

ANGOLA TOWARDS DEVELOPMENT: NOW IS THE TIME TO INVEST

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ABSTRACT

From the interview of Manuel Eduardo Bravo, Ambassador of the Republic of Angola to India, concurrently accredited to Thailand & Malaysia, given to Professor Valentin Yakushik, the readers will get a distinct overview of the multifaceted history of Angola since the 1960s up to the present. Special emphasis has been laid on the trajectory to the Independence in 1975 and, subsequently, on the measures undertaken towards peace, security and stability in Angola and in Southern Africa.

The interview provides an insight into the evolution of Angola over the last six decades and the impact of the Cold War on the Angolan polity. Besides, it offers a perceptive and reflective analysis of the past, present and future challenges and prospects for Angola and its role as a critical stakeholder in the process of building peace and stability in Africa. To conclude the interview, Ambassador Bravo makes a persuasive case that private investments from all over the world, particularly from India and South-East Asia, would be welcome and paramount in the ongoing diversification of the Angolan economy.

KEYWORDS: Angola, Politically stable country, Opening to private investments.

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Interview with Manuel Eduardo Bravo, the Ambassador of the Republic of Angola to India, concurrently accredited to Thailand & Malaysia (the interviewer – Valentin Yakushik, Professor of the National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine, member of the editorial board of “National Interest International Academic Journal,” Thailand).

Prof. Yakushik: We know each other for more than 40 years, since the time I was a young lecturer and you were an Angolan student at Kiev State University in the capital of Ukraine, then one the republics of the USSR. You have obtained two Master Degrees with distinction: LL.M. in International Law at Kiev State University, in 1982, and an MA in Diplomatic Studies at the Diplomatic Academy of London, University of Westminster, in 1993.

You have had a wonderful professional career as an Angolan international lawyer and diplomat: having started at the Ministry of External Relations as an Assistant to the Africa and Middle East Directorate (1982-1985), then you were successively assigned as Deputy Director and Director of the Minister’s Office (1985-1991), Director-General for Legal and Consular Affairs (1999-2001), and as Senior Diplomatic Assistant to the Presidency of the Republic of Angola (2001-2011). Since 2012, you have been the Ambassador of Angola to India [1], concurrently accredited to Thailand [2] and Malaysia [3].

Having had a cursory glance at your professional profile, I realize that you have several publications within your main research areas of interest, namely public international law, geopolitics, political science, multilateralism, theories of positive peace and transformational leadership. I have come across collective books edited by yourself, such as Angola: Transition to Peace, Reconciliation and Development [4], not to mention articles in journals and newspapers, inter alia: The Trajectory of Angola’s Admission to the United Nations, in Novo Jornal, 27 November 2020; Agostinho Neto and

Realpolitik, in *Novo Jornal*, 21–28 September 2018; Remembering Afonso Van-Dúnem Mbinda, in *Novo Jornal*, 02–09 December 2016; Asian Tigers’ Path, in *Novo Jornal*, 22 July 2011; Special Relationship between Angola and South Africa, in *Novo Jornal*, 25 March 2011; Memories of Anatoly Dobrynin, in *Semanário Angolense*, 8 May 2010; Brief Consideration on the Use of the Diplomatic Bag and International Practice, in *Semanário Angolense*, 11–18 June 2005; and Reflections on War Reparations due to Angola by South Africa, in *Jornal de Angola*, 26 March 2005.

I would really like that you, from the height of your deep and varied political, administrative and academic experience, answer some questions that would interest not only me, but, I am sure, a wide international audience as well. Our academic journal tries to combine both approaches – analysis of pragmatic (practical) issues and working out theoretical (conceptual) background for better understanding of geopolitical and national problems. So, in my questions and your responses, we shall keep in mind these dual optics. Let me start with the following question:

What is the specificity, and maybe even the uniqueness of Angolan political experience as a country and as a state? What are the major features of nation-building in Angola?

Amb. Bravo: The uniqueness of Angolan political experience as a country and as a State stems even from the multicontinental colonial yoke Angolans had been subjugated to. Angola is about 5 times bigger than the UK and 14 times the size of Portugal. It has an abundance of natural and hydro resources, besides its rich flora and fauna. No wonder Angola was considered the jewel of the Portuguese colonial empire, an empire which resisted and refused to abide by the 1960 United Nations Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

In view of the colonial power’s unwillingness either to voluntarily concede the self-determination and independence to Angola, or to entertain dialogue with the then three National Liberation Movements, the latter opted for an armed struggle of national liberation, which broke out in 1961 and ended in 1974, following the Carnation Revolution occurred in Portugal in April 1974. Dishearteningly, throughout the 14 years of the anti-colonial war, the nationalist forces were unable to unite for the common purpose of combating the colonialism. Apart from being a cross that Angola carries even today, the egocentric disunity between the Liberation Movements turned out to be a feature of nation-building in the contemporary Angola. Besides, it bred the ensuing civil war which broke out prior and after the proclamation of the independence by the poet-president Agostinho Neto, on 11 November 1975. In his intemporal song “O guerrilheiro / The freedom fighter,” David Zé, an iconic singer-songwriter of the 1960s–1970s, captured the bad omen of the ontological and deep-seated discord within the national liberation *troika*: as the song goes “a união dos Movimentos [de Libertação Nacional] se fosse feita na prática a reacção não passaria / if the unity among the Movements [of National Liberation] were put into practice, reactionaries would not be successful.”

Prof. Yakushik: In the 1970s, the world experienced one of the highlights of the Cold War. **How did the Cold War environment affect the founding and the process of state-building in Angola?**

Amb. Bravo: Indeed, in mid-1970s, the Cold War was at one of its peak. Angola had been the main substrate for that high noon between the West and the East camps, led by the USA and the Soviet Union respectively. In fact, the geopolitical tense atmosphere of mid-1970s, which we witnessed first-hand in Huambo, Cuanza Sul, Luanda and Cuando Cubango, was somehow comparable to the one of the early 1960s, opposing the administrations Kennedy and Khrushchev due to the Bay of Pigs invasion and the Cuban missile crisis. It is no wonder that, as the veteran Soviet diplomat Anatoly Dobrynin put it, Angola became a cockpit of the Cold War. We couldn't agree more with Dobrynin whom I had the pleasure of interacting with in Moscow, in March 1987. In fact, Angola became such a Cold War's cockpit that throughout Jimmy Carter's administration, a US-Soviet bilateral commercial commission reached a temporary impasse, due to the so-called "Soviet involvement in Angola." The geostrategist Zbigniew Brzezinski wrote about it in his 1983 Memoirs. Undoubtedly, the impact of the Cold War on Angola was self-evident all along, from the 1960s up to the kick-start of *perestroika*: the MPLA, the political force which proclaimed the independence and ruled Angola since, was politico-militarily sustained by the Soviet Union and Cuba, while the other two political forces were supported by the US and the apartheid regime. In a nutshell, the impact of the Cold War in Angola was tremendous all along. The scenario couldn't have been different. Why? Because, as Georgi Arbatov, an eminent Americanist and political scientist, (whom, in 1980, I had the pleasure to meet at his think tank in Moscow) wrote: by supporting the National Liberation Movements, the Soviet Union internationalised regional crises and made them part of the Cold War.

Prof. Yakushik: According to you, how did *perestroika* impact in ending the civil war in Angola?

Amb. Bravo: No doubt about its positive impact. The advent of Gorbachev's *perestroika* led to a New Thinking that reflected on the de-ideologisation of the Soviet foreign policy. As a result of the de-ideologisation, the US and the Soviet Union came to terms with each other as far as ending nuclear arms race and settlement of regional conflicts were concerned. In this context, in the late 1980s, the Reagan administration and Gorbachev advanced the process of terminating the Cold War. This impulse of cooperative disengagement by the then superpowers facilitated the settlement of civil war in Angola and paved the way for the independence of Namibia and the fall of the regime of apartheid in South Africa. Clearly, the US-Soviet engagement with settling regional conflicts was such that the topic of Southern African conflict, whose epicentre was Angola, was a salient feature of the US-Soviet dialogue at the Washington (1987) and Moscow (1988) Summits, co-chaired by Reagan and Gorbachev.

Prof. Yakushik: What are the major stages in socio-political development of independent Angola?

Amb. Bravo: As I mentioned earlier, Angolans conquered their independence as a result of a liberation struggle, which counted on an overt Soviet strategic support. I use the word strategic as the support to the National Liberation Movements was based on a strategy devised by Khrushchev administration, in the early 1960s. You may recall that during the 1961 Vienna summit between Khrushchev and John Kennedy (JFK), Khrushchev emphasised the fairness of Angola's national liberation war. At that time, the anti-colonial war had already broken out in February 1961 and JFK was privy to the situation in Angola. In April 1961, he happened to interact with Holden Roberto, an iconic nationalist leader.

Against this background, JFK went along with Khrushchev's point of expressing support and solidarity vis-à-vis the Angola's liberation struggle. Not surprisingly, the Soviet support turned out to provide the perfect springboard to the socialist option in Angola and other countries in Africa and elsewhere. Indeed, a centrally-planned economy aligned with the one-party socialist orientation embodied the first major stage of governance in Angola, spanning from 1975 up to 1991. By the way, in 1991, India also abandoned the system of planned economy and started its journey of economic liberalisation captained at that time by the then Prime Minister Narasimha Rao and Finance Minister Manmohan Singh.

Going back to your question, another stage of socio-political development began in 1991-1992. The tone of this major stage was set by the 1991 peace accords signed by the Angolan government and UNITA, in Bicesse-Portugal, under the aegis of Portugal, the Soviet Union and the US. The signing of these peace accords paved the way for the adoption of the 1992 Constitution which enshrined a market economy system and a multi-party system on the basis of which multi-party elections were held for the first time in Angola in September 1992.

Prof. Yakushik: Planned economies and one-party societies (or societies with a hegemonic political party) are hallmarks of the majority of socialist and socialism-oriented countries. **Would it be fair to say that the 1992 Constitution sounded the death knell of socialism-building in Angola?**

Amb. Bravo: Well, it seems that the 1992 Constitution, and thereafter, the 2010 Constitution, signalled Angola's divorce from socialist path, rather than its obituary. Clearly, pure socialism, the scientific socialism based on the Marxist-Leninist doctrine did not live up to its expectations in Angola and in many other countries that embraced socialist ideology since the 1960s. Although there was a 40-years Cold War won by the West, one has to admit that in Africa the political leaders, the political parties and the thinking elites in the socialism-oriented countries did not walk the talk. On the whole, they didn't rise up to the challenge of making the aspirations of development, prosperity and freedom come true, as it was and is preached. The million-dollar question frequently asked is if the socialist socio-economic system is adaptable to Africa? The eminent

Ghanaian economist George Ayittey would solidly argue that socialism failed in Africa because it is alien to indigenous African culture as free trade and free market were practiced before colonialists arrived in Africa.

Prof. Yakushik: Are you aware of any success stories of socialism, be it pure or hybrid, in other geographies other than Africa?

Amb. Bravo: Of course. We have to take our hat off to a handful of developing countries in Asia which have been successful in following a kind of hybrid socialism. They have been making visible strides in disempoverishment, development and prosperity. This is why I previously mentioned that I didn't write off yet the obituary of socialism, be it in Africa or elsewhere. For whatever it's worth, my perception is that a functioning, hybrid and democratic socialism, adapted to historical concrete realities of the nations, can see the light of day across geographies of the world, should their leaderships so choose. A key to reach this desideratum is the observance of the quadrinomial "rule of law – international law – independent judiciary – good governance." In fact, the common denominator should be the following: the accession to power shouldn't be an end in itself but a means to build humanized, harmonious and prosperous societies, based on positive peace in the Galtungian perspective.

At the end of the day, as Kishore Mahbubani, a renowned Singaporean global public intellectual put it, "good governance is not associated with any single political system or ideology. It is associated with the willingness and ability of the government to develop economic, social and administrative systems that are resilient enough to handle the challenges brought about in the new economic era..." I couldn't agree more with Mahbubani's assertion.

Prof. Yakushik: We know that in the contemporary world there is no longer such an acute bipolar confrontation as it was before the collapse of the Soviet Union and the socialist bloc in Europe and North Eurasia. However, at the same time, the exacerbation of the global confrontation between the West and China, and in particular, in Africa, is clearly manifested. New influential powers are emerging not only at the regional but also at the global level (for example, India and Turkey).

In addition, it seems that there is a very important factor in the life of every country in the modern multi-polar, pluralistic world – a country's pertinence to a particular cultural, civilizational community of nations. After all, it is well known what a significant role is played by The [British] Commonwealth (the community of English-speaking nations), the *Francophonie*, various associations of Arab and Muslim countries, as well as of Turkic-speaking nations.

In this complex, multi-layer and multi-component context, it will of course be interesting to know what is the geopolitical, geo-economic and geo-cultural positioning of Angola?

Amb. Bravo: You are absolutely right. The world is increasingly experiencing greater

multipolarity and plurilateralism, as a result of an à la carte use of multilateralism. Countries like India, Indonesia, Iran, China, Russia and Turkey, for example, stand out as rising emerging poles of power as a consequence of new geopolitical dynamics. In this exercise of multipolarity and plurilateralism are emerging or solidifying new platforms and concepts such as the Indo-Pacific, Quadrilateral Security Dialog (QUAD), Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and Ghana-headquartered African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). I truly believe that Africa has a critical role to play in the rising multipolar world: if led by strategic perspicacity, putting the interests of the peoples above all else, the African regional group has full potential to become a pole, a voice that matters in the world's geo-economic equation. Significantly, at the Raisina Dialogue 2021, the Indian Foreign Minister, Dr Jaishankar, emphasised that the world will not be multipolar until the rise of Africa actually takes place.

Tellingly, today's reality of multipolarity somehow corresponds to the 1964 prediction of Karl Deutsch and David Singer. It envisaged a multipolar international system as a guarantee for a greater stability in the world as opposite to bipolar world order, whose degree of instability "appears to be substantially greater."

Prof. Yakushik: What about the positioning of the geo-political/economical dimensions of Angola in Africa?

Amb. Bravo: The dynamics of the geo-dimensions mentioned in your question have always intersected and informed the Angolan foreign policy. As you know, Angola is geographically located in Central and Southern Africa and is a founding member of the Gabon-headquartered Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Luanda-headquartered Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC) and the Botswana-headquartered Southern African Development Community (SADC). As such, Angola is an important and pro-active stakeholder of peace-making, peace-keeping and peace-building enterprises in sub-Saharan Africa. In this ambit, in January 2021, Angola hosted and presided over a mini-summit of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) dedicated to the political and security situation in the Central African Republic. The summit urged the Central African government to create an environment favourable to peace and national reconciliation and encouraged all stakeholders to operationalize the Truth, Justice, Reparations and Reconciliation Commission. Likewise, in 2017-2018, Angolan peacekeepers serving with SADC Preventive Mission played a critical role in restoring law and order in Lesotho, a brotherly and friendly country. In the same vein, in August 2019, the African Union praised president João Lourenço for having been instrumental in facilitating dialogue and normalisation of bilateral relations between Rwanda and Uganda.

Prof. Yakushik: What about the geo-cultural dimension? Does it matter in the foreign policy making of Angola?

Amb. Bravo: Absolutely. In 2015, under the initiative of Angola, the African Union institutionalised the Pan-African Forum for the Culture of Peace, which is held every two years. Late this year, the second Biennale of Luanda will take place, in partnership with UNESCO and the African Union. Such events are always an opportunity for the African countries and their diasporas to showcase the richness of their cultural diversity and maintain dialogues about peace, freedom and development.

Prof. Yakushik: As far as I understand, some African countries are distancing themselves from the long-standing cultural and linguistic (and, apparently, as a consequence of this, geopolitical) tradition. For example, Mozambique has joined *The Commonwealth* (in 1995), as well as Rwanda (which has even adopted English as an official language since joining this organisation in 2009). The status of English language is strengthened in Madagascar.

How are you doing in Angola in this respect? Are there any tendencies towards a departure from some elements of the traditional self-identification and positioning in the global world?

Amb. Bravo: As a matter of fact, the hat of distancing from Portuguese speaking countries doesn't fit Angola which is a founding and pro-active member of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP). As you are aware, this Community is made up by nine full Portuguese-speaking members from four continents, besides associated observers, such as UK, Japan, Turkey, France and Senegal, to cite but a few. By the way, in the second half of 2021, Angola is going to host a Heads of State CPLP Summit, during which an Agreement on Mobility may be approved. As far as Angola's accession to the Commonwealth and Francophonie is concerned, let's recall the following passage from president João Lourenço's 2018 interview: "Angola is surrounded, not by Portuguese-speaking countries, but by French-speaking countries and English-speaking countries. Therefore, don't be surprised that we are going to apply now to join the Francophonie and that, in a few days, we will also submit a membership application to the Commonwealth." Since this interview, the Angolan government presented its candidacy for joining both organisations. The Coronavirus pandemic constraints have impeded holding presential diplomatic gatherings but I guess that, in a couple of years or so, Angola will definitely be affiliated as a full member to the Francophonie and the Commonwealth.

Prof. Yakushik: And if I may put it this way, what are the priority partners of your State? (Among other states, organizations and, probably, corporations.)

Amb. Bravo: Among the current or emerging priority partners stand out the member states of SADC, ECCAS, CPLP and ICGLR, whose rotating chairperson is now the head of state of Angola. The same pattern applies to countries such as Algeria, China, Egypt, India, Russia, USA, besides EU members like France, Germany, Italy, Spain, UK, and the Gulf countries. But there are, naturally, other countries. This is just a glimpse of a myriad of countries with which Angola has established or is establishing friendly relations of cooperation and/or strategic partnerships. As regards to international organisations, Angola attaches great importance to the United Nations, the Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States, and the African Union. An Angolan Commissioner is responsible for the portfolio of rural economy and agriculture in the African Union, while another Angolan diplomat chairs the International Law Commission of the organisation. The European Union is another multilateral platform which is dear to my country. Not too long ago, in September 2020, if my memory serves me well, Angola and the EU held a ministerial meeting. One of the main takeaways of that meeting was the launch of a roadmap designed to set up a partnership on security and defence. Due to its prestige and capabilities in the domain of security and defence, Angola may participate in EU's missions and operations of common security and defence policy, namely in the Gulf of Guinea.

Prof. Yakushik: What are the sub-regions organizations in Africa which have greater weight, which revolves around the formulation and implementation of the foreign policy of Angola?

Amb. Bravo: The sub-regional platforms that matter most to the pendulum of the foreign policy of Angola and to its diplomatic priorities and approaches are the ECCAS, whose Commission is currently led by an Angolan diplomat. The other one is the ICGLR, whose executive secretariat is led by another Angolan diplomat. Last, but not the least is the SADC which evolved in the first phase as Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC). Its genesis is interlaced with the organization of the Front Line States (FLS), which is a brainchild of president Agostinho Neto who, in 1977, proposed its creation to his counterparts in Southern Africa. This explains the deep political and emotional bonds which link Angola to SADC. You may recall that at that epoch, the 1970s and first half of the 1980s, the existential challenge in Southern Africa was to combat and eradicate the ferocious apartheid regime and liberate the peoples of Namibia and South Africa.

Understandably, there are plenty of commonalities among the three organizations: it is worth highlighting the goals of peace, security and development within and among the member states, not to mention the strategic plans and action plans of development that each sub-regional platform approves at the highest levels.

Prof. Yakushik: As the Ambassador of Angola to India and Thailand and to several other countries of the region, what are your views about the economic, political and cultural role of the region of South and Southeast Asia for your country (Angola), and for sub-Saharan Africa? What are the prospects for mutually beneficial cooperation between Angola and the countries of this region? Are there any obstacles to this? And if so, how to overcome them?

Amb. Bravo: Angola-India ties go back to the 1960s when Angola's national liberation struggle benefitted from India's support and solidarity. The bilateral cooperation is vibrant, but has yet to attain its cruise speed. Oil continues to have a bearing on the trade relations that Angola entertains with India and Thailand. For example, in 2020, Angola exported 446.39 million barrels of oil and the three main countries of destination were China (71.07%), India (5.87%) and Thailand (4.34%). The challenges and the prospects have to evolve from a buyer-seller relationship to a strategic and diversified cooperation. I am optimistic that Angola and friendly Southeast Asian countries like India, Thailand, Malaysia, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives and others, will rise up to the challenge of diversifying and strengthening this cooperation. By the way, India's support to its industrialists to invest in Africa is one of the principles guiding India's engagement with Africa. Should this principle be put into practice, as I expect it to, it will provide added value to the Indo-Angolan cooperation.

Prof. Yakushik: At the end of our conversation, could you indicate what, in your opinion, are the main current challenges for Angola, both domestically and internationally?

Amb. Bravo: As you are aware, since 2017, Angola is under a new ruling political dispensation. Its flagship policy is an ongoing crusade against corruption and impunity. Angola is implementing a package of many-sided reforms aimed at improving the doing business environment, implementing a macroeconomic stabilization programme and promoting private investment. New laws on private investment and on competition have been passed. The process of investments and of issuance of visas has been simplified and free and fair competition is ensured within the Angolan market. The Investor Gateway at the Private Investment Agency (AIPEX) is already in operation. It ensures that every investment proposal is decided upon in less than a month. It is no wonder that, according to the African Investment Report 2019, Angola emerged amongst the top five favoured countries to invest in.

Prof. Yakushik: What are the domains in which private investments are most welcome in Angola?

Amb. Bravo: Private investments would make all the difference in domains such as: agriculture, fisheries and food-processing; education, health and pharmaceuticals; hospitality and tourism; manufacturing and petrochemical industries; solar energy; transports and logistics; textiles, clothing and footwear. I could go on enumerating several other areas. By the way, we have in place a National Production and Export Diversification Programme (PRODESI) oriented towards the non-oil sector. South-East Asian captains of industry and entrepreneurs would be welcome game changers in the diversification of the Angolan economy. What's more, under the Privatization Programme (PROPRIV),

we have at the disposal of private investors over 190 public companies due to be privatized through the stock market. As expected, due to our great hydrocarbon potential, the Angolan government will award over 50 exploration oil blocks by 2025. The submission of bids is underway. So, businessmen of India, Thailand, Malaysia and elsewhere are invited to grasp these and other opportunities to invest in Angola. Needless to say that all investments are bound to clear-cut guarantees of repatriation of dividends and profits.

Prof. Yakushik: Thank you very much for the interesting and informative interview. I wish you success in your responsible and noble work whereby you contribute to your country, Angola, being a dynamic and developed regional power.

Amb. Bravo: Thank you for your kind words and your best wishes, Prof. Yakushik. It has been a great pleasure to interact with you. I have always held your academic and scientific credentials in high regard ever since our paths crossed in Kiev, for the first time, in the 1970s. Angola is a country with a strong sense of individuality, freedom and strategic autonomy instilled in its nationals even before the proclamation of Independence by Agostinho Neto, whose birth centenary Angolans will celebrate in 2022. These traits, associated with hard work and focus on development as freedom, as the Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen would say, will pay off in the medium to long-term. We hope that, through this interview, the readers and subscribers of this renowned journal get a small glimpse of an emerging, promising, politically stable and hospitable African country called Angola, open to investments from all over the world, namely from Asia [5].

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