

- Vidal, Nuno, "The Angolan regime and the move to multiparty politics", in Patrick Chabal & Nuno Vidal (eds. & co-auth.), *Angola: the weight of history* (New York & London: Hurst & Columbia University Press, 2007), pp. 124-174.

The Angolan Regime and the Move to a Multiparty System

Introduction

During the ten years between 1992 and 2002 — from the first multiparty elections to the signing of the Luena memorandum — the Angolan transition to a multiparty system that began in 1990 was more or less suspended, held hostage by the civil war. Restrictions to the proper functioning of a multiparty system were maintained throughout the nineties, especially at the level of civil and political rights. After the death of Savimbi and the end of the war in 2002, many hoped for the rapid and effective opening up of space for political opposition, which would serve an emerging civil society and bring about a thorough transformation of the Angolan political system.¹ This did not happen. Why? The main characteristics of the Angolan political system — constructed over the two presidencies during the so-called Socialist period from the early 70s to the early 80s — run the risk of perpetuating themselves in the supposedly new era of multiparty politics.

A major assumption for opposition parties and for part of the emergent civil society is that peace and elections — legislative, presidential and local — might bring some significant change to the Angolan political system. This assumption is based upon three main arguments: firstly, that the dynamics of an electoral process closely monitored by international organizations will open more space for political debate and demands; secondly, that the possibility of having a parliament without a majority of one party will be an opportunity to institutionalise political negotiation; and thirdly, that local elections — to be held after the legislative — might start a gradual process of local development beyond the oil sector as well as a process of political inclusion and participation, thereby

¹ Research for this study was financed by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology and developed under the aegis of the Faculty of the Economy – University of Coimbra. It is the result of consistent field research over a period of three years and of the cooperation of the author with a number of international research teams operating in Angola. Around three hundred and fifty in-depth interviews were held during these years in Luanda and in the provinces of Huambo and Malange, with people from a broad social and professional spectrum, including national and local members from all political parties represented at the National Assembly as well as representatives from a few parties outside the parliament; national and local government members; presidential aides; Catholic and Protestant religious leaders; members of the national army; reporters from the world of radio, television and the press, both State and private; academics; trade-union leaders; managers and workers of national and international NGOs. A full list of interviewees is available through institutional request to the University of Coimbra. A slightly different version of this paper can be found in Portuguese: Nuno Vidal, "Multipartidarismo em Angola", in Nuno Vidal & Justino Pinto de Andrade, *O processo de transição para o multipartidarismo em Angola* (Luanda e Lisboa: Firmamento, 2006), pp.11-57.

eroding the current centralization of power and administration that excludes the majority of people from politics.

This chapter tests these assumptions by analysing the political process through which the Angolan political system emerged over time. It is in three parts: the first examines the so-called Socialist period; the second discusses how these same characteristics survived throughout the nineties, during a period of so-called transition to multiparty politics; the third outlines the obstacles, risks and constraints these characteristics still represent to an effective democratization after the end of the war.

The analysis is centred on the way the political structure facilitates the regime's patrimonial and clientelistic operation despite the formal model in place — be it single-party socialism or multiparty capitalism — allowing a specific type of domination to prevail, which combines selective distribution and cooption with repression, social fragmentation, and the political and economic alienation of the majority of the population.

1 – The construction of the Angolan political system after independence

As in so many other African countries, the Angolan post-colonial political system assumed a clearly neo-patrimonial character.² The State and its resources were used from the start by the elites in power to achieve political and economic hegemony. A redistributive scheme of privileges and benefits operated by means of the allocation of party, governmental and other public offices, blurring the distinction between public and private spheres. The juxtaposition of Party and State structures and the political and economic centralisation typical of a Marxist model suited the needs of a patrimonial operation.

Regardless of the regime (civil or military) and regardless of the political model (socialist or capitalist), all neo-patrimonial States have in common a strategy for concentrating political power and centralising administration in those strategic areas that provide primary access to State resources so as to centralise the general distribution of benefits and privileges. This strategy is crucial for the survival of patrimonialism because if the system of redistribution is politically scattered and administratively dispersed, the patrimonial organization risks disruption. Even if economic privileges can still be obtained, there is no longer a dependency on hierarchical distribution³

² For a characterization of modern patrimonialism, see Jean-François Médard, 'The Underdeveloped State in Tropical Africa: Political Clientelism or Neo-Patrimonialism?' in C. Clapham, ed., *Private Patronage and Public Power* (London: Frances Pinter, 1982), pp.162–192; Jean-François Médard, 'L'État néo-patrimonial en Afrique noire' in Jean-François Médard, ed., *États d'Afrique noire* (Paris: Karthala, 1991), pp.323-353; Jean-François Bayart, *The State in Africa, the Politics of the Belly* (London: Longman, 1989); Jean-François Bayart et al., *The Criminalization of the State in Africa* (London: James Currey, 1998); Patrick Chabal, *Power in Africa* (London: Macmillan Press, 1994); Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz, *Africa Works* (London: James Currey, 1999). For an analytical comparison of these works and their characterization as a neo-patrimonial perspective see Nuno Vidal, *Post-modern Patrimonialism in Africa: the genesis and development of the Angolan Political-Economic System 1961–1987* (London: King's College, 2002), a PhD thesis, ch.1.

³ Jean-François Médard, ed., *États d'Afrique noire* (Paris: Karthala, 1991), p.360.

Post-independence Angolan patrimonialism started off, during Neto's administration, by being partisan in nature, soon to become presidential. At first, during the second half of the 70s, simple party membership gave access to secondary distribution. Yet, faced with decreasing revenues due to the war effort and the disruption of the productive sector of the economy outside the oil industry, the lower and (even certain) middle echelons of the party began to lose a good part of their benefits. The majority of the population, in or outside the party, fought to establish clientelistic links with the higher levels of the patrimonial pyramid, usually appealing to primary solidarities such as family, region of origin or even ethno-linguistic bonds – all of which contributed to the fragmentation of the social tissue. The inequality between rulers and ruled in the access to resources was gradually aggravated. Angolan patrimonialism became increasingly elitist at the same time as it became more solidly presidentialist, especially during the Dos Santos administration in the mid-80s.

The system of distribution that was supposed to bring together rulers and ruled, link centres and peripheries, urban and rural areas, simply collapsed. It became extremely concentrated at the top, in the hands of a select few: the President and a restricted clique. Insofar as it was the political and administrative system that gave access to material benefits and privileges, such a phenomenon drastically restricted access to the channels of resources and led to the neglect of the population at large. The enclave and *rentière* nature of the main source of revenue, oil, facilitated this phenomenon. It allowed the ruling elites to ignore the need to care about the productive effort of the ordinary population, who was virtually excluded from any effective political and economic participation. Politically, they had no votes to exchange for benefits; economically, they were not a source of income. I have characterized this process as post-modern patrimonialism in order to distinguish it from the neo-patrimonialism that prevailed during Neto's administration.⁴

State services such as public administration, social security, health and education, gradually collapsed.⁵ Within such a context, where freedom of expression, civil society and legal opposition were not allowed, inefficiency and corruption thrived. The increasing intensity of the war in the 1980s reinforced the characteristics of the whole system: war served as a justification, or excuse, for the decline of redistribution and poor State delivery of services. It justified a strong internal State security apparatus and fierce authoritarianism. It required political control and unified command, thereby strengthening centralization and the concentration of power. It disrupted internal production and increased economic dependence on oil revenues. Finally, it intensified social fragmentation.⁶

⁴ For such a characterization see Nuno Vidal, *Post-Modern Patrimonialism in Africa*, op. cit.; also Nuno Vidal, 'Modern and Post-Modern Patrimonialism', 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.

⁵ See my chapter on social issues in this volume.

⁶ Nuno Vidal, 'Modern and Post-Modern Patrimonialism', op. cit., pp. 1–14.

The process of increasing centralisation and elitism began with the first President, Agostinho Neto and was later developed to an extreme by Dos Santos. As early as 1976, Neto had progressively started to absorb the powers of the Prime Minister and to reinforce his authority over the provincial commissioners, who are now called provincial governors. In August 1977, he assumed the role of head of government.⁷ In December 1978, he abolished the posts of Prime Minister and Vice-Prime Minister.⁸ This process of centralisation was boosted by the reaction to the attempted coup, led by Nito Alves, that took place in May 1977. Seen as the consequence of poor internal discipline and power dispersal, it led to the increase in presidential powers, the setting up of a strong State security apparatus and a 'rectification movement' that drastically reduced party membership. There followed the establishment of strong political control over the judicial system, which juxtaposed civil and military courts with an increasing supremacy of the military over the civil.⁹ These were all characteristics that became central to the Angolan political system and have survived to this day, as will be shown.

Right after the attempted coup, a radical campaign for the cleansing of society and of the political apparatus degenerated into a savage and terrifying witch-hunt throughout the country, with particular incidence on young activists, intellectuals and cadres, generally believed to be close to Nito Alves' ideals. The purge and its traumatic memory, along with the consolidation of a fearful State security service, became a powerful inhibitor of organised popular protest against the MPLA's leadership. In parallel to the purge, a movement of party 'rectification' was launched, whereby rigid processes were set up for party membership, which dropped from 110,000 to a mere 31,000 members¹⁰. In an estimated population of 8 million in 1980, the new party members represented around 0.4% of that population, a tiny number considering that it was a single party system.

Selection criteria for membership privileged 'the more aware elements of the working class' — usually taken as the more educated.¹¹ This discriminated against peasants since most of them were illiterate and 60% of the whole labour force, working in agriculture mostly as peasant farmers, was simply ignored — this in a context where 74% of the population still lived in rural areas.¹² After the 'rectification campaign', peasants merely represented 1.9% of that membership.¹³ They became ever more distanced from the party. Since the party was the main provider of benefits and goods and since agricultural production abruptly dropped due to the war and the centralized Socialist

⁷ See Law 71/76 in *Diário da República*, I, 266 (November 11th 1976); also Law 13/77, in *DR*, I, 194 (August 7th 1977).

⁸ See Law 1/79, *DR*, I, 14 (January 16th 1979).

⁹ See Nuno Vidal, 'Multipartidarismo em Angola', op. cit. pp.11-57.

¹⁰ In *Relatório do Comité Central ao Iº Congresso Extraordinário do Partido, realizado em Luanda de 17 a 23 de Dezembro de 1980* (Luanda: Secretariado do Comité Central, 1980), pp.17-18.

¹¹ In *Relatório do Comité Central ao Iº Congresso do MPLA, realizado em Luanda de 4 a 11 de Dezembro de 1977* (Luanda: DEPI, 1977), p.22, pp.18-19.

¹² In Keith Somerville, *Angola: Politics, Economics and Society* (London: Frances Pinter, 1986), p. 91 and pp. 96-97.

¹³ In *Relatório do Comité Central ao Iº Congresso Extraordinário*, op. cit., p.18.

management, peasants were now on the margins of patrimonial distribution.¹⁴ The party was showing its first signs of elitism.

Bearing in mind the problems caused by a young generation involved in political activities, having resisted the MPLA's dominance and for some having joined the 'Nitista' movement, a new control over education was established by the party. Through his presidential despatch dated February 1979, Neto determined that the Council for Student Grants Abroad and the Scholarship Fund (Internal and Abroad) should now be accountable to the Central Committee's Department of Party Cadres, itself directly answerable to the Party President.¹⁵ Thus, for scholarship students, Neto created a mechanism of economic and educational dependency on the party's supreme organs – a mechanism that was used, albeit informally, to reward or punish the students' political behaviour and that was soon to become part of a wider system of distribution of privileges and benefits.

The new policy had its results: on the whole, the generation that followed that of the youth committees understood and respected the new rules concerning the behaviour that was expected from them in order to access professional education and social upward mobility. This new generation provided politically accommodating young members for the party, loyal to any given protector, and expecting benefits and retributions in exchange for dependability and political correctness. Those who fitted these parameters went on with their education and did well. In the early 1980s, they were given senior positions in the State administration, both in government and in State enterprises, and those within FAPLA (*Forças Armadas Populares de Libertação de Angola*) were promoted to higher ranks. A few of them were later recruited by the new President, Eduardo dos Santos, to become part of the powerful presidential shadow government surrounding the presidency.¹⁶

The process of controlling, centralizing and restricting the political system evolved with the restructuring of the judiciary. The death penalty was approved to punish vaguely defined crimes against State security, and military courts were given broad competence, which coincided with those of the civilian courts, thereby blending ever more the civil and military areas.¹⁷ Political control of both judicial systems, the military and the civilian, was enshrined in law on the grounds that the legitimacy of both tribunals arose from the MPLA, the supreme State organisation.¹⁸ These two judicial systems and their respective tribunals were subordinated to the party, and ultimately to the President of the Republic.¹⁹ This situation was not essentially different from that which prevails today, as will be shown.

¹⁴ See Vidal, Nuno, *Post-Modern Patrimonialism in Africa*, op. cit., chapter 7.

¹⁵ Legal Despatch, *DR*, I, 29 (3rd February 1979).

¹⁶ See Nuno Vidal, *Post-modern patrimonialism in Africa*, op. cit.

¹⁷ See laws: 7/78, *DR*, I, 136 (June 10th 1978); 8/78, *DR*, I, 137 (May 26th 1978); 16/78, *DR*, I, 15 (November 24th 1978); 17/78, *DR*, I, 15 (November 24th 1978).

¹⁸ See in this sense the introduction to law 7/76, *DR*, I, 102 (1976); also introduction to law 8/78 in *DR*, I, 137 (May 26th 1978); also article 1 of law 17/78 in *DR*, I, 15 (November 24th 1978).

¹⁹ The president of the military tribunal and the judges of the Civilian Tribunals were all nominated or removed from office by the National Security Commission of the MPLA's Central Committee, which was

By the time Eduardo dos Santos assumed the presidency in September 1979, the MPLA and its regime had clearly taken on an authoritarian and much feared character. During the Marxist phase of Dos Santos's administration, up to 1987, authoritarianism, restricted party membership and political control of the judicial system were all maintained. The process of political and administrative centralization continued unabated.

Due to party discrimination and centralisation, together with escalating public expenditure on the war, the lower social strata (including even those party members at the bottom of the party structure, the party cells) were increasingly neglected by the system of distribution. As the start of the 80s, this kind of grassroots membership had no special material privileges in relation to non-party members.²⁰ The result was the paralysis of party-cell activity, especially at provincial level.²¹ A campaign for the recruitment of new members began in 1983 with the declared objectives of doubling membership from 30,000 to 60,000. However, insofar as the 'rectification principles' were maintained, the results presented at the 1985 congress accounted for only 3,500 new members.²² Once again selection criteria kept on favouring the urban and literate to the detriment of the rural and illiterate. In fact, out of the 628 delegates to the second congress in 1985, only 12 were peasants whereas administrative office-holders and civil servants numbered 269.²³ In short, the party had reinforced its elitist and restrictive character, and the lower 'orders' had entered into a 'pernicious state of apathy', as recognised by the President himself.²⁴ The party remained tiny until 1990, representing less than 0.5% of the population.

Continuing to concentrate power, the President was constitutionally consecrated as President of the People's Assembly in August 1980 and was entitled to control and revoke all executive and legislative acts of the new organisations, be it at central or at local level.²⁵ In practice, the People's Assembly was reduced to a ratification chamber of the President's decisions; the situation is not much different nowadays, as will be shown.

With regards to the party, in 1980 Dos Santos began to isolate certain areas within the presidency that had previously been under party control, such as foreign economic affairs where the President's Cabinet was now entrusted with establishing business

presided over by the President of the Party, also President of the Republic; see art. 6 law 17/78 in *DR*, I, 15 (November 24th 1978); also art. 7, n^o 1, law 8/78 in *DR*, I, 137 (May 26th 1978).

²⁰ Michael Wolfers and Jane Bergerol, *Angola*, op. cit., p. 177.

²¹ See *Relatório do Comité Central ao I^o Congresso Extraordinário*, op. cit., 1980, p.21; also comments on the CC meeting of December 1982 on the *Angolan National Radio* (December 9th 1982), in *Survey of World Broadcast* (December 13th 1982).

²² In *Relatório do Comité Central ao II Congresso do Partido, realizado em Luanda de 2 a 10 de Dezembro de 1985* (Luanda: Edição do Secretariado do Comité Central, 1985), pp.22–23.

²³ See *Relatório do Comité Central ao II^o Congresso*, op. cit., pp.22–23; also Keith Somerville, *Angola*, op. cit., p.105.

²⁴ See 'Opening speech of the President of the Republic to the Ist National Conference', in *Documentos da I^a Conferência Nacional do MPLA-PT de 14 a 19 de Janeiro* (Luanda: Edição do Secretariado do Comité Central, 1985), pp. 13–17.

²⁵ See amendment to Constitutional Law, *DR*, I, 225 (September 23rd 1980).

contacts with public or private foreign entities.²⁶ The President's intention was beginning to show; it allowed him to have autonomous control over external sources of income, such as revenue from oil, itself the main financial support of the Angolan patrimonial system. Although the origin of these changes dates back to the early 80s, they were only uncovered in the late 90s by the media.²⁷

Taking advantage of new South African incursions into southern Angola in November 1982, Dos Santos demanded from the Central Committee new and sweeping emergency powers, including military ones. A new national political, military and administrative structure was created — the Regional Military Councils, or CMRs.²⁸ These were hierarchically above all other (local, provincial or central) governing and administrative bodies and were accountable to a Council for Defence and Security, a form of martial government under the President in his role as Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. It had almost unlimited powers across the territory, including control of all financial dealings with the outside.²⁹ The President personally took charge of foreign affairs, dismissing the minister and assuming his brief from mid-1984 to 1985.³⁰ The whole ministry was then placed under the President's direct tutelage, as shown in the Central State Structure diagram at the end of this section (fig. 1).

In parallel to the new emergency powers, there now developed a bitter struggle between historical political figures inside the Political Bureau, the Central Committee and the government.³¹ The young President became more politically aggressive and gradually deprived the government and Party structures of effective executive power, transferring such powers to subsidiary organisations more dependant on himself, such as the Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, the Cabinet of the President of the Republic and the Cabinet of the Head of Government. These institutions comprised mainly young people, issued from the post-27th May generation, with good technical preparation, coming from the faculties of Engineering, Law and Economy. They belonged to those who had been purged and 'rectified' earlier and had thus become submissive and subservient to the President – to whom they owed their social, professional and, above all, economic advancement.

²⁶ Article 1 in Presidential decree 25–A/80, *DR*, I, 72 (April 1st 1980); statutes of the President of the Republic's Cabinet.

²⁷ See the reports in *Global Witness* that names several members of the presidential clique involved in networks of arms' dealing, missing accounts from oil income to the State, among other scandals: '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 President's Men', a report by *Global Witness*, March 2002; 'A Rough Trade: the Role of Companies and Governments in the Angolan Conflict', a report by *Global Witness*, December 1998; published on www.oneworld.org/globalwitness.

²⁸ Law 5/83, *DR*, I, 179 (July 30th 1983).

²⁹ Article 4 of law 3/84, in *DR*, I, 22 (January 26th 1984), creating the CDS; also Decree 6/84, *DR*, I, 79 (April 3rd 1984), regulating the CDS.

³⁰ The President held the brief for foreign affairs until April 1985 when a new minister was appointed, Afonso 'M'Binda' Van Dunem, a man of absolute confidence to the president (a 'loyalist' as defined), who had been until then the head of the President's cabinet; in *ARB* (April 1985), p.7565.

³¹ So-called incident of the picture and the play; see Nuno Vidal, *Post-Modern Patrimonialism in Africa*, op. cit., 10.1.

With power now concentrated in those institutions surrounding the Presidency, these young cadres became inherently powerful although they were deprived of political legitimacy other than that bestowed by the President. Their relatively young age, their technical education and weak ideological convictions also made them more permeable to new socio-economic ideas and, according to official party documents, they were the main protagonists of the 1987 economic reform.³² It is also important to stress that, insofar as the access to the President became ever more restricted, these young technicians came to act as gatekeepers and were used by Western diplomats to transmit information to the presidency.

Finally, regarding the judicial system, Dos Santos intensified the process initiated by his predecessor. The attorney-general was considered subordinate to the President.³³ The same applied to the whole ministry of justice (see fig. 1). Following the creation of the CMR, the competence of the military courts was broadened and the new organs of military justice were explicitly granted juridical preponderance over civil tribunals.³⁴ The presidents and professional judges of the regional military tribunals were to be directly nominated by the President of the Republic.³⁵

In the mid-80s, the regime had reached the peak of power concentration and administrative centralization: it was run by President Eduardo dos Santos, exerting to the full his functions as President of the Party, Head of State, Head of Government, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces and, above all, head manager of the system of distribution, directly controlling oil, the major source of State revenues. Nevertheless, it would be an exaggeration to suggest that President dos Santos had established a personal dictatorship during this period. He and other MPLA leaders had to play complex games of consensus politics, alliance building and patronage within the party.

Beyond the presidency, the connections between the military, the State and the party's top organs prevented the military from becoming an autonomous source of power as happened in other African countries such as Nigeria.³⁶ The presidential structure, sometimes supported by the top party leadership made the strategic policy decisions, but it was not easy to ensure delivery because of an increasingly dysfunctional State bureaucracy, resulting from the war and a Marxist-type bureaucracy with an enormous deficit of middle-cadres. This top-heavy, over-centralized system resulted in even minor decisions needing top-level approval.

³² See *Biografia Oficial de José Eduardo dos Santos, Presidente da República de Angola* (Luanda: np, nd), pp.vi and vii.

³³ See articles 1 and 2. of decree 25/80, *DR*, I, 70 (24th March 1980), approving the organisational regulation of the Office of the Procurator General of the Republic.

³⁴ Law 14/84, *DR*, I, 168 (17th July 1984), on the regulation of organs of military justice.

³⁵ In article 7, para. 2 of Law 14/84, *DR*, I, 168 (17th July 1984), on the regulation of organs of military justice.

³⁶ On the case of Nigeria, see Jean-François Bayart, *The State in Africa*, op. cit. This state of affairs in Angola might change with the peace after 2002, the military demobilization (and reduction of the armed forces) and the effective integration of UNITA's military structures in the national army.

Increasing imports to feed an expanding war and to compensate for the disrupted agriculture and industry, along with the fall in oil prices in 1986, created serious problems for the Angolan balance of payments. Together with the USSR's decreasing capacity to carry on supporting the Angolan war effort, these problems paved the way for economic and political changes from 1987 onwards. By then the economic and financial adjustment programme (*Programa de Saneamento Económico e Financeiro*, or SEF) introduced cautious market reforms, which marked the prelude to the transition to a market economy and a multiparty system.³⁷

³⁷ On these issues, see Manuel Ennes Ferreira, 'A política de recuperação económica na República Popular de Angola', in *Política Internacional*, 1, I (1990), pp.107–132; Manuel Ennes Ferreira, 'La reconversion économique de la nomenclature pétrolière', in *Politique Africaine*, 57 (1995), pp.11–26.

2 – The transition to a multiparty system in the nineties

Officially the Socialist model lasted until the third MPLA Party Congress of December 1990, but by 1987 it was already in steady decline. Complex negotiations with South Africa, the US and Cuba led to the withdrawal of Cuban troops and Namibia's independence, paving the way for the 1991 Bicesse peace agreement between the MPLA and UNITA and the 1992 multiparty elections — the first ever in Angola.

A constitutional revision of law 12/91 in 1991 simply approved the basic principles of a multiparty democracy, defining Angola as a democratic State based on the rule of law, enshrining the key civic and human rights as well as the basic principles of a market economy. The new political and legal framework opened a space for the emergence of opposition political parties and so-called civil society organisations — church groups, private media, independent labour, professional unions and NGOs. Government radio and television became somewhat more pluralist and a wave of strikes took place in 1991 and 1992.

Within such a climate, having to prepare himself for the first elections ever in Angola, the President realised the need to rehabilitate the party machine, not only in terms of effective power, but also in terms of a revival of the local structures that had been forgotten and marginalized over the years. Several former leaders from the nationalist period, such as Lopo do Nascimento and Lucio Lara, were again called to prominent positions and the party was effectively revived. Grassroots structures and hierarchic mechanisms were rehabilitated through a major re-organization. According to the third MPLA extraordinary congress of May 1992, it was now time to re-unite the party's 'big family', namely all those who considered themselves to belong to the MPLA even though distanced from party militancy. There was a large distribution of material benefits and traditional authorities were politically rehabilitated. Party membership was enlarged from 65,362 members in 1990 to 544,639 by the end of 1992.³⁸ A significant amount of funds became available for party activities and for a professional electoral campaign managed by Brazilian experts.

The MPLA gained in dynamism but it is important to stress that a revived party did not mean an emerging autonomous entity. Several of the young cadres surrounding the Presidency had been occupying positions in the party's top echelons since the second congress of 1985 and had remained there, therefore preventing the party from becoming a parallel power to the Presidency. Later, during the fourth congress of 1998, when war resumed after the 1994–1998 Lusaka peace period and power was concentrated once again, former party leaders were again degraded in favour of the younger cadres: Lopo do Nascimento gave up his place of Secretary General to João Lourenço and Lúcio Lara was dismissed from the Central Committee.

A strong electoral dynamic progressively emerged within the MPLA ranks, helped significantly by UNITA's bellicose, *revanchiste* and frustrated electoral discourse,

³⁸ See *Relatório do Comité Central ao IV Congresso do MPLA – Firme, rumo ao século XXI* (Luanda: Publicações do MPLA, 1998), pp. 5–10.

which effectively helped to bring together within the MPLA all those who feared UNITA's recovery.³⁹ In Angola's first nationwide multiparty elections ever, a turnout of more than 91% (4.4 million) registered voters gave the MPLA candidate, President Dos Santos 49.57% of the vote against 40.07% for Savimbi, and the legislative elections resulted in UNITA getting 34.10% of the vote against 53.74% for the MPLA. The elections were considered generally free and fair by the UN and other foreign observers and according to the law there should have been a presidential election run-off, but UNITA refused to accept the results and returned to civil war.⁴⁰

By then, a lot of criticism had been raised against the international community for not having sufficiently supported the implementation of the Bicesse agreement. From UNITA's powerful military advancement — taking control of more than two thirds of the territory and isolating several urban centres — it became clear that Savimbi's forces never disarmed as they should have under the supervision of the UN. The problem was not only the insufficiency of means — financial and human — allocated to the process, but also the weak reactions of the international community in general, and of the West in particular, after the elections in the face of the illegality of UNITA's political claims. The international community was perceived by observers inside and outside Angola as having let the country down.⁴¹

The political liberalization that had occurred during the electoral period (1991–92) was reversed and power was once again concentrated within the presidency, especially when it came to the purchase of arms' financed with oil revenues. In spite of the appointment of a new Prime Minister, Marcolino Moco (nominated mainly for the politically expedient reason that he came from the same regional-ethnic background as Savimbi), the main political decisions were still made at the level of the Council of Ministers presided over by Dos Santos. Once again, the distribution of resources came under the control of the top echelons of the party/State/presidency (these organs remained intertwined) whilst at the same time as the majority of the population most affected by the war was left to the care of international organizations now arriving en masse to offer emergency aid programmes.⁴² The activism and dedication of party members during the electoral campaign gave way to passivity.⁴³

With a gradual military reversal in favour of the MPLA, the US finally conceded diplomatic recognition to the Angolan government in May 1993. Increasing US pressure seems to have led to the Lusaka peace agreement of November 1994. A new period of political openness then started with the integration of some of UNITA's military forces

39 For the characterization of this UNITA attitude towards the MPLA and all those who might be proximate of the MPLA, see Christine Messiant, 'MPLA et UNITA, processus de paix et logique de guerre', in *Politique Africaine*, 57 (1995) pp.53–54; also Christine Messiant, 'Angola les voies de l'éthnisation et de la décomposition — II — Transition à la démocratie ou marche à la guerre? L'épanouissement des deux 'partis armés' (Mai 1991–Septembre 1992)' in *Lusotopie*, 3 (1995) pp. 181–221.

40 On the electoral results see Sofia Marques, *Angola: da Guerra à Democracia* (Luanda: Edipress, 1993).

41 See, among others, Christine Messiant, 'Angola: le retour à la guerre ou l'inavouable faillite d'une intervention internationale', in *L'Afrique Politique* (1994) pp. 201–229.

42 See my chapter on social issues in this volume.

43 See *Relatório do Comité Central ao IV Congresso*, op. cit., p.8.

into the national armed forces (the FAA) under UN supervision, with UNITA's deputies taking their seats at parliament in 1997 and the constitution of a so-called Government of Unity and National Reconstruction, or GURN, which integrated elements of several opposition parties represented in parliament.

Despite several minor military incidents, the protocol was partially implemented until 1998, when the Government decided to suspend it due to UNITA's repeated failure to hand over the administrative control of municipalities in the areas it still dominated. Insofar as both sides did not cease rebuilding and re-arming their military forces during the peace period, the military conflict resumed with unprecedented intensity. The government resorted to the oil rent to finance its war effort while UNITA used the diamonds extracted from the areas under its control.

The resumption of war meant another contraction of the political and civil space opened during the 1994–1998 Lusaka protocol implementation period. As ever, concentration of power, authoritarianism and political control followed. The President took over as head of government in January 1999 and abolished the post of Prime Minister (by then occupied by França Van Dunem). Political pressure upon the private media was reinforced through State security and judicial activity resulting in several arrests and lawsuits against journalists.⁴⁴ A multitude of opposition political parties had to face the challenge of internal factions (the so-called phenomenon of 'Renovadas'), which according to all opposition leaders dealing with the problem were instigated and sponsored by the MPLA. Such internal 'factionism' weakened the opposition and strongly affected its ability to play a more active role during that period. The party most affected was obviously UNITA, whose deputies in Luanda were split between those who supported Savimbi and those who did not. Among the latter, a clearly government-sponsored group of defectors was formed (*UNITA-Renovada* or Renewed UNITA), which took the parliamentary seats reserved for Savimbi's party but without any internal or external credibility.

On the MPLA's side, the decision was made clear: this time no concession would be made and a military solution was definitely to be sought – as confirmed by the President at the fourth congress of December 1998. That goal was achieved with the progressive disruption of UNITA's military forces and the killing of Savimbi in February 2002. Despite several attempts made by the international community and the Angolan social movements supporting peace, the ceasefire and the Memorandum of Luena were signed without any external or internal participation apart from the victorious MPLA and the defeated UNITA.⁴⁵ Such unequal relation of forces would from then on characterize the multiparty system in Angola.

⁴⁴ See *Angola, freedom of expression under threat*, Amnesty International Index AFR 12/016/1999 (1st November 1999); also Amnesty International, *Angola: unfair trial of Rafael Marques* (Amnesty International, March 31st 2000). URL: <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/ENGAFR120161999>.

⁴⁵ During the Socialist period, Churches, both Catholic and Protestant, were the isolated voices defending Human Rights, but during the last stages of the civil war, they were greatly helped in their initiatives by CSOs, which had grown stronger since 1991. In the late 90s, myriad projects and initiatives for peace emerged between Churches and CSOs: Pro Pace movement; Angolan Group Reflecting for Peace, or GARP; Programme for Peace Building, or PCP; and a number of others. For a detailed analysis of these

3 - Constraints to an effective multiparty system on the eve of elections

After the cease-fire negotiated in Luena in April 2002 and the resumption of the Lusaka protocol, many hoped for the rapid opening up of space for civil society and political opposition – as had occurred after the Bicesse agreement until the 1991–1992 elections and again during the first stage of implementation of the Lusaka protocol between 1994 and 1998. However, more than four years after the memorandum, there were no significant signs of change. The presidency and the MPLA's top echelons retained a tight control over the State, its institutions and resources, using them to maintain their political and economic hegemony, and significantly restricting the political and civil space. Opposition parties and civil society organizations faced severe constraints and were fragile and highly dependent. I detail here the MPLA's political strategy to retain power and the main constraints, obstacles and problems faced by the opposition.

3.1 – The maintenance of political and economic hegemony

Elected in 1992 for a four-year period, the National Assembly has been active but its credibility has been affected by the lack of a renewed mandate since then. With the end of the war in 2002, new legislative and presidential elections were expected to occur, first in 2004, then 2005, soon replaced by 2006 and then 2007.⁴⁶

Unlike to the opposition, the MPLA was well advanced in its preparation for elections, with clear directives established at its fifth congress in 2003. Returning in part to the strategy used in the third extraordinary congress in 1992, the fifth congress called for party militancy and the general mobilization of all its members, reaffirming the importance of traditional authorities and the need to address the needs of the rural areas and its populations – all in an attempt to revive the party's grassroots support base. Once again, the distribution of resources was expanded and former party members were called back – such as Lúcio Lara, who was re-elected to the Central Committee. The usual measures were then put in place to restructure the party and control all the variables as much as possible, always taking advantage of party dominance over the State and its structures — the executive, the legislative and the judicial⁴⁷.

One of the first measures was, again, to increase party membership. A massive and aggressive campaign was launched all over the country to recruit new members and party membership reached 2 million in 2006 against 544,639 in 1992, 998,199 in 1998 and 1,862,409 by the end of 2003.⁴⁸ MPLA membership has grown sharply since the end

initiatives, see Michael, G. Comerford, *O Rosto Pacífico de Angola* (Luanda: edição do autor, 2005), especially end of chapter 2 and chapter 4. See also Christine Messiant, 'Les églises et la dernière guerre en Angola (1998–2002). Les voies difficiles de l'engagement pour un pays juste', in *Le fait Missionnaire. War, peace and religion*, n°13, October 2003, pp. 75–117 ; see also my chapter on social issues in this volume.

⁴⁶ See Eduardo dos Santos' statements at the Central Committee meeting on the 27th January 2006; in *Jornal de Angola* (January 28th 2006); also in *BBC* (January 28th 2006).

⁴⁷ See also Nuno Vidal, *Angola: Preconditions for Elections*, a report for the Netherlands Institute for Southern Africa – NiZA (Amsterdam: NiZA, 2006).

⁴⁸ See *Relatório do Comité Central ao V Congresso Ordinário*, op. cit., p.6.

of the war, especially in the central highlands, traditionally seen as UNITA's stronghold: Bié has now over 300,000 members, while Huambo and Huíla provinces are not far behind and even the sparsely populated Kuando Kubango province, where UNITA's headquarters were located, now boasts 100,000 MPLA members. Membership in Luanda has risen sharply from 80,000 to around 1 million in 2006.

A process for the restructuring and revitalization of the party's base structures followed. Preparing itself for the forthcoming elections and addressing the requirements of the new democratic rules, more transparent mechanisms were created for the election of members at all levels of the hierarchy, from local cells to the Central Committee – requiring more than one candidate to every position. Equally the party began transferring its cells from workplaces to neighbourhoods, where they were integrated into the previously existing network of neighbourhood cells, coordinated by Action Committees — one per neighbourhood. New elections to these committees were supposed to occur and with the newly elected members this transfer process would be completed.⁴⁹ The process started in February 2004 but according to several opposition leaders, it was just a cosmetic operation that so far has left untouched the cells in workplaces. At the same time, neighbourhood cells were being restructured and coordinated with their counterparts in the workplaces, thus rendering more effective the party's social control.

A campaign of political seduction aimed at traditional authorities began, with gifts and respect offered whilst party political activities all over the country intensified in what was clearly perceived as pre-electoral campaign.⁵⁰

As usual in personalized and patrimonial type regimes, where there is no clear distinction between the public and the private, commitment to delivery of services by ministers and provincial governors was personalised. Electoral periods seem to be the exception to this rule. On such occasions, delivery of services becomes mandatory. That happened in 1992 and again after the fifth congress, which clearly set the strategy towards the 2007 elections. Accordingly, the rehabilitation of infrastructure became a major objective. The Party drew up long term economic development plans with heavy investment on infrastructure and technology transfer, aiming at an accelerated economic growth. This was to be financed by new and more favorable oil-backed loans such as the one from China — two loans of US 2 billion in conditions compared to aid credit conceded by international financial institutions⁵¹ — and the use of record-high oil

⁴⁹ Above the neighbourhood Action Committee is the provincial party committee, topped by the national Central Committee.

⁵⁰ See references to such charming campaigns on traditional authorities and comparison with the same procedures in 1992 in 'Seduções pré-campanha', in *Agora* (December 10th 2005), pp. 8–9; See also the book resulting from the 2002 national meeting on traditional authorities promoted in Luanda, 20th–22nd March 2002 by the Ministry of Territorial Administration and supported by the President, *1º Encontro Nacional Sobre a Autoridade Tradicional em Angola* (Luanda: Ministério da Administração do Território-MAT, 2004).

⁵¹ See the official characterization of these loans by the ministry of finance, available at www.minfin.gv.ao ; on these loans, see also Arlindo Miranda, *Angola 2003/2004, Waiting for Elections*, a report for the Michelsen Institute (2004), p.18.

revenues, which in 2005 rose to around \$US 6.88 billion.⁵² There were several plans to support a myriad economic sectors and regional development clusters.⁵³ This development perspective was exclusively planned, debated and developed inside the MPLA. Besides investing in new or rehabilitated infrastructures, there was also an appeal to militant/membership voluntary effort in service delivery to the community, such as painting neighbourhood schools or medical centres, neighbourhood cleaning, helping the government with the rubbish disposal problem, to mention but a few.

As it did prior to the 1992 elections and taking full political advantage of the control over the legislative, the party sought as much as possible to restructure the legal framework before the elections to suit the political strategy and interests of those in power. To that end it restructured the Land Law, the Law on Territorial Organization and Urbanism, the Oil Law and, whenever possible, the Constitution.⁵⁴ It also prepared to command a resounding majority of members at the new electoral organs. The majority party and the President directly or indirectly appointed 8 out of 11 members of the National Electoral Commission — the institution responsible for the organization, management and supervision of the whole electoral process — and also ensured a majority in the provincial, municipal and communal electoral commissions.⁵⁵ It attempted to regulate the electoral register through the Council of Ministers, creating new electoral organs such as executive commissions, with members exclusively appointed by the majority party, to take over responsibilities initially attributed to the National Electoral Commission – thus circumventing the electoral law and granting absolute control over the registration process to the party in government.⁵⁶ This position led the main opposition party to question the legitimacy of any future elections, considering that they could not be internationally considered democratic, free and fair.⁵⁷ This position overshadowed the polls right from the start.

Benefiting from the dominion over the executive, the MPLA ensured that its ministers, provincial governors and administrators (who in several cases were also top members of the party at national and regional level) were seen to inaugurate public infrastructure projects financed with public money in ceremonies where State and party symbols were often mixed. Such events were manipulated by the State media in order to

⁵² See *Global Witness* Press Release: *Western banks to give huge new loan to Angola in further blow to transparency* (September, 23rd 2005).

⁵³ Such as large intensive agricultural projects in several regions with special emphasis on the central plateau; a new oil refinery in Lobito; three new railway lines stretching east from the coast at Luanda, Lobito and Namibe, followed by north-south railways in eastern Angola; an international airport in Luanda and maybe other in Kuando Kubango province; and a natural gas factory in Soyo with export capacity to Namibia and South Africa.

⁵⁴ For now the opposition seem to have managed to postpone the approval of a new constitution to the new legislature.

⁵⁵ See electoral law, Law 6/05, *DR, I*, 95 (August 10th 2005), title IX.

⁵⁶ Compare the electoral law approved by the National Assembly, Law 6/05, *DR, I*, 95 (August 10th 2005) with the Council of Ministers Decree 63/05, *DR, I*, 111 (September 16th 2005) and the Council of Ministers Decree 62/05, *DR, I*, 107 (September 7th 2005).

⁵⁷ Statements and arguments produced by UNITA's secretary for information, Adalberto da Costa Júnior, in a press conference entitled *Alert on the legitimacy and dangers of the electoral process* (Luanda: Hotel Trópico, December 7th 2005).

give as much political credit as possible to the party in power. Television and national radio broadcasting remained a monopoly of the State.⁵⁸ Severe constraints were imposed on the private media. The government was able to block the only relatively independent radio station — the Catholic church radio Eclésia — from broadcasting outside Luanda and continued to intimidate journalists into practicing self-censorship while buying off some and co-opting others into the State media.⁵⁹

Political control over the judicial remained as strong as ever and was clearly a major advantage for the party and its regime. The President of the Republic, who is also President of the MPLA, maintained significant powers over the appointment to the judiciary, including the power to appoint Supreme Court judges without confirmation by the National Assembly. There were several reports of political pressure from the presidency affecting the outcome of cases. One of the most recent and enlightening example was the Supreme Court decision, on July 22nd 2005, not to consider Dos Santos' presidential administration since 1992 as presidential mandates in order to circumvent the constitutional disposition that limits presidential mandates to three five-year terms. Otherwise, his presidency initiated after the first presidential elections in 1992 would have counted as three five-year presidential mandates between 1992 and 2007 and would therefore have prevented him from running again.⁶⁰

Representing one of the most important pillars of the regime, central control over the public and private sectors of the economy remained extremely tight. The political dominance over the public sector is as old as the regime and was extended to the private sector as soon as the transition to a market economy started in the early 90s. Privatization throughout the 90s was made in favour of the elites in power and resulted in an oligopoly in the politically crucial private sectors like banks, communications, diamonds, insurances, transport, all managed within the prevailing patrimonial and clientelistic logic. Directly or indirectly, the president and the party kept a tight grip over each and every significant business activity in the country, public or private, and it was simply not possible for a medium or large business to operate without political consent from the top.⁶¹ Material benefits and financial privileges for those occupying political positions were significantly increased - politicians and government members⁶².

⁵⁸ A new press law was approved in 3 February 2006, abolishing the State monopoly over television broadcasting, but based on the example of commercial radio stations in 1992, one should not expect politically independent television channels; new private commercial radios started broadcasting in 1992, but were all, without exception, controlled by the MPLA: LAC in Luanda, Rádio 2000 in Lubango, Rádio Morena in Benguela and Rádio Comercial in Cabinda. The Catholic Church's radio station Eclésia re-opened in Luanda in 1997, after having been closed down since 1977.

⁵⁹ See Human Rights Watch report, *Unfinished democracy: media and political freedoms in Angola* (July 14th 2004); also news report, 'Director of Government News Agency threatens to shoot journalist', in Media Institute of Southern Africa (February 23rd 2005); also *Human Rights Watch World Report 2006* (New York: HRW & Seven stories press, 2006), pp. 74–79.

⁶⁰ In power since 1979 and currently aged 63 (born August 28th 1942), Dos Santos may well remain president for life.

⁶¹ See Manuel Ennes Ferreira, *La reconversion*, op. cit., pp.11–26; Renato Aguilar, '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); Renato Aguilar,

Despite an obvious excess of low-qualified public servants, who overcrowded State administration during the Socialist regime, resisting each and every IMF and World Bank restructuring programme in the late 80s and throughout the 90s, it was announced in 2006 that an extra 5,000 positions would be open in public administration and salaries increased.⁶³

In sum, the President and the party in power reinforced their control over the State apparatus, carefully preparing for the forthcoming elections. Without changing the regime's *modus operandi*, political power was still concentrated in the person and institution of the President and the administration remained centralized. Access to the President was highly restricted and key policy decisions were made by presidential aides, who are mostly technocrats. The post of Prime Minister was reintroduced in December 2002, with the nomination of Fernando 'Nandó' Dias da Piedade, along with the appointment of a reformist economic team. Nevertheless, the Prime Ministerial post remained weak and President Dos Santos continued to chair the powerful Council of Ministers, which effectively made him head of government and gave him control over the management of governmental affairs. Power was still managed according to a distribution mechanism of State resources operated through the rotation and cooption of key-figures for the top jobs in party and State structures. Positions such as ministers, provincial governors, ambassadors and especially positions in the myriad services surrounding the presidency (under the supervision of the Civil and Military Cabinets of the Presidency) were some of the most prized posts and their political importance continued to depend upon the personality of the person and his/her proximity to the President.

3.2 – Opposition political parties

Although there were in 2006 125 registered political parties in Angola, fewer than a quarter were in fact operational. The MPLA held an outright majority with 129 seats out of 220 at the National Assembly while UNITA had 70 seats and other parties the remainder of the seats⁶⁴. Opposition parties were politically and institutionally fragile and faced severe constraints to their work and political affirmation.

Angola: getting off the hook, a report for SIDA (Gothenburg: Gothenburg University, 2005), in particular pp. 13–18.

⁶² See Decree-law on *DR*, I (12th April 2006), establishing new eprivileges for those occupying political positions within the State structure; see also *Semanário Angolense* (May 13th to 20th, 2006), pp 6-7.

⁶³ See *Jornal de Angola* (January 19th 2006); also *Semanário Angolense* "Migalhas para o povolu" (May 13th to 20th, 2006); on public administration, post-colonial development and policies up to the 2000s see Nuno Vidal, *Post-Modern Patrimonialism in Africa*, op. cit., in particular the conclusion.

⁶⁴ PRS - *Partido da Renovação Social*/Party of Social Renewal, 6 MPs; FNLA-Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola - Front for the National Liberation of Angola, 5 MPs; PLD - *Partido Liberal Democrata*/Liberal Democratic Party, 3 MPs; PRD - *Partido Renovador Democrático* - Party of Democratic Renewal, 1 MP; PAJOCA - *Partido da Juventude Operários e Camponeses de Angola* - Party of Youth, Workers and Peasants, 1 MP; PDP-ANA - *Partido Democrático para o Progresso da Aliança Nacional* - Democratic Party for Progress of the National Alliance, 1 MP; PNDA - *Partido Nacional Democrático de Angola* - Angolan National Democratic Party, 1 MP; FDA - *Forum Democrático Angolano* - Party of Angolan Democratic Fórum, 1 MP; AD-Coligação, *Aliança Democrática-Coligação*/Party of Democratic Alliance, 1 MP; PSD - *Partido Social Democrata*- Social Democratic Party, 1 MP.

Financial difficulties were the main problems for the opposition. Contrary to civil society organizations⁶⁵, opposition parties barely access external funding and membership fees are merely symbolic at around \$1 per month, and even then most of the members usually do not pay their dues.⁶⁶ Those opposition parties represented in parliament before the elections lived essentially on funds coming out of the State budget (\$10 per vote obtained in the 1992 election), which in 2006 worked out at around \$14 million for UNITA per year, and sums that vary between \$100,000 and \$900,000 for the rest of the opposition, with the majority situated within the \$100,000 and \$200,000 range.⁶⁷ Opposition parties without exception complained that this was far from being sufficient and was paid irregularly, sometimes even suspended, so as to disrupt their activities or apply pressure on them at key moments, such as during the constitutional deadlock in 2005.

In view of such financial restrictions it was extremely difficult for the opposition to expand activities outside provincial capital cities. UNITA was the only opposition party with effective national presence outside provincial capital cities. Some parties, such as PDP-ANA and PAJOCA, were still struggling to get representation in the capital city of Luanda. The situation was far worse for parties without parliamentary representation and without access to State budget funds.⁶⁸ In absolute contrast with the opposition stood the MPLA, with an impressive collection of buildings, widespread throughout the country, with a presence in each and every village, with no financial difficulties whatsoever, having the largest State subsidy of around \$21.5 million, with membership fees retained at source from salaries in some State companies and directly or indirectly controlling the most significant private companies.

Opposition parties widely complained about the permanent political advantage taken by the MPLA from the manipulation of State structures. As an example, some ministers were MPLA Central Committee members and several provincial governors MPLA first provincial secretaries. The same happened with municipal and communal administrators and it was sometimes difficult to distinguish between their party and State activities insofar as party events mobilized State logistics, and vice-versa. MPLA flags are everywhere in the provinces and are very similar to the Angolan Republic's flag. In many rural areas it was easier to find an MPLA flag than the flag of the Republic.

At the level of the Government of Unity and National Reconciliation, or GURN, several opposition leaders accused the majority party of pre-empting the responsibilities of every governmental position occupied by their representatives. According to these accusations, no matter what position was attributed to the opposition — minister, vice-minister, governor, administrator — each and every politically sensitive competence was

⁶⁵ See chapter on social sectors and CSO in this volume.

⁶⁶ According to the dominant mentality it is the party that has to support its members and not the other way around; see Nuno Vidal, *Post-modern patrimonialism in Africa*:..op. cit., especially “conclusion”.

⁶⁷ For the exact number of votes obtained by each party in the 1992 elections see, Marques, Sofia, *Angola*.... op. cit., p. 43.

⁶⁸ An exception can be found in PADEPA, which has been more active than many parties inside parliament; PADEPA – *Partido de Apoio Democrático e Progresso de Angola*/Party of Democratic Support and Progress of Angola.

immediately transferred to the nearest position occupied by an MPLA member. Thus, if the governor was from UNITA, the effective powers such as budget management rested with a vice-governor belonging to the MPLA. This being so, the obvious question is, why did the opposition remain in such a government?

Generally speaking, the reasons for remaining had to do with the effectiveness of the patrimonial system and the fear of retaliation from the majority party in terms of cancellation of State budget funds and the loss of other benefits that were usually related to the positions occupied within the governmental structures. There was also difficulty in obtaining a consensus within and without opposition parties in favour of a move that could be seen, again internally or externally, as being radical, anti-institutional and anti-reconciliatory. Without much success, UNITA's leader, Isaias Samakuva, tried to replace some of his party's representatives in parliament and in government, who have been occupying their posts since the days of *UNITA-Renovada*.⁶⁹

Access to the State media (national radio, television and daily newspapers) also constituted a problem for the opposition, which experienced censorship through manipulated reporting and the 'editing' of news that almost ignored them while giving full and premium coverage to even the most irrelevant MPLA activities and to its government. The government clearly used its control of the media to influence public opinion, both domestic and international. In some provinces, opposition parties occasionally took out commercial radio advertisements to get publicity, but this represented an enormous financial effort considering the parties' budget difficulties. They were also severely affected by the fact that private media organizations routinely suffered pressure and inducements from the ruling structures and were basically restricted to Luanda. Private weekly newspapers, in their low thousands, only circulate in Luanda and the same happens with Radio Eclésia broadcast as previously mentioned.

The judicial system was also at the centre of the opposition criticism, accused of being manipulated in cases involving factions within opposition parties, often resulting in the suspension of State subsidy and serving the general purpose of dividing and weakening the opposition. Even the head of the Lawyers' Bar Association, Raúl Araújo, an MPLA member, accepted that judges should be held accountable and be exonerated in the case of serious mistakes, retiring at a given age and not being kept in their positions until their death, thereby implicitly recognizing that meritocracy is not the main criterion for occupying such positions.⁷⁰ Moreover, there was still the dual and confused judicial system — civil and military⁷¹ — which contributed to the maintenance of the authoritarian and greatly feared character of justice in politically sensitive issues, keeping alive the memory of the post-27th May bloody purge.

A particular disappointment for the parliamentary opposition was directed at the international community, in particular the World Bank and the IMF, for reducing the

⁶⁹ On this subject, see 'Substituição de parlamentares aquece debate na Assembleia Nacional' ('Replacement of MPs warms up debates in the National Assembly'), in *Jornal de Angola* (February 1st 2006); 'Sem consenso' ('Without consensus'), in *Jornal de Angola* (February 1st 2006).

⁷⁰ In *Jornal de Angola* (28th September 2004).

⁷¹ See Luís Paulo Monteiro Marques, *Labirinto do sistema judicial angolano, notas para a sua compreensão* (Luanda: edição do autor, 2004), especially part II.

pressure that was being exerted on the government in terms of accountability and transparency in the management of public funds and respect for Human Rights. With oil prices at record highs, an increased world demand and the new Asian partners of the Angolan government — China, India and possibly South Korea — the IMF, the World Bank and the Western democracies gradually abandoned their former attitude.⁷² The ‘Angola-gate’ Falcone case also stands out as a clear example of the leverage exerted by the Angolan government on Western powers such as France.⁷³

Signs of authoritarianism remained. The MPLA still had an active paramilitary militia, the Organization of Civil Defence, funded by the State budget, in city neighbourhoods. Even though direct intimidation of opposition members and officials was rare in Luanda, it was more common in the provinces where political openness and tolerance depended on the personality and goodwill of provincial governors and municipal administrators. This probably explains why, although decreasing, there were still reports of political intolerance in the provinces, such as beatings, threats and burning of opposition delegations in rural areas: witness what happened in Luwemba in July 2004, Mavinga, March 2005 and Chongoroi, April 2006. Investigations into the murder of the opposition leader M’Fulupinga Landu Victor on 2nd July 2004 remained inconclusive and the murder might have been a straightforward act of criminality, but it effectively spread great fear among the opposition and civil society organizations.

It is also important to stress that members of M’Fulupinga’s party — the PDP-ANA — were particularly persecuted in the North and East of the country, and were pejoratively designated as ‘Bakongo returnees’ – a reference to the fact that they or their parents returned from Zaire, where they had emigrated in the 60s – and were discriminated against outside their provinces of origin of Uíge and Zaire.⁷⁴ They complained of systematic abuse committed against them by the police, such as beatings,

⁷² See *More than humanitarianism: a strategic US approach toward Africa*, a report by an independent task force sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2005), especially pp. 32–33, 49–50; also *Human Rights Watch World Report 2006*, op. cit., pp.74–79; Renato Aguilar, *Angola*, op. cit., especially pp. 2, 13–18; also John Reed, ‘Angola: o capitalismo dos petrodiamantes’, in *Courrier International* (November 25th 2005), n.34, pp. 22–23.

⁷³ Pierre Falcone (arms dealer) was nominated Angolan ambassador to UNESCO in order to be granted diplomatic immunity to travel around Europe and escape French justice, namely the judicial process on corruption and illegal arms deals involving Angolan top government officials and their French counterparts. French authorities were not willing to recognize such immunity and wanted to detain him for questioning; however, as soon as the Angolan government retaliated by withholding the recognition of the French ambassador and refusing to renew Total’s oil contract on block 3/80, the French government dropped its initial intentions and recognized Falcone’s Angolan diplomatic immunity in a humiliating move that jeopardized the whole judicial process, given the central importance of Falcone’s testimony. On the Falcone ‘Angola-gate’, case see, *Financial Times London* (August 6th 2004); *World Markets Analysis* (September 8th 2004); *International Oil Daily* (October 26th 2004); *Voice Of America* (November, 1st 2004); *ANGOP* (November 2nd 2004).

⁷⁴ On the issue of ‘Bakongos returnees’, see Jean-Michel Mabeko-Tali, *Les Bakongo et la Transition Démocratique en Angola: Démocratie ou Représentation Ethnico-Regionale?* (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1993); ‘Rapport Scientifique de la Mission à Luanda; Groupe de Recherches’, 846, in *Afrique Australe*; also Jean-Michel Mabeko-Tali, ‘La chasse aux Zaïrois à Luanda’, in *Politique Africaine*, 57 (1995) pp. 71–84.

extortion, illegal arrests, confiscation of documents and denied access to formal labour markets.⁷⁵

According to several opposition leaders and supporters, just like in the old days of the one-party regime, the State was used mainly as a mechanism for patronage, ‘feeding’ political clients and trying to bribe and/or co-opt potential opponents. They say that the promotion to senior levels or access to State jobs remained dependent on MPLA membership; the same is said to have happened at an academic level, whereby progress might be affected by an individual’s decision whether or not to join the party in power. Similar constraints applied to most of the private sector. According to several UNITA leaders in Luanda and the provinces, such political conditioning was extended to UNITA ex-combatants, who joined the MPLA to the tune of 12,000 in 2004 alone.⁷⁶ This was in order to access the support promised to help them integrate back into civil life — support that in fact was their due in accordance to the Lusaka protocol and the Luena memorandum.

One of the most enlightening examples mentioned by opposition leaders and members of CSOs regarding the degree of entrenchment of political patronage within party and State structures, is that extracted from an interview with the Angolan ambassador to Brazil, Alberto Correia Neto.

Ambassador: ‘A major part of the Angolan money comes from oil, but does not enter the financial system [...] State money is not in banks in Angola. Oil companies deposit tax in foreign banks, American, French, etc. The chairman of the central bank and other people manage that money according to orders given by juridical persons they represent [...] Capitalism engenders corruption. Why do you think there are people fighting to become ministers, MPs, Senators? Is that because they care for the country or the people? No. It’s because of *bufunfa*, money.’⁷⁷

As publicly stated by a member of the National Electoral Commission,

We must be realistic and say that what we have in Angola is a patrimonial State and not a democratic State [...] we have a country where public funds are not controlled.⁷⁸

Given all the above mentioned constraints, the opposition in general found its meagre energies and resources absorbed by its own internal problems, involved in legal and bureaucratic disputes with the MPLA, demonstrating a serious inability to mobilize the electorate with political programmes to meet the needs and wishes of the people. In the legal disputes with the MPLA, it usually came out losing, not only because the party in power held the majority of seats in parliament and in every parliamentary working commission, but also because it had more and better qualified cadres, was well resourced

⁷⁵ Complaints were presented to the author and supported with documentary evidence of judicial processes.

⁷⁶ In *Jornal de Angola* (September 28th 2004).

⁷⁷ In *O Globo* (21st November 2005).

⁷⁸ Declarations of Cláudio Silva, member of the National Electoral Commission, proposed by UNITA, but who was a former member of the Front for Democracy (FpD), a party integrating the coalition, on the *Voice of America* and the *BBC* on October 12th 2005, during a visit to Washington.

financially better structured to prepare legislation and argue in its favour. Moreover, among several of the less represented parties, there was the reproduction of the same patrimonial practices: favouritism according to primary solidarities, clientelism and the blurring of boundaries between party and personal assets.

Within such a context it is not hard to understand why the National Assembly remained a rubber-stamp institution for laws approved by the Council of Ministers presided over by the President.⁷⁹

In sum, the analysis provided in this chapter clearly reveals the daunting task for all those aiming for socio-political change and therefore defying the regime. The magnitude of such a task is summed up by a saying by Agostinho Neto, in 1977, inscribed in a big placard in front of the provincial committee of the MPLA in Huambo: ‘o MPLA é uma barreira intransponível’ (the MPLA is an unsurpassable barrier).

Nevertheless, certain opposition parties and civil society organizations came to believe that the 2007 elections held the potential to bring about socio-political change. Why?

4 – Could the elections transform the Angolan political system?

Most of opposition parties and several civil society organizations believed before the elections that the dynamics set up by peace and elections represented a major opportunity to achieve some significant change in the Angolan political system towards greater openness and democratization. Such a point of view was essentially based on three arguments.

First, the MPLA needed domestic and international political re-legitimation through an electoral process. In order to get this it must have not only to win the elections but also to have them considered free and fair according to international standards. This implied effective, rather than superficial, openness of the public political debate (*e.g.* freer access to the State media by opposition and CSOs; less constraints on the private media, public political meetings, speeches and demonstrations, etc.).

Second, if the MPLA lost its parliamentary majority that might push it to ‘institutionalise’ the practice of political negotiation with the opposition and also to be more receptive to civil society pressures.

Finally, there was an expectation that local direct elections after legislatives might initiate a strong regional pressure for effective decentralisation and therefore bring non-oil development, political inclusion and participation, eroding the current oil dependency as well as the excessive centralization of power and administration.

Each of these three arguments is analysed in turn

⁷⁹ In the same sense, see *Some transparency, no accountability*, op. cit., pp. 76–77; also, Arlindo Miranda, *Angola 2003/2004*, op.cit, pp.25–26.

4.1 – Opening space for political debate and demand

This expectation was based on the 1992 experience. By then, even in control of the State apparatus and with a clear intention to conduct the electoral process, the MPLA ended up making significant political concessions to the opposition and to a newborn civil society, especially under strong international and domestic pressure for political openness. It became obvious that the dynamics of an electoral process made it impossible to control all the political variables. As the electoral process developed, the regime opened much more political space than expected and, even though that space contracted as soon as the war resumed, it was not possible to return to the *status quo ante*. Such experiences were still remembered in 2006 and, just as in 1992, there were hopes that the electoral process would increase political and social openness and democratize the regime.

Although it is easy to agree with the argument that electoral dynamics open the space for political discussion, it must also be taken into account that the domestic and international context in 2006 was vastly different from that of 1992. At that time, the MPLA was in a difficult position: its earlier Socialist model had collapsed and the country was exposed as a political and economic failure, oppressing people and retarding development. On the other hand, its major opponent, UNITA, had significant internal leverage, emerging from the civil war in control of part of the national territory, strongly backed, both politically and financially, by the US and several other Western countries. It was portrayed, even if inaccurately, by the international media as the Angolan force for Western style liberal democracy. Domestic pressure for change also benefited from the massive arrival of international organizations. The MPLA, for its part, had had to make massive changes quickly, as demonstrated by the three consecutive party congresses held in the short period of 1990–1993, intended to help the party come to terms with the new multiparty framework and the market economy before the elections.⁸⁰

In 2006, the internal and external situation seemed much more favorable to the MPLA than ever before. It had reinforced State control and gained governing experience under the new multiparty framework. It had militarily defeated UNITA, which could no longer count on international backing as in 1992. Indeed UNITA was virtually as weak and funding dependent as the rest of the opposition. It had strengthened control over CSOs, tightened control over the State media and imposed severe restrictions on the private media. It had complete dominion of the new market economy. Furthermore, it had good political and economic relations with the US and the Western countries, which are now eager to please. And, finally, the MPLA was well advanced in its preparation for the elections.

A number of the interviewed opposition leaders and civil society activists seemed to realize this and, in order to overcome these constraints they stressed the need for a major coordination between internal and external international CSOs sharing the same principles and values, such as political democratization and respect for human rights. There seemed to be no illusion on the leverage that could eventually be exerted over the

⁸⁰ Third congress in 1990; second extraordinary congress in 1991; third extraordinary congress in May 1992.

Angolan regime by donors or International Governmental Organizations following what had happened during the ‘Angola-gate’ case, the Falcone episode and the change of attitude of the World Bank, the IMF and even the EU.⁸¹

4.2 – A loss of parliamentary majority would institutionalise negotiation

The MPLA’s absolute majority in parliament allowed it to pass most of the laws unhindered, except for the Constitution, for which a two thirds majority was required. According to several opposition leaders and certain civil society activists, the MPLA’s loss of its parliamentary majority would institutionalise negotiation. This expectation arose from the constitutional discussion initiated after the 1994 Lusaka protocol.

The existing constitution was approved in 1991 and revised in 1992, prior to the elections mentioned above, but it was assumed at that time that a new constitution would be negotiated after the elections. The resumption of war in 1992 postponed the approval of a new constitution. Discussions were re-initiated after the signature of the Lusaka Protocol in 1994 but again suspended in late 1998 when war resumed.

During the period of 1997–1998, and in accordance with the Lusaka Protocol, UNITA deputies took their seats and, for the first time in Angola’s history, an effective multiparty political life started to emerge. In 1997 and 1998, the National Assembly was humming with political activity, broadcast live on national radio and television. Negotiations and alliances between parties were at the top of the agenda. The constitutional revision was the main concern. UNITA, FNLA and PRS had already agreed to cluster their votes — forming 1/3 of the total — in order to force the MPLA to negotiate. Discussion about what type of political and administrative model to choose for a future Angola captured the imagination of many Angolans.

Two models emerged from these debates.⁸² On the one hand, there was the MPLA project: a French-style, unicameral, semi-presidential system, with a weak Prime Minister and a central role for the President; some enhancement of provincial autonomy, with direct elections to regional structures, excepting provincial governors, who held the most powerful position within the provinces. On the other hand, there was the FNLA/UNITA/PRS project: greater provincial autonomy, effective decentralisation with provincial management of local resources, somewhere between regionalism and federalism, with all positions directly elected. The intention was obviously to enlarge autonomy in the core zones of these parties —FNLA in the North, UNITA in the central plateaux and PRS in the North-East.

At that time the second project seemed to be widely favoured; there was a broad consensus within opposition parties, private newspapers, international organisations, national and foreign NGOs and even some sectors of the MPLA. The idea was that

⁸¹ See my chapter on social issues in this volume; also Nuno Vidal, *Angola: Preconditions ...op. cit.*

⁸² In Nuno Vidal, ‘The genesis and development of the Angolan political and administrative system from 1975 to the present’, in Steve Kyle, *Intersections between Social Sciences* (Cornell: Institute for African Development of Cornell University, 2004), especially pp.12-14.

decentralisation could promote economic development outside the oil sector, allow political participation at grassroots level and defuse secessionism in provinces such as Cabinda and the Lundas. The MPLA appeared ready to make concessions.⁸³ Savimbi, then still alive, controlled large swathes of territory and therefore had immense leverage.

The suspension of the Lusaka protocol in late 1998, followed by the walkout of UNITA deputies from parliament and the resumption of the war, put an end to this process. After the death of Jonas Savimbi, the new constitutional project was negotiated bi-laterally between the MPLA and UNITA, under General Gato's leadership, and was approved in January 2003. This became known as the Alvalade agreement and, although it was presented as a new model, in fact it basically endorsed the original project of the winners of the civil war, the MPLA. According to the Alvalade model, the President enjoyed discretionary powers to appoint and dismiss the Prime Minister. The names of provincial governors, although recommended by the party with the largest share of the vote in the province, were chosen, appointed, nominated and dismissed by the President. The President also retained the power to dissolve the National Assembly.

However, soon after that, the new UNITA leader, Isaiás Samakuva, who took over from General Gato after a congress party vote in June 2003, expressed his concern with the agreement and tried to postpone constitutional approval of this law to the next legislature by allying UNITA with a coalition of smaller opposition parties. These parties were also against the Alvalade agreement because it approved a model they were against and also because the negotiation simply ignored them, taking advantage of a weak and defeated UNITA. In May 2004, all opposition parties withdrew from the constitutional commission that had been in charge of the final draft to be presented for approval at the National Assembly. The MPLA was accused of manipulating the commission and holding elections hostage to constitutional approval. In reality, the opposition believed that the MPLA would lose many parliamentary seats in the next election and that the new parliament would be more favorable to them.

The opposition demanded a date from the President for legislative and presidential elections, after consultation with members of the civil society and opposition political parties. They also asked for an electoral calendar with a clear outline of all steps to prepare the electoral process, with due respect for electoral law — electoral registration, monitoring, funding of political parties, electoral campaigns; and the remove of any linkage between elections and the approval of a new constitution.

This move coincided with the President's visit to the US, where President Bush raised the question of elections, which seems to have had a clear impact on the MPLA and the presidency. Returning home, Dos Santos called selected members of civil society organisations to see him on 28th July 2004 for bi-lateral meetings about the elections. COIEPA, ADRA and AJAPRAZ were consulted.⁸⁴ Four days later he called the Council

⁸³ At that time the author was in Angola conducting field research for his PhD thesis.

⁸⁴ The Inter Ecclesial Committee for Peace or COIEPA is an ecumenical organization relating Catholic and Protestant Churches created in 2000; ADRA is the Action for Rural Development and Environment, the

of the Republic and listened to the opposition parties represented there. In both meetings there was consensus in favour of elections in 2006.

After Dos Santos' meeting with civil society on 30th June, the MPLA's Political Bureau issued a statement saying that elections should take place before September 2006, and it dropped the link between elections and the approval of a new constitution. The opposition appeared to have made a compromise with the MPLA. The MPLA did not follow its usual procedure of ignoring opposition opinion and imposing laws for approval by its parliamentary majority at the National Assembly. This time there was negotiation and the main reason for this was the requirement of a two-third majority, which the MPLA did not have, for such a fundamental constitutional revision.

This example supports the argument of those who thought elections might provide an opening for a more effective multiparty system, especially if there was no majority party in parliament after the next elections and if electoral results were respected. The MPLA would have to negotiate constantly with the opposition, implementing the practice of democratic dialogue. Even considering the possibility of a coalition between parties after the election in order to reach a governing majority there would still be a need for greater political diversity and discussion within the government.

However, it was not in any way obvious that the MPLA's majority would be at risk. Unlike the opposition, the MPLA was advanced in its preparation for the elections and the internal and external contexts seemed now much more favourable than in 1992. Moreover, contrary to the suspicions of the opposition, the continuous postponement of the elections since 2004 by the MPLA might not have been related to the fear of losing its parliamentary majority but to a need for more time to prepare. At the top of the party and the presidency, there was a strong conviction that what happened in Mozambique in the second legislative elections and in South Africa with the ANC — a majority of two thirds in parliament — could now happen in Angola. The MPLA would then have absolute control over the legislative, especially in the long-awaited approval of a new constitution. The President's objective of going to elections with a clearly defined set of powers that would ensure his supremacy over the other State organs could still be achieved as long as legislative elections were separated from the presidential ones⁸⁵. Dos Santos' statements in 2006 seemed to support this argument on the electoral need for more time for rehabilitation of infrastructure.⁸⁶

4.3 - Decentralisation: participation, inclusion and non-oil development

biggest Angolan NGO; AJAPRAZ is the Association of Angolan Youth returned from Zambia and is commonly known as a government-friendly Angolan NGO. See my chapter on social issues in this volume.

⁸⁵ The intention of separating those two elections was publicly expressed by the President; see *Agence France Press* (November 11 and 12, 2004).

⁸⁶ (...) the party must encourage the government to conclude its rehabilitation program of primary road and rail links in 2007 so that participation in the next polls is considerable.(...)Speech of Eduardo dos Santos at the opening of the CC meeting on January 27th 2006; in *Jornal de Angola* (January 28th 2006); also broadcast on the BBC (January 28th 2006).

This argument was based on the idea that the extreme centralization characterizing the Angolan political and administrative system was a major obstacle to political participation, inclusion and development outside the oil sector. So far the decentralisation process has been very timid and it is in its early stages. It involves four main players: the government, the UNDP, the party, and the presidency.

At government level there are three ministries concerned: the Ministry of Territorial Administration (or MAT), involved in research, vocational training and co-operation with the UNDP; the Ministry of Finance, dealing with technical aspects related to fiscal and financial autonomy of provinces and municipalities; and the Ministry of Planning, indirectly involved in decentralisation through two projects, namely the *Fundo de Apoio Social* (or FAS), the Social Action Fund, and the *Programa de Apoio à Reabilitação* (or PAR), the Programme to Support Rehabilitation.

Apart from providing technical support to those three ministries, the UNDP also undertakes to facilitate the coordination between ongoing projects and lobbies for a more decisive political and legislative move towards the implementation of decentralisation. The party and the Presidency have monitored and controlled the whole process, researching and analysing similar cases in other countries such as Mozambique, whilst trying to adapt the process to their overall political strategy, bearing in mind parallel processes such as the approval of a new set of laws directly related to decentralisation, such as the Constitution, the Land Law and the Law on Territorial Organisation and Urbanisation.

The reasons behind the UNDP involvement are clear: it believes that decentralisation might bring about political inclusiveness and development. However, the motives behind the government involvement with decentralisation were not. Opinions were not consensual: some argued that the government understood the usefulness of decentralisation, as it helped solve local development problems and could also defuse secessionist feelings in provinces such as Cabinda and the Lundas; others said it could be part of a cynical plan to extend State control to municipalities and communes now that the administration was expanding throughout the whole territory. Although at this stage the whole process was essentially a plan still to be implemented, some useful conclusions can be drawn from the analysis of the regime's plans for decentralisation on the one hand and of the field experiences of PAR and FAS on the other.

4.3.1 - The party and presidency strategic views on decentralisation

In a speech on the occasion of the first National Meeting on Local Administration on August 30th 2004, President Dos Santos stated that the government planned a two-phase programme for local government: the first to reform the State administration and the second to create the conditions for institutionalising autonomous, local, power structures after the elections. The process had to be gradual and slow, and the reasons for that become obvious from the presidential speech, which explained that around fifty per cent

of the administrative capacity of the State was concentrated in just three of Angola's eighteen provinces: Luanda, Benguela and Huíla.⁸⁷

According to presidential advisors and senior party officials, before the creation of “autarchies” — the final step of the decentralisation process — it would be necessary to consolidate the State at local level. Deconcentration of competence and responsibilities would have to be gradual since Angola has 18 provinces, 163 municipalities and 532 communes, all in a sparsely populated territory. The ‘autarchic system’ would start with pilot projects that expand gradually, according to specific needs and demands. Mozambique was the model to be followed. Pilot areas would be started in Luanda, Cabinda, Huambo and Lundas. The system of ‘autarchies’ would be implemented in parallel with the existing system of provinces, municipalities and communes. Contrary to the existing administrative system, the new one would not be hierarchically rigid: “autarchies” would all have equal status within the province, with autonomy in relation to each other and in relation to the centre.

This argument in favour of the creation of “autarchies” was that it would help solve two types of political problems: secessionist tendencies such as those of Cabinda, and the political struggle at the centre, related to the management of resources. According to the plan for decentralisation, ‘autarchies’ would have access to the management of important resources, dealing directly with investors for local development projects, and being able to retain local taxes and managing funds allocated directly by the national budget. Expanding economic activities would mean higher tax revenues for the ‘autarchy’. Therefore, as soon as ‘autarchies’ start to manage increasing revenues, they would reduce the political struggle at the centre related to the competition for the management of resources.

According to these views, decentralisation was needed to dilute secessionist feelings and lessen the political struggle over public resources. Coincidentally or not, when looking at the chosen pilot areas where the decentralisation process is supposed to start — Luanda, Huambo, Cabinda and Lundas — it becomes clear that these are the most problematic electoral areas for the MPLA. Cabinda and Lundas are known for their rejection of MPLA's power on the grounds that it plunders their natural wealth in oil and diamonds, respectively. Huambo is the historical stronghold of UNITA; and Luanda has growing popular discontent, mainly in its shanty towns, due to the harsh living conditions.

Such arguments were clearly patrimonial in nature and it is in no way clear that decentralisation — with or without elections — can bring non-oil development, political inclusion and participation. In several other cases across Africa, such decentralisation merely replicated patrimonialism at a regional level, sometimes degenerating into warlordism, as a means of taking advantage of regional resources.⁸⁸ There simply was no

⁸⁷ Of this total, 79% of human resources are concentrated at provincial level, with 19% at municipal level and just 1% at communal level. In addition, only 3% of the administrators had received higher education and, of these, 97% were concentrated at the provincial level; see Speech of the President of the Republic to the First National Meeting on Local Administration (Luanda, August 30th 2004).

⁸⁸ William Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States* (London: Lynne Rienner, 1998).

guarantee that a slow and gradual process as intended by the MPLA would help to avoid such problems by enabling the government to manage the transition carefully and to assess the results of pilot projects on an ongoing basis.

Nevertheless, it was stressed that an effective implementation of decentralisation required the approval of a new Constitution, which should include the political programme for decentralisation. Local elections were only expected to take place at least one year after the legislatives, but with the stated intention of having presidential elections one year after legislatives, no one knew when local elections would take place.

4.3.2 - Decentralisation experiences in the field — PAR and FAS

Two projects of the ministry of planning have been dealing with the decentralisation issue in very practical terms. Although these programmes were basically concerned with building and the rehabilitation of social and economic infrastructure, they became indirectly related to decentralisation due to the operating structures in the field. These experiences have been used to argue in favour of decentralisation and seen as a first good example that such reform could bring change.

The *Programa de Apoio à Reabilitação* (Rehabilitation Support Programme), or PAR, is funded by the European Union and targets thirty-one municipalities in the four provinces of Huambo, Huíla, Benguela and Bié. In each province, municipal implementation is entrusted to national and international NGOs, which act as *Operadores de Referência Municipal* (Main Municipal Operators), or ORMs. Contracts with ORMs specified three main stages of action: between 2002 and 2003, the diagnosis of the municipality and its requirements; between 2003 and 2004, the design of a programme for the rehabilitation of the municipality, known as the *Programa de Reabilitação Municipal*, or PRM; and, finally, in 2005, the implementation of the programme as previously designed.

From the perspective of decentralisation, the main interest of PAR was its operating structure with its three types of organs, of which the third was completely new. The main decision-making organ of PAR is the provincial committee presided over by the provincial governor, including all ORM and supervising the implementation of the programme in the whole province. The municipal committee is the second body with decision-making powers on problems specific to the municipality, presided over by the municipal administrator and including the ORM along with the remaining members of the municipal administration. The third and most innovative organ was the Advisory Forum, intended to assist local administrations and ORMs and, above all, to make the implementation stage more participative. These Forums were to be created in each of the targeted provinces and municipalities; the *Quadros de Concertação Provincial*, or QCPs, and the *Quadros de Concertação Municipal*, or QCMs, were to be presided over by the provincial governor and the municipal administrator at the municipality level. They would also include other members of the administration, the ORM, national and international NGOs operating in the municipality, businesses, political parties and community representatives.

Although PAR is mainly a rehabilitation programme, its innovative structure at the level of advisory forums implied the strengthening of its institutional capabilities and effectively brought about pressure for decentralisation and democratisation of local politics. The direct involvement of national and international NGOs in ORM resulted in additional pressure for decentralisation. The dynamics created by PAR, it was argued, buttressed decentralisation. However, funding for the third stage and its effective implementation of rehabilitation programmes was halted by the European Union. This premature termination has frustrated expectations for rehabilitation projects, and has wasted resources and efforts spent in drawing up diagnostic studies and programme outlines. The whole project only made sense with the implementation of this third phase and the advisory forums are bound to disappear as soon as the project ends.⁸⁹

The *Fundo de Apoio Social* (Social Action Fund), or FAS, is an autonomous programme of the Ministry of Planning, financed by the World Bank and operating directly in the municipalities. The programme is now in its third stage, or FAS III, and has two main components, not much different from those of PAR: community development, aimed at building and restoring social and economic infrastructure; and municipal development, aimed at assisting municipal governments with capacity development and financial resources for the provision of social and economic services to communities. Like PAR, it also comprises an advisory body to the municipal administration, namely the *Conselho de Concertação*, or Consultative Forum, which includes representatives from communities and civil society.

Again, as for the PAR, the dynamics set in motion by FAS seem to have strengthened the demand for effective decentralisation insofar as it builds capacity and accountability mechanisms in local government, communities and civil society. Although there is no funding problem, contrary to PAR, the programme itself acknowledges the limitations of the role of social funds in the decentralisation process. According to a project appraisal document for FAS III, without the actual institutional and fiscal devolution of authority and resources to local levels, the efforts of FAS will not be sustainable in the long term. At some point, local government will need to take over.⁹⁰

Once again there is a major problem with the lack of legislation for the consultative forums; this is a central concern of FAS, which has been pressuring for new legislation within the recently created governmental 'Informal Group on Decentralisation', coordinated by the Ministry of Territorial Administration and grouping several players involved with the decentralisation issue, such as the Ministry of Planning,

⁸⁹ It must also be stressed that the Advisory Forums did not exist in all four provinces: Huambo province did not have such a Forum although there was one in the municipality of Bailundo; the forum existed in the province of Huíla, and in Benguela, but not in Bié. The explanation for this variability has to do with the governor's personal attitude towards the programme and its structures, considering they do not have legal existence. See Decree-law no. 27/00, *DR*, I, 20 (May 19, 2000).

⁹⁰ World Bank, *Project Appraisal Document on a Proposed Credit for the Third Social Action Fund Project, FAS III* (World Bank report n°25671-ANG, June 27, 2003), pp.10–20; for the characterization of FAS, see also *Avaliação Participativa de Beneficiários* (Luanda: FAS, Novembro 2003); *Relatório Anual de Actividades* (Luanda: FAS, 2004); *Relatório Final de Actividades FAS III* (Luanda: FAS, 2004).

the Ministry of Finance, the UNDP, EU, USAID, GTZ (German co-operation) and FAS, among several others.

When taking into account both programmes— PAR and FAS — it is necessary to remain realistic about this indirect approach to decentralisation. After all, these experiences are still dependent on external funding and on the approval of a government programme of national decentralisation, which would ensure the mechanisms for an effective transfer of decision-making and financial autonomy to local levels. Whether from the analysis of the government perspective on decentralisation, or from the programmes running in the field, it is in no way clear that decentralisation *per se* will bring about inclusion, participation and development beyond the oil sector. Taking into account other African experiences, the conclusion remains the same.⁹¹

In Angola, as in many other African countries, there seem to be two different perspectives on decentralisation. On the one hand, there is the *reformist* view of the donor community and NGOs — both national and international — who see decentralisation as a dynamic process stimulating citizenship, participation, inclusion and development. On the other hand, there is a *conservative* position, whereby decentralisation serves the political and economic interest of the centre, being designed, implemented and controlled at all levels by the central power – a centralised approach to decentralisation, as it were.⁹² The most recent statements by the Head of State on decentralisation do seem to support this second position, once again confusing State and party structures and functions. Eduardo dos Santos said as much in one of his speeches.⁹³

CONCLUSION

⁹¹ See among several other evaluations on decentralisation programmes throughout the eighties, J. Wunsch, “Institutional analysis and decentralisation: developing an analytical framework for effective Third World administrative reform”, in *Public Administration and Development*, 11, 1991, p.433; Dennis Rondinelli & S. Schema, *Decentralisation in developing countries: a review of recent experience*, (Washington DC: The World Bank, 1984).

⁹² For a theoretical discussion on different decentralisation perspectives see among others, John Aye, “The measurement of decentralisation: the Ghanaian experience, 1988-92”, in *African Affairs*, 95, 1996, pp. 31-50; Amnisur Rahman, *People's self-development* (London: Zed Books, 1993).

⁹³ “The MPLA needs dynamic and focused managing bodies in all its echelons that are dedicated, with militant and mission spirit, to solve problems, to the political and civic education of all citizens and to the organization of community life. Since national independence was proclaimed, we have organized the management system in both the party and the State, from top to bottom. The war did not allow us to conveniently organize our grassroots structure, that is, the villages, the communes, wards, and the rural and urban municipalities. Thus we have two courses of action to proceed. The first is to continue with the studies and reflection under way in the context of de-concentrating and decentralizing administration based on the organizational and functional model of administration in the municipalities and communes in rural and urban areas. The second is to reconcile and overhaul the party chain of management from top to bottom so as to bring about renewal to the managing bodies at a commune and municipal level in terms of the statutes. In this context members to be chosen or elected for, need good political and technical training. Having established this management chain, we need to make perfect our system of information that analyses and handles data on the reality in the provinces and respective municipalities in order to improve our ability to be prepared and to respond.” Speech of Eduardo dos Santos at the opening of the Central Committee meeting on January 27th 2006, in *Jornal de Angola* (January 28th, 2006); also broadcast on the BBC on the same day.

Despite the new multiparty framework, the Angolan political system retained its basic characteristics as constructed after independence and throughout the eighties. The President and the top party echelons were still in control of the State and its resources — especially the revenues from the oil and diamond sectors, which were still used to maintain the political and economic hegemony of the mainly urban elites in power according to a patrimonial logic. Juxtaposition of presidential, party, State and governmental structures continued, as did the blurring between the private and public spheres. Political power was still concentrated and the administrative system still centralized, presided over by an overstuffed bureaucracy inherited from the colonial period and from the Marxist model of State organisation — the so-called democratic centralism. There was still a deep interpenetration between the judicial, legislative and executive systems, with tight political control over the judiciary. The State security apparatus remained effective, under close presidential and party guidance. The lack of political participation from the majority of the population persisted, with a remarkable distance between rulers and ruled. This may explain the recent forecasts on the increase in the abstention rates and in the number of Angolans who believe elections will not bring about change.⁹⁴

Opposition political parties were weak and faced severe constraints such as the lack of funds, cadres and organizational capacity, along with an inability to mobilize the electorate. They and the CSOs also suffered from the widespread culture of fear and intimidation. The State media was tightly controlled and manipulated, and there were numerous restrictions on the private media. Despite all these obstacles, most of the opposition parties and some CSOs continued to think that elections have had the potential to bring about change, especially if International Civil Society Organizations link up with their Angolan counterparts to monitor the polls and push for the reinforcement of transparent and democratic procedures and mechanisms.

However it was not at all clear how such expectation could be fulfilled. Faced with the repeated adjournment of elections and serious problems with the electoral process — among others, the debate about the responsibilities given to executive electoral commissions and the unbalanced composition of the National Electoral Commission —, International CSOs inside and outside of Angola remained relatively silent. This lack of reaction seemed to confirm the suspicion that outside attitudes were conditioned by the international economic standing of Angola. So-called international activists of development, civil society, Human Rights and others, did not seem willing to risk their careers and positions in Angola, having clearly understood the politically acceptable limits of their activity.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ See Report, *Resultados do Inquérito de Opinião 'Percepções dos Angolanos em relação às próximas eleições'* (Luanda: International Republican Institute, 2003).

⁹⁵ According to these terms, the main drive for change would have to come from within; but, as stressed by a minority of Angolan intellectuals, African opposition parties in general and CSOs in particular must stop their customary tendency of looking abroad and over-emphasizing the role of external agents, whilst disregarding internal discontentment and populations at large as the main source for social and political change. According to this argument, this is exactly what has been happening in Angola since 2002, after the death of Savimbi, and in Zimbabwe, after the 2001 election fraud, with opposition parties and CSOs expecting the international community, through some kind of task force, to lead the demands for change

Finally, it is important to remember that multiparty politics do not necessarily or automatically mean democracy. In Latin America, Asia and Southern Europe, where regular multiparty elections are held, those political systems that stem from patrimonialism show that the participation of the people remains fragmented, personalised and tends towards a form of *status quo*. In such contexts it can be argued that patrimonialism has an inhibiting effect on the emergence of democratic procedures.⁹⁶

and to exert pressure for the reinforcement of civil as well as Human Rights. This meaning can be found in the article by Rafael Marques, 'Os povos da linha da frente,' in *Semanário A capital* (July 16th, 2005).

⁹⁶ For a comprehensive discussion of this subject see Luis Roniger & Ayse Gunes-Ayata, *Democracy, Clientelism and Civil Society* (London: Lynne Rienner, 1994), chapter 2; see also Judith Chubb, *Patronage, Power and Poverty in Southern Italy* (Cambridge: CUP, 1982); Nuno Vidal, 'Modern and Post-Modern Patrimonialism', in Malyn Newitt with Patrick Chabal & Norris MacQueen, *Community & the State in Lusophone Africa* (London: King's College Press, 2003), pp. 1-14.
