

Angola

Ethnicity in Angola

Group selection

Angola consists of 12 to 13 distinct ethnic groups, which settle in the following regions. The Ovimbundu-Ovambo, the largest ethnic group, settles in the central-eastern highlands (Provinces: Bie, Huambo, Huila, Benguela, and Cuando Cubango). They earn their living as farmers. The Mbundu-Mestico (term used for racially mixed Portuguese-Africans), the second largest ethnic group of the country, live primarily in the provinces surrounding the capital Luanda (Provinces: Luanda, Bengo, Cuanza Norte, Cuanza Sul and Malanje). They are due to the geographical proximity to the Portuguese more educated and work in a variety of sectors. The Bakongo, the third largest ethnic group, live in the northern provinces bordering the Democratic Republic of Congo (Provinces: Uige, Zaire). The Lunda-Chokwe, the fourth largest ethnic group, live in the western provinces of Angola (Provinces: Lunda Norte, Lunda Sul and Moxico). The other minor groups live in central Angola between the Ovimbundu-Ovambo and the Lunda-Chokwe (the Nganguela), in the southeastern provinces Namibe and Cunene (the Helelo and Nyaneka) and the enclave Cabinda in the north of Angola (the Cabinda-Mayombe) (⁴²; ⁴³, 109-110; ⁴⁴, 18-47; ⁴⁵). After independence from Portugal in 1975 the dominant liberation movement Movimento Popular de Liberta de Angola (MPLA) under colonialization came to power and installed a Marxist-Leninist single party regime following the example of the United Socialist Soviet Republic (USSR). Between 1975 and 2002 Angola found itself with short periods of peace (1990-1992, 1994-1998) in a civil war between the MPLA and the second big liberation movement after independence the Unio Nacional para la Independencia Total de Angola (UNITA). After the loss of their charismatic leader UNITA agreed to a ceasefire, demobilized its troops and has transformed itself to the largest opposition party. Besides minor incidences in the enclave of Cabinda in the north, which strives for independence, Angola has since then lived in peace, but is politically still dominated by the MPLA (⁴⁶).

Fearon's (⁴⁷) list is used as a starting point since it includes all the larger ethnic groups noted above. The list from the Minorities at Risk program is too sparse and the one from the Soviet Atlas Narodov Mira is far too detailed. The reasons for these changes

⁴² [Broadhead, 1992]

⁴³ [Levinson, 1998]

⁴⁴ [Lusani, 2001]

⁴⁵ [James, 2004]

⁴⁶ [James, 2004]

⁴⁷ [Fearon, 2003]

are as follows: 1. In the literature consulted there was no evidence that the Nganguela and Nyaneka were politically relevant or compactly supported the political movement of any other ethnic groups (Broadhead (⁴⁸, 149) argues that half of the Nganguela supported the MPLA, while the other half supported the UNITA). Hence, they were dropped from the list (rather than coding them as irrelevant in each time period). 2. Although the Cabinda-Mayombe and the Bakongo are closely related they are kept as distinct groups for the analysis. The reasons are as follows. First, the Cabinda-Mayombe have their own political group, the Frente para a Libertação do Enclave de Cabinda (FLEC). Second, the FLEC does not strive for political power in all of Angola, but for the independence of the enclave Cabinda in the far north of the country, which has huge oil reserves and is therefore economically important for Angola as a whole (over 90% of all Angolas export revenue is based on oil exports from Cabinda) (⁴⁹, 115-119, 308-312). The adapted group list maps nicely into the major political organizations that make up the political arena between 1975-2005. The Mbundu-Mestico build the primary supporter base of the MPLA, the Ovimbundu and Lunda that of the UNITA, the Bakongo are the main supporters of the Frente Nacional da Liberta de Angola (FNLA) and finally the FLEC finds their main support among the Cabinda-Mayombe (⁵⁰, ⁵¹).

⁴⁸ [Broadhead, 1992]

⁴⁹ [Lusani, 2001]

⁵⁰ [Broadhead, 1992]

⁵¹ [James, 2004]

The role of ethnicity

Ethnicity played a significant role in the political life of Angola since independence. The reasons leading to this coding are as follows:

1. All of the main political actors during that time period receive primary support from one of the main ethnic groups. Although the MPLA and UNITA tried to build a broad national coalition, their attempt was not very successful and forced them to rely heavily on their core supporters. Moreover, the literature provides evidence that people of these ethnic groups felt represented by those political actors (Ingham 1990: 178-180; ⁵²; ⁵³, 109; ⁵⁴, 187-188, 196-197).
 2. Heywood (⁵⁵, 48) notes explicitly that nationalism has failed to break ethnic thinking. She also argues that the ideological dimension of the civil war (East vs. West, Socialism vs. Capitalism) had an underlying ethnic dimension, which makes sense, since the conflict could not be settled when the ideological dimension vanished with the end of the cold war. Only after the death of the UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi 2002 could the civil war be successfully terminated. Additionally, she argues that when taking over power the MPLA avoided open elections, because ethnicity could count for more than ideology (⁵⁶, 188).

⁵² [Broadhead, 1992]

⁵³ [Tvedten, 1997]

⁵⁴ [Heywood, 2000]

⁵⁵ [Heywood, 2000]

⁵⁶ [Heywood, 2000]

*Power relations**1975-2002*

The time period was chosen from independence to the death of Jonas Savimbi in 2002, after which the UNITA definitely transformed itself from a guerilla movement to a political party. All main political actors were independence movements, which in the winter before Angolas independence (11. November 1975) agreed to mutual recognition with equal rights and responsibility. During spring and early summer 1975, however, the groups became engaged in fights for power over the country. At the same time they received financial and technical (e.g. military advisers) support from the United States (UNITA and FNLA) and the Soviets/Cuba (MPLA). The MPLA could drive the UNITA and FNLA out from the capital city Luanda, where due to the geographical and ethnic closeness (i.e. the majority of the assimilandos and mesticos supported the MPLA, while the UNITA and FNLA stressed the negritude dominance) the Portuguese in November 1975 granted the MPLA formally control over Angola. The MPLA declared the Peoples Republic of Angola (PRA), which is immediately recognized by the Soviet Union, Cuba, the Warsaw Pact Nations, and Brazil. They also began to establish a single party regime following Soviet example, occupied all official political offices and where 1976 officially recognized as the 47th member of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Finally, without becoming a member of MPLA, which was dominated by the **Mbundu-Mestico** people, one had no chance of getting political power. This is the reason why the power access of the Mbundu-Mestico people has been coded as a monopoly (⁵⁷, 164-321; ⁵⁸, xxviii- xxxv). The UNITA and FNLA declared the Republica de Pessao Democrtica de Angola (RPDA), with Huambo as capital and built a shadow government. Their republic and government was never officially recognized, but from 1975-1989 financially and militarily supported by the United States and South Africa. The UNITA dominated the FNLA (⁵⁹; ⁶⁰, 197-200; ⁶¹, 164-165), which in a last attempt to capture the capital before independence was defeated by the MPLA troops and since then never gained political prominence again. They also never held a single province under their control. The **Bakongo**, the main supporters of the FNLA, are therefore coded as powerless, since there was no evidence that they were formally or informally discriminated (⁶², 86-88; ⁶³, 61- 62). During the whole time period and civil war the UNITA held at least on province and up to 2/3 of the country, which is why the Ovimbundu-Lunda have been coded as having local power (⁶⁴). Finally, the FLEC was defeated by MPLA troops, which needed to gain dominance in the petroleum-rich province to cover their political and military expenses. Since then (1975), the FLEC has maintained a low-level insurgency, which has been ineffective, since the FLEC has split into two subgroups. Again, since there was no evidence of formal or informal discrimination the **Cabinda-Mayombe** have been coded as powerless. One could

⁵⁷ [Lusani, 2001]⁵⁸ [James, 2004]⁵⁹ [Heywood, 1989]⁶⁰ [Broadhead, 1992]⁶¹ [James, 2004]

object that there have been various ceasefires and periods of peace between 1975 and 2002 and even free and general elections 1992, which should be reflected in the coding. The reasons these periods of peace are not reflected in the coding are the following: 1. Both periods (1990-1992 and 1994-1998) were relative short and in none of the two periods was there an effective change in power (⁶⁵, 189-321). 2. None of the peace treaties brought a significant political change. The parliamentary elections 1992 lead to an absolute majority for the MPLA (130 seats out of 220, UNITA 70 out of 130 and FNLA 5 out of 130) and José Eduardo dos Santos (49.57%, Savimbi 40.07%) missed the absolute majority only scantily. A second round never took place since the UNITA accused the MPLA of fraud, although international observers graded the elections as free and fair. This restarted the civil war again (1992-1994), so that the newly elected parliament first met on April 1997 (⁶⁶, ⁶⁷, 252-255). The establishment of a national government of unity (GURN) as outlined in the treaty of Lusaka (1994) also did not lead to any significant changes in power, since the UNITA held only 4 ministries (mining, trade, health and tourism) and 7 vice-ministers (construction, finance, domestic politics, farming, social welfare, media and defense) of the 29 ministers and 57 vice-ministers. Additionally, dos Santos weakened the position of the UNITA in the government considerably, for example by outsourcing the mining and trade of diamantes to a newly founded holding. One can therefore not speak of a true period of power sharing (GURN in power from April 1997 until August 1998) (⁶⁸, 277-281).

2003-2017

The time period was chosen from the death of Jonas Savimbi (2002) to the end of the coding time period. After the death of Jonas Savimbi and his deputy in 2002 the UNITA, the only remaining big opponent of the MPLA after 1975, surrendered, turn power in all provinces to the government, disarmed completely and transformed itself into a political party, which is with 70 of the 130 seats in parliament in largest opposition party. Since the MPLA government holds all ministries, provinces and the absolute majority in parliament. The next presidential and parliamentary elections have been rescheduled several times. To date the next parliamentary elections are assumed to be held 2008 or 2009, although the definitive date has not yet been set. The Mbunda-Mestico, the main supporters of the MPLA, have been therefore coded as having dominant power rather than monopoly power, because they have formally agreed to share power based on fair and free elections (⁶⁹, 104-108; ⁷⁰). Note, however, that the MPLA is trying to broaden its electoral base and has therefore since 2003 loosened its ethnic ties considerably. It is therefore becoming more difficult to map a single ethnic group to the MPLA as time passes. All other groups play at best a minor role in Angolan politics. The UNITA is with 70 parliamentary

⁶⁹ [James, 2004]

⁷⁰ [Haan Santana, 2005]

members the biggest opposition party, but has no real political influence. It also lost formal political control of the provinces it once controlled. As the Bakongo and Cabinda-Mayombe whose situation remained unchanged between the two time periods distinguished, the Ovimbundu-Lunda group are coded as powerless between 2003 and 2005 (⁷¹, ⁷²). There was no evidence of formal or informal discrimination by the ruling MPLA.

As stated in the previous comments, ethnicity plays a role in Angola's political arena despite different (failed) attempts of political parties to establish an Angolan identity and thereby win the support of voters "outside" their traditional bases (e.g. ⁷³, ⁷; ⁷⁴, ¹⁰). Only the ruling MPLA, due to its dominance and its hold on the machinery of the state, has had some success in this regard and further consolidated its power position in recent years.

This is aptly reflected in its landslide victories in the legislative elections in 2008 and 2012 (⁷⁵; ⁷⁶). Originally an Mbundu-Mestizo Movement, MPLA has been increasingly successful in attracting/co-opting elites and citizens from other ethnic groups, mainly from the Ovimbundu-Ovambo and the Bakongo groups (e.g. ⁷⁷, ¹⁰; ⁷⁸, ³³; ⁷⁹). In today's Angola the key route to political power is an MPLA affiliation. In this sense, the MPLA regime is no longer representing the interests of one ethnic group but has become more inclusive.

The same is not true for the most important opposition parties. While UNITA lost some of its traditional areas of support in the 2008 elections (⁸⁰, ⁹²), it still has a mainly Ovimbundu-Ovambo followership. FNLA received most of its votes from ethnic Bakongo. Most Bakongo and Ovimbundu-Ovambo voted, however, MPLA both in 2008 and 2012 (⁸¹, ²⁰¹⁰; ⁸², ²⁰¹⁴). This illustrates the MPLA's success in reaching out to citizens from other groups than its original Mbundu-Mestizo followership. On the other hand, recent voting patterns show that ethnicity is still a salient dimension of political contestation. UNITA, FNLA, and also PRS (with a predominantly Lunda-Chokwe support base) remain, to a large extent, ethnic organizations. Yet also within the governing MPLA, as within the Angolan state on the whole, questions of power are "further complicated by subethnic and racial dynamics" (⁸³, ¹⁰⁷), as for example even president Dos Santos' ethnic background is more complex than claimed. Therefore, MPLA's win of the election and the simultaneous decrease of votes for the UNITA can be seen as a tendency of overcoming ethnically motivated politics, yet ingrains as well a tendency to further minimize the political integration of parties and groups outside the "omnipotent" MPLA (see literature review below).

As far as the Angolan exclave Cabinda is concerned, there is still an active separatist movement and some low-scale outbreaks of violence have occurred in the recent past, most notably a FLEC attack on the bus of the Togolese national soccer team (⁸⁴, ²⁰¹²). There have been some attempts by the central government to coopt Cabindan elites but no meaningful steps towards political inclusion

⁷¹ [James, 2004]

⁷² [Haan Santana, 2005]

⁷³ [Orre, 2010]

⁷⁴ [Roque, 2008]

⁷⁵ [US State Department, 2006-2016]

⁷⁶ [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2008-2016]

⁷⁷ [Orre, 2010]

⁷⁸ [Armundsen and Weimer, 2008]

⁷⁹ [Roque, 2009]

⁸⁰ [James, 2011]

⁸¹ [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2008-2016]

⁸² [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2008-2016]

⁸³ [Malaquias, 2000]

⁸⁴ [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2008-2016]

(*ibid.*). On the other hand, the U.S. State Department human rights reports (⁸⁵, 2010-13) do not report evidence of systematic state-led discrimination against Cabindans. On these grounds, the Cabindan Mayombe are continued to be coded as powerless.

⁸⁵ [US State Department, 2006-2016]

The MPLA continues to hold its dominance in the Angolan state administration and politics. It also continues to portray itself as a party that transgresses exclusionary ethnic interests. Indeed, the fact that the party portrays itself as the only movement whose nation-building aspirations transcends ethno-regional and racial boundaries is part of their claim of being the only legitimate guiding force in Angolan politics. The national reconstruction envisioned by the MPLA encompasses an ideological project of transforming the country according to its modernised, urbanised Portuguese speaking capital (⁸⁶, 19).

⁸⁶ [Soares de Oliveira, 2015]

The Historical Dictionary of Angola continues to declare UNITA and FNLA as ethnic organisations. However, this denomination stems rather from a general remaining importance of ethnicity in politics, not from explicit claims made by organisations on behalf of certain ethnicities. On the contrary, the Bertelsmann Stiftung contains that “all parties carefully refrain from mobilising along ethnic lines” (⁸⁷, 2014: 7) and that in fact “any ‘ethnic question’ has been largely absent from public debate” ever since the end of the civil war (⁸⁸, 2016: 6). UNITA and FNLA remain thus, to a large extent, ethnic organizations when it comes to their support base, not, however when it comes to publicly pronouncing ethnic claims, which is something frowned upon in Angolan politics. This remains the case (at least for the UNITA) up until 2017 (⁸⁹, 50), while detailed information on voting behaviour in the 2017 elections have not been released at the time of the coding.

⁸⁷ [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2008-2016]

⁸⁸ [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2008-2016]

⁸⁹ [Lansford, 2017]

While previous coding remarked a tendency of overcoming ethnically motivated politics due to the MPLA’s win of votes in the 2008 election and the decrease of votes for UNITA, this trend has been reversed with the 2017 elections: The MPLA lost 10% of its votes (from 72% in 2012 to 61%) while the UNITA gained seats and currently holds 27% of the seats. Also the UNITA splinter CASA-CE (founded in 2012 (⁹⁰, 51)) gained votes and holds 9% of the seats (⁹¹). Hence, while the MPLA’s refraining from active ethnic mobilisation might indicate a trend towards a dwindling importance of ethnicity in national Angolan politics, it is still too early to completely declare ethnicity as irrelevant in the Angolan political sphere. The winning of the ethnic parties can, on the contrary, be interpreted as an increase in the relevance of ethnic politization. Supporting this coding decision of continued ethnic relevance in Angola’s political sphere, Roque (⁹², 9-10) contends that no political party, including the MPLA “has managed to create a truly nationalist platform”, which has allowed (social and ethnic) fragmentation and stratification to remain unaddressed and thus poses a threat to unity of the ruling class. The SRP and FNLA both lost one seat and thus remain in parliament with two and one seats respectively (⁹³).

⁹⁰ [Lansford, 2017]

⁹¹ [Electoral Geography, 2017]

⁹² [Roque, 2017]

⁹³ [Electoral Geography, 2017]

The MPLA's dominance in Angolan politics was reinforced by the 2010 constitutional amendment, which grants the president further power and consolidated the executive's dominance over both legislative and judicative (⁹⁴, 13). Opposition parties don't enjoy equal airtime or coverage in public media nor funding. The president remains the ultimate arbiter of any political decision. The democratically elected parliament is "almost irrelevant, and opposition parties in parliament have little to no leverage to influence decision-making" (⁹⁵, 2014: 10). While formally a democracy, Angola is de facto an authoritarian state (⁹⁶, 2014: 13). The cabinet is directly appointed by the president and the parliament has little power, so the ultimate arbiter of political decisions remains the president (⁹⁷, 2016: 8). Power of the opposition parties in national politics remained largely insignificant over the whole period (⁹⁸, 2016: 14).

Focussing on the executive branch of state power, the Angolan cabinet has comprised ministers from all three major ethnic groups (Mbundu-Mestico, Bakongo, and Ovimbundu-Ovambo) as well as the Lunda-Chokwe since 2006, the latest (⁹⁹, 2006-2013). However, Roque writes in a report for the Institute for Security Studies that both MPLA and opposition members acknowledge that "no Ovimbundu or Bakongo today holds any real power in the state, despite token placements within the leadership of the military and the cabinet" (¹⁰⁰, 10). Martins contends further that while there are some Ovimbundu-Ovambo in the Angolan government, those are rather "thinkers in the back", supporting the regime but never reaching leadership positions" (¹⁰¹, 14). Also they are facing a trend of growing levels of discrimination in the economy on the basis of their ethnic origin (¹⁰², 13). In line with this, the previous coding phase is continued and the Mbundu-Mestico are coded as dominant while Bakongo, Ovimbundu-Ovambo and Lunda-Chokwe are coded as powerless, even though they formally occupy positions of power.

According to the BTI Project Lunda-Chokwe and Cabinda people are the only Angolans that identify as ethnic minorities (¹⁰³, 2016: 6). Both provinces have experienced repression and ethnic activism of some sort. In Lunda provinces, a "Movement for the Protectorate of Lunda-Chokwe" has been peacefully advocating regional autonomy and an end to human rights violations by security forces (¹⁰⁴, 2016: 6). The PRS, formerly drawing support from Chokwe from the eastern Luanda provinces has refrained from mobilizing along ethnic lines (¹⁰⁵, 2014: 8).

According to the BTI Project, political claims based on ethno-regional identities have all but disappeared since the end of the war, with the Cabinda in the north being the only exception (¹⁰⁶, 2014: 7). In the Province of Cabinda the separatist movement FLEC continues to wage a low-level guerilla war against what it conceives as the Angolan "occupation" of Cabinda. FLEC continue sporadic attacks of federal army troops as well as oil companies (¹⁰⁷, 2014: 7; ¹⁰⁸, 2016: 6). Some low-scale outbreaks of violence have occurred in the recent past, most notably a FLEC attack on the bus of the

⁹⁴ [Orre, 2010]⁹⁵ [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2008-2016]⁹⁶ [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2008-2016]⁹⁷ [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2008-2016]⁹⁸ [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2008-2016]⁹⁹ [US State Department, 2006-2016]¹⁰⁰ [Roque, 2017]¹⁰¹ [Martins, 2015]¹⁰² [Martins, 2015]¹⁰³ [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2008-2016]¹⁰⁴ [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2008-2016]¹⁰⁵ [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2008-2016]¹⁰⁶ [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2008-2016]¹⁰⁷ [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2008-2016]¹⁰⁸ [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2008-2016]

Togolese national soccer team (¹⁰⁹, 2012). There have been some attempts by the central government to co-opt Cabinda elites but no meaningful steps towards political inclusion (*ibid.*). Since the death of one of its founders in 2016, the FLEC has become more active, coordinated and destabilising. In February 2017 they claimed to have killed 18 Angolan soldiers and triggered the deploying of private security organisations by the Angolan military intelligence to kill certain FLEC commanders. Efforts to united Cabinda factions are gaining ground (¹¹⁰, 19). Although there is evidence that in Cabinda, civil society activists and suspected FLEC-supporters are often prosecuted, detained and tortured (¹¹¹, 2014: 13), that the general human rights and freedom of press situation deteriorated between 2014 and 2016 (¹¹², 2016: 2) and that repression and violence in both resource rich regions Cabinda and Lunda have increased in 2016/17 (¹¹³, 20), the U.S. State Department human rights reports (2010-16) and Human Rights Watch do not find evidence that repression reaches a level of systematic state-led discrimination against both ethnic groups (¹¹⁴, 2006-2016; ¹¹⁵). On these grounds, the Lunda-Chokwe and the Cabindan Mayombe are continued to be coded as powerless.

¹⁰⁹ [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2008-2016]

¹¹⁰ [Roque, 2017]

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Political status of ethnic groups in Angola

From 1975 until 2002

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Ovimbundu-Ovambo	0.38	DISCRIMINATED
Mbundu-Mestico	0.26	MONOPOLY
Bakongo	0.13	POWERLESS
Lunda-Chokwe	0.09	DISCRIMINATED
Cabindan Mayombe	0.02	POWERLESS

From 2003 until 2017

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Ovimbundu-Ovambo	0.38	POWERLESS
Mbundu-Mestico	0.26	DOMINANT
Bakongo	0.13	POWERLESS
Lunda-Chokwe	0.09	POWERLESS
Cabindan Mayombe	0.02	POWERLESS

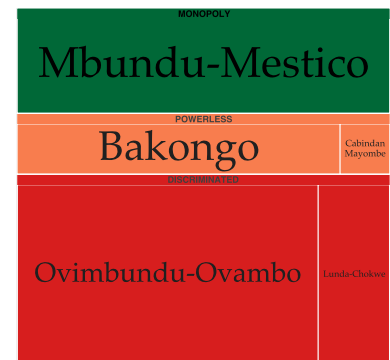


Figure 17: Political status of ethnic groups in Angola during 1975-2002.



Figure 18: Political status of ethnic groups in Angola during 2003-2017.

Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Angola

From 1975 until 2017

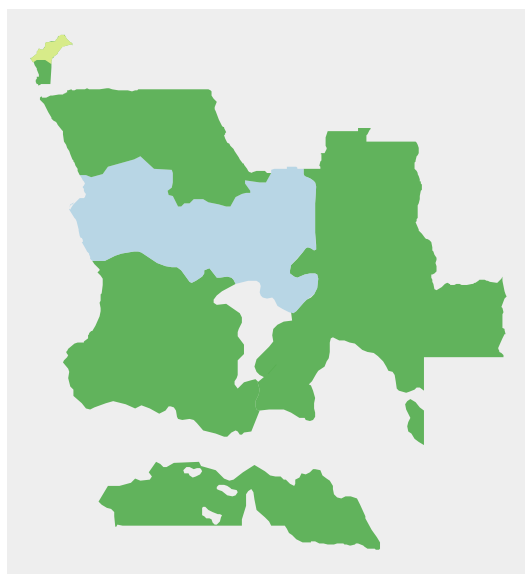


Figure 19: Map of ethnic groups in Angola during 1975-2017.

Group name	Area in km ²	Type
■ Lunda-Chokwe	296 640	Regionally based
■ Ovimbundu-Ovambo	291 540	Regionally based
■ Mbundu-Mestico	181 428	Regionally based
■ Bakongo	137 430	Regionally based
■ Cabindan Mayombe	4167	Regionally based

Table 8: List of ethnic groups in Angola during 1975-2017.

Conflicts in Angola

Starting on 1961-02-03

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Portugal	MPLA		1961-02-03			
Government of Portugal	FNLA		1961-03-14			
Government of Portugal	UNITA		1966-12-25			

Starting on 1975-11-10

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Angola	FNLA	Bakongo	1975-11-10	No	Yes	Yes
Government of Angola	UNITA	Ovimbundu-Ovambo	1975-11-10	No	Yes	Yes

Starting on 1991-06-02

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Angola	FLEC-R	Cabindan Mayombe	1991-06-02	Explicit	Yes	Yes
Government of Angola	FLEC-R	Bakongo	1991-06-02	Explicit	Yes	Yes
Government of Angola	FLEC-FAC	Cabindan Mayombe	1992-06-05	Explicit	Yes	Yes
Government of Angola	FLEC-FAC	Bakongo	1992-06-05	No	No	No