

Observation no: 160 – 163 War over Angola

Country-year: Angola 1975

Coder's note: Angola became independent from Portugal in 1975 in the same year that the War over Angola began, making it impossible to use data from 1974. Nor can coding from Portugal be substituted in its place: the right-wing dictatorship led by António Salazar was overthrown by a pro-democratic coup in April 1974, ushering in a wave of democratic reforms. As such, this coding uses data from Angola in 1975.

1. Did the current regime come to power in a military coup?

No.

António Agostinho Neto became Angola's first president after winning Angola's war of independence against the Portuguese.

2. Has the country ever experienced a military coup?

No.

António Agostinho Neto served as president until his death in 1979.

3. Is the country's top leader a former military officer?

No.

Neto was the head of the MPLA's political wing but was not a commander of the organization's military wing, the Forças Armadas Populares para Libertação de Angola, MPLA's military wing.

4. Are ethnic, sectarian, or racial criteria used to exclude segments of the population from the officer corps?

No.

The population of Angola is generally ethnically mixed, and thus such a requirement would be difficult to implement.

5. Are there strict ideological requirements for entry into the senior officer corps?

Yes.

The MPLA was a Communist organization openly backed by the Soviet Union. Officers had to support Communist ideology.¹

6. Is party membership required for entry into the senior officer corps?

Yes.

Although no source mentions this as a formal requirement, given the single-party status of the Angolan government, it is clear that membership was required in order to advance in the military.²

7. Does military training involve extensive political education or ideological indoctrination?

Yes.

Officers were taught more about Communist ideology.

8. Has the military been used to repress internal dissent in the last five years?

No.

The Angolan army was formed in the same year as the War over Angola began.

9. Has the military been used to govern the country in the last five years?

No.

The country became independent under the leadership of the MPLA.

10. Is there a paramilitary organization separate from the regular military, used to provide regime or leader security?

Yes.

At the time of independence, the Alvor Agreement recognized all three anti-Portuguese rebel groups as forming the legitimate government of Angola.³ The MPLA, who became president of Angola by virtue of its control of the capital city,

¹ Klinghoffer, Arthur Kay. *The Angolan War: A Study in Soviet Policy in the Third World*, Boulder, CA: Westview Press, 1980, p. 18-19.

² Klinghoffer, Arthur Kay. *The Angolan War: A Study in Soviet Policy in the Third World*, Boulder, CA: Westview Press, 1980, p. 18-19.

³ James III, W. Martin. *A Political History of the Civil War in Angola, 1974 – 1990*, New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1992, p. 55.

operated a separate military wing called the Forças Armadas Poplar Para Libertação de Angola, or FAPLA.

11. Is there an internal intelligence apparatus dedicated to watching the regular military?

No.

In this period of Angolan history, there was no regular army as each rebel faction maintained independent military wings.⁴

12. Has a purge of the officer corps occurred in the last five years?

No.

There is no national Angolan army.

13. Is there an institutionalized forum through which civilian leaders and military officers regularly exchange information?

No.

⁴ James III, W. Martin. *A Political History of the Civil War in Angola, 1974 – 1990*, New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1992, p. 55.