

Angola: Preconditions for Elections

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INTRODUCTION

After the death of Savimbi and the signature of the Luena peace memorandum (April 2002), the Angolan transition to a multiparty system was supposed to resume. The transition process started in 1990/92 but was more or less suspended and held hostage of the civil war, restarted right after the first multiparty elections of 1992. Several restrictions to the proper functioning of a multiparty system were maintained throughout the nineties, especially at the level of civil and political rights. With the end of the war many hoped for the rapid, broad and effective opening up of space for political opposition, for an emerging civil society and for a steep transformation of the Angolan political system.

However, almost four years after the Luena memorandum, except for freedom of movement across most of Angola (which is extremely important for Angolans but insufficient in itself), there are not too many substantial signs of the political peace dividend, be it at the level of opposition political parties or civil society organizations.

The MPLA and the Presidency are still in control of the State and its resources (especially oil and diamond revenues), which are still used to achieve political and economic hegemony of the elites in power in a patrimonial/clientelistic way. State, party, governmental and presidential structures remain blurred. Political power is still concentrated and the administrative system centralized. There is still a deep interpenetration between the judicial, legislative and executive systems with tight political control of the judicial. The state security apparatus remains effective, the State media is tightly controlled and manipulated and there are several direct and indirect restrictions to the private media. Civil Society Organizations remain weak, dependent on foreign support, lacking the means and capacity to affirm themselves and their agendas. Opposition political parties face severe constraints such as the lack of funds, cadres, structural organization, planning, programming and above all the capacity to mobilize the electorate and represent its needs. The lack of political participation from the majority of the population persists, with a remarkable distance between rulers and ruled.

Constructed over two presidential administrations during the so-called socialist period (second half of seventies and throughout the eighties), the main characteristics of the Angolan political system survived the transition to a multiparty system.

This report is divided in four parts: the first deals with the construction of the main characteristics of the Angolan political system; the second analyses the formal transition process to a multiparty system; the third focuses on the constraints created by the party in power to limit the political and civil space for opposition parties and Civil Society Organizations; the last part discusses the potential for change of the forthcoming electoral process.

1 – THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE ANGOLAN POST-COLONIAL POLITICAL SYSTEM: 1975-1990

Like in so many other African parties, the post-colonial Angolan political system clearly assumed a neo-patrimonial character. The State and its resources were used from the start by the elites in power (at the core of the MPLA) to achieve political and economic hegemony. A distributive scheme of privileges and benefits operated through the allocation of party, governmental and other public offices, blurring the distinction between public and private dimensions. The juxtaposition of Party and State structures and the political and economic centralisation typical of a Marxist model suited the needs of a patrimonial distributive operation.

Post-independence Angolan patrimonialism started off by being partisan in nature (during Neto's administration), soon to become presidential. At first (second half of the seventies) 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 part of the middle echelons of the party lost a good part of their benefits. The majority of the population outside the party fought to establish distributive links with the higher levels of the patrimonial pyramid, usually appealing to primary solidarities such as family, region, or even ethno-linguistic bonds, which contributed to the fragmentation of the social tissue and did not improve their condition. The unbalance between rulers and ruled in the access to resources was gradually aggravated. Angolan patrimonialism became increasingly 'elitist' at the same time as it became presidentialist (mainly during Dos Santos administration in mid eighties).

The political and economic system became extremely concentrated at the top, in the hands of a few (the President and a restricted clique) and virtually excluded the majority of the population from any effective political or economic participation; politically they had no votes to exchange for benefits, economically they were not a source of income. The enclave nature of the main source of revenue - oil - facilitated this phenomenon, allowing the ruling elites to ignore practices of surplus extraction from the productive effort of the general population. State services such as public administration, social security, health and education, gradually collapsed.

Within such context, with no freedom of expression, civil society or legal opposition allowed, inefficiency and corruption thrived. The increasing intensity of the war in the 1980s reinforced the characteristics of the whole system: served as a justification (sometimes excuse) for the decline of redistribution and poor State delivery of services; justified a strong internal state security apparatus and authoritarianism; supported the need for political control and unified command, therefore supporting centralization and power concentration; disrupted internal production and increased economic dependency on oil revenues; intensified social fragmentation¹.

¹ Vidal, Nuno, '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.

The phenomenon of steeper centralisation and 'elitism' began with the first president, Agostinho Neto and was later developed to an extreme by Dos Santos. As soon as 1976 Neto progressively started to absorb powers of the Prime minister and reinforced his authority over provincial commissioners (current provincial governors), assuming as the head of government in August 1977 and abolishing the position of prime minister and vice-prime minister in December 1978.² Although indirectly, the process of centralisation and 'elitism' benefited from an attempted coup occurred in May 1977 led by Nito Alves; diagnosed as a problem of internal discipline and power dispersal ended up justifying the increased presidential powers, a fearful State security, a rectification movement which drastically reduced party membership and a fierce political control over the judicial system which became divided in two, a civil and a military branch with an increasing supremacy of the military over the civil – all characteristics that became central to the Angolan political system and survived till nowadays, as we will see.

By the time Eduardo dos Santos assumed the presidency (September 1979) the MPLA and its regime had clearly assumed an authoritarian and much feared character. During the Marxist phase of Dos Santos' administration (up to 1987), authoritarianism, rectification principles (i.e. restricted party membership) and political/military control of the judicial system were all maintained. The process of political and administrative centralization was incremented to an extreme.

The President was constitutionally consecrated President of the People's Assembly in August 1980 and was empowered to control and revoke all executive and legislative acts of the new organisation, be it at the central or provincial level. In practice, the People's Assembly became reduced to a chamber for the ratification of the President's decisions (the situation is not much different nowadays as we will see below).

With regards to the party, in 1980 Dos Santos began to isolate in the presidency certain areas that were previously under party control, namely foreign economic affairs, whereby the President's Cabinet became entrusted with the possibility of doing business contacts with public or private foreign entities. The President's intention to dominate the State's business affairs with private and public entities abroad was beginning to appear, allowing him to have autonomous control over the external sources of income – oil revenues —, a problem that only came to the public discussion in late nineties but started in 1980.³

The President gradually deprived the government and Party structures of effective executive power, relying such powers in subsidiary organisations more dependant on the President, 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, thus creating a shadow government at the presidency. These institutions comprised mainly young people, namely the post-27th May generation, with a good technical preparation, coming from the faculties of Engineering, Law and Economy; they were those who had

² Vidal, Nuno, 'The genesis and development of the Angolan political and administrative system from 1975 to the present', in Kyle, Steve (org.) *Intersections between social sciences* (Cornell NY: Institute for African Development of Cornell University, 2004) pp. 1-16.

³ Forthcoming Vidal, Nuno, "Multipartidarismo em Angola", in Vidal, Nuno & Pinto de Andrade, Justino, *O processo de transição para o multipartidarismo em Angola* (Lisbon: Firmamento, 2006).

been purged and rectified by previous policies of cadres, they became submissive and subservient to the President to whom they owed their social, professional and (above all) economic advancement. Insofar as the access to the President became ever more restricted and its subsidiary organizations ever more powerful, these young technicians acquired a significant power acting as some kind of gatekeepers of the presidency, used nowadays by western diplomats to transmit information to the president.

The General Procurator of the Republic was made a direct subordinate of the President of the Republic and the military judicial tribunals got enlarged competences clearly above the civil tribunals but under tighter presidential control.

On the second half of the eighties the regime reached the peak of power concentration and administrative centralization; run by President Eduardo dos Santos, exerting in full his functions as President of the Party, Head of State, Head of Government and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. Nevertheless, it would be exaggerated to depict President dos Santos as having established a personal dictatorship during this period. Dos Santos and other MPLA leaders had to play complex games of consensus politics, alliance building and patronage within the party.

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 to the Angolan balance of payments. Together with the USSR decreasing capacity to continue to support the Angolan war effort, these problems opened the way to economic and political changes from 1987 onwards. By then the Economic and Financial Clean-up Programme introduced timid market reforms, which represented the prelude of the transition process to a market economy and a multiparty system⁴.

⁴ On these issues see Ferreira, Manuel Ennes, 'A política de recuperação económica na República Popular de Angola', in *Política Internacional*, 1, I (1990), pp.107–132; Ferreira, Manuel Ennes, 'La reconversion économique de la nomenclature pétrolière', in *Politique Africaine*, 57 (1995), pp.11–26.

2 – THE TRANSITION TO A MULTIPARTY SYSTEM

Officially the Socialist model lasted until the MPLA III Party Congress of December 1990, but by 1987 Socialism was already in gradual decline. Entailed negotiations with South Africa, the US and Cuba led to the withdrawal of Cuban troops, to Namibia's independence and paved the way to the 1991 Bicesse peace agreement between the MPLA and UNITA and the 1992 multiparty elections – the first ever in Angola.

A new constitutional revision law in 1991 (law 12/91), simply approved the basic principles of a multiparty democracy, defining Angola as a democratic state based on the rule of law⁵.

The new legal framework opened the space for the emergence of opposition political parties and so-called civil society organisations - church organisations, private media, independent labour and professional unions and NGOs. Government radio and television became a bit more pluralist and a wave of strikes took place in 1991/92.

Within such climate, having to prepare itself for the first elections ever, the President realised the need to rehabilitate the party machine not only in terms of effective power but also in terms of its base structures that had been forgotten and marginalized over the years. The party was effectively revived, base structures and hierarchical mechanisms were rehabilitated through a major movement of re-organization. According to the III MPLA extraordinary congress of May 1992, it was now time to re-unite the big family of the party, i.e. all those who considered themselves within the party's sociological and political area even though distanced from the party militancy. There was a large distribution of material benefits and traditional authorities were politically recovered. Party membership was enlarged from 65 362 members in 1990 to 544 639 by the end of 1992⁶, and a significant amount of funds became available to party activities and to a professionally (Brazilian) managed electoral campaign. A strong electoral dynamic of victory progressively emerged within the MPLA ranks, significantly helped by UNITA's aggressive, bellicose, *revanchiste* and frustrated electoral discourse⁷, which effectively represented the mobile to gather in the MPLA all those who feared UNITA's day after.

In Angola's first nationwide multiparty elections ever, a turn out of more than 91 percent (4.4 million) of registered voters, gave President Dos Santos (MPLA candidate) 49.57 per cent of the vote against 40.07 per cent for Savimbi and the legislatives gave UNITA 34.10 per cent of the vote against 53.74 per cent for the MPLA. Elections were

⁵ Constitutional revisions changing the constitution to a new political and economic framework: Law 12/91, *DR*, I, 19 (6 May 1991) and also Law 23/92, *DR*, I, 38 (16 September 1992).

⁶ See *Relatório do Comité Central ao IV Congresso do MPLA – Firme, rumo ao século XXI* (Luanda: Publicações do MPLA, 1998), pp. 5-10.

⁷ For the characterization of such UNITA attitude towards the MPLA and all those who might be proximate of the MPLA see, Messiant, Christine, 'MPLA et UNITA, processus de paix et logique de guerre', in *Politique Africaine*, 57 (1995) pp.53-54; também Messiant, Christine, 'Angola les voies de l'ethnisation 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.

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 war⁸.

The international community was perceived by several observers inside and outside Angola to have let the country down. 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 the West in particular) after elections, in face of the illegality of UNITA's political claims⁹.

The political distension of the electoral period (1991-92) was reversed and power was once again concentrated and centralized in the presidency, especially at the level of arms deals financed with oil revenues. Despite the appointment of a new prime minister, Marcolino Moco (mainly nominated for political cosmetic reasons – coming from the same regional-ethnic background of Savimbi), the main political decisions were still made at the level of the Council of Ministers presided over by Dos Santos. Once again, distribution contracted at the top echelons of the party/State/presidency (these structures remained interpenetrated), at the same time as the majority of the population most affected by the war was left to the care of international organizations arriving en masse to the country with emergency programmes (*cf. infra*)¹⁰.

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 to restore Bicesse. A new period of political openness then started with the integration of some UNITA's military forces into the national armed forces (FAA) under the 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 which integrated elements of several opposition parties represented at the parliament.

Despite several small scale 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 under its domain. Insofar as both sides did not stop 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 negotiated with diamonds extracted from the areas under its control.

A resumed war immediately represented another contraction of the political and civil space opened during the 1994-1998 Lusaka protocol implementation period. As usual,

⁸ On the electoral results see *Marques, Sofia, Angola: Da Guerra à Democracia* (Luanda: Edipress, 1993).

⁹ See among others, Messiant, Christine, 'Angola: le retour à la guerre ou l'inavouable faillite d'une intervention internationale' in *L'Afrique Politique*, (1994) pp. 201–229.

¹⁰ See "Country profile Angola" in *An Assessment of Human Rights Defender initiatives in Southern Africa*, a report of the Netherlands Institute of Southern Africa – NiZA by Ahmed Motala, Nuno Vidal, Piers Pigou and Venitia Govender (Amsterdam: NiZA, June 2005), pp.47-62; also forthcoming, Vidal, Nuno, *Social sectors in Angola: from the regime's neglect to the involvement of transnational networks and the emergence of civil society organizations* (London: Hurst, 2006)

concentration of political 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 journalists¹¹. 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 divisionism weakened the opposition and strongly affected its ability to play a more active role during that period. The most affected party was obviously UNITA, whose deputies in Luanda were split between those who supported Savimbi and those who did not; among the later a clearly government-sponsored group of defectors was formed – UNITA-*Renovada* (Renewed UNITA) and took the parliamentary seats reserved to Savimbi's party but without any internal or external credibility.

On the MPLA's side the decision was made clear, this time no concessions would be allowed to internal or external pressures and a military solution was to be definitely sought. That aim was achieved with the progressive disruption of UNITA's military forces and the killing of Savimbi in February 2002. Despite several attempts of the international community and Angolan social movements for peace (e.g. the *pro pace movement*), the cease fire and the Memorandum of Luena were signed without any external or internal participation besides the victorious MPLA and the defeated UNITA. Such unbalanced relation of forces would from then on characterize the multiparty system in Angola.

¹¹ See *Angola, freedom of expression under threat*, Amnesty International Index AFR 12/016/1999 (1 November 1999); also Amnesty International, *Angola: unfair trial of Rafael Marques* (AI: March 31, 2000). URL:<http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/ENGAFR120161999>.

3 – MULTIPARTY SYSTEM VERSUS DEMOCRACY

With the Luena Memorandum and the resume of the Lusaka protocol, many expected the rapid opening up of space for civil society and political opposition as occurred after the Bicesse agreement and up to the elections (1991-1992) and again during the first stage of implementation of the Lusaka protocol (1994-1998). However, more than three years after the memorandum, there are no signs of an effective democratization of the Angolan political system. The presidency and the MPLA retain a tight control over the State, its institutions and resources, uses them to maintain its political and economic hegemony, significantly restricting the political and civil space (3.1). Opposition parties and civil society organizations face severe constraints, are fragile and dependent (3.2 & 3.3).

3.1 – The party in power: assuring the maintenance of the political and economic hegemony

Elected in 1992 for a four year period, the National Assembly remained in activity until now and 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 in 2005 and for now September 2006 is still a possible date, depending on the way the process of electoral registration evolves in the first semester of this year.

Contrary to the opposition, the MPLA is well advanced in its preparation for elections, with clear directives established at its V congress in 2003. Partially repeating the strategy used in 1992 (III extraordinary congress), the V congress appealed to the party militancy and general mobilization of all its members, recognizing and reaffirming the importance of traditional authorities and the need for a special care towards the rural areas and its populations, trying to revive the party's grass root support base¹². The 'usual' measures were then putted into practice to restructure the party and control all the variables as much as possible, taking advantage of the domain exerted over the State and its structures – the executive, the legislative and the judicial.

- **Increasing party membership:** a massive campaign was launched all over the country to recruit new members and party membership is now around 2 million from previous 544.639 in 1992, 998.199 in 1998 and 1.862.409 by the end of 2003¹³. MPLA membership has grown sharply since 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 has now 100.000 MPLA members. Membership in Luanda has sharply risen from 80.000 to around 1 million now.

¹² See *Relatório do Comité Central ao V Congresso Ordinário do MPLA* (Luanda : Publicações do MPLA, 2003); also the opening speech of Eduardo dos Santos, *Discurso pronunciado pelo camarada José Eduardo dos Santos, Presidente do MPLA, na abertura do V congresso ordinário do partido* (Luanda: Publicações do MPLA, Dezembro de 2003).

¹³ See *Relatório do Comité Central ao V Congresso Ordinário...op. cit.*, p.6.

- **Revitalizing and restructuring the party's base structures:** adapting itself to forthcoming elections and addressing new democratic rules, the party began transferring its cells in workplaces to neighbourhoods, where they have to be integrated in the previously existing network of neighbourhood cells, coordinated by Action Committees (1 per neighbourhood). New elections to these committees are supposed to occur and with the new elected members this transfer process will be completed. The process started in February 2004, but according to several opposition leaders, it is just a cosmetic operation that so far has left untouched the cells in workplaces at the same time as neighbourhood cells are being restructured and coordinated with its counter parts in workplaces.
- **Creating more transparent mechanisms for members' election at all levels of the hierarchy** from cells to the Central Committee, demanding more than one candidate to every position (the President was left out of this rule for now).
- **Rehabilitating infrastructure** – Resorting to new and more favorable oil-backed loans such as the one from China (2 billion US\$ in conditions compared to aid credit conceded by international financial institutions¹⁴) at the same time as oil revenues for 2005 were around \$6.88billion with prices at record highs¹⁵, the Party drew up long term economic development plans with a strategy than can be described as one of accelerated economic growth, with heavy investment on infrastructure and technology transfer. There are several plans to support a myriad of economic sectors and regional development clusters (e.g. large intensive agricultural projects in several regions with special emphasis on the central plateaux, a new oil refinery at 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). This development perspective was exclusively planned, debated and developed inside the MPLA. Besides investing in new or rehabilitated infrastructures, there is an appeal to militant/membership voluntary effort in service delivery to the community such as painting the neighbourhood schools or medical centres, neighbourhood cleaning, helping the government with the garbage problem, etc.
- **Charming traditional authorities:** seducing them with gifts and reverence in several government and/or party political activities (it is still

¹⁴ See the official characterization of these loans by the ministry of finance, available at [www.minfin.gv.ao/]; on these loans see also Miranda, Arlindo, *Angola 2003/2004, Waiting for Elections*, a report for the Michelsen Institute, 2004, p.18.

¹⁵ See Global Witness Press Release: Western banks to give huge new loan to Angola in further blow to transparency (September, 23, 2005).

hard to distinguish one from the other) all over the country in what is clearly perceived as pre-electoral campaign¹⁶.

- **Taking political advantage of the dominion over the legislative:** restructuring as much as possible the legal framework before elections to suit the political strategy of the party and the interests of those in power (e.g. the Land Law, Law on Territorial Organization and Urbanism and the Oil Law and if possible the Constitution¹⁷) – as occurred prior to the 1992 elections; assuring a smashing majority of members in the National Electoral Council (the institution responsible for the organization, direction and supervision of the whole electoral process), the same in the provincial electoral commissions, municipal and communal electoral cabinets¹⁸; illicitly regulating 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 Council, thus circumventing the electoral law and assuring an absolute control over the registration process to the party in government¹⁹.
- **Taking political advantage of the dominion over the executive:** having its ministers, provincial governors and administrators (who in several cases are also top members of the party at the national and regional level) inaugurating public infrastructure financed with public money in ceremonies and events where State and party symbols are oftenly mixed. Such events are manipulated by the state media in order to take as much political credit as possible to the party in power. This example leads us to the problem of party control (mainly through the executive – ministry of social communication and ministry of the interior) of the state media and the constraints imposed over the private media. Television is a monopoly of the State as well as national radio broadcast. The government has been able to block the only relatively independent radio station – the catholic church radio *Eclesia* – to broadcast outside Luanda and continues to intimidate journalists into

¹⁶ See references to such charming campaign on traditional authorities and comparison with the same procedures in 1992 in “seduções pré-campanha” *Jornal Agora* (10 December 2005), pp.8-9; See also the book resulting from the 2002 national meeting on traditional authorities promoted in Luanda, 20-22 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).

¹⁷ For now the opposition seem to have managed to postpone the approval of a new constitution to the new legislature.

¹⁸ The majority party and the President have directly or indirectly appointed 8 out of 11 members of the National Electoral Council, also assuring a majority in the provincial, municipal and communal electoral commissions; see electoral law, Law 6/05, *DR, I*, 95 (August 10, 2005), title IX.

¹⁹ Compare electoral law approved by the National Assembly, Law 6/05, *DR, I*, 95 (August 10, 2005), with Council of Ministers Decree 63/05, *DR, I*, 111 (September 16, 2005) and Council of Ministers Decree 62/05, *DR, I*, 107 (September 7, 2005).

practicing self-censorship while buying-off some and co-opting others to the state media²⁰.

- **Taking political advantage of the dominion over the judicial** – the President of the republic (and president of the MPLA) has significant appointive powers on the judicial area, including the power to appoint Supreme Court judges without confirmation by the National Assembly. There are several reports where political pressure from the presidency affected the outcome of cases and one of the most recent and clarifying example is the Supreme Court decision (July 22, 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. If considered, his administration since the first presidential elections in 1992 would count as three five-year presidential mandates (1992-2007) and therefore prevent him to run again. In power since 1979 and currently with 63 years old, Dos Santos might well be president for life.
- **Controlling the public and private sectors of the economy** – 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 early nineties. Privatization throughout the nineties was made in favour of the protégées of the regime and today the most profitable and politically crucial private sectors function in oligopoly and with an oligarchic character (e.g. banks, insurances, communications, diamonds), managed within the general distributive patrimonial/clientelistic logic. Directly or indirectly the party and the president have a tight grip over each and every significant business in the country be it public or private and it is simply not possible for a medium/large business to operate without the political consent of the regime.²¹

In sum, the President and the party in government are covering all odds in view of the forthcoming elections. Contrary to the suspicions of the opposition, the continuous postponement of the elections since 2004 by the MPLA might not be related to the fear of loosing its parliamentary majority, but with a need for more time to prepare a smashing victory. Within several top sectors of the party and the presidency there is a strong conviction that it is possible to happen in Angola what happened in Mozambique at the second legislative elections and with the ANC in South Africa – a majority of two

²⁰ On this issue see, Human Rights Watch report, *Unfinished democracy: media and political freedoms in Angola* (July 14, 2004); also news report, “Director of Government News Agency threatens to shoot journalist” in MISA – Media Institute of Southern Africa (February, 23, 2005), it is important to refer that the director mentioned, Miguel de Carvalho, was later appointed by the President to the position of vice-minister of social communication.

²¹ See Ferreira, Manuel Ennes, ‘La reconversion ...op. cit... pp.11–26; Aguilar, Renato, “Angola’s private sector : rents distribution and oligarchy”, in Karl Wohlmuth, Achim Gutowski, Tobias Knedlick, Mareike Meyn & Sunita Pitamber, *African Development Perspectives* (Germany: Lit Verlag, 2003); Aguilar, Renato, *Angola: getting off the hook*, a report for Sida (Gothenburg: Gothenburg University, 2005), especially pp. 13-18.

thirds at the parliament. The MPLA would then have an absolute control over the legislative, especially in those matters requiring 2/3 of the votes such as the long desired approval of a new constitution. After a tuff struggle with the opposition the President and the MPLA gave up the intention to approve a new constitution before elections²². The President wanted to go to elections with a clearly defined set of powers that assured him the maintenance of his supremacy over the other State organs. This objective however, was not dropped and might be achieved as long as legislatives occur one year before the presidential elections with a new constitution approved between the two plebiscites²³.

In view of a political strategy aiming for a smashing electoral victory, it makes all sense the intensive infrastructure rehabilitation programme developed by the party but executed by Chinese companies, which are cheaper and reliable, assuring that most of the credit lines will not be swallowed by the entrenched corruption schemes of the Angolan public and private sectors. However, it remains to be seen if the plan works out in practice. So far the existing information is that several of these Chinese companies had to associate with some Angolan companies (the usual beneficiaries of the regime) and might not be that easy to escape the common practices of business commissions, over pricing, etc²⁴, something that might endanger the programme of intensive inauguration of infrastructures due to 2006. Moreover, urbanization plans have resulted in forced (violent) evictions of thousands of families, spreading discontentment among a significant part of the urban population²⁵.

3.2 – Opposition political parties

Although there are 125 registered political parties in Angola, less than a quarter are operational. The MPLA holds an outright majority with 129 seats out of 220 at the National Assembly while UNITA holds 70 seats and other parties the remainder of the seats (PRS, 6; FNLA, 5; PLD, 3; PRD, 1, PAJOCA, 1; PDP-ANA, 1; PNDA, 1; FDA, 1; AD-Coligação, 1; PSD, 1).

Opposition parties are politically and institutionally fragile and face severe constraints. These constraints generically result from the manipulation of State structures, institutions and resources, made by the MPLA with the clear intention to preserve its power and limit the space for any opposition to develop, thus impeding a regular functioning of a multiparty system as explained below:

²² On the intricacies of this conflict see forthcoming Vidal, Nuno, “Multipartidarismo em Angola”, in Vidal, Nuno & Pinto de Andrade, Justino, *O processo de transição para o multipartidarismo em Angola* (Lisbon: Firmamento, 2006).

²³ The intention of separating those two elections was publicly expressed by the President, see *Agence France Press* (November 11 and 12, 2004).

²⁴ On these entrenched practices of commissioning in State businesses and appropriation of State funds the most clarifying and shocking explanation is the one provided by the Angolan ambassador in Brazil, Alberto Correia Neto, where he clearly stands for such practices as normal and legitimate procedures; *in O Globo* (21/11/05).

²⁵ A civil society community based organization - SOS Habitat - has been extremely active in the defense of those evicted, denouncing several abuses and demanding compensations and relocations. The author was able to attend one of its recent meetings with the community of Kilamba Kiayi I and II after a demolition process where 628 families were made homeless.

- **Opposition parties survive with severe financial difficulties.** Contrary to civil society organizations - CSO, opposition parties hardly access external funding and membership fees are merely symbolic (the equivalent to 1US\$/month) and even so most of the members usually lack the means to pay it. Those opposition parties represented in the parliament live essentially on funds coming out of the State budget (10 US\$ per vote obtained in the 1992 election), which works 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 (the majority situated within the \$100.000 and \$200.000 range)²⁶. Opposition parties without exception complain that this is not sufficient and is paid irregularly (sometimes even suspended) so as to disrupt their activities or apply pressure on them at key moments (such as during the recent constitutional deadlock, *cf. infra*). In the past the MPLA successfully divided the main opposition parties supporting internal factions, including UNITA, with – the so-called phenomenon of *Renovadas* (i.e. factions to supposedly renew the parties) – which greatly contributed to weaken the opposition.
- **In face of such financial restrictions it is extremely difficult for the opposition to expand activities outside provincial capital cities.** UNITA is the only opposition party with effective national presence outside provincial capital cities. Some parties are still struggling to get a representation in the capital city of Luanda (e.g. PDP-ANA and PAJOCA). The situation is much worse for parties without parliamentary representation, without access to state budget funds. An exception can be found in PADEPA, which has been more active than many parties inside parliament. In absolute contrast with this scenario is the MPLA, with an impressive collection of buildings widespread throughout the country, with a presence in each and every village of the country, without no financial difficulties whatsoever, having the largest State subsidy (circa \$21.5 million), having membership fees retained at source (salaries) by some state companies and also directly/indirectly controlling the most significant private companies²⁷.
- **Opposition political parties widely complain that there is little distinction between State and MPLA structures,** a confusion that serves the political purposes of the party in power helping it to keep its hegemony. As an example, some ministers are MPLA Central Committee members and several provincial governors are MPLA first provincial secretaries. The same happens with municipal and communal administrators and it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between their party and State activities insofar as party events mobilize State logistics and vice-versa. MPLA flags are everywhere in the provinces and are

²⁶ For the exact number of votes obtained by each party in the 1992 elections see, Marques, Sofia, *Angola.... op. cit.*, p. 43.

²⁷ Ferreira, Manuel Ennes, 'La reconversion ...op. cit., pp.11–26 ; also Aguilar, Renato, "Angola's private ...op. cit.;; Aguilar, Renato, *Angola: getting off...*op. cit., especially pp. 13-18.

very similar to the Republic flag. In many rural areas it is easier to find an MPLA flag than a Republic's flag.

- As previously mentioned the **Government of Unity and National Reconciliation** includes members of several opposition parties since 1997, nevertheless, several opposition leaders accuse the majority party of pre-empting the competences of every governmental position occupied by their representatives. According to these accusations, no matter the position attributed to the opposition (minister, vice-minister, governor, administrator, etc.), each and every politically sensitive competence is immediately transferred to the nearest position occupied by an MPLA member (e.g, if the governor is from UNITA, the effective powers such as budget management rests with a vice-governor representing the MPLA). If that is so, the obvious question is why the opposition remain in such government? In general, reasons for remaining have to do with the fear of retaliations from the majority party in terms of cancellation of State budget funds and the loss of several other benefits that are usually related to the positions occupied within the governmental structures; there is also the difficulty to obtain a consensus intra and inter opposition parties in favour of such move that could be (internally and externally) accused of radical, anti-institutions and anti-reconciliation. Without much success, UNITA's leader, Isaias Samakuva, has been trying to replace his government representatives occupying such positions since the days of UNITA-Renovada (MPLA sponsored).
- **Opposition parties find it difficult to access the State media** (national radio, television and daily newspaper), experience censorship through manipulated reporting and editorial alignment of news that almost ignores them while giving full and premium coverage (of a clear propaganda type) to the MPLA activities and its government (even the most irrelevant). The government clearly uses its control of the media to influence local and international public opinion. In some provinces, opposition parties occasionally take out commercial radio advertisements to get publicity, but this represents an enormous financial effort in face of party's budget difficulties. They are also severely affected by the fact that private media organizations routinely suffer pressures and inducements from the ruling structures and are basically restricted to Luanda. Private weekly newspapers, in the low thousands, only circulate in Luanda and the same happens with the only politically independent radio station – Church-run Radio Ecclesia –unable to get the government's authorization to broadcast in the provinces.
- Although decreasing, **there are still reports of authoritarianism and political intolerance** (especially in the provinces), such as beatings, threats, burning of opposition delegations in rural areas (e.g. Luwemba in July 2004; Mavinga in March 2005). Although direct intimidation of opposition officials is rare in Luanda, it is more common in the

provinces where political openness and tolerance is very much dependent on the personality and willingness of provincial governors. The MPLA still has an active para-military militia in the neighbourhoods (Organization of Civil Defence) funded by the State budget; still under investigation is the murder of the opposition leader M'Fulupinga Landu Victor, on the 2nd July 2004, which might have been just an ordinary crime, but effectively spread the fear among the opposition and civil society organizations. It is also important to stress that members of M'Fulupinga's party are particularly persecuted in the North and East of the country, pejoratively designated as "Bakongo returnees" (they or their parents returned from Zaire to where they emigrated in the sixties) and discriminated outside their provinces of origin (Uíge and Zaire)²⁸; they usually complaint of several abuses committed by the police such as beatings, extortion, illegal arrests, confiscation of documents, denied access to formal labour market, etc.²⁹.

- The Angolan **judicial system lacks the means, experience, training, and political backing to affirm its independence towards the MPLA and the president**. Even the head of the lawyers' association, Raúl Araújo declared that judges should be held accountable and be exonerated in face of serious mistakes and retire at a certain age and not be kept in their positions until their death, implicitly recognizing that meritocracy is not the main criterion to occupy such positions³⁰. Moreover, there is still a dual and confused judicial system – civil and military³¹ –, which contributes to the maintenance of an authoritarian and much feared character of justice in politically sensitive issues (keeping alive the memory of the post-27th May bloody purge).
- Several opposition leaders expressed their **disappointment with the international community, especially the IMF and the World Bank** for dropping the pressure that was being exerted over the government on the need for 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 relaxed their attitude³².

²⁸ On the issue of 'Bakongos returnees', see Mabeko-Tali, Jean-Michel, *Les Bakongo et la Transition Démocratique en Angola: Démocratie ou Représentation Ethnico-Regionale?* (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique/CNRS, 1993), Rapport Scientifique de la Mission à Luanda; Groupe de Recherches 846 'Afrique Australe'; também Mabeko-Tali, Jean-Michel, 'La 'chasse aux Zairois' à Luanda', in *Politique Africaine*, 57 (1995) pp. 71–84.

²⁹ Complaints were presented to the author and sustained with several documents of judicial processes.

³⁰ In *Jornal de Angola* (28/9/04).

³¹ See Marques, Luís Paulo Monteiro, *Labirinto do sistema judicial angolano, notas para a sua compreensão* (Luanda: edição do autor, 2004), especially part II.

³² See *More than humanitarianism: a strategic US approach toward Africa*; a report of 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 Aguilar, Renato, *Angola: getting off ...op. cit.*, especially pp. 2,

- A strong criticism from the majority of the political opposition is directed to the way the **government/State/party capitalizes on the international community aid and funding**, trying to appear in the eyes of the population as the main responsible (or at least co-responsible) for infrastructure rehabilitation done by international and national NGOs with international funds.
- Just like in the old days of the one-party regime, **the State is still used as a mechanism for patronage**, feeding political clienteles and according to opposition leaders and supporters, the promotion to senior levels or access to State jobs is very much dependent on MPLA membership; the same is said to have happened at an academic level, whereby progress might be affected by individual's decisions whether or not to join the party in power. This procedure was extended to UNITA ex-combatants, who joined the MPLA in the number of 12 000 in 2004 alone³³. As previously mentioned, the MPLA recruitment campaign has become particularly aggressive since the V congress.

Probably one of the most illustrative examples on the level of entrenchment of political patronage within the party-state structures is the interview of the Angolan ambassador in Brazil, Alberto Correia Neto, assuming that part of Angolan State funds are out of the financial system and accepting as natural and normal practices of bribe (co-optation) of political opponents such as those happening within the alleged Brazilian corruption scheme of opposition parties (“mensalão”)³⁴.

As publicly stated by a member of the National Electoral Commission (indicated by UNITA),

*“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”*³⁵.

- **The major opposition party complains that the electoral process is already being manipulated and its legitimacy endangered** due to three main reasons: 1) the unbalanced composition of the National Electoral Commission violates the constitution, 2) the Council of Ministers creation (under Presidential orientation) of parallel structures such as the electoral “executive commissions’ with broad competences over the electoral registration violates the electoral law and the constitutive pact, 3) the Council of Ministers approval of the electoral registration programme goes against the electoral law and the law on electoral registration insofar as that is a competence of the National

13-18; also Reed, John, “Angola o capitalismo dos petrodiamantes” in *Courrier International* (Novembro 25, 2005), n.34, pp. 22-23.

³³ In *Jornal de Angola* 28/9/2004.

³⁴ In *O Globo* (21/11/05).

³⁵ Declarations of Cláudio Silva, member of the National Electoral Commission (proposed by UNITA), to the Voice Of America and BBC on the 12th October 2005, during a visit to Washington.

Electoral Commission³⁶. UNITA accuses the MPLA of using the State power to manipulate the electoral process and therefore elections can not be considered democratic, claiming for the immediate support of the international community to end such distortions, so that elections can be considered free and fair³⁷.

Captured within the above mentioned constraints, the opposition in general has its scarce energies and resources absorbed by its own internal problems or involved in legal-bureaucratic disputes with the MPLA, expressing a serious inability to mobilize the electorate with political programmes that represent the needs and wishes of the people. In the legal disputes with the MPLA it usually comes out losing, not only because the party in power holds the majority in the parliament and the majority in every parliamentary working commission, but also because it has more and better qualified cadres, is well financially sourced and better structured to prepare legal projects and argue in its favour. Moreover, among several of the less representative parties (less voted) we can also see the micro reproduction of the same patrimonial logic that dominates the regime, favouritism according to primary solidarities, clientelism, confusion between party and personal assets, etc.

Within such context it is not hard to understand why the National Assembly remains a rubber stamp institution for laws approved by the Council of Ministers presided over by the President³⁸.

3.3 – Civil Society Organizations³⁹

From colonial days to the present Angolans lived almost permanently under authoritarian rule. A long lasting civil war, an authoritarian one-party regime, an entrenched culture of fear, repression and intimidation and a political manipulation of the state-media and mass organizations, all hampered the emergence of an autonomous civil society.

In late eighties and early nineties, with the Angolan transition to a multi party system new legislation was approved consecrating the right to assembly and demonstration (law 16/91), the laws of association (law 14/91), freedom of the press (law 25/91), strike (law 23/91) and independent radio broadcasting (law 16/92). Preparing itself for

³⁶ Compare electoral law approved by the National Assembly, Law 6/05, *DR, I*, 95 (August 10, 2005), with Council of Ministers Decree 63/05, *DR, I*, 111 (September 16, 2005) and Council of Ministers Decree 62/05, *DR, I*, 107 (September 7, 2005).

³⁷ Statements and arguments produced by UNITA's secretary for information, Adalberto da Costa Júnior in a press conference under the title *Alert on the legitimacy and dangers of the electoral process* (Luanda: Hotel Trópico, December 7, 2005); the author was in this press conference.

³⁸ In the same sense see *Some transparency, no accountability, ...op. cit. ...*, pp. 76-77; also, Miranda, Arlindo, *Angola 2003/2004, ...op.cit....*, pp.25-26.

³⁹ Having referred the problems related to the media in two precedent sub-chapters and unable to enter into the specificity of all Angolan CSO (which I did in a previous report), this sub-chapter will focus on national NGO and related forms of association, church organizations and solidarity assistance that clearly dominate the civil society arena. See "Country profile Angola" in *An Assessment of Human Rights Defender initiatives in Southern Africa*, a report of the Netherlands Institute of Southern Africa – NiZA by Ahmed Motala, Nuno Vidal, Piers Pigou and Venitia Govender (Amsterdam: NiZA, June 2005), pp.47-62.

the first elections ever in Angola and facing strong international and domestic pressure, the MPLA had to allow some effective openness and a myriad of organizations within the civil society area emerged - private media, independent labor and professional unions, national NGOs and church organizations. International aid and development cooperation funds arrived *en masse* (from International Governmental Organizations – IGO, to international Non Governmental Organizations -NGO, churches, charitable institutions, solidarity assistance and so on).

Transnational networks and projects gathered expatriate activists, local communities and a marginalized Angolan intellectual elite, including some mid and high level cadres eager to work outside the regime's constraints. An operative articulation emerged between the new comers and all those internally committed to the emerging civil society organizations - CSO. The 'alliance' was beneficial to both; the newcomers needed local expertise and competence to help them with their projects' design, implementation and development and the local organizations needed foreign partners, whose support (financial, institutional and capacity building) was vital in their struggle for survival in a society smotheringly dominated and controlled in all sectors by an authoritarian party/State. The dynamic thus created fuelled an emerging Civil Society with an increasing commitment to poverty alleviation, the provision of social services and the respect for Human Rights⁴⁰.

Even though the regime had tried from the start to influence some of the national NGOs (infiltrating and controlling some of them, such as the Angolan Action for Development – AAD), it did not seem particularly concerned with the dynamics that might arise from the relationship between internal and external CSO because it was mainly focused in two other objectives.

- First, insofar as the war resumed right after elections and there was a need for a reinvestment in armament, the government became extremely committed to the objective of taking its previous strategy of relying on international aid up to the level of the absurd, discarding ever more social responsibilities. Beyond humanitarian aid and in face of the State's self-demise of service delivery to poor populations, IGOs, NGOs and Church Organizations became the main providers of social services in several provinces all over the country (healthcare, education, nutrition, sanitation, support to IDP and so on). This process took place despite the astonishing and continuous growth in annual oil revenues throughout the years – from US\$2 billions in 1987, to US\$3.5 billions in 1990, to US\$5.1 billions in 1996 and to US\$7 billions in 2000⁴¹.
- Second, the government was especially concerned with the supervision not only of the amounts of aid coming in, but also of its distribution inside the country and the definition of priority projects and geographic areas of intervention (e.g. favouring the areas under its control in detriment of those

⁴⁰ Forthcoming, Vidal, Nuno, *Social sectors in Angola: from the regime's neglect to the involvement of transnational networks and the emergence of civil society organizations* (London: Hurst, 2006).

⁴¹ In Hodges, Tony, *Angola from Afro-Stalinism to Petro-Diamond Capitalism* (London: James Currey, 2001), p.2.

controlled by UNITA). By then (early nineties) the focus was directed to the set up of mechanisms for the coordination and management of the international organisations' activities, both in the provinces through provincial governments and in Luanda through the Ministry of Social Assistance and Reintegration - MINARS and the Technical Unity for Coordination of Humanitarian Aid - UTCAH (initially in the direct dependence of the Council of Ministers and after that depending on MINARS).⁴² Insofar as the donor community preferred to channel aid through the UN, international and national NGOs, rather than providing bilateral aid directly to the government, those controlling mechanisms were extremely important to the government in order to keep some manipulative power on the significant resources coming in⁴³.

The State became minimally responsible for very little expenditure in social sectors and the role of international co-operation went from complementary to central. Being the main providers of social services, international organizations and CSO gained increased legitimacy to stand for human rights and to voice strong criticism in face of serious abuses and violations testified by them all over the country⁴⁴.

Such attitude made them at times politically inconvenient to the regime, which strategically reacted in the second half of the nineties with the investment in 'government friendly' CSO, funded with social bonus from oil companies and other multinationals and being favoured in their legal-bureaucratic relationships to the State and the government. These 'parallel' CSO had an easier and faster access to national and provincial government structures, to all kinds of government and State permits and an easier access to the public and private sectors of the economy. As previously mentioned the private sector became clearly dominated by the party in power and replicated the same political retributive logic of the whole system. This process started in 1996 with the creation of the Eduardo dos Santos Foundation – FESA and developed up to nowadays with an increasing number of organizations created by top officials of the regime or co-opted over the years⁴⁵.

While the government intensified its support to its own CSO, most of the other CSO experienced increasing difficulties in late nineties and early 2000s, not only because of constraints created by the regime, but also because of the strong dependence they developed. Born out of an extremely tight relationship with Western international organizations, the Angolan CSO became seriously dependent on foreign expertise, technical support and funding⁴⁶.

⁴² Now also articulated with the Ministry of Planning; not to be confused with UN UCAH (Humanitarian Assistance Co-ordination Unit, of the United Nations), later replaced by the UN OCHA (UN Organization for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs).

⁴³ See Vidal, Nuno, *Strategies of participatory development: the Project Kujje 91 in Malange/Angola* (Lisbon: ISCTE—Instituto Superior de Ciências do Trabalho e da Empresa, 1997), a Master's dissertation.

⁴⁴ See "Country profile Angola" in *An Assessment ...op. cit...pp. 47-62*

⁴⁵ For a more detailed description of these organizations see "Country profile Angola" in *An Assessment ...op. cit...pp. 47-62*.

⁴⁶ There are obviously a few exceptions to this general rule, see "Country profile Angola" in *An Assessment ...op. cit...pp. 47-62*.

Limited, fragmented, short-term and project-by-project driven involvement of donors and international organizations, along with competition for funds between CSO and preferential allocation of funds from each donor or group of donors and international organizations to their “favourite” national partners (according to several criteria), represented an handicap to a sound/endogenous and sustainable capacity building of national organizations. The same must be said to the cyclically changing development priorities of donors, usually moving from one fashionable area to the other without taking into consideration the specificity of each country and the dynamics already in place. The capacity building deficit was much more serious for those smaller national organizations that never managed to go beyond the status of “sub-contracted” by international NGOs to implement or co-implement small parts of bigger projects.

In these terms, Angolan CSO future development was conditioned from the start by two main factors: first, an adverse domestic context; second, an external dependency. Both significantly contributed to the main fragilities and weaknesses currently characterizing Angolan CSO and hampering its development:

- Deficit in long-term sustained networking capacity, at the national, regional, continental and international levels – short-term and project-by-project driven involvement of donors and international organizations, internal competition for funds and preferential relationships with external partners, fragmented more than unified the Angolan CSO;
- Deficit in the capacity to develop and sustain their own perspective, strategic policy orientation and agenda – technical and fund external dependency along with fragmentation leads them to have their agendas primarily determined by donors and foreign partners than by the needs of the communities they work with.

Such weaknesses and fragilities of Angolan CSO became all more visible and concerning as soon as external funds gradually contracted from 2000 onwards. Donor community became increasingly disgusted of the true role played by several international organizations in the social politics of Angola, namely taking over the social responsibilities of the State⁴⁷, while several international reports revealed schemes for the mismanagement of oil revenues and endemic corruption within the Angolan political system⁴⁸. To this context we must add the ridiculous amounts yearly allocated to the social sectors by Angola’s national budget⁴⁹.

⁴⁷ See the statement made by Jean Marc Perrin in Angola at the presentation of the Médecins Sans Frontières Report *Angola: as aparências de ‘normalização’ escondem graves cenas de guerra*, (Luanda: MSF, 9 November 2000), where he says that “it is not understandable how a country as rich as Angola, producing and selling oil and diamonds, with an estimated annual oil revenue of US\$7.000 million per year, can invest so little in areas such as health: ‘In our view, it is not normal that a humanitarian association such as MSF should provide absolutely everything that is required for the running of a hospital, be it in Kahala or in Kuíto. This does seem to be quite illogical. It would appear logical to us that complementary assistance be given to the Ministry of Health; in *Diário de Notícias* (12 November 2000); also *Público* (27 April 2000).

⁴⁸ For an in-depth approach on the scandals of gun-running, diamond trafficking and money-laundering in late 1990’s and early 2000s see: ‘A Crude Awakening: the role of the oil and banking industries in

With the end of the civil war, after the death of Jonas Savimbi and the signature of the Luena peace memorandum in 2002, many hoped for a government reinvestment in social areas⁵⁰. The much exhausted war argument could no longer be used to justify the non investment in those sectors. Moreover, oil production increased and was providing the government with an average income of 3 to 5 billion \$USD/year⁵¹.

Consequently, humanitarian aid substantially decreased and the much waited international donor conference kept being adjourned and conditioned to an agreement between the government and the IMF, which was supposed to set some rules and principles of accountability and transparency in public accounts⁵². Humanitarian assistance was halted in several regions (mainly in centre-north) no longer considered in need of such support and, collaterally and indirectly, several development projects implemented by national and international NGOs also suffered from this new attitude.

As a whole, this new posture was supposed to put some pressure on the Angolan government. However, contrary to any reasonable expectation, that did not happen, as the national budgets of the following years kept underscoring such needs⁵³. Resorting to the previously mentioned new and more favorable oil-backed loans such as the one from China, the party drew up economic development plans with heavy investment on infrastructure and technology transfer without paying the proper attention to more

Angola's civil war and the plunder of the state assets', a report by *Global Witness*, December 1999; also 'All the Presidents' men', a report by *Global Witness*, March 2002; also 'A Rough Trade: the role of Companies and Governments in the Angolan Conflict', a report by *Global Witness*, December 1998. Editions at [www.oneworld.org/globalwitness/].

⁴⁹ Angolan national budgets: in 2001 – education, 5.06%; health, 5.03%; social security, 3.95%; housing and community services, 3.77%; in 2002 - education, 5.19%; health, 4.57%; social security, 3.36%; housing and community services, 2,14%. Angolan State budgets available at [www.minfin.gv.ao/].

⁵⁰ At a time when an estimated three quarters of the country's 14 million people lived on less than a dollar a day and some 2 million were in danger of starvation *The Guardian* (7 February 2003).

⁵¹ From 2000 to 2003 Angola received an average of 3 to 5 billion dollars a year; see article 'Angola should be able to finance its own post war rebuilding' by Michael Dynes in *Times online* (24 February 2003).

⁵² For a summary of the relationship between the Angolan government and the IMF see *Some transparency, no accountability, the use of oil revenue in Angola and its impact on Human Rights*, a report from Human Rights Watch, January 2004, vol. 16, no. 1; this report also exposes the oil revenue and expenditure discrepancies in government accounts.

⁵³ Angolan national budgets: in 2003 – education, 6.24%; health, 5.82%; social security, 1.47%; housing and community services, 1,57%; in 2004 - education, 10.47%; health, 5.69%; social security, 4.30%; housing and community services, 3.07%; in 2005 - education, 7.14%; health, 4.97%; social security, 6.47%; housing and community services, 4.13%. It is also worth noting that a significant part of these amounts were spent on salaries and management activities. The relative increase in education spending in 2004 is deceiving: more than a half of the 6.4% allocated to education was spent in salaries and management (3.27%) and in 2004, of the 10,47%, allocated to education, 8.10% was spent on salaries and management. Angola is far below the 16.7% SADC countries average of national budget expenditures with education; Angolan State budgets available at [www.minfin.gv.ao/]. According to the World Bank, the composition of public spending in 2004 by function health an education expenditures as a percentage of GDP in Angola (less than 2% for health and less than 5% for education) are (with the exception of equatorial Guinea) amongst the lowest in the African context, "such composition of public spending is far below the country's needs in terms of infrastructure reconstruction and provision of essential services to the population and seems to reflect political choices still concerned with the prevalence of a wartime budget"; in World Bank report n. 29036-AO, *Angola public expenditure, management and financial accountability*, February, 16, 2005, p.i, also pp. 5-6.

immediate problems such as the extreme poverty affecting most of the Angolan population, the disruption of health and education systems and the poor indexes of human development in Angola⁵⁴.

Also as an attempt to push the Angolan government to become more directly involved with local communities and their needs in the new peace context, the UN OCHA was replaced by the UN Transitional Coordination Unit (depending on the UNDP) that was supposed to pass on the responsibilities for coordination to government institutions such as the UTCAH and the Ministry of Assistance and Social Reintegration (MINARS). Again, the results were not the expected and according to several interviewees the government became convinced that with such transfer of responsibilities it would finally be able to tighten the grip on NGO's funds and equipments and impose a more effective control on their activities in the field.

Accordingly, new NGO cadastre program began in 2005 and is being progressively extended to integrate in the short term all national and international NGOs; semester and annual reports on NGOs activities will be produced by UTCAH for the government based on pre-defined detailed enquiries that each NGO will have to reply specifying all its activities in the country, projects, funds, equipment, personnel, socio-economic impact, etc.; a new legalization process for all NGOs will follow shortly, conducted by the ministry of justice in a process closely advised by UTCAH on the basis of its reports and evaluation of each NGO. The ministry of justice will then proceed with the registration approval or denial. At the presentation of the first annual report concerning 2005, the UTCAH director clearly stated that a favorable opinion of his institution on a specific NGO would also depend on the level of project partnership established with government structures⁵⁵.

In the end, donor community's new attitude had no impact whatsoever on government social policy and coincidentally or not, previous accusations of "an almost criminal neglect of the government towards its own people" from international organizations⁵⁶, immediately stopped as soon as the international strategic importance of Angola changed – oil prices reached record highs, competition to secure future oil supplies increased worldwide and the government was able to circumvent the IMF and World Bank pressures through new partnerships in Asia (less concerned with the government social policy, human rights or transparency). Nevertheless, such new attitude had a detrimental effect aggravating the constraints on CSO's activities and negatively impacting the conditions of the poor.

⁵⁴ Ranked at position 160 out of 177 of the UN Human Development Index and remaining one of world's poorest countries; see *Human Development Report* (New York: United Nations Development Programme, 2005), p.125, p.222.

⁵⁵ The author was at the presentation of this report, a meeting with several national NGOs but only with a few international NGO, who seem to be timidly resisting such measures considering the few interventions of its representatives at that meeting. *Working meeting of UTCAH with national and international NGOs* (Luanda: Catholic University of Angola auditorium, November 29, 2005); agenda: 3 - Presentation of national and international NGOs activities in the first semester of 2005; 4 – Directory of NGOs, information bulletin to be created, research on case studies, draft of the specific reports that must be presented by NGOs throughout the year; 5. Legalization of NGOs (...), Access to public funds.

⁵⁶ CARE International and MSF, see *Voice Of America News Online* (June 11, 2002); *The Guardian* (February 7, 2003).

Angolan CSO are now facing a major challenge, with a decreasing external support and having to rely more and more in its own capacities at the same time as the domestic context remains adverse – the party dominates the State and both dominate the social, political and economic arenas and see non-cooperative CSO as a threat⁵⁷.

Amidst such problems it is therefore not surprising that the first national electoral network led by Angolan CSO (Angolan *Civil Society National Electoral Platform* – PLATA) only came into existence in November 18, 2005, at a time when the MPLA had already appointed more than a thousand members to integrate the Electoral Executive Commissions which will take the main responsibilities in the registration process in each and every province, municipality and commune all over the country. Still in its very first stages, the project is trying to assume previous projects and dispersed experiences of provincial electoral networks that had been technically and financially supported by the National Democratic Institute - NDI, and some of them also benefiting from technical formation provided by the Electoral Institute of Southern Africa – EISA. The main objective is to coordinate, revive and/or create provincial electoral networks in order to promote the participation of civil society in the electoral process, but the task is obviously difficult having to catch up a process already in motion and is now trying to integrate the Informal Group on Elections coordinated by the Ministry of Territorial Administration.

As stressed by one of its leaders, knowing the importance of churches in Angola the project could greatly benefit from the support, experience and national structures of one of the largest Angolan CSO, the COIEPA (Inter-Church Committee for Peace in Angola), which had an important role in late nineties pressuring for peace and democratization and being one of the very few surviving experiences of Angolan CSO networking. However and once more proving the difficulty of Angolan CSO to develop long-term sustained and effective network projects, the three different ecclesiastical congregations at the base of COIEPA did not reach an agreement for a common project towards the electoral process, each one of them having its own agenda and partners⁵⁸.

Despite all the above mentioned constraints, weaknesses and fragilities, it must also be said that some Angolan CSO have been leading the most significant initiatives in the defense of civil, political and economic rights, being much more active in that area than the gross majority of political parties at the parliament (e.g. the Land Law, the rejection of the new draft law for the media, HIV law, the struggle for the rights of forcedly evicted communities, better conditions for prisoners).⁵⁹

⁵⁷ See “Country profile Angola” in *An Assessment ...op. cit...*; also Jilani, Hina, *Promotion and protection of Human Rights, Human Rights Defenders*, a report submitted by the special representative of the Secretary General on the situation of Human Rights Defenders, Mission to Angola, 21, February 2005; also *Unfinished democracy: Media and Political Freedoms in Angola*, a report by Human Rights Watch, July 14, 2004 – exposing several violations of basic Human Rights such as the right to freedom of expression, freedom of association and the right to peaceful assembly.

⁵⁸ On COIEPA’s parcours see “Country profile Angola” in *An Assessment...op. cit.* pp.47-62.

⁵⁹ As previously explained I will not enter in the specificities of the Angolan CSO, please see previous report “Country profile Angola” in *An Assessment... op. cit.* pp.47-62; Jilani, Hina, *Promotion and protection ...op. cit.*; Comerford, Michael, G., *O Rosto Pacífico de Angola* (Luanda: edição do autor, 2005), especially chp.4; forthcoming, Vidal, Nuno, *Social sectors in Angola: from the regime’s neglect to*

In sum, having in mind all the exposed characteristics of the Angolan socio-political system it becomes clear that opposition parties and CSO aiming for a change face a daunting task to overcome the constraints imposed by a regime with an extended and tight control over the State apparatus and the society as a whole. Nevertheless, several opposition parties and CSO think that the dynamics generated by the forthcoming electoral process has in itself the potential for some socio-political change in terms that will be analyzed in the next chapter.

4 – ELECTIONS AND ITS POTENTIAL FOR CHANGE

Most of opposition parties and CSO agree that peace and elections have the potential for change. Dynamics set up by the electoral process are expected to open more space for political debate and demand. This expectation is based on the 1992 experience. By then, even with the complete control of the whole State apparatus and a clear intention to manipulate the whole electoral process, the MPLA ended up making significant political concessions to the opposition and to a newborn civil society. It became obvious that the dynamics of an electoral process is impossible to control in all its variables. As the high-speed dynamics of the electoral process went on, the regime opened much more political space than expected and even if that space contracted as soon as the war resumed it was not possible to contract it to its original form. Such experience is still remembered today and just like in 1992 hopes are placed on the next electoral process as a new major step into the openness and democratisation of the regime⁶⁰.

Although we can easily agree with the argument that an electoral dynamics opens some space for political discussion and demand one must also take into account that today the domestic and international context is much different from the one existing in 1992. By then the MPLA was in a difficult position to manage its image, its previous socialist model and partners collapsed everywhere in the world being exposed as a political and economic failure oppressing people and retarding development. On the other hand, its major opponent - UNITA - had a significant internal leverage, coming out of the civil war controlling part of the national territory, strongly backed by the US and several Western countries (politically and financially) and portrayed (even if inaccurately) by the international media as the Angolan fighter for Western democracy and liberal market. Domestic pressure for change also benefited from the massive arrival of international organizations.

Today the internal and external situation seem much more favorable to the MPLA than ever before: it has reinforced State control and governing experience under the new multiparty framework; has militarily defeated UNITA, who no longer counts on the 1992 international backing, is now weak and dependant just like the rest of the opposition; has reinforced constraints over CSO, tightened control over the State media and keeps severe restrictions on the private media; has complete dominion of the 'new market economy'; has a good political and economic relationship with the US and the Western countries who are eager to please it; is well advanced in its preparation for elections.

Several opposition leaders and civil society activists interviewed for this work seem to realize this new context and to overcome it they stress the need for a major mobilization and articulation between internal and international agents effectively committed to change, sharing the same perspectives, objectives, interests and principles – respect for human rights and effective democratization of political systems. They still think that internal leverage for change can only be effective with the strong co-operation of the external, but contrary to 1992 the external is not so much the so-called international community as a whole, but mainly the International Civil Society Organizations. There seems to be a general disappointment with International Governmental Organizations -

⁶⁰ See forthcoming Vidal, Nuno, “Multipartidarismo em Angola”, in Vidal, Nuno & Pinto de Andrade, Justino, *O processo de transição para o multipartidarismo em Angola* (Lisbon: Firmamento, 2006).

IGO and donor community in face of recent examples such as the so-called Angola-gate case with the ridiculous Falcone episode in September/October 2004 (in which the French government drew back, deciding to recognize diplomatic immunity conceded by the Angolan government to an arms dealer, Pierre Falcone, thus hampering the judicial process on corruption and illegal arms deals involving Angolan top government officials their French counter-parts, as soon as the Angolan government retaliated delaying the recognition of the French ambassador and refusing to renew Total's oil contract on block 3/80)⁶¹ and also the change of attitude of the World Bank and the IMF, which dropped their pressures for transparency, accountability and human rights in face of the new international and economic interests in Angola (*cf. supra*).

According to some of my interviewees the initiative for external leverage rests now with International CSO that do have efficient and global lobbying, networking and advocacy capacity to mobilize international public opinion in order to pressure IGOs, the donor community and its governments to adopt a more firm, intervening and dignifying position on the Angolan political transition process. A few others, much more skeptical about any external leverage whatsoever, stress that once and for all Angolan and African CSO and political opposition must stop their usual tendency to over-emphasize the role of external agents, while disregarding internal discontentment and populations at large as the main source for social and political change. As pointed out by a well known Angolan human rights activist, that is exactly what is happening in Angola since 2002 after the death of Savimbi and in Zimbabwe after the 2001 election fraud, with CSO and opposition parties mainly expecting the "international community" to lead the demand for change and to pressure for the enforcement of civil and human rights⁶².

The analysis provided in this report seems to support these two positions that in fact are complementary:

- On the one hand it must be recognized that because oil supply is diminishing worldwide, regimes such as the Angolan are usually able to extract strong concessions from the outside world – from governments and international governmental organizations sometimes moved by economic interests more than humanitarianism⁶³ -, and in such conditions International CSO that for more than fifteen years have been standing in Angola for the respect of human rights and democratization processes do have the obligation to come forward and assume a more active role side by side with their Angolan counter parts.

- On the other hand, one must admit that CSO and political opposition have to pay more attention inwards and search for their basis and constituencies. Political parties are distant from the electorate, too much centered on their internal problems or with legal-

⁶¹ On the Falcone-Angola-gate case see, *Financial Times London* (August 6, 2004); *World Markets Analysis* (September 08, 2004); *International Oil Daily* (October 26, 2004); *Voice Of America-VOA* (November, 1, 2004); *ANGOP* (November, 2, 2004).

⁶² Marques, Rafael, "Os povos da linha da frente", in semanário *A capital*, 16 de Julho de 2005.

⁶³ See *More than humanitarianism:...* op. cit..., especially pp. 32-33, 49-50; also Aguilar, Renato, *Angola: getting off ...* op. cit... especially pp. 13-18; Miranda, Arlindo, *Angola 2003/2004,...* op. cit.; also forthcoming Chabal, Patrick, 'Preface' in Vidal, Nuno & Pinto de Andrade, Justino, *O processo de transição para o multipartidarismo em Angola* (Lisbon: Firmamento, 2005).

bureaucratic fights with the MPLA and hopping for the international community to support their claims, but having serious difficulties to relate to the people, mobilize them, understand and represent their needs in political programs – something that might help us to understand electoral tendencies pointing out for an increase in the abstention rate and in the number of Angolans who think elections will not bring change⁶⁴; also in the same sense, CSO in general prioritize their foreign partner's or donors' agendas and perspectives rather than the perspectives, needs and aims of the communities they serve.

The forthcoming electoral process and its dynamics have the potential for some change, but its effective outcome will greatly depend on the commitment to change set by national and international players and specially the interactions that might be established between them.

⁶⁴ See Report *Resultados do Inquérito de Opinião “Percepções dos Angolanos em relação às próximas eleições”* (Luanda: International Republican Institute, 2003).

CONCLUSION

Despite the new multiparty framework, the Angolan political system keeps its basic characteristics as constructed after independence and throughout the eighties: strong concentration of political power and administrative centralization; State, party and government structures remain blurred; there is still a deep interpenetration between the judicial, legislative and executive systems with tight political control of the judicial; the regime maintains its security mechanisms and an authoritarian character; State structures and resources (mainly the oil rent and diamonds) are still used to achieve political and economic hegemony. There is a remarkable distance between people and politics.

Opposition political parties are weak and face severe constraints: lack of funds and organizational capacity; a still present culture of fear and intimidation; limited access to the state media; weak private media mainly circumscribed to Luanda. Associations and organizations in the area of civil society are in no better position, being fragile, dependent on external funding and expertise, fighting an adverse domestic context, seen as a political threat by the regime.

Nevertheless, **opposition political parties and several CSO do think that forthcoming elections have some potential for change. Dynamics set up by the electoral process are expected to open more space for political debate and demand, especially if International Civil Society Organizations articulated with their Angolan counterparts commit to its monitoring, pressuring to the enforcement of transparent and democratic procedures and mechanisms. There is a general disappointment with International Governmental Organizations and the donor community insofar as it became clear that their quest for transparency, accountability and human rights draws back in face of important international economic interests in Angola.**