

Angola

Angola (äng-gō' lə), officially Republic of Angola (1994 est. pop. 11,200,000), including the exclave of [Cabinda](#), 481,351 sq mi (1,246,700 sq km), SW Africa. Angola is bounded by the Atlantic Ocean on the west, by Congo (Kinshasa) on the north and northeast, by Zambia on the east, and by Namibia on the south. [Luanda](#) is the capital, largest city, and chief port. Land and People

The Bié Plateau, which forms the central region of the territory, has an average altitude of 6,000 ft (1,830 m). Rising abruptly from the coastal lowland, the plateau slopes gently eastward toward the Congo and Zambezi basins and forms one of Africa's major watersheds. The uneven topography of the plateau has resulted in the formation of numerous rapids and waterfalls, which are used for the production of hydroelectric power. The territory's principal rivers are the Cuanza and the Cunene. Rainfall in the south and along the coast north to Luanda is generally low. In northern Angola it is usually dry and cool from May to October and wet and hot from November to April. The characteristic landscape is savanna woodlands and grasslands. The northeast, however, has densely forested valleys that yield hardwoods, and palm trees are cultivated along a narrow coastal strip.

Administratively, the country is divided into 18 provinces. In addition to Luanda, other important cities are [Huambo](#), [Lobito](#), [Benguela](#), and [Namibe](#). The overwhelming majority of Angola's population is of African descent, and most of the people speak a Bantu language; the official language, however, is Portuguese. The Ovimbundu, Kimbundu, and Bakongo are the largest ethnic groups and there is also a sizable mixed-race population. After Angola secured its independence from Portugal, many Europeans left the country. Traditional indigenous religions prevail, but there is a large Roman Catholic minority and a smaller Protestant minority.

Economy

Angola's rich agricultural sector was formerly the mainstay of the economy and currently provides employment for the majority of the people. Food must be imported in large quantities, however, because of the disruption caused by the country's protracted civil war. All areas of production have suffered since fighting began in 1975. Coffee and sugarcane are the most important cash crops. Cassava, corn, sisal, cotton, tobacco, and bananas are raised, and fishing is also important. Livestock, notably cattle, sheep, goats, and pigs, is raised in much of the savanna region.

Angola has substantial mineral resources and hydroelectric power. Most large-scale industries are nationalized. Oil, chiefly from reserves offshore, is the most lucrative product, providing about 50% of the country's GDP. Oil revenues have done little to improve the economy or the everyday lives of Angolans, however, because huge sums have been spent on the armed forces and lost due to government corruption. Diamond mining is also a principal industry; for many years in the late 20th cent. revenue from the

mines supported UNITA rebels (see under *Postcolonial History*). Natural gas is produced, and Angola has deposits of copper, iron ore, manganese, phosphates, gold, feldspar, lead, zinc, bauxite, and uranium. Industries include metals processing, meat and fish processing, brewing, and the manufacture of cement, tobacco products, and textiles.

The Benguela railroad, which carries metals from the mines of Congo (Kinshasa) and the Zambian Copperbelt, was an important source of revenue, but much of the line is in disrepair due to the civil war. Angola's road network and communications system have also been affected by civil strife. Luanda and Lobito are the country's main shipping ports. The country's main trading partners are the United States, Portugal, and Brazil. Angola is a member of the Southern African Development Community.

Government

After many years of one-party Marxist rule, Angola is now a struggling multiparty democracy. Its executive branch is headed by a president and includes a prime minister and council of ministers. Angola also has a unicameral legislature and a judicial branch with a supreme court. Its legal system is a mixture of Portuguese civil law and traditional law.

HistoryHistory until Independence

The first inhabitants of the area that is now Angola are thought to have been members of the hunter-gatherer Khoisan group. Bantu-speaking peoples from West Africa arrived in the region in the 13th cent., partially displacing the Khoisan and establishing a number of powerful kingdoms. The Portuguese first explored coastal Angola in the late 15th cent., and except for a short occupation (1641–48) by the Dutch, it was under Portugal's control until they left the country late in the 20th cent.

Although they failed to discover the gold and other precious metals they were seeking, the Portuguese found in Angola an excellent source of slaves for their colony in Brazil. Portuguese colonization of Angola began in 1575, when a permanent base was established at Luanda. By this time the Mbundu kingdom had established itself in central Angola. After several attempts at subjugation, Portuguese troops finally broke the back of the kingdom in 1902, when the Bié Plateau was captured. Construction of the Benguela railroad followed, and white settlers arrived in the Angolan highlands.

The modern development of Angola began only after World War II. In 1951 the colony was designated an overseas province, and Portugal initiated plans to develop industries and hydroelectric power. Although the Portuguese professed the aim of a multiracial society of equals in Angola, most Africans still suffered repression. Inspired by nationalist movements elsewhere, the native Angolans rose in revolt in 1961. When the uprising was quelled by the Portuguese army, many fled to Congo (Kinshasa) and other neighboring countries.

In 1962 a group of refugees in the Congo, led by Holden Roberto, organized the Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA). It maintained supply and training bases in the Congo, waged guerrilla warfare in Angola, and, while developing contacts with both Western and Communist nations, obtained its chief support from the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Angola's liberation movement comprised two other guerrilla groups as well. The Marxist-influenced Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA), founded in 1956, had its headquarters in Zambia and was most active among educated Angolan Africans and *mestiços* living abroad. The MPLA led the struggle for Angolan independence. The third rival group was the União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA), which was established in 1966 under the leadership of Jonas [Savimbi](#). As a result of the guerrilla warfare, Portugal was forced to keep more than 50,000 troops in Angola by the early 1970s.

In 1972 the heads of the FNLA and MPLA assumed joint leadership of a newly formed Supreme Council for the Liberation of Angola, but their military forces did not merge. That same year the Portuguese national assembly changed Angola's status from an overseas province to an autonomous state with authority over internal affairs; Portugal was to retain responsibility for defense and foreign relations. Elections were held for a legislative assembly in 1973.

In Apr., 1974, the Portuguese government was overthrown in a military uprising. In May of that year the new government proclaimed a truce with the guerrillas in an effort to promote peace talks. Later in the year Portugal seemed intent on granting Angola independence; however, the situation was complicated by the large number of Portuguese and other Europeans (estimated at 500,000) resident there, by continued conflict among the African liberation movements, and by the desire of some Cabindans for their oil-rich region to become independent as a separate nation.

Postcolonial History

Portugal granted Angola independence in 1975 and the MPLA assumed control of the government in Luanda; Agostinho [Neto](#) became president. The FNLA and UNITA, however, proclaimed a coalition government in Nova Lisboa (now Huambo), but by early 1976 the MPLA had gained control of the whole country. Most of the European population fled the political and economic upheaval that followed independence, taking their investments and technical expertise with them. When Neto died in 1979, José Eduardo [dos Santos](#) succeeded him as president. In the 1970s and 80s the MPLA government received large amounts of aid from Cuba and the Soviet Union, while the United States supported first the FNLA and then UNITA. Although the FNLA faded in importance, UNITA obtained the support of South Africa, which was mounting its own campaigns against the Southwest Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), a Namibian liberation group based in Angola.

In the late 1980s the United States provided military aid to UNITA and demanded the withdrawal of Cuban troops and an end to Soviet assistance. As a result of negotiations among Angola, South Africa, Cuba, and the United States, the withdrawal of Cuban

troops began in 1989. Also in the late 1980s, Marxist Angola implemented programs of privatization under President dos Santos. A cease-fire between the ruling MPLA and UNITA was reached in 1991, and the government agreed to make Angola a multiparty state. However, when dos Santos won UN-supervised elections held in Sept., 1992, UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi charged fraud and refused to accept the results. In Nov., 1992, bitter fighting broke out between rebel UNITA troops and government forces, destroying many cities and much of the country's infrastructure. Despite initial victories that gave UNITA control of some two thirds of Angola, the MPLA eventually gained the upper hand in the renewed warfare.

In Nov., 1994, with UNITA on the verge of defeat, dos Santos and Savimbi signed the Lusaka protocol, a new agreement on ending the conflict. The two sides committed to the integration of several thousand UNITA troops into the government armed forces as well as the demobilization of thousands more from both sides. UN peacekeeping troops began arriving in June, 1995, to supervise the process. Troop integration, however, was suspended in 1996, and UNITA's demobilization efforts lagged. A new government of national unity was formed in 1997, including several UNITA deputies; Savimbi had declined a vice presidency in 1996.

With renewed fighting in 1998, Angola's ruling MPLA put the country's coalition government on hold, saying that UNITA had failed to meet its peace-treaty obligations. It suspended all UNITA representatives from parliament and declared that it would no longer deal with Savimbi, instead recognizing a splinter group, UNITA Renovada. In 1999 the United Nations voted to pull out all remaining troops stationed in the country, while continuing humanitarian relief work with over a million refugees. UNITA was able to finance its activities, including an estimated 30,000 troops stationed in neighboring Zambia and Congo (Kinshasa), with some \$500 million a year in diamond revenues from mines it controlled in the country's northeast. Fighting continued, with Angola's army inflicting several defeats on UNITA beginning in late 1999, weakening UNITA's still sizable forces. International restrictions (2001) on sales of diamonds not certified as coming from legitimate sources also hurt UNITA, and the death of Savimbi in battle in 2002 was a severe blow to the rebels, who subsequently signed a cease-fire agreement. As many as one million people have died in the fighting since 1975, and the country's infrastructure has yet to recover from the effects of the warfare.

Bibliography.

See B. Davidson, *In the Eye of the Storm* (1972); G. J. Bender, *Angola Under the Portuguese* (1978); P. M. Martin, *Historical Dictionary of Angola* (1980); K. Akpau et al., *Alvor and Beyond: Political Trends and Legal Issues in Angola* (1988); J. C. Miller, *Angola: A Way of Death* (1988).

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