



Transcript

Change in Angola: The Role of UNITA

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Isaias Samakuva:

Ladies and gentlemen:

Thank you very much for honouring me with this invitation to discuss UNITA's contribution to transformation processes and democratic development in Angola.

In our discussion today, I will argue that although Angola has known political and social transformations in the last decades, the effective social change that Angolans have been battling for in the last 40 years did not happen yet.

Secondly we'll discuss ten misrepresentations about the UNITA's role in the changes facing Angola. Third, we will outline the prospects for real change UNITA is committed to bring to alleviate the suffering of the Angolan people.

Over the last 40 years, turbulence, illegitimacy and discontinuity have been Angola's fate while discrimination, poverty and inequalities have been the fate of Angolans. The effective social change Angolans have been seeking for over 40 years did not happen yet. In fact, the political and social conditions of the people now after all wars and economic booms are somehow similar to the ones we experienced 40 years ago under the colonial regime of Salazar and Caetano.

During the colonial era, Angola had weak and illegitimate political institutions. Today there are not legitimate democratic institutions. In fact, there are no institutions but one: the president of the republic.

The Portuguese dictatorship created a bizarre creed that the colonial order was legitimate and sustainable. Today, Mr Dos Santos' dictatorship created the same creed that his regime is a republic, although it does not embrace the republican principles of accountability, political responsibility, separation of powers, separation of public and private wealth, and independence of the judiciary.

The Portuguese dictatorship claimed to be a state of law, although it did not respect human rights. So does the current regime. It also claims to be a democracy, although it does not allow for freedom of expression nor for a free press, or for free and fair elections.

The colonial government was rigid, centralized and corrupted. So is Mr Dos Santos' government.

The colonial government had a structured patronage corrupted system, and many informal norms maintained by the Portuguese police state to keep command structures unified and loyal. So does the current regime in Angola.

During the colonial era, the leading exports (slaves, rubber, sisal, and coffee) boomed, and then went bust. Angola's current economic boom is something that will also go bust, because the boom is also driven from outside and by outsiders.

As development strategies, both the colonial and post-colonial regimes experimented captive dependency on volatile export commodities, import-substitution and settlement schemes. All these strategies, plus the Soviet-style planning, have come and gone with no success.

These cycles left behind few capacities or institutions for periods that followed. What has remained constant, however, is the commanding position of foreign capital, allied with repressive and administrative powers of the state.

In 1975, the nationalist leadership inherited no institutions or traditions on which to build a responsive bond or social contract between citizens and the state. After 40 years, such social contract still not in place.

Despite the pacification of politics and the undeniable gains in collective self-esteem brought with the proclamation of independence, there are undeniable signs of continuity, indeed of 'path dependence'.

Decades after abandoning Soviet-style central planning, and embracing a supervised but predatory kind of capitalism, the postcolonial authoritarian regime today replicates the authoritarian dirigisme and external orientation of the colonial era.

Therefore, Angolans did not experiment yet the kind of change envisaged by Holden Roberto (1923-2007), Agostinho Neto (1922-1979) and Jonas Savimbi (1934-2002), when they fought for independence, equality and social justice.

Ladies and gentlemen:

To understand why the social transformations of the last 10 years do not equate to the changes the Angolans have been expecting since 1975, we have to correct certain misrepresentations about recent Angolan political history.

Misrepresentation number one – There has been civil war in Angola because UNITA are the bad guys who embarked on a civil war just for the sake of being in power by force.

The war in Angola was not a simple civil war. It was an international war among different players with different interests. It was the ‘hot war of the cold war’ fought by the international community against the international community on the Angolan soil at the expenses of the lives of the Angolan people.

From 1976 to 2002, in the battlefields of Angola, Americans fought against Russians, Cubans fought against South Africans; Angolans fought Namibians, Cubans, Russian and South Africans. Other countries joined the fight in the diplomatic arena, including the United Kingdom. It was a fight for ideas. One side wanted freedom, democracy and free market. The other wanted oppression and state-controlled markets.

UNITA, FNLA and MPLA fought for the independence of Angola in the context of this cold war. The civil dimension of the cold war in Angola was caused by the MPLA who failed to observe the Alvor Agreement, refused to organize elections and seized power by force in 1975.

Misrepresentation number two – The war that had ended in 1991 resumed in October 1992 because UNITA refused to accept the results of a fair election.

UNITA contested the 1992 elections but accepted its manipulated results through a letter signed by its leader, Dr Jonas Savimbi, on 15 October 1992. This letter was received by the United Nations and is part of its historical archives. It is referred to in the UN Security Council Resolution number 793 of 30 November 1992.

Misrepresentation number three – UNITA lost the war and provided a negative contribution to the nation-building process.

Again, the Angola war was not a simple civil war. While in general the West did win the ideological dimension of cold war, in Angola it was UNITA who won the ideological dimension of the civil war. Mr Dos Santos recognized already that he is not a converted democratic. He said more than once that ‘democracy has been imposed upon him’.

Willing or not, in the 1990s, Mr Dos Santos has formally embraced the same causes UNITA had embraced and fought for during the last 47 years: freedom, democracy, the rule of law and a free market economy.

The abandonment of the one-party state regime by the MPLA is a legacy of Dr Jonas Malheiro Savimbi, the founder of UNITA. The constitution of the multi-party republic of Angola in 1992 and its political regime of freedom, equality and prosperity for all is another legacy of UNITA. The triumph of free markets ideals in Angola, although distorted by a few, is another positive aspect of the UNITA's contribution for change in Angola.

Misrepresentation number four – There is peace and stability in Angola.

There is neither social peace nor stability in Angola. Actually, the regime in Angola enjoys the four dimensions of instability: it faces civil protests; carries out a permanent politically motivated aggression against its own people; faces instability from within; and its record as aggressor to the constitution, human rights violator and promoter of widespread corruption makes the regime illegitimate and therefore instable. The head of state is the principal factor of instability because he seized power and has held it for 34 years through several constitutional coups d'état. He controls the legislative, the executive and the judicial branches of the government, as well as the media and the electoral commission.

Misrepresentation number five – Angola has democratic institutions. The democracy-building process that started in 1992 has been averted. There was no effective transition from one-party state to a multi-party state; from the culture of war to a culture of peace. There are no democratic institutions because there is no real democracy in Angola. The system does not allow for democratic replacement of the government nor power sharing.

Misrepresentation number six – The opposition is weak, thus there is no viable alternative to the current government in Angola.

The regime does not believe in democracy. They believe that certain people were born to govern forever and others were born just to be in the opposition forever. The opposition does not have access to credible spaces in the public radio and television to express their views. There is censorship in the parliament too. The regime wants the world to believe that there is no viable alternative to its government. To this end, the MPLA transformed Angola into a republic of one person alone. This person is the president of the republic, who violates the constitution at will, misuses the public funds for private purposes at will, and subverts the state institutions at will. In fact, in every election, he manipulates the results and replaces the will of the people expressed in the ballot boxes by his own will. Under these rules of engagement who is the weak part?

Misrepresentation number seven – UNITA's influence in the Angolan politics is diminishing.

Although it has no access to state media and its assets have been illegally sequestered by the government, UNITA is now stronger than any time in the past, not because it has control over 80 per cent of the Angolan territory, but because its goals today are the goals and aspirations of more than 80 per cent of the Angolan people. UNITA has conquered the minds and the soul of the various strata of the Angolan people. Our membership grew in all provinces. UNITA has given up its guns, completely disarmed its military wing, and successfully transformed itself into a legal, civilian, political party based wholly on the trust my constituency had in the brokerage powers of our mentors in the West.

The government failed to deliver on its promise. It illegally and absolutely seized all public media outlets in Leninist style to control the ruling party's political propaganda. Harassment, intimidation, discrimination and extra-judicial killings of political opponents and independent journalists have increased. President Dos Santos seized control over a \$70-billion state budget with neither accountability nor responsibility. He also transformed the state into a promoter of corruption, organized legislative fraudulent elections in 2008 and ignored international calls for presidential elections in 2009.

In 2010, he engineered a constitutional revision that abolished direct presidential elections and allowed him to remain an untitled president for life.

Mr Dos Santos has impoverished the people at a level worse than the colonial regime. Today, the people have no drinkable water, no basic sanitation, no quality education, and no decent and affordable health care.

As a direct result of this bad governance the people have revolted against the government and want to unseat the government. Mr Dos Santos' political capital has deeply depleted. It is UNITA who is holding the fragile peace by telling the people to trust its leadership towards a peaceful, comprehensive and inclusive change. The people are listening to UNITA and accepting UNITA leadership. This is why the barrel of explosives did not explode yet in Angola. The holding of the military peace despite criminal acts by the government against its own people is a vivid evidence of UNITA's influence in the current Angolan politics.

Misrepresentation number eight – Angola is on the right path because it is recording a constant economic growth rate; and for an African country economic growth is more important than democracy.

While it is true that Angola achieved certain macroeconomic stability, one should remember that macroeconomic stability does not equate to social stability because it does not reflect the wellbeing of the people. The Angolan growth is a misleading 'jobless economic growth' driven by the volatile price of raw materials that are extracted by a few highly skilled expatriates. The current petrodollar-based development model is not aimed at human development and does not serve the legitimate interests and aspirations of the Angolan people. The majority of the Angolan people want a job-creation economic growth generated by massive investments in education, agriculture, health and housing.

Misrepresentation number nine – The MPLA and its president won both elections in 2008 and in 2012.

It has been proved beyond any reasonable doubt that Mr Dos Santos has subverted the constitutional duties of the National Electoral Commission by setting up an illegal shadow organization that in fact organized the 2012 elections and replaced the will of the people expressed in the ballots by the president's own will. He also contracted Chinese high-tech security experts to orchestrate electronic disfranchisement of voters and manipulate the voter rolls.

UNITA filed constitutional complaints and submitted 123 pieces of evidence to the High Court of the country and testimonies of 57 eye witnesses to prove its claims of dozens of violations of the constitution in connection with the last elections. The claims are still under consideration.

In addition, based on the undisputed evidence of crimes, UNITA asked for full investigation and the prosecution of the president of the republic and 18 other officials including his national security advisor, for seven crimes against the sovereignty of the people. Neither the president nor any of the 18 indicted officials and foreign experts denied the charges.

These events were not reported in the Angolan press because there is no free press in Angola. They may not be reported in the international media either. However, these are the issues people are worried about. These are the current headlines in the streets, schools and in the hearts and minds of the Angolan families.

Misrepresentation number ten – UNITA people have no governmental experience and are not prepared to govern Angola.

While it is true that UNITA has no experience in bad or corrupt governance, we do not want to receive this kind of training from the MPLA. We have a

vision for the rebirth of Angola and have a program to reform the state, build a robust democracy, avert poverty, and restructure the economy.

We will address the five main problems of the nation by going deep into their roots. We will proclaim, develop and adopt National Emergency Programmes for education, health, housing, employment and social security. These five problems constitute the main cause of poverty in Angola and my government will consider poverty a matter of national security.

Because we recognize that long term sustainable solutions for these five big problems require long-term programmes at county level, our priority is to decentralize power and money to address these problems at local level through a new culture of governance that embraces democracy, accountability and responsibility.

To this end we are developing a model for county and city governments with full autonomy to manage their budgets and will call for local elections at the municipality level to implement the PNCP (National Program for Fighting Poverty).

We will make clear to all that for us, the true enemies of the Angolan people are the lack of drinkable water, lack of sanitation, lack of housing, unemployment, illiteracy, malaria, tuberculosis, misery, and crime of any kind – violent and non-violent. If these are the enemies of the nation, fighting them shall absorb the same proportion of the budget that is absorbed today by the military.

Education, skills development and job creation are the bedrock of our economic policy. We will invest heavily in education, training and skills formation to promote social change.

We will call upon the business leaders and listen to them about what the government can do to meet their expectations and what the economic priorities of the country shall be. We will then develop and implement the right model to promote a dynamic investment policy to build the country's human capital and the country's physical infrastructure by spreading education, health and employment throughout Angola.

We will negotiate a peaceful, democratic and definitive solution for the conflict in Cabinda.

A full summary of the UNITA government main policies can be found in the Seven-Point Action Plan to Change Angola for the Better that was published last year and can be read in our website at www.unitaangola.org.

In selecting the people to serve the country as members of the new type of government, we will not be guided by political affiliation, race or any other kind of predisposition. It will be a government of Angolans, not a government of a political party. We will govern with technocrats, not only with politicians. Some have decades of experience and are internationally recognized and experts in their respective fields.

Despite these dynamics of stability, historic misrepresentations, and bad governance, we have confidence in the future of Angola because change is on the way.

UNITA is building a national coalition to bring about a cultural and structural peaceful change in Angola. Change built upon moral values, with no sign of revenge. Change that includes our opponents seeks reconciliation and promotes human dignity and social justice for all.

We are optimistic because the desire for real change is greater and stronger than the fear of change. People from all sectors of the society including within the regime itself want change because they are exhausted and frustrated. I will tell you three examples:

- Last week I received a telephone call from government officials at a state media unit. They said clearly that they are from the MPLA but they are frustrated because their current leadership betrayed the MPLA goals and values. They want change to establish true democracy in Angola and they trust us to lead the national movement for change.
- Over the last months we received similar requests and appeals from other sectors of the regime: from officials in the presidential palace, from MPs in the parliament, from officials in the intelligence community, from the business community, from the judiciary and of course from the young student population.
- Others are providing evidence of government corrupt deals for public knowledge, like the one recently published by www.corruptionwatch-uk.co.uk

After four decades of political independence and 11 years of military peace, the fate of the great majority of Angolans inside and outside the country is worse than during the colonial era.

We cannot secure long-lasting political and social stability if we continue to live in a country where the role of government is subverted, where there are no institutions but one – the president himself.

We cannot ask our constituents to let their children die from malnutrition and curable diseases while the children of the president seed their corrupt accounts to prepare to succeed to the throne.

We can – we must – avoid the winds of Arab Spring, learning from its most profound lessons while weathering through our winter.

Angolans are responsible for bringing the necessary change. UNITA stands ready to do its part. However, given the history, the geography, and the economic potential of Angola, the international community has a significant stake in Angola's success.

BP alone has invested \$30 billion in Angola and is committed to invest another \$15 billion in the near future. They also have a social responsibility towards the Angolan people.

The Angolan people ask the international community to support it in its fight against authoritarianism and not be a willing part in its entrenchment.

The guns have been silenced; help democracy reign!

Thank you very much.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Questions:

You mentioned that democratic institutions in Angola are not well developed, but does your existence as a political party suggest there must be some space in which you can work?

UNITA had difficulty in its old heartland of the central highlands of the 2008 elections, although it recovered some support last year. Do you see a difference in mobilizing that constituency in the central highlands from mobilizing the bigger constituency in Luanda?

How could an opposition party like UNITA work with civil society, for example with youth movements?

Has the formation of CASA-CE affected UNITA's fortunes?

Isaias Samakuva:

There is a possibility in Angola for political parties to exercise as some kind of politics, but what we need is not some kind of politics but real democracy. What we have now is controlled democracy. You have no access to media. The Angolan National Assembly has one plenary per month when deputies can speak out, but last time we were denied the opportunity to speak, so we held a press conference instead. You do not have free access to your constituencies: you must inform the policy and government before you visit an area, so when you arrive they have begun their own rally. On the one hand you can say there is space for political parties, but in fact the political parties are not able to do their job properly.

On mobilization: during the last elections, support for UNITA increased across the country, except in Cabinda, where the MPLA also lost as a result of the emergence of CASA-CE. In Luanda, the government itself mobilizes support for UNITA because there is some kind of press there and people are aware of the situation in the country and can judge for themselves. Mobilization in Luanda today is much easier than outside Luanda. Outside Luanda, you can just point out the basic things the government has failed to address, and everyone understands the things that are supposed to be done by the government.

We think it's important for different political parties in the opposition to get together, as well as with civil society groups so that we form a coalition to face the ruling party.

Question:

You recently were denied an action by the Supreme Court in Angola: are you still waiting for some results on this? What role do you expect the international community to do in regards to this?

Isaias Samakuva:

The electoral processes in Angola have not been transparent since 1992, but the last election was even worse. To contest illegalities in the elections, we took 123 pieces of evidence to the Constitutional Court and Supreme Court to prove that there were irregularities.

The Constitutional Court had initially refused to receive the evidence, which was also illegal. So we went back with a stronger argument which they received, and now there is a case pending at the Constitutional Court. Then the attorney general investigated whether there were criminal irregularities and electoral crimes, which were denied. The way this process took place was not according to the law so we took this to the Supreme Court as well.

According to the norms, we cannot go to the international courts before we receive the verdicts from the national institutions, but if those cases are not properly investigated then we will seek the international institutions. We hope that the international community sticks to the rules, because the Angolan judiciary have not done so.

Question:

What changes would you like to see in the management of the Angolan economy, particularly in the management and exploitation of its natural resources?

Isaias Samakuva:

We would like to diversify the economy. The economy has been relying on oil and we have been ignoring the importance of other sectors that can help develop the Angolan economy. If we diversify the economy, we're bringing

investment not only to Luanda, but to the whole country. If we look to other sectors of our economy as well, we think development of the country will improve.

Corruption is a big problem. We would like to set up credible institutions that can fight corruption. We need to bring a system in which the judiciary under the legislature are really independent.

Question:

What are your perspectives on UNITA and its relations with the region, for example SADC, with the wider African community, for example the AU, and with the international community?

Isaias Samakuva:

UNITA believes we should have an active role in the region, and in regional institutions. Particularly with SADC: we are very concerned with the way the government deals with SADC. Now, it is difficult for persons and goods from the immediate area to enter Angola, although there are no problems for Angolans to enter these countries. We would like to play an active role with SADC in order to speed up the measures that other countries have already put in place.

Question:

What form of regional cooperation does UNITA have with other opposition parties in the region?

Isaias Samakuva:

I am the chairman of an organization called the Union of African Parties for Democracy and Development, which is a forum for all the major opposition parties of Southern Africa to meet and exchange ideas. All of the regional countries except Zimbabwe are part of this group.

What we realize is that the regional governments seem to coordinate their strategies for nearly everything. These ruling parties have ideological control, so we must be united as well as working very hard in our own countries.

Question:

What changes would UNITA like to see in education, including higher education in Angola?

Isaias Samakuva:

Education is one of the main areas where change is important and we have addressed this in our party political platform. The quality of education needs to be improved, which we would do by increasing the budget for the education sector. We want to extend education to rural areas, and send teachers into villages to initiate a campaign of literacy. Finally we want to set up a system for adults who wish to improve their education to do so.

Question:

When is the Angolan government going to implement equal opportunity policies in Angola? Is this issue on UNITA's agenda?

Isaias Samakuva:

We are fighting intensely for this. In our political platform, we came up with strong statements on this. It is essential that all Angolans are seen as Angolans of the same class.

Question:

The MPLA recently appointed a non-traditional party member into the number two role: Manuel Vicente. From your own networks, how is this being viewed by MPLA party members and others?

In this context, do you see a possible regeneration of UNITA in coming years?

Isaias Samakuva:

The question of Manuel Vicente is perhaps an internal MPLA question; it is an internal MPLA problem. What we hear is that this was a very controversial choice from the president; just for the fact that it seems that he was not a member of the party. Many MPLAs who talk to us do make this an issue.

Question:

You stated that there are no legitimate institutions, only Dos Santos. If Dos Santos goes, does that worry you, and would this be a threat because the institution is so personalized?

Isaias Samakuva:

Manuel Vicente is Dos Santos. With Manuel Vicente, nothing will change.

In UNITA we think that it is very important to bring in new generations to take control of the party for when we retire. This is also happening in MPLA. For UNITA, bringing in new generations is a strategy that we decided to do after we held our eleventh UNITA congress. We want to train the new generation so that when we leave, UNITA will still progress.

Question:

Is UNITA's move to bring in new people really a deliberate strategy, or is it a consequence of the recent youth movement?

Isaias Samakuva:

The eleventh UNITA congress was held in 2011, before the youth revolutionaries existed so this is a strategy of the party. Some of the revolutionaries are very committed, and others just want to get some money from the government by protesting. One has to be very careful in dealing with the revolutionaries.

Question:

What changes would you like to see in healthcare?

Isaias Samakuva:

This is another priority for UNITA. Very recently there was dengue fever in Luanda: people were dying and the government did nothing. When our health secretary made a statement to say that there is dengue fever and it is necessary to take urgent action, the government said he was lying, but eventually they admitted that there was dengue fever in Luanda.

We cannot deny that the government is building hospitals, but they are not truly hospitals: they are buildings. There is no medicine, no nurses and old machinery. All this is done for show. These are basic things to do, but they are not being done. I don't think it's because they can't do it, it is because there is no political will.

Question:

You spoke of the need to diversify the economy away from oil: what risk do you see if there is a drop in the oil price, and could you elaborate on what UNITA would do to diversify the economy?

You spoke about various misrepresentations that have been perpetuated. Some people would look at the benefits that UNITA have obtained, and have said that actually UNITA has been co-opted by the MPLA to perpetuate this fallacy of democracy. What is your response to this?

What is UNITA's view on getting Angolans in the diaspora who have been highly educated to return to Angola and help participate in the development of the country?

Isaias Samakuva:

Last week we were in Washington, and we realized that the Americans; who currently consume vast amounts of oil; are working hard to become self-sufficient in energy. If the Americans turn to other sources of energy, then the price of oil will definitely drop. Other countries are doing the same.

According to specialists, Angolan oil only has another 20 years or so to go until reserves run out. Therefore there is an urgent need to diversify the economy. Angola is not a poor country: we have other natural resources which are also available sources of income. Another problem is that oil seems to create corruption.

The views against UNITA are nothing new. When people see bad things happening in Angola, they blame UNITA. Some people may not believe this, but it is UNITA who is really holding peace in Angola. In our experience, people who want to protest do not understand the consequences this can have. If they take to the streets, and something happens, then you are the one to blame.

We have experience of years of war, whereas it is easy for a young man with no experience of war to want to start some kind of protest without

understanding the consequences. This is why I would prefer to be blamed for not doing what some people want.

UNITA is going through a huge contention in the country. There is no stability in the country: our main message in this trip to Europe and America is to alert people. Before the barrel of explosives explodes, let us do something. UNITA may even lose its position as the leader of the opposition and the country will suffer. So we have to be very careful in Angola because the situation is not good.

We are trying to convince the government that we have a lot to gain in bringing back Angolans that were trained abroad. When we meet people who are CEOs or owners of their own companies, we try to encourage them to recruit Angolans from outside the country. Education in Angola is of poor quality and development needs better education and experts. The problem is that Angolans don't come home because the conditions are not there for them to stay. We are trying to convince the government that Angolans coming from abroad are not bringing revolutionary ideas; they are bringing expertise and skills that Angola needs.

Question:

What is your view on the recent demonstration in Luanda by ex-combatants demanding pensions?

What is UNITA's opinion on municipal elections?

What should Chatham House ask Abel Chivukuvuku from CASA-CE when he visits in May?

Isaias Samakuva:

The problem of the ex-combatants is one that contributes to this explosive situation. The conflict is coming from people that were demobilized with promises of getting their pensions, of getting training, of getting reintegrated but these promises were not fulfilled. Then they fought; the country is as it is today thanks to them; so they are now coming to these demonstrations again.

It is UNITA who has lots of these people. They want to go into the streets to protest, and the government on several occasions has asked us to talk with those people. The government only gave the high-ranking officials pensions, and not the soldiers, hoping that the ex-combatants would disperse without leadership.

But what is happening is that they are creating their own leaderships and they are now organizing these demonstrations. Even before leaving the country, another group came to us to say: 'listen, you must resolve this problem or you will see what happens. It is not only against the government, it is against you as well because you are doing nothing for us'.

This is a problem for Angola. I hope the government will do something. They are making promises but in reality nothing happens and therefore we are cannot keep our promises either.

We are struggling to get municipal elections. We put some pressure on the government, but they keep postponing the process; last time it was postponed until 2015. Now there has been a statement from the secretary of state saying that 2015 will not be the right time to hold local elections, that Angola doesn't have the right conditions for this; it needs a lot of studies. We need, we want these local elections to happen.

It is a pity that Abel Chivukuvuku left UNITA, but on the other hand, we are convinced that we can diversify the opposition against the government. The main thing for us is that this opposition fights against the government and not against the opposition as well. Chivukuvuku's organization seems to be devoted to fight against the government, so it will only come to reinforce the struggle against the ruling party. We hope that you will welcome him at Chatham House.