration in partnerships with African and foreign institutions (public and private), competing for strategic resources (e.g. the case of Asia and the West for oil and other minerals). The Paris Declaration makes vague and isolated references to the need for engagement in resolving challenges such as corruption and the lack of transparency, but without touching on the fundamental issues of governance and power relations regarding how these countries are structured internally and within the international system, and the impact of this on poverty.

It is natural that the dilution of CSOs within depoliticised and essentially techno-bureaucratic strategies, their insertion into such a broad category as Non State Actors, and their increasing dependency on funds channelled through the State budget (managed by government institutions and whose office holders have worked for decades in clientelistic and patrimonial regimes), implies emptying some CSOs of their political and confrontational work regarding governance, and reducing their effectiveness as monitors of government action. CSOs are increasingly pressurised to reduce their activity to that of providing technical support and resolving social issues within communities, fearing reprisals if they offer political critique of government. Donors find it difficult to avoid discriminating against politically

---

[17] *Ibid*. article 2.
[18] See *Civil society statement in Accra warns urgency for action on aid*, Accra, September 1, 2008, p. 2; available at http://www.betteraid.org/downloads/Final_CSO_Statement_Accra010908%5B1%5D.doc

troublesome CSOs in accessing resources from the national budget. Legislation becomes a useful weapon within the regime, through which it can prescribe that only CSOs fulfilling certain criteria have access to public funds, which in turn requires approval from other State institutions. This process is capable of indefinitely blocking the provision of funds by means of all sorts of bureaucratic and legal requirements (e.g. the statute of public utility in Angola, to which primarily regime or pro-regime CSOs have access, as we will see in part II).

This repositioning of aid strategies ended up making it easy for many African governments who had argued for the depoliticisation of civil society, accused of not having the legitimacy to interfere in politics (at the level of debate and preparation of public policies), to argue that it did not enjoy the voter legitimacy given to political parties in elections.[19]

From a realistic perspective, this is rather convenient for the governments of major donor countries who, on the one hand maintain support to civil society — albeit much reduced, (appeasing the western humanist public conscience) — while ensuring progress in business relations (public and private) without antagonising the regimes with which they wish to maintain good economic relations, especially during an international economic recession and given tough competition from Asia and South America (especially Brazil).

Changes in donor strategy towards a more technocratic and depoliticised approach will have few problems being implemented on the ground, given that national organisations are very dependent on external agendas and finance, and the local structures of international organisations (governmental and non-governmental) are dominated by a large 'techno-careerist' development army. Its members move between different countries, continents and organisations at the sniff of employment opportunities and socio-professional betterment. While attracted by the exotic and the aura of development, they are deprived of political and ideological awareness. Those with political awareness do not express it openly or even put it into practice, due to the problems this would cause their careers (difficulties in obtaining work visas, maintaining employment in organisations which do not wish to be expelled from the country, or persecuted in different ways by the censuring and oppressive mechanisms of these regimes, etc.).

It is important here to distinguish between this 'techno-careerist' majority, depoliticised in their work, and a minority of 'activists', who have not numbed their awareness or politically questioning action, but believe in changing the reality where they work, even if this means personal cost and sacrifice (which it nearly always does), adopting a militant and/or mission stance. They are in fact development agents, but represent a minority who find it hard to make ends meet.

[19] Sabine Fiedler-Conradi (2003) "Strengthening Civil Society in Zambia", study conducted to inform a focal area strategy paper, commissioned by the German Development Service (DED) on behalf of German Ministry of Economic Co-operation and Development (BMZ), Lusaka/ Munich; also Lifuka, Rueben L. & Habasonda, Lee M., 'A Sociedade Civil e o Poder Político na Zâmbia' in Vidal, Nuno & Pinto de Andrade, Justino (eds.), *Sociedade Civil e Política em Angola* (Luanda & Lisboa: Firmamento, Universidade de Coimbra & Universidade Católica de Angola, 2008), p. 385-393.

The 'institutionalisation' of Patrimonialism

To date State capacity building has largely resulted in more technocratic and administrative effectiveness of beneficiary States in ministerial administration and some services, in controlling and limiting the private appropriation of public resources at lower administrative levels (avoiding the predatory and anarchic appropriation of regimes such as those of Mobutu and Charles Taylor, especially in their latter years), but not at the highest levels of the distributive pyramid. Greater control of State resources and revenues at the lower and intermediate levels of State administration could, for example, be achieved in partnership with foreign businesses, (a form of outsourcing or consultancy), as happened in Mozambique and Angola in relation to British companies managing the customs services at ports and airports.

This basically meant that more revenues were deposited in State accounts and that appropriation at the lower and intermediate levels within the patrimonial pyramid was reduced. It does not mean that the management of State resources by those in power at the highest levels (who control the State accounts) became more transparent or equitable in the administration of these resources. Regarding distribution, above all, it implies that the whole system is more dependent on those at the centre, absolutely crucial for the proper functioning of any modern patrimonial system.

The State building or institutional strengthening strategy remains at the level of formal appearance for functioning institutions, not altering the structure or the operational logic of neo-patrimonial political systems. The demands for multi-party elections, the legislative guarantee of fundamental rights and freedoms, and of respect for human rights, are rendered more formal and ritualistic than effective.[20]

Similarly, the all encompassing partnership between Non State Actors and the State ends up strengthening the controlling functions of existing systems. It conspires to silence or diminish the most critical and aggressive (politically disconcerting voices) within civil society, which made demands and monitored public policy for the poorest, questioning and opposing the brushing aside of human rights, denouncing cases of embezzlement and corruption.

The system therefore becomes more effective but it remains, controllable and secure for its main managers and beneficiaries.[21] In reality, these systems refined their operational mechanisms/structures creating a more complex, sophisticated and modern appearance of the State, increasingly engaged in external, political, diplomatic and economic-financial affairs. Or expressed more simply, in creating a combination of international and national transactions of State and private agents (African or foreigner), which become indistinguishable. A network of complicity is created between public and private, national and foreign sectors, all taking advantage of the appropriation mechanisms in place.

---

[20] See chapter by Benjamim Castello in this volume.
[21] On the DRC, see for example, Englebert, P., *Why Congo persists: Sovereignty, globalization and the violent reproduction of a weak state* (Oxford: Queen Elisabeth House Working Paper Series, 2003); Angola is also a good example, analysed in part II of this paper.

By way of example, one highlights the manner of public resource appropriation conducted in the 1980s and 90s, when the diversion of public money was frequent, and holders of government office were paid commissions into their foreign bank accounts. This type of appropriation and distribution actually requires much caution and camouflage. A consequence of the blatant and primitive predatory nature of Mobutism was to serve as an example of how not to do things, to ensure that one could later avoid facing international justice which continues to hover like a black cloud over many African presidents, besides Bashir and Charles Taylor.

Gradually, a growing concern emerges to avoid awarding public contracts directly to private companies, whose owners or family members are recognised public office holders. A much safer option is the creation of a chain or network of companies between business people and trusted, loyal associates (national and/or foreigner), where public office holders participate indirectly, secretly managing the whole scheme.

They continue to make the same old business transactions profitable, which are disastrous for the country itself, such as over-charging for goods and services provided by private companies; awarding contracts not based on competence for carrying out state projects or providing goods and services to the State; inflated awards paid by the State to private companies for meeting deadlines; payment of astronomical fines to private companies for failure by the State to fulfil contractual clauses; commissions paid to private individuals representing the State in business with private companies, etc.[22] The manner of appropriation is more complex, concealed and 'modern'.

In wealthier countries where international commercial relations are more intense and deal with significant volumes (e.g. oil producers), a new world of options is made available with the possibility of accessing international financial markets and the range of existing devices which facilitate camouflage, such as offshore companies and accounts, broadly encompassing State-private business consortia and financial consultants highly specialised in these operations. Several possibilities of disguise and legitimisation for office holders emerge, such as creating foreign anonymous societies in offshore accounts which includes foreign business partners scattered overseas, who then participate in consortia with companies doing business with the State. Contract adjudication is approved by the same State office holders supposedly representing the State's interest. Preferably, these consortia involve renowned multinationals and foreign State companies (who effectively provide the technical skill and ensure the work is at least done, aware of the 'need' to structure the consortium in those terms, including the 'offshore' partner), thus rendering foreign companies accomplices and helping to legitimise the whole process. The profits will later be paid as dividends to company associates in several parts of the world (perfectly legal), where one finds the same State office holders or individuals they trust. In short, we are dealing with international laundering processes, which privately appropriate public resources.

One can say that these mechanisms and constructs are globalised, frequently encountered, and in permanent development in the West. They are, not an invention of post-independence neo-patrimonial systems. In the West, the difference, however, is found

---

[22] See declaration of the Angolan ambassador to Brazil, Alberto Correia Neto in *O Globo* (21st November 2005), cit. in Vidal, Nuno, "The Angolan regime and the Move to Multiparty Politics" in Chabal, Patrick & Vidal, Nuno, *Angola, the weight of history* (London & New York: Hurst & Columbia, 2007), pp. 124-174.

elsewhere, in a strong civil society and public opinion with power to influence and protect the common good, with effective separation of judicial, executive and legislative powers. This is not found in countries with fragile civil societies with highly personalised regimes, which confuse persons and institutions, irrespective of existing legislation, and where the overwhelming majority of office holders within the three powers are among the principal direct beneficiaries of the appropriation system, who fail to exercise their monitoring or regulation roles, but rather assist in concealing what is happening.[23]

Weaknesses of interpretation among neo-liberals and neo-Marxists

For different reasons, both neo-liberal (orthodox and social-democratic) and neo-Marxists, show a strong resistance in accepting African political analysis from within these systems, which makes clear its own internal operational logic and exhibits capacity to resist outside influences. Above all, the difficulty in accepting this is located in their strong ideological 'prejudice', which can be politically characterised as from the Western 'right' and 'left wing'.

In neo-liberal approaches, the disappearance of the Eastern Bloc, the generalised unconditional acceptance of the market economy by the majority of regimes, including those formerly Socialist, and the Asian competition for strategic resources, means that an analysis highlighting neo-patrimonial governance and the exposure of alliances with external partners, become uncomfortable regarding the economic relations one hopes to develop.

As we have seen, the established commercial and financial relations within the new post-Cold War context have in reality strengthened the existing patrimonial logic and *rentier* economy, maintaining resource exploitation and perpetuating the status quo. In practice, these external relations represent important alliances for neo-patrimonial regimes, creating a legitimising network of 'accomplices' (at least by omission)[24] within the system of elite public resource appropriation and the perpetuation of poverty for the majority. This is an inconvenient reality for the economic and political pragmatism of the 'right'.

On the other hand, analytical neo-Marxist approaches (either class conflict and dependency theory) have difficulty in accepting that the existing system is not an exclusive product of Machiavellian and bourgeois elites, aligned to international capital in usurping State resources and condemning the majority population to a life of misery. There is a serious inability to accept that the structure, survival and

---

[23] See for example, *Global Witness* media briefing, *Angola: private oil firm has shareholders with same names as top government officials*, (4 August, 2009); denouncing a private oil firm given permission by the state oil company Sonangol to bid for potentially lucrative oil rights, but including shareholders such as the Sonangol's chairman, senior presidential advisers, and a former finance minister. See also the investigation of Rafael Marques who denounced what has become 'generalised practice in Angola', whereby State officials at the highest levels of Government, the Judicial system (including the Attorney-General and presiding judge of the Angolan Military Supreme Court), Angolan Armed Forces, National Police, National Assembly and even the President's office, combine public duties with private interests; Marques, Rafael, *The Business Activities of the Attorney-General of the Republic*, in *Semanário Angolense*, no 329 (15-21 August 2009).
[24] I use the expression 'complicity by omission' (cumplicidade por omissão) of the Angolan activist Luís Araújo of SOS Habitat, who frequently used the phrase in conversations with me to describe the relationship of various Western powers with the Angola regime regarding disrespect for Human Rights.

resilience of post-colonial African political systems,[25] depend on a logic of appropria-tion and distribution, shared by the overwhelming of the population — that is an acceptance the one reaps rewards according to one's position within the distributive pyramid — wretched survival for the majority at the bottom, self-enrichment and opulence for a minority at the higher levels, closest to the Boss (the President).[26] Moreover, neo-patrimonial analysis clearly goes against the prevailing post-colonial social sciences tradition of politically atoning for colonial sins — a type of contritional act — translated into the need to paternalistically and systematically excuse poor African governance. Instead they point to the international dimension as the explana-tory factor, understating the importance of governance in Africa, as if the majority of African polities had not exhaustively demonstrated their resilience, their unchanged logic with whatever international system existed, irrespective of the Cold War. By undervaluing the historical pathway of post-colonial African political systems, these perspectives refuse to accept that reform of major multilateral institutions, although necessary, cannot be a sufficient condition for substantive change in Africa.

Both neo-Marxist and neo-liberal perspectives still have faith in the change they believe is occurring in developing countries (a concept itself premised on the assumption of a dynamic of Western development), though they differ in their interpretation of the rhythm and direction of the supposed change taking place. Fundamental political positions (or 'ideological prejudice') prevent acceptance that African polities have their own logic and that neo-patrimonial roots are capable of surviving and deepening in different contexts.

If this is not the case, then what has substantively changed from the Mobutu ad-ministration to those of Kabila-father and Kabila-son (even with the legitimisation of Joseph Kabila in the July-October 2006 multi-party elections)? What substantive neo-patrimonial political and *rentier* system changes are found in Ali Bongo inherit-ing the presidential 'throne' from his father Omar Bongo, in Gabon (subsequently legitimised for the West in multi-party elections held for this purpose in August 2009)? What change can be verified in the fundamentals of the Nigerian political-economic system in the transition from a military to a civil regime (1999), or the change of civil administration from Obasanjo to Yar'Adua in 2007, with massive private appropriation of State resources (mainly oil), based on a complex distribu-tive equilibrium and various clientelistic solidarities? What type of alternative and fundamental change is effected by the post-electoral 'negotiations' of March 2008 in Zimbabwe, after massive electoral fraud, accommodating apparent contradictory rivals like Mugabe, Morgan Tsvangirai and Arthur Mutambara (a crony agreement with a simple division of places and State spoils, without any coherent political project, pressurised and supported by the African Union and South Africa)? How should one interpret the negotiations and accommodation post/extra elections which followed the Kenyan elections in December 2007 (again with the complic-ity of AU and South Africa), between Mwai Kibaki and Raila Odinga, a scenario where results were manipulated and violently contested, in a country previously seen as a model of functioning democracy in Africa?

---

[25] South Africa is clearly excluded here, because of its different trajectory in terms of industrial and proletariat processes, which did not happen in other sub-Saharan African countries.
[26] Vidal, Nuno, 'Modern and Post-Modern… *op. cit.*.

PART II

Angola – a case study

This second part, which analyses Angola, is illustrative of the trajectory described above, on development assistance strategies, and dealing with a neo-patrimonial system supported by immense financial resources from oil production (currently competing with Nigeria for the position of leading African oil producer). This state of affairs facilitates resistance to external conditionalities and to securing external alliances (private and State) to maintain the *status quo*, counting on generating competition between the West and East for the exploration and production of oil.

Transition and emergence of CSOs

At the time of independence, a slow but progressive and continuous process took root in Angola, bringing about an erosion of public consciousness and social solidarity, as well as the decay of social sectors people strongly depend on: education, health, housing, social assistance, and community services. A distributive neo-patrimonial logic was covertly at work within a so-called socialist system, controlling and perverting collectivist principles and public consciousness, utilising the period of one-party rule and authoritarianism to impose itself effectively, which particularly impacted on the most vulnerable, the majority population, progressively excluded from the benefits derived from public resources.[27]

During the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, the transition to multipartyism and a market economy, with a new legal framework for political and civic freedoms, brought a large number of international organisations to the country — from international government organisations to international NGOs, Church organizations, solidarity assistance, etc. Transnational networks gathered together expatriate activists, local communities and a marginalised Angolan intellectual elite, including some middle and high level cadres. Joining forces, they began to work with those most in need of basic social support and progressively took over an ever expanding portfolio of State responsibilities in social sectors such as education, health, basic sanitation, housing, support to Internal Displaced Persons (IDPs) and rural development. CSO civil political activity emerged similarly, denouncing social and humanitarian problems such as State neglect of social sectors, increasing poverty, the deplorable living conditions for the majority of the population, and advocating respect for human rights.[28]

Angolan CSOs emerged during this transition, benefitting greatly from the involvement and support of foreign organisations and the dynamics of transnational networks, whose support (financial, institutional and technical capacity) was vital

---

[27] Independently of officially declared ideology, and contrary to what is sometimes argued, this dynamic during the two so-called Socialist administrations (1975-1979, 1979-1987), develops unperturbed during the multipartyism transition process. This process was explored elsewhere, and hence will not be developed here; see Vidal, Nuno, "Social Neglect and the Emergence of Civil Society", in Chabal, Patrick & Vidal, Nuno, *Angola, the weight of history* (London: Hurst, 2007), pp. 200-235.

[28] *Ibid*.

in the struggle to survive, in a society controlled in all sectors by an authoritarian party-State.[29] However, if this involvement was essential to the development of CSOs, it also came to represent one of its major weaknesses, a serious dependency on foreign expertise, technical support and funding. As there was no private sector independent from the party and State structures,[30] there was no alternative for CSOs but to depend on external funding.

Government reaction

At first, the government appeared not to pay much attention to the dynamic created through internal and external activism for three reasons. Firstly, new development perspectives (more participative and inclusive) were associated with development programmes, which apparently were of lesser importance compared to the prioritisation of humanitarian aid, when the war resumed in October 1992. Secondly, the Angolan government was primarily concerned with supervising the vast amounts of aid and its distribution to the interior of the country, defining project priorities and intervention areas (e.g. favouring government controlled areas to the detriment of those controlled by UNITA).[31] Thirdly, as soon as the war resumed after elections, an immediate effort was required to reinvest in weapons and the armed forces (significantly de-mobilised after the 1991 Bicesse Peace Accords); international assistance became of greater importance to guarantee food supplies and some social services, freeing government of these concerns. The role of international cooperation moved from secondary to central importance, irrespective of the huge rise in oil revenues during this period: US$2 billion in 1987, US$3.5 billion in 1990, US$5.1 billion in 1996, and US$7 billion in 2000.[32]

In the early 1990s, government concerns were largely directed towards the establishment of coordination mechanisms and managing the activities of international organisations, essentially through MINARS (Ministry of Assistance and Social Reintegration) and UTCAH (the Technical Unit for the Coordination of Humanitarian Aid). This was initially under the supervision of the Council of Ministers and later MINARS.[33] Given that the international community preferred to channel international aid through the UN system, and national and international NGOs, instead of direct bilateral aid, these supervisory mechanisms were extremely important for a government seeking to maintain control and take advantage of the significant resources entering the country.

---

[29] See Vidal, Nuno, 'The genesis and development of the Angolan political and administrative system from 1975 to the present' in Kyle, Steve *Lusophone Africa: Intersections between Social Sciences* (Cornell, NY: Cornell Institute for African Development, May 2-3, 2003), pp. 1- 16.

[30] The privatisation process of the early nineties primarily benefited the nomenclature, see Aguilar, Renato, "Angola's private sector: rents distribution and oligarchy", in Karl Wohlmuth, Achim Gutowski, Tobias Knedlick, Mareike Meyn & Sunita Pitamber, *African Development Perspectives* (Germany: Lit Verlag, 2003); Aguilar, Renato, *Angola: getting off the hook*, a report for Sida (Gothenburg: Gothenburg University, 2005), especially pp. 13-18.

[31] Vidal, Nuno, *Strategies of participatory development…op. cit.*.

[32] In Hodges, Tony, "The Economic Foundations of the Patrimonial State" in Chabal, Patrick & Vidal, Nuno, *Angola, the weight of history* (London: Hurst, 2007), pp. 175-199.

[33] UTCAH is also engaged with the Ministry of Planning; which ought not be confused with OCHA (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) of the United Nations, nor with UNTCU *(UN Transitional Coordination Unit)*; in the provinces, the role of coordination and control was largely carried out by provincial governments; see Vidal, Nuno, *Strategies of participatory development…op. cit.*; also Vidal, Nuno, "Social Neglect…*op. cit.*

If at the beginning of the 1990s, government was not very concerned about the dynamic between national and international CSOs, for reasons already mentioned, in the mid- and late 1990s the situation changed substantially.

CSOs became more critical and increasingly troublesome for the regime, challenging the lack of government concern towards the decay and disruption of social sectors, documenting and publicising various situations of extreme poverty and pressurising government institutions to effect a change of attitude.[34] The private and international media echoed these demands. Opposition political parties sometimes joined this criticism (though rarely with the same commitment and force as the CSOs, for reasons explained elsewhere).[35]

The government/party in power reacted in a structured manner in the mid 1990s, investing heavily in a 'parallel civil society' comprised of organisations such as the president's foundation FESA (Fundação Eduardo dos Santos), created in 1996,[36] and later the Lwini Social Solidarity Fund of the First Lady Ana Paula dos Santos, both aiming to rehabilitate the political image of the president, selectively providing social services which are the responsibility of the State, and using social bonus funds from international oil companies. This strategy continues today with the creation or cooptation of other organisations, basically serving the need of the government and of the president to have a politically manipulated cooperative 'civil society', participating in politically sensitive processes (e.g. the approval of certain laws) without challenging them, thus meeting the international expectation that 'civil society' be consulted.[37]

The *government friendly* or parallel CSOs gained privileged and facilitated access to government structures (and private sector, where the majority of companies followed the regime's patrimonial distributive logic), and to the legal status of public utilities, which grants access to public resources through the State budget.[38] Organisations not within these parameters increasingly experienced difficulties in conducting activities, directly proportionate to how much they challenged government.[39]

Growing internal constraints increased the external dependence of national CSOs (especially NGOs). This support however, experienced significant review in the late 1990s, as the internal-external scenario substantially changed.

---

[34] See "Country profile Angola" in *An Assessment of Human Rights Defender initiatives in Southern Africa*, a report for the Netherlands Institute of Southern Africa – NiZA, by Ahmed Motala, Nuno Vidal, Piers Pigou and Venitia Govender (Amsterdam: NiZA, June 2005), pp. 47-62.

[35] Vidal, Nuno, "The Angolan regime …*op. cit.* p. 124-174.

[36] For further information on this foundation and investment of power within civil society, see Messiant, Christine, 'La Fondation Eduardo dos Santos (FESA): autour de l'investissement de la société civile par le pouvoir angolais', in *Politique Africaine*, 73, 1999, pp. 82-101.

[37] The National Agenda for Consensus, passed on April 3 2007 and promoted by the government, is an example of this type of initiative which requires CSO 'cooperation'; for more detail on the National Agenda for Consensus, see *Jornal de Angola* (June 20 2007); with respect to CSO parallels and regime needs, see Messiant, Christine, "The Mutation of Hegemonic Domination: Multiparty Politics Without Democracy", in Chabal, Patrick & Vidal, Nuno, *Angola, the weight of history* (London: Hurst, 2007), pp. 93-123.

[38] See Vidal, Nuno, *Relatório da II Conferência da Sociedade Civil Angolana*, 2008 (Luanda: Grupo de Coordenação da Sociedade Civil & Firmamento, 2009).

[39] Vidal, Nuno, "Sectores Sociais, Sociedade Civil, Política e Direitos Humanos em Angola" in Vidal, Nuno & Pinto de Andrade, Justino (eds.), *Sociedade Civil e Política em Angola* (Luanda e Lisboa: Firmamento, 2008), pp. 11-40.

Changes in the national and international context

With the ending of the civil war following the death in combat of the rebel leader Jonas Savimbi (February 2002), and the signing of the Luena Peace Memorandum (April 2002), many hoped for rapid socio-political change, for substantial state investment in the social sectors at a time when it was estimated that 75% of the population of 14 million people lived on less than $1 per day, and 2 million faced a high risk of hunger.[40]

The old excuse of the war could no longer be used to explain the lack of investment in these sectors. Above all, oil production increased and provided the government with an average of $5 billion annually.[41] Various international reports continued to denounce poor management of oil revenues and endemic corruption in the political system, as well as other related activities exposed by the media.[42]

Within this context, international organisations such as *CARE International* and *MSF - Médecins Sans Frontières* accused the government of criminal negligence towards its own population.[43] Humanitarian aid reduced as a consequence, and the much awaited international donor conference was continually postponed, remaining conditional on agreement between the government and IMF, meant to establish accountability and transparency principles in the management of public accounts,[44] as well as the development of a Poverty Reduction Strategy *(Estratégia de Combate à Pobreza)*. Humanitarian assistance was suspended in certain regions (especially the Centre-North), no longer deemed to require such support.[45]

With the end of the UN presence in Angola fast approaching, UNOCHA *(United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs)* was substituted by

---

[40] *The Guardian* (February 7, 2003).

[41] From 2000 to 2003, Angola received an average of $5 billion per year; see article 'Angola should be able to finance its own post war rebuilding' by Michael Dynes in *Times online* (February 24, 2003).

[42] According to the IMF, between 1997 and 2001, the whereabouts of $8.45 billion of public funds are unknown (equal to 23% GDP), see *Time for transparency, coming clean on oil, mining and gas revenues, a report from Global Witness* (Washington: *Global Witness*, March 2004), p. 35; Angola was then ranked 133 of 145 countries in relation to corruption by *Transparency International*, (145 being most corrupt), c.f. www.transparencyinternational. com. Corruption scandals have been condemned since the 1990s in a range of reports, such as *A Rough Trade: the role of Companies and Governments in the Angolan Conflict*, a report by *Global Witness*, December 1998; *A Crude Awakening: the role of the oil and banking industries in Angola's civil war and the plunder of the state assets*, a report by *Global Witness*, December 1999; *All the Presidents' men*, a report by *Global Witness*, March 2002; *Angola public expenditure, management and financial accountability*, World Bank report n. 29036-AO, February 16, 2005; McMillan, John, *The main institution in the country is corruption: creating transparency in Angola* (Stanford: Center on democracy, development and the rule of law, Stanford Institute of International Studies, February, 2005). *Global Witness* publications available at www.oneworld.org/globalwitness

[43] *Voz da América News Online* (June 11, 2002); *The Guardian* (February 7, 2003).

[44] Angola needed to review is public accounts fiscal system and resource designation plan, equally needing to show greater transparency regarding oil accounts and budget rectitude (50% of expenditure was estimated to be conducted outside the national budget). National reconstruction was then estimated to cost around $4 billon, with $1.5 billion coming from participation by the international community; see *External Evaluation of SDC's Humanitarian Aid in Angola*, Commissioned by the Africa Division for Humanitarian Aid (HA) of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Berne, March 2004, p. 5. For a summary of the relationship between the Angolan government and the IMF, see *Some transparency, no accountability, the use of oil revenue in Angola and its impact on Human rights*, Human Rights Watch Report, vol. 16, no. 1 (New York: HRW, January 2004), this report also exposes discrepancies in government accounts between income and expenditure from oil; see also *Human Rights Watch World Report 2006* (Washington: HRW, 2006), pp. 74-79.

[45] Interview given to the author by Philippe Lazzarini, Chief Officer of the UN-OCHA – *United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Aid* (Luanda, October 1, 2004).

UNTCU (*United Nations Transitional Coordination Unit*; dependent on the *United Nations Development Programme - UNDP*), which was meant to handover coordination responsibilities to government, UTCAH and MINARS.

International pressure essentially aimed at improving governance and ensure more effective government involvement in the social sectors. Efforts to this effect, however, were not very effective. With new and more favourable loans (especially from China: $4 billion without any conditionalities on transparency, good governance or respect for human rights),[46] the government ended up abandoning a donor conference and reaffirmed its autonomy in the face of external conditionalities. The government unilaterally designed its own development plans, prioritising macro-economic stability, with huge investment in infrastructure and technology transfer. Even though the Poverty Reduction Strategy was still mentioned in official documents, it was relegated in importance, losing the strategic importance it was meant to have in the post-2002 reconstruction process.[47] Also relegated were the social sectors, as can be seen in the evolution of the State budget.

State Budget: Social Sectors

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008*	2009
Education	5.06%	5.19%	6.24%	10.47%	7.14%	3.82%	6.63%	7.9%	7.9%
Health	5.03%	4.57%	5.82%	5.69%	4.97%	4.42%	4.70%	6.7%	8.38%
Social Security & Assistance	3.93%	3.36%	1.47%	4.30%	6.47%	9.66%	11.54%	9.6%	10.69%
Housing & Community Services	3.77%	2.14%	1.57%	3.07%	4.13%	6.51%	7.72%	5.1%.	4.78%

* In 2008, the title 'Social Security and Assistance' was renamed 'Social Protection'.

Source: created by the author based on State Budget information for the specified years, available at www.minfin.gov.ao

Regarding the transfer of responsibility from UNTCU to UTCAH, the result was not exactly what had been desired. The government did not so much see the possibility for more effective involvement in coordinating of assistance and NGO projects as the opportunity to increase political control over CSO activities and finances. The new programme for NGO registration, which began in 2005, and has progressively been implemented to integrate all national and international NGOs, must be understood against this background. Registration procedures and demands for regular reports on NGO activities, specifying types of activities, projects, funding, equipment, personnel, socio-economic impact, etc, were the basis of an evaluation,

---

[46] See *More than humanitarianism: a strategic US approach toward Africa, report to the Council on Foreign Relations by an Independent Task-force* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2005), specially p. 32-33, 49-50; also Aguilar, Renato, *Angola: getting off the hook, op. cit.*, p. 2, 13-18. Although the amounts involved in Chinese credit lines are not known, it was estimated in 2007 to be between $6-10 billion, in article by Alec Russell, "Investors sign up to Angola's miracle" (*Financial Times*, August 22, 2007).

[47] On the Strategy to Fight Poverty see Vidal, Nuno *PRS Country Briefing Paper, The Angolan Case* (Midrand/South Africa: Southern Africa Trust, April 2009).

as explained by the director of UTCAH, which his institution would issue to the Ministry of Justice regarding NGO projects and the level of partnership with government. With UTCAH issuing an opinion, the Ministry of Justice would approve or reject the registration of each NGO under review.[48]

In the face of rising oil prices, increasing Angolan production,[49] fierce global competition to secure future deliveries of crude (with Angola's new Asian partners gaining ground), the IMF, World Bank, and western democracies, gradually dropped their pressure for transparency, accountability and human rights.[50] In the new international geo-strategic context (energy), Angola has become a significant power capable of exerting leverage upon the international community, instead of the other way around (as had been the case during 1980s and 90s).[51] This power is not only over government and companies with interests in Angola, but equally over international government organisations and the donor community, whose most influential members have strong economic interests in Angola.

As a result, pressure was exerted over international NGOs operating in Angola, and their national partners, given that the vast majority of funding came from the same international sources. A sign of this was the moderated posture quickly adopted by the majority of international organisations working in Angola when faced with serious human rights violations in peri-urban communities,[52] non registration of CSOs,[53] extinction of Cabindan CSO *MPalabanda*, veiled threats of deregistration of national and international NGOs,[54] constraints on media activities (including prison for journalists)[55], closure of the United Nations Human Rights Office in Angola at the end of 2007, and the vitiated manner in which the electoral process was directed (e.g. the unequal composition of the national electoral commission, responsibilities given to electoral executive commissions which exceed the spirit of

---

[48] Explanation provided by Director of UTCAH in a meeting of *UTCAH with national and international NGOs* (Luanda: Auditorium of Catholic University of Angola, November 29 2005); agenda item: "(…) 3. Presentation of activities of national and international NGOs during first six months of 2005; 4. NGO Directory, information bulletin to be created, case study research, drafts of specific NGO reports to be presented throughout the year; 5. legalisation of NGOs (…); access to public funds".

[49] See Hodges, Tony, "The Economic Foundations of the Patrimonial State" in Chabal, Patrick & Vidal, Nuno, *Angola, the weight of history* (London: Hurst, 2007), pp. 175-199.

[50] See *Angola Strategy: Prioritizing U.S. — Angola Relations, a Report of an Independent Commission Sponsored by the Center for Preventive Action* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2007); also *More than humanitarianism:…op. cit.*, pp. 32-33, 49-50; also *Human Rights Watch World Report 2006 …op. cit.*, pp. 74-79; Aguilar, Renato, Angola: getting off…*op. cit.*, pp. 2, 13-18; also Reed, John, "Angola o capitalismo dos petrodiamantes" in *Courrier Internacional* (November 25, 2005), n.º 34, pp. 22-23.

[51] See Jad Mouawad "Nowadays, Angola Is Oil's Topic A", *The New York Times* (March 20, 2007); Miranda, Arlindo, *Angola 2003/2004, Waiting for Elections, a report for the Christian Michelsen Institute* (Norway: CMI, 2004); Chabal, Patrick, 'Introduction' in Chabal, Patrick & Vidal, Nuno, *Angola, the weight of history* (London: Hurst, 2007), pp. 1-18.

[52] See "Angola, 'They Pushed Down the Houses', Forced Evictions and Insecure Land Tenure for Luanda's Urban Poor", Human Rights Watch & SOS Habitat Report, Vol. 19, no. 7 (A) (New York: HRW & SOS Habitat, May 2007), available at http://hrw.org/reports/2007/angola0507/; also *Angola, Lives in Ruins: Forced Evictions Continue, Amnesty International Report* (London: AI, January 2007), located at http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGAFR120012007.

[53] Such as Associação Justiça Paz e Democracia (AJPD).

[54] Such as *Open-Society Foundation - Angola, Mãos Livres* and *SOS Habitat* ; see article by Mário Paiva in *A Capital* (Luanda: July 14, 2007); also article by Reginaldo Silva in *Angolense* (Luanda: July 14, 2007).

[55] This was the case with Graça Campos, journalist and chief-editor of *Semanário Angolense*, or of Fernando Lelo, *Voice of America* correspondent in Cabinda, imprisoned on November 11, 2007, accused of instigating rebellion and crimes against the State. He was sentenced to 12 year, but freed on August 20, 2009 on a lack of evidence.

the Law, international non observance of the registration process, and the impossibility of Angolans in the diaspora voting).[56]

Organisations which previously publicly accused the government of criminal negligence towards its own populations, significantly restrained themselves and their opinions.[57] Many of so called international 'agents' of development, human rights and civil society (above all the 'techno-careerist' majority referred to earlier), knew the politically acceptable limits of their activity, quickly taking refuge within the emerging Institutionalist stream, adopting the technical discourse of State institutional strengthening as the new and correct route for development support.

Institutionalist thinking and constructive engagement

The increased leverage of the Angolan regime over countries and international organisations, intersects with the previously explained new wave of international developmentalist approach — Institutionalist Thinking —, encountering an important and unexpected ally.

Within the new internal and external context, some intergovernmental organisations and international NGOs adopted a new role as promoters of a new perspective, of CSO *'constructive engagement'* with the State. These same organisations also adopted the role of intermediaries in the construction of new relationship mechanisms and structures between the government and national CSOs. This posture becomes evident in certain programmes and initiatives.

One such programme embodying this new posture (and the Institutionalist stream) is the European Union's 2007-08 Programme of Support to Non State Actors - NSA *(Programa de Apoio aos Actores Não Estatais - PAANE)*. It has continued to further the liberal and flexible concept of NSA, with the objective of promoting social and political dialogue between these and national authorities at central and local levels. Supervision and implementation is shared by the Ministry of Planning and European Commission in Angola, but in practice the ultimate decision rests with the Angolan government, particularly the Ministry of Planning (so-called National Organiser, or the entity which authorises implementation of the 9th and 10th European Development Fund Programme in Angola).

The subordination of PAANE to the government is clear from funding contracts and support to NSA projects, which determine that:

> *PAANE has the right to close or suspend financial contributions in advance, and interrupt payments, if: (…)*
>
> > *- PAANE is required to suspend or terminate financial contributions by any regional or national governmental institution or any court of law; (…)*

---

[56] See Vidal, Nuno, *Plano Estratégico* 2008-2010, *Programa de Direitos Humanos, Construção da Democracia, Género e VIH/SIDA* (Luanda: Fundação Open Society, Angola, August 2007); also Vidal, Nuno, "Landmines of Democracy: Civil Society and the Legacy of Authoritarian Rule in Angola" in Minnie, Jeanette (ed.), *Outside the Ballot Box: Preconditions for Elections in Southern Africa in 2005/6* (Windhoek: HiVOS, NiZA-Netherlands Institute for Southern Africa & MISA-Media Institute of Southern Africa, November 2006), pp. 65-87.
[57] *Voz da América News Online* (June 11, 2002); *The Guardian* (February 7, 2003).

> *- the financial contribution was granted by the European Commission and Angolan government, and if these request or demand that PAANE suspend or terminate financial contributions.*[58]

As the vast list of government's civic and political restrictions and conditionalities on CSOs is public knowledge, it is hard to understand how to strengthen NSAs, their autonomy, independence, as well as their critical and democratic capacity, if project approval, accompaniment and supervision from the beginning are conditional on government institutions, which could suspend financial support and suffocate the project at any moment. Clearly we are dealing with a serious conditionality, which is anti-democratic, induces self-censure and strengthens existing government mechanisms of control, repression and restriction of civil rights and freedoms.

Other initiatives promoting the new perspective include the *Civil Society Strengthening Programme* (CSSP) led by *Development Workshop* (DW) and *World Learning* (both international, though DW was the first NGO to work in Angola, the only one to establish itself during the Socialist era, 1981).

The CSSP intends (as set out by UTCAH; *cf. supra*) to map and register national NGOs to:

> *(…) strengthen the Technical and Organisational Capacity of Angolan NGOs, so that they become* **legitimate and privileged government partners***, in proving public utility services to urban, peri-urban and rural communities,*[59] (emphasis added)*.

The abovementioned mapping involves an exhaustive verification of all NGO characteristics, with particular focus on existing and planned relationships with local and central government.[60]

Presented in these terms, the CSSP provoked negative reactions from some civil society activists,[61] which did not understand where the legitimacy of this type of institution 'pre-accrediting' NGOs originated, dealing with a structure comprising of some unelected NGOs (led by two international NGOs), appropriating unto themselves the right to evaluate national partners. The intention to 'pre-certify' NGOs as 'privileged and legitimate partners of government,' is tainted with an appearance of collaborationism, the age-old intention of control by government institutions, as well as an implicit measure of coercion given that all who could not meet the evaluation criteria (subjective and political) probably become illegitimate, and are consequently discriminated by donors and State administrative structures.

The plan to 'strengthen civil society' continues in other projects, such as the Centre for the Development of Angolan Partnerships, envisaging CSO capacity building.

---

[58] In contract between the *Programme of Support for NSAs/European Commission and OMUNGA Association, project no. 005/2008, "Quintas de debates"*, execution from November 12, 2008 - January 11, 2009, p. 3.

[59] In a letter requesting a meeting from *Development Workshop* sent to all national NGOs, March 2, 2007. A copy of this letter is with the author, which has not been published anywhere.

[60] In *Inquérito para Entrevistas de Mapeamento das Organizações da Sociedade Civil Angolana*, directed to all national NGOs, March 2, 2007.

[61] We can place activists such as Fernando Macedo or Luís Araújo here (expressing these opinions in conversations with the author); see chapter by Fernando Macedo in this volume.

Again it involves DW and World Learning, and some national NGOs, where the main objective is funding civil society projects with finance from oil companies operating in Angola (some kind of Corporate Social Responsibility), an initiative originally launched by the European Union delegation, the Angolan government and USAID. Given the operational logic of the political economic system, obviously when some national NGOs began to highlight the urgent need to finance projects on human rights advocacy, the oil companies raised concerns, requesting that one understand the political constraints and undertakings of companies in this sector.[62]

Understood in these terms, the strategy of *'constructive engagement'* reveals itself as limited public criticism within politically acceptable parameters, which are imprecise, not official, but when in doubt, each organisation or activist adopts in what is effectively a self-censorship mechanism.

CSOs of Angola Unite!

The new CSO strengthening strategy argues for unity within civil society, based on the belief that CSOs in Angola lack networking ability (that are substantive, continuous, medium to long term, on interconnected issues), be it at national level or with peers at regional or international levels.[63] The simplified argument, supported by international NGOs (which to a certain extent guide the process), believes that civil society is weak because it is divided.

While this ignores the responsibility of external partners in this deficit,[64] this approach favours a unifying structure for CSOs, which in its simplest expression argues for the strengthening of representative structures which allow CSOs (largely NGOs) to speak with one voice in its *'constructive engagement'* with State institutions. Without specifying that unity between CSOs should be established on the basis of shared principles (e.g. unquestioned and unconditional defence of human rights), and which should not impose itself, or substitute individual CSOs, nor make decisions beyond its basic principles and statues, unity could quickly become homogenisation, uniformity, and subordination of the most critical voices.

Based on this, some organisations and activists challenged the call for unity of civil society allied to a strategy of 'constructive engagement'. Given that governmental structures believe CSOs should abstain from involvement in political issues, the above strategy in the medium term, has a double impact: firstly, adopting an increasingly technical approach, aid-delivery oriented, sectoral (action through thematic networks — HIV, environment, civic education, etc.), and apolitical activity by 'legitimate government partners'; secondly, a homogenisation of discourse and approaches which facilitate the subjugation of independent NGO individual positions through collective federal and representative structures, more easily co-opted

---

[62] In this regard, see chapter by Carlos Figueiredo in this volume.
[63] On this deficit, see Vidal, Nuno, "Social Neglect…*op. cit.*, pp. 200-235.
[64] This does not take into account that project by project involvement and short-term priorities of donors and international NGOs, the imposition of agendas which change according to the whims of international developmentalists and their preferential relations with some internal partners, has fragmented more than united Angolan CSOs; See Vidal, Nuno, *Angola: Preconditions for Elections…op. cit.*; also "Country profile Angola" in *An Assessment*, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-62.

and manipulated by political power. In practice, this constructive engagement and representative structures end up aligned with the fundamental principles of the patrimonial and clientelistic system, which lead to inequality, poverty and injustice. It also provides a cover, which leaves untouched the structural change that would have to be made to address the real causes of serious social problems.[65]

From a government perspective, 'constructive engagement' and unification as outlined above, are naturally very welcome. It is a more efficient and sophisticated way to soften the critics, as it depends on the self-initiative and collaboration of those who promote it (national and international NGOs). Above all, it is a cheaper strategy in comparison to that of 'parallel CSOs', first founded in the 1990s and now recognised as having been designed to undermine the independence of civil society in this regard.

Two contradictory positions have emerged within CSOs (principally NGOs) between those favouring a 'reformist' strategy (believing that one could reform institutions from within, collaborating with governmental structures in various projects), and those who believe that engagement with governmental structures should be selective and cautious, based on principles which respect human rights that should never be sacrificed, while always protecting the right to CSO political opinion and expression. This politically conscious position is more critical, than cooperative.[66] Characterisation of the two contrary perspectives appear within international organisations' reports, in somewhat exaggerated and simplistic terms, as a separation of 'overly radical' CSOs from the 'authentic and sensible' ones[67] — with the most sensible being the 'reformists': a Manichaean characterisation which denigrates positions contrary to 'constructive engagement' and the unifying representativeness of civil society, that exacerbate existing divisions.

The process associated with the National Civil Society Conference, reflects these different view points within CSOs and the involvement of international organisations in the issue. Although dispersed, the process was driven initially by the European Union delegation, with the active collaboration of international NGOs, *Development Workshop*, *World Learning* and *CARE* (among others). The 1st Angolan National Civil Society Conference, November 6-8, 2007, adopted the theme 'to Construct Unity in Diversity' at the outset, with the following objectives: 'to improve knowledge of each other [CSOs], and thus capacity to coordinate civil society efforts so as to promote national development'.[68]

The reformist perspective appears to have prevailed from reading the conference recommendations, emphasising the importance of civil society national 'representation' through a strengthening of FONGA (Forum of Angolan NGOs), a structure and space for articulation and bringing together positions of member NGOs, but which never represented the totality of Angolan NGOs:

---

[65] Regarding criticism of constructive engagement and homogenised and apolitical civil society representation, see chapter by Fernando Macedo in this volume; also chapters by Sérgio Calundungo critiquing the perspective of a politically sterilised civil society, and Fernando Pacheco critiquing homogenised representation.

[66] See interview extracts with Luís Araújo in Vidal, Nuno, "Landmines of Democracy: Civil Society and the Legacy of Authoritarian Rule in Angola" in Minnie, Jeanette (ed.), *Outside the Ballot Box…op. cit.*, pp. 65-87.

[67] See Amundsen, Inge & Abreu, Cesaltina, *Civil Society in Angola: Inroads, Space and Accountability*, a Christian Michelsen Institute Report (Bergen-Norway: CMI, 2006), footnote 27, p. 18.

[68] In *Conclusões da Conferência Nacional da Sociedade Civil*, 2007, unpublished, p. 1

> *Rethink the role of FONGA as a coordination mechanism for national NGOs, paying special attention to national representation. This concerns relations with other platforms and the organisational expression of civil society in the provinces, municipalities and villages.*[69]

Other recommendations where the prevalence of the reformist position was evident, while referring to the need to unite, state that it is equally necessary to collaborate with government and represent civil society through constructive engagement:

> *It is necessary to guarantee quality civil society representation within the councils being created at different levels. Autonomous constructive engagement with the government is essential to avail of this space for dialogue and negotiation.*[70]

The 2nd conference, held in Luanda from November 25-27 2008 (without FONGA which had withdrawn from the process due to criticism about its inability to pre-pare and organise the conference), again highlights differing opinions. On one side are those more disposed to intense and dutiful articulation with government, through civil society representative structures and mechanisms; on the other are those expressing strong reservations about the possible manipulation of structures that monopolise civil society representation, disconnected from its original roots and associates, losing legitimacy and becoming easy prey for potential cooptation by political power. While not questioning the need for some articulation with gov-ernment and state institutions, these latter opinions called attention to the need to impose conditions on such relationshipcollaboration, namely to ensure that CSO autonomy, its principles and philosophy for action remained absolute, thus avoiding cooptation. They also pointed to the need to bring past errors to an end, such as civil society structures without legitimacy, transparency or constituency, of restricted enclaves of opinion and analysis from within closed elitist circles, characterised by much external interference.[71]

Opposition to a 'reformist' stance (from both national and international NGOs) is clearly in the minority, with less ability to influence, less support and means. Even so, contrary to what one would expect, given the prevalence of a reformist position (with strong support from the donor community and a majority of followers from national and international NGOs), one does not see appeasement from those in power. Quite the opposite in fact, the more CSOs offer concessions and smooth cooperation, the more determined the government becomes in the process. This can be seen in the veiled threat of rendering illegal those national and international NGOs that have caused greatest political discomfort to government *(Open-Society Angola, Mãos Livres, AJPD and SOS Habitat[72])*, the banning of *MPalabanda* in Cabinda,

---

[69] In *Conclusões da Conferência Nacional da Sociedade Civil*, 2007, unpublished, point 3, line a), i, p. 2.

[70] In *Conclusões da Conferência Nacional da Sociedade Civil*, 2007, unpublished, point 3, line g), p. 3.

[71] The author participated in the II National Civil Society Conference, collaborated in preparing the methodology and organisation of discussion, and edited the final report; see Vidal, Nuno, *Relatório da II Conferência Angolana da Sociedade Civil, 2008/2009* (Luanda: Grupo de Coordenação da Sociedade Civil, July 2009).

[72] In statements to RNA, 13:00 hrs news programme, July 10, 2007, and repeated by *Jornal de Angola*, edition 10812, p. 3, July 11, 2007, the Director General of UTCAH accused Open Society, AJPD, Mãos Livres and SOS Habitat of conducting activities outside the law, inciting disorder and disobedience to government among the population and state institutions, and of carrying out activities reserved to political parties, in a clear prelude to a process that could render them illegal, if pursued; see the article by Mário Paiva in the weekly paper *A Capital* (Luanda: Luanda, July 14, 2007); also article by Reginaldo Silva in *Angolense* (Luanda: July 14, 2007).

in constraints to media activity, (including prison sentences for journalists,[73] and maintaining restrictions on Radio Ecclesia's expansion outside Luanda), or even closure of UNHROA, the United Nations Human Rights Office Angola (directly contradicting government commitments to work more closely with UNHROA, made when Angola ran for a seat on the UN Human Rights Council in 2007,[74] and despite the strategy of constructive engagement adopted by the office during its last years in Angola[75]).

Conclusion: the institutionalisation of modern patrimonialism in Angola

It was understood early on, that in spite of the new legal framework of 1991-92, the old political and economic power holders would do everything to resist change within decision making centres and in controlling the State apparatus and control.

The need for international political legitimacy effectively 'obliges' the existing system to allow for the functioning of mechanisms of a democratic and legal system, including human rights, but within limits which do not threaten the fundamental interests of the governing power and its *modus operandi*. An Institutionalist strategy of development assistance, as currently prevails in Angola, perfectly respects these limits, representing an apolitical 'partnership', subordinated and complicit. It supports the national and international legitimisation of the regime, improving its democratic image and leaving untouched the principle of patrimonial appropriation, and the control of public resources by a minority who hold political power. We are here dealing with the institutionalisation of modern patrimonialism as set out in part I of this chapter.

Such a system is contrary to any concept of development, as currently understood. The international image in the Western media, financed by the regime (e.g. CNN and Bloomberg)[76] of a growing country, on the road to modernisation, development, progress and democratisation (with growth rates of between 16-20%, and GDP per capita of $1,400),[77] is far from the reality for the majority of the population. Apart from the mineral sector (oil and diamonds), internal production has grown very little, and the country depends heavily on the importation of basic foods items

---

[73] This was the case with Graça Campos, journalist and chief editor of *Semanário Angolense* and Fernando Lelo, *Voice of America* Cabindan correspondent, imprisoned in November 2007, accused of 'instigating rebellion' and crimes against the State. He was condemned to 12 years in prison, but freed on August 20, 2009 for lack of evidence.

[74] U.S. State Department. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour, 2008 *Human Rights Report Angola* Accessed at www.state.gov

[75] See Vidal, Nuno, "Sectores Sociais, Sociedade Civil, Política e Direitos Humanos em Angola" in Vidal, Nuno & Pinto de Andrade, Justino (eds.), *Sociedade Civil e Política em Angola* (Luanda e Lisboa: Firmamento, 2008), pp. 11-40.

[76] See *Angola; do you recognize this nation?*, Peninsula Press, advertising supplement, May/June 2009, located at www.peninsula-press.com

[77] See *World Bank Country Brief - Angola*, located at *http://go.worldbank.org/6LIK1A3SS0*; Russell, Alec, "Investors sign up to Angola's miracle" (*Financial Times*, August 22, 2007); Della Barba, Mariana, "A África que prospera: Angola vive 'milagre económico' Exportações de petróleo atraem investimentos, mudam a paisagem de Luanda e fazem PIB crescer 23% em 2007", in O Estado de São Paulo (December 18 2007); also Hodges, Tony, "The Economic Foundations of the Patrimonial State" in Chabal, Patrick & Vidal, Nuno, *Angola, the weight of history* (London: Hurst, 2007), pp. 175-199.

and services.[78] The mechanisms to divert public resources crystallised during the war were redirected to benefit the national reconstruction process, according to The US State Department 2008 Human Rights Report:

> *Government corruption was widespread, and accountability was limited due to a lack of checks and balances, lack of institutional capacity, and a culture of impunity. Despite the widespread perception that government corruption at all levels was endemic, there were no public investigations or prosecutions of government officials (…) SONANGOL's dual role as governmental regulator and national oil company hindered transparency in the petroleum sector. (…) Serious transparency problems remained in the diamond industry. (…) The business climate continued to favour those connected to the government; government ministers and other high-level officials commonly and openly owned interests in companies regulated by or doing business with their respective ministries. There were no laws or regulations regarding conflict of interest. (…) There were credible reports of high-level officials receiving substantial kickbacks from private companies awarded government contracts.[79]*

Similarly the mechanisms of repression, authoritarianism and disrespect for human rights are maintained. According to the same report:

> *(…) there were numerous and serious problems. Human rights abuses included: the abridgement of citizens' right to elect officials at all levels; unlawful killings by police, military, and private security forces; security force torture, beatings, and rape; harsh prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; official corruption and impunity; judicial inefficiency and lack of independence; lengthy pre-trial detention; lack of due process; restrictions on freedom of speech, press, assembly, and association; forced evictions without compensation; and discrimination, violence, and abuse perpetrated against women and children.[80]*

The majority of the population live below the poverty line (approximately 70% of the population live on less than $2 per day) and the country is 162nd on the UN Human Development Index (having fallen one place from the previous report).[81] In relation to the Gender-related Development Index (GDI), the country is 142nd of

---

[78] See article by Justino Pinto de Andrade in A Capital (Luanda: May 26, 2007), p. 13; also AfDB/OECD, *African Economic Outlook, Angola*, May 2007, pp. 107-120, at http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/26/16/38561655.pdf; also Hodges, Tony, "The Economic Foundations of the Patrimonial State" in Chabal, Patrick & Vidal, Nuno, *Angola, the weight of history* (London: Hurst, 2007), pp. 175-199.

[79] In U.S. State Department, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour, *2008 Human Rights Report Angola* Accessed at www.state.gov; also report by Rafael Marques denouncing "generalised practices in Angola", where State officials at the highest levels of Government, in the Judicial system (including the Attorney-General and the presiding judge of the Angolan Military Supreme Court), Angolan Armed Forces, National Police, National Assembly and even in the Presidency of the Republic, combine their public duties with private interests; Marques, Rafael, "*The Business Activities of the Attorney-General of the Republic*", in *Semanário Angolense*, no. 329 (15-21 August 2009).

[80] U.S. State Department, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour, *2008 Human Rights Report Angola* located at www.state.gov

[81] See Human *Development Report 2007/2008, Fighting climate change: human solidarity: human solidarity in a divided world* (New York: UNDP, 2008); Human Development Report 2006, Beyond scarcity: power, poverty and the global water crisis (New York: UNDP, 2006), classifying Angola in 161st position; also Carvalho, Paulo de, "Desenvolvimento Humano em Angola", in Vidal, Nuno and Pinto de Andrade, Justino, *Sociedade Civil e Política em Angola, enquadramento regional e internacional* (Lisboa e Luanda: Firmamento, Universidade de Coimbra e Universidade Católica de Angola, 2008), pp. 221-231; also IMF Public Information Notice. *IMF Executive Board concludes 2007 Article IV Consultation with Angola*, September 13 2007, located at www.imf.org.

157 countries, and inequality continues to be acute.[82] The first two national reports on progress towards the *Millennium Development Goals*, in 2003 and 2005, concluded that at the present rate, the country would fail to meet the objective for 2015; there is weak progress regarding almost all objectives, and a dubious possibility that they will be fulfilled.[83]

Confronting this reality from a neo-liberal and technical bureaucratic perspective, with social-democratic finery (e.g. Millennium Declaration, MDGs, Cotonou Agreement, PAANE, Constructive Engagement, PRCSC, etc.), through apparent State institutional strengthening, which does not address the fundamental issues of the existing political and economic system and its international relations, contributes nothing to real development. Nor does it offer hope for substantive change in the lives of the Angolan poor, the majority. The opposite is the case: we are dealing with cynical complicity in maintaining and strengthening the current situation, the prevailing *status quo*.

---

[82] *Human Development Report 2007/2008, Fighting climate change: human solidarity: human solidarity in a divided world* (New York: UNDP, 2008); also Pereira, Aline, "Género, Mercado de Trabalho e Sociedade Civil", in Vidal, Nuno and Pinto de Andrade, Justino, *Sociedade Civil e Política em Angola, enquadramento regional e internacional* (Lisboa & Luanda: Firmamento, Universidade de Coimbra e Universidade Católica de Angola, 2008), pp. 181-196.
[83] *The UN System in Angola MDG Strategy Outline, Draft 2, Work in Progress*, March 2007, p. 3; also, *Angola, Objectivos de Desenvolvimento do Milénio, relatório de progresso 2005* (Luanda: Angolan government and PNUD, 2005); *Angola, Objectivos de Desenvolvimento do Milénio, relatório MDG/NEPAD 2003* (Luanda: Angolan government, Ministry of Planning, UN System in Angola, 2003).

CIVIL DOMAINS AND ARENAS IN ANGOLAN SETTINGS. DEMOCRACY AND RESPONSIVENESS REVISITED[1].

**David Sogge,
Bob van der Winden
and René Roemersma**

Introduction

Apopular remedy for many of Africa's predicaments is the promotion of 'civil society'. It is conventionally seen as a collection of non-profit bodies separate from the state and the business sector but capable of working in 'partnership' with both. Within a model of consensual, conflict-free politics, civil society can be enlisted in pursuit of common interests, particularly 'development' and 'democracy' By enlisting private sector actors, donors have long sought to substitute for, or by-pass the state. The neo-liberal counter-revolution in development policy thrust the non-profit private sector to the fore. Where once there had been talk of a citizen-state social contract and of public entitlements to social services and protection, an opposing cry went up: "Let the charities fill the gap!" Hence not only older mission hospitals but also newly-arrived NGOs were tasked with providing a range of services, from schooling and healthcare to small enterprise promotion, that were once considered public sector responsibilities. Donors exalted the non-profit sector's political status, chiefly as a counterweight to the state. Here civil society is cast as a hero, who routinely calls a villainous state to account.

This model has evoked controversy[2]. Researchers, activists and journalists have questioned the claims for NGOs as substitute providers of basic services and as substitute vehicles of public politics[3]. In the case of Africa, some argue that the whole concept of 'civil society' as promoted by outsiders does not match African sociological or political realities in most settings[4], and can ultimately weaken, rather than strengthen the power of common citizens. There are calls, in short, for a re-think.

---

[1] This paper draws on Sogge's longer discussion paper, *Civil Domains in African Settings: Some Issues*, commissioned in 2004 by Hivos and on *Do not beat a drum with an axe, masters thesis* (2004) by Bob van der Winden (see www.bwsupport.nl).

[2] See Howell, J. and J. Pearce 2001, *Civil Society & Development. A Critical Exploration*, London: Lynne Rienner.

[3] See for example: Langohr, V. 2004, 'Too Much Civil Society, Too Little Politics' *Comparative Politics*, 36 (2)

[4] These are reviewed in Sogge, D. 2004, *Civil domains in African Settings: Some Issues* http://www.sarpn.org.za/documents/d0000840/index.php

1. Civil domains

How closely does the idea of civil society correspond to the ways Africans themselves go about their associational life and politics? How has it worked in the past? Can it foster robust citizenship in the future?

At some times and places, answers to these questions have been affirmative. Where Africans could organise to transform the political order — the ending of minority rule in southern Africa being a major case in point — rights and collective self-esteem have advanced. The consensual politics of the conventional civil society model is hard to detect in African history. More realism is needed. The concept of public space, as derived from the work on the foundations of democracy of the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas[5], allows us not only to analyse players and issues at stake but also to pay attention to the history of the discourse in that space. In many African contexts that discourse is strongly marked by authoritarianism, colonialism, and even Marxism-Leninism .

Hence we conceive that space differently, and designate it with term the civil domain: a social realm or space apart from the state, familial bonds and for-profit firms, in which people associate together voluntarily to reproduce, promote or contest the character of social, cultural economic or political rules that concern them.

Such a conception makes it possible to include other actors including churches, trade unions, intellectuals, journalists, students and representatives of vernacular society, such as the sobas ('traditional authorities') in Angola. Yet a glance at history reveals the limitations of even this conception of public space. For the advance of public politics and citizenship has been halted or reversed where an even wider set of forces and actors, driven by global interests, have been at play.

Usually in collusion with foreign interests, many African leaders have squandered public goods and public trust. Sovereign powers and surpluses have been transferred abroad, open political competition outlawed and space for active citizenship reduced to nothing. In much of Africa, public institutions have decayed, and in Somalia, Congo-Kinshasa and Sierra Leone largely collapsed. Explaining such outcomes is a complex and disputed matter. Many home-grown villains from Mobutu to Mengistu are blameworthy. But as powers over fundamental political and economic choices have shifted even further upward and outward, to Western-based entities that make the rules — donor agencies, bankers, corporations and unaccountable global regulators — external factors loom very large indeed.

Power in African settings is commonly constructed and deployed in spheres far wider than civil domains: the state, the armed forces, enterprises and the media. These have external as well as domestic dimensions; in a continent where power is highly extraverted[6], relationships with foreign actors are commonly decisive. Hence when talking of governance, democracy, and respect for human rights it is important to keep in mind differing levels — global, national, regional and local — and the interplay among them.

---

[5] Habermas, J. 1989, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Cambridge: MIT Press
[6] Bayart, Jean-Francois, 1999, 'Africa in the world: a history of extraversion' *African Affairs*, 99 (395)

2. Civil Domains in the Public Arena

Habermas concluded that in the 18th and 19th century 'real' democracy developed in feudal Europe when there emerged independent public spaces (as coffee houses, salons, reading rooms, the beginning of the independent press) in which issues could be debated outside the influence of government structures. These spaces gave rise to freedom of speech, opinion, association, assembly — all now cornerstones of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Today public space is not necessarily confined to the media. In the case of Angola, Comerford shows that the churches, amidst continuing war, fed the public domain with a vital discourse of peace.[7] Yet public spaces transcend national frontiers. In the case of Zimbabwe, public space is internationalised, much of it being found outside the country, in the diaspora in South Africa, U.K. and beyond. Hence, the model of civil domains complements the model of the arena. The scope of 'civil domain' allows for conflict, but cannot account for its non-territorial, externalised dimensions. A 'public arena' is a complex whole of 'antagonistic cooperation'[8]. We regard these twinned concepts as helpful in illuminating what is really going on in the complex African context.

The Arena

The arena model allows analysis of day to day power relations. These can be found not only outside organisations but also within them. In such a perspective, organisations can be seen as half-open systems interacting with actors in their environments and influenced by them. That interaction may touch different layers of organisations in different ways.

Take for example a large non-governmental organisation in Angola. It depends on international donors, but also operates in the Angolan political environment where the influence of Angolan politics is unavoidable. It faces further challenges from its beneficiaries. Hence the organisation operates within the force-fields of several kinds of actors. The organisation's managers must respond chiefly to donors who are all abroad and influenced by other political realities than Angola. The organisation's field officers, on the other hand, are dealing and trying to respond chiefly to Angolans. The organisation is a half-open system. Its inner workings can be understood as nested within Angolan political reality but at the same time within the arena of international development assistance which in its turn is nested again in the overall international relations.

This pressure is exerted on many levels. At the same time the organisation is a half open system in the sense that the culture of the programme related officers inside the organisation is more geared towards the beneficiaries than that of the 'Angola or international related' managers and directors, while the organisation as a whole is more related to the beneficiaries than the Angolan Government itself. At the

---

[7] See Comerford paper in this volume, and Comerford, M. 2005, *The Peaceful Face of Angola*, Luanda. See also: Monga, C 1997, 'Eight problems with African Politics' *Journal of Democracy*, 9:3, pp. 156-170, cited in Comerford (2005) and Habermas, J. 1989, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Cambridge: MIT Press.
[8] Verweel, Paul 2002, *Bewogen en gewogen: the power and weakness of vision and division* Lecture for Forum, Utrecht, The Netherlands

same time all parties have a fragile relationship, based on conflict resolution and negotiation, and this relationship is reflected inside the organisation as well.

Thus in the organisation's internal arenas, different players confront each other and may become interdependent[9]. They are not in the 'public arena', but not taking them into account would overlook many things that drive relations in the 'public arena'. This is also true of media outlets and political parties. So it is not enough to analyse 'the' organisation: an analysis needs to be deeper and more encompassing. It is the public arena in which battles (cold or hot) are fought by various players and powers, resulting in the end more (or less) democracy. This complex 'nesting' of arenas[10] is an important part of the analytical model. When analysing Angola, international pressure cannot be omitted.

3. Democracy and State Responsiveness

Consistent with neoliberal attitudes toward the state, official aid agencies have expressed their dismay at top-down approaches; they now claim to belong to the 'participatory methods' club. Yet in practice, those new methods have often camouflaged old-fashioned autocratic power. Donors continue attaching coercive conditions to their loans and grants. Aid-givers' insistence on 'participation' in some places is experienced as manipulation, deception or simply as unpaid local labour. Some now speak of the 'tyranny of participation', and discuss it only with adjectives: 'veneered participation' (going-through-the motions); 'inequitable participation' (women and minorities marginalized), and 'bureaucratic participation' (planning-by-numbers, discussing-by-checklists).[11]

Some wish to drop the term participation altogether. Real citizenship is not served by cheap substitutes; rather it requires 'teeth' — concrete obligations and rights capable of enforcement in law. Citizens should have real powers to "throw the rascals out". However, credible mechanisms such as truly competitive elections, independent parliamentary inquires, independent public auditing for downward accountability are scarce or weak.

In their approaches to the state in Africa, aid donors have shown ambivalence and mood swings. In the 1960s they favoured the state and 'nation-building.' Around 1980 they changed course, mounting an offensive to 'roll back' government through privatization, decentralization and de-legitimation of the public sector. Up to the mid-1990s, donors showed great optimism about the powers of private for-profit and non-profit sectors. This harmonized with prevailing neo-liberal orthodoxies, namely that Greed is Good, and that horse-and-sparrow economics would be sufficient to tackle poverty — that is, "feed the horse well and some benefits are sure to pass through for the sparrows to eat".

Where African governments poured public resources into such luxuries as four-star hotels and automobile assembly plants, cutting back state engagement in the economy was not a bad thing. But de-legitimizing the public sector rapidly became a self-fulfilling prophecy. Schools, health services, police and other public sector

---

[9] Verweel, Paul 2000, *Betekenisgeving in organisatiestudies* Inaugural lecture, University of Utrecht

[10] Antonissen, Anton & Jan Boessenkool 1998, *Betekenissen van besturen*. Utrecht: ISOR, page 208

[11] Heeks, Richard 1999, *The Tyranny of Participation in Information Systems: Learning from Development Projects*, IDPM, University of Manchester

services — especially those serving the politically weak — rapidly lost the means to meet citizen's needs. Unable to deliver basic services of acceptable quality on a fair basis, and ravaged by corruption, the state lost legitimacy for citizens. Readiness to pay taxes and fees declined. The public sector lost whatever responsiveness it may have had. he 'social contract' between states and citizens collapsed.

Donors and lenders aggravated decay of African public sectors simply by choosing to by-pass them. Increasingly, they channelled aid via special project units, consulting firms and nonprofits. NGOs became aid vehicles of choice, and their supply both in the North and the South boomed in response to donor demand. The resulting organizational islands could deliver their agricultural extension, health care and training project services for a while. But disconnected from public institutions and local taxes and fees, those services stopped when the stream of aid dried up.

Institutional decay, combined with low and declining reciprocity between political classes and citizens, have made states dangerously fragile. There has been no lack of disaffected politicians or disgruntled army officers ready to spark a coup or a war. The sequel is collapse, sometimes with unspeakable violence. Victims have been chiefly civilians. In the case of Rwanda, the system of foreign aid, including that helping create 'civil society', set the stage for genocide.[12]

After 11 September 2001, strategists at the centre of world power began paying more attention to the periphery. People in supposedly secure Western countries began to realize that they were vulnerable to angry people in faraway non-Western places. Washington DC today regards weak and failed states as among its top security priorities. Its main development agencies are re-tooling themselves to promote 'nation building' — a theme of the 1960s. The task is no longer to shrink the state but to reinforce it.

That may not be a bad idea. Contrary to some conventional thinking about civil society, stronger states can advance anti-poverty and human rights agendas. Weak and poorly institutionalized states offer unpromising venues for emancipatory associational life. But where there are robust institutions to provide basic services and to conduct open politics, many things become possible. Citizen action in South Africa, for example, has scored victories for the landless and people living with HIV-AIDS because special courts and official commissions have grown (partially as a result of civil society pressures) to promote provisions of the Constitution's bill of rights. In Mozambique, an important pre-condition for achievement of smallholder land rights was the rehabilitation of a land title office managed by the state.

Charitable giving and government subsidies to NGOs are commonly justified by claims about their responsiveness in combating poverty. Indeed in many African settings, a lot seems to be happening thanks to NGOs: sewing circles, street children centres, HIV-AIDS counselling, kitchen garden and small livestock efforts, micro-lending, literacy, and so forth. Africa seems abuzz with little projects supported from abroad. But does this add up to anything people can count on? For

---

[12] Uvin, Peter 1998, *Aiding Violence. The Development Enterprise in Rwanda*, West Hartford: Kumarian. This important and neglected study includes a devastating analysis in the chapter 'And Where Was Civil Society?'.

many citizens such beehives of activity can be a 'tyranny of structurelessness' — a situation in which benefits are indeed flowing to some, but not according to any priorities or plans ratified by wide popular consent. Nonprofits claiming to be more responsive than the state in service provision seem to have a point when people flock to their clinics and schools. But in the absence of public steering and comprehensive coverage, displacing public services with private ones will usually worsen fragmentation, instability, unequal access and no reliable ways for citizens to call service providers to account and get what they are entitled to.[13]

In this regard an interesting study has been conducted in the Balkans[14], about which the authors ask: 'Why is economic growth not generating support for market capitalism and why is state weakness reproduced in the Balkans?' Their study shows, first of all, that economic growth is not sufficient to create a social base for a market society; second, that state building in the Balkans can not be simply reduced to an EU-guided reform of public administrations. The researchers hold that in the Balkans, state building should be viewed primarily as a constituency building. The paradigm shift proposed — to build a constituency for the state and public politics, rather than in opposition to it — is a virtual reversal of the neoliberal paradigm.

Yet it appears that neither 'building civil society', nor 'building the state' are in themselves the answer to public issues. Rather, viable answers may be better sought in the 'public arena' where the question is not one of shrinking or developing substitutes for the state, but challenging it to become more responsive while at the same time helping it gain the capacities to respond. As the authors of the Balkan study write:

> *What is needed is a new generation of democratization policies that focus on the quality of political representation. What we see as a priority is a shift from the normative approach to democratization that focuses on democratic institutions (elections, courts, and media) and which is most often expressed with the idea of "accountable government" or "good government" to the idea of "responsive government" that underlines not the state's autonomy from civil society but the influence of major social constituencies over state decisions.'[15]*

This is analogous to the synthesis of the three approaches in our theoretical notes: concepts of civil domains have more explanatory power than those of civil society, but even then are insufficient, for in the end much more can be explained by relations of power in the public arena. This nested constellation of public and private spheres has non-territorial, global dimensions — something indispensable to understanding politics in a place like Angola, where so much power is anchored offshore. A functioning public arena is precondition for a functioning state as well as functioning constituencies of that state. That public arena makes a responsive state possible, as a first requisite for genuine democracy.

---

[13] One example from a large case study literature: Pfeiffer, J. 2003, 'International NGOs and primary health care in Mozambique: the need for a new model of collaboration' *Social Science & Medicine*, nr. 56.
[14] Center for Policy Studies, 2003, *In search of responsive government*, CPS, Budapest
[15] Center for Policy Studies, 2003, *ibid*, page 52

4. Angola's Public Arena

What institutions, rules and incentives are driving or blocking change, and shaping the civil domain and public arena in post-war Angola? The following sections look at four dynamics: economic, state-party, civil, and vernacular.

Economic Power

Since the early 1970s oil has dominated the economy, accounting for about four-fifths of state revenue and nine-tenths of export earnings. Yet with only 11,000 employees and almost no forward or backward linkages with other productive sectors, the oil industry is an enclave. Its economic significance is chiefly that of filling a small number of bank accounts — most of them outside the country.

A lot more oil will soon be pumped up from Angola's new deepwater wells. Expanded output and rising revenues might suggest that a Valhalla for the poor is just around the corner. But such visions continue receding into the future, pushed back by other claimants with greater powers to tap Angola's wealth. Constraints on those powers are few in part because the business of tapping wealth is deliberately kept murky, and out of public view.

This lack of transparency is an issue both of Angolan *and* global governance.[16]

State and Party Power

More than in other African settings, Angola's post-colonial order displays some striking lines of continuity with the colonial order: Far-reaching "extraversion" of national sovereignty, that is, foreign private corporations and banks decisively set the parameters of national policy; Centralized, authoritarian state power managed in alignment with elite interests; Politics run according both to particularistic norms of "know-who" and to universalistic norms of legal and administrative codes — the choice of norm depending on which was more convenient to those in authority; State repression as standard responses to political discontent; Officials with one foot in public institutions and another in private business; A weak and corrupted judiciary.

In the colonial period, Africans were not considered citizens; they did not matter politically because they were *indigenas* and subalterns. Nevertheless they were needed for their labour, taxes, and to some extent their ability to consume Portuguese goods. Today Angolans may matter to some degree politically (chiefly as ballot fodder) but not very much economically, since most of what the political class needs can be obtained without Angolan labour, taxes and consumption. The "resource curse" is fundamentally a political curse, in that it weakens reciprocity between rulers and ruled.

Politics today

Today there are naturally a number of important differences from the colonial order.

---

[16] Disreputable practices by oil industry firms — paying off or otherwise influencing national and international officials, massive use of tax havens etc. — can affect governance everywhere. See for example *The Politics of Oil. How one of the World's Richest Industries Influences Government and Policy*, 2004, Center for Public Integrity, Washington DC, http://www.publicintegrity.org/oil/default.aspx

Citizenship is extended, in principle, to everyone, although inclusion/exclusion according to party affiliation and class usually nullify the norm of equality of opportunity. Moreover "citizenship" as a concept based on the actual practice of political rights & duties is rather empty of meaning.

Political competition is no longer pursued through force of arms but tolerated in formal proceedings; since 1990 multi-partyism has been legal, but is unwelcome by the regime.

Political co-optation of constituencies is standard operating procedure for the MPLA — as shown in the creation of posts for defectors from the FNLA in the late 1980s, and generous support to defectors from UNITA who chose to retain seats UNITA won in the 1992 elections.

Foreign affairs are managed through both formal diplomatic channels and informal mercantile channels. This was shown in the case of French state-owned companies, but included private or semi-state channels based in the US, UK, Italy, The Netherlands etc.

The oil economy has created powerful new semi-autonomous institutions under a parastatal holding company, Sonangol, which acts as a state within a state and enjoys alliances with offshore interests. The company is only marginally accountable to the central bank and public treasury.

Bargains among elites entail some concessions to regional privilege. For example, since 1996 the provinces of Cabinda and Zaire receive ten percent of tax revenues their respective oil output generates. Delegation of some spending and management responsibilities to provincial authorities takes place, but Luanda has yet to decentralize political power or to adopt significant federal arrangements.

The parliamentary election campaign of 2008 was an open demonstration of clientelism: people voted for the party providing them or their communities with goods ranging from tractors to telephones to t-shirts. Combined with musical entertainments and bean fests, the MPLA carried it off in spectacular fashion. Angolan politics may thus be fairly described as 'Goods Government'.

The supreme seat of authority is in Futungo de Belas, the Presidential complex on a seaside hill on the outskirts of Luanda. The term *Futungo* refers to the cluster of personages and patronage networks centered on President Dos Santos. Until around 2000 there was a small rival MPLA faction, referred to as the 'colossi', including wealthy but liberal-minded figures from the party's past such as former Prime Minister Lopo do Nascimento. Dissent and outspoken journalism had emerged in the 1990s, at least in Luanda. Against this background, optimists in Luanda's network of human rights NGOs, small parties and church intellectuals thought the 'colossi' might make a comeback, usher in a centre-left government widen public space for opposition. But the comeback never took place and neither robust opposition nor a centre-left regime have yet to emerge. *Futungo* appears mightier than ever.

The social underpinnings of the political class are a matter of speculation. According to Angola's pop sociology, the top of the elite comprises "One Hundred Families". In early 2003 the Luanda newspaper *O Angolense* reported on 59 rich Angolans whose combined wealth totalled nearly four billion dollars. The wealthiest among

them are or were government/party officials.

New ways of self-enrichment opened up after Angola joined the IMF in 1989 and launched a wave of privatization. Out of public view, and at bargain prices, the political elite sold off state-owned businesses, farms, houses, apartment blocs and special export franchises to themselves and to their domestic and foreign political friends. These acquisitive dynamics, under conditions of non-transparency and mal-administration, illustrate the uses of disorder as a political instrument.[17] This syndrome — opaque, non-accountable authority, a weak and corrupted legal order, few boundaries between formal and informal sectors — also figures in other African states. Conditions in Angola have made disorder an especially effective mechanism, serving a diverse range of interests.

In peacetime, it is more difficult to reproduce disorder. Yet opacity continues and open and active political competition is constrained by:

> Widespread public distrust and cynicism toward all political parties, as shown in recent attitude surveys[18];

> State-party powers of patronage, exercised since the 1980s to neutralize or co-opt rival political forces, such as the Bakongo-based FNLA. Today patronage is formalised in the dependence of most political parties on state funding, and in Futungo's charity arm in civil society, the Fundação Eduardo dos Santos;

> State repression, including anti-riot police and the National Spontaneous Movement — a rent-a-mob party youth league;

> State quasi-monopolies over national radio, TV and most printed journals, coupled with restrictions on independent media, particularly outside Luanda;

> A policy of 'gradualism' that is effectively reinforcing a political status quo: foot-dragging about a new constitution; postponement of local-level elections; rejection of proposals to end impunity and to carry out a formal process of reconciliation; continual re-scheduling national presidential elections, etc;

> Proliferation of political parties (some 150 are said to exist), most of them pivoting on one aspiring "big man" and his followers. Confined mainly to networks in Luanda, their scope is small, their ideas & initiatives few; in short, most opposition parties lack credibility and momentum.

Historically, party-political rivalry corresponded to an 'insider/outsider' dichotomy: (a) the MPLA as rallying-point for the urban, westernized, white/creole, wage — and salary — earning strata and (b) two rallying-points for the rural, black, agrarian, petty producer/trader and poor peasant strata: the FNLA as a Bakongo-dominated hierarchy, UNITA as an Ovimbumdo-dominated hierarchy, both led by Big Men. Distrust of political parties, demobilization of party activists except for electoral campaigns, and MPLA's now overwhelming command over all sources of patronage and political authority (as well as much of the commercial and non-

---

[17] Chabal, Patrick & J-P Daloz, 1999, *Africa Works. Disorder as Political Instrument*, Oxford: James Currey.
[18] IRI 2006, *Republic of Angola National Opinion Poll - June 29 to September 6, 2006* Washington DC: International Republican Institute (IRI); BBC World Service Trust 2008, *Elections Study Angola 2008*, London: BBC World Service Trust

profit worlds) all suggest the end of the country's three-way, ethnically-charged divisions. Many may continue to explain political events in terms of ethnic interests and bias, and make political appeals on the basis of ethno- regional loyalties. But more plausible today are scenarios in which parties and civil society bodies may seek to advance their agendas by appealing across ethnic divisions to populist sentiments pivoting on 'insiders'/'outsiders' themes.

The state apparatus

Angola's public sector is big but feeble. Government jobs have since independence accounted for about three-quarters of all formal sector employment (whereas in Tanzania and Zambia for example they account for about one-third). Provinces and districts least affected by war (the Southwestern provinces, the coastal zone of Benguela, Cabinda, and of course Luanda) have disproportionate numbers of civil servants. Yet many state systems are dysfunctional. Basic public sector services of education, health care have expanded since 2002 but remain poor in quality and limited in coverage.

Provision of health, education and security services through private channels, on the other hand, is advancing, thanks chiefly to encouragement and patronage of the political class and better-off strata and their foreign partners. In 2003 the government passed enabling legislation for a national programme of social protection; but that hardly opened the way for downward redistribution. Stronger has been government encouragement (not yet expressed in formal subsidies or contracts) to NGOs and churches to fill gaps in social services for the poor. The official media project a view of the church as a 'pacifier', provider of social services and a stern voice admonishing youth to abstain from bad behaviour.[19]

5. Typology of Civil Domains in Angola

Associational life takes a variety of forms, based on a variety of social settings.

Vernacular Ways of Associating

Most Angolans' experience of associative life takes place informally, in ways that may be termed 'vernacular'. Together with extended families, such ties constitute the social bedrock — something that most Angolans have badly needed. At the height of the war in 1996, an Angolan protestant theologian observed that "People feel totally abandoned." Ordinary citizens had been cast adrift by their leaders; they had to face war, predation and *capitalismo selvagem* (jungle capitalism) wholly on their own.

Most Angolans cope by relying on social connections they were born into as well as on *jeito* — street smarts or *savoir faire* in daily life. Through not systematically known, survival strategies include exchanging labour and goods and managing natural resources, credit, and services such as child care. In urban areas, people quietly encroach on natural resources, such as wood-cutting; they encroach on public resources such as water and electricity by clandestine taps on public mains.

More than three-quarters of Angola's urban population resides in shantytowns, where most live atomized lives. Collective action to solve common problems does

---

[19] *ANGOP,* 6 January, 2009

not take place spontaneously. Most face problems on their own. Open, horizontal community-based organizations appeal to many — although there too trust can be quite fragile. Neighbourhood committees to resolve disputes and manage local public improvements have worked successfully in some Luanda and Lubango neighbourhoods. Many forms of mutual aid were transformed or dissolved under pressures of war, forced urbanization and competitive scrambles for existence. Given the widespread damage to the social fabric, the strength of vernacular institutions should not be over-estimated. Efforts to mobilize the urban poor for protest have been routinely suppressed; indeed formal and informal state security units for precisely this purpose are continually at the ready.

Formal Organisations

Formal associational life has not fared much better. Throughout most of the 20th century, voluntary associational life lacked both the social basis and the political freedom to flourish. Churches were the only formal option open to most Angolans. Toward the end of the colonial period about 40 percent of the population was nominally Catholic, 10 percent Protestant; today those proportions are said to be 58 percent Catholic, 17 percent Protestant. Indigenous African churches drew huge followings. But the Portuguese kept a close eye on such churches and on secular groups, such as small cultural circles of *assimilados*.

On assuming power in 1976, the MPLA likewise sought to confine civil space. Its Constitution did permit some rights of association, thereby allowing Catholic charities, Protestant umbrella bodies, the YMCA and the Angolan Red Cross to operate. The MPLA came down hard on Catholic institutions, while its stances toward Protestant mission churches ranged from very cordial (the Methodist church in Luanda came to be known as "the MPLA at prayer") to restrictive (as potential pro-Savimbi or fifth columns for the USA). The party went about colonizing associational life by setting up Soviet-style "mass" organizations: one each for children, youth, women, peasants and waged workers.

Around 1990, its "Year of Enlargement of Democracy", the government stopped blocking autonomous associative life. Thereafter, dozens of new organizations began sprouting up — some of them at the instigation of party officials themselves. In anticipation of the 1992 elections, there came many self-proclaimed political parties. Several large development NGOs took shape under the aegis of liberal party leaders, and gained foreign funding. Some initiative came from ordinary citizens, who set up (with no foreign funding) residents' committees and neighbourhood clean-up groups. Urban football clubs, on the other hand, have been backed by big firms or government branches like the police and army. Also with party-state help, business and political elites helped set up "Friends and Natives of [town X]" clubs linking Luanda residents with hometowns up-country. State/party-supervised organizations for wage-earners began diversifying and showing some militancy in the early 1990s. There were sporadic worker walkouts and stay-aways, but these were promptly quashed.

There are, particularly in Luanda, formal groupings of professionals, such as the Orders of engineers, physicians and lawyers, and associations of architects, economists, sociologists and psychologists. Business people have formed numerous trade associations, including the eight-member Angolan Private Press Association.

Some of these groups are quite close to the political class. A few deliver services directly to the public, such as the legal aid work of the Bar Association *(Ordem dos Advogados)*, as well as lobby for structural reforms.

NGOs

Organizations whose chief vocations are in service delivery have emerged under three main auspices:

1) The party-state structure, for example the Organization of Angolan Women (OMA) and the Eduardo dos Santos Foundation (FESA); the latter is a typical Presidential (or "First Lady") charitable fund relying on foreign business donations, thus allowing wealthy interests to pay off the political class under the guise of philanthropy;

2) Churches: for example, Caritas Angola; social service branches of the protestant churches and their apex bodies; and a wide number of local NGOs inspired or led by churches;

3) Foreign aid channels: NGOs have arisen from direct initiative such as Deutsche Welthungerhilfe's setting up of AAD in 1989, or in response to donor demand for 'partners' and for sub-contractors to deliver humanitarian goods and services, such as the many scores of NGOs delivering World Food Program foodstuffs.

As many as 500 Angolan NGOs are said to exist, but most of these are ephemeral, informal bodies. Perhaps no more that a few dozen actually operate full-time. Some die and are re-born under new names. In circumstances like Angola's, NGOs are not neatly-bounded, structured things but fluid processes. In this perspective[20], Angolans are not steering organizations like drivers of so many busses but rather are busy "NGO-ing" like freelance impresarios trying to build up theatrical repertoires.

Most NGOs represent initiatives of the salariat — teachers, middle managers, church pastors and so forth. Their orientation is chiefly toward the aid system, and its ever-shifting mix of donor interests and requirements. The curriculum vitae of just one organization can easily show a record of activities as diverse as food delivery, water supply, health care, gender, small enterprise promotion, conflict resolution, child care, social surveys, trauma counselling, micro credit, advocacy, and HIV-AIDS education. These jacks-of-all-trades NGOs, and the types of "trades" they claim proficiency in, grow more numerous every year with every passing donor fad. Most NGOs live from hand to mouth on an unstable series of grants from donors who themselves pay a lot of attention to the Next Big Thing in aid discourse and practice. Their domestic contractees operate essentially as enterprises in a skewed and non-transparent market for aid funding, thus illustrating the civil domain's extraversion, and the nested pattern of its structure.

6. Angolan civil domains and public arenas

Almost all Angolan NGOs dependend on foreign aid, yet a few of them are guided more by Angolan than by donor compasses. Some of these organisations have

---

[20] Hilhorst, D. 2003, *The Real World of NGOs. Discourses, Diversity and Development*, London: Zed Books

developed vocations based on professional knowledge and calculations of what is politically feasible. They also enjoy a certain amount of political protection. Angola's leading development NGO is ADRA *(Acção para o Desenvolvimento Rural e Ambiente)*, a product wholly of Angolan leadership. Since its creation in 1990 it has set the "gold standard" for NGO practice in the country. Its repertoire includes community economic development, education, the promotion of human rights, participatory practice, and policy debates on fundamental matters of poverty and democratization. ADRA is among very few Angolan NGOs pursuing policy innovations and scaling up together with public sector bodies, such as with education authorities in the Province of Benguela. Policy activism presents a riskier terrain, and few Angolan NGOs pursue advocacy without the backing of foreign aid agencies or the collaboration of other well-positioned NGOs.

A few younger NGOs have concentrated on civil and political rights in particular settings: residents of low-income neighbourhoods facing abuse by the authorities or landlords (such as forced evictions); prison conditions. A network for human rights activism associated with Catholic institutions is perhaps the strongest current example of NGO networking, although it operates informally. Built up by lawyers and enjoying the discreet protection of political figures, church leaders and outsiders like the Swedish Embassy and the Open Society Foundation, these NGOs are developing track records of effectiveness and public credibility. Those getting in the way of urban gentrification or calling international attention to major abuses, are special targets of intimidation by the authorities.

Moreover, journalists and trade unionists face curbs on freedom of expression; independent radio beyond the capital city is effectively forbidden. Even when armed with restrictions and blockages of information, the ruling political class and leadership show great sensitivity about their public image. Basic psychology is usually at play. The president evidently wants to be remembered as the president that brought peace and — according to some — prosperity. Many in the ruling party genuinely believe that the party is the vanguard of development; consequently they distrust competitive politics where that vanguard role may be put in question and ridiculed.

Reading Angolan politics from the outside is not easy. No outsider knows exactly what the sphinxes of *Futungo* actually think and want. Is *Futungo* the factor blocking the creation of a responsive state as Steve Kibble[21] suggests? He sees *Futungo* running a state without need for citizens to produce or pay taxes, let alone to exercise their full political potentials. Or is it a complex scheme to hold other elites at bay, limiting their access to oil and other resources revenues in order to prevent corruption spiralling out of control, as Nicholas Shaxson[22] suggests? Readings from the inside don't necessarily make things better. When Radio Ecclesia sacked its executive director, two camps with opposite explanations were quickly formed. One held that the director had been a victim of Machiavellian power plays within the radio and within the Angolan Bishops Conference - CEAST; the other camp accused the ex-director of being an agent provocateur paid by the ruling party

[21] Kibble, S. 2007, *Angola: from politics of disorder to politics of democratization?* http://www.worldhunger.org/articles/06/africa/kibble.htm
[22] Shaxson, N. 2007, *Poisoned Wells; the Dirty Politics of African Oil*, London: Palgrave Macmillan

to create this permanent state of confusion within the Radio and by doing this, destabilizing the trusted networks within that radio. Also Radio Ecclesia turned out to be a 'half-open-system'.

In Angola two versions of a story can be true at the same time. This was shown in the fall of the chief of state intelligence, General Miala. He turned out to be one of the financers of a particularly critical weekly publication. Journalists there knew when they were fed certain information against the ruling elite, but at the same time they kept some independence with regard to other publications.

Space for independent media or journalism in Angola is highly constrained. A journalist's capacity to investigate and publish is directly related to his or her capacity to find a balance between the different (non-public) spheres and a genuine wish to inform the public. That is, the public will learn only those facts that someone has not been paid to keep quiet about. In the words of one editor, "there is no story in Angola I can't make money with". These practices are relatively easy to maintain where the press is confined to Luanda. This is the real drama behind Radio Ecclesia's failure to expand into the provinces. The flow of information resulting from this expansion would be far more difficult to control and the government and the party would be exposed as failures because of their inability to actually deliver some of the public goods and services the Angolan population is still waiting for. This is why the Radio has been targeted for dirty tricks or 'black-ops' by the security services and why the government did not allow it to expand.

To control information is to control the discourse in public domains — thus reinforcing hegemony over the civil domain. For the time being information flows among private domains where small networks based on personal, familial and cultural ties operate. Even amidst this political disorder, a logic can be found. The single most important factor is the predictability of behaviour of members of these networks — a question of trust and loyalty.

Angolan public domains are under construction. Even a top-heavy state like Angola's can be challenged to respond to pressures in public domains at the middle and bottom of social pyramids. For those public domains to be nurtured and protected, informed citizens and a notion of citizenship are needed. This is not beyond the possibilities of Angolan NGOs and media working in the field of civic education. Modern communications tools such as the Internet would help build that informed citizenship.

NGOs engaged in this type of politicizing work are aware that it exposes them to risks. After all, it puts in question the legitimacy of claims to absolute authority by those in power and introduces countervailing power. This is not politics in the sense of opposition or party politics. The objective is not to seize control over the state. Nevertheless for the political class such politics pose threats. They call for a skilful application of a Socratic method; in the words of the dean of the Catholic University: "We don't do politics here but we discuss things in such a way that our students leave the university with their eyes wide open". Today some NGOs seem willing to take up this role, but it cannot be left to the NGOs. Emancipatory coalitions such as among women leaders, anti-conscription students and public sector workers need encouragement, support and protection in order to broaden the civil domain and engage in the wider civic arena of politics.

Working with the media to produce trustworthy information in the embryonic public domain remains a priority. Research on issues fundamental to Angolan and international elites, namely about oil and diamond revenues, is too dangerous for Angolan NGOs to undertake openly. Western-based bodies like *Global Witness*, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International rely to some extent on streams of information supplied by Angolan activists and intellectuals, but such collaboration poses grave risks to those allies. International media organizations supporting concerned and civic journalism could step in here and publish what Angolan journalists can't, thus filling vital gaps in public debate.

The politics of the global arena impinges on civil domains. Protection, confidence and information needed to mount advocacy efforts are nowhere guaranteed in Angola. Major outside actors in that political arena are commercial enterprises, both Western and Chinese, who can continue to operate non-transparently with impunity. Privatized global governance is organized chiefly on their behalf. The balance of forces in the public arena today is tilted overwhelmingly against emancipatory initiatives in civil domains. The interests of the producers and consumers of hydrocarbons (and other sectors, especially financial services, serving producers and Angolan elites) have priority, severely constraining research, debate and protest at both national and global levels.

Use of public arenas during elections

The Parliamentary elections of 2008 showed how the ruling party can dominate in the civil domain. In a brilliant show of clientelism the MPLA demonstrated that it knew exactly how to 'win the hearts and minds' of the people. Its efforts in the run-up to election-day were considerable. The President seemed to be everywhere, every day officially opening at least four different public goods: bridges, offices, power plants, refinished roads, etc. Never mind that, a few months after the elections, the newly tarred roads are crumbling. Civil society bodies were usually present at these public events, particularly vernacular organisations and the churches. Referring to these civil organizations, one of the leading MPLA election strategists openly declared they 'are ours'; and he added: at least the critical ones will not speak against us…'.

In the run-up to the 2008 Parliamentary elections, the ruling party and government regularly claimed more than 80 percent of news broadcasting time on national television and radio. Its aim of achieving a two-thirds majority — a goal that filled even some prominent Party members with apprehension — was easily achieved. A massive, if manipulated, expression of the voters' will has restored the *status quo ante*, the one-party state.

Conclusions

In Angola the civil domain's formal, visible members have with few exceptions been marginal to political life. Few have been active protagonists pressing for policy change, or vehicles to consolidate the hegemony of the political class. Established churches have tipped political balances at exceptional moments, such as when they pressed for non-punitive terms of a political settlement following UNITA's defeat

on the battlefield. There have been important tactical gains, such as improvements in land reform legislation, attributable to specialized NGOs. Finally, the political class has proven to be sensitive to criticisms aimed at it from public tribunes of the independent media; they tend to take it as disrespect bordering on treason. But as a rule, civil domains and what takes place in them are today not decisive in Angolan politics at any level.

In certain local circumstances, where political stakes are modest and the issues narrowly defined (preferably in technical, not political terms), local authorities have participated in public consultation with representatives of NGOs and churches — a case in point being district-level authorities in Huila Province. Since 2005 a pilot project of administrative decentralization has been underway in 88 of 163 districts. Backed by Brazilian conceptual and technical advice, the project has allowed for citizen input and is said to have shown promising results[23]. It remains to be seen if this initiative will open the door to more than perfunctory gestures toward enhancing citizen 'voice'. Across Africa, decentralization and the creation of 'invited spaces' for civil society have often left many disappointed. In Angola, however, such initiatives are in any case unprecedented, and may afford opportunities for citizens to promote local public spaces on their own terms.

Open, routine dialogue between public authorities and citizens' organizations takes place in only a few locales in Angola; most are limited to small settlements. Signs of a 'responsive' state are thus still a far cry from those seen in Brazil, where decades of popular agitation, political competition and development of public services have seen the growth of real constituencies for services. Those pressures, combined with service delivery roles by NGOs, have led to the creation of statutory national councils in which both government and civil actors take part. From human rights and racial equality to food and nutrition safety, important policy realms have their own national councils. Such platforms open possibilities for constituencies to exercise real influence over statutory programmes and policies — things whose scale and concreteness far surpass the uneven and discontinuous endeavours in civil domains[24].

Can such public 'arenas' be anticipated in Angola? They are not in any case impossible to imagine. Access to the internet is spreading, thus information, debates and encounters in cyberspace will grow both within the country and abroad. Returning Angolans and newcomers are arriving with fresh experiences of other kinds of politics, of citizen action and emancipatory alternatives. This kind of interaction will throw open yet more windows, possibly even among officials and politicians under pressure to raise Angola's profile and show that it is no second-rate backwater. In 2010, Angola will host an international conference of Africa's public Ombudsmen. That will draw attention to its own Justice Ombudsman *(Provedor de Justiça)*, at work since 2005, who must be seen to have a credible track record in handling citizen complaints. Government efforts to quash dissident media boomeranged, drawing yet more attention and thus helping legitimise 'such media outlets as the

---

[23] Henda Ducados, personal communication at the international conference on "Civil Society and Politics", Angolan Catholic University, 7-8 August 2008.
[24] A Brazilian civil umbrella body, COEP (Comitê de Entidades no Combate à Fome e pela Vida) works actively toward social control of public policies. See http://www.coepbrasil.org.br/

"weapons of the weak", and beacons of democracy'.[25] Meanwhile, job actions by Lobito port workers and Bengo school teachers suggest that organized labour is not intimidated. Student-led protests against forced recruitment into the army (to fight in the Congo) offer further evidence of civil courage. Government initiatives to watch or even domesticate action in civil society, such as the party's Office of Citizenship and Civil Society, may themselves stimulate more public debate, thinking and action in the emancipatory camp of Angola's civil society.

Angola illustrates the limitations of the conventional story of civil society, centred on NGOs. In Angola, NGOs are far newer and far less rooted and effective politically than are many institutions of vernacular associational life, and some large, established churches. The configuration of political power, largely out of sight and beyond the reach of most citizens and their organisations, also raise questions about the relevance of investing in NGOs as independent agents of countervailing power'. For donor ambivalences and rules render current forms of external support incommensurate with the political challenges.

It is important to explore and identify more clearly what those challenges really are. A functioning democracy — a constitution, freely chosen political representations at all levels, independent powers of public inquiry etc. — certainly merits pursuit. Public space for associational life is also without question a good thing. But a responsive state, built around public services and the active pressure of constituents (consumers and producers) to make them work well, seems to us to be an even more pressing and probably more feasible objective in the middle run. Therefore a chief priority for foreign support should be those organisations actively enlarging public space and fighting in the public arena, as well as to the means (e.g. media, communication) that enlarge and protect the public domain.

Given that organisations are nested in a globalised pattern, and that Angolan elite interests are anchored offshore, strategies of countervailing power increasingly have to be made relevant at those global levels. Improving the responsiveness of domestic elites and their global allies will require confronting them in the domestic arena but especially in the global arena, where transparency, anti-corruption and good governance are needed more than ever.

---

[25] Marques, Raphael 2009, 'Mass media in Angola: Hegemonic power or power to be subverted?' *Pampazuka News* 8 January, http://www.pambazuka.org/en/category/comment/53064

HUMANITARIAN AID AND LOCAL INSTITUTIONS IN ANGOLA: STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONS OR INSTITUTIONALISING WEAKNESSES?

Maliana Marcelino Serrano
Wageningen University

Introduction

The long civil conflict in Angola resulted in the weakening and disintegration of both informal social institutions and formal state institutions. During the protracted crisis, humanitarian actors emerged as the principal providers of social services, filling the institutional void in service delivery left by the state. This chaper discusses the changing relationship over time between humanitarian aid and local institutions, and the consequences for local capacities. It is based on fieldwork undertaken in Huíla Province in 2007/08, mostly in Matala and Chipindo municipalities, which have distinct experiences of aid and conflict,[1] as part of PhD research on the effects of humanitarian aid for local rural institutions.[2]

Humanitarian aid has the distinct purpose of saving lives and alleviating suffering wherever and whenever needed.[3] It is based on the core principles of being needs-based, impartial, independent and neutral. These principles are reflected in the Code of Conduct for International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in disaster relief,[4] and other instruments of International Humanitarian Law. However, beyond the humanitarian imperative of saving lives, humanitarians are also meant to build and strengthen local capacities to meet the needs of

---

[1] Matala in Southern Huíla witnessed little direct conflict but received a large displaced population and hosted numerous relief programmes. Chipindo to the north-east was heavily contested throughout the war. Most of its population was uprooted and remained isolated and inaccessible by aid agencies until peace was established in 2002.

[2] The research is part of the programme 'Aid under fire: people, principles and practices of humanitarian aid in Angola' of Wageningen University, financed by the Dutch Agency for Scientific Research, NWO. It is based on an ethnographic analysis that includes participant observation of selected aid projects and institutions, as well as interviews with rural populations, aid organisations' staff, public servants and social sector workers.

[3] This rationale is rooted in the Geneva Convention and creation of the International Committee of the Red Cross. It followed Henry Dunant's initiative after witnessing the extent of suffering at the battle of Solferino in 1859.

[4] This Code was launched in 1994 and now has over 300 signatories. Hilhorst, D. (2005) Dead letter or living document? Ten years of the Code of Conduct for disaster relief. Disasters, Issue 4, Vol. 29.

those affected by disaster or conflict. This intention is articulated explicitly in several of the Code of Conduct's 10 Articles.[5] The attention to strengthening local institutions reflects the need of aid organisations to extend their objectives beyond the pure delivery of humanitarian aid to areas which traditionally belong in the development field. Few organisations see relief work (protection and assistance) as an end in itself.[6] Only Médicins Sans Frontières (MSF) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) are considered organisations with a 'pure' humanitarian mandate.[7] Increasingly, principles derived from development, like accountability, partnership, participation and sustainability, are more important.[8] However, humanitarians have struggled to implement them particularly in contexts of protracted crisis, such as during Angola's conflict, where short and long-term needs coexisted. The question is what have been the concrete efforts and results of humanitarian aid in increasing the capacity of local institutions? Some have argued that contrary to the rhetoric, not only has aid failed to build local capacity, but it has also contributed to its long term decline.[9] This paper explores such questions in relation to the history of aid in Angola and shows how problematic such objectives remain for humanitarians. It argues that aid interventions, despite being guided by a set of values and principles that go beyond saving lives, have not made serious efforts to build the capacity of local government institutions or understand the role of informal community institutions. Instead, and as a direct consequence of this, humanitarian action has actually contributed to the processes of deterioration of local institutions.

The chapter covers the post-colonial conflict and the history of aid thereafter. It distinguishes between two periods of the war: from independence in 1975 until the Bicesse Peace Accords in 1991, and from the 1992 resumption of conflict, until the Luena Memorandum of Understanding in 2002. A third period covers the transition to peace to the present time. For each of the three periods, the chapter looks at conditions within the local institutional landscape, at the role of different aid actors, and at their changing approaches to formal and informal local institutions. The time periods defined do not claim to fully represent Angola's complex reality. They are limited to major changes in the conflict and political situation (including the influence of the Cold War and peace agreements or the holding of elections) and in the aid environment (including the emergence of national CSOs).[10]

During the first phase of the civil war, people relied primarily on informal social institutions and mutual aid mechanisms. International aid agencies were few and national CSOs only emerged at the time of the 1991 Bicesse Accords. Thus, no organised national humanitarian operation was in place to assist victims of conflict and displacement. The

---

[5] Article 2 says that relief will be provided upon the basis 'of a thorough assessment of the needs of the disaster victims and the local capacities already in place to meet those needs'. Article 6 commits to attempt to build disaster response on local capacities' and strengthen these by using local resources, working with local partners and in cooperation with local government structures where possible or appropriate. Article 7 refers to full community participation in managing relief aid.

[6] Walker, P. (2005) Cracking the code: the genesis, use and future of the Code of Conduct. Disasters, Issue 4, Vol. 29.

[7] Hilhorst (2005: 353).

[8] *Ibid*.

[9] Smillie, I. (Ed.) (2001) Patronage or partnership: local capacity building in humanitarian crisis, Bloomfield, Kumarian Press; Jum, M. & Shurke, A. (Eds.) (2002) Eroding Local Capacity: International Humanitarian Action in Africa, Uppsala, Nodiska Afrikainstitutet.

[10] Hilhorst, D. & Serrano, M. (forthcoming) The Humanitarian Arena in Angola: 1975 – 2008. Disaster Studies, Wageningen University.

return to war in 1992 saw further decay of social and state institutions and a scaling up of the humanitarian effort. However, as this paper argues, aid agencies paid little attention to understanding and supporting existing local institutions. In the transition to peace, aid has shifted focus towards institutional strengthening and capacity building initiatives. Nevertheless, the legacy of emergency approaches is problematic for current attempts to strengthen the state's relationship with communities, as well as its service delivery capacity. Such aid efforts to support the transition and democratisation processes have been further compromised by the sharp decline in donor funds, in coordination activities, and by underinvestment in local aid actors.

1. Institutions during conflict

Institutions are often defined as the 'rules of the game' and organisations as the 'players in the game'.[11] Institutions can be further characterised according to the degree of formality (formal, semi-formal, informal), the level of geographical hierarchy (from local to global), and the area of analysis (economic, political, legal and social-cultural).[12] In this chapter, institutions are conceptualised as *'any form of legitimised social ordering'*.[13] The focus is on those institutions through which local people address their needs and problems, whether organisations or not, formal and informal. There is a strong relationship between crises, such as conflicts, and the disintegration of such institutions: *'…conflict further weakens institutions by breaking-up communities, deepening mistrust and preventing the State from functioning in an accountable manner to distribute resources and manage conflicts.'*[14] These effects on the social fabric vary from one locality to another according to their specific history and experience of conflict.

Formal institutions in Angola, such as the state, have weakened over the years due to factors such as the transition from the colonial system and the political changes of the early independence years,[15] the effects of the war and the severe underinvestment by the government in both material and human resources. During the conflict, the institutional capacity in nearly all branches of public administration declined, leaving it disorganised and in a leadership vacuum.[16] Social sector institutions were also affected as the withdrawal of the state produced an institutional void in service delivery, particularly in rural and more isolated areas.[17] The absence of state institutions meant that many people had to fend for themselves during the years of displacement in the 'bush', as was the case for most of Chipindo's population.

---

[11] North, D. C. (1993) Economic Performance Through Time. Lecture in memory of Alfred Nobel.

[12] Jutting, J. (2003) Institutions and development: a critical review. OECD Development Centre, Research Programme on Social Institutions and Dialogue, Working Paper No. 210.

[13] Douglas, M. (1986) *How institutions think?* Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, p. 46

[14] Robson, P., Ulisava, M., Festo, M., Domingos, A. & Mavela, A. (2006) Sustainable peace analysis and risk mapping for post-conflict Angola. In Robson, P. (Ed.) What to do when the fighting stops: Challenges for post-conflict reconstruction in Angola. Luanda and Ontario, *Development Workshop*, p 87.

[15] These are discussed elsewhere, for example in relation to the changing role of traditional leaders and authorities. Suffice to say here that the legacy of these factors has also defined rural societies, their institutional fabric and relationship with the state. For an historical account of the experiences of colonisation and early independence, see Neto, M. C. (2001) Angola – The historical context of reconstruction, In Robson, P. (Ed.) *Communities and Reconstruction in Angola*. Guelph, *Development Workshop*.

[16] Tvedten, I. (2000) Report to NORAD on selected development issues in Angola 1999/2000. Bergen, Christen Michelson Institute.

[17] Christoplos, I. (1998) *Humanitarianism and local service institutions in Angola.* Disasters, Issue 1, Vol. 22.

Otherwise, they resorted to alternatives such as traditional and community institutions, private services, personal networks, churches or NGOs. Service provision was thus left almost entirely in the hands of external aid actors. The replacement of this role of the state remains a dominant criticism of the lengthy presence of humanitarian aid in Angola. It refers to the contribution of aid to de-linking the state from society, and its responsibility in the provision of basic services to the people. As shall be seen, in the post-conflict phase, aid interventions are attempting to address some of these weaknesses by building the state's institutional capacity.

The war and large-scale population movements also affected informal institutions, directly and indirectly. Although there has been a serious information gap regarding processes of institutional change over the years, existing studies suggest that there has been a general decline in rural institutions, particularly communal ones. Robson and Roque for instance explain that '… *after such a long period of social transformations in rural areas in the colonial period, followed by various decades of instability, rural institutions of solidarity have been strongly modified. Mutual aid may occur in rural areas, but less frequently than before.*'[18] The phenomenon of displacement had a great impact on the social life of the country and was one of the primary factors behind the destruction of community institutions. In 2001 alone, almost one third of the Angolan population was estimated to have been displaced.[19] Displacement split up families and communities but also accelerated the urbanisation process, creating new social constellations where people from different origins and contexts were able to coexist. Notwithstanding the effects of the conflict and of population movements, some customary rural institutions such as the *Onjango* did survive,[20] and still have an important role in the management of resources and conflict resolution,[21] particularly in the least war affected areas.

Besides conflict, aid interventions also play into processes of institutional change and social transformation. These occur as a result of social actors' behaviour in reaction to an external factor, or to emerging constraints or opportunities. The long presence and prominence of aid in Angola have made aid interventions an inherent part of these change processes. This happens either intentionally through institutional strengthening projects, or unintentionally as aid becomes another strategy people employ to meet needs, and through which power relations play out. This perspective rests on an actor-orientation, which starts from the premise that social actors have agency. As external interventions, such as aid projects, enter the life-worlds of people, they are shaped and transformed as actors negotiate with one another.[22]

---

[18] ROBSON, P. & ROQUE, S. (2001) 'Here in the city there is northing left over for lending a hand': In search of solidarity and collective action in peri-urban areas in Angola, Guelph, Canada, *Development Workshop,* p. 37.

[19] That is 3.8 out of a total estimate of 12 million people. Cish (2001) Programa nacional de emergência para a assistência humanitária — segunda fase — continuação. Comissão Interministerial para a Situação Humanitária, República de Angola.

[20] The Onjango is a village 'council of elders' that still exists in the majority of rural villages and which plays a vital role in the management of community life, in moderating the power of leaderships, in conflict resolution and in the transfer of knowledge to the young. Pacheco, F. (2005) *Angola: Construindo cidadania num país em reconstrução: A experiência da ADRA.* V Colóquio Internacional Paulo Freire, Recife, Brazil.

[21] Robson, Ulisava *et al.* (2006); Pacheco, F., (2005).

[22] Long, N. (1992) From Paradigm Lost to Paradigm Regained? The case for an actor-oriented sociology of development, in Long N. & Long, A. (Eds.) *Battlefields of Knowledge: the Interlocking of Theory and Practice in Social Research and Development.* London & New York, Routledge.

There is therefore a need to deconstruct interventions and understand how aid is translated and transformed at the interface of implementation, through the everyday practices of organisations and their interaction with various stakeholders such as civil servants, recipients and aid workers.[23]

2. Different periods, actors and approaches of humanitarian aid

From independence in 1975 to the 1991 Bicesse Peace Accords

The process of institutional decline is first linked to the abrupt transition from colonial rule.[24] At independence there was a mass exodus of the colonial population and with it, the abandonment of skilled and qualified human resources, and of major infrastructure. Hodges quotes an estimated 5% (or 340,000 people) of the total population having left the country at that time.[25] The lack of investment by the colonial system in education and training of local people, and later the severe neglect of social services by the independent government resulted in the quick deterioration of state institutions at all levels. Towards the end of the 1970s, social services were already showing signs of decay as a result of budgetary constraints[26]. Over time, the state became altogether absent in many parts of the territory as a result of the conflict. In many areas, such as Chicomba and Chipindo in northern Huíla, this was reversed only after the war ended, when the government reinstated local government administrations. While in isolated rural areas basic service institutions were virtually abandoned, in the cities they were strained far beyond capacity due to rapid population growth resulting from displacement.

In many areas, the complete breakdown of state services was avoided largely through the assistance provided by external actors, such as the churches, some aid agencies and technical assistance in various sectors by political actors such as Cuba.[27] Kapelongo hospital in Matala municipality reached such a poor level of service that its functions were taken over by the municipal health centre, which is lower in the referral system hierarchy. The centre was more easily accessible than the hospital and received support from MSF for a number of years, developing a greater capacity to respond to health needs. The churches were also important in providing basic services and in training local staff through their rural missions, but they too suffered greatly during this period. In Huíla province the Protestant churches, assigned to the region by the colonial system, were particularly prominent in creating and maintaining health care for the local population.[28]

---

[23] Long, N. (2001) *Development Sociology: Actor Perspectives*, London & New York, Routledge.

[24] Robson, Ulisava *et al.* (2006).

[25] Hodges, T. (2004) *Angola: Anatomy of an Oil State*, Oxford, James Currey, p 9.

[26] Vidal, N (2007) Social Neglect and the Emergence of Civil Society, in Chabal & Vidal (eds.), *Angola: the weight of history* (London & New York: Hurst & Columbia University Press, 2007), pp. 224-232.

[27] Most notable was the contribution of hundreds of Cuban doctors and teachers during this period. In the health sector, the government was able to establish 1,260 health units nation-wide with significant support of foreign doctors. However, these entered a rapid process of deterioration due to a lack of resources, poor coordination of medical supplies and transport difficulties to the provinces. Vidal, N. (2009) Política, sectores sociais e sociedade civil em Angola, in Vidal, N. & Pinto de Andrade J. (Eds.) *O Processo de Transicão para o Multipartidarismo em Angola*. Luanda, Edições Firmamento.

[28] The IESA (Sinodal Evangelical Church of Angola) mission hospital at Caluquembe municipality was long renowned for its quality service. Despite many difficulties, it continues to train local staff. The hospital of the IECA mission (Evangelical Congregational Church of Angola) in Bunjei (Chipindo) was also a crucial provider of health care, but was abandoned by 1982 due to the war and eventually completely destroyed.

Between 1975 and the Bicesse peace process in 1991, there were few international humanitarian organisations working in the country.[29] Some aid was being provided as part of external interventions of political actors involved in the Cold War. MPLA received military assistance from Cuba and the Soviet Union, while UNITA received it from South Africa and the United States. Towards the end of the 1970s and into the first half of the 1980s, in addition to these actors, several international donors such as the Nordic and Western European countries were funding aid interventions to alleviate hunger and disease.[30] During the Cold War, the ICRC and MSF were the only organisations present in UNITA areas, while several United Nations (UN) agencies were operating mainly in government territory.[31] In the late 1980s, a small number of more development-oriented INGOs appeared[32] and the first coordinated humanitarian operation was launched in 1990, led by the UN's Development Programme (UNDP).[33]

The political changes that lead to the 1991 cease-fire also affected humanitarian actors and their strategies. The national civil society sector was born as the country moved to a multiparty system and begun to open up. Some existing INGOs responded to the transition to peace by attempting to adjust interventions towards development activities, including training and capacity building.[34] However, this period was short lived and the war that followed was the most destructive and cruel in the country's history. As such, the results of investments made during the short window of peace, in terms of institutional capacity building, were unclear. The abrupt return to war created an emergency culture among agencies that was to persist over time, even in areas and during periods of relative 'stability', where longer-term development interventions could have been implemented. Some aid actors emerged and retained a development vision, even after the return to war. The national NGO ADRA for instance, pioneered initiatives to strengthen community organisations including the distribution of relief aid through existing structures. In Gambos municipality, in 1994, ADRA started an integrated intervention involving the provision of relief aid, social infrastructure and capacity building of local institutions. It worked with the local administration and emerging forms of community organisation around various issues. A local group was created, *Grupo Estrela*, which was involved from the outset in the distribution of relief items. It also designed and implemented small projects. Later the group became a local NGO and now represents other local organisations in public consultation fora and performs tasks previously done by ADRA, which has scaled down its presence.[35] However, as the next section shows, this was an exceptional approach to aid in the emergency period.

---

[29] The state received technical assistance in areas such as health and education, particularly in the early independence years when it made some effort to invest in policies and programmes in the social sectors.
[30] For further details of aid in the 1st and 2nd socialist administrations see Vidal (2009).
[31] Lanzer, T. (1996) The UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs in Angola: A Model for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance? *Studies on Emergencies and Disaster Relief*. Uppsala, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet; Richardson, A. (2000) Negotiating Humanitarian Access in Angola: 1990 - 2000. *The Journal of Humanitarian Assistance* Working Paper No. 18.
[32] Examples from the South of Angola include Development Workshop and ACORD.
[33] Ball, N. & Campbell, K. F. (1998) Complex crisis and complex peace: Humanitarian coordination in Angola. New York, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.
[34] MSF SPAIN (2007) *Relatório sobre a Missão dos Médicos Sem Fronteiras em Angola* (1989 - 2007)..
[35] Interviews with ADRA Director, February 8, 2008, Luanda; ADRA Project Coordinator for Gambos, September 3, 2007, Gambos; Founding Member of Grupo Estrela; and Municipal Administrator of Gambos, September 4, 2007, Gambos.

From 1992 to the end of the conflict in 2002

The return to war in 1992 was marked by the intensification of needs and the scaling up of the humanitarian effort. Institutional capacity continued to decline to the extent that local administrations ceased to function or exist, not only in UNITA territory, but also in remote government areas. This period saw a sudden growth in numbers of international aid agencies as well as national organisations, which often acted as their implementing partners. Except for a few agencies like ADRA, humanitarian actors concentrated almost exclusively on emergency assistance: food aid, essential non-food items, medical assistance and basic service infrastructure. This left little room for practices to support existing local institutions, either formal or informal. Interviews with agency staff and civil servants revealed that most agencies limited their relation-ship with state institutions to pragmatic communication with the relevant structures to define areas of intervention and ensure physical access.[36] However, even this was unsystematic given that *'many times NGOs skipped consultation with governmental bod-ies and intervened directly at the municipal level'*.[37] Beyond this superficial contact there was neither a real engagement with government to devise policies or approaches for the provision of assistance, nor much concern with capacity building for local service delivery by the state. In areas controlled by UNITA, this was even more problematic as access remained difficult and was ultimately completely cut after 1998.

Humanitarian agencies opted to work outside state structures, establishing parallel systems of aid provision whose structure and functioning depended fully on their own inputs. Concern with corruption and mismanagement, as well as neutrality considera-tions, played a role as state institutions were seen as lacking in capacity, commitment and resources. Humanitarians sought to secure access to populations in areas under the control of the two warring parties and therefore opted to work 'alone'. The circumven-tion of the state contributed in turn to the further deterioration of its service delivery capacity. It also undermined the impact of subsequent efforts to build the capacity of national institutions or develop democratic forms of government.[38] Moreover, as the government continued to neglect the social sectors despite its growing revenues from a booming oil industry, humanitarians viewed this lack of willingness, besides the lack of capacity, as part of the root causes of the crisis.[39]

Humanitarian interventions were equally limited in supporting informal community institutions. Beyond superficial needs-assessments, accounts of rural people revealed that participation of aid recipients was almost invariably reduced to modest consulta-tion by aid agencies, in turn limited to beneficiary registration through the traditional

---

[36] Locally, this communication was done through the provincial offices of the government's Technical Unit for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (UTCAH) operating with the support of the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA). UTCAH was established in 1998 to raise funds, monitor, coordinate, evaluate and inspect all aid programmes (article 6, Decree 30/98). It works under the Ministry of Social Assistance and Reintegration (MINARS).

[37] Interview with Provincial Humanitarian Coordinator of UTCAH for Huíla province. Lubango, August 27, 2007.

[38] Cain, A., Daly, M. & Robson, P. (2002) Basic Service Provision for the Urban Poor: The Experience of Development Workshop in Angola. Working *Paper Series on Poverty Reduction in Urban Areas, IIED, London*, Working Paper 8; Neto (2001).

[39] Duffield, M. (1994) Complex political emergencies with reference to Angola and Bosnia; an explanatory report for UNICEF, in Policy, S. O. P. (Ed.), University of Birmingham, UK; Ostheimer, A. (2000) Aid agencies: providers of essential resources? in Cilliers, J. & Dietrich, X. (Eds.) *Angola's war economy - the role of oil diamonds.* Pretoria, Institute for Security Studies.

leaders. Typically the Soba (traditional chief) and the village secretary[40] were approached by aid organisations to request a list of families eligible for a project, or to act as witnesses during the agency's own registration process. Some cases were found of individuals claiming to have been excluded from beneficiary lists due to disagreements with their Sobas, or a fee was demanded which they were unable to pay.[41] Furthermore, several aid agencies reported that it is common practice for community organisation projects, to have traditional authorities formally or informally occupying the most powerful positions within created structures.[42] Only one programme was encountered in Huíla where the Soba is purposefully left out of such group.

This points to a failure of aid agencies to understand the changing role and systems of power and authority of these institutions, thereby risking doing more harm than good. Aid delivery through traditional structures, which suffered deep transformations, did not guarantee more socially responsible interventions. As Wille explains, humanitarian aid agencies which worked with community structures without understanding them, risked inadvertently strengthening the hierarchical and undemocratic aspects of such structures rather than empowering whole communities.[43] *'Local communities are not homogenous entities and power relations regularly play a role in the allocation of resources. It is important that INGOs are aware of these problems and aim to make well-informed decisions about collaboration.'*[44]

The lack of attention and investment by aid agencies during the emergency to supporting existing local institutions, or creating lasting new ones, can be explained by a number of reasons. Firstly, donors preferred to channel aid through INGOs or the UN rather than bilaterally,[45] and to fund short-term projects aimed at saving lives and reaching the highest possible number of people quickly. This intervention modality lasted almost a decade. Secondly, the competition for visibility and funds amongst agencies discouraged detailed studies and needs assessments needed to build knowledge of local contexts. *'Rapid diagnostics and assessments are important, but do not provide a deep understanding of social dynamics and their origins.'*[46] Thirdly, as argued by Simões and Pacheco, there was a serious lack of value attached by donors, international agencies and the government itself, to the importance of knowledge about the social reality and of the capacity of communities to assume their own destinies.[47] This lack of real direct involvement by communities in the definition and implementation of activities resulted in a working culture that was 'blind' to institutional aspects. As discussed by other authors in this volume, aid during this

---

[40] The village secretary is appointed by the MPLA and is also the party secretary. He is the person responsible for keeping records and supplying data on the village's population.

[41] Interviews with local woman in Bairro KM15, Matala, January 28, 2008; with local farmer, Nguelengue Village, Bunjei, October 13, 2008; with resident of Catchope Village, Matala, December 19, 2008.

[42] Interview with IECA programme staff in Bunjei, May 2008; Personal communication with CARE International staff in Matala, June 2008; Communication with ZOA staff-member at inter-agency meeting, March 2007, Lubango.

[43] Wille in Robson, P. (2003) The case of Angola. In Alnap (Ed.) *ALNAP Global Study on Consultation and Participation of Disaster-affected Populations* London, Overseas Development Institute.

[44] Hilhorst (2005) p. 361.

[45] Simões, M. R. & Pacheco, F. (2009) Sociedade Civil e Ajuda Internacional em Angola, in Vidal, N. & Pinto de Andrade, J. (Eds.) *Sociedade Civil e Política em Angola*: *Enquadramenteo Regional e Internacional.* 2ⁿᵈ ed. Luanda e Lisboa, Edições Firmamento, Media XXI e Adra Angola.

[46] Pacheco, F. (2001) Rural Communities in Huambo. In Robson, P. (Ed.) *Communities and Reconstruction in Angola*. Guelph, *Development Workshop*, p. 111.

[47] Simões & Pacheco, *ibid*., p. 287.

period contributed to the development and knowledge transfer to CSOs.[48] State institutions also benefitted from such dynamics. For example, health workers from the municipal post in Matala all refer to the experience and knowledge gained as the greatest legacy of MSF's presence during the emergency.[49]

The end of the war and the transition period

By the time the conflict ended in April of 2002, the humanitarian crisis had reached a new peak in the country as previously inaccessible areas were opened up and large numbers of people arrived in displacement centres, often in a critical condition.[50] This crisis was met by virtually collapsed social services in rural areas and severely overstretched and under-equipped ones in urban centres. People's own coping capacities had also been greatly undermined following the brutal war tactics which were responsible for splitting up families and communities and destroying mutual and self-help mechanisms.

Aid agencies played an essential role during this phase, but were affected by the rapid decline in donor funding soon after the end of the war, which led to a rather abrupt downsizing and withdrawal of many international organisations. Within only one year, from 2004 to 2005, Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) net totals dropped from 1145 million to 442 million USD respectively.[51] This had a clear knock on effect on national NGOs (NNGOs). In early 2001 the numbers of NNGOs and INGOs registered with UTCAH stood at 365 and 195 respectively (and were estimated to be higher in reality),[52] whilst by 2006 UTCAH's directory listed only 68 NNGOs and 57 INGOs as being operational.[53] The downsizing of aid resulted from a shift in donors' policies, as peace was consolidated. The continued growth in wealth from oil was taken by the donor community as a sign that the state should take over the country's development. Funds were thus directed elsewhere.[54] However, the persistence of various needs of the population shows that the decision was politically informed rather than based on local realities.[55]

Early in the transition, aid projects assisted civilians and ex-soldiers at displacement and demobilisation centres. Later they supported the return and reintegration to their areas of origin. In Huíla, these projects focused on two dimensions of rural recovery: restoring basic services by focusing on the building or rehabilitation of social service infrastructure such as health facilities and schools; and livelihoods recovery through activities to kick-start production for subsistence agriculture. The latter entailed the free distribution of agricultural inputs such as seeds, tools and some livestock for animal traction, but over time agencies adapted their approaches towards develop-ment and switched to the introduction of in-kind credit systems, managed by pur-

---

[48] See paper of David Sogge, Bob van der Winden and Rene Roersma in this volume.
[49] Interviews with the head of the Health Section of Matala, Matala, January 15, 2008, the Administrator of the municipal health centre, Matala, January 15, 2008 and two local nurses, Matala, January 12, 2008.
[50] For instance, estimates by local medical staff interviewed in Bunjei (Chipindo) place mortality figures above 30 people per day at the very height of the crisis, and nutritional data show that 9% of children under 5 years were severely malnourished, and 27% moderately malnourished. MSF (2002) Angola: Sacrifice of a People. MSF, p 18.
[51] OECD (2007) African Economic Outlook 2007: Statistical Annex. ADB/OECD, p 594.
[52] Tvedten, I. (2001) Angola 2000/2001: Key development issues and the role of NGOs. MFA/NORAD, pp. 22, 28.
[53] UTCAH (2007) Relatório de actividades desenvolvidas pelas ONG's durante o ano de 2006, Luanda, Ministério da Assistência e Reinserção Social.
[54] Vidal, N (2007) Social Neglect and the Emergence of Civil Society, in Chabal & Vidal (eds.), *Angola: the weight of history* (London & New York: Hurst & Columbia University Press, 2007), pp. 224-232.
[55] Hilhorst & Serrano (forthcoming).

posely created community-based organisations (CBOs).[56] With the consolidation of peace and a rapidly growing economy,[57] the donor community became concerned with questions of governance, democratisation and transparency, therefore focusing on the state's capacity for reform. These concerns follow mainstream international discourse on state-building in post-conflict fragile states.[58] Many interventions in the reconstruction phase therefore aim to build and strengthen the institutional capacity targeting local government institutions and communities.

Capacity building of state institutions in the transition phase involves technical support to different areas, from the economy to health and education, primarily through UN agencies and bilateral agreements.[59] Aid agencies have also explicitly assisted state institutions by supporting the current national process of decentralisation and deconcentration. This approach is distinct from other projects in that it specifically works at the levels of the community and local government, to create the structures and capacity for the transfer and management of power and resources from central to local government. The methodology involves the creation of CBOs from the village to the municipal level, where they are supposed to be incorporated into existing government *fora* for consultation on social issues.[60] The government's decision in 2009 to transform all 163 municipalities into budgetary units, heightened concerns over the low-skills base and quality of financial management of local administrations and over real local participation. Whilst this may suggest a need for external capacity-building, too little is known about the appropriateness of such interventions to conclude whether decentralisation can result in real local decision-making power and in improving people's situations. However, there are threats in the way the process is being conducted, in potentially exacerbating regional inequalities. Initially it was only piloted in 68 of 163 municipalities nation-wide. Even now only a minority of the country's municipalities are receiving support, which is given by different aid agencies or donors with distinct approaches, priorities, budgets and timeframes.[61]

At the community level, the notion of community organisation and the creation of local groups or CBOs became central for the management of activities of rural projects. As in the case of decentralisation, the groups are also intended to provide spaces for debate of community problems, and act as a link between the community and external actors, such as the NGO, local government administration, and other

---

[56] Typically in Huíla these include integrated development programmes focused on food security, implemented in several municipalities by INGOs and NNGOs such as Action Against Hunger, ADRA, CARE, GTZ, IECA and ZOA Refugee Care.

[57] Angola's GDP growth rate went from 3.1% at the end of the conflict in 2001 to 26.9% by 2007, OECD 2007, p 4.

[58] State-building involves *'purposeful action to build capacity, institutions and legitimacy of the state in relation to an effective political process to negotiate the mutual demands between the state and the citizen'*. Anten, L. (2009) Strengthening Governance in Post-Conflict Fragile States, *Issues Paper*. The Hague, Clingendael - Netherlands Institute of International Relations. Page i.

[59] UNICEF stands out in Huíla province as an agency that is currently involved in technical assistance programmes in various sectors including health, water and sanitation, education and decentralisation.

[60] Matala is a pilot municipality of the decentralisation plan in Huíla. The others are Lubango, Humpata and Chibia.

[61] For example, UNICEF and CARE Angola are co-funding a decentralisation programme in 2 of the 4 pilot municipalities of Huíla, and one other in Cunene province. In line with their organisational mandates, they prioritised as objectives the 'institutionalisation of the Integrated Municipal Development Plan and the contribution to the implementation of the '11 commitments' to children', a government initiative supported by UNICEF. CARE (2008) Apresentação sobre o Programa de Descentralização da Huíla e Kunene, Deshuku: 2008-2010. CARE International.

state institutions. They have set structures determined by the project and made up of locally elected individuals.[62] Some organisations have reported positive results from this methodology, for example where villages managed to establish self-run community warehouses, or were incorporated into government led structures and processes of local consultation. However, this research uncovered several problematic aspects of this approach in the communities studied, to which I now turn.

Community groups struggle to survive beyond the duration of the actual projects. The institutionalisation and legitimisation of behaviour require the building or restoring of trust by local actors, all of which are lengthy processes that demand time. Institutional change tends to be slow as it is characterised by path-dependence, lock-in and embeddedness in ideological (values and beliefs) and institutional heritage.[63] The short duration of aid projects is in direct contradiction with this, compromising the sustainability of these structures from the start, particularly when there are no follow up activities that replace or invest in them. In Chipindo for instance, in those communities where aid interventions are still being implemented, community based groups remain active, though to differing degrees. Such communities had previous groups established by another NGO. The current intervention replaced them with its own, sometimes incorporating the members and some of their activities quite successfully. Where no follow up was implemented, residents refer that the initial community development groups had disintegrated when the NGO withdrew.[64] In Matala, less than half those interviewed in 2004, knew of CBOs created by a previous INGO programme.[65] Of those people that knew, all mentioned their complete disintegration or inactivity, although they were handed over to the local Agricultural Development Station (EDA – *Estação de Desenvolvimento Agrícola*) when the NGO withdrew in 2005.

Further, these structures struggle to gain significant legitimacy vis-à-vis their communities and the state. Legitimacy, as explained by Slim, is both derived and generated. It is derived from morality and law, and is generated by tangible support, performance and intangible sources of trust, integrity and reputation.[66] CBOs cannot derive legal legitimacy as they lack a formal status. This is an impediment to recognition by formal institutions like the local authorities. As the leader of one such group said, *'If I approach the administrator or his assistant and tell him that I am the leader of a group of Community x, they will laugh in my face and ask me to provide official documentation. It is not possible to approach them to talk about issues… only our Soba can try to talk on our behalf.'*[67] In addition, they struggle to generate legitimacy as they lack a track record

---

[62] Terminologies differ between organisations, but with the exception of one organisation which works with a parallel group comprised only of women, the structures normally include a coordinator, a secretary, two assistants and a treasurer.

[63] Skoog, G. E. (2005) Supporting the Development of Institutions — Formal and Informal Rules: an Evaluation Theme, Basic Concepts, in Audit, S. D. F. E. A. I. (Ed.) *UTV Working Paper 2005: 3*. SIDA, p. 31.

[64] Interestingly, groups formed around specific issues like water management or hygiene and health, remained active and widely known in the communities.

[65] Figures are based on 50 individual interviews carried out in 5 communities in Matala: Monhanangombe, Mupindi, KM15, Catchope, and Calheta and on group interviews with Farmer School Members.

[66] Although Slim's argument refers to NGO legitimacy, it is equally relevant for CBOs and state institutions. Slim, H. (2002) By What Authority? The Legitimacy and Accountability of Non-governmental Organisations. *The International Council on Human Rights Policy International Meeting on Global Trends and Human Rights — Before and after September 11*. Geneva, International Council on Human Rights Policy, p 6.

[67] Interview with Community Development Group coordinator of a village in Bunjei, Chipindo Municipality, October 13, 2008.

of performance or reputation from which to draw support. Interviews revealed that in most cases, NGO-created community groups with broad objectives such as improving local development are not widely known by people, or are simply seen as channels to manage reimbursements of seed or animal credit, rather than to address long-term community problems. State institutions too have difficulty generating legitimacy due to a history of very poor performance.

3. Gaps and challenges: engagement of humanitarian action with local institutions

From analysis of the different stages of the conflict and post-conflict periods in Angola, common gaps and challenges of aid interventions emerge which have affected and defined the modes of engagement with local actors and institutions. First, humanitarian aid has repeatedly been 'blind' to institutional aspects and how these shape interventions to produce unintended as well as intended outcomes. By failing to understand the transformations undergone by formal and informal institutions, aspects that are crucial for institution building, such as trust and legitimacy, are neglected. Uncertainty and rising levels of inequality during the Angolan conflict contributed to the low levels of trust in social institutions,[68] but each community has its own experience of conflict and social transformation. Yet, there has been little serious effort to assess local capacities and strengths, often resulting in tokenistic and standardised actions of engagement with community structures or local government. As has been shown, while it is true that informal institutions often enjoy a high degree of trust and legitimacy,[69] this is not a given. Aid agencies should know that distribution through traditional authorities, simply because they are community-based, does not stand for greater equity, wider participation or earn them accountability. In the same vein, exogenous community groups are not guaranteed widespread trust or recognition. Nor is it sufficient to rebuild social infrastructure to ensure efficient and trustworthy services. In Bunjei, local people complain of the persistent lack of medicines and general service quality at the local state-run health centre built in 2004 by an INGO. Many continue to choose private health facilities and nurses, or traditional doctors on whom they relied for years.

Second is the rapid withdrawal and disengagement of donors and aid organisations in the post-conflict period. This greatly compromised the ability of aid interventions to improve the living conditions of local people through the (re)building and strengthening of social institutions. Such processes were effectively 'interrupted' as agencies discontinued their programmes. This was all the more problematic given the knock-on effect on national CSOs, which would have been well placed to pursue these processes, but instead were left struggling for funds to survive. In turn, this impacted, throughout the emergency, on NNGO's sustainability and capacity. Humanitarians have not developed sophisticated enough tools to determine whose capacities should be built and how.[70] Furthermore, contrary to official policy discourse, the transition

---

[68] Sousa, M. A., Addison, T., Ekman, B. & Stenman, A. (2001) From Humanitarian Assistance to Poverty Reduction in Angola, in Research, W. I. F. D. E. (Ed.) *Discussion Paper* No. 2001/22,United Nations University.

[69] Messer, N. & Townsley, P. (2003) Local institutions and livelihoods: guidelines for analysis, in Rural Development Division, F. (Ed.) Rome, FAO.

[70] Christoplos, I. (2004) Institutional Capacity Building Amid Humanitarian Action, in Alnap (Ed.) *ALNAP Review of Humanitarian Action in 2004.* ALNAP.

from emergency to development did not witness new actors with specific expertise in institution strengthening, but rather saw a reduction in their diversity and number.

Third, the fact that the level of coordination between humanitarian and development actors in the transition was far lower than in the emergency, became an obstacle to strengthening local community and government institutions. It resulted partly from changes in the structures responsible for coordination. OCHA was central during the emergency in coordination and in the establishment of UTCAH, the government's coordination unit. When it withdrew in 2004, activities were handed over to the UN's Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO)[71] and to UTCAH. However, both bodies embarked on long reform processes, with the RCO focusing on coordination within the UN system, whilst UTCAH's capacity for leadership remained limited. Moreover, whilst coordination was vital for access to populations during the emergency, in peace-time it was no longer a priority for either aid or government actors as there were no immediate visible benefits. Agencies thus missed opportunities for learning and for policy and practice discussions to help them reach their longer-term goals, difficult to achieve within the duration of a typical NGO project. On the ground, it prevented continuity of change processes or the institutionalisation of new forms of social organisation, and undermined the credibility of agencies among local communities. In Huíla, some villages have hosted similar projects establishing community groups, without the NGOs paying attention to previously existing groups, how these worked, or why they disintegrated.[72]

Lastly, there remains a gap in the relationship between communities, individuals and the state. As Neto explains, these relationships need to be thoroughly re-examined. New efforts at democratisation by third parties must look towards existing social forces and historical experiences which have the power to stimulate or inhibit initiatives.[73] Most aid agencies have struggled to create links between the formal state and community-based institutions, and to extend these to higher administrative levels. The theoretical function of CBOs acting as a link between the community and the state, thereby improving the living conditions of rural populations, is seemingly not being fulfilled. Even aid projects supporting the decentralisation process which set out to promote participatory local governance systems for service delivery, are fraught with difficulties. Their methodology at community level is similar to that described for other CBOs, thus exposed to identical problems in creating sustainability and legitimacy of processes. Besides, the long-term effect of capacity-building activities with local administrations requires further analysis, particularly in how these capacities will be retained and reproduced in the future. Furthermore, aid actors are still struggling with switching from emergency projects to longer-term activities. For example, the INGO leading the decentralisation process in Matala was a major distributor of food aid during the emergency. Alongside budget restrictions, local staff identified this past image as a key obstacle in engaging people in activities not involving material aid. Agencies have yet to demonstrate that they have the needed expertise and resources to take on these challenges.

---

[71] The RCO *'brings together the different UN agencies to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of operational activities at the country level'*. It is managed by the UNDP whose Resident Representative is also the Resident Coordinator. (www.ao.undp.org).

[72] Often interventions use the same notion of community groups, which differ only in terminology. In Huíla alone, five distinct terms were identified: Community Development Nuclei, Village Development Organisations, Community Development Committees, Community Solidarity Groups, Management Commissions.

[73] NETO (2001: 48).

Conclusion

Humanitarian aid in Angola has played a crucial role during the war and in the post-conflict period in saving people's lives and providing essential social services. Yet, the rationale of humanitarian aid is based not only on the four core principles of humanitarianism, needs-basis, neutrality and impartiality, but also on the ambition of humanitarian aid to build institutions besides saving lives. However, as this paper has shown, humanitarian aid struggles to fulfil these broadened objectives.

The process of institutional disintegration started under the colonial system and was exacerbated during the conflict. State institutions and basic services suffered from underinvestment by the post-colonial government and as a result of population displacement, particularly after the resumption of the conflict in 1992. During the initial war, aid interventions were limited to few international organisations, local churches and aid received within the context of the Cold War. These helped to sustain a certain level of services to the population, but there was no support for informal mechanisms, such as kinship ties through which most people survived displacement. Attempts by aid agencies in the short interlude of peace from 1991-92 to strengthen institutions for the transition to development were hindered by the quick return to war. From then on, there was a rapid expansion in the international humanitarian effort, which coincided with the rise of national civil society. Despite the diversity of actors and the substantial volumes of funding, the emergency approach crowded out efforts by some actors to work with a development orientation. Humanitarian aid did little to uphold its principles of doing detailed assessments of local capacities and of working with existing local actors and government. It remained largely unconcerned with building state capacity or understanding informal institutions. On the one hand humanitarians replaced the state in service provision, thereby contributing to the de-linking of state from society. Aid worked outside of state structures, seen as untrustworthy, incapable, or as compromising neutrality. On the other, humanitarians blindly distributed aid through informal structures such as traditional authorities, without understanding their internal workings and transformations, the effect of power relations and the implications for beneficiary communities. It is concluded from these approaches that humanitarian action contributed to the deterioration of local institutions. As the title of this paper suggests, rather than strengthening institutions, aid institutionalised weaknesses.

In the transition phase, interventions attempted to address past weaknesses through strengthening institutional capacity at community and state levels. However, these efforts too struggle to ensure the legitimacy and sustainability of local institutions, and to create effective linkages between the two levels. The rapid disengagement of the international community means that there is less expertise and resources available to take on this challenge. Lacking coordination and articulation amongst agencies and other key actors, further compromises the continuity of change processes and is in direct tension with other important principles, such as efficiency, partnership and sustainability. The inability of humanitarians to uphold their guiding principles reflects the complexity of such contexts. Moreover, issues such as capacity of the state and society have an effect on local processes of development and democratisation, and ultimately on the lives of local populations. They therefore support a call for increased attention to another crucial principle of the humanitarian Code of Conduct, namely accountability. It specifically refers to accountability 'to both those they seek to assist and those from which they accept resources'.

WAKING FROM A NIGHTMARE:
LIFE IN SOYO'S EXTRACTIVE ZONE[1]

Kristin Reed
University of Berkeley

Introduction

This chapter examines the impact of oil extraction in Soyo through the narratives of fishers and farmers whose subsistence hangs in the balance between degraded fisheries and contaminated agricultural plots. Their narratives draw on themes of inclusion, identity and belonging as a means to contest their exclusion from the developmental benefits of oil. The words serve as a form of protest, an objection to the pollution that destroys traditional livelihoods and undermines their children's future. This chapter presents an examination of these narratives grounded in Soyo's geography, specifically its location between the flowing river and ocean tides, and the region's complex history.

A history of violent occupation and repression, coupled with a lack of political alternatives, have limited local capacity in Soyo to openly protest pollution associated with oil extraction and to demand their share of oil revenues from the government.[2] But even the weak possess unique weapons of protest, as shown by Scott (1985).[3] Narratives are one of these weapons. Soyo's fishers, farmers and fish traders employ narratives to demonstrate and contest degradation.[4] As Labov (1997) and Reissman (2001) have argued, narrative analysis is a useful tool for analyzing perceptions and the role of memory and metaphor in articulating experiences or emotions.[5] Artisanal fishers paint a grim picture of Soyo's fisheries as offshore pollution chases away the only fish to escape pirate trawlers. Yet the

[2] See: Reed, Kristin. 2006. *Washing Ashore: The Politics of Offshore Oil in Northern Angola*. Dissertation filed at the University of California, Berkeley.
[3] Scott, James C. 1985. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven, Yale University Press.
[4] To retain the ethnographic character of this analysis, I acknowledge my own positioning as a researcher.
[5] Labov, William. 1997. "Some Further Steps in Narrative Analysis." The Journal of Narrative and Life History. Accessed 2006 at: www.ling.upenn.edu/~labov/sfs.html. Riessman, Catherine K. 2001. "Analysis of Personal Narratives", *Handbook of Interview Research*. J.F. Gurbium and J.A. Holstein. London, Sage Publications.

worlds of extraction on land and sea merge to compound the effects of inhabitants in Soyo's neighborhoods of Mongo Soyo, Pângala and Kitona who rely on both fishing and farming in areas under concession.

These narratives often begin with the entrance of oil corporations and trace the way down a path of degradation to the present, illuminating environmental signposts of environmental damage. Many evoked nostalgia for the abundant days before oil's discovery. "We used to have everything here — we did not worry ourselves with buying a kilo of rice, a kilo of beans — no, we had everything," said one man. He continued, "It is because of this petroleum production that appeared here, without any compensation, without any — or almost any — benefit, that this people lives in misery." Then, contrasting the presence of oil with Soyo's underdevelopment, the narrator decried: "The people, we have nothing. Even people living here where petroleum is produced, the people live without petroleum — in the houses there is no lamp oil, there is no gasoline, there is no diesel. It is sad, very sad." Finally, he gestured to his degraded surroundings and concluded, "The problems of the cashew trees, the mango trees, our coconut palms — everything that used to provide yesterday one hundred percent, today gives only thirty or forty percent. The people live like this, in this deep poverty." The elder stressed the decline of once-abundant natural resources, such as cashews.[6] "The cashew trees hardly produce any fruit anymore. The oil companies came here first in the sixties doing seismic work — with their arrival, our production began to diminish. From 1975, the trees stopped producing cashews almost completely," he said pointing to a dangling shriveled fruit.

Background

Antique maps of the Kongo Kingdom referred to the place where the Congo River met the ocean as *Sonho*, ascribing a somnolence or dreamlike quality to the region Portuguese explorer Diogo Cão first visited in 1482.[7] Perhaps the label alluded to the local scourge of *tsetse* flies, vectors for the sleeping sickness trypanosomiasis. Or, more likely, the conquistadores had simply altered yet another traditional place name. I pondered these possibilities on a propeller plane bound for the town now labeled on Angolan maps as Soyo.[8] Peering out the window, I traced the fluid curves in the landscape below. Soyo sits at the mouth of the Congo River, embraced in a tangle of mangrove swaths separating canals that locals simply call "the arms of the river." Veering away from one of these canals, the plane turned suddenly toward town and bumped along a narrow runway, scattering goats unaware of the flight schedule. A two-room, cinderblock airport entered into view as a flight attendant announced our arrival. A fellow passenger leaned across the aisle, rattled off the latest statistics on the hundreds of thousands of barrels extracted from the region daily, and grumbled, "Can you imagine that Soyo is so poor?" Given the region's

---

[6] During the colonial period, Portuguese administrators marveled at the prolific cashew trees along the littoral zone and noted their nutritional importance as a protein source of the Basolongo. See: de Morais Martins, Manuel Alfredo. 1958. *Contacto de Culturas no Congo Português*. Lisbon, Ministério do Ultramar. D'Almeida Matos, José. 1924. O Congo Português e as Suas Riquezas. Lisbon, Simões, Marques, Santões & Ca, Lda.

[7] In Portuguese, *sonho* means dream. The word is related to *sono*, the term for sleepiness.

[8] Soyo is the name of the municipality and municipal seat. One of six municipalities in Zaire Province, Soyo contains five communes: Soyo, Pedra do Feitiço, Sumba, Kelo and Mangue Grande.

subterranean riches, he wondered how anyone might "explain these roads full of holes and the undignified homes made of mud, straw and hay."

Soyo is both the name of a growing town and the surrounding municipality located at the northwestern tip of Angola's Zaire province. Although Soyo is approximately 300 kilometers from Luanda, it stands a world apart.[9] A travel writer for Angola's national newspaper suggested that, given the kindness of Soyo's people and the feverish pitch of petroleum development in the municipality, "it seems inviting and advantageous to take a weekend to visit Soyo whether doing so by road, air or sea."[10] A weekend road trip to Soyo, however, seems impossible considering that the 'highway' linking the city to Luanda requires up to ten hours of travel due to miserable conditions.[11] Intra-provincial travel may be harder still: the government reported that 1,506 kilometers of the total 1,638 kilometers of road in Zaire province need repairs.[12] The only functioning roads are those leading between the major oil installations. The roads are emblematic of Soyo's infrastructural divide — the populace struggles to cope with an archaic and war-ravaged infrastructure while Kwanda, the logistics support base to the oil industry, offers amenities such as running water, 24-hour electricity, a swimming pool, and internet access.

A 2001 government census recorded nearly 110,000 people living in the municipality of Soyo, over one-third of the provincial population.[13] Thousands of residents who fled to the Democratic Republic of Congo during the nightmarish occupation of Soyo by UNITA between 1993 and 1995 have returned since the war's end in 2002. Many hope to work in the oil sector, but few possess the proper education. Soyo has neither a university nor a technical school, only a secondary school specializing in social sciences and a teacher-training academy. Angola's National Petroleum Institute is located in Sumbe, 1,125 kilometers south of Soyo and far from most of the country's producing oilfields. With few other options, most of Soyo's residents engage in artisanal fishing and small-scale agriculture, growing staples such as manioc, beans and peanuts. Less than half of the municipal population has access to potable water or sanitation; fewer still have electricity or running water. HIV/AIDS is spreading rapidly and the five doctors at Soyo's overflowing hospital struggle to administer to the crowds of patients.

Oil wells hiss in the sandy backyards of Soyo's residents while fishermen navigate the seas, using platforms to mark their location against the hazy horizon. Elders

---

[9] People in Luanda tend to regard Soyo as a backwater town, far from modern, cosmopolitan Luanda. Their perception of Zaire province was tainted by a 2000 scandal in which the provincial authorities registered 423 complaints of "bewitched children" who were often subjected to cruel treatments (e.g. placing spicy *gindungo* peppers in their eyes) in an effort to break the spell ("Fenómeno 'Criança Feitiçeira' Chega ao Fim" *Jornal de Angola*, January 14, 2004). Despite Taussig's (1980) exploration of how 'precapitalist societies' interpreted the tumultuous turns of global capitalism through the language of witchcraft, many Luandans saw the bewitched children in Zaire province as evidence of the region's detachment from modernity. See: Taussig, Michael. 1980. *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
[10] Chitata, Agostinho. June 14, 2003. "Vá, O Soyo Espera-Lhe! ." *Jornal de Angola*.
[11] Time estimate based on "Troço Soyo/Luanda Clama por Reparação" *Jornal de Angola*, December 15, 2003. The government is working on rehabilitating the road and plans to complete the Nzeto-Soyo segment by April 2010. See Government of Angola "Nzeto/Soyo Road to Become Highway" *ReliefWeb*, April 14, 2008. Accessed November 2008 at: http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/MMAH-7DQ3JM.
[12] Government of Angola. April 2003. "Perfil Sócio-Económico do Zaire." Luanda.
[13] Population estimate for 2001 in Government of Angola. April 2003. "Perfil Sócio-Económico do Zaire." Luanda.

remember how onshore production in Total's FS/FST concessions and shallow water Blocks 1 and 2 began in a climate of hope and fear as Angola fought for freedom from the Portuguese colonial power.[14] They recall how the outbreak of war after independence ate up all of the oil revenues, sparing little for reinvestment in development projects. For decades, the fighting continued. In 2002, the people of Soyo celebrated the war's end and new oil discoveries far offshore. Following technological advances and massive finds, ExxonMobil commenced production from Block 15's deepwater fields. By 2006, Block 15 was producing 535,000 barrels per day — more than any other concession in Angola before Block 17 superseded it the following year.[15] BP's Block 31 in the ultra-deepwater offshore of Soyo remains in the development phase, but geologists continued to announce new discoveries through 2008.

Oil Production by Concession Block (Thousands of barrels per day)

Concession	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Block 0	431	405	393	371	371	420
Block 1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Block 2	50	45	39	30	22	20
Block 3	139	125	119	114	106	115
Block 4	1	0	0	0	0	0
Block 14	66	61	61	57	89	200
Block 15	0	0	0	414	535	520
Block 17	193	216	229	244	273	550
Block 18	0	0	0	0	0	100
Congo (FS/FST)	13	13	14	14	13	15
Kwanza	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	894	875	989	1,247	1,411	1,940

Sources: 2002-2006 data from IMF Country Report 07/355 "Angola: Selected Issues and Statistical Appendix" October 2007. Data for 2007 from Sousa, Paul. "Current State and Future Prospect of Business and Regulatory Environment – Angola." KPMG Gulf of Guinea Oil and Gas Conference. February 5-6, 2008. Abuja, Nigeria.

---

[14] FS and FST denote the respective Fina-Sonangol and Fina-Sonangol-Texaco consortia. Fina, now known as Total, is the operator of these onshore fields. Block 1 was operated by Agip. Block 2 was operated by Chevron (which subsumed Texaco) until a recent transfer of operatorship to Sonangol in July 2006.

[15] In 2007, Total's deepwater Block 17 superceded Block 15 with production rates of 550,000 barrels per day. Total expects peak production rates of 850,000 barrels per day from Block 17 by 2012. See: Energy Information Administration. March 2008. "Country Analysis Briefs: Angola". Accessed November 2008 at: http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Angola/Oil.html.
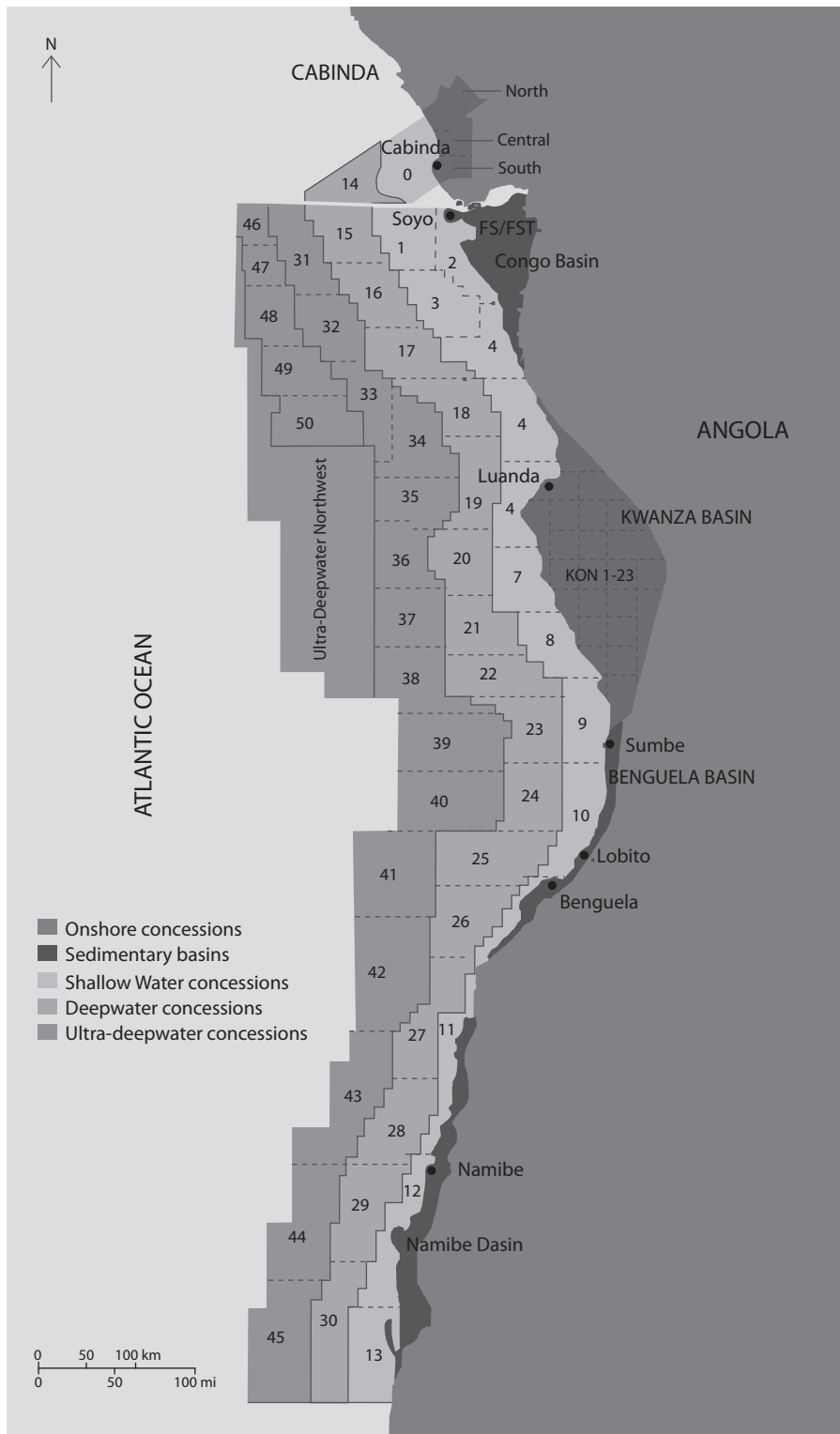
Delineation of concessions is not official.

From the colonial period to the present, nearly 1.3 billion barrels of oil have been extracted from the Soyo region's onshore FS/FST concessions, the shallow water Blocks 1 and 2 hugging the coastline, and the deepwater fields of Block 15 far to the west.[16] Oil infrastructure overlays the subsistence farming plots and the fishing grounds of families whose manioc is harvested next to pipelines and whose fish catches may pass through Blocks 15 and 2 before reaching their plates. Caught between onshore and offshore wells, residents of Soyo contend contamination associated with extraction has damaged their health, ecosystems and livelihoods. Moreover, they claim the Angolan state never fulfilled its promise to use oil wealth to develop the municipality, let alone provide basic services or repair war-torn infrastructure. However, residents of Soyo have framed their demands and discontent in different ways from protesters in Cabinda, Angola's northernmost province. In this enclave sandwiched between the Republic of Congo and the Democratic Republic of Congo, activists embed their claims to development and challenges to pollution in narratives advocating for Cabinda's independence from Angola. The people of Soyo do not see secession as an option. And, given their brutal occupation by UNITA during the war, they maintain allegiance to the MPLA ruling party but express frustration that their allegiance has not yielded greater benefits.

Many of Soyo's residents dismissed the notion that any substantial sum of oil monies reached the municipality. Some questioned whether Luanda actually paid the funds to the provincial government and others suspected the payments evaporated through embezzlement somewhere along the way.[17] They cited poor infrastructure and social services: on average, Zaire province spent only $5.80 per person in education and $4.90 per capita in health services each year between 1997 and 2001.[18] Declining production from the mature shallow water fields might explain these meager expenditures, but why had investments not increased once Exxon began production on Block 15? By law, the central government of Angola is required to return ten percent of the revenues derived from taxation of profits from oil extracted from a given a province to its respective provincial government for the nebulous task of provincial development. However, it appears that these funds, which totaled $149 million in 2000, do not reach the villages most negatively affected by oil pollution or whose access, use and control to natural resources is most restricted by production activities.[19] One resident of Soyo urged greater transparency in the distribution of the funds saying, "We know we are supposed to receive a portion of the wealth according to this rule of ten percent, but we do not even know what ten percent amounts to. How can we if we do not know how many barrels are produced or how much they are worth?"[20]

During discussions about the proportion of revenues owed the province, interviewees drew distinctions between the state and civil society. They portrayed the

---

[16] Cumulative figure covers period up to the end of 2007. The total was derived from data through 2006 in IMF Country Report 07/355 "Angola: Selected Issues and Statistical Appendix" October 2007 and 2007 statistics from the Angolan Ministry of Finance.

[17] Frustrated locals sometimes blame Ludy Kissassunda, the allegedly kleptocratic Governor of Zaire Province from 1996 to 2004, for embezzling funds.

[18] Government of Angola. April 2003. "Perfil Sócio-Económico do Zaire." Luanda.

[19] Figure from KPMG. 2003. "Evaluation of the Angolan Petroleum Sector: Executive Summary, Initial Report." Luanda: Ministry of Finance.

[20] The details of how this 'worth' is calculated and divided are hidden from the public in the confidential concession contracts negotiated between the Angolan state and the consortium for each concession block.

state as an omnipotent, omniscient entity, withholding not only knowledge but also the promised funds for development. An elder in Kitona doubted the existence of the funds saying: "This ten percent, who has seen it? No one sees it. It is a phantom. Only [the state] knows. The people stay silent. These are serious things. The petroleum is for us, that is all we hear about, petroleum, petroleum, petroleum. No one believes this. And the benefits, we do not see what benefits there are for us. For the state, yes, but for the people, no." Another added, "If you talk to the communities, does the ten percent exist? I do not know myself. It is a lot of money that is suitable to develop the entire province, but where does it go? I do not know. Maybe it is given, but someone is taking it." He ended his testimony by dramatically drawing a question mark with his index finger and left it hanging in the air between us.

Onshore degradation

Turning to narratives that emphasized degradation of human and environmental health, I sought to understand the ways in which locals saw pollution as further undermining their already marginalized communities. A village health promoter dusted the sand from the hem of her skirt and elucidated the negative effects of extraction on local food production. She said: "The palm trees, cashew trees, and coconut palms are suffering and the manioc does not grow as well. The oranges do not grow like they used to — they are small and contain no vitamins. The mangos seem to be okay, but there is a dark, thick coating on their leaves. We noted the emergence of many illnesses that we never had, infections appearing as they extracted the oil, always extracting the oil to the point that our food production could not endure. We no longer have a way to collect enough fruit for our subsistence needs."

As I heard more of these narratives on degradation, I began to discern patterns between the claimants and their allegations. Aged men not only remembered the abundance of the region before the advent of oil, they specifically mourned the loss of the cashew crop: elders once consumed liquor brewed from the harvest during their meetings. Women, the principal cultivators and caregivers, spoke of sickly manioc plants and weak children. Even local huntsmen saw the effect of oil reflected in the landscape. The profusion of game in Soyo once impressed Portuguese hunters, but an elder from Mongo Soyo said, "The animals that used to live here do not come here any more: once the wells were put in the wild animals began to disappear… they fled." He suggested that the wild game perceived a danger that people had not.

Tethered and corralled farm animals, however, found no escape. Although most herds of domesticated animals died at the hands of raiding soldiers and desperate villagers during the war, livestock is on the rebound in Zaire province. Still, an animated government official exclaimed during an interview, "Did you know there is not one cow in all of Zaire Province?" Trypanosomiasis limits the range available to cattle, but an agricultural census revealed 984 pigs, 658 sheep, 2,794 goats and 31,000 fowl across the province.[21] Nevertheless, locals claim that the gains across

---

[21] Government of Angola. April 2003. "Perfil Sócio-Económico do Zaire." Luanda.

Zaire province are uneven. Residents living near Soyo's oilfields contend that pollution has inhibited livestock from thriving in their municipality — chickens and goats have sickened and died from inhaling fumes near the wells.

Employing the metaphor of a gas stove, a traditional leader explained that the gas leaking from wells could be lethal because it was "unburned" (i.e. vented). He explained that "burning" (i.e. flaring) rendered the gas somewhat less dangerous, but cumulative exposure to flares had proven harmful to humans, animals, plants and the atmosphere. The leader clarified, "These wells used to give off a lot of fire; it is just recently that they changed this system and there are still some flares in the area." Then, in a grave tone he said, "We can speak of this in terms of gases. Gas is invisible — we don't see it, but we feel it in our nasal passages. It is here in my lungs, we breathe it and it is always inside us. We smell these gases that affect the plants and all living things, like humans. We have respiratory diseases…" He trailed off, plucking a diseased leaf from a nearby mango tree. Turning toward me with the leaf he continued, "You can see that the leaf of this tree cannot breathe and it is hard for us to breathe too. It is here in my lungs — we breathe it and it is always inside us."

Examining the leaf's surface, I saw it was covered by a dark layer of fungus. The previous day, when an elder in Kitona attributed the dark coating on the leaves of his guava tree to particles emanating from nearby natural gas flares, I had seen the same fungus. For months thereafter, I consistently observed the presence of this fungal coating on the leaves of mango and guava trees near sites of extraction. Locals said it appeared only after oil production had begun in the area. An agronomist confirmed that it was sooty mold: a non-pathogenic fungus associated with insect infestations like whiteflies, scales, mealybugs and aphids.[22] He suspected that plants stressed by natural gas flares would be more susceptible to infestation and disease. Likewise, he postulated that exposure to natural gas flares could damage the immune systems of local people and render them more prone to health problems. The elder recognized the linkages between communities and their environment in a way that Total did not: the oil corporation refused to accept responsibility for agricultural losses or human health problems near well sites.

Community members presented their observations to Total, but corporate officials rejected their allegations for lack of scientific evidence. Elders in Pângala lamented Total's rejection. With shaking hands one decried the irony of his situation, "For years… after twenty years we are feeling the full effects. It is not for being educated — even an illiterate person sees the damage. But it is because of education that they are separating themselves from the pollution." Another elder concurred, "The blackness on the trees — we do not know the origin, but it was not there before production began. If it is not from pollution, then to what origin does the dark layer belong?" A traditional leader lamented, "We are unable to distinguish the degree of pollution. We asked the Ministry of Environment to undertake a study, but we have not received a response." The residents of Pângala took their claims directly to Sonangol, the national concessionaire and a shareholder in Total's onshore

---

[22] Agronomists recognize fungal complexes comprised of ascomycetes and fungi imperfecti including varieties from the genera *Cladosporium, Aureobasidium, Antennariella, Limacinula, Scorias,* and *Capnodium* as sooty mold.

blocks. "We have even made complaints to Sonangol, but they refuse to take our word as valid. We need hard data: we have a situation in which we know we are being hurt but we do not know exactly what is causing it or how," explained one resident. A mother in Kitona expressed her frustration that the community leaders "do not have machines" to measure the damage in terms more comprehensible to Total. She shrugged, "But if it affects the plants, it affects us too."

Offshore degradation

Transnational oil corporations named Soyo's oilfields after the region's natural riches once abundant on land and at sea. The oilfields in Block 1 are called *Bananeira* (banana palm), Cajueiro (cashew tree), *Imbondeiro* (baobab), *Safueiro* (African plum tree), and *Coqueiro* (coconut palm). Likewise, Block 2 features the names *Albacore* (tuna), *Bagre* (catfish), *Espadarte* (swordfish), *Raia* (ray) and *Tubarão* (shark). But locals maintain that gas flares, oil spills, and pipeline leaks have damaged not only their fruit trees onshore but also their offshore fishing grounds. "The oil that they release kills fish," declared a middle-aged fisherman pointing to an offshore platform. Noting that the corporations dispose of 'produced water' — the sometimes radioactive, oily liquid waste dredged up with oil from the reservoir — offshore, the fisherman wondered, "The oil is going in a tanker to Europe or America… somewhere… but where does that water go?" He aimed his index finger toward the lapping waves saying, "I am sure it pollutes the water — you see the effect on fishing. Try to imagine how much of this pollution is happening."

Some fishermen worried about large-scale accidents in ExxonMobil's deepwater concession, where floating production, storage, and offloading units can store up to 1 million barrels of oil. Others expressed concern about moderate spills in shallow water Block 2, where, as one fisher claimed, "the closer it is the more dangerous still." Daily production rates declined from 50,000 barrels per day in 2002 to 20,000 in 2007.[23] Despite low current production rates, Block 2 is a historically prolific concession. During the 28-year stretch between its initiation in 1979 and 2007, Block 2 yielded nearly 459 million barrels of oil from twenty fields.[24] Residents say that decades of poor pipeline maintenance and concession operators' disregard for the environment contributed to local pollution. However, they are unable to confirm their suspicions because the oil corporations and the Ministry of Petroleum refuse to release spill data.

Pollution threatens the livelihoods and food security of a large proportion of Soyo's population. A study of the artisanal fisheries sector in Soyo identified 208 fishers and 151 persons involved in processing fish.[25] Absent ice and electricity they preserve fish for consumption or sale by drying, smoking and/or salting. Fishers

---

[23] Data from IMF Country Report 07/355 "Angola: Selected Issues and Statistical Appendix" October 2007 and Sousa, Paul. "Current State and Future Prospect of Business and Regulatory Environment — Angola." A presentation from the KPMG Gulf of Guinea Oil and Gas Conference. February 5-6, 2008. Abuja, Nigeria.

[24] Cumulative figure was derived from data through 2006 in IMF Country Report 07/355 "Angola: Selected Issues and Statistical Appendix" October 2007 and 2007 statistics from the Angolan Ministry of Finance. Regarding number of fields, see: Mayer, Graciete. August 12, 2003 "Petrobrás Vai Operar em Águas Profundas Angolanas." *Jornal de Angola*.

[25] IFAD. November 2002. "Angola: Northern Fisheries Communities Development Programme (Pesnorte)." *Mid-Term Review*, United Nations.

rely on their catch to feed their families and earn income through sales in Soyo's local praça as well as markets in Muanda, Boma and Kimuabi in the Democratic Republic of Congo.[26] Fish traders buy the catch from fishermen upon their arrival at the Soyo docks or at comparable points of disembarkation in fishing communities and resell the fish — fresh or preserved — in the market or on the streets of Soyo town. Fishermen and fish traders often develop complementary business relationships and enterprising fish traders may tote market staples like sugar and bread to exchange for fish or to garner a discount on the transaction. This arrangement is useful, for many of Soyo's artisanal fishers conduct their operations from encampments on the sandy spits of a peninsula that divides the Congo River from the Atlantic Ocean.

At the tip of the formation, a marker commemorates the 1482 landing of Diogo Cão. The inhabitants of the nearby fishing community of Bocolo recall with pride how their ancestors greeted the Portuguese explorer. Life in Bocolo, as in the nearby communities of Tulombo, Kimpula, Fundão and Moita Seca, centered on fishing. Fishing nets hung from trees, children kicked around an old buoy and women splayed salted fillets out to dry. When I commented that the proportion of men to women seemed unusually high, an older fellow mending a net explained that some 150 people resided in Bocolo at odd intervals and that he and his fisher counterparts in other fishing camps often hailed from Kitona, Pângala and Mongo Soyo. Most fishermen left their families for weeks or months at a time to fish; a few maintained a household in Bocolo and another in Kitona. A 2002 survey observed that Kitona, Pângala and Mongo Soyo supported 89 active fishers out of a total population of 4,785, but noted that Moita Seca, Fundão, Kimpula, Bocolo and Tulombo sustained 119 artisanal fishers out of a population of just 174. In some cases, fishers constituted the entire population of a given community. The survey indicated not that those engaged in the artisanal fisheries sector prefer a cloistered existence, but that they move fluidly between communities. The fishers surveyed in Moita Seca, Fundão, Kimpula, Bocolo and Tulombo maintained homes and families in Kitona, Pângala and Mongo Soyo. Thus, whether artisanal fishers and fish traders split their time between part-time encampments on the peninsula and Kitona, Pângala and Mongo Soyo or live full-time in the latter communities, they are doubly prone to pollution from local oil extraction onshore and offshore.

Residents across various communities in Soyo recognized the compounded, harmful effects of oil industry contamination of their resources on land and at sea. Two fishermen who agreed to an interview in Bocolo directed me to sit on an auxiliary section of tubing the community had procured from Kwanda Base. The first began solemnly, "Our main preoccupation with the production of petroleum is the water pollution. We used to fish in the area right here, but now it is polluted with oil and gas. This kills the fish. We cannot rely on the river to bring us potable water now either. We are complaining that we cannot consume this polluted water. It hurts our health." His counterpart wearing a faded sea-green shirt added, "Often oil appears on top of the water and sometimes fish appear dead on the surface… because if it affects the water or the air, it will always affect the fish." When I asked

---

[26] Kilongo, Dr. Kumbi. 2004. "Recursos Marinhos Na Província do Zaire No Ámbito de Monotorização e Gestão da Pesca Artisanal." Luanda: Instituto de Investigação Marinha & Pesnorte.

whether they harbored concerns about spills emanating from far away concessions, he responded, "It is all the same, those that are far and those that are near the coast because the water moves. Where the water goes the pollution goes. For this we say that pollution, whether near or far, is the same thing." As I pondered the transit of produced water, chemical additives and residual hydrocarbons along ocean currents, a faint breeze rustled through the tree above us. I muttered something about the wind carrying pollution and the fisherman rejoined, "In the sea, all the fish fled… the pollution on land also affected the cashew trees, manioc plants and the rest… so the damage is the same."

For those in Soyo who live with one foot on land and another in the sea, the distinction between offshore and onshore pollution is fluid. Offshore pollution from flares and spills is blown or washed ashore and contamination from onshore fields is also diverted offshore from Total's separator tanks at Quinfuquena. Although Total discharges much of its waste through an underground pipe leading 100 meters offshore, a surface canal revealed an oil-clotted stream passing through a sedimentary canyon stained by the passage of crude waste and moving toward the crashing waves like a sidewinder in the sand. Just as effluent from onshore production flowed out to sea, fumes from offshore production floated inland. A community health advocate said, "We always have that smoke that comes from the beach to here. In the time of the rains we always said that 'oh, those are the rain clouds' but later we realized that they were not."

A government official suggested I visit a site called *Os Cavalos* to see some of the other externalities associated with local oil extraction.[27] It was a dump — literally. Pied crows cawed loudly, hopping between the oversized chains, rusted tubes, old storage tanks and gigantic drill bits. Examining some tubing with traces of barnacles I saw that *Os Cavalos* contained waste from both onshore and offshore operations. I worried that the some of the pipes discarded here, commonly filched by locals for home construction projects, might be contaminated by carcinogenic hydrocarbons or radioactive isotopes present in produced water.[28] Corroded barrels sat in a fenced section of the facility and I recalled that the government official had expressed some concern about the storage and disposal of liquid waste in unlined sandy pits capable of leaching into groundwater. I asked a few local employees in jumpsuits and flip-flops about the contents of the barrels and disposal of toxic wastes but they wrung their gloveless hands, pleaded ignorance and returned to unloading scrap metal from a truck.

Fishers witnessed decades' worth of ecological damage, but knew little about the toxicity of pollutants associated with oil extraction and lacked the institutional capacity to effectively document the extent of the destruction — or their losses. Oil spills offshore of Soyo date back to the onset of production Blocks 1 and 2. An elder in Moita Seca remembered distantly, "In the 1970s, there was an accident at a well. All the water looked like oil, from here to Cabinda." A young fisherman claimed that the spills continued to the present, citing a slick in Block 2 on July 8,

---

[27] *Os Cavalos* literally means 'The Horses', but not even the municipal administrator could explain the significance of this place name.
[28] Naturally occurring radium dissolved in formation water combines with barium from drilling fluids to produce a radioactive scale that collects on the inner surface of pipes transporting large volumes of produced water.

2003 that reached as far as the beach. Workers came to clean up the beach, but the oil in the water frightened all the fish away. He explained that oil "is difficult to control" in the water and "once the fish perceive this pollution most flee seeking safety away from the incident and the rest end up dying here." Another fisher agreed that frequent pollution events reaching "up to seven spills per year… spoil both fish and nets." He expounded upon the difficulties incurred by slicks stating, "The pollution destroys our nets sometimes… our nets become coated in an oily mud and then we cannot use them. A net destroyed is an awful thing with the high prices here. A net may be worth three full months of work. Sometimes prices are inflated one hundred percent." When asked whether fishermen in Soyo demanded compensation for destroyed nets a representative from *Soyo's Instituto de Pesca Artesanal* (IPA) shook his head and called upon fishermen to bring their oiled nets to his office and register their losses so as to create conditions for "a pact between fishermen and the [oil] corporations." The young fisher professed little hope in reporting his damages to IPA saying, "Things are so disorganized here that the pollution occurs and we cannot trace it."

Government officials assigned to represent and assist fishers exhibit a lack of institutional capacity or willingness to follow up on pollution claims. An official from the artisanal fisheries office admitted some anxiety about assigning blame for fish declines to the oil industry. "In terms of the threat, we have no data… species are dying and the quality of fish is decreasing," he trailed off leaving the linkage between pollution and reduced fish stocks unclear. One fisherman freckled from years under the sun explained, "We do not have the machines to tell us whether it is pollution that makes them disappear." Lacking technology, artisanal fishers can only surmise the link between oil extraction and environmental degradation. They point to declining stocks of key species like *corvina* (croaker) and *esparideos* (black seabream) as well as a type of shark known in Kisolongo as *nfuifua*, and a variety of oyster locals called *mankolua*.[29] Still, deducing the effects of oil pollution is not as simple as comparing statistics on past captures to current data — pirate fishing presents a confounding factor.

Soyo's fishermen agreed that pirate fishing represents a grave threat to their stocks, contending that fiscal police charged with enforcing Angola's strict regulations are too under-resourced or disorganized to effectively confront the massive boats from Japan, Korea, Russia and Spain that steal their fish. The fishers witnessed great ships with lights extinguished stealthily motoring under cover of darkness to sweep the ocean floor; they told tales of chasing down invaders to report their hull names to local authorities and cursed the pirates stealing their fish. Moreover, the fishermen recognized that the Angolan government's restrictions on catch rates of threatened species like *carapau* (mackerel) could not alleviate pressure on the dwindling stocks if the government continually failed to seize pirate boats.

Rubbing the gray stubble on his chin, a fisherman said, "No one is following the law. The fiscal police do not have the right information and we too are not well informed enough about what is really going on here. During the colonial era the *capitania* (port authority) made sure people followed the law, but now it is not the

---

[29] Some fishermen also referred to the black seabream as *peixe preto* (black fish).

same. No one is making sure these laws are respected." Another, noting that the lone fiscal police boat dedicated to patrolling Soyo's coasts sat idle in the harbor for months while waiting on a spare part, declared, "We have fiscal police to maintain order because without order there is chaos. The fiscal officers need to be more capable of apprehending these boats — or maybe the Navy should step in." Another fisher noted, "The pirate fishing and the oil industry are not related, but we are caught between the two." His insightful comment highlighted the state's failure to regulate resource extraction in both sectors, creating the conditions for a convergence that challenged local modes of subsistence and means of survival.

Growing claims to the land

The state, people across Soyo said, had promised that oil would bring development. But thus far, it had only seemed to reduce the returns from traditional occupations like fishing and agriculture without bringing new jobs. To emphasize their exclusion from distributions of oil wealth, many of Soyo's oldest residents told narratives about belonging and presented tangible claims to the land. I first heard this narrative while visiting with the *Soyo dia Nsi*[30] — the highest traditional leader of Soyo — in his backyard in Pângala. At the opposite end of the yard, a round-faced child hugged a mango tree with blackened leaves and dropped its fruit to his sticky-fingered friends encircled below. The group giggled and danced in the dusty light, sucking on golden mangos. I stood alongside the *Soyo dia Nsi*, waving at the kids. A relic of the ancient Kongo kingdom, he coordinates the actions of every *rei do povo* (king of the people) in the area. Upon my arrival I had presented myself to this king of kings with the requisite alcoholic offerings of cachaça and wine. Donning a knit cap studded with lion claws that once belonged to his grandfather, the *Soyo dia Nsi* accepted my gifts in a traditional ceremony conducted in Kisolongo. We had since traded less formal visits for tea in town and guavas in Pângala. Now it was mango season. He motioned for me to follow a sandy track leading out of the backyard. We walked a few hundred yards past a hissing oil well to a towering *imbondeiro* — the stout tree also known as a baobab. The *Soyo dia Nsi* explained the importance of the *imbondeiro*: his forebears planted the tree in their settlements and their enduring presence signified the indelible mark of the ancestors and their timeless livelihood. Prior to the advent of nylon and plastics, Soyo's fishermen once wove nets from its fibrous bark and used the husks of fallen fruits to bail their leaky canoes. But as he spoke of the tree from the cool reach of its shadow, I stared off at the oil well glaring in the heat of the sun. The *imbondeiro*, I realized, represented a claim to the land and its resources.[31] The tree presented rooted evidence of his people's occupation of this territory, well before the arrival of oil corporations or even the Angolan state.

---

[30] The title may also be spelled *Soyo Dya Nsi* or *Soyo Dia-nsi*.

[31] In many parts of the world, as in Angola, customary law supports tree tenure as associated with a "bundle of rights" for the use of land, trees, and tree products. Given the role of trees in customary tenure, people may even plant trees to stake land claims. See: Fortmann, Louise P., 1985, "The Tree Tenure Factor in Agroforestry with Particular Reference to Africa." *Agroforestry Systems* 2: 229-51; Fortmann, Louise P. and John W. Bruce, 1988, *Whose Trees?: Proprietary Dimensions of Forestry*. Boulder, Westview Press; Peluso, Nancy Lee, 1996, "Fruit Trees and Family Trees in an Anthropogenic Forest: Ethics of Access, Property Zones and Environmental Change in Indonesia", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 38(3): 510-48.

Citing their traditional ties to this territory saturated with oil, Soyo's residents claim remuneration for the resources extracted from the municipality — whether onshore or offshore. An elder in Pângala envisioned his community as the human component of the landscape. He explained, "We are of the earth — like gold, oil and wood." But since the 1960s, he said wistfully, "We have lost so much." Another lamented, "We have the riches of petroleum, but it is not ours. We can only look at it but not benefit from it. They come like a flock of birds, eating up all the crop and leaving nothing behind." Even the Municipal Administrator believed Soyo was not receiving its due. He claimed, "It is a question of identity." … "Here I am in Zaire province and I feel no harm because the population in the Lundas benefits from some diamond mines that were discovered there. I do not feel bad when they say that the people of Cuando Cubango have a lot of meat because they are cattle herders. Or those of Benguela with their fish. There is this speech on petroleum as a national treasure, even a salvation, but it has to come from somewhere. We have a saying that whoever is in the kitchen cannot die of hunger." Quickly, he added, "Well, unless you are a bad cook." He continued, "So, we understand that it is a national treasure and the money should be distributed for all people in the national territory. But the areas of production, this is the same question of identity, the identification of a region with its own means of development."

Traditional authorities agreed that Soyo deserved a share of the revenues derived from its subterranean riches. Yet they had no power to enforce their beliefs. Under the Angolan constitution traditional authorities are designated as "the entities which personify and exercise power within their respective traditional political-community organization, according to the customary values, norms and laws" — a definition which effectively severs traditional authorities' ties to territory as "the fundamental basis of [their] authority."[32] Without territorial power, the *Soyo dia Nsi* and his subordinate *reis do povo* are relegated to ceremonial figureheads. One *rei do povo* emphasized that his region's oil had financed infrastructure in Luanda but left Soyo without 24-hour electricity. He reminded Luandan officials, "The lands that hold this wealth sustain the country — this nation is comprised of services coming from here, from the petroleum."

Compensatory development

Another set of narratives demanded development as compensation for environ-mental damages. On a clear morning, the *Soyo Dia Nsi* explained that with oil extraction in Soyo "those that are poor become rich and those that are rich become poor." The claim perplexed me until I saw his contention inscribed on the landscape: wealth in land no longer ensured a bountiful harvest as fortune-seeking oilmen polluted the environment. His Basolongo ancestors had ruled this territory with pride, once enriching themselves not only from the bounty of the land and sea but through mediation of all commerce with foreigners. Now they were outsiders in their own homeland, excluded from the riches flowing from concessions super-imposed on the landscape. Through this lens, I began to see how people in Soyo embedded claims to development in narratives on degradation.

---

[32] Oliveira, Elias. August 22, 2004. "The 'Monarchs' of Angola and the Issue of Local Power." (Accessed 2005), Available from: http://www.angonoticias.com.

Men and women, old and young consistently alleged that plants near well sites became desiccated: trees drained of sap and their fruits devoid of juices and nutrients. More than observations on plant health, the narrative of desiccation bared the emptiness produced in the process of extraction. This narrative asserted that Total had disturbed the fragile balance in the subterranean landscape but failed to compensate for the subsequent repercussions. As such, it seamlessly transitioned from remonstrations on degradation and pollution to claims for community development, contrasting the bright promise of oil with the grim realities of life near the site of extraction. In the meager noontime shade of a blighted mango tree, a woman with hardened hands began, "We do not have a share in the profits from this petroleum — they neither want to give us water, nor light." Suggesting that Total's failure to provide water and electric utilities to her community was insulting given the injuries it endured as a result of extraction, she continued: "What we get is the damage. After [extraction began] many illnesses appeared — we never had so many illnesses. But ever more infections appear… as they are always pumping out the oil, pumping out the petroleum… and our food crops do not appear. They suck it from here — and I do not know if it always has all of the nutrients inside — but all of the plants become dry. There is no more water; they do not drink. The plants die of thirst. We all do too. A low-grade fever comes from that infection, but we do not know where the infection came from. We do not want this —we are living with such great harm. We are dying slowly."

From Mongo Soyo to Cabeça de Cobra, communities along the coast claimed their plants yielded less since Total began extracting oil from Soyo. Were these diminished returns associated with oil extraction or attributable to the tiring of Soyo's poor sandy soils?[33] A schoolteacher spoke of manioc plants that once exhibited healthy "leaves green with chlorophyll" but now "grow poorly" as pollution has contributed to "the loss of chlorophyll in the leaves." A traditional authority claimed that the oil from pipeline leaks "has seeped into the land, has become entrenched in it" and is choking the roots of the plants. Total's officials may contest the scientific accuracy of these allegations, but the community members' observations reflect not only environmental, but social realities. In their view, oil extraction has drained the vibrancy and sustainability of local communities, damaged agricultural output and human health near the wells, and undermined traditional claims to the land.

On the shores of the gaping mouth of the Congo River, a group of fishermen addressed their concerns under the shade of a mango tree. One fisherman alleged, "Any of the [oil revenue] that is supposed to go to the communities here is embezzled. The government doesn't have to give us money, but schools, electricity, health clinics and roads should be a given. The Portuguese got here in 1482 and they gave us nothing. It was here in Bocolo that the first white man stepped onto our soil, Diogo Cão, and we do not even have a school. We became independent in 1975 and still our own government has done nothing. The wealth of our land, everything leaves here. We do not have paved roads linked to Luanda or even a port where larger boats can dock. The government constructed a wall to close the space between us. When we ask, nothing comes of it."

---

[33] Perhaps farmers arriving from the agriculturally productive interior of Zaire province expected similar agricultural yields from fields in Soyo without taking into account the different properties of sandy soils and the divergent management practices required to maintain soil fertility in the dry coastal region.

Another fisher drew the link between oil extraction and the diminishing catches suggesting that the government and oil corporations benefiting from the oil should compensate not only his losses but also his children's lost inheritance. "This is our heritage" he said, "and these are our lands, but we can no longer fish in the traditional areas. We have the gas in our lungs, but the medical post was destroyed with the war. The school was too. We really do not have enough to live on and the companies do not give us anything. We are crying because we do not have enough to give to our children. The state owns this land and they have played a part in putting in the wells here and there. We have recorded our community's presence here since 1482. We see what is in the ocean and the state sees it too."

These final narratives emphasize historical ties to the land that predate both the intervention of oil corporations and the establishment of the Angolan state. They subtly challenge the legitimacy of these actors by juxtaposing the bounty of the traditional and pre-war periods with a present devoid of development and an ecologically barren future. The implication is that the parties responsible for environmental damage — the state and the corporations — should compensate communities with development to offset the loss of traditional livelihoods.

Conclusion

Soyo's Municipal Administrator once shared with me the Angolan aphorism "if you want to enhance your economic life a bit, make friends with a rich person."[34] However, he qualified that "it makes little sense for me to be poor alongside a rich person without getting anything from him — they cannot have a good relationship." Sometimes it seemed as if Soyo's residents were waiting for some kind of development by osmosis wherein the standard of living on Kwanda Base — where there were no shortages of water, electricity or fuel — would spill out into the surrounding areas until all people in Soyo received equal benefits. But the barriers remained impermeable when I made my first trip to Kwanda. Approaching the base, I passed by an elderly lady slumped at the foot of the chain-link lattice crowned with coils of razor wire. A uniformed woman at the front gate narrowed her eyes, repeatedly shifting her gaze between my face and passport picture before waving me on. Seeing my concern for the woman, an official explained: "Access is not given to everybody, unless you have something significant to do in the base." I wondered how my trip to Sodispal — the base supermarket run by a Sonangol subsidiary — qualified as significant. Dusty bottles of wine and high-priced whiskey, crinkled bags of individually-wrapped candies, and colorful packages of sandwich cookies featuring every conceivable flavor of cream filling lined Sodispal's shelves. The refrigerator case, always stocked with Coca-Cola, Cristal beer, and both the orange and green Fanta varieties, occasionally offered waxed rounds of Gouda, cups of yogurt and even butter. But I had an eye out for one simple item: toilet paper. For two weeks, not a single roll could be found for sale in the whole of Soyo from the outdoor market to the local shops. I settled for paper towels; it seemed that Sodispal was also out. Even the purchasing power of the oil industry, embodied the Kwanda's supermarket, could not overcome all of Soyo's shortcomings.

---

[34] Literally *"Se você quiser crescer um bocado na vida económica, arranja amizade com um rico."*

At the time of oil's discovery, the corporations and government officials keen to get a share of the revenues constructed it as an omnipotent, beneficent commodity. They promised economic transformation, deliberately omitted any details on externalities, and enforced this rosy discourse on the benefits of oil under threat of violent repression. Ultimately — and rather unsurprisingly — without state and civil society engagement on the terms of production oil had failed to bring development to Soyo. Instead, oil pollution had degraded the environment and destroyed local livelihoods onshore and offshore. Trapped between diseased crops and contaminated fish, Soyo's people have begun to demand concerted efforts from the state to protect local ecosystems and reinvest oil revenues in the municipality. Two sets of narratives emphasize local claims to a share of the benefits from oil extracted from the fields beneath their agricultural plots and fishing grounds. The first centers on identity and belonging, asserting a right to development based on traditional geographic ties that predate interventions by the state and the oil corporations. The second reflects on the livelihoods, ecosystems, and lives sacrificed for the economy of extraction, articulating claims to development in the language of compensation.

The people of Soyo have woken to the reality that oil will not magically transform their impoverished municipality. The developmental gains from oil are unevenly distributed and the pollution affects the poorest segments of the population, who rely on increasingly degraded ecosystems for subsistence. This chapter has demonstrated how fishers and farmers in Soyo use narratives on identity and environmental degradation to make claims to their share of benefits from local oil production. I will close with story I heard just before leaving Soyo, which suggested some residents of the oil-rich municipality had begun to back their words with direct action. According to an official from Total, every December the oil corporation invited its employees and a few leaders from the communities in its zone of operations to celebrate the feast of Santa Barbara, apparently the patron saint of oil. The festivities featured sports competitions, an award ceremony, speeches, and a vast buffet. The previous year, before the meal had concluded, one of the community invitees sent a team of children with plastic bags to gather up the remaining food to share with the people back in the community.

Was this an act of protest, an endeavor to break down the exclusionary barriers between the corporation and community? Was it an attempt at restitution, a Robin Hood-inspired crusade? Or was it a gut reaction to contrast between the abundant excess characteristic of the oil sector and the hungry backdrop of deprivation and dispossession in Soyo? It was all of these. Mulling over the anecdote, I recalled the Total official's attitude of derision and disbelief as he related the incident. I also had mixed feelings about this tale: I waffled between exuberant celebrations of the community leader's defiance and despairing concern for the community. I concluded that the story exemplified the way in which, in an atmosphere of repression and desperation, Soyo's communities are protesting their relegation to collecting the scraps from the banquet of natural resource wealth and demanding a place at the table. In this sleepy region waking from a nightmare, an emboldened civil society is on the rise.

II – Angola

POLITICS, CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS AND CHURCHES

Justino Pinto de Andrade
Fernando Macedo
Fernando Pacheco
Sérgio Calundungo
Carlos Figueiredo
Benjamim Castello
Michael Comerford

THE PROCESS OF CHANGE IN ANGOLA: CIVIL SOCIETY, POLITICAL PARTIES, ECONOMIC FACTORS AND GENERAL POPULATION

Justino Pinto de Andrade
Catholic University of Angola

Introduction

Angola is said to be going through a process of transition, moving from a single-party political system to a multi-party system that claims to be democratic in nature. This process is still under way but the analysis of how it is unfolding shows there is clearly a long way to go before effective democracy is achieved. Angola is an example of transition without change, as was the case with many other countries throughout the world when they emerged from authoritarian regimes. Its standing as an oil-producing country with an increasing importance in world-production allows Angola to resist external sanctions demanding good governance, transparency and respect for human rights. Party-political opposition is, on the whole, weak or even rudimentary, with some sectors of civil society taking upon itself protest against political affairs that is uncomfortable for those in established power. This role, however, is increasingly limited by the constraints imposed by government. It is indeed very difficult to build an effective democracy with a weak and handicapped opposition; a civilian society greatly restricted in its activity; external pressures without tough sanctions; and an impoverished population without participation or possibility of intervention in the processes of political and economic decision making.

This chapter comprises of four sections. The first situates Angola within the context of transitions under different authoritarian regimes, both of the left and of the right, throughout the world. The second discusses the role of external pressures demanding greater transparency, good governance and respect for human rights from the government of Angola, and the government's reaction to this. The third examines the role played by opposition political parties and civil society organisations in the transition process when faced with government obstacles. The final section broaches the situation of the poorest and most excluded in society, namely the vast majority of the population, when faced with the process of transition.

1. Angola within the context of left- and right-wing political and economic transitions

Without entering the endless theoretical and conceptual debate that surrounds political transitions, an incursion will nevertheless be made into the present political momentum of Angola in an attempt to place it within the international panorama of political and economic transition.

Notwithstanding the characteristics and nuances specific to each case, the processes of political transition over the past few decades that have occurred in repressive single-party regimes, be they left- or right-wing, have certain common features that need to be taken into account when discussing the subject of transitions. Civilian regimes, considered Socialist left-wing or right-wing with military characteristics, are of some relevance to understanding Angola. With reference to the so-called Socialist regimes of the old Eastern Bloc, there are two distinct situations, one being that of Eastern Europe, the other that of Russia.

Important economic changes also took place in Eastern European countries, during the profound political transformation that occurred with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. In these countries, the political regime changed, as did the actual mode of production and ownership. Political space was opened to other players. The communist parties that had been all-powerful were either banned or transformed into Socialist or Social Democratic Parties. With or without their new attire, they effectively ceased being single or hegemonic parties and accepted other forms of ownership, in accordance with market law. Many of the old Eastern European regimes integrated the democratic and competitive space of the European Union and are now successful democracies. The geographic and, to a certain extent, the cultural proximity of these countries to Western European democracies made it easier for the forces of change to assert themselves where there was a real interest in implementing the new model. Being nearer, it was easier to tighten economic and political relations with a view to achieving effective change.

The case of Russia is somewhat different from that of its former allies. Although the old economic and political tutelary power of the Eastern Bloc had existed under a pluralistic political system, it did not effectively make the transition to a democratic regime. This is partly due to the fact that economic power in Russia was shared out almost entirely amongst representatives of the old Communist *nomenklatura* and/or their representatives and family members. This has created a country where some of the greatest personal fortunes are to be found, as a result of the accumulation of personal wealth when public property was privately seized through a blatantly oligarchic system. The fact that the country had the means and resources that enabled a degree of international economic and political autonomy meant that its transition process was somewhat impervious to the conditionalities that are usually attached to loans and to financial and economic aid from the West, such as transparency, good governance and respect for human rights. In summary, the economy of the country was seized by the old *nomenklatura* of the previous totalitarian and autocratic regime that generated a transition process for its own benefit, ensuring it retained political and economic power along the lines of a new model of liberal 'democracy', in other words, ensuring a transition with no essential changes in who maintained effective power.

Regarding repressive regimes of the right-wing military, there are similar instances, whereby transition does not greatly change the status quo. In most cases these were 'democratic' transitions arising from pacts. In Latin America, this is the case with Brazil, Chile and Argentina (at different times). In Asia there is the example of Indonesia.

In Brazil, the democratic transition went through two distinct cycles, the first in the mid-1970s and the second starting in 1984 when there was a widespread mobilization of people. The core of the problem in a process fraught with deadlock seems to have lain within the armed forces and the concessions and agreements that had to be made to them, when for many years they had dominated political and economic power. During the first cycle, in order to overcome the deadlock, a number of guarantees had to be made to the military such as no punishment for crimes committed by the apparatus of repression and maintaining many of the armed forces' economic and political prerogatives, thereby ensuring the survival and continuity of the civilian elite created and connected to them during the previous regime. A political and legal framework was gradually put together, capable of changing the formal model but leaving the essence of the system intact that ensured continuity of power. Everyone is aware of the enormous disparities in income distribution at the heart of Brazilian society and of the profound social injustice that clearly prevails, an obvious legacy of a process of 'transition' with little effective change to political and economic power (and ensuing privileges).

The cases of Chile under Augusto Pinochet, of Argentina under the militaristic Videla, Viola and Galtieri, and of Indonesia under Suharto, are also examples of transitions through pacts, namely with the agreement and support of the military after negotiating the usual conditions of non-persecution for crimes committed, the keeping of personal fortunes amassed at the expense of the public treasury and the continuation of privileged access to public resources, advantages and benefits. In essence, they would remain an elite. All these cases are examples of 'democratic' transition processes under the patronage of the armed forces of the old military regime.

Apart from the Eastern European countries, who have joined or who want effectively to join the European Union, all the other instances of transition with no substantial change (from left-wing or proletarian dictatorships, and right-wing military dictatorships) are in many ways faulty and inadequate and cannot be considered democracies even in the loosest sense of the word. They are merely fragile, sham democracies, forever susceptible to regression and relatively hidden eruptions of violence.

There are many constraints to the consolidation of democratic regimes built on the ashes of former totalitarian and autocratic regimes that never stopped being so in effect. We refer here just as much to economic restrictions as to political, social or cultural constraints. A democratic regime cannot flourish when the system does not allow the separation of power between the executive, the legislature and the judiciary; when the distinction between public and private dimensions is not clear-cut; when the holders of public office consider it their personal prerogative to make private profits from managing public resources; when there is no effective respect for fundamental rights, liberties and guarantees for the greatest part of the population (with functional protection agents); where the rules of the marketplace and the freedom of private initiative are non-existent, relying on political favour and patrimonialism; where politics (the movement of favours and influence) re-

main the principal means of access to economic progress; where merit, ability and competence are all but worthless.

When predicting the success or failure of a political transition, a sociological analysis needs to be carried out of the players in the democratic transition process. It would be necessary to study the way these internalise democratic political values and how effectively they play in relation to change because without democrats, democracies cannot be built.

Angola: the enterprising *nomenklatura* or the 'primitive accumulation of capital'

In Angola there is a process of transition that has characteristics of the aforementioned processes, from both repressive right-wing militaristic systems and left-wing socialist regimes. Firstly, the ability of the former socialist *nomenklatura* to manage the process of transition, ensuring it maintains its economic and political power within the new so-called democratic model; secondly, the gratification of the higher-ranking military through access to countless socio-economic and political benefits (appropriation of public goods; diamond exploration permits; maintaining political office within party, state and government structures), notwithstanding their guaranteed impunity in matters relating to past courses of action (this impunity is in fact extended to the entire political class and to the current security forces, with repeated international complaints whenever human rights are violated); thirdly, the maintenance of the privileges of the elites, who benefit at the expense of extreme social injustice, huge imbalances in income distribution and pockets of abject poverty; fourthly, the covert and thinly-disguised preservation of powerful systems of repression and disregard for human rights.

The players in the former single-party regime made the transition to the new 'democratic' model without internalising one single concept around the need for democracy in spite of the civil war and the international wave of feeling that swept the world during the late 80s and the early 90s; one moment they were Marxists, the next, democrats, in complete control of the process of transition, giving it rhythm and shape to suit their own benefit in order to maintain their own privileges and benefits.

The process of privatisation that has been unfolding since the early 90s was conducted wholly in favour of the old *nomenklatura* which went rapidly from Marxist Socialism to big-business capitalism in a process that, ironically, many termed the 'primitive accumulation of capital'. In this way many important public figures rose to power in government, State and party structures from amongst the main project leaders in the most diverse areas such as agriculture, real estate, banking and insurance. They became involved in all the most profitable businesses in Angola.

It is nothing new to say that favouritism, clientelism and private use of public resources are the norm in the political and economic administration of Angola. Angola has never done very well in international ratings on corruption, as the various reports from Transparency International demonstrate.[1]

---

[1] See the reports on www.transparencyinternational.com

The international scandal that became known as 'Angolagate', involving public figures from Brazil, France and even Russia, was the event that did the most damage to the country's international image. The situation was made worse when the President of the Republic, José Eduardo dos Santos, appointed the main villain in the scandal, the Franco-Brazilian Pierre Falcone, minister and advisor to the Angolan delegation to UNESCO. Not only had Pierre Falcone been involved in the arms trafficking at the very heart of the complex process of 'Angolagate', but he was also pivotal to the process of renegotiating the Angolan debt with Russia, a dealing that also involved one of his associates, Arkadi Gaidamak. During this time, Falcone was seen to be rubbing shoulders with the highest-ranking officials in the country's government, starting with José Eduardo dos Santos, the actual Head of State.

Institutional corruption and the illegal enrichment of the highest dignitaries in the Angolan State are part of a strategy aimed at keeping political power at all costs. Money is disseminated amongst the old *nomenklatura*, thereby creating a many-tentacled network linking political power to the economic world.

Inasmuch as Angolan society endured a state of war for a long time, the military (in many cases already established along partisan or political lines) could not be forgotten in this distribution of benefits, as for example, is the case with the diamond sector where high-ranking officers of the Armed Forces own most of the diamond mines, involved in the mining and trading of diamonds. The revenue from this hugely profitable business is in turn shared with high-ranking officials in political and governmental power, closely linked within a loyal clientelistic network. The complicity thus forged makes it impossible for any fracture or divergence from the established status quo.

Although diamonds are now mined in other parts of the country, it is the region of the Lundas (North and South) that most feels the damaging effects of corruption and the unbridled and limitless appropriation of natural resources. The Lundas have become extremely unstable areas. It is there that the countless bands of national and international speculators converged. Agriculture became impossible because of the damage caused to the land, the destruction of the soil and diversion of water, with hardly any other productive activity taking place. It is a region deeply affected by the greatest violations of human rights. Contrary to what might have been expected, the end of the military conflict worsened the difficult situation in the region, with the arrival of private 'armies' in the service of 'enterprising generals' and 'speculating generals'. The lack of public order maintained by State security forces has turned the region into a kind of American Wild West during the time of the Gold Rush.

2. Resource management and external pressures for transparency, good governance and human rights

During various international forums over the last decade, there has been a systematic reaffirmation of, and a growing clamour for, the principles of public good governance and business ethics alongside the condemnation of the practices of bribery and corruption. In these forums, a demand is also made for the respect of human rights and for transparency in the management of public funds.

In Angola, according to accusations from the IMF, a sizeable percentage of oil revenue is not included in the General State Budget[2] and is managed outside the rules and regulations established by the government itself, a feat made easier by the fact that the taxes paid by the oil companies, as well as the 'signing-on bonuses' (payments made by companies when wanting to exploit new oil fields) do not find their way directly into the public treasury. These financial resources are laundered through off-shore accounts registered in the names of the national oil company, Sonangol, or other high-ranking government and State dignitaries.[3]

In December 1999, *Global Witness* published a report exposing the apparent complicity of oil companies and banks in the appropriation of the revenues from the sale of mineral resources, oil in particular, by certain State managers.[4] Following that report, a public appeal was made to oil-companies working in Angola to make public their payments to the State of Angola. The concern extended to other countries where the handling of revenues from the sale of mineral resources is badly managed and dishonestly appropriated by rulers, thereby feeding international corruption, arms trafficking and other forms of illegitimate business. Other institutions joined their voices to *Global Witness*, such as Oxfam, Save the Children UK and Transparency International UK.

With the end of the civil war in 2002, international pressure on the Angolan government became greater, clamouring for transparency, good governance and respect for human rights, not only from international and national NGOs but also from international governmental organisations. Access to new loans from international finance organisations became conditional to these demands.

Open Society also launched an international campaign, 'Publish what you pay', that gained the backing of many NGOs and even of certain other countries persecuted for the phenomenon of widespread corruption, such as Olusengu Obasanjo's Nigeria. Angola, however, did not respond well to this kind of initiative and Sonangol warned the petrol companies working in Angola to say absolutely nothing about the content of the financial relations they had established with the country, under threat of reprisals in future business dealings.

The reluctance of the Angolan government in obeying criteria for transparency, good governance and human rights made it difficult to obtain international financial aid for the purpose of national reconstruction. This is what thwarted the possibility of holding an International Donors Conference. The potential donors acknowledged that not only did Angola have the financial ability to guarantee reconstruction, but that the country was also mismanaging those same resources.

It is within this context that the opportunity presented by the People's Republic of China emerged, with its willingness to make huge loans available to the Angolan government at most advantageous rates (compared to those offered by

---

[2] See 'Time for transparency, coming clean on oil, mining and gas revenues,' a report from *Global Witness*, March 2004, p.35.

[3] In this sense, see the explanation (justification) given by Ambassador Alberto Correia Neto in *O Globo* (21 November 2005).

[4] See 'A crude awakening: the role of the oil and banking systems in Angola's civil war and the plunder of the state assets,' a report by *Global Witness* (December 1999).

international financial institutions) and with no sanctions attached. The Chinese government completely ignored matters to do with transparency, good governance and human rights and this is where the advantage lay for the Angolan government, being allowed to ignore the sanctions of the 'West' and of its institutions and organisations.

The Angolan government soon returned to its old habit of lack of transparency in its management of public finances, immediately obvious in the way the State accepted China's external financing. This financing was supposedly earmarked to provide for the country's need to reconstruct infrastructure destroyed by war, for the rebuilding of new infrastructures and the reduction of external debt, in due course. For the legal and transparent management of public finances, contracting external financing needs prior approval by Parliament within the funding lines of the State Budget and the National Economic and Social Development Plan (NESDP). In practice, however, this did not happen, and these loans were not put to Parliament for approval within the State Budget or the NESDP.

The quality of resource management is indeed a decisive factor for future development. Angola, as we know, has experienced high rates of economic growth over the last few years, following the end of military conflict, at around 20% per year. However, we all know that a large part of this figure is due to the growth of the mineral sector (essentially oil and diamonds). The increase in oil production alongside the gradual rise in the cost per barrel on the international market has brought about an oil bonanza unprecedented in the history of the country. The international context along with the state of peace in the country, which has never lasted for any real length of time at all since independence, creates an unprecedented conjuncture in the history of the country. This conjuncture (internal and external) represents a unique opportunity for the steady and sustained economic development of the country. Unfortunately, this will probably be yet another missed opportunity, inasmuch as the non-mineral sectors of the economy have not been sufficiently boosted by resources arising from oil. By definition, the non-mineral sectors are the main creators of employment, being therefore amongst the main sources of income for families.

In the same way, the process of national reconstruction, with its vast programme of public works, could also be the great booster of the non-mineral economy, should public expenses benefit from a Keynesian multiplication effect. However, what is happening in fact is a far cry from an economic growth propelled by the process of reconstruction. Most businesses entrusted with the main projects are foreign and employ foreign workers, even for the most basic jobs (such as digging ditches, as happens in Chinese enterprises). In Angola, decisions regarding the allocation of contracts for the undertaking of important public works are made in a discretionary manner. Such allocation does not depend on any form of public competition and usually benefits businesses owned fully or partly by the 'new' *nomenklatura* of power and their foreign partners, with whom they are in collusion.

It is quite obvious that the country does not have sufficient technical or human capacity for undertaking works of any great magnitude, but this could be the opportunity for imposing certain procedures for contract workers such as making it mandatory that contractors can compete for business only if they employ foreigners when there are no nationals (inside or outside the country) who have the neces-

sary competencies to undertake the work. This would also be an opportunity for beginning to put together a workforce in Angola and ensuring that foreign businesses would leave behind training programmes when they left the country. Of course this would demand a greater public conscience from the governors who negotiate the contracts, and from the legislative powers, in order to create the necessary legal framework; this would also demand that a greater role be played by public institutions and that there be a greater supervision of contractual processes. However, another problem lies precisely in the efficiency and effectiveness of governance and public administration, seriously lacking in public conscience and undermined by corruption.

On the other hand, a large part of the funds spent on reconstruction projects are wasted on mechanisms such as 'established' commissions or 'percentages' (that are no more than institutionalised corruption),[5] thereby damaging not only the progress of reconstruction projects but also the quality of the work undertaken. Investments in capital goods, which by definition have to be relatively long-term, soon become worthless, with roads as the clearest example of this, being built for show and falling rapidly into disrepair in the ensuing months due to the poor quality of the materials used in relation to the requirements of traffic, weight of vehicles using the road and resistance to natural elements. The problem does not lie in the total amount actually spent on the work by the public treasury and which would have been more than enough to undertake top-quality work anywhere in the world, but in the commissions that are pocketed throughout the process and that take up a large part of the monies, at the expense of quality of materials used in the projects.

3. Opposition political parties and civil society organizations

Within multi-party democratic systems, the parties are the main agents of the political process. It is through them that the collective can be represented and take part in the system of government and chose the programmes of governance. It is the political parties that play the peaceful game of fighting for victory and the exercise of power.

The quality of democracy, even the survival of a democratic process of transition, depends above all on the interaction of the parties with society, their ability to represent the interests and perspectives of their constituents.

In Angola there is a broad spectrum of political parties, most of them with no social expression or representation or even relevant activity. Many of the political parties are a mere reflection of rudimentary aggregations, of family loyalties, clanship, or of small groups with shared interests, getting together in the hope of material gain; they have no projects for society, no credible organisational structure whatsoever, no alternative proposals to put forward regarding the process of governance and even less do they have any ideological references. They feed off the State Budget and become easy prey for those in power, and who will in turn use them as puppets in order to present a national and international image of pluralism, thereby serving the strategy for the democratic legitimacy of the regime.

---

[5] The best explanation of this matter is given by Alberto Correia Neto, then Angolan ambassador to Brazil, in *O Globo* (21 November 2005).

As for the few parties that do have social representation, they too display a certain amount of apathy and inability to address the electorate, they complain readily about lack of means and the constraints imposed by the party in power, but this ought not to stop fieldwork amongst the population. From the end of the 19th century and throughout the 20th century, many parties in other parts of the world managed to grow in spite of comparatively greater adversity and rallied huge layers of the population to alternative political projects with effective change.

This inefficiency and unproductiveness of political parties means that, in many situations, the onus of contesting burning issues and defending the poor and marginalised sectors (the majority) of the population falls on civil society organizations (CSOs). This is why the regime lost no time in reacting by raising severe and effective obstacles to hinder the actions of these organisations, resorting to all kinds of persecution and intimidation, including threatening to make some of them illegal and prohibiting their activity (in Cabinda, the civic association *Mpalabana* was indeed made illegal).

There is no denying the real temptation to silence the CSOs that do not follow the electoral strategy of the party in power. Apart from anything else, there is a blatant and quite shameful attempt to instrumentalise (or co-opt) some CSOs, turning them into veritable driving-belts for the party in power. Nowadays there is a deluge of such organisations, emerging as sporting or recreational associations, associations of local or regional solidarity, associations to aid the neediest, and so on. They are clearly subordinated to the MPLA's strategy for maintaining power for itself, its president and its regime.

If private media are to be included in civil society, then this is another example of the persecution of, and attempts to control, all those who dare to defy the official political line. There are numerous reports and complaints from the professionals in this sector, with many of them using self-censorship in the knowledge that they would find it very hard to find work if they were to become politically inconvenient.

4. The excluded of Angola: the 'silent majority'

According to the latest report on human development from the UNDP, the situation in Angola is indeed worrying. The Human Poverty Index stands at around 40.3%, a figure that places the country's performance in the 23rd worst position in the world, with around 38% of the population in a state of sub-nutrition.[6]

After the war there was a growth in financial resources available to the social sectors (from 22% of total expenditure, in 2002, to the current 28%). However, education, health, housing and basic infrastructures (sanitation, transport and travel) are still far too weak. This can be seen in the poor quality of teaching on offer, the lack of classrooms, decaying school buildings and high rates of resignations amongst teachers who work in poor conditions and for low salaries; it can be seen also in the resurgence of certain diseases such as cholera, tuberculosis and malaria (some of these diseases had been all but eradicated during the colonial period), as well as

---

[6] See *Human Development Report 2006* (New York: PNUD, 2006); also *Human Development Report 2007/2008* (New York: PNUD, 2008).

the increased prevalence of HIV/AIDS; again it can be seen in the urban chaos of the cities (especially in the capital) where millions of people live in urban slums, or *musseques*, that are not fit for human inhabitation, with no sanitation, no piped water or electricity. The buildings dating from colonial times remain, in their vast majority, derelict, on the verge of collapse, the most dramatic example of this being the collapse of the National Criminal Investigation Department building that caved in, in March 2008, killing dozens of people who were inside at the time.

There is the forced and systematic eviction of people (something that had almost stopped during the election period), inhabitants of the peripheral areas, with the aim of putting the land to a different use, often for private condominiums, with houses worth hundreds of thousands of US dollars, for the political and economic elite. Some of these lands were used for the cultivation of the little produce that allowed the survival of these people living in extreme poverty. The forcible eviction of the people is followed by the demolition of their precarious homes and there are recurrent complaints from those who are bereft of their meagre belongings, homeless, exposed to sun, wind and rain, without any sanitation infrastructures, electricity or drinking water. The rehousing of the homeless, when it happens, is made in distant locations that do not allow them to move to the city in search of work or to support themselves through trading, and deprives their children of the possibility of going to school. All too often these evictions are carried out with excessive use of force.[7]

The destruction of peripheral markets has also been carried out through violent police activity. Usually the local sellers react to the destruction of their work-places. New markets are built to replace the ones that have been demolished but in insufficient number to house all those affected and in areas that are more difficult to access, which leads to a considerable drop in income.

Throughout the years, various organizations, especially the Association for Justice, Peace and Democracy (AJDP), have denounced the judicial and penal system, which is still afflicted with major flaws. There is use and abuse of preventive custody measures, often well beyond the boundaries of law; citizens throughout the country are still arbitrarily imprisoned; there is ill-treatment in police stations, solitary confinement in small spaces (in police-stations and prisons), lacking the most basic living-conditions, overcrowded and with no food supplies for the prisoners.

Most of the population deals with these problems in a sectarian and fragmented way, being incapable of facing them in a collective and, more importantly, political manner.[8] Small sectors of poor communities, who are lucky enough to be the focus of attention of given national or international NGOs, manage to make themselves heard by the authorities through these organisations, but this does not solve the fundamental problems of this 'silent majority' who suffer much, hope for every-

---

[7] See the reports from Human Rights Watch and SOS Habitat, 'They Pushed Down the Houses: Forced Evictions and Insecurity of Tenure for Luanda's Urban Poor' (New York: HRW & SOS Habitat, May 2007), available on http://hrw.org/reports/2007/angola0507/ ; see also Amnesty International's report, 'Angola, Lives in Ruins: Forced Evictions Continue (New York: AI, January 2007, available on http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/ENGAFR120012007/

[8] See Vidal, Nuno, 'Modern and Post-Modern Patrimonialism in Africa: the Angolan case' in *Community & the State in Lusophone Africa*, edited by Malyn Newitt with Patrick Chabal & Norrie MacQueen (London: King's College London, 2003), pp.1-14.

thing and ask for nothing in an organised, public and political manner.

Many wonder about the cause of this relative 'silence', this lack of drive to make demands, to express discontent through politics and, most of all, about the majority vote for the MPLA. The answer seems to lie in the long tradition of repression that the people have been subjected to since colonial times, through the Socialist period and to the present time, on top of the traumas of civil war they were subjected to from independence to 2002, and the programme of building and rebuilding of infrastructures that was launched throughout most of the country, on top of the tough manipulation of the State apparatus by the MPLA (through logistical means, public media, public monies, and so on) with extensive distribution of goods of all kinds to all strata of the population. The answer lies also in the pressing concerns for survival that are already part of the daily life of most people from the day they are born, and that take up all the hours of their days, in a desperate search for their daily bread in the most diverse and exhausting activities that rob them of the ability to acquire a greater critical and political conscience.[9]

The distancing of these people, the majority of Angolans, from the so-called process of transition to 'democracy' is the same that existed during the building process of Socialism, but without their participation and involvement in the building of a new social project, it will be difficult to achieve any effective change from the present reality of poverty and human underdevelopment of which this majority remains the foremost victim.

---

[9] *Ibid.*

CIVIL SOCIETY AND POLITICAL POWER

Fernando Macedo
*Angolan Lusíada
University*

Introduction

Although progress has been made since the democratisation process started in the early 1990s, the existence of a democratic State has yet to become a reality. Signs of complete respect for the Constitution and the law enacted by State institutions are still tenuous. The ineffectiveness of accountability mechanisms for political, civil and criminal, holders of public office, civil servants and agents of the State, and the disregard for basic human rights, remain major concerns.

The ruling party in Angola intervenes greatly in the life of political opposition parties and CSOs, impeding their development. Most leaders from political parties have had to defend themselves from intrusions by the regime's security services, and/or from some of their own members, challenging and accusing the leadership of violating the statutes of their own party.[1] For CSOs, it became increasingly obvious that the regime was feeling uncomfortable with the growing social intervention and criticism of governance emanating from this arena, increasingly outside it political control, and set about creating its 'own' CSOs. Later it opted for a less explicit approach, believing that control of access to national and international funds available to CSOs (public and private) would be sufficient. When this strategy failed in relation to certain CSOs, the approach became more drastic, to the point of threatening to declare some national and foreign CSOs as illegal, without regard to the entire legal system regulating this area.

Further to these tactics, we have noticed varied attempts at creating a large civil society platform, seeking to standardise relationships with government institutions. This is yet another attempt to 'domesticate' civil society, undemocratically seeking to restrict pluralism of expression and of organisation, by supposedly creating a representative body through which dialogue occurs. This approach is supported in diplomatic circles, by sectors of Angolan

---

[1] See interview with the author in *Voice of America*, 'NGOs can be involved in politics' (30 July 2007).

civil society and certain intellectuals and international organisations working in Angola. These obstacles and constraints represent what I consider to be the greatest challenge to the future development of Angolan CSOs.

This chapter begins with a presentation and analysis of the legal framework for civil society and democracy in Angola (sections 1 and 2). It then deals with some key discussion regarding the relationship between civil society and political society from a legal perspective, arguing that CSOs can contribute to the exercise of citizens' political rights, that political associations can engage with certain aspects of public political life, and that the current NGO Regulation Bill suffers from a lack of compliance with the Constitution and lack of legality (sections 3, 4 and 5). The chapter ends with a discussion on government strategies to manipulate CSOs, on the stance of several international organisations in Angola, and the main challenges facing the development of Angolan CSOs (sections 6 and 7).

1. Democracy and civil society in Angolan law

The Republic of Angola is a democratic State (Art. 2 of Angolan Constitutional Law, hereafter LCA), in that 'sovereignty resides with the people' (LCA Art. 3/1) who 'exercises political power through periodic universal suffrage in order to choose their representatives, through referenda, and through other means of democratic citizen participation within the Nation' (LCA Art. 32). Here we are dealing with representative and participative democracy (LCA Art.3/2), in the sense that firstly, it is clear that people elect their representatives who exercise political power on their behalf; and secondly, that after electing their representatives, people continue to participate in the life of the Nation through other forms of democratic participation.

In a democracy, those who govern are always accountable to those who are governed, given that those who govern are bound by an obligation placed upon them by the Republic, namely: 'the construction of a society that is free, democratic, and which promotes peace, justice and social progress' (LCA Art. 1).

'The people' is understood as a group of citizens. Nevertheless, it is fundamental to understand that 'the people' is not an abstract singular entity, whereby one reduces the action and characteristics of all citizens to a single representative agent. 'The people' should be understood as 'a great plurality comprised of individuals, associations, groups, churches, communities, personalities, institutions (and movements) that communicate interests, ideas, beliefs and values, that are plural, convergent and conflictual'.[2]

In representative democracy, it is fundamental to understand that those who govern do not exercise limitless power, their powers are constitutionally and legally bound to objectives (LCA Art. 1), and modes of exercising power established under the Constitution (LCA Art. 54/b). When electing representatives, the people do not renounce their sovereign right once and for all, but continue to engage in other forms of democratic participation in the life of the Nation, through intensive interaction with their representatives (LCA Art. 3). Political parties and elections are but some of the instruments and vehicles of democracy.

---

[2] Canotilho, G., *Constitutional Right and Theory of the Constitution*, 7th edition (Coimbra: Almedina Editions, 2003), p. 6.

A condition in the exercise of democracy is the existence of a sphere separate from State-power where interests, values and solidarities may be expressed, where the State does interfere, yet remains within the State-community. State-power can be defined as those who govern, and State-community as unit of those governed and governing. The sphere of interests, values and solidarities, relatively autonomous from State-power, is conventionally referred to as civil society.[3]

Civil society is an objective reality and can be understood in two ways. The first is the granting of a set of rights, freedoms and guarantees to individuals through a legal-constitutional framework, further strengthened by law. The second is action permitting the exercise and defence of rights or interests, by those holding these rights.

In order for citizens to express and make public their preferences and opinions, democracy presumes the existence of pluralism of expression, of pluralism of political organisation and of organised social groups (LCA Art. 2). According to the Constitution, the 'State should create the necessary political, economic and cultural conditions for citizens to effectively enjoy their rights and to fulfil their duties' (LCA Art. 50). The effectiveness and embodiment of those conditions is underpinned by eight guarantees, namely: 1. freedom to form and to join organisations (LCA Art. 2 & 32); 2. freedom of expression (LCA Art. 32); 3. the right to vote (LCA Art. 28); 4. political leaders' right to compete for the support of the electorate (LCA Art. 3 & 4); 5. the right to receive and to disseminate information (Art. 19 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights); 6. access to alternative sources of information (LCA Art. 35); 7. free and fair elections, with institutions ensuring that the government's policies depend on voting or other means to capture citizens' preferences; and 8. eligibility for public positions (LCA Art. 28).

Civil society is distinct from political society, a reality created by the Constitution (LCA Art. 4) and defined as that which is formed by political parties and organisations conducting political campaigns with a view to winning political power. Angolan legislation uses the concept 'civil society' in the Law of Associations (LA) and in the Media Law. We see it in the preamble of the Law of Associations, which states: 'in light of the new demands within the development of democracy, with a view to greater civil society participation in the Nation's destiny'. It can be deduced from the words of the legislator that associations are one of the routes whereby civil society expresses itself. In the Media Law, '[establishing] as being of public interest, the information that has the following purpose (…) to assure the free expression of public opinion and of civil society' (Art. 11/1).

In the Law of Associations, the legislator defines one of the manifestations of civil society as: 'the voluntary union of Angolan or foreign citizens, with steadfast character that pursues a common end without lucrative intention' (LA Art. 2). The very same law stipulates that 'associations continue freely and autonomously to fulfil their goals, benefiting from legal, administrative and financial autonomy, (…) and their activities may not be terminated nor suspended except within the law' (LA Art. 9) and in agreement with article 52 of the Constitution which establishes the framework for the limitation or suspension of rights, freedoms and security of

---

[3] Miranda, Jorge, *Manual of Constitutional Law*, Tome I, 7th Edition (Coimbra: Coimbra Editora, 2003), p. 11.

citizens. Furthermore, the preamble to the Law of Associations states that associations are 'autonomous and should be free of interference from public powers in the fulfilment of their objectives'. They can therefore, establish themselves to pursue the most varied objectives, as long as these are not contrary to the Constitution and Law (LA Arts. 6, 8 & 11). The Law cannot, nor should, stipulate the objectives that associations should pursue. It offers by way of illustration, objectives which are professional, scientific, technical, cultural, recreational, educational, convivial, protective of the environment, and which promote community, social solidarity and political development goals (LA Art 8).

In pursuing these ends, civil society supports the fulfilment of the objectives of the Republic of Angola, because it promotes the development, strengthening and consolidation of democracy (one of the objectives of the Republic stipulated in LCA Art. 1).

2. Civil society and Politics within the Angolan Legal System

Repeatedly, public announcements have been made by members of the Angolan Government, members of the party in power, journalists and opinion makers, according to whom associations cannot have political objectives, that many have crossed the boundaries of their statutes, and have become involved in issues on which they should not comment. In July 2007, the director of UTCAH – Technical Unit for the Coordination of Humanitarian Aid *(Unidade Técnica de Coordenação das Ajudas Humanitárias)*, a public institute under the Ministry of Social Reintegration, openly endorsed this type of sentiment, saying that some NGOs were operating illegally as they had gone beyond their purpose and were engaged in politics.[4] One of the organisations referred to at this time was AJPD, summoned by the Constitutional Court on September 4, 2008, to contest its indictment by the Attorney General's office, with a view to announcing the judicial declaration of its extinction.[5] Such statements are completely unfounded, and if taken seriously would constitute a shocking violation of the Constitution (LCA Art 3 n° 2 & 32 n° 1) and of the Law of Associations (LA Art. 8, n° 1 paragraph i; as referred to above).

The Constitution is absolutely clear in stating that the Angolan people exercise political power through three means: through universal suffrage, referenda, and other forms of democratic participation in the Nation (LCA Art. 3 n° 2). One can therefore deduce that associations with political ends have their plan of political action within a wide sphere of activity, and with the exception of being unable to participate in elections to gain political power, they can do all that is not prohibited in the Constitution and the Law.

According to the Law of Associations, those with political ends are not allowed to 'participate in the activities of State institutions' (LA Art 8, n.° 2, para a); 'contribute to the direction of national politics, particularly through participation in elections or other democratic methods' (LA Art 8, n.° 2, para b); 'contribute to the exercise of citizens' political rights' (LA Art 8, n.° 2, para c); 'determine government

---

[4] Declarations made by the director-general of UTCAH, Pedro Walipe Kalenga in an interview with the National Radio of Angola on 10 July, 2007; Luanda, *Angop*, 10 July, 2007.
[5] Judicial process n° 50/2008.

and administrative programmes' (LA Art 8, n.º 2, para d); and 'influence national politics in Parliament or in Government' (LA Art 8, n.º 2, para e). The legislator, in seeking to regulate freedom of association by constitutional means, enacted the Law of Associations, but included issues such as those just outlined, which ran the risk of being unconstitutional.

The statement that associations cannot 'participate in the activity of State institutions' is partially unconstitutional, given that there are State institutions which integrate associations within the activities they implement, without compromising respective spheres of competence in relation to decision making. For instance, National Assembly committees can grant CSOs a parliamentary audience in order to hear issues of public interest. AJPD for example, had already been granted an audience by the 9th Committee of the National Assembly. Therefore, it seems that there are different levels of participation in the activity of State institutions, some of which is within the Constitution.

The same can be said regarding the prohibition of associations from 'contributing towards the decision making process of national politics, specifically through participation in elections or other democratic methods'. Strictly speaking, associations can contribute towards the decision making process of national politics through subsidiarity because, having conducted public debate, the final word on public policy rests with the institutions invested with constitutional power, thereby fully respecting that associations cannot participate in elections. It is important to highlight that the expression 'or through other democratic means' contradicts article 3 n.º 2 of the Constitution, where it is established that, besides electing their representatives, citizens exercise political power through other forms of democratic participation in the nation. The fact that associations are prohibited from 'contributing towards the decision making process of national politics (...) through other democratic means' is equivalent to saying that they cannot influence national politics in Parliament and in Government.

Associations can and should contribute towards the exercise of citizens political rights in accordance with the Constitution, in order to play a role in the civic and political education of citizens. Within associations, citizens learn how to be in tune with issues of public interest, to receive and disseminate information essential for the formation of their critical conscience in relation to the fulfilment of public powers, and in so doing are better prepared and informed to vote. After some time working within an association, citizens can decide if they wish to become members of political parties. Associations play an extremely vital role in the gathering and distribution of alternative information provided by public powers, to the point of proposing a different purpose and interpretation of the information. All of the above mentioned elements contribute to the political formation of citizens, promoting, although indirectly, the exercise of citizens' political rights. The greater the information and interpretation made available to voters, the more enhanced their capacity to vote. Citizens who decide to be eligible for public office, after having been exposed to these associations, will possibly have developed skills that enables them to be more effective in political action, once elected. Therefore, I cannot see any wrongdoing with a member of an association becoming a member of a political party.

It is inconceivable that in a democratic State ruled by Law, associations are not allowed to 'influence national politics in Parliament or in Government'. In reality, the principle of political representation implies (LCA Art. 3 n.º 2) that the representatives of the people regularly maintain contact with those they represent, in order to fulfil their obligation to 'contribute towards the expression of popular will' (LCA Art. 4), and update their political agenda based on the problems faced by the people. In the context of the constitutional prerogative to create a democratic society (LCA Art. 1) the democratic principle (LCA Art. 2) endeavours to 'democratize democracy', which implies the improvement of representative and participative democracy in a cumulative and complementary way.[6] Public powers are obliged to open participative spaces to citizens, not to restrict nor limit their participation. In this sense, lines a), b), c), and e) of n.º 2 of article 8 of the Law of the Associations, violate articles 1, 2, 3 n.º 2, 4 and 32/1 of LCA, and for this reason are unconstitutional.

A related issue concerns statements arguing that associations which had not foreseen particular social objectives and included them in their constitution, cannot pursue these objectives. If applied rigorously, this means that whenever an association decides to pursue objectives that are not set out in their statutes, they must adopt legal measures to make the necessary amendments. However, there is no legal provision in place to sanction or restrict exercise of this new activity. The constitutional framework for the exercise of fundamental rights, established by article 52, n.º 1 of LCA, only approves restrictions or annulment of fundamental rights, liberties and guarantees of citizens, if clearly laid down by law.

Based on what has been described, it is relevant to compare this with a similar situation regarding the freedom to demonstrate. In agreement with Rui Ferreira, failure to inform the competent authority that a demonstration will take place, which is a citizen duty, does not represent a crime, because the law does not propose a sanction.[7] In the case of an association pursuing new objectives not originally foreseen in its statutes, even before these are approved through public notary, similar to what takes place with the failure to inform a competent authority regarding the holding of a demonstration, the law does not penalize an association the has not pursued the legalisation of a new objective. Save for a better opinion, we stand before the principle of no penalty without law, while also invoking the most favourable constitutional verdict to deal with the right of liberty, which establishes that one should only restrict fundamental citizen rights, freedoms and guarantees, in protecting other rights.

3. Associations pursuing political purposes and political parties

Politics is the place where individuals and groups compete to win or to directly influence State power: parties, unions and social movements. At this level, political life is characterized by a permanent debate, renewed though electoral cycles, and informed by the problems people face.[8]

---

[6] Canotilho, G., *ibid*, pp. 289, 290.
[7] Ferreira, R., 'Liberdade de expressão e direito à liberdade de manifestação: positivação constitucional em Angola', in *Revista da Ordem dos Advogados de Angola (Order of Angolan Lawyers)*, OAA, Ano I, Número 1 (Luanda: Centro de Documentação e Informação da OAA – OAA's Documentation and Information Centre, 1998), pp. 223-236.
[8] Braud, P., *Introdução à ciência política* (Lisbon: Editorial News, 1982), p. 14.

According to Diamond, nothing hinders CSOs from forming alliances with political parties. However, if they are absorbed by political parties, they move the primary locus of their activity to political society and lose a substantial part of their specific capacity to facilitate and mediate the construction of democracy.[9]

The type of practice whereby CSOs form an alliance with political parties does not constitute a crime in Angola, since no law exists that renders it as a crime. Even if such a law existed to render such practice as unlawful, it would be unconstitutional. What effectively takes place within the present Angolan political reality is that organisations that choose this route, but in support of the opposition, are discredited through a systematic campaign of intimidation and misinformation, and subjected to public opinion by people and structures closely linked to the party in power. The practice whereby CSOs form alliances with political parties or even with the executive already exists, and is sponsored by the Government itself and by the majority party. It is also probable that there exist CSOs aligned with the opposition parties. In analysing the first scenario, is this not be the case with the organisation Causa Solidária, AJAPRAZ (Association of Young Angolans Coming from Zambia) and FESA (Eduardo dos Santos Foundation)? Notice that these organisations conduct political propaganda in favour of José Eduardo dos Santos, the President. The creation of FESA through his patronage, while he exercises the position of President, raises doubts about the legality of such practice within the incompatibilities framework of the mandate of the President.

It is noteworthy that Araújo, referring to the President's decision to assume the honorary presidency of some institutions, such as the Association of War Veterans *(Associação dos Antigos Combatentes)* and the Association for the Defence of Psychically Sick Children *(Defesa das Crianças Psiquicamente Doentes')* says that 'in spite of the silence of the constitutional text, the incompatibilities framework is implicit within the exercise of the presidential mandate with other public or private functions, unforeseen in the constitution, which does not include the principle of the extension of presidential powers, by legal methods'.[10]

In relation to the Presidential mandate, this incompatibilities framework reasonably extends to the creation of a Foundation during the Presidency. Is his foundation not receiving contributions from various Angolan and foreign companies, some of which have contracts with the State? Are not some of those who work for this foundation members of the Government and of the National Assembly? Are not some of the activities that this foundation carries out in conflict with the responsibilities of governmental ministries, while many of these same ministries do not have the resources at their disposal that this Foundation manages to raise, probably through the influence of the President's name? Finally, how can public title holders and government officials, be members of civil society at the same time?

From a comparative perspective, we see that civil society in other countries has been carrying out political activities, even before the institutionalisation of multi-

---

[9] Diamond, L, *Developing Democracy, Toward Consolidation* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1999), p. 221.
[10] Araújo, R. C., *Os Sistemas de Governo de Transição Democrática nos P.A.L.O.P.* (Coimbra: Coimbra Editora, 2000), p. 211.

party democracy. The involvement of CSOs in activities of a political nature is not exclusive to Angola. *Solidarity* in communist Poland, received aid from the Polish Catholic Church, and played a very important role in the democratisation process of that country.[11] Chiluba's victory in the first democratic elections in Zambia was due to the support of a labour union.[12] The students' movement in Yugoslavia played a decisive role in Slobodan Milosevic's fall. Various civic organisations played a relevant role in the *Apartheid* transformation process in South Africa.[13]

4. Legitimacy and constitutionality of civil society campaigns against governing parties

A doubt has been raised regarding the legality and constitutionality of CSOs establishing political campaigns against government malpractices (e.g. violations of human rights and freedoms). During electoral periods the same campaigns conducted by political parties do not raise any doubt about their constitutionality and legality. Is it possible to justify this when carried out by CSOs? The answer is 'yes', to the extent that limitations on the freedom of association and individual freedoms are only those established by the Constitution and the Law. In this regard, what constitutional or legal position states that an individual, groups of individuals or civic associations, cannot oppose governmental actions, practices and public policies, if observing Constitutional and legal limitations?

There is no room for doubt in relation to the right to oppose the violation of fundamental rights and freedoms, as well as the right to oppose poor or bad governance (practices and implementation of public policies that violate the Constitution and the law), because democracy can be defined both negatively and positively.[14] The positive definition of democracy points to government as government of the people, by the people, and for the people: while negatively, democracy holds the possibility of the overthrow of government, peacefully through available constitutional and legal means. Democracy can be defined as the 'means or procedure used for the selection and peaceful removal of those governing.'[15] Leaders (those who govern in the widest sense: members of the executive, deputies and judges) can be removed from their positions by revoking their mandate, impeachment, motion of censure, incompatibility of functions, or other mechanisms foreseen constitutionally and legally.

In order to hold rulers accountable in the public sphere, it is necessary that individuals or organisations have access to information which highlights the failure of those governing, violations of citizen rights and freedoms perpetrated by those in power; that individuals or organisations can disseminate this information as well as their interpretation and opinion of it (Art. 19 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights), helping to create public opinion; promote good governance, defined as

---

[11] Linz L., & Stepan A., *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation – Southern Europe, South America, and Post Communist Europe* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1997), pp. 255-292.
[12] Wanjala Nasong´o, S., *Contending Political Paradigms in Africa: Democratization vs. Authoritarianism in Kenya and Zambia*, PhD dissertation (Boston, Massachusetts: North-eastern University, February, 2004).
[13] Wood, E. J., *Forging Democracy from Below, Insurgent Transitions in South Africa and El Salvador* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 169-193.
[14] Canotilho, G., *ibid*, p. 291.
[15] Canotilho, G., *ibid*, p. 291.

being of public interest (Art. 11 of the Media Law). Once again, it is important to remember that according to the Angolan Constitution, legal norms on fundamental rights should be interpreted in harmony with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (LCA Art. 21/2).

Moreover, political campaigns such as public condemnation of practices and public policies which violate the legitimate rights and interests of citizens, serve to make the bearers of public office, civil servants and State agents, more accountable. According to the Constitution, 'the Government is politically accountable before the President and National Assembly' (LCA Art 105 no. 2), and that 'those in public office account in a civil and criminal capacity for their actions and omissions when exercising their functions in terms of the law' (LCA Art. 54, line f). The right to contribute towards the alternation of power is indisputable, to show that those governing are incompetent, during or prior electoral campaigns, and to contribute to the dismissal of those in public office.

All CSOs or individuals should respect the right to a good-name, the honour, respect and reputation of those in public office and members of political parties (LCA Art. 20). However, the right to opposition in a broad sense, incorporating civic and political associations as well as political parties, is a democratic principle defended in the constitution (LCA Art. 2 LCA), and should not be questioned by arbitrary actions or statements by public office holders.

5. Formal Unconstitutionality and Illegality of the NGOs Regulation Bill

The Angolan government does not have competency to regulate freedom of association. However, despite this violation of the Constitution, through Decree nº 84/02 of December 31 (NGO Regulation), the government has regularly used this mechanism.

Under the Constitution (Art 92, nº 1), laws fall under the exclusive competency of the National Assembly. Article 89, line 1, states: 'It is the National Assembly's absolute legislative right to legislate on associations and political parties.' It is therefore unequivocally clear that only by violating Constitutional Law could the government legislate on issues in relation to associations. We are here dealing with 'organic unconstitutionality', given that the government usurped power that, according to the Constitution, it does not have. The government itself should have revoked this law. The Attorney-General's office, the President of the Republic, the Prime-Minister, or even a fifth of the deputies in office, should have requested an opinion on the constitutionality of the NGO Regulation Bill.

Even if the NGO Regulation Bill was not organically unconstitutional (formally unconstitutional), it violates the Law of Associations as this Law does not authorise such regulation. Respecting what is established in article 89, paragraph *i* of the Constitution, the Law of Associations stipulates the following: '[the] objective of the present law is to regulate the right of association' (LA Art. 1). This means that it is up to this Law to regulate issues regarding associations and any alterations or additions should be included in a new law, not by regulatory decree. Moreover, many norms of the NGO Regulation Bill are themselves in direct violation of

norms inscribed in the Constitution and in the Law of Associations, making them unconstitutional and illegal.[16]

6. Governmental efforts to hinder civil society by 'collaboration' with 'co-opted' CSOs, some international organisations and foreign governments.

Due to the clientelistic nature of the Angolan regime, public and private sectors are under tight political control, and therefore CSOs 'not friends with government,' hardly have access to public or private funds, having to heavily rely on external funding from international organisations. In so far as possible, government aims to extend control over these external funds. In recent times, a growing tendency has been noticed whereby many international CSO offer selective support to national partners, based on criteria that have little to do with the value of the work being carried out, but rather based upon the politically acceptable behaviour of national organisations. CSOs viewed as sensitive to government get overlooked in seeking external support, and are named as 'radical' and 'problematic' in comparison to those 'less radical' and 'less problematic', which are treated preferentially and co-opted. Methods of applying government pressure on international organisations include imposition of bureaucratic, administrative and political limitations on the work of these organisations. We are here dealing with government expediency in the unquestionable violation of the freedom of association. It is important to remember that the freedom of association is a human right, not just a right of Angolan citizens. This interpretation is based on the rationale that constitutional and legal norms regarding fundamental rights, upon which the Angolan Constitution is based, should be interpreted in harmony with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (LCA Art 21/2).

From the regime's perspective, good international partners are those that speak from the politically and diplomatically acceptable template, which basically states that the 'government and the President are working hard to improve the situation within the country in spite of the many difficulties faced, such as the prolonged civil war'. Whoever adopts this acceptable discourse is rewarded and enjoys a facilitated relationship with the bureaucratic, administrative and governmental apparatus. Those that cross these limits are subjected to punishment, ranging from a simple warning to increasing bureaucratic and political obstacles relating to their functioning and possible expulsion from Angola, disguised behind the most sophisticated technical and legal argumentation.

Although never assumed and vehemently denied by international CSOs, we have progressively witnessed from a political perspective, this selective support of less 'problematic' national CSOs. The truth of this practice cannot be accepted because the funders of international CSOs working in Angola, and international public opinion, would condemn it and probably reduce financial support given. From the regime's point of view, this camouflaged tactic is quite effective in terms of

---

[16] Articles 4 and 6 violate articles 32 of LCA and 9 of the Law of Associations (principle of autonomy of associations); Art. 16 n.º 1, violates Art. 13 of LA (ability to fulfil rights and obligations); Art. 18, n.º 1, violates Art. 52/1 of LCA; Art. 21.º, n.º 1, violates Art. 9 of LA, as well as arts. 52 n.º 1 and 89 paragraph *i* of LCA (according to which only a law can suspend or limit fundamental rights).

achieving intended objectives of weakening civil society through the old fashioned tactic of co-optation.

It is important to condemn this 'complicity of avoidance' by many international organisations, which in exchange for governmental permission to continue working in Angola, remain silent (or at least do not clearly express themselves) in the face of the countless injustices and human rights violations. As it is necessary to align oneself with the constitutional objective of creating a free, democratic, peaceful, socially just and progressive society, then it is fair to say that if international organisations wish to work in Angola at the price of remaining silent, their work is negative. We do not need crumbs and emergency aid, we need medium and long-term opportunities to fully participate in the political, social and economic system, opportunities to grow within a society that facilitates such development. This society must be an open society where public policies and government actions are debated and critiqued on a daily basis.

Another tendency noticed by international CSOs and their preferred national partners is the increased spread of the notion of union between the diverse national CSOs, arguing in favour of joint initiatives that can eventually have a greater impact on the institutional relationship with the State. Such notion has been promoted and resulted in several initiatives among CSOs, a practice well accepted by government, and which is progressively and imperceptibly assimilating the aforementioned 'government friendly' CSOs, thereby making a whole range of problematic initiatives, acceptable.

This disguised and apparently well intentioned initiative to promote CSO unity, is a great threat to the Angolan democratic constitution. Firstly, the constitution recognises pluralism of expression and of political organisation as one of the foundational values of the Republic (LCA Art. 2), and regards political community as comprised of various individuals and groups of individuals. These in their turn can, by free initiative, join together in coalitions, networks or other forms of solidarity, without loss of identity, without being subject to a unifying leadership. Secondly, civil society gives expression to a wide range of interests, rights and aspirations that are satisfied through political engagement, which has a competitive dimension. Thirdly, pluralism of expression and of political organisation aims to guarantee that various interests, rights and aspirations, even of minority groups, are taken into consideration through public debate, public demonstration, and other democratic means.

Civil society by definition and essence cannot be institutionalised, headquartered under a single leadership: it is above all a free space where various actors participate democratically. The opposite would be nothing more than a monolithic fake to facilitate co-optation, and mitigate pluralism of expression and organisation. Irrespective of what these international organisations and their respective Angolan partners hope for, the equivalent of this homogenised unity of relationship with State institutions, does not exist in the West. Even at a regional level, such a phenomenon is not seen in South Africa or in Mozambique. Networks exist among partners that share certain principles based on work ethic and posture in terms of social policies or areas of operation. We do not see any necessity to format CSOs into a single relational model with State structures. This supposed reinvention of

Angolan civil society is a hegemonic and antidemocratic project, given that civil society is founded on the pluralism of organisation and expression.

In the Angolan context, where democracy in fact does not exist, it is above all necessary to define some principles of identity and action at the level of CSOs and join hands with partners that identify with these same principles within a pluralistic framework. These principles are explicit in the Angolan Constitution, summarised as the rule of law and democracy. Convergence and unity are the result of an identity that is forged through experience and adherence to a principle of solidarity in difference.

The fact that I desire to cooperate with the government in my area of work is perfectly acceptable, but it is necessary to define boundaries to such cooperation. Is it possible that cooperation with government can reach the point of being silent before human rights violations? The Angolan government likes partners that cooperate, but remain silent when faced with human rights violations, and other uncomfortable political issues. For the Angolan government, good civil society is that which is silent in the face of corruption; the enrichment of the political class, their relatives and friends (Angolan or foreigners); bad governance; the violation of human rights; and disrespect for the law and Constitution. In this sense, it is necessary to be selective in the choice of partners and to express doubt concerning hegemonic strategies for CSOs. In open, free and democratic societies, pluralism is untouchable and unquestionable.

7. Challenges facing future CSO action

Today we face what can be considered the second national liberation struggle. The first was against colonial oppression, but what we must free ourselves from today is the oppression that a minority have imposed on the majority, since independence. Today democracy in Angola is superficial, with both the State and society strongly dominated by a regime that uses all mechanisms to perpetuate itself in power. I have earlier referred to the economy as being completely controlled (public and private sectors); to the many internal and external limitations imposed on civil society; to the well known control of public and private media, through which one of the most basic democratic rights continues to be denied, pluralism of expression and access to information. The clearest example of this is Radio Ecclesia, forbidden to broadcast nationally. We have long been waiting for internal and external pressures to help solve the problem, but many years have passed with no pressure materialising, and there is little hope of it appearing at all, especially from the international community.

The strategy to be embraced by CSOs engaged in building a true liberal democracy in Angola must follow three important courses of action. The first relates to how each CSO positions itself and defines the reach of its actions, needing to clearly define principles, such as the limits of cooperation with government, knowing how far it can cooperate, so that cooperation does not become co-optation. Every engagement between national or international partners should be based on an unwavering respect for the principles of orientation, direction and action. Then we can discuss cooperation between CSOs, at a national or regional level. Networking is crucial for CSOs, but not at any cost.

The second is related to the need for national CSOs to adopt a coherent position between principles and programmatic lines of action, which they define for themselves, and which enables them to criticise national or international organisations which contradict and violate democratic principles and the human rights we wish to defend.

Thirdly, we should also demand fair and equal treatment in relation to donors and partners of international NGOs. Apart from the previously discussed conditions imposed by government and respected by some international CSOs in the selection of national partners, other levels of discrimination exist, namely at the level of funding. International CSOs operating in Angola receive 2-4 million dollars of funding, yet only make extremely small amounts available to local partners for them to develop small projects, as a type of sub-contractor. As a result, national CSOs do not gain the necessary experience to grow or develop competencies. In the same vein, we all know that external consultants and specialists are paid five to six times more than nationals, while many of the national specialists are the very ones that supply the main inputs and in depth local knowledge.

International partners usually highlight a lack of competence as a justification for not granting more funds and responsibility to national organisations. They also argue implicitly (and at times explicitly), that a large number of national partners are involved in corruption, diverting part of the funding. These arguments are abusive generalisations, since there are many serious and competent people working in Angolan CSOs and, also, very competent nationals that do not accept to work in Angolan CSO since the wages offered are not competitive, especially when compared with those of the international organisations. Paradoxically, international organisations appeal for volunteerism, while their expatriate staff, or even some of their Angolan staff, receive some of the most competitive wages in the market. Above all, we must dismantle this argument and clearly state that we will not accept the disrespectful position where several international partners want to place us.

Cooperation between national and international organisations should be one of authentic partnership, not of subordination. Angolan organisations must win and demand the respect that is due to them. While competence is gained through working and learning in situations of equality with international partners, we must realize that the shortage of available resources for national NGOs has led to added difficulties in recruiting qualified national staff, since national NGOs have to train their own personnel that, once qualified, become the object of more attractive proposals on behalf of international NGOs, against whom national organisations are not able to compete.

Conclusion

The Angolan legal system unequivocally establishes the parameters for civil society activity. This is comprised of individuals, formal or informal groups, associations independent from the State, representing rights and interests, and which are the bearers of constitutionally and legally guaranteed rights and freedoms. Limitations to civil society activities are those established by the Constitution and the Law of Associations. The government does not have the right to restrict or alter

this framework through ordinary regulations (governmental regulatory decrees), for this legislative arena is exclusive to the National Assembly. In these terms, the existing 'NGO Regulation Bill' created by the government, suffers from organic unconstitutionality.

While civil society may be involved in politics, it may not participate in elections, but may seek to influence the decision making process, the executive and legislative powers. It can even campaign against parties or governments, ensuring that it observes the right to a good-name and reputation of those in public office, and members of political parties. It is free to do that which the law does not prohibit. It is the Law that establishes the parameters, not a political party, parliamentary majority or executive, in an isolated and fraudulent manner.

The attempt to institutionalize representation of civil society through the ('imposed') leadership of a group of individuals (currently in use in Angola, through the patronage of international organisations, multinationals and Western embassies) constitutes an attack on the Angolan democratic constitutional order, that presupposes pluralism of expression, pluralism of political organisation, and autonomy of civil society in relation to the State, and social and economic powers.

International NGOs should rethink the way in which they reproduce the old model of 'Third World' dependency. The international NGOs industry should not be the new face of a selfish and paternalistic West, pretending to support the democratisation of the 'Third World '.

National NGOs that turn a blind eye to serious violations of human rights, bad-governance and corruption, should cease pretending that they support democratisation. They have the option to supporting the Government unconditionally, but should accept that this option is one of complicity, based on a calculation in relation to their own survival, at the expense of human rights and the consolidation of democracy.

CIVIL SOCIETY IN ANGOLA: FICTION OR AGENT OF CHANGE?

Fernando Pacheco
Action for Rural Development and Environment, ADRA-Angola

Introduction

When speaking about civil society in Angola we usually encounter two view points. The first demonstrates its weaknesses or calls into question its existence, without relating this to the specific historical and cultural context, and is almost always transmitted by non-African authors. The renowned Christine Messiant, when reviewing the transition process to multi-party democracy, exemplifies this, as her discourse deals with formal aspects of the process and ignores the path that Angolan citizens are taking in constructing their citizenship, paths that have nothing to do with the purposes of the dominant political and economic elites, nor with the catastrophic premonitions of many Western analysts.[1]

Ulrich Schiefer goes further and affirms that in conditions such as those of Angola, the idea of civil society is generally 'fictitious', because 'real' civil society would consist of ethnically structured agrarian societies, marginalized or excluded groups, unable to connect with social organisations of a more complex nature.[2] Such an argument indicates a disturbing lack of understanding of recent dynamics in Angola, namely the important and substantial migratory movements over the last few years towards the main cities, that profoundly altered the population distribution from the colonial era, not to mention the overly simplified Western analyses that divided Africa into conceptual dichotomies such as 'rural' and 'urban' societies.

Analysts such as Michel Cahen, understand that instead of speaking about civil society, one should speak about social movements in African societies, something not substantially different from the above mentioned authors'

---

[1] Messiant, C., 2007, 'Transição para o Multipartidarismo sem Transição para a Democracia', in Nuno Vidal & Justino Pinto de Andrade (eds.), *O Processo de Transição para o Multipartidarismo em Angola* (Luanda and Lisbon: Firmamento, 2nd edition).

[2] Schiefer, U, 2006, 'Comments on the Case Studies and Main Challenges – Debate; a few short Remarks', in *The Role of External Development Actors in Post – Conflict Scenarios*, Office nº 258 the Centre for Social Studies of the Faculty of Economy of the University of Coimbra.

arguments.[3] What stands out in these varying analyses is that they use concepts and theories based on Western structures and reveal a weakness in being unable to adaptor be flexible to the African reality. An analysis of democracy, for instance, cannot be limited to its formal or institutional aspects, to political parties or the State, as Messiant does. It must also include actions initiated by citizens in their relationship to existing government structures through what is designated as 'civil society'. In the case of Angola, the State, political parties and CSOs represent the corners of the triangle where one should analyse processes of democratisation, its accomplishments, inadequacies and failures.

The second perspective, which can be referred to as 'endogenous', emphasises the limited strengths and potential of Angolan civil society for political, economic and social change, and for the establishment of a public arena of jurisdiction independent of the State. This is what I intend to demonstrate in this chapter, in line with that advocated by the Ghanaian Gyimah Boadi, the Mozambican José Negrão, the Angolan Cesaltina Abreu, and, more recently, the Brazilian Idaci Ferreira. I also intend to outline the constraints inhibiting development of such potential.

1. The strong socialist State, democratisation process and emergence of CSOs

At independence, the need for a strong national State was recognised, capable of integrating the socio-cultural diversities of Angola into a national unity, leading economic and social reconstruction, and eliminating various injustices inherited from colonialism. However, when it came to fulfilling these promises, things were very different. The monolithic and sectarian character of the socialist regime, and the desire to control the independent social forces betrayed such objectives. Instead it favoured incompetence and bureaucracy, excluding or limiting the participation of several segments of society, such as, Church members, entrepreneurs, those who had served the colonial regime, members of other liberation movements, or past dissidents from the MPLA itself. It resulted in the restriction of citizens' rights that created enormous social divisions and, to a certain degree, led to the civil war. The emergent regime ended up developing a strong State at the cost of an obliterated society, where citizens had not the right to participate freely within their own society.

For several reasons throughout the 1980s, the Angolan State became less efficient and effective with regard to public service provision. With the start of the transition process towards a multi-party system in the early 1990s, an opportunity arose for CSOs, which emerged in force and gained enormous support within the decade, at a time when State institutions were extremely fragile and unable to fulfil the most elementary public service. In many circumstances, local administrations of the State relied on NGOs to carry out these functions.

Conscious of civil society's growing importance within the country, towards the end of the 1990s government decided to encourage and support the emergence and consolidation of CSOs that functioned as 'chains of transmission' of its policies and strategies, thereby seeking to undermine, influence and co-opt the genuine civil society movement. Since these pro-governmental CSOs were not autonomous,

---

[3] Conversation with Michel Cahen, Luanda, August 2004.

they were usually limited to the distribution of free goods to the populace, contributing to a culture of irresponsibility, paternalism and promotion of clientelism, communicating messages that were favourable to the ruling party, and at times organising civil society debates on issues of interest to government.

This relationship between the party in power, government and some CSOs, was denounced by several analysts and public media. However, at a social level, it represented a strategy that the MPLA had cunningly implemented through culture and sport, co-opting popular musicians and capitalising on national football and basketball victories.

Consequently, at the end of the 1990s and at the beginning of the new century, the relationship between the 'more genuine' CSOs and the Government took on a different form, in that each began to view the other not as a partner (since they held different opinions concerning complex reconstruction, reconciliation, democratisation and development tasks) but as opponents and, at times, as enemies. This was true for civil servants and holders of public offices, that considered themselves as 'owners of the State', as for certain NGOs that believed civil society and those militantly opposed to the Government and the State were the only ethical ones. This created extreme situations in no way beneficial for either party involved.

2. The socio-economic and socio-political contribution of CSOs

From its emergence, to at least the end of the war in 2002, Angolan civil society experienced significant growth and social dynamism. Several factors contributed to this: pluralism and freedom of association being constitutionally approved; the strong increase of humanitarian aid as a direct consequence of the war; citizens' movement for peace and the defence of human rights; the retraction of the State in public services and its increasing inability to control social forces; the action of the international community, through the United Nations' and multilateral agencies, international NGOs and some donors with greater involvement in Angola; as well as resources which helped to create a favourable political atmosphere for the growth of civil society and to stimulate a culture respecting human rights.

Whether we like it or not, NGOs deserve to be commended for their positive influence on Angolan civil society. Since the beginning of the 1990s they have been the most dynamic segment of civil society. Unfortunately, perception of NGOs from many sectors of society has been negative, mostly fed by an increasingly unsupportive media and some influential intellectuals, while forgetting the challenges they themselves faced in support of citizenship, against social exclusion, inequality and oppression. Such sectors were of the opinion that NGOs squandered public funds, on themselves, at the expense of the needy populace. Schiefer and like-minded analysts, state that African CSOs mostly focus on projects sponsored by the international community, existing to sustain the salaries of organisational members.[4] This generalisation clouds reality, is simplistic and abusive.

Community organisations functioned almost all over the country, sustained by volunteers, with resources originating from within their own communities. In his study on the role of community associations in the promotion of citizenship and

---

[4] Schiefer, U, *ibid*.''

in the construction of democracy in the community of Dombe Grande (Benguela), Idaci Ferreira exhaustively describes the experiences of community groups that work as volunteers, contributing with their own efforts and resources to achieve their objectives. The author concludes that in spite of a need for consolidation, the groups were promoting participative dynamics, stimulating new forms of dialogue, influencing the local administration, as well as solving their problems and thus gaining influence. In spite of their action being local, they seemed to possess a great potential to improve the quality of democracy and of citizenship in Angola.[5]

Based on my own field experience, I can highlight various other organisations at both a central and provincial level, where the work of most or all of their members was based on voluntary action, in defence of causes such as the environment, the fight against AIDS, human rights, civic education, seeking to influence politics and public practices (e.g. *Juventude Ecológica* — Ecological Youth, FOJASIDA – Youth Forum for the Support of Health and Prevention of AIDS, SOS Habitat, Mosaiko Cultural Centre, OPSA – Political and Social Observatory of Angola, and ADRA – Action for Rural Development and Environment). Local community organisations from several locations within the country were playing an important role, be it economically (e.g. access to credit or commercialisation of cattle), socially (access to, and supply of, basic social services), or institutionally (participation in councils for reconciliation and forums with the State administration). In some municipal districts, the associations joined independent unions, despite government pressure that they be subordinated to UNACA – Agricultural Confederation of Associations and Cooperatives (e.g. the cases of Cubal and Cáala).

The growth of community based organisations became evident when a community took judicial action against the government for hindering it, by setting aside land for public investment (as occurred in Huambo province), or when a consortium of associations demanded participation in the technical evaluation of the NGOs that supported them, something that became more frequent.

These changes were the result of local dynamics and the help offered by some NGOs, whose work was to provide services, promote rights (of various types), strengthen skills, facilitate access to information, create lobby groups and provide sponsorship. Using participative methodologies, they established horizontal relationships with community organisations and contributed to their autonomy and self-esteem. In a country where relationships between 'centre' and 'periphery' were traditionally authoritarian, these changes were extremely relevant. Furthermore, the political legitimacy and influence of some NGOs originated in their relationship with community organisations.

The abovementioned critical comments regarding NGOs, should be reviewed recalling that, besides crucial humanitarian action carried out during the worst phases of the armed conflict in Angola, helping to save millions of people from death, hunger and disease, NGOs continued to provide extremely important public services after the war, from health to education, sanitation, and food security, among others.

---

[5] Ferreira, I., 2007, *The Role of Community Association in Promoting Citizenship and Building Democracy: Exploring the Case of NRA (Núcleo Representativo de Associações — Representative Centre of Associations) and Associations in Dombe Grande Comune – Angola*; Masters Dissertation thesis, Sussex University.

One must take into account the contribution of civil society in general, and of NGOs in particular, for the performance of the ongoing democratisation process at various levels. The first concerns the contribution towards achieving peace and progressive change in the decision making process, breaking the bipolarisation of the two biggest parties, UNITA and MPLA, that characterised the Angolan political scene since 1975. A second concerns the theoretical and intellectual development of ideas in relation to democracy, and development of an understanding of citizenship (in a fundamental sense), which was more advanced than that of political parties. Thirdly, what stands out is the decisive role in the change brought about in Angola in the promotion and defence of human rights and citizenship, the defence of women's rights and gender balance, the construction of a democratic culture, greater quality of public space, the civic education of citizens, and its influence on some public policies in such diverse domains as poverty, land, the media, decentralisation and education. Finally, we need to mention the promotion of ideas such as participation and pluralism, constructing and strengthening a civic sense within groups and organisations, the promotion of values such as reconciliation, tolerance, and building a consensus on the great challenges facing the nation.[6]

Civil society efforts and its contributions are much more important when they occur in a context with several constraints, such as within the prevailing political culture of authoritarianism, clientelism, political dependence of the business community, and excessive weight of the informal sector in the economy.[7]

3. Citizenship and participation vs difficulties in separating civic and political space

In my view, one cannot, analyse the issue of civil society in Angola without relating it to citizenship. This need becomes more relevant given that the struggle for citizenship in our country has always taken place in parallel with the struggle for independence (anti-colonial) and for peace (end of the civil war). According to José Bengoa, when citizens are not conscious of their rights and duties, it is not possible to construct a participative and substantive democracy, one based on the growth of citizens' freedom, to respect for cultural differences within society, to the articulation of values such as justice, solidarity, recognition, and self-determination, and lastly, to a democracy in which all citizens are free to participate.[8]

As a result of the weakening of public institutions and discrediting of political parties, there seems to be a growing need in Angola, for significant groups of citizens to participate in resolving their problems in public life, and in defining public policy. Such need is more significant when it occurs at a local level, in communities, communes and municipal districts, because it is at the local level that we find institutions which most citizens are more readily able to identify with, socially, economically and culturally.[9]

---

[6] Robinson, M. & Friedman, S., 2005, 'Civil society, democratization and foreign aid in Africa' in *IDS Discussion Paper* 383.

[7] Messiant, C., *ibid* .

[8] Bengoa, José, 1987, 'L´education pour les mouvements sociaux', in *Revista Proposiciones*, nº 15, Santiago of Chile.

[9] Pacheco, F., & Santos, G., 1999, 'Desenvolvimento Local e Ambiente: a experiência da ADRA e o caso do município dos Gambos', in *ONGs dos Países de Língua Oficial Portuguesa na luta contra a Pobreza pelo Bem-estar e a Cidadania* (Lisboa: ACEP).

Partly as a result of the work and influence of CSOs within communities, the State is trying to restructure itself at a local level, based on new legislation concerning the organisation of Local State Administrations. This legislation contains innovative elements, such as the local administration's partial management of the budget and investments, as well as citizen participation within public consultation mechanisms for communal and municipal districts, through local CSOs. However, the Local State Administrations are still structurally fragile, without authority to make decisions, and possessing limited capacity for service provision to citizens. These facts, allied with the weak development of the local economy, partially explain the current levels of poverty and weak participation of citizens in these processes.

In this context, for instance, CSOs have helped to stimulate and promote the creation of local fora, where communities and their organisations interact with public institutions. These opportunities are in line with what some Anglo-Saxon literature refers to as 'new democratic spaces',[10] in other words, areas of participation and opportunities for citizens to deliberate about issues of common interest, that can greatly satisfy social and economic needs. Since political discussion in Angola is restricted to spaces of 'formal democracy', with little connection to the population, CSOs carry out an important political and democratic function when providing an independent public sphere to citizens, beyond State control, of association and participation, where they can freely voice their opinions and articulate their priorities.[11]

In executing their civic and political roles, it is natural that CSOs are confronted, sooner or later, with institutional political power. Relationships between State and civil society in Angola have been influenced by services provided during the war, that characterised the activity of many organisations. Many holding positions of authority still believe that an NGO must limit itself to partnership with Government. Based on this view, there arose within government an absurd idea that NGOs, which are called to help solve citizens' problems, should not contribute to the definition of public policies, to the solution of problems, nor the defence of citizens' rights, because they would be getting involved in politics, as if the Constitutional Law refused citizens the right to be involved in politics.

This understanding of the role of CSOs led to the repressive and authoritarian position taken by government institutions in July 2007, when a few national and international NGOs were threatened with being rendered illegal, based upon the assertion that they were interfering with politics and were overstepping the boundaries of their social responsibilities. Such attitudes, stemming from Government are not democratic, and were opposed by nearly all of society. There are citizens who are not involved in party politics, but nevertheless want to and are entitled to participate in public life. In such cases, CSOs and civic space are a legitimate and viable alternative.

---

[10]Robinson, M. & Friedman, S., *ibid*.

[11] Roque, S. & Shankland, A., 2006, 'Participation, Mutation and Political Transition; New Democratic Spaces in Peri-Urban Angola' in A. Cornwall & S. Schattan Coelho (eds), *Spaces for change?* (London: Zed Books).

4. CSOs' potential for change and their limitations

Beyond the structural and situational constraints of the political system, its *modus operandi* and characteristics, CSOs potential for change is still conditioned by limitations that exist within CSOs themselves, and which must first of all be overcome by their own organisations in terms of organisational practices and strategies for action.

Firstly, CSOs should introspectively look at themselves and note that many suffer from the same inadequacies and addictions that State institutions are accused of, such as lack of internal democracy, authoritarianism, lack of freedom to question leadership, absence of transparency and responsibility, as well as corruption.

Secondly, CSOs should reflect on their role in society and develop a new vision for development. They should touch base more with the communities with whom they work to promote inclusive discussion and reflection, so as to better define their own strategy and direction in a sustainable manner. For example, the 'Forum for the Community Development of Catumbela' has made it its goal to contribute towards the development of Catumbela. However, within the Forum, it has never reflected on what 'development' in the context of Catumbela means, neither has it challenged the community to reflect on the same issue. The creation of the Catumbela industrial area for instance, can look extremely attractive in terms of job creation, but can also render the production of corn and beans by many family producers unfeasible, and thereby alter the community's socio-economic balance. Extensive processes of reflection and action should be put in place on these issues, for them to effectively contribute to the communities' development.

Thirdly, I highlight the need to maintain plurality within civil society, refusing homogenisation of representation. A major weaknesses of Angolan CSOs is a demonstrated inability in networking and adopting common positions. The point highlights the lack of a representative body, able to dialogue, negotiate, influence, and interact with Government or international agencies. However, we need to ask ourselves who, after all, stands to gain from homogenisation through vehicles like the so-called 'platforms'? The answer cannot be singular, based on advantages that representative mechanisms offer, but it seems clear to me that Government and the aforementioned agencies greatly value the advantage they gain having only one spokesperson, expressing a particular opinion. Moreover, a large national platform demands a level of organisational skill and ability to gain the trust of the overwhelming majority of CSOs, in order to make collective representative action possible: conditions that in the Angolan context, do not exist.

Apart from normal differences of opinion, provincial organisations demonstrate a great lack of trust in relation to representative mechanisms and structures for their positions, fearing domination by organisations from Luanda. In reality, the manner in which FONGA, the Forum of Angolan NGOs, was formed and conducts its affairs, demonstrates a tendency towards a concentration and centralisation of power in Luanda. Whenever FONGA intends to assume positions on political and social matters, the fact that it does not have the legitimacy to operate on behalf of all Angolan civil society, is not taken into account.

On the other hand, one must bear in mind that one of the greatest threats to the performance of civil society is what can be termed an 'avant-garde movement',

often highlighted as being the exclusive evil of Marxist-Leninist parties, but which ends up being a general organisational temptation, especially in environments like Angola, where inequalities are so abundant, overwhelming and diverse. Even people in favour of effective democratisation are frequently tempted to assume leadership positions on certain issues without the required legitimacy, without taking into account other CSOs views that they intend to represent, and fail to analyse the consequences of such actions for the remaining CSOs, and even less within the communities themselves.

One of civil society's most significant features is the absence of avant-garde leaders that eloquently speak on behalf of citizens. Contemporary history is full of sad and even dramatic examples of what organisational vanguards and enlightened leaders defended, and still defend, on whom everything depended, and to whom everyone is supposed to owe everything. No one in civil society can hope to represent all of society, but can only represent small segments of it. We should all be able to autonomously demand that citizens' rights consecrated in Constitutional Law be guaranteed and respected, and in so doing, we will already be greatly contributing towards the democratisation of our society.

5. The new model of economic and political development and its inadequacies

Profiting from the favourable international economic climate, especially the increase in oil prices, the Government began to implement a strategy of economic development, whose general direction can be found in a document proposed by the MPLA to Angolan society on June 20, 2007, entitled the National Consensus Agenda. This document proposed a development model based on the creation of fixed capital (infrastructures), financial capital (banks and insurance as a first phase, capital markets as a second phase), human capital (scientific and technological), and social capital (a strong civil society derived from economic growth, from political stability and macroeconomics). This developmental approach has several weaknesses and can be critiqued from a number of angles, apart from raising serious doubts in relation to its feasibility in terms of achieving its objectives.

Firstly, the model of accelerated growth and modernisation of the economy, with a strong emphasis on infrastructures, was precisely the model followed by several African countries in the early years of independence and resulted in a myriad of failures. In general, these experiences revealed that the *rentiére* logic adopted by the post-colonial State, contradicted and subordinated the logic of capitalist or socialist production, and failed to produce the expected results in terms of economic development. Currently, in the context of liberalisation, the interference of the State in economic administration would be justifiable in this first period of transition, to create a physical and human capital base, and regulate the market. However, what effectively persists is the adaptation and survival of the *rentiére* logic within a multi-party system, with personal use of public property by governing elites and their cronies. 'Clientelistic' and patrimonial practices did not disappear with the simple advent of the market economy and multi-party system.[12]

---

[12] See Chabal, P., & Vidal, N., 2007, *Angola, the weight of history* (London: Hurst).

Taking a different approach to development would require significant transformation of the present system and *rentiére* logic (based on growing oil profits) to a system based on a logic of productivity. But that is not what is happening. To facilitate ongoing clientelistic processes, new agricultural policies are granting vast tracts of productive lands to people closely associated with governmental elites, without taking merit criteria and competence for its appropriate use into account. The development model we are following is based on the primacy of economic growth over democracy and human rights. From the perspective of MPLA leaders at the highest level, as long as GDP continues its upward trend, it is of no importance that 'growth' comes through 'islands' (as taking place with the condominiums, shopping centres and agriculture-industrial projects like 'Aldeia Nova'), at the expense of equality and social justice.

Secondly, rehabilitation and construction of infrastructure raise serious concerns. Besides its extraordinary high costs, criticisms were raised that have been validated over time, regarding the quality and durability of these enterprises, and the overwhelming presence of foreign companies and workers in the process, which push Angolan workers to one side, thereby missing an opportunity to reduce unemployment and train national technicians. Similarly, critics point to the deterioration of the State education system at every level, contributing to the lack of training of Angolan staff in sufficient numbers to meet the needs arising from economic growth and development within the country. Investment in fixed capital is therefore being achieved without the due parallel investment in human capital.

Thirdly, we have the theme of decentralisation. In spite of progress regarding legislation, the lack of authority at the municipal level to decide issues of conception, negotiation, recruitment, monitoring and evaluation of projects is concerning, and does little to promote accountability or the development of local institutions that have proven to be weak in their functioning and their ability to provide public services. This weakness demonstrated by local authorities hinders CSOs developing their projects there, adding to difficulties already faced in affirming and stimulating citizens' participation in public life. Similarly, the local business community faces countless difficulties in growing and developing away from the centres of power and State administration, insufficiently free to function as a vehicle of alternative development to oil in the provinces, by promoting an increase in agricultural and industrial production.

In short, the 'development' model proposed, presents several deficiencies and imbalances, a concern with modernisation (in which infrastructure assume first place) takes precedence over all other dimensions. The Angolan economy continues to marginalise most of its citizens, deprived of the benefits afforded to clientele, devastated by high levels of unemployment and low-paid unskilled labour, being left with no alternative but the informal sector.

Unlike the abovementioned, a model of sustainable development should combine modernisation with civic, political, economic, social and cultural rights, and balance greater participation with social mobility, respect for the diversity of identities, cultural values and environment.[13] In a context where those in power are in agreement with clientelism that promotes corruption, it is of the utmost importance to

---

[13] Bengoa, J., *ibid*.

promote greater social justice, finding means to distribute national income better, in order to ensure social peace.

In many respects, the government's 'development model' seems to reflect an attempt to return to pre-independence, to return to 1973, which was the best year for the Angolan economy. No matter how urgent the need to rehabilitate infrastructure and to put services to work, reconstruction cannot mean restoring things to how they were, for two fundamental reasons: firstly, because in the history of societies it is not possible to turn back and recreate the conditions of the past and, secondly, because, contrary to what many assert, we in fact, never had a 'model country' on an economic, social or political level in the first place. The colonial era was always characterised by serious socio-economic injustice and restriction of rights. The post-independence regime progressively abandoned promised socio-economic rights and reinforced centralism, monolithism, authoritarianism, a top-down approach, a lack of transparency and accountability, with serious difficulties in promoting popular participation, among several other negative aspects.[14]

From a political perspective, the model now proposed (Western-type democracy) also did not take into account the reality and needs of the country. The transition process arrived in Angola with the so-called third wave of democratisation that began to impact several African countries in the late 1980s. Its arrival translated itself into a multi-party system and a market economy in the early 1990s, promising to solve two main problems: war and underdevelopment. It was a 'promise' that required the adoption of a liberal Western political-economic system, at a time when this model had already proven to be extremely problematic in other continents, demonstrating a lack of representation and participation.[15] If it was like this in other places, where such a system benefited from a history of endogenous construction of the societies that adopted and developed it, how much more careful should one be in transposing and adapting it to the realities of Africa.

Such a careful adaptation in Africa however, did not take place, and Angola was not the exception where it was necessary to take into account its socio-cultural environment, and its specific needs. These included the need to construct the sense of a nation (still fragile), the need for citizens to participate effectively in national political life through means other than political parties, the need to represent cultural or regional diversity, or even the possibility of taking advantage of experiences of community administration in rural and peri-urban areas. In other words, there was no attempt made to 'Angolanise' democracy. [16]

Traditional methods of individuals' participation within their communities were not taken into account. Had these methods been taken advantage of, or at least some of their mechanisms adopted, they would have facilitated the adaptation

---

[14] Conceição Neto, M. da, 2003, 'Reconstrução Nacional: Desafios e Perspectivas', in *O cidadão e a política*, II Semana Social Nacional da CEAST- Conferência Episcopal de Angola e S. Tomé e Centro Cultural Mosaiko (Luanda 25-29 November 2003).

[15] Sousa Santos, B., 2002, *Democratizar a Democracia: Os Caminhos da Democracia Participativa* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira).

[16] Lopes, C., 2005, 'Democratizar África ou africanizar a democracia?', in jornal *Público*, Lisboa September 11, 1994; Pacheco, Fernando, 'Angola: Construindo Cidadania num País em Reconstrução, a experiência da ADRA', in *V Colóquio Internacional sobre Paulo Freire*, (Pernambuco-Recife: Centro Paulo Freire de Estudos e Pesquisas).

and support of a new model, of something rooted in the communities' tradition, facilitating and stimulating the citizens' participation in public life through new institutions and democratic procedures. An example of these traditional methods is the *Onjango*, a very common institution in Angolan rural areas, and of fundamental importance in the administration of community life, in the exercise of leadership, in the resolution of conflict, and in the transmission of values to youth.[17] With the introduction of some corrective factors, such as a better balance of age and gender, this and other traditional methods of administering community life could improve and increase the level of democratic participation.

Another important consideration in adapting the democratic model to African and Angolan realities, would have been the possibility to begin the electoral process at local level. That would have had visible advantages, such as a larger share of political-administrative power between the central and local levels, greater involvement by citizens in public politics, a better approach to these policies and expansion of central power to the reality of the communities' life. General elections could come in a second phase, thus ensuring wider participation and articulation of local and national realities.

Conclusion

The contribution of Angolan CSOs to the democratisation process is praiseworthy, as it has taken place in a context of much adversity, and within a relatively short period of time. However, given the complexity of Angola, the possibility for civil society to provoke lasting or structural change is limited.

True change in society should start at the level of each individual's behaviour and be transposed to society as a whole. In the complexity of Angola, this means the healing of traumas and complexes provoked by colonialism, racism, regionalism, social exclusion, war, dependence, authoritarianism, and repression, apart from the need to change the clientelistic and neo-patrimonial mentality and behaviour of each individual. In order for change to take place, the majority of the population have to be profoundly aware of their need and be committed to change.

At the central level, within political, administrative and party structures, change is difficult, once the *rentiére* logic seeks to reproduce itself within its macro dimension, impeding transformation of the system. In agreement with Chabal, formal regime changes cannot, in general, be translated into systematic political reforms. With few exceptions, the one that prevails is the continuation of neo-patrimonial policies (or *rentiére*), incompatible with sustainable development.[18] The confusion between party structures and State administration remains. It was shocking to observe the way in which the public media was manipulated by the MPLA during the electoral campaign of August 2008, assuming a clear posture of propaganda. All over Angola, a significant number of civil servants did nothing in August 2008 except work for the MPLA's campaign. The Public Treasury should demand payment from the MPLA for at least part of the expenses incurred, as a result of

---

[17] *Onjango* is a word in the Umbundu language, but in other Angolan languages one finds designations for the same type of institution: as mbanza (Kimbundu or Kicongo), cota or tchota (in Tchokwe).
[18] Chabal, P., 2007, 'Introdução', in Vidal N., & de Andrade J. P., (eds.), *ibid*.

presidential campaign trips made during the month of August, that served the party strategy for an overwhelming victory at the polls.

Faced with this, it is crucial for civil society to organise itself to monitor public policies in coming years. CSOs should be impartial concerning the political scene, develop a social commitment with those excluded and discriminated against, fight for social justice and be independently positioned in relation to the State. These organisations will play an important role in taking the democratic debate into non-formal spaces, so important in our social fabric and in the development of new social relationships, while attempting to create room for dialogue among themselves, as well as strengthening those spaces that already exist.

In the short and medium-term, the strategy for change should focus at the local level, that of small communities, because citizens are more open to the need for and possibility of creating citizenship spaces, autonomy and power. In spite of the fact that these spaces are relatively limited in their dimension and reach when compared to a national level, they represent enormous victories in the lives of those that create them. The opportunity offered by the decentralisation process, if taken advantage of, will favour this type of local transformation, through increased institutional interaction between CSOs and public institutions, stimulating greater participation. This process will gradually begin through new democratic spaces, consultation forums and councils to voice public opinion, that have begun to emerge throughout the provinces, and whose development should be stimulated, supported and strengthened. Local elections could serve as a pivotal moment to initiate change in how politics is practiced in Angola.

CIVIL SOCIETY, POLITICS AND POVERTY ERADICATION IN ANGOLA: TWO CONTRASTING PERSPECTIVES

Sérgio Calundungo
Action for Rural Development and Environment, ADRA-Angola

Introduction

In spite of increased revenues from oil and diamonds, human development indicators remain extremely low in Angola, which occupies 162nd place in the United Nations index. About 70% of the population live on less than $2 per day, survive in abject poverty, with limited access to basic sanitation, potable water, education and medical assistance, and experience exceptionally high infant mortality rates.[1]

Angola was one of 191 countries that embraced the *Millennium Development Goals* seeking to reduce, among other things, poverty and hunger by 50% by the year 2015. The first two national Millennium Development Goals reports of 2003 and 2005 concluded however that if the current trend continued, the country would fail to reach the set targets. According to these reports, some of the main reasons for this lack of progress include the poor involvement of the non-governmental sector in decision making, the strong regional disparity in infra-structure, and inadequate supply of social services with acceptable quality.[2]

This chapter examines the discussion on the contribution of CSOs in the fight against poverty, and their relationship with State institutions in finding means to combat this national scandal affecting the majority of the population.

Ever since the 1990s, CSOs have become key players in the fight against poverty, through actions in the field of emergency aid and solutions offered in the face of socio-economic challenges, both medium and long-term.

---

[1] See the Human Development Report of 2007, *Relatório de Desenvolvimento Humano 2007/2008, Combater as alterações climáticas: Solidariedade humana num mundo dividido* (New York: PNUD), p. 234; also the 2006 report, *Water beyond drought: power, poverty and the world-wide water crisis*. (New York: UNDP, 2006).

[2] See *Objectivos de Desenvolvimento do Milénio, relatório de progresso 2005 (Millennium Development Goals, progress report for 2005)* (Luanda: Angolan Government and UNDP, 2005).

A preliminary overview of civil society highlights two principal and distinct approaches concerning analysis and strategies in combating poverty: one focuses on symptoms, the other on causes. Instruments used to fight poverty are conditioned by these different perspectives, not only in terms of social projects conceived, but also the kind of relationship required with State Institutions.

The relationship between CSOs and State power structures has been complicated, confusing and characterised by conflict over the boundaries of CSO engagement. The government attempted to place restrictions on what it considered as civil society's area of jurisdiction, distinct and separate from that of politics. The debate spread throughout CSOs and continues between those with a broad political analysis on poverty, who argue that there are important structural-political causes that need to be addressed to solve the current situation of poverty in Angola; and those with a pragmatic short-term vision which ignore the causes, but concentrates essentially on the symptoms of poverty, by providing emergency aid in situations of dire need.

A question arises from these two approaches related to what type of relationship with the State one promotes. For those taking a political analysis approach, the relationship with State institutions must be informed by an uncompromising defense of human rights, not allowing any partnership with government to circumscribe their action. Whenever a human rights violation takes place, there must be an uncompromising critical response from these organisations, and such violations determine the limit of co-operation with State institutions. On the other hand, for those that support short-term solutions and fight the symptoms of poverty, co-operation (collaboration) cannot impose conditions: it must first seek to persuade and strengthen State institutions through partnership and progressive reform of governmental structures from within.

Far from trying to appear restrictive when I assert that two perspectives exist in the analysis of poverty, strategies adopted to combat it, and the type of relationship maintained with State institutions, I am merely seeking to compare two differing perspectives in an insightful manner, through a focus on causes and symptoms. This chapter begins with a short overview of the history of civil society in Angola and of its relationship with State structures (section 1), then analyses this relationship with the State from two perspectives (section 2 and 3). This is followed by an examination of the position taken by international organisations regarding this discussion (section 4). Finally, the chapter ends with a reflection on the limits of the current model of State development in contrast to a model based on civil society participation (section 5).

1. Brief contextualisation

The problem of poverty began much earlier than independence. Social, economic and political injustice, with the denial of innumerable rights, freedoms and guarantees, are the inheritance of the colonial past. In the 1960s and 70s, development theories were practically unanimous in affirming that the principal causes of poverty lay within colonial political, administrative and economic structures. The analysis of poverty was essentially political in nature, with a strong ideological penchant which characterised that period, namely the Cold War.

Independence pointed to the need for profound socio-economic transformation and an equally profound change in the power structures inherited from colonialism. The officially accepted prototype for the construction of a socialist State in several African countries placed the emphasis on social issues and, based on this, ambitious projects in the areas of education, health, housing, social security, and others, were put into practice. By then, debate concerning civil society was insignificant in comparison with the strength that it would have in the 1990s, when the Eastern block collapsed and political transitions began. In the 1970s, whether from the Eastern or Western block, one did not question the leading, dominant and almost autonomous role of the State concerning socio-economic policies and development strategies (with almost absolute power in so-called socialist models).

After independence, Angola chose the path of socialism and the State grew enormously, crushing any civil society group independent of the ruling political power, that could pose a political threat. Mass party organisations had to conform, were evidently controlled by the Party and were strongly political.[3] The State crushed and suffocated any attempt at intervention by civil society.

With the demise of the one-party socialist regime and the transition to democracy, various CSOs emerged, both national and international. The influx of external funds for projects was significant and caused a *boom* of CSOs throughout the country. With the resurgence of the armed conflict after the first multi-party elections in 1992, it was necessary to face the immediate social consequences of war, and to strengthen emergency projects. The period of 'neither peace nor war' that was experienced from 1990 until 2002 was predominantly characterised by emergency humanitarian action, although various medium-term projects were implemented which had a sustained developmental perspective.[4]

The presence of various CSOs operating from either medium or long-term perspectives, that wanted to do more than merely react to emergency situations created various problems for the regime. These concerned an increasing questioning and deepening criticism of incompetence, inabilities and deficiencies, seen in government structures, that was failing in its social responsibilities. In order to counteract this growing criticism, the government gradually tried to limit civil society's area of jurisdiction, to co-opt some autonomous CSOs, and also create its own organisations that began to do pro-government work, in an attempt to water down negative public opinions.

While a growing number of CSOs were aligned with government, many others retained a degree of autonomy. Within this latter group, a debate arose about the degree to which they should co-operate with governmental institutions, and on what terms.

For the politically aware national CSOs and their international partners, the noose began to tighten, and with elections approaching, some were even under threat of

---

[3] Mass organisations such as *Organização da Mulher Angolana, OMA* (the Organization of Angolan Woman), *Juventude do partido*, JMPLA (the Youth of the party) and *União Nacional dos Trabalhadores Angolanos,* UNTA (the National Union of Angolan Workers).

[4] See Vidal, Nuno 'Social neglect and the emergence of civil society' in Patrick Chabal & Nuno Vidal, *Angola, the weight of history* (London: Hurst, 2007), pp. 200-235.

being rendered illegal.[5] It was in this context that a discussion developed within CSOs, a confrontation between the two major perspectives concerning the role of CSOs', their boundaries and effect within society.

2. 'Emergency', short-term and 'apolitical' CSOs

For civil society actors that deal with symptoms, their intervention is palliative and focuses on relief, or in extreme cases, on action that essentially and primarily aims at eradicating the symptoms of poverty.

These actors lobby for the basic needs of the poor to be met, believing that in order to achieve that goal it is important for government, national and international NGOs, to draw up programmes whose ultimate goal is the disbursement of resources to meet the most pressing needs of the poorest of the poor. In line with this, their desire to create local skills for sustainable development is secondary.

In practice, those advocating a symptom based approach, attempt to help the poor by providing for their immediate basic needs, but without promoting a local interactive strategy for the personal and collective well-being of these people, sustainable in both the medium and long-term. Their perspective is that material support distributed in the midst of the neediest communities (the majority of the population of Angola), plays a vital role in the fight against poverty, hoping that other help and contributions of a similar nature, coming from other donors, when joined together, make a difference in the lives of those assisted. From a micro perspective, based on an examination of individual lives that have benefited from this assistance, aid workers argue that their work has had a profound impact and, for thousands of people, has meant the difference between life and death.

Among those players promoting a symptom based approach, some defend the idea that civil society's primary role in favour of the poor is to complement public policies developed by the government at a macro level. They believe that the actions of CSOs should not aim to resolve the global problem of poverty, nor to have a macro-social impact, as this role belongs to government, in collaboration with influential international governmental organisations. Accordingly, CSOs are automatically and necessarily in partnership with government and must seek to co-operate with the State administration. Implicitly, this argument accepts that it is the government's responsibility to protect and somehow lead, direct and control CSOs' initiatives, ideas and projects.

This approach avoids any questioning of the role played by the current government and present political system, and avoids any discussion on the root causes of socio-economic problems and the structures of the State. It highlights the many signs and symptoms of poverty, seeking to soften them by aiding the poor in their more pressing problems, without deeper questioning of the causes of these problems.

According to a symptom based approach, the situation in which the poor find themselves has multiple causes and is extremely complex, ranging from cultural, historical, climatic, behavioural and economic organisational problems. This im-

---

[5] See the declarations of Pedro Walipe Kalenga, director-general of UTCAH in an interview with the National Radio of Angola, 10 July 2007; in Luanda, *Angop*.

plies that CSOs are unable to take the lead in bringing about sustainable medium and long-term structural change in the eradication of poverty. This position will evidently find acceptance and sympathy within government circles.

A more critical analysis of this approach enables one to identify clear signs of a self-imposed perspective, an inability to reflect on and link political, economic and social issues, subserviently accepting the 'decree' of intellectual, civic and political incompetence that the government wants to issue to CSOs.

The commendable work of CSOs that aim to assist people in this manner is obviously not in question, but we refer here to the lack of sustainability of their medium and long-term projects, always opting to 'give fish, instead of teaching people to fish'. When the main need is defined as being the immediate rescue of lives at risk, all emergency and aid support is welcome. In this instance for all civil society actors, the discussion on the structural causes that lead to these lives being at risk is momentarily postponed. However, when the emergency phase has passed, it is imperative to discuss and address structural problems with social and political awareness. Failure to do so means that there is a real danger of slipping back into a crisis that will hinder the disadvantaged from experiencing stable lives.

3. 'Developmentalist' CSOs perspectives and socio-political awareness

Differing from the symptom based approach to poverty, there is an ever growing array of civil society actors that attempt to focus on its causes. This contrasting perspective analyses the link between civil society and development, between the political-economic system and the sustainable eradication of poverty.

Those supporting this view believe that it is imperative to identify the structural causes of poverty and underdevelopment. Therefore, their approach is inevitably political. According to this group, their role in the fight on behalf of the poor should be to monitor public policies for greater participation of citizens in deciding the direction that policies take. Such a perspective seeks to promote the 'citizens' view, to balance opportunities and responsibilities vis-a-vis the benefits and problems of the society in which they live.

Unlike the CSOs that embrace the symptom based approach, those focussed on the causes of poverty do not consider themselves as being complementary institutions to government, neither do they consider themselves as being so-called 'reformer' partners. Rather they insist on the right to disagree, to refute and counter-argue public policy that violates the principles and objectives they pursue, namely of harmonious, balanced, social and economically just development, in line with respect for the human rights.

While those that support this approach recognise the potential of partnership with institutions of political power at different levels, they regard joint action as an exercise of rights and duties, not accepting to sacrifice their principles and conscience for these partnerships, in other words, not accepting that these partnerships become vehicles of co-optation. For them, therefore, the interests of civil society actors can very often diverge from the interests defended by State institutions and its power holders.

In the natural course of events, CSOs that adopt this inclusive and politically conscious approach recognise that, in the defence of their principles, they face several obstacles and resistance, whereby their position is seen as a threat towards the governing political power.

On a political level, those who defend this view believe that a direct relationship exists between the current model of political-economic administration, and the problem of underdevelopment and poverty. Debate around poverty generating mechanisms should be simultaneously linked to debate on the considerable wealth generating mechanisms possessed by a minority group linked to the ruling political class, since both mechanisms are interlinked and interdependent. The management of public resources for private ends completely contradicts any project aiming at generating an equitable society that pursues economic and social development. This perspective also takes into consideration various regional and international geo-political and geo-economic influences, including analysis which suggests that a strong link exists between these and the national dynamics that propel many into poverty.

Such a political system (of a *rentiére*/patrimonial type) is an obstacle to reform within the State administration, within the agricultural and industrial productive sectors that promote development beyond the outskirts of Luanda and beyond the oil and mineral extractive industries. These characteristics of the Angolan political economy have been well researched and without doubt directly influence how power is exercised, in a concentrated and centralised manner, confusing public and private spheres, and creating strong inequalities.[6]

4. Position of the International Community

Just like its Angolan counter-parts, international CSOs are divided between political and apolitical approaches. We have witnessed throughout the years how the posture of international CSOs' in Angola has varied according to political context, dominant currents of developmental thought, its own organisational principles, and major donor strategies and influences according to international geo-political interests.

When the war ended in 2002, a consensus began to emerge among international CSOs regarding the need to pressurise the Angolan government to adopt a more socially responsible attitude, good governance and transparency. Pressure coming from these organisations and donors began to mount, but it was short-lived given the growing strategic importance of the country's natural resources, namely oil. The Angolan government tightened the noose around international CSOs that supported like-minded nationals, more politically oriented, and then even went as far as threatening a few international organisations with illegality.

This attitude could have been publicly contested, uniting national and international CSOs, but this did not occur, due to the government's international leverage but

---

[6] Vidal, Nuno, 'The Angolan regime and the move to multiparty politics', in Chabal, Patrick & Vidal, Nuno, *Angola, the weight of history* (London: Hurst, 2007), pp. 124-174; also Carneiro, Emmanuel, *Especialização Rendeira e Extroversão na África Subsariana – Caracterização e Consequência* (Lisbon: Principia, 2004).

also to the previously referred divisions within national and international CSOs themselves. An alliance of solidarity and open partnership that should have existed between all civil society actors (national and international) did not materialize: the fact that this has not taken place weakens civil society as a whole and, naturally, its role in the construction of a more democratic society.

5. Development models: government vs civil society

The development model adopted by the government since 2002 is clearly focused on infrastructure, a show-off of flashy buildings, roads and bridges while continuing to relegate the important and necessary reforms in the areas of education, health, housing and development planning to a secondary position, perpetuating strong and debilitating socio-economic imbalances that afflict the country.

We all know that the overwhelming majority of the population is concentrated in the largest cities of the country, particularly Luanda, but there is no sign of any concerted plan of action to have a more balanced distribution of income and of the population throughout the country. People cannot be expected to live and work in areas that are without any efficient social services, without decent schools and trained teachers, without hospitals and medical centres adequately equipped and with competent doctors, and without business that will facilitate the development of trade and the selling of goods and provision of various services. The problem of regional imbalance is not solved without regular and long-term sustainable investment, and without a project that focuses on the country as a whole, believing that it should develop in a harmonious way.

It is necessary to have a national development strategy that cannot repeat the mistakes of the socialist past, where the 'State', led by an enlightened vanguard, drew up five year strategic development plans in an isolated manner. A task of such dimensions and scope should count upon having the active and intense participation of all, focussing especially on the desires, anxieties and needs of the poor (the majority of the population) that suffer from the consequences of regional and socio-economic imbalances.

Expressed in these terms, the goal of harmonious and balanced national development as a whole assumes a political dimension, to the degree that an integrated and participative development plan requires the transformation of the political-administrative model, strongly influenced by the centralisation and concentration of power within an hierarchical structure, with a top-down leadership style, where almost everything is decided upon and takes place in Luanda and the Presidential palace.

A balanced developmental model can be considered as a prototype of the State's administration that gives more say to the communes, municipal districts and provinces at a local level, that not only facilitates 'deconcentration', but effectively decentralises in order to stimulate the participation of the local population in the political decision making that directly affect their lives. It will be difficult to attain such goals based on the ideas already outlined in certain official circles, being strongly influenced by the logic of 'deconcentration' (accepting that some administrative tasks can be better performed at the local level), but without effec-

tive decentralisation (accepting to transfer significant decision power to the local level).[7] Local elections, when they take place, can be an important stimulus to a real dynamic of decentralisation.

Within this perspective, promoting the need to increase the level of civil participation in public affairs, it is important to take into consideration that the overwhelming majority of votes obtained by the MPLA in the legislative elections of September 2008 (over 81%) signify some potential danger. It can immediately be understood as a mandate for the exercise of power independent of any need for dialogue and collaboration with other forces in society, especially those of civil society, whose organisations do not legitimately represent their constituencies, unlike the political parties represented in parliament. This will be a battle that CSOs will have to face with those governing, similar to what takes place in neighbouring countries.

Even though CSOs cannot mitigate or correct the socio-political imbalances created by electoral results, they must encourage civil participation and intervention in public affairs, in opposition to a model of participation that restricts the use of civil-political rights only to elections. In the current context of fragile democratic institutions, civil society not only has the right, but the obligation to monitor and participate in the running of public affairs and the decision making process of public policies. It is in this way that the institutions of representative democracy are strengthened to better meet citizens' needs. Representative and participative democracy is not exclusive, but rather complementary and self-supporting.[8]

Today we are no longer in a time of distributing bread, but of questioning why some people do not have any bread. We are clearly in a political era. Civil society's struggle is now political.

---

[7] For a more detailed analysis on these ideas and plans, see Vidal, Nuno, 'Multipartidarismo em Angola' in Nuno Vidal & Justino Pinto de Andrade (eds.), *O processo de transição para o multipartidarismo em Angola* (Luanda & Lisbon: The Catholic University of Angola & The University of Coimbra, 2006), pp. 50-55.
[8] In regard to this, refer to Fernando Macedo's paper in this volume.

DEMOCRATISATION AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN ANGOLA

Carlos Figueiredo
Action for Rural Development and Environment, ADRA-Angola

In this paper it is reasoned that civil society's major contribution to the process of democratisation and to the growth of social justice in Angola is to encourage the practice of closer articulation, the coherence of collective action and cultivation of democratic styles of leadership within Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), reinforcing their efficiency. The new 2008 post-electoral context emphasises the need for a strong civil society intervention for the sake of a threatened democracy.

1. Transition from a poorly democratized culture to a new pluralist regime in 1990s

The challenges we face today originate deep in the past. Before independence, a series of civic movements began, initiatives through which citizens joined forces against the injustice and violence of colonisation. These groups united around various key issues, for example, differing forms of art, intellectual debates and even certain interests in specific neighbourhoods. All of these local mass movements and civic manifestations played an important role in the formation of the movement that led to the fight for independence, particularly that of the MPLA, that has its roots deeply entrenched in these dynamics.

With independence and the ensuing war, existing organisations, namely those of Luanda's neighbourhoods, women's groups, youth groups and syndicates, all became mechanisms for control and coercion. What in the past had been about citizen action, became controlling, limiting and disciplinarian in both thought and behaviour, in what was almost a military-type logic.

The atmosphere caused by civil war and the Marxist-Leninist one-party State led to various forms of intolerance towards those with differing political views, those supporting the idea of social organisation, different strategies of development, as well as those professing religious belief (the so-called 'opium of the people').

A controlling style of leadership emerged that claimed to possess clairvoyant powers and omniscience, demanding to be listened to, followed, and unquestionably obeyed. In reality this attitude reinforced the characteristics of

authoritarianism that had already become firmly entrenched in the colonial and pre-colonial eras. These factors all converged to generate a culture of intolerance that became deeply rooted in the political, economic and social framework of the new State and the post-colonial society. This culture did not disappear with the demise of the single-party regime but continued to influence the ensuing multi-party period at the beginning of the 1990s. Such culture remained firmly ingrained in State institutions and in the overall structure of society, from the Church to the political opposition parties that had begun to emerge.

In 1992 when elections took place, the prevailing democratic culture was far from the ideal, even though speech and some practices had already radically changed. Many that had formerly been known as Marxists and atheists, emerged as Catholics or confessing Christians, and began participating in church practices such as marriage and baptism. Some ex-communists and Marxists formed new political parties that propounded anti-Marxism and came across as fervently democratic and defensive of a pluralistic society. Even individuals that had assumed high ranking positions in the institutions of ideological training (Marxist-Leninist), publicly renounced their past.

In spite of the landscape having rapidly changed, the stage, actors and structure remained almost completely unchanged. The autocratic culture inherited from the past remained steadfast, deeply entrenched in our institutions, organisations, in our manner of acting and interacting, in fact, in our very culture.

This continuity from a culture with strong autocratic characteristics to a new model of multi-party democracy, forced the State to radically alter the way in which it coerced society, turning to other methods based on seduction rather than repression. It now resorted to power plays, using the seductive promise of easy access to resources, prestige and fame. This is not just a question of seduction luring those that aspire to gain political positions — wishing to fight for power — but also enticing those that can in any way challenge power. That was the case with some CSOs that could not resist the temptation of riches and fame, which contributed to the difficulties faced in the construction of a new democratic culture, and aided the perpetuation of the former culture. In spite of the significant change in speech, the culture of intolerance survived, disguised as co-optation, opposed to the effective implementation of democracy and overall participation.

2. The fragmentation of civil society

In order to deal with pluralism, the State sought new strategies, such as the creation of organisations that would act in the space open for civil society, but under political control. These had easy access to considerable resources, originating in the social funds generated from oil revenues. These funds were generally disbursed on aid programmes which received much coverage by the state-owned media, completely disproportionate to the effective and relative importance of the actions initiated by them. One such organisation, recognised on a national and international level, is the Eduardo dos Santos Foundation – FESA, whose patron is none other than the President of the Republic, an organisation much closer to government and the upper echelons of society, than to citizens themselves. In the spirit of the aforementioned example, many other organisations arose with similar purposes and features.

Faced with the government strategy of strengthening the 'cooperative' CSO (essentially created by those in power to reinforce their hegemony), and weakening the 'non-cooperative' (more firmly established upon visions, longings and interests of groups within Angolan society), it is of the utmost importance that the second type of organisation works in greater coordination to resist the forces that seek to weaken them. This is a crucial frontline battle for the democratisation of society.

On the other hand, one needs to recognise that at the heart of these 'more genuine' organisations, there exist differing positions, perspectives, visions and strategies. One of the reasons for such fragmentation, besides what is normal, acceptable and beneficial in social/civil movements, is the fact that their roots are extremely diverse. Some organisations, for example, were created by groups of people with strong historical-sociological ties to the MPLA, linked in the past to the formation of co-operatives and later created the so-called developmental organisations. Some were created in areas that were formerly occupied by UNITA, while others arose out of reactions to the humanitarian crisis.

This division, arising from differing perspectives, is often aggravated by the perpetuation of a simplistic bi-polar vision inherited from the single-party system and the civil war, where individuals and groups were seen as 'good' or 'bad', where UNITA was seen as a 'political puppet of Apartheid,' opposing those who wanted to build a new, free and just society. In spite of the change to pluralism in the 1990s, this culture of separation and intolerance is still all too real in the way we reason and act, debilitating ourselves as a civil society, and critically impeding our ability to work together.

Moreover, one must not neglect to mention the culture of fear that resulted from intolerance and authoritarianism. This fear often leads to self-censorship, and debilitates freedom of expression, of opinion and even of thought. For example, we can highlight the case of the attempt to render some NGOs 'illegal' by the government in mid-July 2007. In an interview at the National Radio of Angola on the July 10, 2007, the director-general of UTCAH, Pedro Walipe Kalenga, denounced the existence of national and international NGOs that were functioning illegally in Angola, declaring that many of these were funded by opposing political parties and were carrying out activities that violated the law, disobeying the government and instigating the population to react violently against authorities. Those accused were *Mãos Livres*, *SOS Habitat*, AJPD, and the Open Society Foundation in Angola.[1]

Walipe's accusations were followed by others, repeated by people that held key positions in government and supported the MPLA, individuals who were deputies, journalists and sociologists linked to the ruling party.[2] All these interven-

---

[1] Luanda, *Angop*, July 10, 2007.

[2] Walipe's intervention was followed by others that backed up his claims, for example, the journalist and professor Ismael Mateus, who stated that the General Procurator of the Republic should properly investigate and, based upon their findings, render NGOs illegal that operated against their social objectives, such as involving themselves in political issues, inciting the population to disobedience. (Luanda: *Angop*, July 12, 2007); Dr. Alvarenga, of the Ministry of Justice, referred to NGOs as sometimes being mechanisms of money laundering and promotion of terrorism; the MPLA's first provincial secretary in Luanda, Bento Bento, affirmed that 'NGOs exist that instead of mobilising the population towards the electoral register, are inciting the population not vote for the MPLA' (Luanda: *Jornal de Angola* July 22, 2007); the sociologist Simão Helena denounced the case of NGOs that operated in the country under the guise of philanthropy, but had become involved in politics, inciting the population to subversion and disorder (Luanda: *Jornal de Angola*, July 11, 2007).

tions reverberated in a media campaign controlled by the government aiming to support these positions, not even giving ear to the accused, nor to any contrary opinion raised within civil society. The organisations that frequently appeared in the government-owned media conducting propaganda in favour of the majority party, were evidently not among those under observation, not acting in the more 'politically inconvenient' sectors (human rights, elections and advocacy). This led some to believe that such pronouncements could be connected to the upcoming elections, and an attempt to restrict critical opinions during the period of pre-electoral debate. Another hypothesis put forward was that this campaign could be part of the preparation of public opinion for legal action that would restrict the autonomy of CSOs.

Apart from motives that could possibly be at the heart of such campaigns, the fact is that the way in which public statements against CSOs were articulated and the coverage and support they received from the government-owned media, made it very clear that this was a political strategy on behalf of the ruling party to attack CSOs, civil liberties and basic freedoms as a whole.

CSOs not receiving governmental support planned a joint response through the two major NGO platforms: FONGA, the Forum of Angolan NGOs, and CONGA, the Committee of NGOs in Angola). The process involved in preparing a joint response highlights the spirit of self-censorship which prevailed. Straight after the first attacks, a draft document was prepared that criticised the government's attitude. This first draft benefited from the contribution of various organisations and individuals in order to get the tone right and include what was considered important for a joint public communiqué. Although a consensus was reached, it was not possible to get the leadership of CONGA and FONGA to sign, due to an enormous amount of irrelevancies and obstacles raised.

Following this, another attempt was made to circulate the document and have it signed by a group of individuals that would sign it in their personal and individual capacity, since it had proven impossible at an institutional level. However, this strategy also failed, since the various potential signatories wanted, before committing themselves, to know who their co-signatories would be. They were fearful of possible retaliation from the ruling political party. Finally, after numerous debates, time and expended energy, the document was signed by only two individuals, later criticised in various CSO circles for having breached the supposed code of solidarity and response within civil society.

Based on this example, it is clear that one of the enormous challenges that we face as civil society pledged to effective democratisation, is the challenge to unite and critically reflect on the role we should play in relation to effective democratisation and construction of a democratic culture. We need to raise our standard, to practice what we 'preach', seek to improve co-ordination and diminish fragmentation. We should seek to co-ordinate based on principles and common causes that contribute towards effective democratisation of our society that mobilises people, in spite of the fact that people's ideals, political parties and religious creeds differ. In essence, we need to go beyond the prevailing reality of sectarianism and of inherent weakness, seeking the greater goal of strengthening civil society and of democratisation. Fear must be overcome and self-censorship defeated.

In spite of the fact that diversity is positive, it is important to discover points of contact among CSOs, and promote articulation based on democratic foundations and strategies, to fight with determination against intimidation emanating from political power, and always challenge whenever legally protected basic freedoms are threatened.

3. Relationships with the donor community and international NGOs

The relationships that are established with the international community, brings us to another pivotal issue in the fragmentation of CSOs. It is important here to identify two types of organisation: those whose programmes are essentially framed by the problems faced by Angolan communities, and those who can be referred to as social work subcontractors, that serve as intermediaries between donors and communities and whose needs fit donor strategies.

In the same way, we have what can be called the 'patronage' of donors, dealing with the selective choice of CSOs according to criteria that are not always objective. As time passes, this creates a privileged group of organisations and individuals that stand out in relation to others in terms of access to resources and donors' financial aid. Competition among CSOs regarding funds from donors, separates and fragments them as a group, instead of uniting them.

I am aware that one cannot expect all CSOs to be equally funded. The donor community will certainly have their own agenda. To expect anything different would be unrealistic. However, it's not acceptable that donors use national organisations as mere tools to achieve their external goals. This is primarily the donors' responsibility, but one should not ignore the responsibility that Angolan CSOs personally hold in terms of compromising or standing firm. There is an urgent need for an open debate around these issues, not only within Angolan CSOs but also with the donor community. This is yet another issue that requires articulation among CSOs.

4. Strategies of transformation for a dynamic and strong civil society

From my perspective, a strategy for socio-political transformation that leads to stronger CSOs and effective democratisation must pass through five crucial steps.

Firstly, one identifies real situations in which CSOs could be united and respond in such a way as to create an environment conducive to unity. Clear violations of constitutionally established basic rights can easily bring several organisations and individuals together. It is even possible that people in key positions close to those in power, and to the MPLA, supporters of the opposition, critics and intellectuals, unite in favour of specific measures and actions towards greater democratisation. The unity engendered in this scenario contributes to the practice of political and critical collective intervention, to the assimilation of experience and therefore of courage, in order to face greater and more challenging battles.

The example of what took place in Mozambique during debate on the Land Law, in which many took to the streets to show their support for the issue around which a large part of society was united, should serve as an inspiration to us. In Angola

various attempts were made at uniting CSOs and the public in general, but were mostly short-lived and did not produce anything that would stand the test of time, not even resulting in greater co-ordination among CSOs. It is evident that such mobilisation and co-ordination should not be confused with a permanent, systematic or militant opposition to the established political power.

Secondly, forging greater and better inter-communication and knowledge of one another as CSOs, the type of communication that stimulates articulation and unity, communication that demonstrates what various organisations are doing, leading to greater understanding. Many of us do not have a clear idea of what others are doing, but even so, we are quick to judge and criticise others' weaknesses. That is to say, we form opinions before knowing all the facts. This has to do with the lack of good communication that exists among CSOs, as well as the aforementioned culture of intolerance and manipulation.

Thirdly, I suggest it is imperative that we create transparent control mechanisms and democratic procedures within our own CSOs. If we criticise the lack of transparency and good governance within State structures, we should not tolerate impunity when CSOs are faced with acts of corruption, embezzlement of funds, fraud, abuse of power for personal use, and other illegal acts that sometimes occur. I reemphasise that we ourselves need to set good example and be unwavering in controlling and confronting any such situation within our sphere of influence, so that we have the right to speak out against these very same practices in government structures.

Similarly, we need to implement and secure the functioning of democratic mechanisms within our CSOs, especially regarding leadership, in order to avoid for example, our NGOs being dominated by autocratic leaders, that are not open to being questioned, nor willing to be accountable to others. This autocratic style of leadership displays an authoritarian-type attitude that expects immediate and unquestionable obedience. Those who do not comply are labeled as traitors and enemies. These leaders do not grasp the fact that they are replicating and perpetuating the very anti-democratic culture that they profess to stand against. The fact that they adopt a position of confrontation and criticism towards the regime, does not automatically mean that they themselves are democratic within their own organisations. They may even fail to be examples of transformation in the practices, methods and culture that they dare to stand against. Freedom of speech, opinion and the freedom to present alternative leadership styles must begin within our very own organisations. The challenge that I would like to issue is that unless we practice the culture that we advocate within our own organisations, we will be unable to transform the socio-political culture of our nation.

I am not categorically stating that most CSOs leaders function as authoritarians, without transparency. Many already operate in a regulated and controlled environment when compared with other structures of society. Auditing and financial accountability are common in the sector but much still needs to be done to match our action with our speech.

Fourthly, following on from the previous point, is the diffusion and promotion of a collective culture for participative and democratic action, for the marginalised

communities where many of us work. This practice must be applied to problems faced and to the daily existence of these needy communities in such areas as the management of schools and health centers, access to basic sanitation, potable water, electricity etc. The strengthening and creation of a culture of efficient collective action will, in time, play the role of supporting the democratisation of government structure at various levels within the nation (from local to national). In many villages across the country, one encounters elements of this type of collective action, and of the management of common interests rooted within rural African tradition. A starting point can be the strengthening of these elements.

Finally, the development of research projects based on realities faced, would also support action. There is a need for research by academics, together with CSOs themselves, and the communities in question, carried out in a participative and inclusive manner. It should be research compatible with the needs of marginalized communities, without losing sight of the link between this micro dimension and the vast political, economic, national, regional and international settings. We have an enormous deficit at this level,

5. Structural constraints for change

The effective democratisation of our society implies significant structural changes of a socio-political nature that will not take place in the near future. It is of the utmost importance that elections take place regularly, but the exercise of democracy and citizenship, is much greater and requires considerable work, in the medium and long-term.

The structural barriers to effective democratisation are numerous, but I will highlight four. A first concerns relations between political and economic power, reinforcing each other in the preservation and perpetuation of positions of privilege and power. Related to this is the difficulty that CSOs experience, being outside the sphere of influence, acceding to internal sources of funding. Besides this challenge, access to external funding also presents problems. We have already discussed certain topics concerning CSOs' relationships with donors and with international NGOs, but it is of interest to highlight a more recent phenomenon that involves important growth in the financing of civil society as well as development projects sponsored by oil and diamond producing firms, part of their perceived Corporate Social Responsibility.

A certain consensus exists between international donors and the international community in general in relation to this issue, searching for ways whereby the population has greater access to funds derived from the mineral resources of their nation, as well as their own resources, whose management is often accused of insufficient transparency. One cannot expect, for example, foreign firms to fund programmes that monitor the government's actions, or that reinforce the exercise of citizen rights. The corporate social responsibility of these firms should be understood to be subject to the transactions that are carried out in a wider national and international political context. These firms act according to their own agendas and have their business activities as a primary goal. We cannot expect this sector to fund CSOs, considering that this funding cannot be autonomous from the political and business interests defined by the country where they operate.

An example of this was the launching of a project at the beginning of 2007 to create a training centre for the upgrading of CSOs (also planning to upgrade the capacity of local government), a partnership between *Development Workshop*, ADRA, MOSAIKO, IBIS, FONGA and World Learning, in response to a challenge issued by the European Union, USAID and the Angolan government, to encourage the financing of civil society projects with funds made available by oil companies. In one of the meetings associated with this project, some CSO representatives highlighted the need to place greater emphasis and investment in citizenship, to advocate for human rights and to pressurise the State regarding democratisation. The informal reaction of the representatives of a few oil companies was cautious, rejecting such sponsorship, emphasising that one must understand the position these companies find themselves in, in terms of the wider national and international political context and their own agendas and business objectives (politically constrained in their actions by the government).

Secondly, are barriers to the freedom to act in civic spaces, starting with the effectiveness of freedom of speech and of access to information, given that the alternative media (the few that are outside the State's sphere of influence) finds itself increasingly limited in what it can achieve. Radio Ecclesia is the most cited example, having been banned from broadcasting beyond the confines of Luanda. The government-owned media is extremely partial and allows less and less space to civil society activists that prove to be critical of government. During the September 2008 elections, public media were excessively biased, even to the point of absurdity.

Besides internal barriers, new obstacles are being created on a regional/international level. There are cases of social organisations being discouraged from connecting with similar organisations from other countries in the region. This regional/international space is much more difficult to control and therefore, poses a much greater threat to the interests of the established power.

Thirdly, are factors related to the extreme concentration of power in our nation and the lack of effectiveness in controlling mechanisms of political power. When it comes to controlling government activity, institutions like the Parliament, the Auditor General *(Tribunal de Contas)* and the General Procurator of the Republic play a very limited role. These institutions generally abstain from adopting a more assertive role in relation to government action and, above all, to the President of the Republic. In the same vein, most of the opposition has proven to be rather incompetent and lacking in vision, having ceded to pressure or been seduced by the ruling powers.

Finally, although no less important, strong psychological factors exist in the majority of the populace (at every social level) that hinder the exercise of civic and democratic freedom. There is a strong attitude of self-censorship and fear prevailing in relation to the possible consequences of any expression of political opinion and affiliation other than to the ruling party. Whenever people realise that declaring their affiliation could be interpreted as rebellion against the established power, they keep quiet for fear of it affecting their careers. This firmly entrenches a culture of absolute rule, of submission and of autocratic leadership that endangers the process of effective democratisation. The example of the attempt to render some of the NGOs illegal is in line with this theme.

6. Elections and enigmas in the process of democratisation

Angola still lacks the socio-political conditions needed for the exercise of a healthy democracy and the holding of truly transparent, free and fair elections. Apart from electoral technical and administrative conditions, much still needs to be done to make democracy a reality. This is not only the responsibility of those in power and of professional politicians, but is equally ours as civil society.

The results of the September 2008 elections are disturbing due to the risk that the ruling power might interpret it as a licence for arrogance, and a mandate to silence whoever does not join the choir that always sings its praises. The possibility of regression in a country such as ours is alarming, since so many opportunities have already been lost. In order to recuperate lost time, it is imperative that we modernise social relations. The modernisation I am referring to is based upon plurality, the elimination of social inequality, an increase in social justice, the possibility of negotiating ideas and interests, the possibility of turning to impartial institutions that are autonomous. This modernisation has to do with every human being standing equal before the law, which still has not taken place.

As a society it seems that democratically we have reverted to the 'single-party' as opposed to the 'multi-party'. In a modern and effective democratic society, what should be debated in the public media and negotiated in parliament seems to be only effectively debated and negotiated in the headquarters of the party or the presidency. There will always be some critics inside the MPLA with principles and socio-political consciousness that stand up for national interests in these fora, but they are a minority, and on the whole, we in society are all the more vulnerable.

There is nothing new in this post-electoral scene, because the parliament has never been an effective negotiating arena, and the majority party has always governed in this way, now having a renewed legitimacy of 81.64% of the vote. But the question we need to ask ourselves is how did we reach this point? The inability (almost self-dismissal) of civil society, even to discuss democracy and representation, was perhaps a good indicator of where we were heading. The opposition failed to take elections seriously, hardly threatening the ruling party, counting more on chance than on good preparation, unable to demand that basic requirements be met (for example, the guarantee that the public press be forthright and independent). Without taking anything away from the winning party for its efficiency in communicating, achieving, mobilising, seducing, co-opting, manipulating, and working hard for a crushing victory, having used all the means at its disposal, through its control of the State apparatus.

Are we facing the regression of our political process? Or are we merely standing before a legitimate choice made by the electorate who will afterwards evaluate the fulfillment of promises made? Could civil society be the space preserved for social control, allowing such monitoring? We have four years in which we can reflect, learn lessons and act.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC JUSTICE AND A NATION STATE BASED ON RESPECT FOR THE RULE OF LAW

Benjamim A. Castello
Jubilee 2000 Angola – LiJua

This chapter analyses the role of civil society organisations (CSOs) within the process of democratic transition in Angola. The first section outlines some fundamental characteristics of Angola society which require deeper reflection and discussion if we wish to build a just society, based on the rule of law and effective democracy. The second addresses the strategy of CSOs, aiming to change our current social reality, and seeking to build productive relationships with government structures. I strongly support a strategy of constructive engagement with the State and governmental bodies.

1. Obstacles to the development of a strong civil society and effective democracy in Angola

The background to this chapter is rooted in my experience, collaboration and work with a number of CSOs, and in discussion, debates and reflections within the context of this work. I begin by exploring basic notions of democracy, of a State based on the rule of Law, of good governance and of the relationship between those governing and those governed. Can we assume that these concepts and ideas mean the same thing in Southern Africa, the African continent as a whole, and in the West? I think not.

Different concepts of State, good governance and democracy

Modern Western societies largely derive their democratic practices from Weberian and Westphalian roots. Currently, Angolans live within a Nation-State with a democratic constitution, which orders our collective lives and relationships. However, the actual practice of democracy, the role of the State, and the relationships between those governing and governed, challenges the original concept of democracy. From the perspective of the governed, modern Angola is home to many different ethnic groups, with different cultural realities, different historical heritages, traditions, and experiences of political organisations. When we look at those who govern, there is a clear lack of coherence and consistency between official discourse

and the practice of democracy. Our ruling elite differ in their posture and dialogue with international actors, where they emphasise concepts of democracy, in comparison to their corresponding engagement in the domestic arena, where the practice is less than democratic.

I am from the north of Angola, a territory that was historically part of the Congo Kingdom; from a society where power is matrilineal. While a man is ostensibly head of the household, women exercise enormous influence, though not publicly. Other ethnic groups in Angola have different forms of social organisation. During the period of colonial rule, all groups were influenced differently by the introduction of new social values and different forms of social organisation. This means that in Angola today, the understanding people in my region have of what constitutes appropriate political organisation, is not the same as those of people who live on the coast, in the centre, and elsewhere in the country. However, even though we differ among ourselves, we share the fact that none of us understand democracy as in the Western sense of the term.

We should recognise that the culture and values of our traditional communities, of our villages and the majority of our families, are not akin to the democratic values and principles shared by most Western populations today. Our societies share values which promote internal social harmony and harmonious relationships with the environment. Our values and culture are not derived from a democratic Judeo-Christian model of liberal thinking and individual freedom of expression and opinion. While youth and youth movements have made significant contributions to modern contemporary history and to the development of democratic social movements on other continents, in Africa, youth are expected to listen more than speak, and must always respect the opinion of elders. One proverb says 'the ears are never larger than the head', meaning that young people should listen to the reflections and opinions of older and more experienced members of the community. Western style democracy is not understood or practiced in our rural, more traditional communities.

We should also remember that today's political leaders were yesterday's ordinary citizens. When political leaders emerge from weak civil societies with limited citizen participation, this leader is unlikely to practice democracy when in power. If today's political leader comes from a family which does not share democratic principles and values, how can we expect this person to espouse democracy when in power? If this leader grew up in a community where democratic rules were not part of the fabric of life, how could this person become a democratic leader?

When a leader from this background works within a modern State structure, with potential means and resources to impose coercion and collective action, with the possibility of using 'legitimate' armed force to impose his will and notion of governance, we should not expect that this person will govern democratically, as understood in Western societies. Yesterday's ordinary citizen, raised in a non-democratic environment, comes to power with the means for coercion and oppression at his disposal, and is often further strengthened by international legitimacy and recognition, and by regional networks with other real and potential despots. This leads rapidly to the intolerance, authoritarianism and totalitarianism that we see in many post independence regimes in Africa.

When I think of political pluralism and citizen participation in Africa, I remember the words often spoken by President Mobutu Sesse Seko of the former Zaire:

> *Why should we promote opposition parties in our countries when our villages and communities do not have chiefs or groups constituted in opposition to the existing traditional power?*

I think it is important that we consider the heritage of social organisation and the practice of power in Africa, in contrast to the fundamental importance of a competent opposition and of an engaged, participative constituency of citizens in a Western democracy.

We might also wish to consider how many of Africa's current political leaders emerged from backgrounds of extreme poverty. I would like to introduce an analogy used by a Yugoslavian colleague of mine, who had worked for two years in Angola. In 1980, he said,

> *I think that I am now beginning to understand the problems of Angola. I will use an analogy, since Bantus love analogies. Think about somebody who has slept his whole life on the floor, in a society where the grass mat is the privilege of the traditional chief. When he comes to power, he is not likely to think of building a factory to make mattresses for everyone. The mattress simply becomes a sign of his privilege as a 'modern' chief.*

The concept and practice of corruption has different perspectives in Africa, when compared to Western democracies. Again to use a traditional Bantu analogy to make my argument: when somebody in a community robs a neighbour's chicken, this person is considered a thief because the chicken belonged to an identified family and is part of the community. If the person steals a cow, which is community property, then the crime is even more serious and the thief may even be killed since he stole valuable capital which belongs to the collective. However, when a person in public office steals large sums of money from public funds, the term used is 'that money was deviated', not that money was stolen, even though the act constitutes theft. 'Deviating' rather than stealing is a softer word for an action which often earns respect and admiration from others. Some may feel envy, and those with family ties expect that they will receive some of the 'deviated funds'. Overall, few people are likely to be concerned about any potential harm to State interests.

In Africa today, the State remains an abstract notion, which few people identify with. Even fewer Africans see any reason to defend an entity which they do not understand why it exists, and how it might serve them. The State belongs to nobody and is not yet seen as something which can serve the larger community or country, with which all identify.

In our traditional culture, the chief is the respected repository of traditional ancestral wisdom and he alone can divide and distribute community produce. It is his responsibility and privilege to distribute to members of his community, within the framework of his specific political strategy, normally adapted to maintain his own economic well-being and that of the community. There is no clear boundary between the two domains: that of the personal economic wealth of the chief and the wealth of the community (or public or 'State' resources). The traditional chief who has noth-

ing to distribute or divide among his subjects is not a chief, in the traditional Bantu understanding of chiefly qualities and responsibilities. It is this logic which facilitates the acceptance and tolerance of heads of States in newly independent African States, who confuse the assets of the State with their own personal assets, using public monies to reward their friends, supporters, extended families and members of the same ethnic group. It is this 'natural' commitment and responsibility to 'one's own people' which grows to constitute a network of clientelism and patronage, perceived by a Western observer as nothing more than crude corruption.

Hence, the notion of corruption is yet another cultural example revealing a different understanding of a shared phenomenon. In Angolan Bantu languages, there is no word for corruption. When we speak of corruption in communities, participants frequently respond with examples from daily life:

> *If I am pleased with the service a public servant performed, I may give him a goat. He solved my problem and I am pleased, so I show my pleasure. What is wrong with that? In our culture, it is appropriate to demonstrate one's satisfaction with a concrete action.*

As is clear in this example, the citizen understands the 'service' performed as a favour, not as the professional obligation of a public servant paid by public money (which is collectively owned by all citizens), raised by taxes and other forms of public revenue. The same public servant is also not likely to view his functions through the lens of professional obligation to all citizens, rewarded by a monthly salary. He is more likely to consider that he can provide the service at his own discretion, in direct relationship to individual tokens of gratitude provided by citizens/clients/friends.

During the election campaign of 1992, political parties such as the FNLA *(Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola* — Front the National Liberation of Angola), PNDA *(Partido Nacional Democrático de Angola* – Angola's National Democratic Party) and UNITA *(União Nacional para a Libertação Total de Angola* – National Union for the Complete Liberation of Angola), to name but a few, raised the issue of corruption in their campaigns. Most of the electorate did not understand the issue and, in some cases, it was perceived as challenging traditional practices. On the whole, only a minority of intellectuals are likely to perceive clientelism and patronage, the use of public funds, as contravening the basic principles of a modern bureaucratic State and representative democracy.

In practice, the majority of Angolans do not have any concrete working concept of the Nation-State, collective well-being and assets owned by the nation. The words represent nothing more than meaningless political rhetoric. However, citizens have a clear notion of rights, responsibilities and obligations at the level of the local community.

The majority of citizens are also unlikely to understand the implications of fundamental human rights, as presented by CSOs. They will clearly understand the right to survival, access to food, family subsistence, security, basic housing, water and health. These are understood as basic needs for human existence. However, if I argue that the former are fundamental human rights, inherent to being human, and as such it is the responsibility of the Nation-State to protect and provide for

these rights on behalf of the collective of citizens, people do not follow the logic. Again, we are confronted with different cultural perspectives of what constitutes a right. The modern Western concept and practice of democracy is derived from Judaeo-Christian values, quite different from the values transmitted in a traditional Bantu family and a community education.

I would argue that we Angolans need to engage in a profound process of discussion, reflection and analysis, to define what kind of political, social and economic order we wish to construct for our country and for future generations. It is not sustainable to continue with a duplicitous and hypocritical situation, where the elite apparently embrace the rhetoric of a Western style democracy when they engage with international actors and institutions, but where day to day domestic transactions are conducted within another paradigm, inconsistent with the officially marketed democratic model of governance.

This ambiguity where governance is promoted with a semblance of rule of law, but where the rules can change, is created by the prevailing interests of the ruling classes. This context is a fundamental constraint to the growth of a healthy, representative democracy in many African countries. We need to clearly name the unjust nature of the social order as just described, which will create an ever larger divide within our societies, generating discontent which may be latent in times of economic growth, but likely to erupt as violence when it becomes clear that the lot of the majority has not greatly improved.

The international community and elections in Angola

The discourse of many African leaders and the ruling elite demonstrate the duality between the democratic model in theory and the effective practice of governance, where leaders learn to manage required external discourse, while also managing the domestic reality to bolster their interests. When dealing with foreign contemporaries, international political actors and representatives of multilateral organisations, Angolan leaders use the rhetoric and concepts of democracy. Within the domestic sphere however, their attitude and behaviour in the community and in national political discourse, is invariably different. At home, they defend a different notion of democracy, with a different management practice of public assets.

Elections fall into this category. The process is conducted to satisfy an international understanding of legitimacy, thereby facilitating national access to external finance and a place on the international stage. However, elections are not expected to change the status quo internally. It is simply an exercise designed to present an impression of democracy to the outside world. After elections, many countries find themselves drowning in the same problems, continuing to live in a state of instability and exposed to conflicting allegations of electoral fraud, which may lead to violence. Clearly, the isolated practice of multiparty elections will have little or no effect on the fundamental problems of social injustice. Prior to the September 2008 elections in Angola, I asked a prominent Angolan politician if he thought that the elections would result in genuine and sustainable peace. He was unable to answer me but I am sure that if a foreigner had asked the same question, the answer would have been an unequivocal 'yes', that elections would achieve lasting peace and change at every level in society.

Elections, and the massive effort to reconstruct basic infrastructure, will not markedly alter the profound injustices ingrained in Angolan society: both processes may even contribute to a greater degree of inequality between the majority and the ruling classes. Such inequalities are a significant impediment to the development of a healthy democracy based on citizen participation. As long as the majority are involved in a daily struggle to achieve food security, obtain drinking water, be secure, live in basic housing, have access to basic education and primary health care, it is not possible to build a strong civil society where informed citizen participation is the cornerstone of a vibrant, responsive democracy. It is difficult to mobilise poor communities to engage in citizen participation when their basic needs are not met, when they are not convinced that collective civil action will change anything for the better. We need concrete action to reduce poverty and make our society more just. We need to understand that promoting social justice is also promoting democracy.

In concluding this section, I argue that the issues raised are fundamental and critical to the development of a serious project aiming to build a democratic State, based on the rule of law. The different perspectives that our communities and our leaders have of democracy, the Nation-State and good governance, would seem to indicate that we first need to sow the concept of democracy in our population, convince them that the leaders govern on our behalf, that the nation's resources belong to all of us, and should be managed for our collective benefit in the short term, and in the interests of future generations.

Much of the work I do with CSOs involves active reflection and analysis of these issues, so that we can develop sound strategies to lay the grounds for a sustainable democracy, based on the rule of law, guaranteeing the rights and liberties of all citizens. If society continues to avoid examining the relevance of these issues for Angola, we will not be able to develop the tools to build a stable and healthy democracy, guaranteeing peaceful coexistence in the long term. We will continue to survive in a 'partial democracy', which is fragile and unstable. We will not develop a common vision with a common objective. More importantly, we will continue to postpone the participative resolution of our long-standing internal conflicts and tensions, which Western observers refer to simplistically as 'post electoral conflicts'.

2. Civil society strategies in Angola towards changing the status quo

A sound civil society strategy requires a medium and long-term vision for change. However, we cannot forget the current context of poverty, where the majority of the population is condemned to a daily struggle for basic survival.

The first civil society groups emerged in the early 1990s, occupying the timid space available at the time. In subsequent years, the number of active national civil society groups was small, but these groups were able to establish themselves as recognised actors on the national stage. It became increasingly obvious that the State could and should engage with these actors in the process of national reconstruction and, more importantly, in discussions on the future structure of the Nation-State and future relationship of the government with citizens, illustrating that the legitimacy of government is derived from citizens exercising their rights and responsibilities.

Civil society groups did engage in partnerships with like-minded organisations from other countries, but the results were limited because of short term donor priorities. Currently, a number of Angolan CSOs are engaged in a process of *'constructive engagement'* with the government, with a view to strengthening reform of government and State institutions.

The effective establishment of democracy in Angola is an enormous challenge requiring coordinated and sustained collaboration of different interest groups. Angolans need to gain more experience of building common interest networks and alliances, beginning with national actors and extending to like-minded international groups. Constructive partnerships with public institutions, government and State bodies will also be key to the success of the democratic project. The experience of Jubilee 2000 in Angola convinced us that we must work with public institutions in order to influence policy making and decisions. If we refuse to cooperate with State and government bodies, or adopt confrontational positions for the sake of confrontation, we run the risk of being marginal to important processes, and becoming a civil society equivalent of a wandering D. Quixote.

Civil society groups in Angola have had some recent successes with a strategy of engagement with government. Five years ago, Angola's external debt was not discussed in a public forum. Today, following intense lobbying of parliamentary groups by Jubilee 2000, information on external debt is published and updated by government, discussed widely in the media and in public debates. The process required intense awareness raising with elected deputies, providing them with information and tools to analyse and interpret the available data. It is a clear example of a civil society initiative which contributed to strengthening the capacity of a government institution (the parliament and member deputies) to fulfil its role and perform tasks that are part of the job assigned to it.

This was also a good example of constructive engagement on issues, which by their nature involve political parties, civil society and government. Many government representatives initially understood the debt initiative as party political under the umbrella of an NGO, and were highly critical of Jubilee 2000. In a functioning democracy, it is not possible or desirable to attempt to draw definitive boundaries between the space for civil society action, and the space for party politics and governance. Political parties and civil society groups have different organisational structures, objectives and strategies. However, their areas of interest and action overlap, providing opportunities for mutual learning and dialogue in the greater interest of the Nation-State.

Defence of human rights is a further relevant example of productive engagement and collaboration. Civil society groups are slowly but consistently making human rights a significant issue on the national political and social agenda. The Annual National Report on Human Rights is coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, the report is prepared each year with active participation of civil society groups such as AJPD (Association for Justice, Peace and Democracy) and Liga Jubileu 2000 Angola. The initiative for the partnership came from the staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who recognised the need for a broader forum of interest groups.

Finally, I would like to make some brief references to other networks of non-governmental actors formed to engage with government on specific social issues. The Election Network was formed to engage in the preparation and implementation of the election process. The network mobilised broad civil society participation and achieved some success in influencing the process. The active engagement of the Land Network greatly influenced the final content of the Land Law, where the original government sponsored proposal had actually prejudiced the interests of the majority. The final legislation now contains important clauses which defend the interests of rural communities, as a result of active engagement and lobbying by organised civil society groups. The Women's Network is one of the longest standing networks where, organised consistent strategies have contributed to achieving a greater profile for women, a greater awareness of violence against women, greater participation of women in public fora and in representation roles, and even a change in the name of the Ministry responsible for women's issues: from the Ministry of Women to the Ministry of Gender. The more recently formed Transparency Network lobbies private and public oil companies to 'Publish What You Pay'.

I strongly defend the strategy of constructive engagement with State and governmental bodies. Strategies of confrontation fall too easily into patterns of self righteous and deaf contestation of the 'regime', where civil society groups marginalize themselves, and thereby lose the opportunity to influence important social policy discussions and engage in the building of a new Nation-State for all Angolans. A sound civil society strategy emphasises inclusion of all voices to influence and change Angola's reality.

I would like to end by sharing a Bakongo proverb, which illustrates the relevance of this strategy in the Angola context:

Volueke vana vata dia kinzenza, wawana vo mu kulu kua ludia bekininanga, ongeye wa kinina muna (kulu) kua lumonso, nsualu ovengumunua (vana makinu). Kansi, vokinini muna kulu kua ludia wonso akaka, ntambuk´ambote otambuka vana makinu (evo muna nlonga). Wawu osinga kota vana kati, voyantikidi okinina muna kulu kua lumonso, akaka tangizina (tanginina) bekutangizina yo kulanda, ye mpe ofuete tondua wakala mosi vana kabu diodio.

This proverb translates as,

When you arrive in a village and find the villagers dancing in a circle, leading with their right foot, if you insist on leading with the left foot, you will be expelled from the circle. However, if you enter the circle, also leading with the right foot, when you arrive in the middle of the circle, you can now change to leading with your left foot and others will follow.

BUILDING PEACE AND ADVOCATING FOR HUMAN RIGHTS: CONTRIBUTION OF THE ANGOLAN CHURCHES

Michael Comerford
Trócaire

Introduction

The long and bloody military conflict in Angola finally ended in April 2002 with the signing of the Luena Memorandum of Understanding between the Angolan armed forces and the military leadership of UNITA. The Luena Memorandum followed the death in combat of Jonas Savimbi, the UNITA leader, and was the third peace agreement signed between the warring sides. Neither the Bicesse Accords of May 1991 nor the Lusaka Protocol of November 1994 secured lasting peace. This chapter assesses the role played by the churches in Angola in promoting peace and democracy by examining and contextualising literature and initiatives from the major Protestant churches and the Catholic Church.

The churches are important institutions in Angola with a 'powerful influence among the people',[1] and saw themselves as speaking on behalf of the Angolan people who paid the highest price for the various failures to resolve the conflict between the MPLA and UNITA. The churches were regarded during the conflict as 'the most legitimate and organised network for peace and change in a fractured Angola'.[2] Others, such as Messiant,[3] prior to the Luena Memorandum argued that, in the failure to secure peace, one must also see a failure of the Christian churches, premised substantially on their inability to promote a united approach until late in the conflict.

The chapter focuses on three church institutions: CICA (Council of Christian Churches of Angola), AEA (Angolan Evangelical Alliance) and CEAST (Catholic Church's Episcopal Conference of Angola and San Tome). The first two are ecumenical organisations for the principal Protestant churches, and all three are widely known in Angola by

---

[1] Birmingham, D., 1999, *Portugal and Africa*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, p. 63.
[2] Howen, N., 2001, *Peace-Building and Civil Society in Angola: A role for the International Community*. Commissioned by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Department for International Development, London, p. 29.
[3] Messiant, C., 2000, 'Introduction', in Schubert B. *A Guerra e as Igrejas*, Angola 1961-1991. Basel: P. Schlettwein, p. 1.

these acronyms. The three organisations speak publicly in rather different ways and have changed in how they engage with public political discourse, as we will see later. AEA's theological tradition posited a clear distinction between the spiritual and political, seeing these as separate spheres; less so for CICA (key members include the Methodist, Baptist and Congregationalist churches) and CEAST. CEAST discourse is the product of a search for consensus among the Catholic bishops, where political affiliations and division reflected those within wider Angolan society; AEA and CICA discourse emerged from within church conferences or through the public statements of their secretary-general who interpreted political and social events in accordance with the statutes of their organisation.[4]

Rather than treat the narratives of the Protestant and Catholic churches separately, which the Angolan literature generally does, this chapter deals with them collectively because of significant similarities between their analyses. A number of important works have examined the role of the churches prior to the signing of the 1991 Bicesse Accords. The most significant is Schubert,[5] but others include Grenfell,[6] Henderson[7] and Péclard.[8] These have outlined the relationship between the nationalist parties and the three main Protestant churches, and the relationship of the colonial power to the Catholic Church. The three main Protestant churches — Methodist, Baptist and Congregationalist — were birthing places for the three main nationalist parties, MPLA, FNLA and UNITA, respectively. The chapter does not explore these historical linkages, which have been discussed elsewhere (for example, Comerford;[9] Guimarães;[10] Marcum;[11] and Mateus[12]).

That the churches have played such a key role in Angola is rather ironic. Two years after independence, when the MPLA government adopted Marxist-Leninism as its political ideology, there were suggestions that the churches should be outlawed,[13] and the first Angolan president Agostinho Neto believed the churches would die out completely within fifty years.[14] Across the continent as a whole, it was thought that 'Christianity in Africa would become ever less significant' after independence, but this has proved not to be the case.[15] Instead the churches have grown in importance, exercising key roles in many countries in reducing conflict, promoting

---

[4] Meeting with CICA members, Luanda, January 30, 2007.
[5] Schubert, B., 2000, *A Guerra e as Igrejas*, Angola 1961-1991. Basel: P. Schlettwein.
[6] Grenfell, J., 1998, *História da Igreja Baptista em Angola*, 1879-1975. Queluz, Portugal: Centro de Publicações Cristãs.
[7] Henderson, L.W., 1979, *Angola: Five Centuries of Conflict*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. Also, Henderson, L.W., 1990. *A Igreja em Angola, um Rio com Várias Correntes*. Lisbon: Editorial Além-Mar.
[8] Péclard, D., 1998, 'Religion and Politics in Angola: The Church, the Colonial State and the Emergence of Angolan Nationalism, 1940-1961'. *Journal of Religion in Africa* 28.2, 160-186.
[9] Comerford, M., 2005, *The Peaceful Face of Angola: Biography of a Peace Process* (1991-2002). Windhoek: John Meinert Printing.
[10] Guimarães, F., 1998, *The Origins of the Angolan Civil War: Foreign Intervention and Domestic Political Conflict*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
[11] Marcum, J., 1969, *The Angolan Revolution Vol. I. The Anatomy of an Explosion* (1950-1962). Cambridge, MA, and London: Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Also, Marcum, J. 1978. *The Angolan Revolution Vol. II., Exile Politics and Guerrilla Warfare*, (1962-1976). Cambridge, MA, and London: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
[12] Mateus, D.C., 1999, *A Luta pela Independência: a Formação das Elites Fundadoras da FRELIMO, MPLA, e PAIGC*. Mem Martins: Editorial Inquérito.
[13] Birmingham (1999: 63).
[14] Schubert (2000: 139).
[15] Gifford P., (ed.), *The Christian Churches and the Democratisation of Africa*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, p. 21.

peace and reconciliation, defending human rights, and facilitating or sustaining democratic transition.[16] As will be seen, the churches were at the forefront in the struggle for peace and democracy in Angola.

The chapter examines six separate periods, analysing church engagement in relation to the political and military context of the time. First, material preceding the Bicesse Accords of May 1991 is examined, where major themes evident in later church analysis initially emerged. Secondly, the period from Bicesse to the first multi-party and presidential elections held in September 1992 is set out. Thirdly, there is reflection on the post-election crisis to the signing of the Lusaka Protocol in November 1994. Fourthly, the period of 'neither war nor peace' from the Lusaka Protocol to late 1998 is assessed. Fifthly, a brief review of the war from December 1998 to the death of Jonas Savimbi in February 2002. Finally, some comment on the years following the 2002 signing of the Luena Memorandum of Understanding. This chronological approach facilitates understanding of how the churches responded as the conflict moved from one crisis to another. The literature reviewed includes pastoral letters, public statements or speeches, conference documents, media reports, and interviews conducted from 1999 to 2007.

Church Narratives Prior to Bicesse

In situating the churches prior to the 1991 Bicesse accords, it is useful to take the Gbadolite Accords of 22 June 1989 as a starting point. After a summit of eighteen regional heads of state in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (former Zaire), President Mobutu announced that a ceasefire had been brokered in Angola.[17] The Gbadolite Accords offered amnesty for UNITA soldiers, and the integration of UNITA into Angolan society and government. However, the agreement quickly broke down and hostilities resumed, with both sides having different interpretations of what was agreed.

> *The MPLA claimed that the Gbadolite accords made provision for UNITA members to be absorbed into MPLA structures, with Savimbi 'retiring' from Angola. UNITA argued that the Gbadolite accords represented the first stage in negotiations towards a ceasefire, a new constitution, and multi-party elections. In UNITA's interpretation there would continue to be a powerful role for Savimbi.[18]*

For Malaquias, the '[f]ailure of Gbadolite revolved around the question of who said what and when.[19] [It was also] poorly planned prior to Mobutu's trip to the USA.' While Gbadolite is remembered for providing the first hand-shake between President dos Santos and Jonas Savimbi, two important themes crystallised in the church literature at the time that are relevant later: analysis of the causes of the war, and comment in favour of democratisation.

---

[16] de Gruchy, J.W., 1995, 'Theological Reflections on the Task of the Church in the Democratisation of Africa'. In P. Gifford (ed.).
[17] Pycroft, C., 1994, 'Angola: The Forgotten Tragedy'. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 20.2 : 241-262.
[18] Pycroft C., (1994: 247)
[19] Malaquias, A., 1995, *Angola: The Challenges of Democratic Transition*. Ph.D thesis, Dalhouise University.

Causes of the War

A 1984 CICA conference document, *The Churches' Memorandum on Peace, Justice and Development in the Popular Republic of Angola*, is especially relevant in identifying reasons for the conflict between the MPLA government and UNITA.[20] Members of CICA point to this conference as a time when the churches began to reinterpret their role in society and distance themselves from the historical affiliations referred to earlier whereby, for example, there was little or no criticism of the MPLA from within the Methodist Church. The proximity of political and church leaders was one of the reasons why it was difficult for the Protestant churches to influence the conflict and promote peace. The document itself is one of the most important in the church-related literature, as it highlights two distinct dimensions—external/regional and internal—in the search for peace. At the external/regional level, CICA identified three issues that sustained the war in Angola.[21] First, CICA argued that the apartheid system in South Africa needed dismantling so as to reduce regional tensions. For example, the South African Defence Forces (SADF) made many incursions into southern Angola in pursuit of SWAPO freedom fighters, creating much instability. Secondly, CICA identified a need for compliance with UN resolution 435 on Namibian independence. Prior to this, South Africa and Angola had a common border, providing South Africa, which also supported UNITA militarily, easy access to Angola in terms of border crossings and supply lines. The signing of the 1988 New York Accords between South Africa, Angola, the United States, the former Soviet Union and Cuba was significant in bringing about Namibian independence, thereby reducing the external military threat. Thirdly, CICA called for an end to the 'politics of militarisation and destabilisation' promoted by neighbouring countries. As well as references to South Africa, one can read here criticism of the former Zaire, used by the US government as a supply line for UNITA.

External factors alone were not sufficient in explaining the causes of conflict. CICA argued that the problem was internal and ultimately needed an internal solution: 'it is necessary to regard a lack of unity as the determining factor slowing down the search for peace, for justice and development'.[22] CICA addresses this 'lack of unity' and these internal divisions from a number of perspectives. It points to the 'divide and conquer' policies utilised by the colonial administration. CICA was especially critical of how evangelization was conducted by foreign missionaries, which reinforced ethnic and tribal differences. It explains that Baptist missionaries worked among the Bakongo, Methodists among the Ambundu, Presbyterians and Congregationalists among the Ovimbundu, Lutherans among the Kwanhama, and Pentecostals and Evangelicals among other ethnic groups. Because of missionary methodologies, historical differences between ethnic groups became religious differences and subsequently political differences, when the nationalist parties emerged from within these ethnic-religious identities. CICA argues that colonialism was able to exploit these identities in a way that enabled it to maintain its hold on

---

[20] CICA 1984, the document is entitled '*Memorando das Igrejas sobre Paz, Justiça e Desenvolvimento na R.P.A*'. CICA replaced the earlier church organisation known as CAIE (Conselho Angolano de Igrejas Evangélicas), and strictly speaking should be referenced as CAIE (1984).
[21] CICA (1984: 4-5).
[22] CICA (1984: 5).

power, suggesting that mission Christianity reconstructed historical differences in a particularly divisive way, that ultimately had negative national consequences.

Internal divisions created what CICA considered 'a monster', when the 1975 government of transition was formed. This monster brought 'a tragedy never before experienced, because our Nation lost more people during the 1975 confrontations than were lost in the first war of national liberation'.[23] The document argued that 'until the beginning of 1976, obstacles to national unity were much more tribal and opportunistic, than ideological'. Working for peace required addressing these underlying problems and necessitated 'redoubling efforts in the struggle for unity of the churches and of the Angolan nation, fighting vigorously against any form of division which presents itself among [the churches] and within Angolan society'. The document concluded:

> *Once again we wish to underline that the basic problem lies in a 'lack of unity' and not in the lack of political reconciliation between the two political powers, whose political ideologies are totally opposed. . . We believe that the real solution lies in our capacity to preserve our identity as Angolans.*[24]

Some seven years later, weeks before the signing of the Bicesse Accords, CEAST expressed similar views to those of CICA on the causes of the conflict, highlighting a lack of unity. According to CEAST in 1991, some ethnic groups considered themselves superior to others:

> *Our country's greatest problem which affects everything else, is a lack of unity. A unity based on truth and justice, and anchored in love. . . Therefore it is important to examine what divides us, not so as to open old wounds, but to eradicate the seeds of discord. Tribal differences . . . have degenerated into a motive for mutual rejection, for disrespect, and the division of tribes into superior and inferior. This is serious. It compromises the future and the nation's very existence, opening doors for others to exploit.*[25]

Echoing CICA, prior to the Bicesse Accords CEAST argued that the causes of conflict were internal, that internal divisions had led to the creation of external alliances. Collectively the churches believed that democratic processes would help address these underlying issues.

Democratisation

It is necessary to situate church discourse on democratisation within the political reality of the time, remembering that Angola was then a one-party Marxist state. Church members were obliged to leave the MPLA or forced to publicly reject their religious belief.[26] Government was sensitive to what it considered political comment emanating from the churches, though it accepted the religious nature of the churches' work. The boundaries between what is considered 'political' and what 'religious' are quite different in the minds of government and of church leaders.

---

[23] CICA (1984: 6).
[24] CICA (1984: 11).
[25] CEAST, 1998. *A Igreja em Angola entre a Guerra e a Paz, Documentos Episcopais 1974-1998*, no publisher. The CEAST documents are published in a single volume, and for clarity of argument I choose to reference by the year of CEAST's communication, and page of the volume: i.e. CEAST 1991: pp. 250-251 denotes a communication from 1991, found on pages 250-251 of volume.
[26] CICA (1984: 7).

The latter do not see a sharp dividing line between the two arenas, particularly when human welfare is considered in jeopardy. Government, on the other hand, has frequently viewed comment of this nature as church intervention in politics and been critical of church statements.

The churches warmly welcomed the Gbadolite Accords. AEA and CICA congratulated the Angolan President on securing peace and practising a 'politics of forgiveness'.[27] CEAST understood that a time of democratic transition had begun, that such a transition was part of the process of national reconciliation: 'the dialogue of reconciliation that had begun, was along democratic lines and ought to continue to build and consolidate peace'.[28] Later in 1989, with Gbadolite clearly a failure, CEAST reiterated that the path to peace and national reconciliation involved democratic reform:

> *We need an authentic peace which changes Angola into a truly free and democratic country, where all her children have a place and a voice. This voice will only be genuinely heard in free elections. It is necessary to find ways to establish a just peace. . . . For the present a ceasefire is needed . . .. The time for personal, direct, and frank dialogue has arrived, from one Angolan to another.[29]*

The same document challenged the political leaders on both sides to stop sacrificing the children of Angola to their party interests. Pro-democracy statements of this nature illustrate how far the Catholic Church had shifted since its support of the colonial regime. That it had come out so clearly in support of democracy reflects political changes occurring elsewhere as change swept across Eastern Europe. It is unusual however, to see such a supportive statement in favour of a particular political system. As de Gruchy makes clear, 'Christianity cannot be equated with any system of government, including democracy, but must remain critical of all social order'.[30]

The MPLA government was irritated by the CEAST intervention. Two articles published in the state-owned daily newspaper *Jornal de Angola* on November 30 1989, accused CEAST of obstructing the search for peace by adopting positions identical with those of the United States and UNITA (the US provided UNITA with weapons during the conflict).[31] While the government response criticised the positions advanced by CEAST, some interviewees suggested that government displeasure was also expressed in other ways, such as a reduction and delays in the number of visas granted to foreign missionaries wishing to work in the country. This created difficulties in staffing levels for CEAST and served as a reminder that public criticism of the government had a price.

CEAST's views were representative of feelings within the churches generally, regarding what shape political change should take. AEA and CICA also viewed democratic change as the surest way to secure peace, evident in a joint submission to the third MPLA national congress in 1990.

---

[27] Letter to President dos Santos after the Gbadolite Accords, dated June 13, 1989, signed by Octávio Fernando of AEA and Augusto Chipesse of CICA.
[28] CEAST (1989: 212).
[29] CEAST (1989: 214).
[30] de Gruchy, (1995: 48).
[31] Published in CEAST (1998: 216-219).

The peace and tranquility of the people depend on a commitment of openness to multi-party politics. . . . Multi-party politics should not be a hypothesis yet to be proved, but an objective to be achieved within a determined period. The commitment to multi-party politics could determine peace, and this in turn brings about democracy.[32]

The submission also commented that democracy would positively shift the balance of power in favour of the people, in a manner not permitted in one party states:

the governments of one-party states maintain their power on the basis of corruption and a large military and security apparatus which defend the regime against the people it governs. . . Until now, the government and the sovereignty of the Angolan nation have been confused with that of the [MPLA] Party. . . Our peace, our development, the national unity for which all of us should be striving, are achieved through democracy.

The pro-democracy position of AEA and CICA is interesting in identifying criticism of the MPLA government from within the Protestant churches. This is especially relevant in the case of AEA which had seen political involvement as a betrayal of its Christian mission, and it was rare for either AEA or CICA during the post-independent period prior to Bicesse to make public pronouncements on peace.[33] Church-based engagement with the MPLA came primarily from CEAST during these years, which, through the Africanisation of its leadership, had significantly transformed itself from its 'collaborator' image during the colonial period.[34]

These statements do not mark the beginning of the churches' advocacy in favour of multi-party democracy in Angola. An earlier call for democracy can be dated to an ecumenical document in June 1975 when the Christian bishops of Angola at the time (six Catholic and one Methodist) issued a joint statement, calling for the establishment of 'sincere dialogue and truly democratic processes' in the new Angolan state.[35] The document is evidence of the churches working together across the Protestant-Catholic divide, but significantly seems to be the only such initiative until COIEPA (Comité Inter Eclesial para a Paz em Angola, a joint AEA-CEAST-CICA ecumenical peace commission, to be examined later) was founded nearly twenty-five years later.

Bicesse Accords to 1992 Elections

The sixteen months from the signing of the Bicesse Accords in May 1991 to the holding of national elections in September 1992 are referred to as the 'mini-paz' (mini-peace). The end of the war came as a relief to the Angolan people who could travel and visit family members they had been unable to see for many years. In exploring this brief period, three key themes addressed by the churches are examined: democratisation; the media, a key institution in democratic societies; and the need for greater voter education.

---

[32] AEA-CICA 1990. Uma Contribuição para a Reunião do Concenso Nacional na Conquista da Paz, Democracia e Progresso Economico e Social de Angola, submission document to the III MPLA Congress, April 17, 1990.
[33] Schubert B., (2000: 157, 207).
[34] Schubert B., (2000: 130).
[35] Pastoral Message from the Bishops of the Christian Churches on Peace and Harmony, published in CEAST (1975: 390).

Democratisation

The change from a one-party state to multi-party democracy was welcomed by the churches, who believed that national reconciliation had been advanced. For the churches, the introduction of multi-party democracy afforded Angola an opportunity to begin again, to place peaceful discussion and political debate at the centre of political life, leaving military conflict in the past. There was a hope that the years of war had taught Angola a lesson about the futility of war, and the need to pursue peaceful means. For AEA the change to multi-party democracy required the involvement of everyone to promote 'the pacification and reconciliation of the whole Angolan family'.[36] The task of 'pacification' is one that emerged after each of Angola's peace agreements, with government calling on the churches to assist in pacifying the nation.

For all the churches, multi-party democracy was understood and presented as the new arena for the peaceful resolution of conflict, a new form of dialogue replacing the dialogue of weapons. A statement from AEA just prior to the holding of elections illustrates this view:

> *In a democracy, free speech should promote peace and the well being of society: access to power is gained through voting, not force or violence. Weapons must yield to dialogue; a dialogue which reveals wisdom, a dialogue based on debate over socioeconomic progress. A dialogue which directs people towards development and respect for the dignity of others.*[37]

CEAST addressed the key post-election role opposition parties would have in building a healthy democracy, and encouraged those defeated electorally to embrace this role.[38] It underlined the importance of an effective opposition in ensuring better governance within the state. For CICA, multi-party democracy was a form of permanent dialogue based on the 'peaceful coexistence of political parties'.[39] Quite clearly the churches viewed multi-party democracy as a discursive arena, where peaceful politics ensured development and national progress.

However, the churches had concerns that this view was not shared by the political parties. CICA expressed a sense of foreboding about the elections and the period afterwards, speaking of a 'dark cloud' that created anxiety, particularly as demobilisation had not been completed. It presented the elections as a means towards greater democratisation and pacification, not an end in themselves: '[Elections] are a door for a new era which we want to be of justice, peace, and freedom, for the happiness of all. These elections are the first and we do not wish them to be the last'.[40] The churches had real concerns about the post-election period. AEA commented on the disquiet felt by those who wondered what would happen 'if one of the signatories of the Accords, or the two, were to lose the elections?'[41] CEAST spoke of the need for political parties and candidates 'to know how to win, to know how to lose, and to accept the result', calling on the parties to exercise

---

[36] AEA, text of an address by Octávio Fernando, December 27, 1991.
[37] AEA, text of an address by Octávio Fernando, September 25, 1992.
[38] CEAST (1991: 289).
[39] CICA 1992, *Mensagem*, read by Augusto Chipesse, September 1992.
[40] CICA 1992, *ibid*.
[41] AEA 1992, text of an address by Octávio Fernando, September 25, 1992.

'democratic wisdom'.[42] AEA encouraged the political contestants to adopt a 'civic posture' after the elections.

It is worth developing a comment made by CEAST two weeks after the signing of the Bicesse Accords which expresses a concern that has appeared frequently within Angolan society generally. CEAST questioned the exclusion from the political process of those who had not been involved in the armed conflict, of those who had struggled for peaceful resolution of the war:

> *[May we not be led into thinking that] only those who carried weapons deserve political rights, thereby marginalising those who suffered as a consequence of those weapons, as well as those who without recourse to violence fought for peace and democracy. Such a dangerous temptation could lead to new forms of unjust discrimination.[43]*

This theme is an important one because, from the Alvor Accords in 1975 to the Bicesse, Lusaka and Luena agreements, only those who have engaged in military struggle have secured a seat at the negotiating table. The voices and opinions of civil society actors, those who adopted non-military means to pursue their objectives, have not been considered during crucial moments of negotiation concerning Angola's future.

Much of the public communication from the churches during these sixteen months after the Bicesse Accords reveals serious reservations about the extent of political commitment to the democratic process. The churches hoped these misgivings would be unfounded, that Angola could move forward and build a lasting peace, but as can be seen from these statements there was a sense that all was not well in Angola at the time.

Role of the Media

A particular concern of the churches in the build-up to the 1992 elections was the content and tone of the media, particularly state-controlled media and UNITA's Vorgan. With the exception of radio LAC, which began broadcasting in Luanda a few days before voting, private media institutions did not exist in Angola prior to elections. On numerous occasions the churches called for the modification of language used in the media. Both sides continued to broadcast propaganda against each other after the signing of the Bicesse Accords, which led CEAST to request that the media also observe the Bicesse Accords.[44] The churches were conscious of the power of the media in relation to opinion formation, but also as a power to foster peace and reconciliation. AEA expressed concern at the 'language of intolerance in the mass media: instead of educating citizens about harmony, it feeds the tension and hatred which still exists'.[45] For CEAST:

> *The provocative language that the two major parties continue to use in the media does not convince listeners they are seeking peace. Once more we appeal to those responsible for information to eliminate all aggressive and provocative content from their communication. Seek the unity of the people, not their division.[46]*

---

[42] CEAST (1992: 289).
[43] CEAST (1992: 266).
[44] CEAST (1992: 265).
[45] AEA 1991, Text of an address by Octávio Fernando, December 27, 1991.
[46] CEAST (1992: 272).

In June, CEAST again requested moderation, this time ominously stating, 'it was exactly similar language to this that was heard before war broke out in 1975'.[47] Though the government and UNITA were on ceasefire, their media institutions remained on a war footing.

Voter Education

Given that Angola has only twice held parliamentary elections and once held presidential elections, it is worth exploring comment from the churches in relation to voter education. The issue is important because, while 92% of the 4.86 million registered voters cast their vote at the last elections, between 10-12% of the votes were either spoiled or blank ballot papers, which according to Maier 'only confirm[ed] the failure of voter education'.[48] However, while the need for voter education is undoubtedly essential, it is also important to remember that many chose to present spoiled or blank votes as a form of protest, as they did not wish to vote for any political party contesting the elections.

AEA commented on the length of time democratic transitions take, and pointed to the need for political education among the population: 'Democracy does not end with a simple act of voting, sometimes manipulated or worse still bought. Democratising a country is a long and exhaustive process. It necessarily involves education of the population at all levels of national life'.[49] The extent to which voter education appeared to have been absent from the electoral campaign can be gauged three months prior to the elections.

> *Much is said about the democratic elections in September, but the people do not know what they are for. And they cannot know why, while they haven't been informed about electoral law, the manifestos and political programmes of the diverse parties. Three months from the elections it is time everything was published and made available to the electorate. These need to know soon who they should choose . . . and they also need to know how the parties intend to govern. A liking for this or that candidate is not enough, it is necessary to know their political ideals with regard to governing.[50]*

Six weeks before the elections the situation was not much improved: 'The forthcoming elections will only be free if there is informed choice. And there will only be informed choice if the electorate know the parties sufficiently, their programmes and candidates, so as to compare one with the other, and choose between them which one seems best'.[51] The document continued: 'the general norm for a candidate or a party to be electable is the guarantee that they offer us of dedicated service to the common good and respect for human rights'. Based on these comments from the churches, it is quite clear that voter education was not given the priority it required, and with approximately half a million blank or spoiled votes the issue is one that will need much greater effort and commitment prior to the next elections. This is something already in evidence in Angola as churches and civil society organisations

---

[47] CEAST (1992: 281).
[48] Maier, K. 1996. *Angola: Promises and Lies*. Rivonia: William Waterman, p. 75.
[49] AEA 1992, *ibid*.
[50] CEAST (1992: 283).
[51] CEAST (1992: 286).

have begun electoral education programmes by training activists who work with local communities. Many of these programmes are being conducted in partnership with government, which has responsibility for electoral education.

From 1992 Elections to Lusaka Protocol

After the September 1992 elections, Angola was again thrown into the chaos of war. The alarming extent to which UNITA had not demilitarised in accordance with the Bicesse Accords became shockingly evident as it quickly took control of an estimated 70% of the country.[52] In the context of this new and bloody conflict, three aspects of the churches' discourse during the period are important: encouragement to accept democratic processes; underlying factors in the new conflict; and the media. This section relies substantially on documents from CEAST, as few AEA or CICA documents exist for the immediate post-election period. In addition to this information, interviews with members of CICA and CEAST have highlighted direct interventions made by their respective organisations to end the conflict. The nature of these interventions involved church delegations meeting with the political and military leadership of both sides in the conflict, appealing for an end to the hostilities. Those interviewed were anxious that such initiatives only be referred to generally in any publication, that at some point in the future the detail of such visits would be made public. It is clear that such interventions did not change the course of the war, but they highlight the fact that the churches were working behind the scenes, using the channels and resources at their disposal to attempt to resolve the conflict.

Acceptance of Democratic Processes

Initial disquiet after the elections centred on accusations of fraud that were not upheld by the international community, which declared the elections free and fair.[53] The first accusations of fraud were made by the newer political parties, and later by UNITA.[54] With Angola on the brink of war in 1992, CEAST encouraged the pursuit of legal mechanisms to resolve these fraud allegations. It reminded the parties that a second round of the presidential elections was still required, as no candidate had achieved the required 50% to guarantee election in the first ballot. It advocated a return to the spirit and the letter of the Bicesse Accords to overcome the political crisis and safeguard the 'miracle of peace'.[55] Peace was too valuable a prize to let slip and democratic processes should be accepted. These appeals were to no avail.

According to AEA and CICA the only way out of the conflict was through dialogue, tolerance and forgiveness.[56] Dialogue did take place at a number of locations. The first meeting was at Namibe, a southern Angolan coastal town, where hopes were

---

[52] Rothchild, R., & Lawson, L. 1994. 'The Interactions Between State and Civil Society in Africa: From Deadlock to New Routines', In J. Harbeson *et al.* (eds.), *Civil Society and the State in Africa*. London: Lynne Rienner, p. 135.
[53] Anstee, M. 1996. *Orphan of the Cold War: Th e Inside Story of the Collapse of the Angolan Peace Process*, 1992-93. Basingstoke: Macmillan/New York: St. Martin's Press, pp. 235-236.
[54] Paulino Pinto João, (leader of a coalition of fourteen political parties) stated that the first accusation of fraud was made by the FNLA on 2 October 1992. On 5 October he was spokesperson for a group of political parties claiming fraud, which included UNITA. Interview, Luanda, November 17, 2001.
[55] CEAST (1992: 292).
[56] AEA 1994, text of an address by Octávio Fernando, November 4, 1994; CICA 1992, *Declaração*, signed by José Domingos Caetano & Augusto Chipesse, dated October 22, 1992.

high that a ceasefire could be secured.[57] Failure resulted in talks being moved to Addis Ababa, where CEAST asked the parties to 'negotiate with their eyes fixed, not on their own Party interests, but the suffering of the people'.[58] Still without a ceasefire, the talks were transferred to Abidjan in the Ivory Coast but without success. The Abidjan failure saw the departure of Margaret Anstee as UN Special Representative, and marked the end of peace negotiations until the process was re-sumed in Lusaka under the new Special Representative, Alioune Blondin Beye.

The desperation and anger of the churches at the failure of the Abidjan talks was palpable. CEAST wrote:

> *Abidjan was a hope that turned to despair. The alleged reasons for its failure, even with the best will in the world, do not make sense to us. . . We had hoped that serious political will would inspire the imagination of the negotiators to find a solution to the impasse. But it did not happen. And the people continue condemned to death with hunger, exile, and all sorts of torment inflicted on them by the war.[59]*

This focus on the effect of the war on local populations has consistently been a key ele-ment in the churches' discourse throughout the years of conflict, critical of the inability of both sides to protect the lives of those for whom they claimed to be fighting.

Underlying Factors in the Conflict

In examining what the churches identified as underlying factors in the new conflict, it is noticeable how the churches, especially CEAST, refrain from apportioning blame in the conflict. This is somewhat surprising given that the international community was unambiguous in seeing UNITA's rejection of the election results as the reason for the war. At no point in the church-based documentation is UNITA referred to as the reason for the resumption of war.

CEAST believed that to take sides in the war would not have been conducive to the overall goal of national reconciliation, nor have facilitated the church's role in that process. CEAST explains its position:

> *For those hoping to see in the pastoral documents of CEAST condemnation of whoever is to blame in the actual conflict, it beholds us to state that to exercise our ministry of reconciliation, this is not the best way. . . However, we cannot refrain from condemning unjust situations by drawing attention to them in a way that people can examine their consciences, recognise the responsibility that belongs to them and take measures to end [these situations].[60]*

While apportioning no individual blame, CEAST points to injustices existing within warfare.

The CEAST position raises the question of whether in fact it considered UNITA responsible for the resumption of hostilities, but refused to say so. As mentioned earlier, CEAST itself was a divided institution, as there were senior bishops who supported UNITA, while others supported the MPLA. CEAST was in a difficult

---

[57] CEAST (1992: 198).
[58] CEAST (1992: 303).
[59] CEAST (1993: 311).
[60] CEAST (1993: 304-305).

position on this issue, as to have taken sides could have endangered its personnel working in areas controlled by the government and UNITA. The CEAST documents suggest that whatever the trigger factor in the war, it was quickly overtaken by other factors which then became the real issue. An examination of CEAST references to ethnicity and political manipulation clarifies this point. First, a few weeks into the conflict in November 1992, CEAST spoke of ethnic rivalry as the motivation behind much of the killing. Most seriously, CEAST commented that tribal rivalry had been 'ignited' in order 'to reap political dividends'.[61] It took the view that the wave of tribal killing had been politically orchestrated:

> *If the Angolan people were not manipulated, they would live together fraternally without turning ethnic differences into an obstacle to peace. Some years ago the city of Luanda used to have hundreds of thousands of citizens from other ethnic groups, mostly Mbundu [Ambundu] and Kikongo and there were no reports of tribal difficulties between them, nor with the local ethnic group. The same can be said of other locations in the country. For this reason, the responsibility for the recent political tribal events goes beyond the level of the ordinary people.[62]*

Secondly, twelve months later CEAST again addressed this theme of political manipulation of tribal sensibilities:

> *If in recent times things have happened that can have tribal connotations, this is due to the manipulation of leaders, who for their own interests, exploited dominant political rivalries in certain ethnic sectors. For this reason therefore, it is to the political leaders above all, that we address our appeal that they show human maturity in accepting their brothers and sisters from whatever ethnicity, in a generous spirit of national reconciliation, without any form of exclusion, without regarding them as possible political rivals.[63]*

These are serious accusations that CEAST levels at the feet of the political leaders, accusing them of having instrumentalised ethnic tensions for political gain. CEAST is making the point that 'ordinary' people had learned to live peacefully together, but political leadership had not. These failures of political leadership were a crucial and deadly dynamic in the conflict. Schubert's comment on the understanding of political power within the Angolan nationalist parties is most relevant: 'The government just as much as the rebels were only able to conceive of political power as a monopoly, combatting one another with a determination ever more exaggerated'.[64]

While Schubert was referring to Angola in 1975, CEAST was making a similar point in 1993. For Messiant, neither UNITA nor the MPLA were prepared to lose the elections, and the seeds for the failure of the Bicesse Accords and the return to war had thus been sown.[65]

Media

The critical stance adopted by the churches vis-à-vis the Angolan media continued

---

[61] CEAST (1992: 297).
[62] CEAST (1992: 297)
[63] CEAST (1993: 320).
[64] Schubert, (2000: 123).
[65] Messiant, C. 2004. 'Why Did Bicesse and Lusaka Fail? A Critical Analysis'. In *From Military Peace to Social Justice? The Angolan Peace Process*. Conciliation Resources, http://www.c-r.org/our-work/accord/.

throughout this period, becoming more pronounced. The severest criticism came in late 1992 when CEAST expressed the view that the state owned media had played a key role in setting Angola on the road to war.

The most decisive instrument in mobilising feeling for peace or war is the mass media — newspaper, radio and television.

> *We have absolutely no doubt about the devastating influence the media has exercised in relation to recent events. We therefore repeat our appeal to those responsible for the media on both sides, to use information to unite Angolans, and not divide. . . . The substance and the shape, even the tone with which communication is transmitted, the editorials and daily news, can be as much an invitation to reconciliation and peace as a stimulus for hatred and war. End this . . . communication which sees only good in your own party, and only evil in the other.[66]*

Clearly CEAST regarded the state and UNITA media as instruments of war and called for an end to the demonisation of the opposing side. The media was a key instrument in achieving political manipulation. CEAST hoped eventually to counteract this through the relaunch of its own station *Rádio Ecclesia* (only achieved in 1997), which had been closed since 1977.[67]

From the Lusaka Protocol to the 1998 War

After a year of negotiations in Lusaka, Angola's second international peace agreement was finally signed on November 20, 1994. The Lusaka Protocol ushered in a four-year period of relative peace, a period of 'neither peace nor war' by Munslow.[68] The implementation of the Protocol was slow, with many missed deadlines, though it did witness the inauguration on April 9, 1997 of GURN *(Governo da Unidade e Reconciliação Nacional)*, the government of unity and national reconciliation. The period was to end with Angola once more at war. This section examines the churches' peace engagement in the following areas; the need for concrete action to consolidate peace; democratisation; and (re)defining the conflict.

Peace Requires Concrete Action

Within the churches there was a sense of relief that a new peace agreement had been signed. However, the bitter experience of the Bicesse failure, and the subsequent devastation caused by two years of war, meant that, more than ever, the signing of a peace deal was but one component in a wider peacebuilding task, a view evident again after the signing of the Luena Memorandum. The churches had learned to be suspicious of promises that could prove hollow and challenged the peace signatories to consolidate the agreement through concrete action. The history of 1992 had shown that a highly publicised peace ceremony and lengthy verbal assurances counted for little, while rearmament was secretly occurring.

---

[66] CEAST (1992: 300).
[67] *Rádio Ecclesia*, with the support of international donors, invested in studios and infrastructure to achieve reception of its signal across the country. The passing of a new Media Law prohibited the activation of this infrastructure, classifying *Rádio Ecclesia* as a Luanda broadcaster with its signal is available only in Luanda and its hinterland.
[68] Munslow, B., 1998, 'Angola: The Search for Peace and Reconstruction'. In O. Furley & R. May (eds.), *Peacekeeping in Africa*. Aldershot: Ashgate, p. 187.

By March 1995, four months after the Lusaka Protocol signing, there was already public unease that the agreement was in trouble, as war preparations were once again in progress. CEAST expressed its profound apprehension at weapons' importation and recruitment of individuals below the minimum age for military service.[69] It called on the international community to act immediately and deploy the promised UN 'Blue Helmet' peace-keepers as a matter of urgency. In August 1995, AEA and CICA issued a press statement which outlined fresh concerns, highlighting the laying of new landmines, emphasising that the quartering of troops was not under way, and that military confrontation was still continuing.[70] The statement expressed criticism of the slow arrival of the Blue Helmets nine months after the Lusaka signing. All this provided evidence that the Protocol was in difficulty and that much needed to be done to bolster the peace agreement.

Democratisation

The published conference documents provide important insights into the Protestant churches' thinking regarding the democratisation process during this post-Lusaka period. A conference paper by the CICA secretary-general, Augusto Chipesse affirmed democracy as the only means for achieving lasting peace in Angola, which in turn would foster 'development and a just distribution of the wealth of the country'. He also argued:

> *It is within parliamentary democracy that ethnic problems, created generally by co-lonialism in Africa and Angola in particular, are and should be debated and resolved, because by any other means war will continue to enrich the weapons manufacturers, and producers of emergency food rations, of the already wealthy nations.[71]*

International weapons manufacturers and food producers were seen as benefitting from the Angolan war.

Despite the failure of elections, democracy was still understood as the best political framework within which to work for peace. However, the thinking had developed and viewed parliamentary democracy as the means to guarantee development and an equitable distribution of the nation's wealth, as the ideal forum for the resolution of Angola's problems, ethnic and otherwise. The seventy UNITA parliamentarians elected in 1992 still had not taken up their seats in the parliament. They would do so later, but, at the time of Chipesse's comment, the parliament consisted of the MPLA deputies and a handful of opposition parties. Emílio de Carvalho, bishop of the United Methodist Church of Angola (who had signed the 1975 ecumenical document referred to earlier), argued in his presentation for a new approach to politics within the churches. On the lack of Christian leaders within politics, he commented:

> *We have a dilemma: as politics progressively becomes the most decisive power in our society, . . . we are less able to act within it as Protestants and Christians. And what's happening? Cruel forces are taking control of our political institutions and our view of these institutions as contrary to 'Christian principles' . . . means we do*

---

[69] CEAST (1995: 343).
[70] EDICA, 1995, press statement, dated August 18, 1995.
[71] Chipesse, A. 1995. 'O Dirigente Cristão e a Política', conference paper during EDICA conference *É tempo para edificar* held in Luanda, September 6-10, 1995, pp. 9-10.

> *not participate in them. As a consequence of our attitude, Christianity in Angola will not exert any significant or positive influence in our future society.*[72]

A new theology of engagement was being called for within the churches, which considered politics as an arena of Christian activity. Those who wanted to enter politics as part of their Christian commitment were encouraged by Bishop de Carvalho to do so.

The EDICA conference also provided evidence that the Protestant churches had begun to review their former political affiliations. By 1994 AEA was expressing regret for 'having failed to be non-party political'.[73] This expression denotes a shift away from party-based support for particular political parties, to a concern for the wider health of the Angolan political system. The resolutions of the conference illustrate this shift, four of which address political issues faced by the churches. First, church members were encouraged to engage positively in politics to build a harmonious society, to promote justice and true peace. Secondly, Christian leaders were encouraged not to establish political parties, a resolution possibly connected with the proliferation of political parties occurring in Angola. Thirdly, Christian leaders were to refrain from making party-political statements which compromised their churches, but should use their influence to educate the people. Fourthly, the churches were not to identify with any particular political party, but were to transcend party politics. These resolutions capture the extent to which the major Protestant churches were redefining their public role in Angola and realigning themselves within Angolan society. At a church policy level, the resolutions reflected a desire to be politically relevant without being party political, a process CEAST underwent during early post-independence.[74]

(Re)defining the Conflict

As early as November 1992 CEAST revealed a fundamental shift in understanding the Angolan conflict when it stated:

> *the fighting of a new civil war will be against whom? Of UNITA against the MPLA, and of the MPLA against UNITA? None of these. It will be both sides against the people. . . In a civil war it is always two armies fighting against the people and the Nation.*[75]

This analysis of a war against the people formed the basis upon which CEAST, in 1996, defined the war as genocide. The relevant text emerged after the Lusaka Protocol:

> *. . . our past must be a lesson for the future. Therefore, what has our past been in terms of the war? A cruel genocide which wiped out hundreds of thousands of innocent people. A hell of destruction that has sent our country from the vanguard of most advanced African countries, to the bottom of the most needy people of our continent.*[76]

CEAST was the only church to apply the term genocide to the Angola war. The term is emotive, and its use just two years after the Rwanda genocide suggests

---

[72] de Carvalho, E. 1995. 'A Acção Social da Igreja no Desenvolvimento Integral do Homen' conference paper during EDICA conference *É tempo para edificar* held in Luanda, September 6-10, 1995, p. 2.
[73] AEA 1994, text of an address by Octávio Fernando, November 4, 1994.
[74] Schubert (2000: 127-130).
[75] CEAST (1992: 298).
[76] CEAST (1996: 363).

that certain parallels were being drawn. The application of the term in peacetime is somewhat unusual. The Protestant churches, by contrast, spoke instead of an unjust or fratricidal war.

While the international literature on Angola places much emphasis on the 'control of natural resources' as the reason for the war,[77] the church-based literature does not. The vital role of revenue from oil and diamonds was unquestionable in enabling both sides to prosecute the war. CEAST referred on numerous occasions to Angola's wealth as a 'curse', as neither side would have fought over a poor country to such an extent. When CEAST comments on natural resources, it is within a wider context and includes those involved in international trade with Angola. For example, CEAST averted to the existence '[of] groups, if not countries, interested in ruining our country even more with destructive weaponry sent here in exchange for diamonds and oil. To these people we simply ask that they not do to us what they would not want for themselves'.[78]

The comment requests countries and businesses involved in trade with Angola to consider what their purchase of oil and diamonds enabled the government and UNITA to do militarily. The resource argument is sometimes implicit within criticism of corruption within the country, and the disparity of wealth between rich and poor:

> *a word of condemnation against those who turn war into a lucrative business. To accumulate accounts in foreign banks and to get rich at the expense of the hunger, suffering, blood and death of your brothers and sisters is repugnant, which never should have a place in the heart of an Angolan, or any person.*[79]

The churches however, have never argued that the war is about control over natural resources. Oil and diamond revenues were utilised to prosecute the military campaign that, in the view of the churches, was caused by the inability of political leaderships to reach accommodation and be reconciled.

The War from 1998-2002

The chapter has traced the arguments set out by the churches over approximately ten years, and seen these change in response to political and military events, as well as in response to the humanitarian crisis. The churches collectively and consistently argued that dialogue represented the best way to achieve lasting peace, and identified ethnic divisions as the underlying factor in the conflict. Democratisation was seen perhaps in an idealised way, as the surest means to consolidate peace in Angola, and provide the proper forum where ethnic differences could be addressed in a non-violent manner. Though the question of ethnicity is referred to as a factor in the war, at no stage was the war described as an ethnic conflict. The churches also pointed to serious misgivings and reservations in relation to the role played by the state media, accused of having whipped up ethnic tension at sensitive times.

---

[77] LeBillon P, (2001), 'Angola's Political Economy of War: The Role of Oil and Diamonds, 1975-2000', *African Affairs* No. 100:55-80. Also, Malaquias, A. 2001. 'Making War & Lots of Money: The Political Economy of Protracted Conflict in Angola'. *Review of African Political Economy* 90, 521-536.
[78] CEAST (1995: 344).
[79] CEAST 1999, *Salvemos a vida dos Angolanos*, July 25.

It was pointed out that church interventions to end the conflict, such as private meetings with political and military leaders, were conducted in a diplomatic manner, which the churches themselves have not made public. Access to this material would provide a fuller picture of what the churches concretely did to promote peace, but interviewees regarded this information as confidential, as something that would be made public at some point in the future. However, with the beginning of the third war, the question of the visibility of the churches' actions in relation to peace changed with the foundation of COIEPA, the ecumenical peace commission. This section is divided into three parts, looking first at COIEPA; secondly, the Luanda Peace Congress of July 2000; and, finally, mediation initiatives. The return to war in 1998 reveals a new determination within the churches to work for peace, and a change in strategy manifest in new concrete peace initiatives.

With the return of military conflict, a new determination became evident within the Angolan government, a determination to prosecute the war so that a military victory would end the conflict once and for all, and deliver peace to Angola.[80] UNITA had been forced to withdraw to the east of Angola following its retreat from Bailundo in Huambo province. In the government offensive against UNITA, local populations were displaced from their villages and forced to take refuge in urban areas such as Luena. The emptying of the countryside had a progressive and debilitating effect on UNITA, as it secured the majority of its food supplies from local communities and also used local people to carry goods, including weapons. Furthermore UNITA troops were forced to flee government forces that had fanned out across the eastern provinces, or surrender, as a great many did.

Formation of COIEPA

The coming together in 1999 of AEA, CEAST and CICA to form COIEPA was a significant development, a response to the renewed outbreak of war that had taken place in late 1998.[81] COIEPA was responsible for 'coordinating the church contribution to the search for peace' and described itself as the product of a new ecumenical vision in Angola. It hoped that the churches could participate more actively in the search for just and sustainable solutions to the problems underlying the national conflict. As far back as 1992, CICA recognised that ecumenical relations were unsatisfactory, and that Angola's peace and reconciliation depended in many ways on a strong ecumenical base to unite the nation. The suggestion here is quite clear: that peace between Angola's political parties depended on the ability of the churches to work together. In a similar vein, as seen in the introduction, Messiant argued that

> *the failure to secure peace in Angola was also a failure of the Christian churches, arguing that traditional rivalries and disunity between the churches impacted negatively on the search for peace and reconciliation: . . . within the failure to secure peace, one cannot but equally see a failure of the Christian churches, to the extent that, uniting about 90% of Angolans, they were the largest civil force in 1991 and the only possible national moral*

[80] Hodges, T. 2004. *Angola: Anatomy of an Oil State*. Oxford: James Currey, pp 16-17; Messiant, C. 2003. 'Les Eglises et la dernière guerre en Angola (1998-2002). *LFM, Missions et Sciences Sociales* 13, 75-117.
[81] A working group was formed on 19 October 1999 for six months, and COIEPA was founded on April 15, 2000.

authority. Failure, firstly, in that they could not avoid a return to arms . . . And also perhaps, a failure in its message of peace and reconciliation.[82]

The linkage suggested by Messiant raises important issues, though there is an over-estimation of the membership and authority of the Angolan churches in 1991.[83]

A number of reasons are suggested as to why the churches failed to unite for peace. Schubert highlights the option of the Methodist church to uncritically support the MPLA government after independence, in effect becoming the state church. Heywood points to the strength and dominance of CEAST as a problem, because, as 'the only national organisation with the prestige and power to challenge the state on behalf of the suffering Angolan people, [it] failed to find common alliance with the weaker and more marginalised Protestant and independence groups'.[84] Elsewhere, Schubert suggests that CEAST was content to go it alone rather than pursue an ecumenical approach. Messiant locates the churches' failure in relation to peace, specifically in the absence of a common ecumenical peace vision. Without a joint approach, she argued that the churches could not have an effective role in advocating peace.

Particularly within the international community, COIEPA achieved prominence and became the vehicle of communication at an international level for the Angolan churches, and indeed for many within civil society. Within Angola, ironically, COIEPA remained relatively unknown. Nationally individual churches preferred to use their own names and structures when communicating on peace, as they were better known than COIEPA. The 2001 award of the European Union's Zakarov human rights prize to bishop Zacarias Kamwenho, president of COIEPA and CEAST, did much to raise COIEPA's profile at home, and recognise much good work already done at the level of international advocacy. The award served to focus attention generally on the growing peace movement within Angola. Kamwenho himself spoke of the award as recognition for all Angolans working for peace.[85]

The guiding principle within COIEPA was that dialogue represented the best way to achieve peace and reconciliation. The basis for dialogue was the Lusaka Protocol, which COIEPA considered 'a forum of approximation, where the most delicate issues and representatives of all interested sectors of the nation, would be brought to the negotiating table, so as to avoid possible political pretexts for a return to war'.[86]

The principle of 'dialogue', appearing to suggest renegotiation of the Lusaka Protocol, brought COIEPA into conflict with the Angolan government, which ruled out such a possibility. For government, the time for dialogue was over and full implementation of the Lusaka Protocol was required. For the churches however, much had changed in Angola that needed incorporation within the peace process, since the signing of the Protocol. The general secretary of CICA, Luis Nguimbi summarised the churches' argument in 2001:

---

[82] Messiant (2000: 1).
[83] Different figures are given for the number of Christians in Angola. Hearn (1997: 201) gives a figure of 69%. Henderson (1990: 8) suggests 50% Catholic and 20% Protestant, but mentions that membership is counted differently. Catholic numbers include children who are baptised, with Protestant figures stressing adult membership.
[84] Heywood, L. 2002. 'Church, State and War' (review of Schubert 2000). *Journal of African History* 43:181-182.
[85] Zacarias Kamwenho, Catholic University of Angola, November 16, 2001.
[86] CICA 2001, newsletter (91-93), June 15, 2001.

> *Lusaka continues to be valid because there is no other document to substitute it. But Lusaka cannot be the bible for the country. It is a solid basis, but it belongs to seven years ago. The country has not stopped, politics has not stood still. The country has developed and this must be included.*[87]

COIEPA represented an important institutional development. As an institutional mechanism it promoted cohesion between the churches and provided a focal point for many civil society organisations working for peace. In fact, COIEPA 'institutionalised' this focal point further in November 2001 when it founded a peace network *(Rede da Paz)*, which brought together other churches, civic organisations, NGOs and traditional authority figures, all sharing the objective of 'peace through dialogue'. For Messiant, this civic movement was seen by the Angolan government as a new force, opposed to its war strategy of 'peace through war'.[88] Furthermore, COIEPA succeeded in breaking down the polarisation of political debate in Angola by situating itself as the voice of the people, a position challenged by the government, which reminded the movement that it alone was the elected representative of the Angolan people. Since the ending of the conflict, COIEPA's ecclesial coordination role and its national profile have decreased, though it is likely to play an important role in electoral monitoring at the next elections.

Pro Pace Peace Congress 2000

The hosting of a peace congress in July 2000, under the auspices of CEAST's peace movement, *Movimento Pro Pace*, was an event of much significance. It brought together representatives from the Angolan government, from political and parliamentary parties, twenty-two churches, NGO and civil society organisations, as well as foreign ambassadors.

It is possible to summarise the main points of the Congress by reference to some of the ten conclusions presented on the final day.[89] For example, the Congress called for: a greater spirit of democracy (No. 1), greater tolerance (No. 2), human rights education as part of school curriculum (No. 6), and action against landmines (No. 7). It also called for a ceasefire (No. 8) as a 'first step towards peace' and the establishment of some form of permanent dialogue to include 'the most representative levels of civil society, such as the churches, political parties and other institutions' (No. 9). The four-day Congress served to add momentum to the peace movement that was slowly forming in the wake of the return to war. Much like COIEPA, the Congress was openly challenged by the Angolan government, particularly evident in comment from the state media, above all the national newspaper *Jornal de Angola*. For example, an editorial entitled 'The Road to Peace' on the first day of the congress, July 18, 2000, adopted a confrontational stance against 'those who wanted peace at any price'. It reaffirmed the Angolan government's position that peace depended on the implementation of the Lusaka Protocol, or the acceptance of a pardon offered to Jonas Savimbi. The editorial presented the government's military campaign as a defence of democracy and of sovereignty:

---

[87] Interview with Rev. Luis Nguimbi, Secretary General of CICA, Luanda, November 21, 2001.
[88] Messiant (2003).
[89] CEAST 2001, *Congresso Pro Pace Documentos*. Gráfica Lux da Diocese do Úije.

> *In the exercise of its constitutional prerogatives, it fell to the Angolan government to take the difficult decision, to reduce and dismantle the war machinery of Jonas Savimbi. The government had no other choice: either it made war, or it passively watched the ruin of the nation. If today, sectors of civil society come together in relation to a peace movement, it is because the campaign of the Angolan Armed Forces has positively changed the balance of power militarily. . . It never ceases to cause amazement why pressure for peace is not applied in the direction of UNITA's armed wing. . . It is strange how those who want peace at any price, pretend not to know that a peace agreement already exists. . . [It was] to guarantee freedom and democracy — that the decision was taken to disarm the illegal forces threatening the country.*

An article on July 19 criticised CEAST for treating both sides in the war as 'belligerents' and for not pointing the finger of blame at Jonas Savimbi as the sole reason for the continuance of the war. A column on July 21 accused 'apologists in favour of dialogue of placing the aggressor and the victim on an equal footing, and of ignoring the 1992 elections', all of which read as propaganda against the Congress, and the impossibility of dialogue with UNITA.

One of the speakers within the Congress was Bishop Matteo Zuppi of the Rome-based Sant'Egidio ecumenical community, responsible for facilitating the negotiations that led to the peace agreement in Mozambique. CEAST was trying to suggest that a similar peace strategy could be followed in Angola, if both sides agreed to church-led negotiations. The Congress 'opened debate on ways to achieve peace, and helped society lose its fear of publicly discussing alternatives in order to leave behind the intrigue of war'.[90] Bishop Mata Mourisca, president of *Movimento Pro Pace*, summarised the principal benefits of the Congress as 'breaking the taboo of silence regarding the road to peace,'[91] and challenging the principle that the war would ultimately bring peace to Angola. As far back as 1994 a message of 'encouragement' from a group of Protestant churches to those involved in the Lusaka negotiations stated that the war had 'no military solution'.[92] CEAST made the same claim in 1997, that 'this long war of thirty five years has left it abundantly clear, that the Angolan question does not have a military solution'.[93] As became clear in 2002, with the death of Jonas Savimbi, the conflict did have a military solution.

Mediation Initiatives

At different stages in the Angolan conflict offers were made by various churches to mediate. The earliest such offer in the literature is from CEAST (1986:131) in February 1986, but it fell on deaf ears. In 2000 COIEPA put forward a considered proposal, suggesting a panel of twelve members to explore possible avenues towards peace between the two sides. This was rejected by the government.[94] Again in 2001, church-based mediation was on the agenda, this time in response to Jonas

---

[90] Espiritanos. 2002. 'Angola com Esperança', located at http://www.espiritanos.org/africa/angola-dossier-mar2002.htm
[91] Espiritanos, *ibid*
[92] The text is signed by Octávio Fernando of AEA, and Augusto Chipesse of CICA.
[93] CEAST (1997: 370).
[94] 'Government rejects church offer to mediate peace talks' http://www.reliefweb/int, August 11, 2000.

Savimbi's May 2001 letter to CEAST, where he expressed support for the churches' peace initiatives, though he did not request church mediation. The letter states:

> *I write . . . about the great challenge for peace (through dialogue). I also write to actively encourage you to participate in this difficult task which the present moment bestows on us. . . We would like to see COIEPA and Pro Pace initiatives move forward. We believe they have an historical and relevant role to offer the Angolan people, providing incentives for reconciliation.[95]*

It took some time to establish the authenticity of the letter, but, when CEAST replied in August, it came as a joint response from the Catholic bishops of Southern Africa, who had met in Harare. The document reads:

> *In the name of Christ and of the suffering Angolan people, we ask the Angolan president and leader of UNITA to meet in a neutral place with the view to dialogue on the ending of war and the future of the nation. The Church gladly offers its help in finding a convenient location, as well as competent and acceptable facilitation for such dialogue.[96]*

This offer to find acceptable facilitation for dialogue was not accepted. CEAST was criticised in some quarters because its views reflected a return to a polarised understanding of the Angolan conflict, suggesting that a resolution could be achieved by President dos Santos and Jonas Savimbi meeting together. This offer departed from the consensus that had been growing within civil society, that meetings of this sort were part of the problem, as other civil forces were excluded. In response to this criticism CEAST revised and restated its position later in 2001:

> ' *. . . however we believe that it shouldn't only be the government and UNITA sitting at the negotiating table, but also representatives from other political parties and civil society'.[97]*

Post Luena Memorandum

The signing of the Luena Peace Agreement was a dream come true for all the Churches. The gradual opening up of the country enabled the churches to provide pastoral care to provincial and rural communities that had been cut off from assistance, many for a lengthy period. As we will see below, in the sub-section on peace consolidation, assistance also involved helping communities support and cope with the process of social integration and the legacy of conflict, a process that is ongoing. It was particularly in these areas where it was necessary to work to build the peace, given the sensitivities present. Secondly, the section looks at issues of social justice and transparency, a theme that grew in importance in the post-Luena period, due to post-war economic growth and the rise in the price of oil.

Peace Consolidation

It is especially at local levels, within communities, where the Angolan churches have done most to build peace in the country. In many parts, the process of social reintegration, where ex-combatants and returnees came back to their former homes to live side

---

[95] Savimbi, J. 2001. Letter to CEAST, dated May 13, 2001, published in Agora, May 19, 2001, pp. 6-7.
[96] CEAST 2001, Mensagem dos Bispos Católicos da Africa Austral ao Presidente da Repúiblica de Angola, ao Lider da Unita e ao Povo de Angola. August 10, 2001, Harare, Zimbabwe.
[97] CEAST 2001, *Justiça e Pão para Todos.* November 10, 2001.

by side with those who had remained during the war, brought significant challenges and tensions. Many IDP's and refugees, as well as demobilized soldiers, returned with material support from government and international agencies to assist in rebuilding their lives, while little or no support was available for the receiving community. In many receiving communities, especially in the central highlands, a feeling of injustice prevailed based on a perception that those who perpetrated the war and who fled were being rewarded, fuelled further when returnees sought to regain their properties and land that may have been occupied in their absence. Peace building initiatives, such as human rights and civic education projects,[98] focusing on interventions within local communities, provided spaces for the sharing of information and discussion on issues of concern. On the whole, these initiatives were organised around church activities, frequently being conducted in churches following Sunday service. Funding from donor organizations was made available to church and local organisations to address these issues and facilitate the reintegration of returnees with communities.

Social Justice and Transparency

Mention must also be made of the increased profile CEAST assumed in the years following Luena in relation to economic justice and transparency. CEAST established an Economic Justice Unit within its national Justice and Peace Commission in 2004, a timely initiative that assisted in monitoring revenues from the oil and diamond industries, which has risen dramatically due to increased production and higher international prices, and to a lesser extent monitor Chinese investment, which became increasingly significant in financing national reconstruction. Swiss Peace regarded CEAST as a major actor regarding 'internal pressures on transparency issues', pointing particularly to one of CEAST's more influential pastoral letters 'For Economic Justice', released in October 2006, which called on the Angolan government to take urgent measures to overcome the 'paradox of the plenty'.[99] The Bishops were critical of the continuing large budget allocations for defense and security, while social sectors remained under funded and Angola's human development indicators continued among the worst in the world. CEAST was extremely critical of and regarded the confidentiality clause for oil companies in the Law on Oil Activities of 2004 as a main obstacle for transparency, and urged the Angolan government to 'actively participate' in the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI).

Conclusion

As can be seen in this chapter, the churches played a central role in Angolan society in defending human rights and promoting peace and democracy, and were a key reference point for wider civil society engagement on these issues. Such ongoing engagement from the Angolan churches is important in ongoing consolidation of peace and democracy in the country.

 The churches were an important voice on behalf of the suffering population who paid the highest price for the years of bloodshed, even though appeals for dia-

---

[98] Development Workshop promoted a civic education project for ex-combatants in 2003/04, in partnership with the Churches, IRSEM (government institute responsible for the social integration of ex-combatants), and other government ministries. The project built on the activities and partnerships within its Peace Building Programme.
[99] http://www.swisspeace.ch/

logue and reconciliation between those at war fell on deaf ears. It was also seen that the churches themselves, through the formation of COIEPA, felt the need to come closer together in the pursuit of peace, a move that served to heal historical differences between the churches themselves.

III – *Southern Africa Context*

SOUTH AFRICA, NAMIBIA, MOZAMBIQUE, DEMOCRATIC
REPUBLIC OF CONGO & ZIMBABWE

Dale McKinley
Henning Melber
Manuel de Araújo & Raúl Chambote
Leo Zeilig
Elinor Sisulu, Pascal Richard & Steve Kibble

WITHER CIVIL SOCIETY IN SOUTH AFRICA?

Dale T. McKinley
Indaba Social Movements

The transitional inheritance

Historically, the dominant ideology of revolutionary struggle in South Africa has been one of statism, wherein the seizure and exercise of power has been conceptualised as coterminous with the State itself. However, the self-organisation of workers and grassroots struggles for immediate reforms, both political and/or socio-economic, that rose to prominence in the 1980s, challenged this conception. Parallel to the collapse of the statist models in the former USSR and Eastern Europe and the prospect of a negotiated transition in South Africa, the notion of civil society as an antidote to the statism of Stalinism and social democracy was resurrected.[1] At the same time, "the concept of civil society was being shaped by global ruling class power to support anti-statism, and to separate politics from welfare and economics".[2]

Thus, leading up to South Africa's 'negotiated transition' of the early 1990s, there were two diametrically opposed concepts of civil society in play, irrespective of their apparent 'anti-statist' commonalities. On the one hand, the idea of civil society as a predominately working class-rooted, collective political and organisational societal 'space', where a 'people's power' can be effected to contest and shape political and economic power in society as a whole, inclusive of the State. On the other hand, civil society as a classless idea, encompassing all social forces outside of orindependent from the State, whose main role is to act as an institutionalised check on State power (the 'watchdog' role) and to practice an 'extra-politics' parallel — and often complementary — to State power, with no direct connection to the actual exercise/shaping of a political and socio-economic power that determines societal development.

In one of the many ironic 'twists' of the early years of South

---

[1] See Chapter 7 in, Hein Marais (1998), *South Africa: Limits to Change* (London: Zed Books).
[2] Stephen Greenberg & Nhlanhla Ndlovu (2004), 'Civil society relationships' in, *Mobilising for Change: New Social Movements in South Africa*, Development Update, Vol. 5, No. 2: p. 25.

Africa's 'negotiated transition', it was the main liberation movement (later govern-ing party), the African National Congress (ANC), that succeeded in effecting the latter role of civil society which, in turn, reinforced the historical ideology of statism. By the mid-late1990s, the ANC had achieved this through two separate, but inter-linked moves: the systematic demobilisation and/or incorporation of most all of the independent working class organisations and movements (the only 'constituency' capable of leading and carrying through a revolutionary struggle for fundamental changes in political and socio-economic power) into either the ANC itself or the various levels of the — newly democratic — state; and the ANC's own political and ideological acceptance of the broad framework of a globally dominant, neo-liberal political and economic orthodoxy[3], with all of its attendant institutional demands and policy prescriptions.

Indeed, it is the strategic statism of both the ANC's pre-1994 struggle for national liberation and post-1994 exercise of state power — combined with its overall embrace of neo-liberal orthodoxy — which has ensured that the core of its own working class base, whose historic organisational and political character were grounded in a struggle for political and socio-economic liberation from apartheid-capitalism, have had to take a transitional back seat to a whole host of powerful social and economic forces whose fundamental interests are inimical to any radical political and socio-economic transformation. The false separation, both theoreti-cally and practically, between political and socio-economic change and between the (autonomous) state and (independent) 'civil society', has meant that concepts such as democratisation and development have taken on a narrowly bourgeois, nationalist and predominantly political meaning — in which any ongoing struggle to fundamentally shift/change power relations within society is subordinated to the exercise of institutionalised political and socio-economic power.

In other words, the new South Africa has, from its beginnings, privileged the societal status quo — capitalism — and the institutions of bourgeois democracy essential to its maintenance. It is only within this 'transitional inheritance' that the trajectory and character of South Africa's civil society can be understood.

Divide, co-opt and rule

> *We must understand that the new democracy cannot allow for hostile surveillance of the democratic process and the participants in this process (Thabo Mbeki - 1994)[4].*

When South Africa's first ever one-person, one-vote elections in 1994 resulted in an overwhelming victory for the ANC, the majority of South Africans understandably celebrated the arrival of a new democracy. After all, the ANC and its liberation

---

[3] The key policy framework underpinning this was the 'Growth, Employment and Redistribution' (GEAR) programme unilaterally implemented by the ANC government in 1996. This was ameliorated, to some extent, by a period of intense legislative activity in the first 3-4 years of the ANC's coming to power — legislation that was designed to repeal apartheid-era discrimination and facilitate new social and economic opportunities for 'historically disadvantaged' sectors of the population.

[4] Thabo Mbeki (1994), 'From Resistance to Reconstruction: Tasks of the ANC in the New Epoch of the Democratic Transformation — Unmandated Reflections', unpublished mimeo. This document, which remained in the possession of a select few ANC-Alliance hands until the late 1990s, was penned when Mbeki was ANC Deputy General Secretary and was circulated amongst the Alliance leadership prior to the ANC's 49th National Conference in December, 1994.

movement allies were now in political control of the state thanks to the votes of those who had, throughout South Africa's modern history, been denied the right of institutionalised democratic participation.

However, there still remained a broad based (but ultimately mistaken) expectation amongst the black majority that the new ANC state would immediately begin to pursue a more socialist — or at the least, radically redistributive — political economy. The basis upon which such expectation had been built derived from the militant mass-based political and socio-economic struggles that had been waged by unions and community organisations (and supported by more radical NGOs) since the mid-1980s, alongside the continued 'socialist' rhetoric of the ANC itself.[5] "As has happened so often in newly liberated countries, the euphoria of political transition led many to expect that the need for adversarial social struggle with the state was over (…)".[6]

After assuming power though, it did not take long for the new ANC state to show its true ideological colours. Its adoption of the overtly neo-liberal *Growth, Employment and Redistribution* (GEAR) macro-economic policy framework in 1996, codified the new government's commitment to macro-fiscal discipline, export-oriented growth, privatisation, a flexible labour market, decreased levels of corporate taxation and full-scale integration into the logic of a globalised capitalist system of production and accumulation.[7] Just as crucially though, GEAR served to further catalyse a fundamental change in the ANC's (and thus the newly democratic state's) relationship with 'civil society' — from one that had historically been defined by a recognition of the leading political and ideological role and place of the forces of the broad working class, to one that now prioritised institutionalised corporatist relationships involving all social forces in the project of 'nation building' through political 'consensus'.

This relational change was underpinned by GEAR's choice of socio-political 'vehicles' for carrying though with the 'transformation' of South Africa's inherited political economy. It was proffered that a combination of economic affirmative action (through land distribution to a new class of black commercial farmers and state assistance to emerging black industrial entrepreneurs), new black economic empowerment initiatives with both state and corporate capital as well as public-private 'partnerships' in the provision of economic and social services would best 'deliver' the desired outcomes of economic redistribution/growth, social equity, job creation and the meeting of basic needs.

The organisational groundwork for this rightward ideological shift of the ANC had been laid soon after the ANC's return from exile in early 1990. Instead of supporting and strengthening the plethora of community/civic organisations (along with

---

[5] Throughout the late 1980s and first two years of the 1990s, the ANC had consistently kept to it's 'line' that, once in power, it would nationalise key sectors of the economy, would set about a radical redistribution of land and wealth and would ensure that the black working class became the main 'driver'/ controller of a 'people's' state dedicated to popular/participatory democracy. The ANC's adoption, in 1994, of the fairly radical, social-democratic *Reconstruction & Development Programme* (as its electoral platform), served to further fuel such expectations. For a detailed exposition of the 'fundamentals' of the RDP see, National Institute for Economic Policy (1996), 'From RDP to GEAR', Research Paper Series (Johannesburg: NIEP).

[6] Richard Ballard, Adam Habib & Imraan Valodia (2006), 'Social Movements in South Africa: promoting crisis or creating stability?', in Vishnu Padayachee (ed), *The Development Decade? Economic and social change in South Africa, 1994-2004* (Cape Town, HSRC Press): p. 397.

[7] See, Adam Habib & Vishnu Padayachee (2000), 'Economic Policy and Power Relations in South Africa's Transition to Democracy', University of Natal — Durban School of Development Studies Research Paper.

progressive unions) that had formed the backbone of the anti-apartheid struggle in the 1980s — and which had come together in the United Democratic Front (UDF) and its successor, the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM) – the ANC called on all civics/community structures to fold-up and become part of ANC branches or to join the newly launched South African National Civics Organisation (SANCO) which, it was announced, would become the 'fourth' member of the Tripartite Alliance. Simultaneously, the ANC further formalised its political alliance with the main trade union federation — the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) — and the main 'left' political party, the South African Communist Party (SACP) — by setting up numerous (consultative) Alliance structures and drafting key leadership figures into its electoral list for all levels of government.

Not long after its ascension to state power, and consistent with the socio-political thrust of GEAR, the ANC was quick to set-up national structures to give institutional form to its corporatist commitments. The National Economic, Development & Labour Council (NEDLAC) was formed, in which 'civil society' was represented by a 'development chamber' (consisting of chosen NGOs/CBOs), a labour component (consisting of recognised/organised union federations) and a corporate component (consisting of representatives from capital/big business). At the same time, legislation was passed — e.g., the Non-Profit Act of 1997 — and institutions set-up like the Directorate of Non-Profit Organisations (which required NGOs/CBOs to officially register with the state), and the National Development Agency ("to direct financial resources to the sector").[8] All of this fit comfortably within the ANC government's push "for a more formalised civil society constituency as part of a developmental model where formally organised groups participate in official structures to claim public resources" and where "the role of such organised groups is constructed along the lines of official government programmes, without space to contest the fundamentals of those programmes".[9]

This sanitising of civil society was only further reinforced by the post-1994 crisis of funding that confronted most independent community organisations and progressive NGOs who were largely dependent on donor funding. Both domestic and foreign donor funding took a radical turn after the 1994 elections, away from previous commitments to independent grassroots mobilisation and struggles and towards state-directed 'developmental' programmes (such as the Reconstruction and Development Programme -RDP) and state-sponsored social welfare 'partnerships' with approved civil society organisations. The dual result was a "development agenda" increasingly driven by state and private (corporate) donor funding and the death of the vast majority of independent, and in many cases anti-capitalist, civil society organisations.[10]

Cumulatively, these developments meant that by the mid-late1990s the vast majority of what had constituted a South African civil society rooted in broad working class politics and struggles, and which had sustained the hope of millions for an anti-capitalist transformation of South African society, had effectively been smashed. Whether swallowed by the ANC, absorbed into other Tripartite Alliance structures, hobbled by the co-optation of key leaders into the state and associated

---

[8] Ballard *et al.* (2006): p. 397.
[9] Greenberg & Ndlovu (2004): pp. 32-33.
[10] These points are taken mainly from Greenberg & Ndlovu (2004): pp. 30-31.

corporatist institutions or starved of financial resources, the bottom line was that the political and organisational terrain for active and militant resistance to the ANC's creeping neo-liberalism, elite deal making and wholesale acceptance of the institutionalised framework of bourgeois democracy had been contained.

New Contestations, New Divisions

It might well be argued (and indeed it has been[11]), that the presence of COSATU and the SACP, as part of both a formal alliance with the ruling ANC party as well as the 'traditional left' in South Africa, necessarily translates into a vibrant 'working class civil society' capable of, and willing to, contest fundamentally the politics, policies and overall developmental agenda of the state. However, the reality is that the acceptance of an unequal and essentially subservient political relationship within an ANC-dominated alliance[12] — which is supposed to act as the political master of the state — as well as participation in corporatist institutionalism, has served to tie organised workers and large numbers of community activists with historic ties with, and/or sympathy to, the Alliance, into a false sense of ideological and strategic unity with the ANC/state and, even if to a lesser extent, with corporate capital.

In turn, this conceding of political, and thus organisational, independence has facilitated the belief in the interlinked notions (energetically propagated by the ANC and numerous Alliance leaders) that all South Africans can 'find' a 'national consensus' about the economic and social path upon which the country should travel and that class struggle (with all its attendant contradictions) can be effectively 'managed'.[13] This has practically translated into a situation over the past several years in which the most organisationally and politically powerful components of the kind of 'working class civil society' previously mentioned, have effectively substituted themselves for the same.

Such subjective choices on the part of COSATU and the SACP - alongside SANCO and several other organs of civil society with historically close links to the ANC (e.g., the South African Council of Churches - SACC), has done little to stem the effectual tide of increased socio-economic inequality and poverty[14], alongside political marginalisation, that have been experienced by most workers and all poor communities across South

---

[11] Such arguments have been vigorously proffered by successive leaders of both COSATU and the SACP ever since the early 1990s. While references are far too numerous to list here, most of the key documents/ speeches that have been made public over the last ten years or so can be found on the respective websites of the two organisations: http://www.cosatu.org.za and http://www.sacp.org.za.

[12] This acceptance has not been without its vocal critics within both COSATU and the SACP. For a detailed treatment of debate and opposition within the Alliance since 1994 see, Dale T. McKinley (2001), 'Democracy, Power and Patronage: Debate and Opposition within the ANC and Tripartite Alliance since 1994', in Roger Southall (ed), *Opposition and Democracy in South Africa*, (London: Frank Cass Publishers): pp. 183-206.

[13] For an overview (since 1994) of the varying contents and consequences flowing from this reality see, Dale T. McKinley (2003), 'The Congress of South African Trade Unions and the Tripartite Alliance since 1994', in Tom Bramble and Franco Barchiesi (eds), *Rethinking the Labour Movement in the 'New' South Africa*, (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishers): pp. 43-61.

[14] There are numerous studies and reports conducted over the last several years that confirm this state of affairs. For example, see: 'South Africa Survey' (2006) compiled by the Institute for a Democratic South Africa — http://www.int.iol.co.za/index.php?art_id=qw114416064258B211&set_id=1&click_id=13&sf=; Stats South Africa (2002) – http://www.statssa.gov.za; the Report of the 'Committee of Inquiry into a Comprehensive System of Social Security for South Africa' (2002); the 'Report of the South African Cities Network' (2004); University of South Africa (2004), 'Projection of Future Economic and Sociopolitical Trends in South Africa up to 2025'; United Nations Development Programme (2003), 'South Africa Human Development Report' .

Africa since the late 1990s. Indeed, it was the cumulative result of such political choices and socio-economic realities experiences that eventually saw the rise of a range of new social movements and community organisations in the early 2000s.

At first in South Africa's main urban centres and then later in rural communities, a collection of social movements arose to challenge water and electricity cut-offs, housing evictions, forced removals and lack of land redistribution. As Ashwin Desai has noted:

> *The rise of these movements based in particular communities and evincing particular, mainly defensive demands, was not merely a natural result of poverty or marginality but a direct response to state policy. The state's inability or unwillingness to be a provider of public services and the guarantor of the conditions of collective consumption has been a spark for a plethora of community movements (and) the general nature of the neo-liberal emergency concentrates and aims these demands towards the state (…) activity has been motivated by social actors spawned by the new conditions of accumulation that lie outside of the ambit of the trade union movement and its style of organising. What distinguishes these community movements from political parties, pressure groups and NGOs is mass mobilisation as the prime source of social sanction.[15]*

The rapid growth of these organisations and movements, coupled as it was to their increasingly militant opposition to the policies of the ANC-run state, soon led to a rupture within South African civil society — between those opposed to the ANC state's political trajectory and economic policies and those that chose continued (even if at times critical) loyalty to the state and the ANC 'party line'. This was best exemplified in the run-up to, and during, the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in August 2002, which saw a decisive split between the two 'camps' — the former gathering together under the rubric of the Social Movements Indaba (SMI) and the latter collectively grouped under the Civil Society (People's) Forum. Confirmation of this developing fault line came in the form of symbolically important dual marches on the WSSD, with the march by the SMI and allied formations such as the Landless People's Movement attracting over 25 000 people onto the streets and the ANC-Alliance backed Forum march attracting fewer than 5000.[16]

Over the last six years, this rupture within South Africa's progressive civil society has gradually widened as a result of a consistent state campaign of rhetorical vitriol against, and physical assaults on, the new social movements and community organisations[17] (often with the tacit/silent 'support' of the various leaderships of COSATU, SACP, SANCO, SACC etc.); the continued failure of this 'traditional

---

[15] Ashwin Desai (2002), 'Witnessing the Transition', article posted on the website of the Centre for Civil Society – http://www.nu.ac.za/ccs.

[16] Social Movements Indaba (2002), 'Historic United Social Movements Mass March To WSSD Sends Clear Message – The People Will Be Heard', SMI Press Release, 1st September – http://www.apf.org.za.

[17] The most public expressions of the ANC's evident contempt for the new movements and their struggles was an ANC statement in 2002, accusing them of being an "ultra left … waging a counter-revolutionary struggle against the ANC and our democratic government", and of siding with the "bourgeoisie and its supporters" [See, ANC (2002) 'Contribution to the NEC/NWC response to the Cronin interviews on the issue of neo-liberalism', Internal ANC paper by the Political Education Unit (September). President Mbeki waded in soon thereafter by claiming publicly that, "this ultra-left works to implant itself within our ranks … it hopes to capture control of our movement and transform it into an instrument for the realisation of its objectives" [See, Mbeki (2002), 'Statement of the President of the ANC, Thabo Mbeki, at the ANC Policy Conference', Kempton Park (20th September) – http://www.anc.org.za/docs. Since the WSSD in 2002, hundreds of community activists have been arrested, jailed and several tortured — See Simon Kimani (ed) (2003), The Right to Dissent (Johannesburg: The Freedom of Expression Institute).

left' to seriously engage with, politically support and provide material solidarity to, community struggles against the state's service delivery policies; and the organisational and ideological gate-keeping of 'working class civil society' that is demanded by the SACP and COSATU's alliance with the ruling ANC party.

Despite the obvious organisational weaknesses and politically incipient nature of the new movements, it has been the organisational and ideological gate-keeping role of the SACP and COSATU in particular, which has ensured that the possibilities of a united 'working class civil society' capable of fundamentally contesting the state, capital and broader power relations within society as a whole, have remained still-borne. Despite their radical rhetoric and Congress resolutions, COSATU and the SACP have, time and again, shunned any meaningful support for, and solidarity with, the new movements whilst consistently affirming their loyalty to the ANC. Indeed, both have been at pains to stress that their opposition to state policies, and critiques of the ANC itself, are "not challenging the ANC"[18] and have nothing to do with those of the new struggles. They have also actively sought to prevent rank-and file structures/members from working with such movements and struggles. As one former leading COSATU figure has tried to politely rationalise it: "(…) where we differ with our friends in the social movements is that we prefer to engage [the state]".[19]

Ultimately then, it is the alliance with the ruling ANC that prevents organisational and political unity within and amongst the key organs of 'working class civil society', and thus continues to ensure that the state is able to pursue, without much hindrance, a policy framework that is not in the interests of South Africa's workers and poor. For Ali Tleane, a former leading member of SANCO, the connections are clear: "SANCO can't speak on behalf of civil society because it takes orders from the ANC government".[20] Dinga Sikwebu, a former leading official in one of COSATU's largest unions also states the case: "The leadership and conservative layers [in COSATU] have something to preserve in the existing status quo (…) COSATU gains something from the ANC — status and all the other perks (…) whilst the ANC guarantees all those things, this relationship between the ANC and the union movements will always be there because they feed into each other (…) these [new social] movements threaten this political relationship …".[21]

What the recent past and subsequent developments since then[22] evince is a clear ideological and organisational divide amongst the key components of South African civil society. A large portion of the new social movements and community

---

[18] COSATU (2005), "Response to Sunday Independent article', Media Statement, 7 August.

[19] As quoted in, Habib &Valodia (2006): p. 249.

[20] As quoted in, William Mervin Gumede (2006), *Thabo Mbeki and the Battle for the Soul of the ANC* (Cape Town: Zebra Press): p. 276.

[21] In, Tom Bramble & Franco Barchiesi (2003), 'Pressing Challenges facing the South African Labour Movement: an Interview with John Appolis and Dinga Sikwebu', in Tom Bramble & Franco Barchiesi (eds), *Rethinking the Labour Movement in the 'New South Africa'* (Aldershot: Ashgate): p. 224.

[22] As an example of the consistent intensity and scope of grassroots community protests — the vast majority of which have revolved around the lack of service delivery — in more recent times, in the year leading up to the 2006 local government elections there were, according to the Office of the Minister of Safety and Security, (at least) two local councillors killed and the homes of many others torched in 881 'delivery' protests — an average of more than two a day. See Penny Sukhraj (2006), 'Belief in government promises is a key to local elections', The Star (9 January) ; Also see, Vicki Robinson, Monako Dibetle & Marianne Merten (2006), 'The ANC monolith starts to crack', Mail & Guardian (24 February — 2 March).

organisations represent those who increasingly desire to push beyond the enforced boundaries of institutionalised bourgeois democracy, who are actively engaged in grassroots struggles in opposition to many state policies and who pursue an independent, mass-based mobilisation as the only meaningful and realistic option for resisting global neo-liberalism and laying the groundwork for the possibility of an ideological and organisational alternative to existing political party politics. Amongst the new social movements however, there have been (and continue to be) substantive organisational differences and political debates. While these movements do not form an homogenous entity, they have become inextricably bound together by the levelling content and common forms of the neo-liberal onslaught, both nationally and, to a lesser extent, internationally[23].

On the other 'side' stand the 'traditionally' progressive forces of South African civil society, represented in the main by the various leaderships of COSATU and the SACP, and in broad alliance with those of SANCO, SACC and the South African Non-Governmental Coalition (SANGOCO). Whilst occasionally engaging in extra-parliamentary activities designed to influence the character and content of specific state policies, regularly employing left rhetoric and proclaiming organisational independence, they have critically accepted the ANC state's deracialised capitalist developmentalism, lost most of whatever confidence they did have in the 'leading role' of the broad working class (both domestically and internationally) and chosen institutionalised democratic privilege and sporadic access to state power — all rationalised by reference to historic liberation Alliance loyalties, the necessities of completing an ill-defined 'national democratic revolution' and the 'realities' of global capitalism.

As a result, these components of 'traditional' working class civil society have continued to play the ANC-Alliance political 'game'. While this has contributed to minor policy shifts and occasional genuflections by the ANC state towards mitigation of rising inequalities and poverty, these have not happened in isolation from the myriad protests and mobilisations that have taken place outside the ANC-Alliance nexus and which have arguably been just as responsible for various policy shifts and the more recent rise in political contestation within the Alliance. Indeed, the ANC is probably more wary of service delivery protests in poor communities and accompanying disillusionment (read: electoral abstentionism) with ANC 'rule' than with the regular sniping and critiques of this 'traditional' working class civil society.

The unfortunate but predictable result has been that the politics and practical work of both the SACP and COSATU have become, over the last three years in particular, tied directly to what is going on inside the ANC-Alliance as a result of intensifying personal and positional power struggles. This is the logical outcome of such an approach and it has effectively paralysed the SACP and COSATU's ability to organise and mobilise on genuinely practical, working class and poor people issues, where their programmes and critiques are actually put to the test in real struggles happening on the ground and in the arena of democratic contestation for societal power. Confirmation of this state of affairs could be seen at the ANC Policy Confer-

---

[23] For a more detailed exposition of these positions flowing from the WSSD see, John Apollis (2002), 'The Political Significance of August 31st', *Khanya*, No. 2 (December): pp. 5-9.

ence, SACP 12th Congress and the ANC National Conference at Polokwane (all in 2007), in the form of the dictates of the personal battle between the 'camps' of the ex South African President (and at the time still ANC President), Thabo Mbeki, and ex South African Deputy President (and at the time ANC Deputy President), Jacob Zuma. The preceding mobilisation campaigns and practical work tended to ape this contest (i.e., the degree to which it will, or won't, take forward the personal positions and accompanying politics of this or that 'camp').

Because the SACP and COSATU refuse to cut the long-standing umbilical cord with the ANC, the core of their critiques and struggles centre around contesting the character of the Alliance and ANC governance, not the systemic nature of the inequalities and injustices of the deracialised capitalism of which the ANC has long been a champion. A classic example of this is the SACP/COSATU's attack on South Africa's post-1994 'accumulation path', where the critique centres on the particular character of this 'accumulation path' (for example, enrichment for the few, consolidation of the post-1996 'class project' in the ANC through use of inherited state institutions etc.) — not the path itself. In other words, the two main 'traditional' working class forces in South Africa refuse to identify capitalism itself — and the capitalists who own the means of production — as the core foundation of South Africa's accumulative 'path', and thus to engage in a mass-led, anti-capitalist struggle as opposed to a rhetorical critique of specific South African characteristics of capitalist accumulation which might, or might not, result in incrementalist changes to macro-economic policy.

As a result, they have no other option but to continue to propagate the idea that the sidelining of the individuals and selected class forces (within the ANC-Alliance) that are pursuing this 'accumulation path', will then evidently result in the possibilities of pursing a different 'path'. The practical manifestations of this approach have been clear for all to see since the ANC's Polokwane Conference in late 2007. Throughout 2008 then, the core struggles of the SACP and COSATU have become a battle politically and organisationally to 'cleanse' the ANC of its historic and more contemporary progeny. Put another way, the political and organisational defeat of those who want their 'fair share' of the capitalist system as was so clearly enunciated by ANC Secretary General, Dr. Xuma, all the way back in 1945.[24] This battle has seen the ANC's axing of the country's President, the recent formation of a break-away political party — the 'Congress of the People' (COPE) - from within the ANC and the increasing embracement of the reactionary politics of ethnicity, misogyny, racialism and creeping intolerance.[25]

---

[24] In 1945, then ANC President, Dr. A.B. Xuma stated: "… it is of less importance to us whether capitalism is smashed or not. It is of greater importance to us that while capitalism exists, we must fight and struggle to get our full share and benefit from the system". As quoted in Robert Fine and Denis Davis, *Beyond Apartheid: Labour and Liberation in South Africa* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1990): 52.

[25] Over the last several months of 2008, senior ANC leaders alongside those of the ANC Youth League, have publicly labelled the judiciary as 'counter-revolutionaries' and more specifically, black judges who have made judgements against the ANC, as 'apologists' of apartheid. Even more vitriolic have been the names used to describe COPE, amongst which have been: 'snakes', 'dogs' and 'cockroaches'. ANC President Jacob Zuma's own recent pronouncements that the way to deal with rampant crime is to deny bail to criminals and the answer to teenage pregnancies in poor communities is to take the babies away from their young mothers foreshadow what could potentially be a reactionary, inward turn towards a pseudo-'traditionalist' social fascism.

Democracy, the state and civil society under capitalism

> *The political system of liberal democracy looks more and more like a mixture of plebiscitary dictatorship and corporate oligarchy.*[26]

The dominant theoretical construct that has informed interrogations of, and approaches to, South Africa's 'democratic transition' — i.e. capitalist (bourgeois) liberalism — falsely separates democratic form, content and context. As such, democracy has been, and continues to be, conceptualised outside of its historical materialist base, as some sort of neutral principle floating somewhere outside material relations. The result is a single analytical starting point; namely, that democracy is a function of institutional arrangements within capitalist society. In turn, this leads to the concept of class and the practice of class struggle being understood solely in relation to the dominant, contemporary institutional forms of democracy under capitalism (i.e., representative democracy and corporatism).

This necessarily leads to a focus on existing institutions of representation and corporatism as the axle upon which any meaningful social and political activity, and accompanying relevance, turns. In relation to the character, content and activity of South African civil society then, the main argument, vigorously punted by ANC/Alliance intellectuals[27], is that the only acceptable and legitimate way to impact on, and potentially change, both state and society is for all organs of civil society to participate in the existing institutional 'democratic' framework (i.e., 'institutionalised politics').

The conceptual heart of this argument is fundamentally embedded within the precepts of classic bourgeois liberalism and is wholly consistent with the 'in vogue' notion (and self-ascription by the ruling ANC) of a 'developmental state'. Under this rubric, institutionalised pluralism becomes the essence of both democracy and development, regardless of the dominant social relations within which such pluralism operates. The problem here is obvious though — such an institutionalisation, under capitalist social relations, has always and everywhere led to an inevitable 'democratic' sterility. Pluralism simply becomes a catchword for a range of organisational and individual 'voices', regardless of their respective class locations and relationships to those who 'own' dominant political and socio-economic power, that are contained and limited within the narrow institutional and political confines of 'liberal' capitalism.

This offers precious little in the way of seriously contesting the parallel character and content of a capitalist state and the policies it implements, but instead, allows the state to champion a democratic 'developmentalism' that effectively corrals and deflates grassroots struggles for more radical change. In this way, the state not only "legitimises itself through civil society, but also shapes [and controls] the terrain upon which civil society makes demands on it".[28] As a result, the space for any kind of fundamental (revolutionary) systemic challenge and/or an alternative politics that is not bounded by *status quo* institutionalism, is both managed and progressively narrowed. The effects of this institutionalised sterility on the long-term capacity of

---

[26] James Cornford as quoted in, Michael Levin (1989), *Marx, Engels and Liberal Democracy* (New York: St. Martin's Press): p. 145.

[27] See, for example, Michael Sachs (2003), 'We don't want the fucking vote: Social movements and demagogues in South Africa's young democracy', South African Labour Bulletin, Vol. 27, No. 6 (December): pp. 23-27.

[28] Greenberg & Ndlovu (2004): pp. 24-25.

working class organs of civil society, both in South Africa and elsewhere, effectively to challenge the agenda of capital and the state institutions that now act, in the main, as the 'public' arm of the private (capitalist) sector, are clear to see.

Regardless of the political democratisation that has taken place in South Africa since 1994, the South African state remains a capitalist state (albeit a deracialised one). While the state (both in general terms and as applied to South Africa) is a complex entity possessing its own set of internal contradictions, it is not a neutral institution that can somehow be enveloped and radically transformed through participation in its associated institutional 'network'. States are, as Marx so cogently argued, the organic repressive and ideological apparatuses of a class and in South Africa's immediate future that class is capitalist. This fact remains, no matter the hypocritical attempts by the new black elite (both inside and outside the state) to present themselves as part of the broad working class and somehow suspended above material relations and class realities.

Certainly the South African state has played, and will continue to play, a role that is not necessarily always in line with the highest expectations and demands of corporate and finance capital. It will no doubt, for example, continue to play a part-time welfarist role that tries to smooth over class conflict and struggle. However, while capitalist relations remain the driving force in society, the state will always imbibe and reflect those dominant relations in the most specific of ways. The kind of classless analysis of democracy, civil society and the state that, it would appear, dominates most intellectual endeavour — no more so than in respect of post-apartheid South Africa — can only lead directly to the kind of quiescent and sterile 'institutional politics' that any genuine and self-respecting working class movement must surely avoid, and transcend[29].

If we understand contemporary politics under capitalism as the continuing (if differentiated) practice of class struggle, then we can also understand why the existing state, its institutionalised politics and socio-economic policies and the political party that runs it are seen, and treated, as a central target of the marginalised and the oppressed. The democratic content of subsequent struggle cannot be manufactured and/or imposed. Those struggling to create new avenues of political expression, to free themselves from the shackles of capitalism's 'democracy' and to lay foundations for radical socio-economic change, will create it.

Realities and Choices

Fourteen years on since the so-called 'miracle' of 1994, South African society (and by extension, 'civil society') is at a crossroads. Despite being a country with immense amounts of natural wealth, a highly-developed industrial, communications and transport infrastructure, democratic institutions and considerable human resources, for a majority of South Africans (alongside those of millions of immigrants and refugees from the rest of Africa) life remains a serious struggle. Contemporary South Africa is characterised by rising socio-economic inequality and poverty, a healthcare

---

[29] Eric Hobsbawm's argument that intellectuals who have been part and parcel of a revolutionary party/liberation movement most often retreat into the "posture of the (liberal) advocate" once they have realised that the politics-ideology of that party/movement is not going to deliver what was expected, rings true in the South African case. See, Hobsbawm (1973), *Revolutionaries* (London: Phoenix Publishers).

and education system in deep trouble, the consolidation and expansion of highly unequal economic ownership/patterns of accumulation (by both domestic white/black and international corporate capital), as well as the increased centralisation of political power in the hands of an ANC-aligned bureaucratic black elite which has control of the state. Parallel to, and flowing from, these developments, there are extremely high levels of social violence and a rapidly growing atomisation of society (based on the cult of consumerism and individualism) which has seen a general decline in basic human values and collective solidarity.

The 'old' and 'new' poor have been marginalised in every conceivable way but such is the historical memory and symbolic power of the ANC-led liberation struggle (coupled to the effective betrayal of the poor by the leadership of the 'working class forces' within the Alliance — i.e., COSATU and the SACP), that the ANC and the state it controls have been able to enjoin the poor in their own oppression. Small-scale (and mostly defensive) struggles of resistance to the present state of affairs are surfacing — and growing — but they do not, as yet, pose any significant political or socio-economic threat to either the political hegemony of the ANC or the (deracialised) capitalist path being so actively pursued.

Those components of civil society that are politically radical and organisationally independent face some fundamental choices: a gradual acceptance of "liquidation into state and party structures"; the "abandonment of the state"[30] as an arena for the contestation of societal power; or, the charting of a new path of struggle and collective solidarity that confidently asserts a dynamic, organic independence which moves beyond the historical lacunae of party politics, is rooted in practical grassroots struggles that encompass a local, national and international character and which targets both the state and capital, transcends the prescribed civil society 'niche areas' of activity and seeks to effect a broader societal change of consciousness that can lay the foundation for a more radical, anti-capitalist and democratic transformation of individual citizen, the state and material society .

It is surely the last choice that is the one that must be made if working class components of civil society in South Africa are to bring about any meaningful transformarion. But in order to get there, the more immediate challenge in the South African context will be one of forging a broad unity of purpose/intent which will require a "reconfiguration of allegiances (…) [in the face of] the new ruling party's repressive requirements of continued loyalty and acquiescence".[31]

Real, lasting democracy cannot be achieved or measured by institutional process and representation, administrative fiat, political proclamation or false societal consensus — but by consistent and radical popular participation at all levels of society, coupled with mass mobilisation against the dominant relations of power. This will provide the possibility of ushering in a society where the fundamentals of life are the property of the demos, not of a state, not of a political party and not of a capitalist elite.

---

[30] Greenberg & Ndlovu (2004): p. 47.
[31] Venitia Govender (2003), 'The Regional Impact of the Current Zimbabwean Crisis', in *Civil Society and Justice in Zimbabwe: Proceedings of a Symposium held in Johannesburg, 11-13 August 2003* (Arcadia: Themba Lesizwe): p. 108.

GOVERNANCE, POLITICAL CULTURE AND CIVIL SOCIETY UNDER A CIVIL LIBERATION MOVEMENT IN POWER: THE CASE OF NAMIBIA

Henning Melber
The Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation

This article highlights trends in the post-colonial political culture under the previous liberation movement SWAPO of Namibia.[1] Like other anti-colonial movements in Southern Africa, which had resorted to armed resistance as ultimate form of the struggle for liberation from colonialism, it seized legitimate political power and has occupied the state apparatus since the end of white minority rule. Re-organised as parties, these movements had obtained the power of definition in the political arena and shape public discourse to a considerable extent. In pursuance of their nation building, they tend to operate with and along rather strict concepts of inclusion/exclusion. The legitimacy of these governments is based on being the — more or less democratically — elected representative of the majority of the people. At the same time, however, the democratic notion remains a contested territory.

Political Hegemony Under Swapo

The most striking phenomenon in terms of political development since Namibia's Independence has been the constant gain and consolidation of political power and control by the former liberation movement. From election to election during the first fifteen years, it managed to add further strength to its dominant role. Swapo had originally failed to obtain the aspired two-third majority votes in the elections for the Constituent Assembly in November 1989. During the national elections in December 1994, Swapo obtained almost the same number of votes than in 1989, while the total number of votes dropped significantly.

---

[1] It is the considerably revised and updated short version of an analysis on government and opposition: Melber, Henning (2007), '"SWAPO is the Nation, and the Nation is SWAPO". Government and Opposition in a Dominant Party State. The Case of Namibia' in Katharina Hulterström/Amin Kamete/Henning Melber, *Political Opposition in African Countries. The Cases of Kenya, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe*. Uppsala: The Nordic Africa Institute (NAI Discussion Paper; no. 37), pp. 61-83. The South West African People's Organisation (originally SWAPO) was later re-named SWAPO of Namibia and in the process of abandoning its liberation movement character into Swapo Party. Reference is made in this paper both to SWAPO or Swapo, depending on the context and/or the source/document quoted.

As a result, the party obtained sole control over the law-making process through a two-third majority in parliament. It maintained and consolidated its two-third majority during the decade since then.

As from the mid-1990s a political system emerged, which displayed tendencies towards a dominant one party state under increasingly autocratic rule.[2] For du Toit, the erstwhile liberation movement had with the election results of 1994 secured the position of an "electorally dominant party", which was "well positioned to establish a 'cycle of dominance'".[3] Not surprisingly, no numerically meaningful opposition party could firmly establish itself as a relevant political counter weight to be considered as a serious challenge to the political hegemony of the former liberation movement.

Based on its reputation as the country's liberating force and in the absence of serious political alternatives, Swapo managed firmly to entrench political dominance by means of obtaining a continuously higher proportion of votes in a largely legitimate way. The far-reaching mandate encouraged the misperception that the government is supposed to serve the party and that the state is the property of the government. With the two-third majority obtained since the second legislative period beginning in 1995, Swapo-lawmakers were also securing a quasi-monopoly over the parliamentary decision-making process. Furthermore, the appointment of more than half of the party's parliamentarians as ministers or deputy ministers degraded the parliament to a rubber stamping institution, which hardly ever tried to control the executive.[4] Consequently, the Constitution was changed for the first time in 1998. Despite strong objections from most other political parties and within the public sphere, Swapo's politically elected representatives in both houses (the National Assembly and the National Council) executed the constitutional modification allowing its President a third term as Head of State.[5] The same year (1998), the country joined a war in the DR Congo as a result of a personally ordered intervention by the Head of State. Neither the Cabinet nor the Parliament was consulted.

Critical voices on these and other issues were and continue to be labelled as unpatriotic elements. Loyalty to Namibia is equated with loyalty to Swapo's policy and in particular the policy executed by the party's President. As legacy of both colonialism and the struggle against foreign rule a critical assessment concluded already in the mid-1990s that a "psychosis of fear is permeating the entire Namibian society".[6]

[2] Keulder, Christiaan/Antonie Nord/Christoph Emminghaus (2000), 'Namibia's Emerging Political Culture' in Christiaan Keulder (ed.), *State, Society and Democracy,. A Reader in Namibian Politics*. Windhoek: Gamsberg Macmillan, pp. 237-263

[3] Du Toit, Pierre (1996), 'Comparing Political Party Systems in Southern Africa', in *Building Democracy Perceptions and Performance of Government and Opposition in Namibia*. Windhoek: Namibia Institute for Democracy and Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, p. 59.

[4] Melber, Henning (2006), 'People, Party, Politics and Parliament: Government and Governance in Namibia' in Mohamed Salih (ed.), *African Parliaments: Governance and Government*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 142-161 (also Cape Town: HSRC Press 2007)

[5] Melber, Henning (2006), '"Presidential indispensability" in Namibia: moving out of office but staying in power?' in Roger Southall/Henning Melber (eds), *Legacies of power: Leadership change and former presidents in African politics*. Cape Town: HSRC Press and Uppsala: The Nordic Africa Institute, pp. 98-119.

[6] Diescho, Joseph (2008), 'President And Other Leaders In Violation Of The Constitution', *The Namibian*, 5 December, p. 16.

A culture of silence has since then become a constitutive part of Namibia's political realities, in which "good patriots" don't criticise. Dissenting views are marginalised. Nation building efforts take place at the expense of minorities. Gay-bashing and xenophobic sentiments are among the repertoire of the highest political office bearers, often combined with an "anti-white" slant.

The independence of the judiciary is openly questioned when it takes unpopular decisions not in favour of the government's political will. The weekly Swapo newspaper "Namibia Today" attacks those not in line with what is considered (in a narrow sense of the meaning) the defined party policy in the most vulgar way and uses name-calling as a comfortable strategy to avoid arguments over subject matters. Party officials (including members of Cabinet) have articulated on numerous occasions their undemocratic views to the extent of voicing unconstitutional demands without being corrected by the party leadership or government. Self-enrichment by higher-ranking officials and politicians utilising their access to the state apparatus has so far been tolerated[7] and illustrates the emergence of a new post-colonial class interest among the political elite.[8] The practices applied in pursuance of such a strategy guided by material self-interest of the new elite are anything but consolidating a culture of transparency and accountability and hence also undermine the democratic process and its consolidation. Those who have the courage to act as whistle blowers are often themselves the subject of enquiries, face disciplinary punishment and are accused of betraying the national interest.

The parliamentary and presidential elections on 15 and 16 November 2004 provided the so far latest results to illustrate the overwhelming dominance of the party in power. The way in which party political office bearers as public servants abused their access to state owned facilities during the campaign confirmed once again the existing misperception equating the party with government and government with the state. State facilities and public property, e.g. means of transport and communication, were used for party propaganda purposes during the election campaign. The state owned Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) devoted disproportional time in its news programs in radio and television to reporting in favor of Swapo. The same was partly true for the way Swapo has mobilized voters ever since being in government, as it "often fails to differentiate between its existence as a party and as the government when listing its achievements".[9] It even goes a step further by simply refusing to be measured against other parties. When in 2004 party representatives were approached to offer their views on the economic

---

[7] Kössler, Reinhart/Henning Melber (2001), 'Political Culture and Civil Society: On the state of the Namibian state' in Ingolf Diener/Olivier Graefe (eds), *Contemporary Namibia. The first landmarks of a post-Apartheid society*. Windhoek: Gamsberg Macmillan, pp. 147-160.

[8] Tapscott, Chris (1995), 'War, Peace & Social Classes' in Colin Leys & John Saul, *Namibia's Liberation Struggle. The Two-Edged Sword*. London: James Currey and Athens: Ohio University Press, pp. 153-170; also Tapscott, Chris (2001), 'Class Formation and Civil Society in Namibia' in Ingolf Diener/Olivier Graefe (eds), *Contemporary Namibia. The first landmarks of a post-Apartheid society*. Windhoek: Gamsberg Macmillan, pp. 307-325; also Melber, Henning (2005), 'Namibia's post-colonial socio-economic (non-)transformation: Business as usual?', *Nord Süd aktuell*, vol. 19, nos. 3 & 4, pp. 306-321; Melber, Henning (2007b), 'Poverty, politics, power and privilege. Namibia's black economic elite formation' in Henning Melber (ed.), *Transitions in Namibia. Which changes for whom?* Uppsala: The Nordic Africa Institute 2007, pp. 110-129.

[9] Boer, Martin (2005), 'Taking a Stand: Comparing Namibia's Political Party Platforms' in Justine Hunter (ed.), *Spot the Difference. Namibia's Political Parties Compared*. Windhoek: Namibia Institute for Democracy, p. 53.

policies they pursue, "the ruling Swapo party decided not to participate arguing that this research project was designed to help opposition parties".[10] Swapo's view is simply that any information on any other party than itself is considered an undue interference in state affairs.

Out of a record number of well above 800,00 ballots (some 85% of close to one million registered voters) Swapo again secured above 75% of the valid votes and 55 out of the 72 seats in the National Assembly from March 2005 onward. During the fourth legislative period, parliamentarians represent seven different parties (previously five) with six of them sharing 17 seats.[11] Opposition parties were both internally and among each other more divided than ever before, while the different party programs showed little to no substantive alternatives. Instead, ethnic-regional patterns re-surfaced, which du Pisani[12] once described as "the rise of older identities". This ultimately benefits once again the hegemonic status of Swapo, which had so far as a power base the unconditional support from the most densely populated areas in the North, representing more than half of the total electorate. In the end, smaller opposition parties may mushroom, but remain without influence beyond their local support base:

> *while the fragmentation of parties into smaller groups, often with an ethnic pitch to the voters, may have prevented the opposition vote deteriorating from its 1999 position, it also produces a bits and pieces opposition.[13]*

There was hardly any doubt that Swapo had clearly retained the dominance it had consolidated since Independence. Numerous minor irregularities and inconsistencies in the electoral procedures, discrepancies in the voters' list and the casting and counting of votes, as well as an undue delay in announcing the election results, however, provoked a subsequent legal intervention, questioning the results of the parliamentary vote. The High Court ruled in favour of the application. After hearing the complaints it ordered a vote recount. This resulted in only minor differences from the original results, leaving the distribution of parliamentary seats unchanged. The two main complainants questioned the recount procedures and registered their objections to the influence of Swapo officials in the process. However, they did not appeal in court. The newly elected members of the (4th) National Assembly were subsequently sworn in on 20 March 2005.

While the legal dispute showed "that there is scope for significant improvement in the way elections are regulated, managed, observed and monitored"[14], the composition of the members of the Electoral Commission of Namibia (ECN) was

---

[10] Sherbourne, Robin (2004), *On the record: Political party representatives challenged. Part 2: Economic programmes.* Windhoek: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and Namibia Institute for Democracy (Analyses and Views; no. 4), p. 2.

[11] The most detailed, solid and authoritative information on the panorama of both the political structures and system of Namibia as well as the policy makers and other figures of so-called public interest offers the encyclopedic volume compiled by Hopwood, Graham (2006), *Guide to Namibian Politics*. Windhoek: Namibia Institute for Democracy (revised and updated edition).

[12] Du Pisani, André (1996), 'State Power and Social Forces in Namibia', in *Building Democracy Perceptions and Performance of Government and Opposition in Namibia*. Windhoek: Namibia Institute for Democracy and Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, p. 42.

[13] Hopwood, Graham (2005), 'Trapped in the Past: The State of the Opposition', in Justine Hunter (ed.), *Spot the Difference. Namibia's Political Parties Compared*. Windhoek: Namibia Institute for Democracy, p. 142.

[14] Kaapama, Phanuel (2005), 'Preconditions for Free and Fair Elections: a Namibian country study', in Jeanette Minnie (ed.), *Outside the Ballot Box. Preconditions for Elections in Southern Africa 2004/2005.* Windhoek: Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA), p. 113.

during 2005 confirmed by re-appointing the relevant office bearers (including the chairman of the commission) for another term. A critical article in a local monthly magazine[15] received a harsh response from the Director of Elections and CEO of the ECN. In a letter to the article he stated: "we are not surprised by the unpatriotic spirit, with which certain articles are published".[16]

While a slogan in the days of the liberation struggle claimed that SWAPO is the people, the adjusted slogan for today might be that Swapo is the government and the government is the state. This tendency towards abuse of state power fails to acknowledge and hence disrespects the relevant difference between a formal democratic legitimacy (through the number of votes obtained in a free and fair general election) and the moral, ethical dimensions and responsibilities of such legitimacy. As a result, also in Namibia, "the state often uses democracy to per-petuate hegemony rather than to advance rights, liberty and democracy".[17] Sev-eral examples in recent years offer empirical evidence to substantiate the case in point. They confirm the suspicion that "the adoption of non-democratic measures is often justified against the backdrop of achieving 'national' objectives through a democratic mandate".[18] The contested results of the last parliamentary and presidential elections of November 2004 are a recent case in point. The degree of dominance by Swapo seems to be more of interest to the party than the legitimacy of its mandate.

As one of the few independent-minded Namibian scholars observed:

> *SWAPO has shown over the years a desire to establish a permanent relationship with the state machinery in order to protect itself, and thereby entrenching its hegemony in the allocation of resources. As a consequence of the fused party-state apparatus, it has become the norm for ministers, who are also party leaders to use officialdom for party-dom, if one could use such a word. […] These actions … compromise the very integrity and essence of the constitutional state that ought to be nurtured because it places the political party above the nation it ought to serve. The monopolistic party has reduced the formal institutional processes of government to a mere appendix at the whims of a factional political elite.[19]*

Government, Political Opposition and Civil Society

The plural, multi-party character of Namibia's political system contrasts with the lack of substantive political-ideological differences among the major parties. As a detailed and systematical comparison documented: "Ideology itself does not seem to play a large role in Namibian politics".[20] An analysis of the economic program

---

[15] 'New Commission, same old problems', in: *Insight*, Windhoek, November 2005.
[16] Kanime, Philemon H. (2006), 'The Electoral Commission of Namibia responds', *Insight*, March. In early 2008, the same official was suspended and ultimately released from his position, after he had registered the latest opposition party (see below), which was considered as an act of subversion. In late 2008, he declared that he left Swapo to join the new party.
[17] Salih, Mohamed M.A. (2000), *Majority Tyranny in a World of Minorities*. The Hague: Institute of Social Studies.p. 24.
[18] *Ibid*.
[19] Hengari, Alfredo Tjiurimo (2008), *Thinking about democracy in Namibia*. Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien (BAB Working Paper No. 5: 2008), p. 4.
[20] Boer, Martin (2005), 'Taking a Stand: Comparing Namibia's Political Party Platforms' in Justine Hunter (ed.), *Spot the Difference. Namibia's Political Parties Compared*. Windhoek: Namibia Institute for Democracy, p. 54.

of the various parties reiterates that, "there is fundamentally little to distinguish between the ruling party's economic policies and those that would be pursued by the opposition parties".[21]

In confirmation of this phenomenon, states: "Namibia's main parties remain broadly centrist, and could be seen as more pragmatic and less ideological in nature."[22] Kaapama reaches the same conclusion: "Looking at the party manifestos, […] perhaps Namibians are even more extravagant than the Americans, in the sense that they are presented with nine parties to choose from, but their policies are not significantly different".[23] Joseph Diescho had already observed almost a decade earlier:

> *One of the strengths of SWAPO is its ability to appear to transform itself from a non-democratic, authoritarian, top-down organization to a democratic, participatory organization while essentially remaining the same. It is this style of political chicanery that makes it very difficult to form opposition against SWAPO. In this context SWAPO owes its resilience more to a lack of challenge than to its own strength.*[24]

It would therefore be somehow unfair and too one-sided, "to lay the burden of democracy on only the Government itself".[25] Following the political discourses within the Namibian public sphere, it is striking to see how little they are carried or shaped by any of the opposition parties. There are other agencies, which pursue much more pro-active and interventionist initiatives. More visibility (with often not more favourable funding) obtained at different stages since Independence by civil non-party agencies like the National Society for Human Rights (NSHR), research institutions such as the Namibian Economic Policy Research Unit (NEPRU), the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) and the Labour Resource and Research Institute (LaRRI) as well as a number of other non-governmental advocacy groups such as the Namibia Institute for Democracy (NID), the Legal Assistance Centre (LAC) and the Sister Namibia Collective — to mention only some of the more prominent ones. They are in different ways engaged in the promotion of social justice and a human rights oriented culture. By doing so, they have so far shouldered the main burden of consolidating a democratic society, while political parties, churches, the labour movement and the private sector were all too often not meeting such expectations. One of the most prominent businessmen of Namibia observed self-critically that neither churches nor the private sector "are, in fact, sufficiently aware of their duty and still less it seems willing to do their duty of speaking up on matters appertaining to maintenance and preservation of moral, ethical and social values and standards".[26]

---

[21] Boer, Martin/Robin Sherbourne (2005), 'Taking Positions: The Economic Policies of Namibia's Political Parties Compared' in Justine Hunter (ed.), *Spot the Difference. Namibia's Political Parties Compared*. Windhoek: Namibia Institute for Democracy, p. 122.

[22] Hunter, Justine (2005), 'Political Platforms on the Record: Party Representatives Challenged' in Justine Hunter (ed.), *Spot the Difference. Namibia's Political Parties Compared*. Windhoek: Namibia Institute for Democracy, p. 97.

[23] Kaapama, Phanuel (2004), 'Where Could Namibia be Heading? An Analysis of the Parties' Manifestos 2004', *The Namibian*, 15 November.

[24] Diescho, Joseph (1996), 'Government and Opposition in Post-Independence Namibia: Perceptions and Performance', in *Building Democracy Perceptions and Performance of Government and Opposition in Namibia*. Windhoek: Namibia Institute for Democracy and Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, p. 15.

[25] Boer, Martin (2004), *The Life of the Party: the Hidden Role of Money in Namibian Politics*. Namibia: Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR Briefing Paper, no. 33), p. 8.

[26] Pupkewitz, Harold (1996), 'Perceptions and Performance of Government and Opposition in Namibia', in *Building Democracy Perceptions and Performance of Government and Opposition in Namibia*. Windhoek: Namibia Institute for Democracy and Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, p. 81.

The Council of Churches in Namibia (CCN), an ecumenical umbrella body for various Christian denominations, acted prior to Independence as a powerful moral and political voice against human rights violations under the Apartheid regime. Since Independence, Namibian churches have retreated from the political public sphere and to a large extent avoided confrontation with the government on human rights and related moral and ethical issues. Most prominently and sadly, the churches refused to visibly support the efforts by the victims of Swapo's violation of human rights exile and to help them deal with their ordeal and their demands for rehabilitation.[27] Church leaders, many of them once closely linked to the anti-colonial struggle, surrendered their moral and ethical integrity in return for an affiliation to the new political power and re-defined the gospel as a purely non-secular affair staying away from social and political responsibilities.

Similarly, the organised labour movement surrendered its autonomy in return for close affiliation to Swapo and a cooptation into the political establishment of the independent Namibian state. Once an integral part of the anti-colonial struggle, it retained its affiliation to Swapo after Independence. This offered the organised labour movement as represented in the umbrella body of the National Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW) access to the politically dominant power. But in return it implied that its autonomous bargaining power for the workers had to be surrendered. The pact between labour and government all too often took place at the expense of the workers' interests since then and puts into question the role of the trade unions vis-à-vis the new post-colonial political and economic elite.[28] A similar process of cooptation resulting from the transformation of the alliances entered during the "struggle days" into the elite pact since Independence could be observed with regard to the organised women movement prior to Independence. Women activists operating in a strategic alliance with Swapo before its seizure of political power were either isolated and neutralised or integrated into the new (male dominated) political hierarchy during the transformation of the liberation movement into the new political party in control of the government and state.[29]

Given the relative high degree of press freedom and the impressive number of independent and politically alert media (at least in the print sector), the dominance of the ruling party is not good enough as an excuse for the absence of any meaningful critical stance. Lack of adequate public media coverage is at least as

---

[27] During the 1980s, Swapo members in exile (estimated at several thousand) were accused of being spies for South Africa. Under torture they were forced to implicate others. Many of them were executed, most others detained in dungeons without trial in Southern Angola. In the transition to Independence, several hundred of these so-called ex-detainees were released and returned to Namibia. They campaign for their rehabilitation and demand an explanation of Swapo concerning the whereabouts of the many missing. In their efforts to seek recognition for their case, they had approached the Namibian churches without any success. See Lombard, Christo (2001), 'The detainee issue: an unresolved test case for SWAPO, the churches and civil society' in Ingolf Diener/Olivier Graefe (eds), *Contemporary Namibia. The first landmarks of a post-Apartheid society*. Windhoek: Gamsberg Macmillan, pp. 161-184.

[28] Peltola, Pekka (1995), *The lost May Day: Namibian workers struggle for Independence*. Helsinki: The Finnish Anthropological Society and Uppsala: The Nordic Africa Institute; Bauer, Gretchen (1998), **Z**. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press; Jauch, Herbert (2007), 'Between politics and the shop floor. Which way for Namibia's labour movement?' in Henning Melber (ed.), *Transitions in Namibia. Which changes for whom?* Uppsala: The Nordic Africa Institute 2007, pp. 50-64.

[29] Becker, Heike (1995), *Namibian Women's Movement 1980 to 1992. From Anti-colonial Resistance to Reconstruction*. Frankfurt a.M.: IKO.

much the failure of the opposition parties and other civil society actors to provide meaningful news stories of political substance and worthwhile to be reported. Even the state-owned daily newspaper "New Era" offers remarkable space for coverage of government-critical views. Hence there is sufficient arena for articulating dissenting views — although at times with great personal risks if not for physical then at least material security. Given the dependence of many on public employment by state agencies or related institutions under the political influence of the new elite, the individual articulation of dissenting views puts employment at risk. This is a major setback for any strengthening of a civil society opposing the hegemonic power structure in place. The possible consequences of a combination of largely ethnical-regional based opposition parties and the relative passivity and lack' of engagement in the political sphere by strong factions within so-called civil society therefore produced "the very familiar African scenario of politicised ethnic identities, monocratic and highly-personalised rule with no or very little opposition from the private sphere and a large-scale disengagement of a disillusioned citizenry from the political arena", as Keulder[30] warned.

As of late, the appearance of a new political party might provide new impacts and change this rather gloomy perspective towards a new dynamic. The Rally for Democracy and Progress (RDP) was registered with the ECN and officially launched in late 2007[31]. Its main architects were from the erstwhile inner circle of Swapo itself, including two former ministers, who were since the 1960s integral part of the exile leadership. As a result of the Swapo-internal power struggle over the succession of Sam Nujoma as Namibia's Head of State from 2005, they were sidelined and marginalised, though representing a meaningful faction inside the party.[32] The formation of these dissenting voices — coming from "within the belly of the beast" — as a new opposition party impacted considerably on the political landscape, and will influence the situation until the next elections towards the end of 2009 in terms of political campaigns and debates more than the existence of any other party so far. The RDP could challenge the hegemonic status of Swapo at least to the extent that its two-third-majority is in question, provided that it is allowed to campaign freely among an electorate, which is not coerced and intimidated. It remains in doubt whether this will be the case.

Authoritarian Polarisation versus Liberal Pluralism

The extent to which the RDP emerges as a true political alternative to Swapo remains limited. Rather, it seems to offer more of the same. But it has impacted on the party-political map of Namibia more than any other political opposition since Independence and has sparked off a lively public debate over democratic practices and virtues. There is a risk that the authoritarian tendencies, which had manifested themselves in Swapo since Independence, gain even more weight in the efforts to

---

[30] Keulder, Christiaan (1996), ´Conclusion: Building Democracy – Perceptions and Performances of Government and Opposition in Namibia' in *Building Democracy Perceptions and Performance of Government and Opposition in Namibia*. Windhoek: Namibia Institute for Democracy and Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, p. 88.

[31] Melber, Henning (2007c), 'Rally for Democracy and Progress: The new kid on the block', *The Namibian*, 9 November.

[32] Melber, Henning (2006b), '"Presidential indispensability" in Namibia: moving out of office but staying in power?' in Roger Southall/Henning Melber (eds), *Legacies of power: Leadership change and former presidents in African politics*. Cape Town: HSRC Press and Uppsala: The Nordic Africa Institute, pp. 98-119

silence any challenge to its hegemony. It is civil society, which would suffer most from the 'collateral damage'. Unfortunately, the habits of name-calling continue to have preference in the controversies over political issues. As in the past, Swapo officials do not hesitate to respond to critical observations articulated in public by means of heavy handed, at times vicious, attacks on the personal integrity of those who dare to raise views unpopular in the eyes of the Swapo functionaries.[33] The RDP on the other hand is not reluctant to pay back in the same currency. This shows that the mindsets of those who have now parted with what had been their political home for decades, is not so different. Instead, the shared political socialisation and the resulting personality structures remain intact when clashing with each other.

On 10 May 2008 Swapo activists prevented the RDP for the first time to hold a properly registered political rally in full compliance with the existing laws in a part of Windhoek's former township Katutura. In its condemnation of such blatant violation of its constitutionally enshrined rights, the RDP released an Open Letter to President Pohamba, in which it compared this unduly intervention with Hitler's methods and blamed 'neo-fascist elements' in Swapo for this. The Minister of Education publicly declared shortly thereafter that there would be 'no-go areas' for other political parties, since these are zones owned by Swapo. RDP responded in a statement qualifying this as 'fascist inclination'. This discourse has since then not ceased. Swapo continues to claim that certain locations are their sole property and should remain inaccessible to other political parties. If these try to hold political gatherings there, they are by definition violating the unwritten laws, even though they might be in strict conformity with the legal provisions to arrange for such a public meeting.

The annual report released in August 2008 by the United Nations' committee in pursuance of the compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) reminded "the state party that the exercise of the right to freedom of opinion and expression carries special duties and responsibilities" and that hate speech, mostly by politicians, continued at an unacceptable rate.[34] As the Namibian scholar Joseph Diescho observed: "The Swapo leaders and other political party leaders breed prejudice, intolerance, and the types of reactions that are becoming the order of the day in the body politic of the nation".[35] The degree of aggressive polarisation was illustrated maybe most spectacularly in a political rally held by the Swapo Party Youth League on 18 October 2008 in Katutura, when the Youth League's president demanded that all higher ranking positions in the state apparatus and the state-owned enterprises ought to be filled only with reliable Swapo members. He was quoted as stating: "We have a political religion called Swapo and the political heaven is Swapo, and the political hell is where all the other political parties are". As a special guest, the leader of a delegation from the South African

---

[33] At the end of 2007, the South African based Namibian scholar Joseph Diescho had blamed two leading political office bearers in Swapo of political opportunism and was quoted accordingly in a local newspaper. One of them, Hage Geingob, had been previously Prime Minister (from Independence until 2002), then politically marginalised and since November 2007 on a political comeback, when he was elected Vice President of Swapo at the party's congress. He voiced his frustration over this criticism by calling the academic at a public political rally in early January 2008 an "intellectual prostitute".

[34] Maletsky, Christof (2008), 'UN report lambastes Nam for hate speech', *The Namibian*, 21 August.

[35] Diescho, Joseph (2008), 'President And Other Leaders In Violation Of The Constitution', *The Namibian*, 5 December.

ANC Youth League said with reference to opposition parties: "Destroy these political cockroaches, they are in your kitchen".[36]

The differences were by no means confined to a rhetorical warfare: they escalated further and turned into a number of isolated events during campaigns for local (communal) elections with massive physical violence between the followers of the two contesting parties, forcing the police on several occasions to intervene and to restore law and order by use of force. Throughout 2008, the worrying tendencies did not bode well for the forthcoming parliamentary and presidential elections to take place towards the end of 2009.

In an unprecedented move, the respected Swapo veteran Andimba Toivo ya Toivo — a founding member of the liberation movement who spent almost twenty years as a political prisoner on Robben Island and has served since Independence as a minister in three cabinets until his retirement in 2005 — showed the wisdom one would expect from a true leader. In the light of the violent escalations during 2008 he published an open appeal for tolerance and respect, in which he urged:

> *We are living in new times that require new ways of conducting political struggle. The formation of new parties and the exchange of differing opinions in the political arena is a normal occurrence in the life of a democracy. The flourishing of new ideas can only contribute to the vitality and development of our nation. The present should be a battle of ideas and not of swords, and the battle should be conducted with respect for our fellow human beings.[37]*

Unfortunately, he seems to be a lonely voice of reason within the party's establishment. Instead, the alliance between the erstwhile liberation movements in Southern Africa seems to be the unifying identity, which allows those in power to consider themselves as "the end of history". Jacob Zuma, president of the South African ANC, visited Namibia on 8 December 2008, where he met President Hifikepunye Pohamba and the former President Sam Nujoma. A Joint Communiqué released after the visit, stated: "It was noted that there is a recurring reactionary debate around the need to reduce the dominance of former liberation (sic!) movements on the African continent. In this regard the emergence of counter revolutionary forces to reverse the social, political and economical gains that have been made under the leadership of our liberation movements was discussed."[38]

In his "Letter from the President", Jacob Zuma after his return summarized and repeated part of the deliberations in the following way:

> *Ruling parties often go through certain challenges after the first decade, when the interests of different strands within the broad liberation movement begin to diverge. People begin to explore other avenues, especially when they feel they are losing control and influence within the movement. The interests of people outside the movement, locally or internationally would also come into play. […] Political analysts and all who claim to know Africans better than they know themselves tell us that it is good for Africa and*

---

[36] Weidlich, Brigitte (2008), '"Everybody in government must be Swapo…"', *The Namibian*, 20 October.
[37] Toivo ya Toivo, Andimba (2008), 'Appeal for Tolerance and Respect in Namibian Politics', *New Era*, 21 November.
[38] Joint Communiqué between the SWAPO Party and the African National Congress, 9 December 2008 (http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?doc=./ancdocs/pr/2008/pr1209.html, accessed on 14 December, 2008)

> *democracy if the majority of former liberation movements was reduced. How do we as former liberation movements ensure that we do not steer away from our mandate of serving the poor and all our people, in the current climate of counter-revolution?*[39]

The answer would actually be an easy one — simply by showing that the former liberation movements continue to provide the best policy choices for the majority of the people. In contrast to this 'exit option', which is rather a window of opportunity, views like the ones expressed by Zuma and his comrades seem to suggest that there is under no circumstances any inclination to vacate again the once occupied centres of political power, even if an electorate — as in the case of Zimbabwe — would vote for a political alternative. A democratic process with such a result would be considered tantamount to an illegitimate regime change initiated by externally influenced and (mis-)guided elements willing to sabotage the project for social, economic and political emancipation, over which the erstwhile liberation movements claim to have a monopoly. Any attacks on the liberation movement in power are construed within such perspective as acts of blasphemy and are dismissed as imperialist conspiracies. The articulation of political opposition is seen as a reason to marginalise, exclude and coerce those with dissenting views — a policy that hose in power consider legitimate. Instead, they could opt for a better policy, which convinces the people that they deserve to remain in political control by means of obtaining the majority votes in free and fair elections as a result of an electoral campaign without restraints for and repression of anyone.

A Namibian deputy minister ended an opinion article in the daily state owned newspaper, in which he claimed a right to "self-defence" in response to unwanted attacks by political enemies and their allies (who are suspected in anybody not sharing the self-righteous propaganda of the party hard liners), by stating: "The SWAPO Party shall prevail against the onslaught and all tactics designed by the perpetrators of various methods of violent political abuses being meted against our party and its leadership. We the people of Namibia shall win this war, the SWAPO Party shall win this war, and Namibia shall forever remain peaceful."[40] What the deputy minister overlooks, is that you cannot win a war and at the same time remain forever peaceful. The choice is rather between wanting to win a war or wanting peace.

Decolonisation and Democracy

John Saul proposes as a result of the sobering socio-political realities in former settler colonies of Southern Africa to perceive decolonisation as "Liberation without Democracy".[41] The track records of the liberation movements with regard to their internal practices during the wars of liberation as well as their lack of democratic virtues and respect towards the protection of human rights once in power are reason for disappointment among many of those who had supported the social emancipation of the colonised. Fighting against unjust systems of oppression,

---

[39] Zuma, Jacob (2008), 'Letter from the President: A Common History and a Shared Future', *ANC Today*, vol. 8, no. 49, 12-18 December, 2008 (http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?doc=ancdocs/anctoday/2008/at49.htm, accessed 14 December, 2008)
[40] Kazenambo, Kazenambo (2008), 'Reflections on Political Violence', *New Era*, 5 December.
[41] Saul, John (1999), 'Liberation Without Democracy? Rethinking the Experiences of the Southern African Liberation Movements' in Jonathan Hyslop (ed.), *African Democracy in the Era of Globalisation*. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, pp. 167-178

rooted in totalitarian colonial rule of a minority, did not protect the cadres of the movement from violation of human rights and other abusive forms of executing power within their own ranks as well as forms of authoritarian and autocratic rule after Independence.[42] With the notion of national reconciliation at hand, the "liberators" blocked any meaningful dialogue on their disrespect for the protection, if not even active violation of human rights within the exile situation.[43] As mentioned earlier, the surviving Swapo 'ex-detainees' have ever since their return to Namibia been denied any recognition of guilt or remorse on the side of the former liberation movement, which maintains that national reconciliation means not to open old wounds and therefore refuses to deal with the issue. As a result, the victims of the Swapo-internal waves of repression remain stigmatised uto this day.[44]

This particularly sensitive issue shows that, despite all rhetoric on the need for reconciliation, Namibia´s dominant political culture is neither tolerant nor forgiving. The effects on the public mindset are not encouraging. In a survey undertaken by the Helen Suzman Foundation in six Southern African states Namibia was the only country in which a large majority would not accept defeat of its party. It diagnosed that "not much more than one third of respondents felt confident of democracy's future".[45] A survey conducted at the turn of the century among six African countries ranked Namibia last in terms of public awareness of democracy.[46] A summary of the report concluded with reference to Namibia and Nigeria, "the consolidation of democracy is a distant prospect in both these countries".[47] In terms of measured support for democracy during 2001, Namibia ranked second from the bottom with 58%.[48]

A survey among Namibians aged 18 to 32 concludes more than a decade after Independence that "Namibia does not have sufficient young Democrats to make

---

[42] Evidence on the repressive stages of Swapo's history in exile offer Dobell, Lauren (1998), *Swapo's Struggle for Namibia, 1960-1991: War by Other Means*. Basel: P. Schlettwein Publishing; also Colin Leys & John Saul (1995), *Namibia's Liberation Struggle. The Two-Edged Sword*. London: James Currey and Athens: Ohio University Press. An interesting indication of Swapo-internal cohesion is also the biography of the founding president Nujoma, Sam (2001), *Where Others Wavered. The Autobiography of Sam Nujoma*. London: PANAF; also the critical review by Saunders, Christopher (2003), 'Liberation and Democracy. A Critical Reading of Sam Nujoma's "Autobiography"' in Henning Melber (ed.), *Re-examining liberation in Namibia. Political culture since Independence*. Uppsala: The Nordic Africa Institute, pp. 87-98, as well as the latter's overview on Namibia's "patriotic history" in the making Saunders, Christopher (2007), 'History and the armed struggle. From anti-colonial propaganda to "patriotic history"?' in Henning Melber (ed.), *Transitions in Namibia. Which changes for whom?* Uppsala: The Nordic Africa Institute 2007, pp. 13-28.
[43] Groth, Siegfried (1995), *Namibia: The Wall of Silence*. Wuppertal: Peter Hammer.
[44] Saul, John/Colin Leys (2003), 'Truth, Reconciliation, Amnesia. The "ex-Detainees" Fight for Justice' in Henning Melber (ed.), *Re-examining liberation in Namibia. Political culture since Independence.* Uppsala: The Nordic Africa Institute, pp. 69-86; also Gertze, Reinhard Kala (2006), 'Handling The Problems Of All Our People', *The Namibian*, 15 September.
[45] Johnson, R.W. (1998), 'Six countries in search of democracy', *Focus 9*, Helen Suzman FoundationKaapama, Phanuel (2004), 'Where Could Namibia be Heading? An Analysis of the Parties' Manifestos 2004', *The Namibian*, 15 November.
[46] Mattes, Robert/Michael Bratton/Yul Derek Davids/Cherrel Africa (2000), *Public Opinion and the Consolidation of Democracy in Southern Africa: An Initial Review of Key Findings of the Southern African Democracy Barometer*. The Southern African Democracy Barometer.
[47] Bratton, Michael/Robert Mattes (2001), 'How People View Democracy. Africans' Surprising Universalism', *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 12/no. 1, p.120.
[48] Afrobarometer (2002), *Key Findings About Public Opinion in Africa*. Cape Town: Idasa (Afrobarometer Briefing Paper; no. 1).

the consolidation of democracy a foregone conclusion"[49] and the same statement is completed in a follow up study with the not so flattering diagnosis that "Namibians are high in partisanship and low in cognitive skills".[50] This touches on aspects of what could be termed the authoritarian character, resulting from the oppressive systems of both the settler colonial structures as well as the hierarchy of the anti-colonial movement particularly in exile. It is therefore not too surprising that the Afrobarometer Network in a compendium of public opinion findings based on a total of three surveys in Namibia between 1999 and 2006 concludes that among the 18 countries surveyed "Namibians appear to be the most deferential to their elected leaders".[51] In another comparative survey among 12 African countries Namibians displayed in 2006 after Ghana (70%) the second highest degree of satisfaction with democracy (69%) — against an average of 45% in all countries. At the same time, the support for multiple political parties among Namibians had dropped by 5% between 2002 and 2005 and ranked with 57% as the third lowest — below the average of 63%.[52] In terms of the attitudes among citizens the latest Afrobarometer national survey classified Namibia as "a democracy without democrats".[53]

The open unanswered question is to what extent this mixed result is mainly the responsibility of the dominant party in political power, exercising its hegemonic rule as described above, or a sign of the failure of political opposition parties and other civil society actors unable to get their act together. Or maybe, the question is in itself already misleading. It could well be that these are just two sides of a coin minted in the decades of oppression and resistance, which ended not too long ago. After all, the hierarchical environments both at home and in exile were for too long a time anything but fertile breeding ground for democrats, who as social products do not fall from heaven or miraculously appear at Independence Day when a national flag is hoisted to the tune of a national anthem.

Such a sobering conclusion is however far from a "prophecy of doom".[54] It merely suggests that the post-colonial reality reflects the contradictions and challenges already described by various open and thereby critically minded scholars and writers on the continent. One of them, who has done so convincingly by means of what is in many ways a revolutionary novel, is Artur Carlos Maurício Pestana. He published the notes he collected in 1971 during his participation in the guerrilla war in the rainforest (the 'mayombe') of the Cabinda front in Angola for the MPLA under his nom de guerre — Pepetela. As a narrative it offers a remarkable degree

---

[49] Keulder, Christiaan/Dirk Spilker (2002), 'In Search of Democrats in Namibia: Attitudes Among the Youth' in Henning Melber (comp.), *Measuring Democracy and Human Rights in Southern Africa.* Uppsala: The Nordic Africa Institute (Discussion Paper; no. 18), p. 28.

[50] Keulder, Christiaan (2003), *Changing Values and Attitudes: Can Civic Education Make a Difference?* Windhoek: Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR Working Paper; no. 2), p. 24.

[51] Logan, Carolyn/Tetsuya Fujiwara/Virginia Parish (2006), *Citizens and the State in Africa: New Results from Afrobarometer Round 3.* Cape Town: Idasa (Afrobarometer Working Paper; no. 61), p. 16.

[52] Bratton, Michael/Wonbin Cho (2006), *Where is Africa Going? Views from below.* Cape Town: Idasa (Afrobarometer Working Paper; no. 60), pp. 19-21.

[53] Keulder, Christiaan/Tania Wiese (2005), *Democracy Without Democrats? Results from the 2003 Afrobarometer Survey in Namibia.* Cape Town: IDASA (Afrobarometer Working Paper; no. 47), p. 26.

[54] In October 2007, the Deputy Minister for Justice (a son of the former President Nujoma) during a parliamentary debate on national reconciliation singled out Joseph Diescho and myself together with the director of the National Society for Human Rights as individuals, who would undermine nation building and threaten stability. He then labeled the author of this chapter as "infamous prophet of doom".

of sensitivity and insight into the complexity (and limits) of social transformation subsequent to a situation of armed resistance against foreign occupation under colonial rule. During its course, the commander of the guerrilla unit ("Fearless") explains himself to the political commissar ("New World"), for whom more than just incidentally he ultimately sacrifices his life in battle, within a revealing dialogue:

> *We don't share the same ideals. […] You are the machine type, one of those who is going to set up the unique, all-powerful Party in Angola. I am the type who could never belong to the machine. […] One day, in Angola, there will no longer be any need for rigid machines, and that is my aim. […] what I want you to understand, is that the revolution we are making is half the revolution I want. But it is the possible. I know my limits and the country's limits. My role is to contribute to this half-revolution. […] I am, in your terminology, adventurist. I should like the discipline of war to be established in terms of man and not the political objective. My guerrillas are not a group of men deployed to destroy the enemy, but a gathering of different, individual beings, each with his subjective reasons to struggle and who, moreover, behave as such. […] I am happy when I see a young man decide to build himself a personality, even if politically that signifies individualism. […] I cannot manipulate men, I respect them too much as individuals. For that reason, I cannot belong to a machine."[55]*

This conversation is more than fiction. It sets the parameters and social constraints for several post-colonial societies in Southern Africa with a history of armed resistance against settler colonialism. Namibia is one among these.

---

[55] Pepetela (1996), *Mayombe*. London: Heinemann (Portuguese original 1980), pp. 197-198.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND DEVELOPMENT IN MOZAMBIQUE

Manuel de Araújo & Raúl Meneses Chambote,
Centre for Mozambican and International Studies (CEMO)

Introduction

This chapter reflects on the contribution of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to the socio-political development process in Mozambique over the last seventeen years. The number and strength of CSOs grew in the 1990's due to the dynamics of the democratisation process, emergency humanitarian aid, and aid from External Co-operation Partners. Quite quickly, two main features were noted in the development work of Mozambican CSOs: the significant 'cost' of financial and technical capacity building, and the increasing discomfort they caused to the powers that be. These two features have characterised the development of civil society to date.

The polarisation of the partisan political space between FRELIMO and RENAMO, as well as the patrimonial and clientelistic character of the political and economic system, posed major restrictions on the autonomy and independence of CSOs. Partnerships with external cooperation partners and direct access to international organisations potentially makes them a threat for the establishment, which fears the loss and/or weakening of its monopolistic control over the political decision making process.

This is the context within which Mozambican CSOs have developed, one characterized by a constant struggle along a thorny path, seeking to establish the legitimacy of their participation and contribution to the process of socio-political democratisation and development of Mozambique.

The chapter is divided into two parts. The first offers extensive analysis of the political, economic and social context of Mozambique, contrasting the tough reality of most people's lives with the idealised scenario of Mozambique as a success story that has been communicated abroad through effective propaganda. The second charts the journey of the development of Mozambican civil society from its earliest beginnings, hindered by several constraints and obstacles (both internal and external), as well as some identifiable successes in its slow but undeniable progress and contribution to the process of democratisation and development.

1. Mozambican socio-economic and political framework

The Republic of Mozambique has been regarded in recent years as a 'good example of reconciliation and economic reconstruction', as a 'success story.'[1]

The political and judicial framework set out in the 1990 Constitution ensures that key State issues are no longer confined to party politics (interaction between the party in government and opposition parties), but opens space for intervention and public participation for CSO and the private sector. Several frameworks for dialogue have been created, in some cases through legislation (e.g. Law on Local State Institutions, which governs the relationship of Local Authorities with State Institutions),[2] and through the initiative of civil society itself (e.g. Poverty Observatory, cf. infra).

Three general multiparty elections have been held (1994, 1999 and 2004, consecutively won by FRELIMO)[3] and three municipal elections (1998, 2003 and 2008; in all FRELIMO won the most municipalities). Despite the increase of voter abstention levels[4] and protests from RENAMO (the biggest opposition party),[5] the electoral process has contributed to political stability and economic growth.

Economically, Mozambique has achieved annual economic growth rates of over 7% in the last fifteen years, and succeeded in reducing and controlling inflation through a strict monetary policy (see Table 1). These positive developments can be attributed to the end of the armed conflict, the restoration of political stability and revival of production, as well as reforms conducted by the Mozambican government.

Table 1: Macro-economic data of Mozambique

Indicator	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
GDP (nominal; million USD)	3,719	3,697	4,094	4,789	5,912	6,823	7,738
Real growth rate (%)	1.9	13.1	8.2	7.9	7.5	6.2	8.5
Inflation, annual average (%)	12.7	9.1	16.8	13.5	12.6	6.4	13.2
Exchange rate (Average MZM/USD)	15.7	20.7	23.7	23.8	22.6	23.1	25.0
Export (goods; million USD)	304	703	679	1,044	1,504	1,745	2,391
Imports (goods; million USD)	1,046	957	1,216	1,672	1,850	2,242	2,616
Trade Balance of Payment (goods; million USD)	-682	-254	-536	-628	-346	-497	-225

Source: Ministry of Planning and Development of Mozambique, Macro Economic Data, Maputo, 2007.

Despite these general positive features, the reality of the majority of peoples' lives is far removed from this apparent successful scenario. According to the Popula-

[1] See Hanlon, Joe (1999) 'Mozambique Notes', in *Southern Africa Report (SAR)*, Vol. 14 No. 4, August; available *online* at [http://www.africafiles.org/article.asp?ID=3737]; also, Hanlon, Joe (1996) *Peace Without Profit: How the IMF Blocks Rebuilding in Mozambique*, London: James Currey.
[2] *Boletim da República* (2003), *Law 8/2003, on the Local Organs of the State* (LOLE), May 19th, 2003. 1st Series, no. 20. Oficial Publication of the Mozambique Repubic. Maputo.
[3] FRELIMO – *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (Front for the Liberation of Mozambique).
[4] Abstention in general elections: 12% in 1994, 32% in 1999, 64% in 2004, 53.6%.
[5] RENAMO – *Resistência Nacional Moçambicana* (Mozambique National Resistance).

tion Census of 2007, the Republic of Mozambique has an estimated population of 19.5 million, of whom 62% live in rural areas. According to data from the Family Household Surveys, 69.4% of people were below the poverty threshold from 1999-2003, and the poverty index during 2002-2003 was estimated at 54.5%.[6] The same situation is reflected in available data in the 2006 Human Development Report, showing a low per capita income of US$310, placing Mozambique in 168th position of 177 countries.[7]

National official statistics show that the poverty index decreased from 69.4% in 1996-97 to 54.1% in 2002-03 and that the highest poverty levels are found in rural areas.[8] Nevertheless, poverty increasingly affects urban areas, particularly those with the highest population density.[9]

A great deal of GDP growth is a result of the activity of mega-projects financed by direct foreign investment (e.g., Aluminium Melting MOZAL and SASOL gas pipeline to South Africa) the services sector, and international aid programmes. These mega-projects have had a strong impact on Mozambican exports from 2003, contributing to a reduction in the balance of trade deficit. However, the increase of GDP has not resulted in improvements to overall living conditions, either in terms of jobs or income. The February 5, 2008 demonstrations against the increase in public bus fares provides clear evidence of the difficulties faced by people in their day to day lives. The contribution of micro, small and medium enterprises to GDP remains weak, which shows that any trickle-down effect of mega projects has yet to happen.

The poor performance of the agricultural sector, the main source of livelihood and income for the majority of the Mozambican population, remains a matter of great concern. Despite employing 80.5% of the economically active population (where 60% are women), this sector represents only 26% of GDP, due to low levels of output and productivity.[10] Low crop harvests undermine family food security in rural areas. This is linked to low output and productivity levels, to poor rural extension services, difficult access to crop markets and to credit, extreme vulnerability to natural disasters and pests, a low skilled labour force and inefficient public sector services to support the sector. According to the World Bank, public investment in agriculture is not sufficiently oriented to the poor.[11]

---

[6] In 1996-97, the National Statistics Institute conducted the first representative survey at national level on the household consumption in Mozambique. In 2002-03 the second survey was conducted. The two surveys (IAFs) can be consulted *online* in [http://www.sarpn.org.za/documents/d0000777/index.php].

[7] See the 2006 Human Development Report, Relatório de Desenvolvimento Humano 2006, *A água para lá da escassez: poder, pobreza e a crise mundial da água* (New York: PNUD, 2006); available *online* at: [http://hdr.undp.org/hdr2006/statistics/country/country_fact_sheets/cty_fs_MOZ.html].

[8] *Ibid*. IAF de 2002-03; the data of this magnitude are contested by various authors, for example by Hanlon, Joe (1997), *Paz Sem Benefícios. Como o FMI Bloqueia a Reconstrução de Moçambique*. Maputo, Centro de Estudos Africanos, Imprensa Universitária da Universidade Eduardo Mondlane. Household Surveys can be consulted *online* in [http://www.sarpn.org.za/documents/d0000777/index.php].

[9] World Bank (2007) *World Development Indicators*, Washington, World Bank.

[10] Even in urban areas, indicators show about 40.7% of economically active population to be dependent on activities in agriculture, forestry and fisheries; see Agenda Estatística 2005 written on the basis of Household Surveys 2002-03, c.f. http://www.gvcmoz.org/documentos%20importantes/dados%20economicos/trabalho.pdf].

[11] World Bank (2007) *World Development Indicators*, Washington, The World Bank.

Despite high GDP growth rates, the prevalence rate of malnutrition is increasing,[12] reflecting growing social inequalities and an ever deepening gap between rich and poor. There are also wide variations in income levels between different groups in the population and between different regions of the country.

HIV/AIDS, which has reached epidemic levels in Mozambique, has also had an adverse socio-economic impact. The national prevalence rate among adults (15-49 yrs), was estimated at 13.6% in 2002, then rose to 17% in 2006, and by 2020 it is estimated that the country will have lost 20% of its agricultural workforce. Evidence from several countries shows that with HIV prevalence rates between 15% and 17%, GDP per capita growth decreases by almost 0.8%. On this basis, one can assume that the development process in Mozambique is likely to suffer a major set-back in the near future.[13]

With regards to Mozambique's external debt levels (previously regarded as a major concern in relation to public accounts), these were significantly reduced as a result of the HIPC initiative (Heavily Indebted Poor Countries).[14] Even so, the country remains heavily dependent on foreign aid. For the last 25 years, over 50% of State Budget has been financed by foreign aid, which rose to 60.4% in 2007.[15]

Based on the above, we can see that the Mozambican reality, far from being a 'success story', is not radically different from the general panorama of poverty, rising social inequalities and external dependence that characterises most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.[16]

2. CSO in Mozambique: weaknesses, constraints and achievements

With Mozambique's independence and the establishment of a single-party socialist political system, Mass Democratic Organisations were created, which included Mozambican Women's Organisation (OMM), Mozambican Youth Organisation (OJM), Mozambican Workers Organisation (OTM) and other similar groups. The established legal framework and the armed conflict were, to some extent, obstacles to the emergence of non-partisan civil society organisations. During this period, it was up to faith-based organisations to try to empower society beyond party lines, such as the Christian Council of Mozambique and the Episcopal Conference of Mozambique.

The adoption of the 1990 Constitution, the Act of Associations (Act 8/91) and the General Peace Agreement (signed in Rome in 1992, ending seventeen years of armed conflict between the FRELIMO government and RENAMO), represent the key elements for the opening of the democratisation process and the emergence of CSOs as we know them today.

---

[12] *UNICEF Mozambique: Consolidated Donor Report 2006*, UNICEF, March 2007.
[13] *Plano Estratégico Nacional de Combate ao Sida* (2004), Maputo: Conselho de Ministros, Conselho Nacional de Combate ao Sida, República de Moçambique, p.15.
[14] Initiative for Heavily Indebted Poor Countries, conceived in 1996, by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, to reduce the heavy burden of foreign debt of some poor countries.
[15] In the revision of State Budget presented to Parliament on November 1, 2007, the total revenue was calculated in 2,018,587.49 New Meticais, of which 800.000,00 resulted from an increase of State revenues and 1,218,587.49 from donated grants (*Jornal Notícias*, 2.11.2007).
[16] World Bank (2007) *World Development Indicators*, Washington, The World Bank.

Weaknesses and constraints of CSOs

Most CSOs emerged ten to seventeen years ago as a response to the humanitarian emergency which hit the country, and were largely funded by external organisations that arrived in Mozambique in response to the terrible crisis. As such, they arose primarily in response to externally, as opposed to internally driven incentives. It was this that set in train many of the features that to this day characterise most CSOs in Mozambique, such as over-dependence on external funds and skills, and lack of a grass-roots support, particularly in the rural areas that were supposed to constitute their natural support base.

Other weaknesses of most Mozambican CSOs include: their limited size; labour inefficiency; inadequate financial and human resources; deficit of technical; poor management; and a weak information base. In relation to information, CSO weaknesses originate in part from the lack of qualitative and quantitative research about the country's social reality, restricting their knowledge and capacity to act. These weaknesses are most acutely apparent in rural organisations, thereby seriously undermining the development of community-based organisations and the participation of grassroots rural communities in public processes.

Most CSOs are also weak in terms of transparency and internal democracy. On the whole, accountability tends to focus on donors, with little or no accountability to the groups they claim to represent and defend, or their support constituencies. Furthermore, most CSOs lack internal democratic structures: for example, leaders are not elected and in many cases, remain leaders for life.

With few exceptions that will be discussed later, most Mozambican CSOs remain relatively weak in terms of their engagement in participatory monitoring of public policy processes. Civil society participation in strategic issues relating to the country's development is basically tokenistic 'consultation' that is neither truly inclusive, nor binding in any way. Given that this is clearly understood by most people, a wider engagement of citizens in the country's public life is hindered.

Judging from what is happening in most countries in the region, there is a tendency by the party in government to control (manipulate) civic space. Those who resist this are accused of supporting the opposition against the establishment. The predominance of patrimonial relations within the political and economic system, and the strongly bi-polarized party political panorama, are reflected in the constraints imposed on CSO intervention. In a political and economic system where there is no distinction between public and private spheres, interferences from public and private powers are frequent in CSO life, seeking to divert the interventions of the more critical and serious voices. There is very little space for 'independent' voices: 'you are either with us or against us'.

As a result of the weak financial position of most CSOs and competition between them to access limited public and private funds, external and internal, as well as the many structural weaknesses (in human resources) they face, most CSOs are unable to withstand corruption, and tend to succumb to bribes and the pull of client-based political system, rather than representing the interests of those they claim to represent.

This excessive dependence and lack of autonomy among most CSOs, coupled with increasing donor fatigue in Mozambique, could lead to things getting worse, rather than better.

Relative Achievements of CSO

Despite the serious weaknesses and drawbacks referred to above, CSOs have been playing an increasingly visible and important role in the country's politics and economy. They have been able to sensitize a significant number of citizens on cross-cutting national issues, raising public awareness over civic and political aspects about the country and the region. Besides important contribution to basic services, such as water, health, education, food and HIV/AIDS services, they have also contributed to to the promotion of human rights by putting pressure on political decision-makers in support of a justice system which serves citizens, which promotes the inclusion of women and other previously neglected groups in social, economic and political development processes.

According to José Negrão, there are three initiatives that have left an indelible mark on the slow, but undeniable progress of CSOs in Mozambique, namely: the Land Campaign, the 2025 Agenda, and creation of the Poverty Observatory.[17]

The Land Campaign

The land issue was and will continue to be vital for countries like Mozambique, where the vast majority of people rely primarily on income from agriculture as their main source of livelihood. The end of the armed conflict with the signing of the 1992 General Peace Agreement in Rome created opportunities for business, and led to a race to access the best land for farming, forestry exploitation and hunting tourism. In line with the provisions of the Structural Adjustment Programme, the Land Tenure Centre, supported by USAID and some northern NGOs, pressurised the Mozambican government to recognise individual deeds as the only means of ensuring land rights. At the same time, the end of the apartheid regime in South Africa, and the ending of subsidies for white farmers, also had far-reaching implications for Mozambique as many South African farmers came in search of new lands for agriculture, thereby boosting agrarian speculation in Mozambique. As a result of these various factors, the land question took on a central role for CSOs, which helped to mobilise public debate and became a great impetus for the diversity of interests within civil society.

The movement that emerged around the land question was simultaneously fostered on three fronts: within the Catholic Church, through Caritas and the Diocesan Commissions for Justice and Peace; within the Christian Council of Mozambique, through the Organisation of Mutual Support; and within the National Union of Peasants, in response to conflicts arising from the rapid privatisation of State *machambas* (farms) and attempts at wrongful seizure of cooperatives lands. The central debating focus on all three fronts was the proposed new Land Act for Mozambique, while the central organising focus was the Land Campaign.

---

[17] Negrão, José (2003) *ONGs do Norte e Sociedade Civil de Moçambique*; Cruzeiro do Sul. Maputo. Mimeo. Available online in [http://www.iid.org.mz/Relacoes_entre_ONG_do_Norte_e_Sociedade_Civil_do_Sul.pdf]

About 200 organisations got together around the Land Campaign, consisting of national and international NGOs, Community Based Organisations (CBOs), Religious Creeds (Christians, Muslims and Zion's), academics and individuals united by a common cause, namely: to ensure that access to and possession of land by the poorest did not depend on a land title deed, and to ensure the full recognition of customary mechanisms of land management based on building relations between the private sector and families, on the basis of mutual advantage.[18]

In the light of these principles and dynamics, the Land Campaign can be said to have established some of the basic characteristics of the new image of Civil Society in Mozambique, namely: adhesion to common causes, irrespective of ideology; the possibility of direct participation of local CBOs in such processes in their own right, rather than through a representative or urban umbrella NGO; the participation of religious groups (Christians, Muslims or syncretism); an opportunity to define strategies of partnership with the private sector; participation in decision making processes of State institutions (especially at the level of the legislative process) without necessarily taking power; and participation of CSOs as equals with international NGOs.

The Land Campaign ended in 2000, but its dynamic of bringing together diverse elements of civil society has not been lost. After the assassinations of journalist Carlos Cardoso, of economist Siba-Siba Maquáqua and of more than 100 citizens in a prison in Montepuez, several civil society forces got together again, to demand ethical behaviour within the State and an end to corruption. Drawing on the lessons and inspiration of the land movement, journalists, socio-professional associations and countless urban elite members joined forces and succeeded in lobbying for the passing of an Act whereby civil society is responsible for the selection of three candidates to chair the National Electoral Commission, elected by Commission members who are appointed by political parties represented in the National Parliament.

The 2025 Agenda

The 2020 and 2025 agendas aim to build consensus between the political forces and other national interest groups around a common vision of the medium-term future, and a set of development strategies to be adopted by successive governments, irrespective of their political party affiliation.

After the failure of the initiative to draft the 2020 Agenda, due to the fact that the party in government sought to do it in private, there followed the 2025 Agenda, with a wider balance of social forces among the 14 members of the Counsellors Committee and about 100 members of the National Committee. Representatives of all political forces, all professional groups and a significant number of intellectuals, artists and writers, worked together on the executive coordination of this project.

For the purposes of consensus-building, it was necessary to conduct analysis, agree on national possibilities and structural weaknesses and, most difficult of all, to discuss

---

[18] Palmer, Robin (2003) 'Struggling to Secure and Defend the Land Rights of the Poor in Africa' in *Austrian Journal of Development Studies*, XIX, 1, pp. 6-21.

principles that could represent common starting points to design several possible scenarios for the following two decades. The most creative aspect of the 2025 Agenda was the identification of a set of determining variables upon which an analytical model was constructed with assumptions which guided scenario building, and strategic options for the country.[19] For the first time, the right to discuss res publica was taken away from the political leadership and myths surrounding the governing party's infallibility and enlightenment of its leadership, were shattered.[20]

The Poverty Observatory

The Poverty Observatory emerged as a result of the Jubilee movement for the cancellation of foreign debt. In 1996 the HIPC Initiative, launched by the World Bank and IMF, aimed at eliminating the so-called 'unsustainable debt' of the poorest and most indebted countries. The objective was to reduce debt to a limit regarded as sustainable, or rather 150% of the export volume and 250% of government income. The same year, the international donor community adhered to the initiative and the traditional terms of debt rescheduling of the Paris Club and other bi-lateral creditors were, as far as possible, changed in accordance with these parameters.[21]

Mozambique was one of the countries that benefited most from the HIPC initiative, having its debt reduced in 1998 from $US 5.6 billion to almost $1.3. In order for this initiative to provide a solution for the country, the debt and export ratio was calculated between 200-220%. The immediate results reached were satisfactory. Between 1996 and 2000 the annual inflation rate decreased from 47% to 2%, and the Gross Domestic Product increased at an average of 10% per year.

In 2000, the country experienced the biggest floods in its history, with great damage in the south and central regions, which were under water for a month. The World Bank and the IMF decided to accelerate debt relief by forgiving total payment of debt service that year. The Paris Club postponed payment until Mozambique was in a position to pay, and several other bilateral creditors did the same.[22] Therefore, Mozambique fulfilled the conditions to qualify for the second phase of the HIPC Initiative, known as HIPC 2. It is in this second phase that the Bretton Woods Institutions decided to grant partial debt forgiveness, only if the country strictly followed the programme approved by those institutions. The Paris Club creditors decided to give debt relief under clearly preferential conditions and it is said that the same would happen with bi-lateral creditors. To secure final approval for HIPC 2 eligibility with the World Bank and IMF, the following four conditions had to be met: (1) the drafting of a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), called the *Plano de Acção para a Redução da Pobreza Absoluta* (PARPA), with the active participation of civil society, private sector and the citizens in general; (2) implementation of a set of social development measures, as well as public sector reforms to the legal

---

[19] The twenty determining variables resulted from the use of an analytical framework based on four criteria: human capital; social capital; economy and development; good governance. From each variable came the normative model whose result is substantially different from the normative model used by the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper.

[20] Agenda 2025, Provisional Document in *Jornal Notícias* of October 3, 2003.

[21] Negrão, José (2003) *ONGs do Norte e Sociedade Civil de Moçambique*; Cruzeiro do Sul. Maputo. Mimeo. Acessed at [http://www.iid.org.mz/Relacoes_entre_ONG_do_Norte_e_Sociedade_Civil_do_Sul.pdf]

[22] Negrão, José (2003) *ibid*.

and regulatory framework of economic activities; (3) maintenance of a stable macro-economic climate under IMF control; and (4) the confirmation from other creditors on their participation in debt relief.

On September 25, 2001, the World Bank and IMF concluded that Mozambique had ful-filled the four conditions presented in 2000 and had taken the necessary steps to qualify for the second phase. Thus, Mozambique became the third country in the world to reach that phase, after Bolivia and Uganda. Foreign debt was reduced to $US750 million, thereby forgiving about 73% of the initial amount. Debt servicing went from $US100 million per year in 1988, to an annual average of $US 56 million from 2002 to 2010, rep-resenting a burden reduction from 23% of State revenues to 10% (from 2000-2010), and it is estimated that this figure will decrease even further (to 7% from 2011-2020).[23]

Savings resulting from the reduction of debt service charges meant that the State had an additional $US130 million to spend on PARPA activities within the terms of the PRSP. However, the active participation of civil society, the private sector and the ordinary citizen stipulated under the terms of the PRSP was reduced to sporadic consultation and even when there was consultation, this amounted to little more than providing information about actions to be taken or already adopted by the State. As a result, PARPA did not take into account any of the perspectives, knowledge and experiences of the key actors involved in the reduction of poverty. Instead, the economic development model adopted by PARPA applied a frame-work developed by a visiting specialist from Harvard University based on the same neo-liberal model applied to all developing countries. Under this economic model, the main focus is on promoting exports, on the assumption that the benefits will eventually trickle-down, whilst ignoring the role of investment in building up the domestic capital at home in order to support the development of an internal economy, oriented to the needs of Mozambicans.

In an attempt to compensate for their lack of participation at the decision-making stages, CSOs agreed to participate in the Poverty Observatory, set up by the Gov-ernment as a forum to monitor the implementation of PARPA. The Mozambican Poverty Observatory consists of the government, funding partners and civil soci-ety at large. The selection of who should be part of civil society was done by civil society itself, with government suggesting that the private sector and trade unions should also be involved.[24]

In addition to this, the second of the two fundamental objectives of the Poverty Observatory was to establish at a national level, a poverty monitoring and evalu-ation system (not only of PARPA), to draft an Annual Poverty Report from the perspective of the poor.

---

[23] Negrão, José (2003) *ibid*.; see also Hanlon, Joe (1997), *Paz Sem Benefícios. Como o FMI Bloqueia a Reconstrução de Moçambique*. Maputo, Centro de Estudos Africanos, Imprensa Universitária da Universidade Eduardo Mondlane.
[24] After the internal consultation phase was over, the following were identified as civil society representatives for the Poverty Observatory in Mozambique: four representatives from faith based organisations (two Christian and two Muslim); two from trade unions (OTM and Independent Unions); three from the private sector associations (*Associação Comercial, Associação Industrial* and CTA); six from 3rd level organisations (*Fórum Terra, Fórum Mulher, UNAC, GMD, Link and Teia*); four from 2nd level ONGs (*FDC, Kulima, ORAM, Khindlimuka*); one from the autonomous research institute (*Cruzeiro do Sul*).

In summary, the most significant achievements for Mozambican CSOs that can be highlighted, include: their capacity to engage in conscious discussion on the future of the public good, subject to recognition of their right to express their views; their acceptance of different viewpoints within a framework of common principles, subject to discussion and widespread consensus; their sense of commitment to the country and, in particular, to issues of social justice; their contribution to bringing an end to the myth of 'enlightened leadership, both past and present'; their ability to seize opportunities as they arose; their support for multicultural diversity and joint initiatives aimed at promoting the living standards and quality of life for all groups in society; their rejection of hegemonic rhetoric in favour of inclusiveness and flexibility in accordance with local conditions; and their capacity to collaborate with government even in operational strategic issues.

Conclusion

Notwithstanding the above mentioned achievements, Mozambican CSOs still have a long road to travel before they are able to excel in any respect. They are not different to the general panorama in Southern Africa, especially as far as external dependence and all types of constraints imposed by the political and governmental establishments are concerned.

Taking into account the weaknesses of CSOs with respect to monitoring and checking the powers of state bodies, and the ongoing importance of meeting the urgent needs which ordinary citizens face, the major challenge faced by civil society in Mozambique at this point in time, is to strengthen its institutional capacity, particularly that of small local CBOs in rural areas. This involves investing in human resource training and creating permanent full time positions so as to develop sustainable mechanisms in the medium and long-term, and investing in more and better research to provide a firm basis for tackling the real problems facing the people whose interests civil society is there to represent.

In addition, CSOs need to incrementally reduce their level of dependence on external aid, not forgetting that one of the main strengths of civil society anywhere, especially in Africa, is its potential to act as a network both internally and externally, regionally and internationally, in order to more effectively resist the constraints imposed upon them by those who desperately cling to power and seek to monopolize management of the public good. Last but not least, it is necessary to have awareness that democracy must above all begin within CSOs, based on their trustworthiness, self-reliance, transparency and professionalism in management, as well as the implementation of alternative democratic mechanisms of leadership.

CRISIS, RESISTANCE AND THE FAILED REBELLION IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Leo Zeilig
University of the Witwatersrand and the Centre for Sociological Research in Johannesburg

There is a paradox that sits at the heart of contemporary politics in the Congo. From 1990 a mass popular movement in cities and towns shook Zaire to its foundations. Mobutu was almost dislodged by a combination of street protests and political opposition. But in 1997 Laurent Kabila, a relatively unknown figure of the Congolese political landscape, came to power and Mobutu fled, dying soon afterwards in exile. How could this little known figure of the long and painful failure of Congolese guerrilla resistance become president? This chapter argues that the war, plunder and catastrophe that gripped the Congo after 1997 emerged out of the defeat of the democratic movement of the early 1990s.

In 1990 the Congolese started to rebel. For more than four years tens of thousands were involved in riots, demonstrations and protests in cities and towns across the country. Students who had long been the lone voice of urban opposition and protest were now joined by the urban poor, workers, informal traders and the army. When Mobutu agreed to accept political changes on 24 April 1990, he had no idea about the extent of the rebellion that he was about to unleash. In the months and years that followed the country's dictator looked as though he was going to be consumed by the popular revolt. Riots, general strikes, religious marches and political meetings punctuated Congo's second and frustrated revolution.

The changes that were taking place were not exclusively Congolese. Political change swept across many parts of the continent. From 1989, political protests rose massively across sub-Sahara Africa; where there had been approximately twenty annually recorded incidents of political protest in the 1980s, in 1991 alone 86 major protest movements had taken place across 30 countries. By 1992 many African governments were forced to introduce reforms and in 1993 fourteen countries held democratic elections. In a four-year period, from the start of the protests in 1990, a total of thirty-five regimes were swept away by a combination of street demonstrations, mass strikes and other forms of protest, and by presidential and legislative

elections that were often the first held for a generation.[1]

One process driving people onto the streets was 'structural adjustment'. For more than ten years country after country had been forced to implement 'reforms' — structural adjustment programmes — by the IMF and the World Bank; these reforms insisted on dramatic cuts to health and education budgets as a condition of new loans. The Congo experienced the same pressures that 'forced the government to address budget deficits by reducing expenditures in "non-productive" sectors such as health, education, research and culture while increasing investments in trade and production. Mobutu respected only the first half of these conditions.'[2] Following the rest of the continent the government slashed funding to public universities, schools and to health faculties.

After all the abortive attempts to remove the regime by rebellion from the countryside in the 1960s and 1970s, the popular movement for democracy in the early 1990s came close to unseating him in Congo's urban centres. However the regime managed to manipulate the 'reforms', and divided and disorientated the opposition who were prepared to bargain with Mobutu. The 'transition' turned into a period of great frustration that revealed the desperate absence of a serious opposition that was prepared to lead a popular movement for radical transformation. One of the keenest observers of the 'transition' Loka Ne Kongo — who was a loyal Minster of Higher Education in the government of transition between 1992-3 — characterised the opposition in 1995 in the following terms, 'the opposition suffered failure after failure, in large part because of their own impotence; all of the paths that could have led to the removal of the dictator, by non-violence, had more or less been exhausted.'[3] These failures eventually destroyed the popular movement that had risen up against the dictator.

This chapter describes the processes that took place during the transition in the context of economic collapse. This collapse propelled the forces calling for democratic change in the 1990s. In the early 1970s Zaire was a country of great optimism. The economy was potentially the strongest on continent, and it was going to power development that would see Zaire catch up with the west by the end of the decade. However by 1980 the economy was dependent on international aid, the state's infrastructure was crumbling and those who worked in the official economy were living on a fraction of their former salaries. At the same time political opposition emerged for the first time in urban areas that drew support from those who had suffered most from structural adjustment and the collapse of the formal economy. Mobutu and his wealthy cronies were despised. The 'transition' finally gave the opposition the opportunity to settle accounts with the regime, but its failure ensured a victory for an obscure guerrilla movement, supported by foreign powers, and led by the forgotten Lumumbist, Laurent Kabila.

---

[1] M. Bratton and N. van de Walle *Democratic experiments in Africa : regime transitions in comparative perspective* (New York : Cambridge University Press, 1997) p. 5

[2] T. Trefon, S.Van Hoyweghen and S. Smis 'State Failure in the Congo: Perceptions and Realities' in *Review of African Political Economy* N.º 93/94 (September/December 2002) p. 381

[3] Cited in L. Martins *Kabila et la révolution congolaise* (Anvers, Editions EPO, 2002) p. 115

Economic collapse

Despite its great mineral riches, by 1988 the Congo had been ranked the eight poorest countries in the world. The World Bank reported that it had a per-capital income of $160 a year, while real incomes had fallen to just 10 percent of their pre-independence level. Between the years 1973 and 1985 — a period that, according to the regime, was going to see the country catch up with the west — per capital income had fallen by 3.9 percent a year (beaten only by Nicaragua that was in the middle of a devastating civil war). The agricultural picture was no better. By the late 1980s Zaire had gone from being a net food exporter to paying out more than 20 percent of its foreign exchange on food imports. Twenty-eight years after independence the country was saddled with a $7 billion foreign debt eagerly lent to Zaire by international banks, western governments and financial agencies and often spent on prestige projects. Interest repayment on these debts was eating up 25 percent of export revenue (and approximately half of the government's budget).[4] The road and transport infrastructure had almost completely crumbled cutting off agricultural producers from their buyers in urban centres. As Zaire approached the last decade of the millennium more and more people in the countryside retreated to subsistence existence and in the cities and towns to the informal economy. Living in a country that had suffered such an economic collapse was becoming intolerable. The rapid decline in nutrition levels and primary health care was killing a third of children before the age of five. However this was not the picture for everyone. The journalist Blaine Harden reported in the late 1980s that while most of the country's thirty five million population were suffering there were notable exceptions, 'Mobutu, his family, his European business partners, his CIA friends, and the eighty or so nimble-footed lickspittles who continue to play musical chairs.' [5]

Mining in Zaire was buffeted by the collapse of world prices and by state-led plunder and corruption. But after the legalisation of artisanal extraction in 1981 diamond production expanded rapidly, and within seventeen years had become responsible for seventy percent of diamond exports. The future of copper production — Congo's cash-cow for decades — was evident for all to see. The sharpest fall in production cut right through the period of the 'democratic transition', between 1987 and 1995 production of copper fell from 499,421 tones to 25,000.[6] In February 1989, the then Prime Minister, Kengo Wa Dondo, claimed that only Générale des Carrières et des Mines (GECAMINES) was now remitting very little money into the state treasury. Mining production, however, took a downward turn from 1988 onwards. Again the international copper market was becoming increasingly volatile and competitive; other world producers, such as Chile, established new open-cast, lower-cost mines. In the period 1990-93, production was further hampered by strikes, theft of equipment, technical problems and a worsening political situation. Nor was GECAMINES immune to corruption and misappropriation. During negotiations for an IMF loan in May-June1989, it was revealed that $400 million had gone missing in copper export revenues. This amounted to some 30 percent of a year's earnings.

---

[4] See for a good account of this period B. Harden *Africa: Dispatches from a Fragile Continent* (London, Harper Collins, 1993) p. 53
[5] B. Harden, *Africa* p. 54
[6] R. Giraudon 'Un Scandale Geologique?' in *Afrique Contemporaine* No. 183 July-September 1997 p. 50

During this period diamonds production continued to grow. By 1995 diamonds production made up approximately forty seven percent of the export earnings, compared to just nineteen percent from copper. Still these processes were relatively slow; even in 1990 copper production by GECAMINES accounted for more than fifty percent of national export earnings. Yet as Janet MacGaffey and Remy Bazenguissa-Ganga stated 'By 1994, GECAMINES, the copper mining company that had been Zaire's principal exporter, was barely producing.'[7] The fall in production between 1990-95 was breathtaking, and utterly devastating. Diamond production continued its seemingly relentless upward spiral expanding further in the 1990s, with the opening up of new diamond beds in the north-east. In 1994 it became the main source of foreign exchange, a process that was inextricably linked to the expansion of the informal economy of the previous fifteen years. MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga describes how 'These diamond earnings in informal markets were the principal economic support for the regime.'[8] Although the artisanal diamond had replaced the industrial mining of copper by the 1990s as the principal source of foreign currency still three quarters of diamonds mined were being smuggled out of the country.[9]

The impact of the collapse of GECAMINES had a profound effect on the economy of the Congo, but the shock waves from the collapse were felt across the region. Thousands of professionals, doctors, academics, engineers and skilled workers suddenly found themselves without work. Many who had spent years working directly or indirectly for the company in Katanga now immigrated to South Africa that became the most popular location for immigration from the Congo. By 1992 Zairians made up approximately half of the immigrants in South Africa, largely because of the relative ease of securing South African visas (aided by Mobutu's close relationship with the apartheid regime in the 1980s). Many more travelled to South Africa illegally on the trucks that drove from Lubumbashi loaded with copper and cobalt. Once in South Africa Zairians became ensconced in the now ubiquitous circuits of informal trade. In the early 1990s the Congo specialist Colette Braeckman described how flights were 'daily from Zaire to South Africa carrying diamonds, coffee, gold and cobalt, and have bought back fresh meat to be sold at very high prices in Kinshasa.'[10]

The measures introduced by the government in the early 1980s (under pressure from the IMF) to legalise artisanal production of diamonds were the valedictory gestures of a state that was increasingly powerless to control the circuits of mineral production in the informal economy. The rise of the diamond was not going to bring about an influx of 'foreign direct investment' promised by the boffins at the IMF, on the contrary it was hand-dug in privately owned plots and frequently sold through a 'criminal' networks that made use of the pre-existing informal economy. These were not the 'imperfections' of globalisation, or the "dark-side" of the global economy as the Congo mining expert Erik Kennes has described them,

---

[7] J. MacGaffey and R. Bazenguissa-Ganga *Congo-Paris: transnational traders on the margins of the law* (London, James Currey 2000) p. 30
[8] J. MacGaffey and R. Bazenguissa-Ganga Congo-Paris p. 30
[9] C. Sumata 'Migradollars and Poverty Alleviation Strategy Issues in Congo (DRC)' in *Review of African Political Economy* No. 93/94 2002 p. 623
[10] J. MacGaffey and R. Bazenguissa-Ganga *Congo-Paris* p. 48-9

but a distinct feature of the new global economy. The convergence of 'criminal' activity outside the control of 'legal' international and national political actors is a central feature of the new globalised world. The Congo was at the frontier of these developments.[11] However the political 'transition' offered thousands hope of an escape from years of hardship and repression.

The transition

The last days of the 1980s had seen a further collapse in living standards of significant sections of the population. Lower level civil servants and public sector employees, including the lower echelons of the army in particular, were poorly paid, with an average civil servant earning 20,000 zaires a month (worth US$25) and a soldier, only a third as much. In February 1990, the *Union pour la démocratie et le progrés social* (UDPS) organised demonstrations in Kinshasa and three other towns to commemorate the 29 anniversary of the assassination of Patrice Lumumba. Further unrest followed in April, when students staged protests in Kinshasa to demand larger study grants and the removal of Mobutu from power. Mobutu was forced to respond.

Suddenly, in a move that was seen by many observers as an attempt to defuse the growing tension, Mobutu announced proposals for political reforms, including the recognition of opposition parties and the possibility of a transitional government prior to multi-party elections. Stephen Riley and Trevor Parfitt saw the significance of this, both in the wider context of African political change and in the specific context of Zaire, 'even the most uncompromising dictatorships, such as those of Mobutu in Zaire and Banda in Malawi, are being forced to consider reforms that would previously have been inconceivable.'[12] In an unprecedented initiative and at this most unpropitious moment, Mobutu decided to embark on the experiment of sounding out popular opinion as to Zaire's political situation and what should be done about it. He invited traditional leaders, associations and individuals to make their views known — this unleashed a deluge of criticism. As Claude Ake put it, 'in Zaire, an innocuous forum for political dialogue that President Mobutu Sese Seko had allowed as a way of diffusing political frustration criticised Mobutu and his government vehemently.'[13] Explicit demands were made for his resignation, for the dismantling of Zaire's only legal (ruling) party, the MPR, and for the establishment of a multi-party democracy.

The failure to announce any specific reforms after an eagerly awaited cabinet meeting early in April 1990 led to extensive student rioting in Kinshasa. This finally prompted Mobutu to take more decisive action. On 24 April, he declared Zaire's Third Republic and indicated that a multi-party system, initially comprising only three parties including the MPR, would be introduced after 'a transitional period' of one year. The scene was striking, during the televised address announcing these reforms Mobutu was seen crying. The long-banned UDPS would be legalised. In early May, a new 'transitional government' was formed. Mobutu announced that a special commission would draft a new constitution by the end of April 1991 and

---

[11] E Kennes 'Footnotes to the Mining Story' in *Review of African Political Economy* N.º 93/94 2002 p. 606
[12] S. Riley and T. Parfitt 'Economic adjustment and democratization in Africa' in J. Walton and D. Seddon (ed) *Free markets and food riots: the politics of global adjustment* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1994) p. 136
[13] C. Ake *Democracy and Development in Africa* (Ibadan, Spectrum Books, 2001) p. 135

that presidential elections would be held before December of that year, with legislative elections to follow in 1992. He also announced the imminent 'depoliticization' of the armed forces, the gendarmerie, the civil guard, the security services and the administration in general.

But there was growing political dissent and unrest, and it rapidly became clear that the transition to multiparty democracy would not be smooth or entirely controlled by Mobutu. At the end of April the security forces broke up a UDPS rally, reportedly killing two people, deepening crisis and the opposition's support. Etienne Tshisekedi wa Muluma who led the UDPS dominated the 'democratic transition' throughout the 1990s. In April 1990 he was released from house arrest to the jubilation of his followers.

However Mobutu could not control the deluge of criticism and protests that his speech had triggered. Soon after Mobutu's speech Tshisekedi warned the president in an interview with a Belgium television station that he was at risk of being removed by force unless he remained true to the promised 'transition'. Tshisekedi referred to Mobutu's close friend the Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu who had been executed months before during a popular uprising. The close relationship extended to co-operation between the Romanian communist party and Zaire's ruling party the MPR. Images of the ignoble trial and execution of Ceausescu reached television sets in Zaire. In Kinshasa popular humour contemplated a similar fate for 'Mobutu Sesesescu.'

Students at the University of Kinshasa were the first to initiate the protests. They demonstrated on the 5 May asserting that the reforms announced ten days previously were 'irrevocable'. The demonstration ended violently, after it was attacked by security forces. The students immediately issued an appeal for other universities and colleges across the country to rise up in solidarity, 'Do not cross your arms. Follow our example. The dictatorship is finished. We cannot go back. Take on the state. Demonstrate! March!'[14]

The call to arms was answered. Students at the University of Lubumbashi responded to this call, demonstrating daily in the city and at the university from the 9 May. On the 11 May the student uprising in Katanga was brought to a swift and violent end. A 'squadron of death' was sent by the president. Dozens of students who had led the strikes and demonstrations were killed, and their bodies disappeared. Their parents were unable to complain. Without wider protests the students could be picked off, killed and isolated. For thousands the massacre in Lubumbashi exposed the reality of Mobutu's 'reforms'. There was strong condemnation of the massacre from humanitarian organisations, and the Belgian government announced the immediate suspension of official bilateral assistance to Zaire.[15] The massacre in Lubumbashi was important in another respect; it prompted a wave of political protest and civil unrest within the country during the second part of the year by a wide range of social groups including civil servants, teachers, medical staff and nurses, as well as workers and the urban poor. Civil servants were on strike from July to October, demanding

---

[14] Nkongolo, *Le Campus*, p. 182
[15] See G. Nzongola-Ntalaja *The Congo: from Leopold to Kabila* (London Zed Books, 2002) p. 155, 156

increases of up to 500 per cent for the lowest paid; they ended when 100 percent pay rises were promised. The civil unrest was not only among the public employees and salaried workers, but among wage workers and the poor. Hyperinflation reduced the value of even quite dramatic pay increases and prices of staple foods rose by the day. These conditions provoked anger and outrage as well as desperation. The strikes were not only 'economic'; they were also political and one of the favourite slogans was 'Mobutu voleur!' There were 'food riots' in Kinshasa, Lubumbashi, Bukavu and Mbuji Mayi in December 1990.[16]

In June 1990, however, as part of the process of continuing uneven political reform, the legislature accepted amendments to the Constitution, ending presidential control over the National Executive Council and foreign policy. The establishment of independent trade unions was also authorized. In early October, Mobutu announced that a full multi-party political system would be established and in November the enabling legislation was adopted. It was now possible to register a political party. The announcement of a timetable for the restoration of multiparty politics led to a proliferation of political parties. Prominent among these was the *Union des fédéralistes et republicains indépendants* (UFERI), led by Jean Nguza Karl-i-Bond — a former member of the ruling party.

By January 1991, 19 new political parties had been formally recognised, including the UDPS; by July, the new coalition of opposition groups established by the UDPS was the Union sacrée de l'opposition radicale (USOR) and had expanded to include 130 political parties. This was contributed to and constituted a reflection of both the widespread nature and the diversity of opposition to Mobutu. As in so many countries undergoing cautious political reforms at the time, the flood-gates, once even slightly opened, proved hard to shut again against the force of the political tide. In February 1991, hundreds of thousands of workers, civil servants and public service employees, held a three-day general strike to protest against working conditions, pay and living standards, and to demand the resignation of the government. Later in the same month, 20,000 people attended an anti-government rally in Kinshasa, organized by the UPDS. Nevertheless, in March 1991, a new and enlarged transitional government included representatives of several minor parties, although the more influential opposition parties and coalitions refused to participate. In April 1991, Mobutu announced that a national conference would convene at the end of the month to draft a new Constitution, but the major opposition parties refused to participate unless Mobutu relinquished power. Widespread anti-government demonstrations followed and in mid-April, 42 people were reported killed and many injured when security forces opened fire on demonstrators in the town of Mbujimayi in central Zaire. Following the violence, Mubutu initially suspended the national conference.

The political situation was now having a deeply traumatic effect on the Zairian economy. Mobutu was aware of this. In July, in an attempt to divide the opposition and incorporate some elements into government, he offered the post of Prime Minister to Tshisekedi; Tshisekedi refused. But this is not the whole picture. In fact secret negotiations had been going on between the two men for sometime, con-

---

[16] J. Walton and D. Seddon *Free markets and Food Rights: the Politics of Global Adjustment* (Oxford, Blackwell,1994) p. 163

ducted through trusted confidants. When national television and radio declared in July that Mobutu had appointed Tshisekedi as Prime Minster thousands of his supporter were shocked, but they were not passive. If the state media was reporting events correctly than this was in contradiction to everything that Tshisekedi had said and stood by for years, that Mobutu must go for there to be any possibility of change. Nzongola-Ntalaja explains what happened next, 'The politicised masses of Kinshasa … immediately after the announcement … descended on Tshisekedi's residence in Limete to force him to back down. For the masses, their 'saviour' should not cohabit with the "devil".' Although bowing to popular pressure, Tshisekedi made it clear that he was prepared to accept the post, as it would have given him the opportunity to organise and manage the national conference that they wanted to be held. While attempting to protect his democratic credentials, he damaged his reputation, perhaps irreparably.[17]

The opposition had previously been opposed to the idea of the national conference but now, sensing its strength, it changed tactics and agreed. The National Conference was reconvened on 31 July 1991 to discuss constitutional and administrative matters, and finally opened on 7 August. Some 2,850 delegates participated, including 900 representing opposition parties. By late September, the conference, from which representatives of the powerful Catholic Church had withdrawn, had become overshadowed by a worsening political crisis beyond its confines. At the beginning of September, violent clashes had taken place between opposition supporters and the security forces, with heavy casualties. The demonstrations represented growing popular frustration with the national conference, massive inflation had aggravated hardship.

Tshisekedi was named Prime Minister on 2 October 1991, albeit with MPR loyalists in the key posts of defence, foreign affairs and planning. The last of these was no sinecure as the economy was in free-fall. Inflation had increased in the wake of the riots to some 10,000 percent and salaried workers in the public sector (including soldiers) were openly contemptuous of pay offers in the region of 100-200 percent. There were even doubts as to whether the government could print the money, given that the German company that printed Zaire's bank notes had cancelled deliveries because of non-payment of printing bills. Nor did the government have much prospect of raising money, since GECAMINES, the only productive parastatal, had ceased payments to the state treasury in early 1991.

Only twelve days after he was appointed, Tshisekedi was dismissed by Mobutu and 'a Government of Crisis' was installed. Tshisekedi's departure had undoubtedly been hastened by his refusal to swear an oath of allegiance to the President and by his public denunciation of Mobutu. Four posts in the government went to MPR figures. It rapidly became clear that the new government lacked the confidence of the Western powers as well as the Zairian political elite. The same day that the presidential order revoked the government of Tshisekedi, October 21, there was second wave of riots and impromptu demonstrations in Lubumbashi, upper Zaire and in the two Kasais. Again it was a widespread popular revolt against misery and hunger, but also crucially against the 'wealthy'. These riots were however never

---

[17] Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, p. 188

channelled let alone officially organised by the opposition, who only saw them as a means to apply pressure on the government. Ludo Martins the controversial Congo expert expresses some of the frustration with the opposition for not using these opportunities, 'They should have called for a popular insurrection against Mobutu and the MPR, against the Presidential Guard and the total overturning of the dictatorship … Such an appeal even if it had not been immediately understood would have made a start. The impotence of the National Conference would have proved the accuracy of such an approach.'[18] It is clear that the opposition always regarded mass mobilisations, riots, strikes and demonstrations as a method to pressurise the dictatorship to share 'le pouvoir'.

Protest of hope: 16 February 1992

During January and February 1992, political tension increased as different sections of the opposition made their views felt. In January, troops briefly seized the national radio station, urging the removal of the government and the resumption of the national conference. Violence intensified as Christian churches attempted to mobilise against the recent suspension of the conference and these moves against certain sections of the opposition. A number of strikes broke out in February as civil servants and public sector workers generally demanded better wages and living conditions and the resumption of the national conference. Nzongola-Ntalaja, an eyewitness to these events, writes 'As in the past, ordinary people stepped in to change the situation'.[19]

The church organised on the 16 February a 'march of Christians' in the capital. Reports from the time describe a 'million people' in the street, exuberant and confident. In 110 parishes there were committees who mobilised for the protests, where radical voices could be heard.[20] The demonstration took place demanding the restitution of the National Conference. The army was reinforced by elements from Angola's rebel army UNITA. However the significance of the march and its bloody repression requires analysis. The organisation of the demonstration — marking perhaps the high point in the popular struggles during the 'transition' — gives us an opportunity to examine the dynamics and organisation of the protests during the popular upheavals. An important collection of eyewitness accounts from the demonstration, Marche d'espoir that came out two years after the protests provides a unique insight into the nature of the popular struggles that were sweeping the Congo.

The church occupied a highly ambiguous space. Church and parish groups were at the centre of the protests during the 'transition'. They organised neighbourhoods, bought together local militants from a range of political parties. The groups discussed how to organise local protests, and co-ordinated their action with other parish groups. Radical intellectuals were invited to address parishioners by local groups who would advocate the overthrown of the regime, lobbies and protests

---

[18] L. Martins *Kabila et la revolution congolaise, panafricanisme ou neocolonialisme? Tome 1* (Anvers, Editions EPO, 2002) p. 78

[19] Nzongola-Ntalaja *The Congo* p. 190

[20] Martins gives a good description of the demonstration and the risks that were involved, Martins, *Kabila* pp. 83-4.

were called by the same groups. They trained the uninitiated in non-violent action, exchanged ideas and discussed the work of Gandhi and Martin Luther King and the liberation theology of Latin America. They instructed new-comers on how to protect themselves against tear-gas, by carrying water and scarves to cover the face and how to behave when under attack by the police. And they organised solidarity during general strikes. Local churches in Kinshasa but also in cities and town across Zaire were the headquarters of the rebellion.

Church groups began to organise themselves in the 1980s. In 1989 Le Groupe Amos in Kinshasa was formed. Its founder was a priest José Mpundu, who together with the group was going to play a decisive role in the politicisation of thousands of Kinois (as Kinshasa's residents are known). Their first meetings in August 1989 were dedicated to spirituality and the techniques of non-violent evangelism. In December the same group — still without an official structure and organisation — organised further meetings, this time more political but still connected to the question of the church and political change.

The group had been functioning without a formalised structure, this was intentional. They wanted to establish that there was enough interest in these ideas before they organised themselves formally. On the 8 January 1990 they held their inaugural meeting, deciding on two principal organisational structures. The first was a co-ordination committee charged with the preparation of meetings. The second was to elected members responsible for spreading information across the region. Similar church-based organisations were taking place in many areas, often drawing their specific motivation from 'le vent de la pérestroika qui a secoué L'Europe de L'Est' ('the wind of perestroika which shook Eastern Europe').[21] Gustave Lobunda a young Christian priest from Kisangani went on hunger strike in 1992 in protest at the closure of the National Conference.

A demonstration on the 16 February was organised by *Comité Laic de Coordination* and was made up of many members of the National Conference, but also local parish militants who had been active for a couple of years and had the ability to mobilise their neighbourhoods. Demonstrators marched holding crosses, bibles, images of the Virgin Mary and other religious objects. The crowds sang hymns and prayed.[22]

The movement was not limited to Kinshasa. Other marches took place in Kitwit, Kananga, Mbujimayi, Kisangani, Goma and Bukavu. The level of repression varied. In Goma and Bukuva there was little disruption. In Kisangani and Mbujimayi however the demonstrations were brutally suppressed. Lobunda who was on hunger strike at the time describes that the Christian community of Kisangani decided to respond to the call from Kinshasa, but only had a days notice. Young Christian militants from Mangobo, a poor neighbourhood in the city, wrote and

---

[21] *Marche d'espoir: Kinshasa 16 Février 1992 Non-violence pour la Démocratie au Zaire* (Paris, l'Harmattan, 1994) pp. 100-2
[22] One eyewitness explains what happened when the police started to fire, 'we were scared by the firing and were advanced slowly towards the soldiers. Priest, nuns … Christians were on their knees praying and brandishing branches, bibles … as the soldiers fired into the air. The crowd were singing… Thirty minutes later the soldiers had exhausted their ammunition and we continued singing religious songs, and we had crossed the first military barrier.'*Marche d'espoir* p. 30

signed a leaflet, and distributed it to all the parishes in Kisangani on Saturday morning. 'The result: despite the short amount of preparation all the parishes of the city marched even if the numbers from parish to parish varied.'[23]

However certain commentators question the 'real' motives of the demonstration. In one academic account of the march de Villers and Tshonda write about the 'imaginary world' of the Christians Marchers. They observe that 'people chanted psalms and demonstrated with bible in hand. They were motivated by the hope of a new Christian reign … This Catholic crowd had the deliberation, calm and peacefulness of … a procession. Its strength was belief rather than politics.'[24] It is absurd to oppose belief and politics in this context. As we have seen the immediately aims of thousands of demonstrators was not the afterlife or a 'new Christian reign' but the reopening of the national conference. The demonstration was motivated by the ideas of non-violence inspired by political movements in the 20th century as well as Christian values and beliefs.

These ideas however had undergone a transformation since 1989, and the church had in the words of *Le Groupe Amos* evolved a 'nouvelle image'. In 1992 many churches were synonymous with activism and protest, encouraging and mobilising communities to become involved in the political changes sweeping the country. There was a widespread belief in the involvement of the church in political liberation. Nzongola-Ntalaja understood the importance of the demonstration in the political evolution of the National Conference, 'In Kinshasa, the paramilitary forces opened fire, killing over thirty people. To the martyrs of independence who fell on Sunday 4 January 1959 were now added the "martyrs of democracy". Their sacrifice would compel the dictator to give in to internal and external pressure by reopening the conference'.[25] The National Conference was reopened in the 6 April.

Resuming the 'transition'

The demonstration and its bloody suppression revealed again the cowardice of the opposition. It seemed as though Mobutu was able to hang onto power, almost at whatever cost. As Parfitt and Riley remarked in mid 1992, 'at the time of writing… Mobutu continues to cling on to power in his bankrupt and chaotic country, clearly oblivious to the suffering of his people.'[26] This, despite the fact that a leaked cable from the Belgian ambassador to Zaire is reported to have said 'it is impossible to continue with Mobutu.'[27]

The political and social deterioration inside the country from late 1991 onwards brought all negotiations with the IMF to a halt. As a result, all rescheduling talks also stopped. No funds were to flow into Zaire for the purpose of structural adjustment or balance of payments support until a satisfactory settlement of Zaire's internal crisis had been reached. Zaire in return suspended virtually all payments on its foreign debt. Of total debt service due, of $3.45 billion, only $79 million was

---

[23] *Marche d'espoir* p. 50
[24] G. de Villers and J. M Tshonda 'When Kinois Take to the Street' p. 144
[25] Nzongola-Ntalaja *The Congo* p. 190
[26] Parfitt and Riley 'Economic adjustment and democratization in Africa' p. 165
[27] Cited in S. Riley *The politics of global debt* (London, Macmillan, 1993) p. 116

paid. Increasingly isolated and under pressure at home and abroad, Mobutu — against the wishes of the Prime Minister Karl-I-Bond — agreed to reconvene the conference. On 17 April, the National Conference declared itself 'sovereign' with power to take binding legislative and executive decisions, thus undermining the role of the government. In return for accepting this ruling, Mobutu was permitted to remain Head of State. The main role of the conference was to define a new constitution, to be put to a referendum, and to establish a timetable for legislative and presidential elections. The political situation within the country was now extremely confused. At a formal level, it was not clear who ruled — the national conference, the government or the President. Mobutu was still President and maintained control of the army and security forces and much of the state apparatus; but there was no effective government, the national conference remained in session, but the various opposition movements were in disarray.

Over the next few months, the national conference appeared to edge forward, making slow progress. In June a special commission was established to examine arrangements for transitional multi-party government. In the same month it was announced that a transitional government would take office in July and that an electoral college would be formed. As the conference began debating, yet again, the choice of the Prime Minister, in mid-June 1992, Mobutu warned that the conference had the power only to draft a constitution, not to adopt it, and threatened to 'call the conference to order' as he had done in the past. However, by late July, he appeared to have conceded to the conference's demands. On 23 July, it was announced that it had been mutually agreed that the conference would elect a transitional Prime Minister, who would appoint a government. Mobutu was also reported to have agreed to the formation of a High Council of the Republic to oversee the implementation of the conference's decisions and to place the gendarmerie and civil guard under the control of the transitional government. Mobutu was, however, to retain control of the army.

In August 1992, Tshisekedi was elected transitional Prime Minster, replacing Karl-I-Bond, who had not stood for re-election. He was given a 24-month mandate, pending the promulgation of a new constitution, which would curtail the powers of the president. Nzongola-Ntalaja gives a graphic account of the election, 'Like Kinshasa, the whole country erupted in joyful dance from dawn to sunset on 15 August 1992.'[28]

At the end of August, Tshisekedi appointed a transitional Government of National Unity, which included opponents of Mobutu. In September, the National Conference, once more in operation, adopted a multi-party constitution, but this was rejected by President Mobutu, who stated his intention of adopting 'a semi-presidential constitution'. In October, attacks on opposition leaders and the offices of newspapers critical of Mobutu became increasingly frequent in Kinshasa, while Katanga was alight with what seemed like ethnic violence. In November, the national conference, without the participation of Mobutu's supporters, adopted a draft constitution providing for the establishment of a Federal Republic of the Congo, the introduction of a bicameral legislature and the election, by universal suffrage, of a non-executive president, to fulfil largely ceremonial functions. Executive and military power was to be exercised by the Prime Minister.

---

[28] Nzongola-Ntalaja *The Congo* p. 195

The draft document was vigorously opposed by Mobutu. He attempted, unsuccessfully, early in December to declare the Tshisekedi government dissolved. The national conference dissolved itself and was succeeded by a 453-member *Haut Conseil de la République* (HCR) with Archbishop Monsengwo as its president. As the supreme interim executive and legislative authority, the HCR was empowered to amend and adopt the new constitution and to organise legislative and presidential elections. Monsengwo announced that the report of a special commission established by the conference in order to examine allegations of corruption brought against the president and his associates would be considered by the High Council. In response to this effective seizure of his powers, Mobutu ordered the suspension of the HCR and the government, and decreed that civil servants should replace ministers in the supervision of government ministries — a demand they refused. Attempts by the Presidential Guard to obstruct the convening of the HCR ended following the organization of a public demonstration in Kinshasa in protest at the actions of the armed forces. The HCR received the support of Belgium, France and the USA in its declaration of Tshisekedi as head of Zaire's government. By the end of the year there was a major political crisis in Zaire.

However political debate was widespread during this period. Far from being restricted to the forums of the National conference Nzongola-Ntalaja observed that politics was discussed 'on the side walks near newspapers stands' which became so common that it led to a 'political organisation of young people calling themselves parlementaires-debout [street politicians]… organised in each municipality in Kinshasa and with a central organ for the city as a whole, these forums debated current issues, took decisions and sought ways of implementing them. Major actions involved publicly denouncing opposition politicians who were seen as faltering in their resolve for democratic change, and organising rallies and demonstrations in support of the various demands of the democracy movement.' Although the groups were vocal supporters of Tshisekedi they were not controlled by the UDPS and free to criticise whoever they wanted.[29]

In January 1993, the HCR first issued an ultimatum to Mobutu, stating that he would be removed unless he reversed his decision to dissolve the transitional government, and then declared him guilty of high treason. Throughout January there were mass demonstrations and strikes by those opposed to Mobutu; troops opened fire on more than one occasion and several demonstrators were reported killed. A brief general strike and campaign of civil disobedience, organised by the USOR, resulted in five fatalities and numerous injuries. The Presidential Guard was also called out to quell riots by disaffected troops, protesting an attempt by the president to pay them with discredited banknotes, indicating serious divisions within the army and security forces. Mobutu blamed Prime Minister Tshisekedi for the troubles and tried to have him removed; the HCR supported the Prime Minister. But Mobutu was committed to the removal of Tshisekedi and in early March convened a special 'conclave' of political forces to debate the country's future. In mid-March, the conclave appointed Faustin Birindwa, a former UDPS member and adviser to Tshisekedi, who had been expelled from the UDPS, as Prime Minister, charged with the formation of a 'government

---

[29] Nzongola-Ntalaja *The Congo* p. 197

of national salvation'. Tshisekedi refused to leave office; Zaire now had two Prime Ministers. Mobutu also re-convened the dormant National Assembly as a rival to the HCR. In early April, Birindwa appointed a cabinet, which included Karl-I-Bond (as first deputy prime minister in charge of defence) and three members of the USOR, who were immediately expelled from that organisation.

Mobutu fostered divisions in the opposition through extensive use of his personal patronage, since, despite the gradual reduction of his formal political powers, he continued to have direct access to much of the country's resources and assets. This was a low period for the political transition; it was also a disastrous period for the Zairian economy. In February 1994, the World Bank closed its office in Kinshasa, and in June, Zaire was suspended from the IMF. Since the civil disturbances of 1991, private investment had virtually ceased, the country having been declared 'a dangerous if not prohibitive risk' for bankers, investors and exporters, by virtually all country risk analysis and export credit guarantee insurance organizations of the OECD countries. Various donors, including Belgium, made it clear that suspension from the IMF could only be ended by the installation of a credible government with a feasible economic programme and plans to exert greater control over the key political and economic institutions. A mission from the IMF at the end of 1994 concluded that Zaire's draft budget for 1995 did not correspond to its own projections (with expenditure exceeding revenues by about $30 million). The control of inflation and stabilization of the exchange rate were awaited as the concrete signs of recovery on which the donors might be prepared to build a support programme.

But the signs were not propitious. For a start, the virtual collapse of the mining industry meant that the foundation of the wealth which sustained the political process was no longer reliably available for distribution and allocation. Mining output hit its lowest point in 1994. A modest improvement followed in 1995 and 1996, with output rising to 34,000 tons and 42,425 tons of copper respectively. But the second half of the decade saw virtual stagnation in the mining sector, at around 30,000-31,000 tons.

Frustrated transitions

There were several moments in the 'transition' between 1990-1994 when Mobutu could have been removed by the popular forces that were mobilising on a regular basis. But there was a serious problem of leadership. Although the main opposition party the UDPS, and its leader Tshisekedi, had widespread respect they failed to seize the opportunity to oust the regime when it was at its weakest. In fact it seemed to many observers that they were not serious in their intention to rid the country of Mobutu at all. De Villers and Tshonda argue that 'Tshisekedi's preoccupation with the premiership caused the opposition to lose sight of it real political objectives. Moreover, his confusing strategy disorientated supporters. "Moses the saviour" was transformed into the "Sphinx" without a clear political stance. His behaviour can best be explained as combat tactics between himself and Mobutu.'[30] The same study argues that the objective was not to overthrow Mobutu — a possibility they argue

---

[30] G. de Villers and J. O. Tshonda 'An Intransitive Transtion', RoAPE no. 93/94 2002 p. 403.

was possible in 1990 and 1992 — but a waiting game, to see the situation deteriorate so dramatically that Tshisekedi would appear to be the only realistic alternative.

In many ways the Congolese transition bore remarkable similarity with the democratic struggles that had swept away old regimes across the continent. Even where these 'transitions' had been successful the new governments were committed to an agenda of neo-liberal privatisation, and further structural adjustment. The class implementing these reforms were a recycled elite, that in the words of some authors has done 'little more than … stabilise property-threatening situations by a momentary re-circulation of elites'.[31] Still it is too easy to be cynical about these 'transitions', when the opening of political space led to an explosion of protest and resistance that presented real opportunities for a more thorough going and radical transformation of society.

But the crucial factor in the Congo was that the 'transition' was frustrated, largely due to the failings of the opposition themselves. Ludo Martins makes the case for a different type of organisation that would have been to help lead and co-ordinate the popular, grass roots forces that were emerging between 1990-4. There was certainly an embryonic alternative in the Parish committees, neighbourhood groups and among trade union militants that could have found more consistent leadership with an organisation that refused to compromise with the regime. Martins outlines what such an organisation might have been able to do, 'A revolutionary organisation could have expressed these needs: the immediate departure of Mobutu and all the dinosaurs; prosecution of all Mobutists responsible for repression and corruption; [and] the end to the foreign domination of the Congo.'[32]

While this author shares some of Martins frustration about the lack of a serious organisational force there were many factors militating against the creation of such a politics. One of the central weaknesses was the organised left who was now further disorientated by the collapse of the Soviet Union. A generation of political leaders, militants, trade union activist and intellectuals — precisely those who could have formed such an organisation — were left without their ideological moorings. One of the reasons why the opposition kept deferring to the National Conference was that it seemed to fill this ideological vacuum. There was simply no other serious political force in the cities and towns that offered a viable alternative. Although much of the organised African left was nostalgic about the Soviet Union, for many reasons, the same was not true for the students and the urban poor. It was these groups, as we have seen, who fuelled the popular struggles in the early years of the 'transition'.

The opposition repeatedly demonstrated their incompetence, though even 'incompetence' suggests poor decisions but a correct strategy, when some commentators on the 'transition' now agreed that the entire political class — government and opposition alike — were determined to secure the largest share of state power and patronage for themselves. There was no better eyewitness to these processes that Loka Ne Kongo, who wrote about the conditions in the country in 1995 'Hunger, illness, ever-present death, social and physical insecurity have devastated our

---

[31] Leys and Saul, 'Sub-Saharan Africa in Global Capitalism' in *The Monthly Review* 1999 Vol. 51 N.º 3 p. 26
[32] Martins *Kabila* p. 83

population. The successive failure of the opposition, the betrayals of our leaders discourage and disarm… the population is hungry. One fears that tomorrow they will not listen anymore to the opposition.' Six months after writing these words Ne Kongo called for a programme of 'civil disobedience' that would include a popular refusal to co-operate with the state on any level. However Ne Kongo was clear that 'this supposes that the opposition organises itself to install across the country a parallel administration, police force and justice system.'[33]

The opposition failed at the last hurdle. The tactics of the parliamentary opposition had collapsed and by September 1996 Ne Kongo saw the opposition as simply adding failure to failure. So now he had reached the conclusion that 'all the paths that could have led to the eradication of the dictator by non-violence are practically exhausted.'[34] The failure of the opposition opened the field to Kabila's rebel army that was assembling in the east.

By 1996 there was no other political force except the armed opposition led by Kabila. Yet Kabila's victory also reveals the enormous weaknesses in his political strategy. During the crucial years of urban revolt and upheaval his voice did not reach Kinshasa (or most cities or towns), and although he was isolated from the betrayals of the opposition he was also cut off from the euphoria and exuberance of the mass mobilisations. It was the collapse of these urban protests (and their tantalizing potential for radical change) that gave Kabila his opportunity. It was not a strategy — as Ne Kongo wanted in 1995 — of organising these popular struggles, rather the substitution of his rebel army for them. Liberation was going to be delivered to a population unable to free themselves by a rebel army led by a radical nationalist who could. The people of the Congo had been 'saved' again.

Therefore Kabila's success was a product of the disorientation of the powerful social forces in Congo by an opposition that was now regarded by many with contempt and indifference. 'Kabila the liberator' was welcomed into Kinshasa by previously loyal, though now bitter and exhausted former supporters of Tshisekedi. While the opposition leader ran to Mobutu's French chateau in November 1996 to see if there was a chance of reviving the 'transition' Kabila's rebel army was beginning their long march towards the capital. It is justified to contemplate another future which could have emerged with the victory of the opposition over Mobutu. The possibility of unseating Mobutu was real but only if there had been a concerted and determined unity among the opposition. A political solution arising from the legitimising and popular mobilisation of the Congolese in cities and towns across the country could have united the Congo, removed the dictator of thirty years and guaranteed a future free of foreign and imperialist domination. The failure of this possibility was a catastrophe. Kabila was hopelessly compromised by his alliances with Uganda and Rwanda, and soon the country was propelled into devastating war for more than a decade. The country again became the play-thing of foreign countries, mercenaries and multi-national companies.

---

[33] Cited in Martins *Kabila* p. 115
[34] Cited in Martins *Kabila* p. 115

NATIONAL UNITY OR NATIONAL EXCLUSION? WHERE TO FOR ZIMBABWEAN CHURCHES AND CIVIL SOCIETY? [1]

Elinor Sisulu, Pascal Richard and Steve Kibble
Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition

The contested outcome of the 2008 local, parliamentary and presidential elections and the high level of violence initially undermined the legitimacy of Robert Mugabe and his ZANU-PF party, even in the assessment by African states and institutions. But instead of leading towards a new democratic dispensation, the southern African heads of state chose to push for a power-sharing agreement, the Global Political Agreement (GPA), against the will of the people of Zimbabwe as expressed by the victory at the polls for the MDC. In January 2009, Zimbabwe's Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) finally gave in to the arm-twisting of regional heads of state and agreed to become part of an inclusive government, the Government of National Unity (GNU), with Robert Mugabe's ZANU-PF in February 2009. The move restored legitimacy to Robert Mugabe as President of Zimbabwe and set the stage for an injection of western capital into the country's beleaguered economy and the end of targeted sanctions. While no realistic political alternative to the GNU was developed, the government itself was received with mixed feelings in Zimbabwe. MDC and civil society activists feared that once Mugabe and his party retained power, there was nothing to stop him from attacking and undermining the MDC through means all too familiar in Zimbabwe's political terrain, such as extra-judicial assassinations, imprisonment on trumped-up charges and undermining of political opponents through intimidation and obstruction. It has become evident that this is indeed the case. Many Zimbabwean minds still hold clear memories of the 1987 Unity Accord between Joshua Nkomo's ZAPU and Zanu: pulverised by five years of harassment and intimidation and a campaign of mass murder against the population of Matabeleland, ZAPU leaders finally capitulated and joined the government. ZAPU leaders were unable to make any impact on government policies and were swallowed up by ZANU-PF (although ZAPU eventually formally withdrew in 2009 and relaunched itself as an independent party).

---

[1] This paper was copy-edited by Clare Smedley.

This is a different political moment, however. The increasing militancy of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), the emergence of civil society coalitions such as the National Constitutional Assembly and Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, the formation of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), the renewed, if spasmodic, commitment within the churches to non-violent civil action, and the outcome of the 2008 elections all signify the deep desire of Zimbabweans to rid themselves of a dictatorship leading the country down the path of destruction. Zimbabwe today faces a series of interlocking crises in the political, constitutional, economic, social and humanitarian arenas. With refugees pouring into neighbouring countries fleeing disease, devastating poverty and political repression, the Zimbabwean crisis has become a major crisis for the region. The GPA signed on 15 September 2008 that culminated in the GNU is not the desired outcome for the vast majority of Zimbabweans, especially those who have spent the past decade struggling to effect change peacefully and democratically in the country. It also raises the question of the commitment of regional and African bodies to the values of the African Union (the rule of law and some degree of intervention challenging the sovereignty of nation-states), as opposed to the Organisation of African Unity.

Zimbabweans in the MDC, civil society and the churches have to subject themselves to serious self-interrogation. How is it that the intense struggles of the past decade have come to this? Where have we gone wrong, and how do we go forward? This article seeks to provide some answers to these questions, focusing on civil society and the churches. We argue that the relationship between civil society and government has been marked by a series of misunderstandings, and by reactive changes in the former, driven as much by vulnerabilities as strategic thinking on goals, values and phased responses.

Civil society, brave though it has been, has too often appeared — along with African counterparts and governments — to accept the rhetoric of the regime rather than to assess its actual performance. Moving chronologically in this piece, we attempt to show that this has led to a less than optimum response. For the sake of clarity, we identify two broad timeframes. The first of these is an initial post-Independence phase (1980 to about 1999), which saw civil society seeking to play a role of constructive criticism in relation to what they believed or hoped was a progressive state. They were ill-prepared for the violent state reaction, running counter to the regional moves to democratisation in the 1990s. The second phase (2000-2008) saw sectors of civil society attempting to develop more adequate, often more confrontational responses to state violence. Currently both strategies coexist uneasily, as illustrated by the virulent debates on a new constitution. During both periods, however, civil society has been largely ineffectual in bringing any positive influence to bear on state policies and actions. This has been due to a range of factors including repression from ZANU-PF, the largely urban bias of civil society groupings, and the fact that while the church has broader representation in rural as well as urban areas, it appeared unwilling to act. We show the complexity of Zimbabwean civil society and the differences in function and values between secular and religious bodies. In analysing the lack of influence on the government, we also look at the way that civil society has attempted to influence regional forces, but has been constrained within an 'anti-imperialist' ideological framework by the complexities of its relationship with the MDC, with outside (western/northern)

funders and by an over-reliance on human rights discourse as being sufficient to both strategise and gain regional allies.

Questions of how to sustain initiatives, provide leadership and consider at each stage the efficacy of strategies, such as engagement or confrontation with government, have marked each stage of the crisis, including at present. In conclusion, we argue that while in the current 'transitional' period civil society is attempting to rethink and re-strategise, many players have been 'co-opted', excluded or side-lined by the new political dispensation.

From Cooperation to Critical Engagement: Churches, Civil Society and the Zimbabwean State 1980-1999

Zimbabwean Independence in 1980 was celebrated across Africa, marking the end of one of the last bastions of white settler colonial rule in Africa. For the Zimbabwean people it marked the end of years of armed struggle waged against a colonial state. Robert Mugabe, the Marxist guerrilla leader-turned-President made remarkably conciliatory noises that gained him the confidence even of the white racists who had demonised him in preceding years. The Zanu government invested massively in education and health and opened a world of new opportunities for the black middle class, while black peasant farmers for the first time had access to credit and extension advice. They made the most of these opportunities, and in the first few years of Independence dramatically increased their agricultural production. For the first years Zimbabwe seemed to be gaining peace and prosperity, with Robert Mugabe being a genuinely popular leader.

Encouraged by this domestic and international support, Mugabe was allowed to get away with the killing and maiming of an estimated 20,000 people by the North Korean-trained Fifth Brigade. The latter's operations in the Matabeleland and Midlands provinces between 1982 and 1986 was called *Gukurahundi*, Shona for 'the early rain which washes away the chaff before the spring rains'. *Gukurahundi* clearly signalled the Mugabe regime's determination to crush all political opposition. Emergency regulations ensured a total media blackout in the affected areas, with large parts of the population remaining ignorant. Those that did know offered little protest. Criticism in Zimbabwe and the rest of the continent was countered by government claims that *Gukurahundi* was an operation against dissidents sent by the apartheid regime to destabilise Zimbabwe. The international community, especially the former colonial power Britain, also had no interest in reopening the Zimbabwean problem. It would take until 1997 before the Catholic Commission of Justice and Peace (CCJP) and the Legal Resources Centre published a report on *Gukurahundi*, called *Breaking the Silence*. Even then, the bishops sat on the report through a combination of fear and unwillingness to confront their new government.

Concerned about allegations of having been insufficiently supportive of ZANU-PF during the liberation struggle or being 'pro-western', the churches felt obliged to demonstrate their allegiance to the new government. This seemed especially the case for the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC), one of whose member churches, the United Methodist Church, was led by Bishop Abel Muzorewa, who had become Prime Minister of the short-lived Zimbabwe Rhodesia in June 1979 in a power-sharing agreement with the Smith regime. Although some radical ele-

ments of the church had had involvement in the liberation struggle, such as the 1970 Catholic Bishops' denunciation of the racially unequal constitution brought in by the Smith government in 1969, and some Catholic priests' interaction with liberation movement forces, there was no generalised support. Those who spoke out, such as Bishop Donal Lamont (who was charged with support for terrorism, although he was deported), were imprisoned or thrown out of the country. The Zimbabwe Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) formed in 1972, with the support of the Catholic Institute for International Relations (CIIR, now Progressio), published pamphlets exposing the repression of the Rhodesian state. But the Catholic bishops did not provide unqualified support for their own CCJP in the pre-Independence era, in much the same way that they hesitated to confront the state over the Gukurahundi report.

A major aspect of the Zimbabwean crisis has been the undermining of governance and rule of law. In 2002, the Zimbabwe Legal Resources Foundation report *Justice in Zimbabwe* highlighted the following:

> *The government said it was trying to rid the legal system of its colonial, reactionary elements so that it would support, rather than obstruct, reforms aimed at advancing the rights of the black majority, especially the programme of land redistribution. In fact, however, the main aim seems to have been to re-mould the legal system into a pliant instrument of State power that would allow the government to curtail organised political opposition and clamp down on criticism and dissent.* [2]

On the legislative front, the structure of governance concentrated political and executive power in the hands of the presidency.[3] The Smith regime's state of emergency that had been in existence since 1965 was inherited and maintained by the Zimbabwe government until 1990. Under this and other colonial legislation, the Zimbabwean government ensured that there were virtually no organised civil society formations apart from those attached to itself. Critics and opponents were either detained, harassed or labelled 'counter-revolutionary', and hence subject to constant attack from state officials, politicians and ZANU-PF supporters. It took courage to challenge the state, and civil society generally avoided a confrontational stance. Organised formations such as the trade unions, student movement, religious organisations and women's groups concentrated on a reformist agenda revolving around specific issues. According to Zimbabwean historian and political commentator Brian Raftopoulos, "for most of the post-colonial period, NGOs have maintained a cautious ambivalence towards the state, finding ways to accommodate the development discourse of the state and avoiding frontal, policy-lobbying confrontations".[4]

The closing years of the 1980s, however, saw more coordinated and active opposition to government, triggered by increasing economic difficulties as a result of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) adopted by the Zimbabwe government in 1987. In the same year, the ZANU-PF government brought the

---

[2] Legal Resources Foundation (2002), *Justice in Zimbabwe*, available at: http://www.lrf.co.zw/Documents/zimjust.doc

[3] The promulgation of the Presidential Powers Act (1986) gave the President powers to legislate unilaterally.

[4] Moyo, Sam, John Makumbe & Brian Raftopoulos (2000), *NGOs, the State and Politics in Zimbabwe*, Harare: Southern Africa Political Economy Series, p.45.

beleaguered ZAPU of Joshua Nkomo into a Government of National Unity. The incorporation of ZAPU as a junior partner in the government gave impetus to Mugabe's drive for a legislated one-party state, creating concern within churches and civil society that this would happen in 1990 once the constitutional clause guaranteeing multi-partyism expired. ZANU-PF agitation for a one-party state coincided with revelations about massive high-level corruption within the party. Its popularity nosedived as the student and labour movement and the middle class — all hitherto formal or informal parts of the nationalist coalition — began to unite in opposition to a one-party state through increasingly active debates about a new constitution. The government response was a brutal crackdown. Leaders of both of the later factions of the MDC — Morgan Tsvangirai, the then secretary-general of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) and student leader Arthur Mutambara — were, with others, thrown into detention for six months under state of emergency laws.

Increasing poverty and job cuts fuelled persistent protests by students and workers throughout the 1990s. Agitation for a new social contract to guarantee freedoms and rights and give people a greater voice culminated in the formation of the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) in 1997 and civil society advocating a democratic, people-driven constitution. The new entity comprising ZCTU, the Zimbabwe National Students' Movement (ZINASU) as well as women's and youth organisations, marked a defining break between civil society and government, ushering in a more confrontational era with different voices raising their different, yet related, grievances. In January 1998, several human rights NGOs came together to provide legal and psychosocial assistance to victims of food riots suppressed by the government that month. This network was formalised as the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, whose objectives included assisting victims of organised violence. In June 1999, women's organisations that were members of the NCA formed the Constitutional Women's Coalition (later known as the Women's Coalition) to address their marginalisation from both the government-led Constitutional Commission and the civil society-led NCA. These groups organised protests, and the mushrooming demands for political change led to the foundation of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) at the ZCTU's Workers' Convention.[5] This was, and still is, seen as an opportune marriage between civil society and political interests. Solidarity Peace Trust (SPT) commented that "in the late 1990s, the constitutional reform process driven by the unified MDC and the NCA was riding the momentum of hope, not just for changes in the constitution, but in state power". It however also set the stage for strains and challenges in the relationship between civil society and the MDC, particularly in a situation where the MDC became part of the government. In SPT's view, "the NCA and others … have not taken into account the changed political context of constitutional reform in 2009, compared to the period 1998-2000".[6] Such challenges also arose in other pro-democracy movements in the region, such as in Malawi and Zambia. In the Zimbabwean case, a close association with the MDC led to regional perceptions

---

[5] Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition (2005), *Civil Society and NGO Responses to the Zimbabwean Crisis*, unpublished.
[6] Solidarity Peace Trust (2009), *Walking a Thin Line*, Johannesburg, p. 12, 30 June. Available at: http://www.solidaritypeacetrust.org/reports/walking_a_thin_line.pdf (accessed 3 September 2009).

being voiced of Zimbabwean civil society as 'lackeys', not only of the MDC, but also of the West.

As general discontent grew in the 1990s over the political, economic and indeed constitutional situation, the churches resumed a broader, more active role (particularly at the levels below the national leaderships). Silveira House, a Jesuit training and analysis centre, led critical discussions, particularly of the unpopular ESAP, and the churches' engagement in the political arena was reactivated when monitors were trained and deployed by Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) during the 1995 elections. Towards the end of the decade, meetings which led to the formation of the NCA[7] took place on ZCC premises, and Africa Synod House, the home of the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference (ZCBC), saw meetings leading to the formation of the MDC. Significant evangelical concern also grew, although interrupted by a major political crisis, widely believed to have been engineered by the state, engulfing the Ecumenical Foundation of Zimbabwe (EFZ) leadership and leading to its virtual collapse.

The ZCC-organised meetings led to the formation in March 2000 of Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN), a coalition of NGOs set up to standardise election-related activities and methodology and to ensure wider geographical coverage and coordination. Although the ZCC helped to set up the NCA in 1997, it withdrew two years later amid worries that the latter had become too critical of government. The regime attempted to hijack the constitutional process by setting up its own constitutional commission, which some church leaders joined, but the draft constitution was decisively rejected by the electorate in a referendum in 2000, with NCA at the forefront. This resounding 'No' vote marked the first ZANU-PF defeat in any election since Independence. It led directly to the land invasions, at first informal but later state-directed, that accelerated Zimbabwe's slide into crisis. It also marked the end of 'constructive criticism' with the new era of intensified government and civil society confrontation.

Civil Society 2000-2008: Prisoners of Hope[8]

Zimbabwean civil society activist and political analyst Brian Kagoro opined that it is "the ingrained capacity of Zimbabweans to constantly hope for a new day that has made us prisoners of hope". When in 2000 the recently formed MDC shocked the ruling party by winning 57 seats in a parliament of 120 seats, Zimbabwe for the first time had a substantial parliamentary opposition, with many hoping that this strong showing on the back of the referendum defeat for the ruling party meant the imminent end of the Mugabe regime. The development of more sustained civil society criticism of ZANU-PF, the widespread support for the NCA and the MDC's essential agenda of democratic change was rooted in an assumption that Zimbabwe would follow the regional trend of transition towards democratisation, achieved in much of sub-Saharan Africa in the early to mid-1990s. As aptly expressed by Kagoro, civil society was therefore unprepared for Mugabe's unusual willingness

---

[7] This was part of the movement for a new constitution, and included a provision for reduced executive power for the president.

[8] This heading is taken from the title of Brian Kagoro's article: Kagoro, Brian (2005), *The Prisoners of Hope: Civil Society and the Opposition in Zimbabwe*, African Security Review, Vol. 14, No. 3.

to use repression to maintain his position, and the inability and/or unwillingness of particularly the regional community to support democratisation.

Civil society's recognition of the need for a well-coordinated and concerted campaign to address the multi-layered crisis found expression in the formation of the 300 organisation-strong Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition in 2001. The new coalition quickly became the most powerful and influential civil society coalition in the country, counting among its membership major mass-based organisations such as the ZCTU, the Zimbabwe National Students' Union (ZINASU), the human rights fraternity in the form of the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, as well as ecumenical and church organisations and the Women's Coalition. The expectation of change reminiscent of broader world social movements was expressed in the Crisis Coalition's motto, 'Another Zimbabwe is possible'.[9]

The NCA remained at the forefront of confrontation with the state through public demonstrations. It produced a widely-circulated draft constitution still viewed within civil society circles as the starting point in any future constitution-making processes in the country. Civil disobedience in the form of public demonstrations became a speciality of Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA), a grass-roots women's organisation that came into being in 2002. Both NCA and WOZA became targets of a sustained campaign of harassment and intimidation by police and other state agents, with their leaders suffering regular assault, arrest and imprisonment, but unable to galvanise widespread popular participation in demonstrations and similar activities.

The Mugabe regime's response to this challenge was swift. It understood clearly that its grip on power was dependent on silencing independent media voices and supplanting them with an aggressive propaganda campaign. Apartheid-like legislation such as the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA), the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) and the Broadcasting Services Act (BSA) closed down media space. As well as closing down newspapers (including the bombing of printing presses), there were attacks on journalists and independent media stakeholders.

Opposition supporters, who felt on the brink of an electoral victory in 2000, saw their hopes dashed in subsequent elections. Since 2000, Zimbabweans have endured numerous by-elections, presidential elections in 2002, parliamentary elections in 2005 and harmonised parliamentary, local, presidential and senate elections in 2008. All of these were characterised by intimidation of voters through widespread and systematic state-sponsored violence. Paramilitary groups such as so-called war veterans and youth militia (believed to be 29,000 strong) were involved, as well as police and army. Intimidation tactics included attacks on independent media, disenfranchisement of citizens through confiscation of identity documents, manipulation of the electoral roll and sustained propaganda campaigns that legitimised violence against the members of the MDC and civil society as 'puppets of the West'.

The AIPPA/POSA legislation created an environment inimical to the proper functioning of civil society, preventing the holding of meetings without police clearance and generally denying Zimbabweans basic freedoms of assembly, speech and association. Civil society was further threatened by the Non-Governmental

---

[9] Taken from the World Social Movement's credo, 'Another world is possible'.

Organisations Bill passed through Parliament in August 2005. This would have outlawed civil society organisations engaged in governance and democracy work, and prevented them from accessing funding and/or conducting any independent research not sanctioned by the state. While the bill was never implemented, it was arguably introduced incrementally, backed by sustained state-sponsored violence. This points towards a major feature and perhaps constraint in Zimbabwe's civil society, namely its overemphasis on (and to an extent dominance by) legal solutions and reforms in an environment of impunity. Although from 2000 onwards rule of law in Zimbabwe was declared 'dead', civil society organisations, as in the case of the NGO Bill, still focused on operating within a legal framework. At the same time, the state was manipulating the law and using extra-legal methods of repression to which civil society had no effective recourse. Few organisations spelt out and followed a clear vision like WOZA, who stated that "Our mandate is to conduct peaceful protests in defiance of unjust laws that sanction our fundamental and god-given freedoms of assembly, expression and association".[10]

The Zimbabwe government's propensity for violence was demonstrated two months after the March 2005 elections, when it launched Operation Murambatsvina, euphemistically referred to as 'Operation Clean-up', although 'Clear Out the Filth' was a more accurate translation. According to a report by United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan's Special Envoy, Anna Tibaijuka, this operation resulted in 700,000 people being without homes or sources of livelihood (or both), and disruption to the education of over 220,000 children. Among those made homeless, without access to food, water, sanitation or health care at the height of winter, were infants, the elderly and infirm, and many people with HIV and AIDS. The report concluded that over 2.4 million Zimbabweans were affected. Hundreds of innocent civilians were attacked and arrested and had their houses destroyed, forcing them to seek shelter in churches from which police often chased them out, before burning blankets, confiscating food and dumping the people in the rural areas. On appealing for funds for the victims, churches were told that there were no victims; only 'illegals'.

The increase in repression from 2000 onwards was matched by dramatic economic collapse. Zimbabwe has had the unenviable distinction of having the fastest shrinking economy, the highest rate of inflation (in the trillions before the dollarisation and 'randisation' of the economy in 2009), one of the highest rates of unemployment (over 80%) and the lowest life expectancy in the world (34 years for women and 37 years for men). Zimbabweans today are poorer than they were 50 years ago. The scale and speed of this income decline is unusual outside war[11]. In fact, the income losses in Zimbabwe have been greater than those experienced during recent conflicts in Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo and Sierra Leone. This economic collapse and social violence has led not only to the extreme vulnerability of major parts of the population, but has also had a great impact on civil society

---

[10] http://www.kubatana.net/html/archive/women/051210woza1.asp?sector=gen&year=2005&range_start=1 (accessed 3 September 2009).
[11] Clemens, Michael, & Todd Moss (2005), *Costs and Causes of Zimbabwe's Crisis*, Washington, D.C.: Center for Global Development, July. Available at: http://www.cgdev.org/content/publications/detail/2918/ (accessed 3 September 2009).

organisations and actors. With enormous unemployment, the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions and its affiliates have struggled to keep their membership and have been dependent on international sister organisations for their financial survival. The strength and impact of CSOs has suffered, while also increasing dependency of many civil society organisations (particularly NGOs) on donor funding.

This lethal combination of economic collapse and political repression resulted in the exodus of some of Zimbabwe's most skilled, experienced and competent civil society leaders, leaving young and inexperienced activists at the helm of most civil society organisations. This brain drain affected the continuity of programmes, the performance of organisations and ability to attract sufficient funding to mount effective responses to the violence and manipulation of the state. The exodus of people has not only severely hampered the quality and strategies of NGOs, but there is no effective strategy of reaching out to the diaspora. Mounting levels of 'struggle' fatigue and disillusionment further compound the situation.

In research undertaken for the Netherlands-based solidarity network Zimbabwe Watch, organisations working on governance and human rights in Zimbabwe unsurprisingly named the government of Zimbabwe, and state security agents and repressive legislation as the major limiting factors in achieving their objectives.[12]

A Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (ZHRF) report in 2006 on transitional justice saw the question for Zimbabwean NGOs as being whether "to engage or not engage the government of Zimbabwe"[13]. Some advocated *'constructive engagement'* as the best means to secure cooperation and concessions. They and others expended considerable energy and resources in engaging government on legislation regulating the NGO sector and electoral reform respectively[14].

In the Zimbabwe Watch research study, Chikomo and Olsen interviewees claimed success in their campaigns for non-introduction of the NGO Bill or the voluntary Media Council of Zimbabwe. At the same time, ZHRF noted that "the government's bona fides in this regard have now been fundamentally questioned, as legislative reform in both these areas reflects little of what was discussed or recommended. Despite this, civil society organisations have continued to engage government policy through the parliamentary portfolio committees." The report concludes, "Although there may be no immediate tangible benefit to this type of engagement, it remains strategically important for organisations to be able to counter any subsequent claims from government that they 'didn't know' or 'were not informed'"[15]. It is clear, however, that there has been very little change in government policy and attitudes towards human rights and governance at the domestic level.

In Chikomo's and Olsen's assessment, engaging the government has been only one of the determining factors in the success of the 'NGO Bill' campaign, along with good local coordination, active lobbying by church leaders, accurate analysis and publication of materials disseminated and issues being debated across the

---

[12] Chikomo, Abel & Tor Olsen (2007), *Assessment of Lobby Initiatives around Zimbabwe*, Zimbabwe Watch, May.
[13] Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (2006), *Exploring Transitional Justice Options in Contemporary Zimbabwe*, January. http://www.hrforumzim.com/special_hrru/transitional_justice.pdf (accessed 3 September 2009).
[14] *Ibid.*
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 22

country, and the use of continental human rights mechanisms to pressurise the government. Even though the Bill was eventually pushed through Parliament, it was never signed into law. However the ZHRF cautions that:

> *There is an increasing distance between ordinary Zimbabweans and 'elite-led' civil society processes. Broader civil society did not defend the rights of NGOs that would have been targeted by the government's NGO Bill. This reflects the failure to invest in participatory processes that could have facilitated a broader mobilisation strategy amongst the general population.[16]*

In the same document, Chikomo and Olsen emphasise that lack of unity of purpose, lack of coordinated and complementary approaches for strategy, mobilisation and follow-up, and lack of appropriate marketing and dissemination of information have severely compromised civil society's impact locally, regionally and internationally.

The issue of addressing transitional justice is a case in point. Before the ZHRF's 2003 Symposium on Transitional Justice in Johannesburg provided a more coordinated approach, this had been only spasmodically addressed. The symposium stressed civil society engagement and support as a critical precondition for effective implementation of transitional justice options, and hence the importance of civil society speaking with one voice. The need was recognised (although not followed through) to include in the process absent civil society organisations. Essentially there was no lead organisation driving the process, and information dissemination was poor.[17] However crisis management put the 'transitional justice' debate on hold until the 2008 elections, when a change in ZHRF leadership brought the issue back onto the agenda.

The clampdown on and very restricted reach of independent media in Zimbabwe has been well documented[18], leaving most Zimbabweans reliant on state propaganda organs, especially in rural areas where many local leaders, councillors, chiefs, and village heads are in the pay of the state. While many of these areas were primary beneficiaries of past civic education programmes, the contraction of democratic space has meant increasing difficulty in disseminating information, particularly on human rights. This is especially true in areas of ruling party dominance such as Mashonaland Central and East, where the 2008 elections demonstrated lack of security for ordinary members of the public. Self-censorship, political conservatism, and concerns about taking on overtly political causes or 'anti-status quo' initiatives are widespread. Furthermore the 'national spread' of organisations has been limited due both to funding problems and strategies.

Opportunities for the spread of information do however remain: a number of civil society networks, including church-based organisations, disseminate information on human rights and governance campaigns through community newsletters and pamphlets, organising prayer groups, and intra- and inter-denominational networks. Using religious precepts to address issues of justice and accountability

---

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 26.
[17] *Ibid.*
[18] See *inter alia*, the Media Institute of Southern Africa's (MISA's) *State of the Media Report* (2006 & 2007), and the weekly reports of the Media Monitoring Project of Zimbabwe.

is a potentially powerful means of reaching a much wider audience. A number of organisations such as trades unions, the NCA and civic education groupings have regional structures and networks of study circles and peace committees meeting regularly. Other groupings, such as women's, student and youth networks and the alternative ex-combatant/war veteran organisation have important networks among grass-roots communities in both urban and rural areas, and remain important 'conveyors of information' back to their home areas. Increased interactions between human rights and governance organisations and youth and women's groupings (such as associations of women's clubs) could be fruitful[19].

Developing alliances and information dissemination with these allies would require adequate coordination, and wider and more innovative information dissemination and mobilisation projects to embrace social — and grassroots-movements. Coordination and sharing of information were named as major problem areas by human rights and governance organisations. While working through existing coalitions like Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, the Media Alliance of Zimbabwe and the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, inclusion of their membership has often been weak or problematic. Instead of leading to broadly supported actions, these coalitions were then often guided by strategic decisions of key individuals.

Church Responses 2000-2008: Willing Servants and Prophetic Voices

As repression intensified and economic decline brought unprecedented suffering to the population, Zimbabwean churches increasingly began to find their voice — a journey that can be described as a move from the pastoral to more prophetic role. This was largely, however, not a role undertaken by heads of denominations but by the 'middle level' of pastors, priests and 'para-church' groupings. The journey took time and was subject to inhibiting factors of differing church histories, fear and/or incorporation into the ZANU-PF project, and use of resources on other manifestations of the crisis, such as responding to the HIV and AIDS pandemic and, from 2000, the ever increasing numbers of people requiring food and humanitarian assistance.

Despite Mugabe's proclaimed Catholic faith, his government has employed a deliberate strategy of keeping the church weak and divided. While some of his strongest critics have come from within the Church, most notably the former Archbishop of Bulawayo, Pius Ncube, other insiders have taken a more conciliatory or even supportive tone. "ZANU-PF has not", according to one church leader, "found it difficult to disrupt the work of the churches — it has plenty of experience of doing that kind of thing". Unlike elsewhere in southern Africa, the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishop's Conference (ZCBC) is only an observer at the Council of Churches. The Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ), with its 60 member churches, has come to more attention in recent years as the grouping which, rather against theological tradition, is devoting a disproportionate amount of energy to the task of confronting the Mugabe regime. However, reversion to a more accommodating or pro-government stance is always a danger, as the experience of Bishop Trevor Manhanga, erstwhile head of EFZ, testifies.

---

[19] Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (2006), *op. cit.*

In his paper entitled *The Role of the Church in Zimbabwe — A Willing Servant*, William Anderson notes two particular strategies in terms of patronage and intimidation: planting key loyalists in high ranking church positions, and "pav[ing] the way for ruling ZANU-PF members to be ordained into the church"[20], although he also makes charges of a leadership vacuum. The Zimbabwean churches have brought to the crisis all the strengths, weaknesses and differences of emphasis, which are everywhere the hallmark of the Christian church. These relate to traditions of theological education, denominational geography, confessional loyalties and ecumenical commitment. To these may be added three distinctive factors: the glossing over at Independence of the impact of the liberation war on individual Zimbabwean psyches and thus a failure to 'deal with the past', thereby storing up trouble for the future; the fear factor — "responding theologically in context is a risky business", said one church leader; and the HIV and AIDS pandemic, which imposes a huge demand on church resources, theological and pastoral[21].

By the early 2000s the church in Zimbabwe became divided, as the lower ranks of the clergy, despairing of action from the official church leaderships and without the latter's support, began to organise themselves cross-denominationally to voice their opposition to increasing ZANU-PF demonisation of and attacks on any group that opposed it.

The Zimbabwe National Pastors' Conference (ZNPC) was established at a meeting of 150 ministers in February 2002 in Gweru. ZNPC sought to become a collective expression of the pastoral challenges confronting Zimbabwean Pastors, leading to visible, sustained articulation. Ecumenical Support Services, a small office headed by Jonah Gokova, a lay preacher of the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe, sought to create spaces for the churches to engage with issues of justice, politics and economics, although its links with the established churches is inherently delicate.

From 2005, the churches faced the fall-out from Operation Murambatsvina (described above). Evangelicals and others were outraged at the persecution of ordinary citizens by the Zimbabwean state. In late June 2005, an inter-denominational prayer meeting was held in Bulawayo at which many denominations came "to pray for the country and the displaced people". Churches with a very long quietist tradition, like the Mennonite Brethren in Christ, now mobilised protest on a global scale.[22]

From this point on, there was increasing concern from church leaders, although most of them saw their role as one of attempting to bring reconciliation, rather than openly leading opposition to the government and its actions. However a number of pastoral initiatives which chose a more confronting approach also materialised at that time. In both Bulawayo and Mutare, ecumenical groupings emerged[23] that focused on justice and peace issues. Each began at the level of 'concerned Christians'

---

[20] Anderson, William (2008), *The Role of the Church in Zimbabwe — A Willing Servant*, Centre for International Governance Innovation, paper written for workshop 'Reconstructing Zimbabwe', October.
[21] Renshaw, Paul & Steve Kibble (2003), *Two Eyes Better Than One*, report on conversations with Zimbabwe churches, unpublished.
[22] Ranger, Terence (2007), 'The Church in Zimbabwe', talk at Christ Church Cathedral, August, and later reprinted in the Britain Zimbabwe Society's *Zimbabwe Review & Newsletter*.
[23] 'Christians Together for Justice' and 'Peace and Churches in Manicaland' respectively.

and spanned the ZCC-ZCBC-EFZ divide. Both were loose and informal, practical rather than officially representative of churches, sidestepping difficult questions of ecclesiology. Links between Bulawayo and Mutare were useful in stepping up advocacy, though the absence of comparable groups in other parts of the country, especially Harare, was a weakness. Harare church leaders however were maybe more susceptible to pressure, both political and media-related. They may also, perhaps, not have had quite the same local societal role as their counterparts in smaller cities, where church leaders are widely recognised as significant figures. However, the birth of the Zimbabwe Christian Alliance (ZCA) sought to overcome the Harare problem and to build on Bulawayo's relative success. It was for a time distracted, however, by being asked by civil society to lead the Save Zimbabwe Campaign (SZC) formed in January 2006 by church activists to hold prayer meetings, rallies and call for an end to repression.

As Anderson notes, ZCA quickly filled the spaces of prophetic engagement left by the official church and drew a reaction from government, which invited the official church leaders to a meeting at State House in May 2006 to discuss the role that churches could play in rebuilding the nation. For many activists, this was collusion with the government — a view seemingly vindicated when, on Mugabe being invited to a National Day of Prayer the following month, he attacked Bishop Pius Ncube, denounced his critics and proclaimed the rightness of ZANU-PF policies. The Christian Alliance (CA) boycotted the National Day of Prayer and denounced the Evangelical Alliance and the Christian Council for attending it. Attacks soon followed, with its convenor, Bishop Levee Kadenge, receiving death threats, followed by arrests as the CA set up a branch in Kadoma.

The attempt by the official churches to balance mild criticism with maintaining a relationship with government led to the production of the 2006 document, *The Zimbabwe We Want: Towards a National Vision for Zimbabwe* (known as the National Vision Document, or NVD) through the Ecumenical Peace Initiative Zimbabwe (EPIZ). The NVD supposedly offered a vision for the future and a framework, but, observed critics, no strategic steps or engagement with ordinary citizens. Church leaders countered that the document was a draft paper for discussion with churchgoers and that discussions took place throughout the country, with training teams reporting that in local discussion (or focal) groups, critical issues were raised. Little was been heard of it subsequently, however.

After a number of pastoral statements calling for an end to violence and poverty, but not apportioning blame, a turning point in the attitude of church leaders came in April 2007, a month after Tsvangirai was beaten up at a prayer meeting organised by SZC (this beating also led to the SADC negotiations under the then South African president, Thabo Mbeki). A pastoral letter published by the ZCBC in April 2007, 'God hears the cry of the oppressed', in which the Catholic leaders for the first time publicly located the crisis as one of internal governance, demonstrated the strongest anti-government sentiment from church leaders. This marked a break from calling impartially for non-violence, to naming the problem and the perpetrators. The document squarely blamed the Mugabe government for spiralling inflation, rampant food shortages and widespread intimidation.

The ZCBC letter however was not backed up by the other church leaderships. Indeed, a statement issued by the Anglican bishops in April 2007, with the pro-Mugabe Bishop of Harare Nolbert Kunonga among them (now resigned/expelled, but still causing problems) focused on the supposed external causes of the crisis — Western sanctions.

The reaction of the government was first to welcome the Anglican letter as a rebuff to the Archbishop of Canterbury's expressed concerns about both Zimbabwe and Kunonga. Second, it warned the Catholic bishops that they would be treated like politicians if they acted as such. The youth militias were used to stop the ZCBC pastoral letter being read out to congregations, and there were threats against the clergy, as well as the successful campaign to remove Pius Ncube. Many SZC supporters were arrested, beaten and tortured before and during the election period and subsequently.

The year 2008 saw concerted attempts to bring about unity within Zimbabwean church formations. An international faith-based NGO has attempted to bring the ZCA and the Protestant churches closer in a reconciliation initiative between ZCA, ZCC and EFZ. A communiqué from a meeting towards the end of 2008 talked of the churches failing each other, and hence the people. A national conference is planned on lessons of truth and reconciliation, but also on the need for repentance, including within the church. There was also the desire to bring in the various Apostolic churches that in the past provided support for ZANU-PF. This appears to open up opportunities, even if there is vagueness on key issues and timeframes. The process of an official church body, which, having played a limited role in the liberation movement, keeps quiet in the years after Independence shows parallels to many post-colonial situations in Africa as a whole, and in Kenya and Zambia in particular. Likewise, in Kenya (in the late 1980s and early 90s) and Zambia (in the late 80s) radical pro-democracy challenges emerged from the middle level of the Catholic Church, rather than from the bishops.

The Regional Dimension

> *The politics of regional solidarity and stabilisation, even under an undemocratic regime like Mugabe's, always took precedence in regional strategy over the democratic wishes of the Zimbabwean people. This version of 'anti-imperialist' politics once again has at its core profoundly anti-democratic propositions that have been challenged by civil society groups in the region.*[24]

The debate surrounding a recent article by Mahmood Mamdani on Zimbabwe aptly illustrates ideological and practical challenges as well as successes faced by its civil society. In attempting to get continental and regional support for its cause, Zimbabwean civil society faced a number of important challenges. First it had to confront an 'anti-imperialist' ideological framework, which was built on widespread coercion and diminishing electoral support and a systematic undermining of democratic space in Zimbabwe, but also aptly exploited by ZANU-PF

---

[24] Raftopoulos, Brian (2009), 'Response to the Mamdani Debate' in *Reflections of Mahmood Mamdani's 'Lessons of Zimbabwe'*, Concerned African Scholars, ACAS Bulletin No. 82. Available at: http://concernedafricascholars. org/response-to-the-mamdani-debate/ (accessed 3 September 2009).

(particularly in their attacks on the MDC), and supported by the region. Second, the close alliance between many civil society organisations and the MDC in demands for greater democratisation, the support from northern/western donors and a broader regional and continental wariness of the role of civil society implied that the latter were often seen as 'guilty by association' by regional and continental governments. Finally, the rather slow realisation of how the Zimbabwean crisis was located in the global political North-South discourse also initially constrained the regional impact of civil society (roughly until 2003/4, when the South African office of the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition was established).

But this also points towards one of the greatest successes — and the limitations of this success — of Zimbabwean civil society and the churches. In the period 2005-08 they were able to overcome the above challenges and to some extent mobilise regional solidarity among civil society. Indeed, the 2008 post-electoral crisis in Zimbabwe sparked an unprecedented response by African and particularly SADC civil society. Organisations throughout the continent issued statements, and trade unionists and civil society activists prevented a Chinese ship carrying arms destined for Zimbabwe from unloading in South Africa, Mozambique, Angola and Namibia. April 2008 saw a large African civil society meeting on Zimbabwe in Dar es Salaam, leading to a more active network of civil society organisations engaged in Zimbabwe campaigns.

Botswana civil society organisations have since 2005 organised themselves into the Botswana Civil Society Coalition on Zimbabwe (BOCISCOZ). Botswana Council of Churches, DITSHWANELO (the Botswana Centre for Human Rights), and the Botswana chapter of the Media Institute of Southern Africa have been the main drivers of BOCISCOZ, which has carried out a number of activities to discourage xenophobia and promote acceptance of and assistance to Zimbabwean refugees there. There have also been solidarity initiatives in Zambia, coordinated by the Southern African Legal Aid Network (SALAN), and Malawi, coordinated by the Centre for Human Rights and Rehabilitation (CHRR). Human rights and legal aid organisations in Tanzania, Namibia, Swaziland and most recently Mozambique have engaged in solidarity initiatives.

Regional church groupings have organised high-level political interventions to address the Zimbabwean crisis. One of these was a high level delegation of regional church leaders to President Thabo Mbeki in May 2008, presenting him with a detailed dossier of human rights abuses in Zimbabwe. Mbeki said that he would send a delegation of South African generals to investigate. The generals confirmed as true the church leaders' dossier, although President Mbeki did not release the report, despite public demand for him to do so. The All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) called for global prayers for Zimbabwe on 25 January 2009, and reiterated that the crisis in that country stemmed from corrupt leadership. "The present rule must be considered as illegitimate, as it was an incomplete reflection of the will of the Zimbabwean people, given that the presidential run-off election in June 2008 was not free and fair and was marred by intimidation and political violence", said the AACC's new general secretary, Rev. Dr. André Karamaga. This followed critical statements by church leaders such as Archbishop Tutu, Pope Benedict XVI, evangelical leaders and the Anglican archbishops of Canterbury and Cape Town.

ZANU-PF's clinging to power in the face of a social, political and humanitarian and economic crisis of such proportions owes much to support from African governments, especially within SADC. This support has been maintained through the skilful use of an anti-imperialist discourse that sidelines human rights concerns, reducing the crisis to a conflict between the sovereign state of Zimbabwe and the former colonial power. The propaganda delegitimises authentic Zimbabwean voices by characterising them as 'puppets' opposed to land reform. The deliberately created cacophony over the land issue drowns out the discourse on human rights violations in Zimbabwe, but it also points to an over-reliance on a human rights discourse, which has not been deeply or adequately anchored in a southern African political context, a challenge shared by civil society organisations across the region.

South Africa has played a specific role in the Zimbabwean political drama. "Three times, in June 2000, March 2002 and March 2005, the South African political leadership in particular provided political oxygen to Mugabe by declaring fraudulent and violent elections in Zimbabwe as legitimate"[25]. 2008 saw continued Mbeki support for Mugabe, including the declaration that there was no crisis in Zimbabwe's elections and suppressing the generals' report.

Both the ANC and ZANU-PF see themselves as the legitimate inheritors of the anti-colonial struggle, with any other parties (even new ones like the MDC) tainted by association with previous regimes. For this reason, South Africa and other southern African states have been only too ready to accept ZANU-PF's policies as in some way pan-African and 'anti-imperialist'. They rely on notions of legitimacy of heads of state and of sovereignty, key African Union concepts, although the AU theoretically introduced limits to this sovereignty for coups d'état. AU reluctance to intervene was shown in Guinea, as well as in the 'silent military coup' in Zimbabwe by which the Joint Operations Command, comprising the heads of army, police, secret police and president, effectively rules. Pretoria in this sense supports 'a just world order' which must be read as one of equity amongst nations, not as states and international institutions that respond to the legitimate demands of the people of a country.

This analysis deals not with the reasons, but its impact. As Tawanda Mutasa points out:

> *We have seen how, over the years, the shielding, aiding and abetting of Mugabe has been explained away by Mr Mbeki and his aides by the misnomer of 'quiet diplomacy', even when it involves unquietly blocking proposed UN discussions about the crisis in Zimbabwe. This approach has fenced out the efforts of concerned African and international leaders. In the eggshell world of international relations, the latter have found themselves affirming their 'support' for Mr Mbeki's efforts, even when it is now beyond reasonable doubt that however one wishes to view Mr Mbeki's frame of engagement with the Zimbabwe crisis, it cannot seriously be said to be about protecting the Zimbabwean populace from a violent and brutal dictatorship.[26]*

---

[25] Mutasa, Tawanda, *President Mwanawasa's responsibility on Zimbabwe*, unpublished. Mutasa is a founder member of the National Constitutional Assembly.
[26] Mutasa, Tawanda, *The African Union and the Zimbabwean Crisis*, unpublished.

In response, South African individuals, movements and church and civil society organisations formed the 'Save Zimbabwe Now!' campaign, with high profile personalities such as Graça Machel and former secretary-general of CIVICUS Kumi Naidoo highlighting Zimbabwe at the January 2009 SADC summit on Zimbabwe. However these actions have not translated into a change of political alignment in SADC, the AU or to some extent the UN. Just as the Zimbabwe government has turned a deaf ear to its own civil society, so SADC has turned a deaf ear to regional civil society efforts and to the right of the people of Zimbabwe to decide on their own destiny. As pointed out by Raftopoulos, "the centrality of regional politics in dealing with the Zimbabwe question has highlighted both the importance of such organisations in the current global configuration and the severe limits they place on democratic struggles within states".[27]

Conclusion

We have demonstrated some of the causes, some located outside their sphere but many related to their own choices and strategies, that have underpinned the inability (and, especially in the case of the churches, the unwillingness) of civil society to decisively overcome the crisis. Since 1980, civil society has adapted its strategies, particularly in providing a more confrontational stance to the increasingly repressive nature of the state. The inability to influence the ZANU-PF regime is intrinsically linked to the inability, with perhaps the exception of the 'war veterans', to strategically use and/or counter ZANU-PF's essentialist drive to re-encapsulate what it means to be a Zimbabwean. As noted by Raftopoulos in his 1999 overview of Zimbabwe's historiography, "our historical perspectives and agendas always relate to our contemporary political concerns. Therefore unpacking the authoritarian notions of unity peddled by nationalist politicians has become as essential for understanding the history of nationalism as it has for current debates on democratisation in Zimbabwe."[28] There was a late break, particularly ideologically, from the broad nationalist coalition. This is illustrated most starkly by the inability of both civil society and the MDC to develop their own 'imagined communities' with effective organising strategies, particularly in relation to the rural population. The failure to adequately question this nationalist agenda by Zimbabwean civil society and the MDC also relates to the collapse of an urban proletariat in what was once a diverse semi-industrialised country. Zimbabwe's present civil society is not therefore anchored to anything like a Western-type support base, although it acts as though it were.

In the short term, the orientation of civil society to an inclusive government still displaying the features of an authoritarian state seems uncertain, contradictory, limited and full of tensions. Considering these challenges, the inability of civil society in Zimbabwe to influence its government and the lack of impact of regional civil society mean that efforts within Zimbabwe, the region and internationally should be redoubled to develop strategies. Just as the GNU highlights the interplay

---

[27] Raftopoulos, Brian (2009), 'Response to the Mamdani Debate', *op. cit.*
[28] Raftopoulos, Brian (1999), *Problematising Nationalism in Zimbabwe: A Historiographical Review*, Journal Zambezia, Vol. 26, N.º 2, pp. 115-134.

of national, regional and international complexities[29], so does civil society. It has ambiguous (and theoretically largely unexplored) relations between international donors, regional civil society and its own state, with the latter split between opponents and former allies. In this battle for state power and legitimacy, with ZANU-PF controlling security versus MDC social and economic ministries, civil society appears as yet unable to use its influence with former allies, and has reverted to more of a critical, sidelined approach in terms of analysing the GNU while engaging with the flawed constitutional process and talking of reconciliation.[30] Donors, some of whom fund civil society, made it clear during the June/July 2009 Tsvangirai visit to North America and western Europe that they would not offer significant aid without a return to the rule of law, respect for property rights and media freedom. Civil society is as aware as donors and MDC that this could lead to violence and repression, but it largely supports a donor approach predicated on the GNU carrying out institutional reforms, which, it argues, depends not on outsider support but on political will. Only this, it argues, will ensure that scenes witnessed around the 2008 elections, where one party won the elections but was not able to secure political power, will not be repeated. In this, civil society is caught in the contradiction between donors and GNU demands.

The number of workshops and meetings taking place in Zimbabwe currently are an indication of civil society's attempt to rethink and re-strategise in the face of the inclusive government. In this situation, what remains of civil society in Zimbabwe needs to develop a clear understanding of what it wants from the inclusive government, the resistance it will face, and the opportunities opened up at a national, regional and international level that it can use to advance its agenda. The two strands of engagement and confrontation described above continue, sometimes by the same bodies. On the one hand, many players have tried (in their personal or organisational capacity) to be part of and/or service the new government in some way or another. Examples range from key members of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions becoming ministers, to the ex-coordinator of the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition taking up a post with the Speaker of the Parliament, and to the Zimbabwe Institute providing the secretariat for both the Joint Monitoring and Implementation Committee of the GPA and for the minister responsible for the constitution-making process. On the other hand, the same ZCTU, NCA and others have chosen to oppose the government's constitution-making process and are trying to organise national outreach activities to raise awareness on this among their memberships. A broad range of civil society actors has also opted to play a more traditional watchdog function. To this effect the civil society actors have developed demands and benchmarks (for example on human rights and violence, opening up space for free media, unhampered and apolitical humanitarian aid, water and sanitation) for assessing the delivery of the Government of National Unity. They are closely monitoring the performance of the GNU against the Global Political Agreement, MDC and ZANU-PF demands and civil society and donor benchmarks. The reports state that while there has been economic stabilisation

---

[29] "The new government has to face the challenges of dealing with overlapping legacies of colonial inequalities and post-colonial authoritarian rule, while attending to the post-Cold War demands of North-South relations": from Solidarity Peace Trust (2009), *Walking a Thin Line*, Johannesburg, July.

[30] Other civil society elements, like NCA and WOZA, are providing a more radical rejectionist agenda.

since the signing of the GPA, "little progress has been made in the protection and promotion of human rights in Zimbabwe as seen by the sustained levels of violence from month to month. … Reports indicate that ZANU-PF bases that were used as places to torture and maim supporters and purported supporters of the MDC during the electoral violence … are still operational or re-activated. … The harassment and intimidation of human rights and MDC activists in the month of May was persistent".[31] Additionally, Sokwanele[32] notes that the month of May was marked by "violent and unconstitutional invasions and seizures of property and farms, harassment and deprivation of freedom of individuals through contrived arrests on spurious charges, wanton politically motivated violence, deprivation of the rights to freedom of speech and association and deliberate misinformation by senior public figures".[33] The reports of civil society in its monitoring of the GPA are uniformly critical of the pace and seriousness of its implementation. This remains the case even with the slight easing of media restrictions signalled (but at the time of writing yet to be implemented) in August 2009 — widely thought to be concessions geared to avoiding SADC criticism.

It is likely in the near future that civil society organisations and leaders will be either incorporated further into government structures or excluded from relevant participation. To compound things, the governmental decision-making structures have already been sidelined by parallel ZANU-PF decision-making structures controlled by the security sector, such as the Joint Operations Command and its supposed replacement, the National Security Council. ZANU-PF, and to a certain extent the MDC, are likely to draw on such parallel decision-making structures in order to influence ministries not under their control. In the process the state itself is undermined, leaving Zimbabwe with an 'empty shell' as a state. At the same time, ZANU-PF is aiming to undermine the MDC majority in Parliament (with MDC MPs jailed under trumped-up charges) and use violence against MDC structures to further weaken it. Faced with these challenges, the MDC is likely to focus its energies on combating Mugabe's party and trying to implement its policies, consequently seeing challenges from civil society as hindrances rather than positive engagement from its constituencies. It is likely therefore that Zimbabwean civil society will see its influence reduced even further through the combined (but not necessarily conscious) efforts of ZANU-PF and MDC.

The various responses to the inclusive government are illustrative of the diversity of Zimbabwean civil society and its tension with both ZANU-PF and the MDC. This means that neither initiatives like NCA's and ZCTU's 'Take Charge' campaign on the constitution-making process, nor the calls for bolder international engagement as formulated by the Solidarity Peace Trust or the Zimbabwe Institute, have translated into joint, widely backed campaigns with clearly articulated demands that could provide a rallying point for continental and international campaign activities to ensure that the GNU provides real peace dividends for the people of Zimbabwe. For radical change to come about, there would need to be fractures in

---

[31] Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (2009), *Political Violence Report May 2009*.
[32] Sokwanele (2009), *Zimbabwe Inclusive Government Watch*, No. 6, June. Available at: http://www.sokwanele.com/articles/zigwatch_issue6_060609.html (accessed 3 September 2009).
[33] *Ibid*.

the state and its apparatuses, and unity of the opposition, with a vision, leadership and a strategy, as well as serious multiple crises and significant outside support. Civil society also has to be strong enough to take advantage and indeed to push for such opportunities, but considering its largely urban bias and dependence on donor support, this seems unlikely to happen. At present it lacks the strength to push the inclusive government into something more than a compromised transition, leaving in place the systemic features of the repressive and kleptocratic regime, accompanied by impunity and little real democratic change.

In the medium to longer term, it would seem that the experience of Zimbabwean civil society mirrors that of other African societies. From the latter being crucial in the 1990s in fighting for democratic transition, the decriminalisation of dissent through national conventions, and competitive elections, civil society was not able to provide either a critical partnership with the state or an alternative vision. This raises the question of the adequacy of current concepts and practices of civil society bodies, and the representativity that such bodies can develop in the current economic, social and cultural make-up of southern African nation-states and their relations with donors. Civil society in Zimbabwe needs to review and deepen its relations with its constituencies in order to ensure grounded responses and greater popular leverage. In this, particular attention needs to be given to rural Zimbabwe. At the same time, civil society and donors alike must give greater priority to enlarging and protecting public domains, expanding and making transparent decision-making processes, and ensuring accountability of the various levels of the government. "The objective would be to enhance responsiveness of the Zimbabwean public sector to citizens' needs in the middle run, thus setting precedents for wider formal democracy in the longer run."[34]

---

[34] Sogge, David & al. (2008), *Civil Domains and Arenas in Zimbabwean Settings*, unpublished, p. 1.