EGMONT POLICY BRIEF 411

– JUNE 2026 –

Angola between China, Russia and the West: Elections, Critical Minerals and Regional Realignment

Rui Verde and Erik Kennes

Angola's international relations have undergone a profound reconfiguration since the end of the civil war in 2002. Seeking greater autonomy after decades of dependence on the Soviet Union, Angola diversified its external partnerships—first turning to China to rebuild its infrastructure and later engaging more actively with the United States and the European Union, particularly around the Lobito Corridor but also in the fields of defence and security. This renewed relationship, shaped by the United States' transactional diplomacy around critical raw materials, creates new opportunities for Angola while simultaneously imposing constraints. Washington's approach is inherently regional and immediately entangles Angola with the dynamics of the Democratic Republic of Congo, at times colliding with Luanda's own regional posture as a member and current chair of the African Union, especially regarding the conflict in the DRC.

ANGOLA AT A GEOPOLITICAL CROSSROADS

These shifting and uncertain alliances form the backdrop to the 2027 presidential and legislative elections, themselves unfolding in a transformed domestic political landscape marked by an internally fragmented MPLA and a revitalized UNITA. The combination of external volatility and internal political competition heightens uncertainty about Angola's trajectory. How in this context can Angola preserve its international and regional autonomy?

In the following we analyze the more recent evolution in Angola's international relations and partnerships in order to assess the context of the upcoming general elections in 2027. First, we discuss the period after the end of the civil war when China was engaging in a reconstruction program, while relations with Russia changed from official state to state friendship to covert influence. The new relationship with USA policy after its transactional turn is spelt out at the bilateral and the regional level (including the DRC), before we briefly assess these changes for the upcoming elections. In our conclusion we try to address the conditions for Angola to continue steering an autonomous course amidst the many foreign actors trying to influence its track.

RECONSTRUCTION WITH CHINA?

Following the end of the civil war in 2002 between the governing MPLA party and the UNITA opposition movement, Angola faced the monumental task of reconstruction. China emerged as the central external partner in this process. Through oil backed credit lines, Chinese banks financed large scale infrastructure projects, from roads and hospitals to public buildings and energy systems. The importance of their partnership is reflected in the fact that between 6 and 9% of China's oil imports come from Angola representing between 60-85% of Angola's oil production.

This model, often described in the academic literature as the "Angola Model,"[1] became emblematic of China's broader engagement in Africa.

However, this expression is somehow misleading. The Angolan model is anything but linear: it began in a largely discreet manner, was mostly carried out by Chinese, Angolan and other private agents acting on behalf of states and companies[2] and therefore became a vehicle for extensive corruption.[3]

Nevertheless, during the presidencies of José Eduardo dos Santos (more specifically 2003-2017), China was not only a financial partner but also a political stabilizer. In the wake of the 2009 global financial crisis and again amid the 2015–2016 oil price collapse, Chinese credit lines provided Angola with liquidity at moments when Western financial institutions were more cautious. These interventions reinforced a perception of China as a reliable long term partner, deeply embedded in Angola's economic architecture.

Therefore, when João Lourenço assumed the presidency in 2017 as the successor of José Edouardo Dos Santos, he inherited both the clear benefits and the constraints of this relationship.

Early in his mandate, he sought to expand Chinese financing to support economic reforms and diversification. Nevertheless, these efforts did not produce the expected results. China, facing its own economic slowdown and reassessing risk exposure in Africa, adopted a more conservative lending posture. Another reason for caution from China may have been concerns about corruption in Angola. The most prominent Chinese intermediary in Angola, Sam Pa, had reportedly been imprisoned in China since 2015 as part of the Chinese President Xi-Jinping anti-corruption campaign.

Angola, heavily indebted and with declining oil revenues, no longer fitted the profile of a high return, low risk borrower.

The failure to secure new large scale loans marked a turning point. Lourenço's government began prioritizing debt repayment and fiscal consolidation, signalling a shift from dependency on China to selective engagement. This foreign-policy shift did not imply a rupture—China remains Angola's largest trading partner (since 2007) and a major investor (since 2004). But the modification of the relationship with China introduced a new geometry: more cautious, more diversified, and more attentive to sovereignty concerns. Additionally, a strong movement to approach the USA was taken by the Angolan presidency. As President Lourenço after coming to power engaged with the USA, China reportedly expressed unease with what could be described as Lourenço's "Western turn," Sources in diplomatic circles suggested that some Chinese officials attribute this shift to the USA partly to the influence of figures within the Angolan presidency, including the First Lady, though such claims remain within the realm of political interpretation rather than verifiable fact.

More significantly, China may[4] discreetly be exploring political channels within the government party MPLA that are less linked to President Lourenço, seeking potential presidential candidates who might adopt a more favourable posture towards Beijing.

This does not necessarily imply overt interference, which would contradict China´s official stance. Rather, it reflects a broader pattern in which major powers cultivate multiple channels of communication in politically fluid environments. For China, Angola remains strategically important—both as an oil supplier and as a symbolic case of long term cooperation—making the 2027 elections a moment of heightened attention.

RUSSIA: OLD FRIENDSHIP COOLED DOWN

Russia, and previously the Soviet Union, played a decisive role in Angola's Cold War history. Military cooperation, ideological alignment, and political support created a durable relationship that survived the end of the bipolar order. For decades, Russian companies maintained a presence in key sectors, including banking and mining.[5]

Under João Lourenço, by contrast, Angola initiated a restructuring of foreign economic presence, following the rapprochement with the U.S. This process affected Russian interests directly. However, a renewed and indirect Russian strategy made a re-entry of Russian interests possible, especially in favourable environments as the Russian diamond and financial sector.

The Angolan government pressed for the withdrawal of VTB, Russia's principal banking presence in the country, and restructured the ownership of the Catoca diamond mine—one of Angola's most strategic mineral assets—effectively compelling the departure of Russian interests from the company.

The relationship deteriorated further when Angolan authorities initiated legal proceedings against two Russian nationals, accusing them of involvement in activities characterised as subversive or aimed at provoking instability. Although the judicial process is still underway, the political signal is unmistakable: a level of mistrust has entered the bilateral relationship that is difficult to reverse, receiving substantial international coverage, including reporting by the BBC.

For Moscow, the public nature of the accusations—combined with the forced disinvestment from strategic assets such as VTB and Catoca—suggests a partner no longer willing to shield Russian interests. For Luanda, the case functions as both a legal assertion of sovereignty and a geopolitical message, marking a clear departure from the historical intimacy of the relationship. Angola's shift in attitude is also driven by economic considerations, notably the fact that Russia has become largely irrelevant as an economic partner, in stark contrast to China. The post-Soviet economic collapse left it without the financial capacity, credit lines or corporate presence needed to compete with China's massive state-backed investments. Russia attempted to prevent further loss of influence and to retain some leverage through external intermediaries, such as Oman, with help from political insiders. Some Oman-mediated structures offer discretion, insulation from sanctions, and a corporate network capable of absorbing Russian capital. The Russia-Oman-Angola triangle may now underpin a renewed architecture of influence.

One of these companies, Taaden, linked to Oman's Sovereign Wealth Fund, was authorized by Angola to acquire the stake in the Catoca diamond mining company which was formerly owned by the giant Russian diamond company Alrosa. According to some Angolan sources,[6] Taaden may function as a vehicle for Russian influence. The Russian national Alexander Reznik was appointed as Chief Financial Officer of Catoca and there are proposals to reintegrate former Alrosa cadres into Catoca Mining or into the Sociedade Mineria do Luele (Luele Mining) as an attempt to restore operational continuity with the previous Russian management model. There are also indications that Russian diamond appraisers may return to key functions in Catoca's diamond production.

A similar pattern is visible in the financial sector. The closure of VTB Africa created space for the African Bank of Oman, an institution allegedly having a Russian national as beneficial owner and which is part of a broader Omani investment package. Its structure reportedly suggests that it effectively operates as VTB's successor, preserving Russian financial influence under an Omani flag while avoiding direct exposure to sanctions.

Finally, this re-entry appears to be facilitated not only by Moscow's indirect strategy but also by segments of the Angolan state apparatus. The sequence of approvals enabling the Oman-mediated return of Russian interests points to deliberate alignment at ministerial level, indicating that the reconstruction of Russian influence is not merely external but also internally supported in some sectors.

Angola's is relevant to Russia because it functions as a low visibility node within the network of Middle Eastern and African intermediaries which the country uses to shield its economic presence. Oman is central in this architecture, as its sovereign structures are a vehicle for entry of Russian capital, hiding it from scrutiny.

This matters because Angola offers the kind of environment that makes such indirect strategies viable. Its diamond sector is a high-value, low-traceability industry easily integrated into opaque commodity flows. Its financial system still suffers from weak external oversight, enabling the creation of successor structures that preserve Russian influence while avoiding sanctions exposure.

These dynamics must also be understood against the backdrop of Angola's long-standing elite connections to Russia — from the generations of senior officials and officers trained in Soviet universities and military academies to the enduring defence cooperation frameworks established during the civil war (1976-1990). Such institutional, educational, and military linkages mean that, despite recent frictions, Angola retains strategic value for Moscow, particularly at a time when global sanctions push Russia to seek alternative political partners and economic corridors.

As with China, there are indications that Russian actors are exploring political alternatives within the MPLA, seeking figures who might restore a more favourable bilateral dynamic. This adds another layer of complexity to the 2027 electoral landscape.

USA: NEW FRIENDS?

In recent years, Angola started a rapprochement to the U.S., exemplified in terms of policy in its stance on the Ukraine as the country e.g. tends to align its UN voting with the USA and the West rather than with Russia. Since the early phase of the Biden administration, Luanda has adopted a proactive posture, voting and positioning itself at the United Nations in ways that reflect its own diplomatic priorities and not the previous alignment with Russia. Angola did not act under external coercion but within a logic of its own choice.

The most significant move with the U.S. was its engagement in framing the Lobito Corridor—a transport and logistics route linking Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Zambia—as a strategic counterweight to Chinese influence in the region. The corridor is presented as a flagship initiative for economic diversification and regional integration.

Angola's importance for the U.S. extends well beyond the Lobito Corridor. Washington is constructing a wider strategic partnership that combines discreet but expanding defence cooperation, renewed energy investment, and a push to integrate Angola into non-Chinese critical-mineral supply chains.

On the security side, the U.S. has intensified military education programmes, maritime security cooperation with Angola in the Gulf of Guinea where Luanda is a stabilizing actor,[7] and naval diplomacy through regular port visits, giving it a stable South Atlantic foothold without establishing a permanent base.

Economically, U.S. majors such as Chevron and ExxonMobil anchor long-term investment in the oil sector, while governance-oriented initiatives—Power Africa, transparency support for Sonangol, and digital infrastructure projects like the Equiano cable—position the U.S. as a credible partner for Angola's economic restructuring. In the critical-minerals sphere, the Lobito Corridor is only the flagship: other US initiatives include U.S. Geological Survey regional critical mineral mapping, DFC financing for cobalt and copper processing projects linked to the Lobito Corridor, and trilateral partnerships with the EU and Japan aim to build diversified value chains that reduce dependence on China.

Taken together, these elements allow the U.S. to compensate for part of the vacuum left by China's retreat—especially in high-value sectors, governance reform, and strategic minerals—though Washington cannot replicate China's concessional lending or large-scale infrastructure financing. The emerging model is therefore hybrid: the U.S. provides strategic alignment, technology, and institutional support; Gulf states supply capital; and China remains present but no longer dominant.

This combination makes Angola a pivotal partner in the U.S.' broader reconfiguration of influence in Southern Africa. However, there are structural contradictions in the strategy concerning the Lobito Corridor. Paradoxically, a project intended to reduce Chinese influence may, in practice, reinforce it.

One of the main operators of the corridor, the Portuguese Mota Engil company, has significant Chinese shareholding. The Mota family holds 40% of the capital while China's CCCC (China Communications Construction Company) acquired around 32.5% in May 2021. On the board of directors, the Chinese group will occupy 35% of the seats—the same proportion as the founding family—since each of the two reference shareholders nominated five members to the board.

The state-owned CCCC was already sanctioned by the USA in August 2020, the US Department of Commerce considering it as a national security and foreign policy risk. The company in 2024 was also listed by the US Ministry of Defence as a Chinese military company operating directly or indirectly in the US.

This exposure via CCCC's shareholder control creates a significant contradiction in the financing architecture of the Lobito Corridor.

The project receives support from the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC), whose mandate explicitly includes countering China's Belt and Road Initiative. The presence of a sanctioned Chinese company at the core of Mota-Engil's ownership therefore raises strategic, political, and compliance tensions for a project that the U.S. publicly frames as an alternative to Chinese influence in Africa.

The same ambiguity applies to the supply chains passing through the Lobito Corridor: while the initiative is meant to diversify global supply chains away from China, it channels in fact largely mining production from Chinese-owned companies in the DRC.

WASHINGTON'S NEW MINERAL DIPLOMACY: IMPLICATIONS FOR CONFLICT DYNAMICS IN THE DRC AND ANGOLA'S SECURITY

The shifts in Angola's external partnerships cannot be understood in isolation from the wider transformation of U.S. strategy in Central Africa, particularly regarding critical minerals and regional supply chains.

The deep shift in US policy towards Africa is well known. The suspension of USAID operations since July 2025 signaled the abrupt end of US soft power on the continent, to be replaced by a transactional diplomacy bluntly formulated in the 2026 National Security strategy.[8]

In Central Africa, the new policy's main objective was access to critical raw materials, reducing the influence of China which had rapidly come to dominate since 2010 the mining sector in DRC and Zambia.

The conflict in Eastern DRC, which was reignited by the end of 2021, provided the USA with an entry point for its strategy. Severely weakened in early 2025 by the takeover by the M23 rebel movement of Goma and Bukavu in East-Congo, President Tshisekedi appealed to the USA for support in exchange for far reaching concessions in the mining sector. This allows him to implement his own political strategy without being forced to give in to Kigali. The US administration compelled the DRC and Rwanda to conclude a peace agreement based on a proposal from Angola - which has not been implemented yet. The two countries also undersigned a MoU for setting up a framework for mutually beneficial regional economic cooperation which would guarantee peace and stability based on rationally calculated self-interest for each partner. This was completed by strategic partnership agreements between the USA and Rwanda, and between the USA and the DRC.

The strategic partnership agreement between the USA and the DRC, signed on 4 December in Washington, provides the USA with maximum guarantees for its future investments, at all stages of the supply chain. This includes the following, at least concerning the projects in the mining sector to be implemented following this agreement:

- Ensured offtake of mining production on the US market.
- Right of first offer for US persons as partners in strategic projects (including US registered companies)
- Company ownership provisions which ensure US control
- Preferential fiscal, tax and regulatory incentives for US citizens and persons accompanied by stability guarantees for the same.

The US administration links the implementation of this agreement to the implementation of the peace agreement between DRC and Rwanda. Following the takeover of Uvira just a few days after these agreements were signed in Washington, an outraged US shifted its allegiance away from Rwanda and fully aligned itself with Kinshasa. It wants to force compliance with the peace agreement including by economic sanctions taken against persons or entities considered to further the conflict. To this end USA'S OFAC sanctioned the Rwanda Defence Force, high-level Rwandan officers but also former president Kabila, who is suspected of supporting M23 and who had been condemned to death in the DRC by a military tribunal. This effectively gives President Tshisekedi important room for maneuver to pursue his own foreign and internal policy objectives.

This implies that the USA has also lost its position of neutral mediator between Rwanda and DRC but rather wants to force through the implementation of the agreement it brokered, even if this agreement is highly problematic.[9]

This evolution is not without consequences for the economic relations between the DRC and Angola. The DRC-USA agreement includes provisions aiming at increasing within five years the volume of critical minerals exported[10] through the Sakania (!) – Lobito corridor up to 50% of the volumes of copper, 90 % of the volumes of zinc concentrate and 30% of the volumes of cobalt.

It must be added that this provision reflects the same difficulty to exclude Chinese involvement as was mentioned above: as Chinese companies control most of the copper and cobalt production (among the major companies, TFM is Chinese-owned and Kamoa copper company is 39,6% Chinese-owned). Cobalt refinery is controlled for 72-78% by China and copper for 40-45 %. Important efforts are being made to reduce this dependency, at least for refining. In May 2026, the creation of a cobalt refinery in Arizona was announced, to be operational in 2029, and a MoU with the "Entreprise Générale du Cobalt" which channels artisanal mine production of cobalt (currently 6% of total cobalt production of the DRC) to guarantee cobalt supply to the refinery to be exported through Lobito. Trafigura, one of the key shareholders in the Lobito Railway, who brokered the agreement, co-signed the MoU.

At the same time, the refurbishing by China of the alternative Tazara railway linking Kapiri Mposhi in Zambia with Dar Es Salaam opening to the Indian Ocean, is scheduled to be completed within three years and could be a preferential option for mining companies in the southern part of DRC.

The strategic partnership agreement USA-DRC also has important political and diplomatic consequences. DRC President Tshisekedi succeeded to modify the perception of Rwanda in western public opinion and to project his country as one of the key areas for CRM supply chains, much more important than Rwanda which only has a fraction of the volume of DRC Mineral resources and which is supplied with minerals from the DRC through legal and illegal channels.

The flipside is that this cooperation allows Tshisekedi to stabilize his authoritarian rule in a classical mode of extraversion and lack of accountability towards the DRC population. It allows Tshisekedi to ignore the internal causes of the ongoing armed conflict, to neutralize political opponents, and to replace the constitution which limits the number of presidential terms to two.

This goes against the initiative of President Lourenço who was first mandated in 2022 by the African Union, in his quality as president of the ICGLR, to mediate between DRC and Rwanda. His efforts to establish a direct dialogue between the DRC and Rwandan presidents were thwarted by a US-favored dialogue in Doha between the DRC and M23. On 18 March 2025, a planned meeting between the two presidents was replaced by a meeting in Doha without President Lourenço even being informed. On 24 March, President Lourenço, having become president of the African Union since February, resigned as a mediator. However, as president of the AU he came to realize that real stability on the Angola-DRC border (a long-term goal of Angola's foreign policy) could only be realized by addressing not only the external but also the internal causes of the DRC crisis, as well as the necessity of a national inclusive dialogue between all DRC stakeholders in order to find a basic national consensus in a deeply divided country. If initially the USA supported this initiative, they seem to have abandoned this idea in favor of a one-sided support for Tshisekedi.

The increasingly repressive policy of the Tshisekedi government, the uncertain outcome of their project to replace the current constitution, and the heavy reliance on US support in the absence of a functional DRC army, may easily lead to instability at the eastern border of Angola and is a cause of concern for the current and future Angolan presidency. These concerns undoubtedly motivated President Lourenço to try and prepare a genuine national inclusive dialogue in the DRC.

At the same time, the end of Chinese dominance in the DRC is a long way ahead. The acquisition of Chemaf, a cobalt and copper producer of the DRC, by Virtus Minerals, a US company headed by former US military not listed on the stock exchange, is presented as a win for the Trump administration but represents a maximum of 8-10% of the DRC cobalt production. If the US Company Orion Critical Mineral Consortium[11] would acquire the Glencore owned companies in DRC, the U.S. would control between 25-30% of the cobalt production, still far behind Chinese-owned companies.

This implies that Tshisekedi may prove to be a less reliable partner for the USA than expected, and changes in partnership in favor of China (especially after the 2027 election in Angola and a possible end to the conflict in East Congo) are perfectly plausible, in a movement parallel to what may happen in Angola.

WHAT ABOUT THE EUROPEAN UNION?

Although the U.S. initially promoted the project with considerable intensity – framing it as a flagship initiative to counterbalance China's dominance in African infrastructure – Washington's follow-through was slow and often hesitant. The European Union stepped in more decisively, integrating the Corridor into its Global Gateway Strategy and mobilising substantial technical and financial resources to accelerate implementation. This transition from US enthusiasm to EU operational leadership reflects broader patterns in western engagement in Africa, where the EU has increasingly assumed the role of primary infrastructure partner on the continent.[12]

European countries, particularly France, have maintained constructive relations with the Angolan government, including cooperation in energy, security and economic reform.

Yet European partners' support for Angola's modernization is accompanied by expectations regarding governance and political openness, institutional continuity, political stability, and electoral transparency.

In practice however, they apply a pragmatic approach in which stability, predictability, and the prevention of conflict often outweigh deeper commitments to democratic standards.[13]

UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE 2027 ELECTIONS

Angola enters the 2027 electoral cycle in a fractured and ambivalent international environment, where none of the major external actors fully align with the government's interests and all observe the process with strategic caution.

The country faces a moment of profound reconfiguration: the once-central relationship with China has shifted from dependency to selective engagement; ties with Russia have cooled under economic and judicial pressures; and Western actors have returned with renewed interest but firm expectations regarding governance and stability.

This produces a geopolitical field defined by uncertainty, competing priorities, and the absence of any unequivocal external anchor.

Priorities indeed diverge between internal and external actors. International partners privilege stability, access, and geopolitical positioning, while domestic actors focus on legitimacy and political survival. These agendas rarely coincide.

The danger lies in mutual misreadings: external partners may misread Angola's internal dynamics in function of their own strategic interests and apprehensions, while Angolan actors may have a wrong estimate of external partners support or hostility, leading them to miscalculate their political capital.

Another, important, layer of uncertainty is added by the internal division of the ruling MPLA party between former Dos Santos and current Lourenço supporters, facing an increasingly popular UNITA which threatens the decades-long MPLA hegemony. At the same time, both parties have lost most of their ideological identification.[14]

Western partners do not want to be associated with electoral processes which trigger violence and instability, as happened in Moçambique and Tanzania. They prefer cautiously to keep distance. Meanwhile, China and Russia, despite their long-standing ties with the ruling party, are reassessing their positions and appear open to alternative political configurations.

In this environment, the 2027 elections become not only a domestic contest but a geopolitical event whose management and outcome will shape Angola's sovereignty, stability, and external credibility.

Against this backdrop, the broader regional environment is being reshaped by an equally significant transformation in U.S. policy toward Africa. This shift is particularly visible in Central Africa, where the U.S. pursuit of critical minerals and supply chain security has redrawn alliances, altered mediation dynamics, and generated new pressures on neighbouring states. It is within this changing geopolitical architecture that Angola must navigate its own interests, especially as developments in the Democratic Republic of Congo increasingly intersect with Angola's security concerns, economic ambitions, and the political stakes of the 2027 electoral cycle.

CONCLUSION

Angola is no longer anchored within a single geopolitical orbit. Instead, it is navigating a fragmented external environment in which China, Russia, the United States, and the European Union all seek influence under increasingly competitive conditions. The 2027 elections will therefore not only determine domestic political succession but also shape Angola's position within the emerging architecture of African (and American) mineral geopolitics.

In this context, Angola's pursuit of genuine international and regional autonomy – a key objective since the end of the civil war - cannot rely solely on diplomatic agility. It requires substantive economic reform capable of reducing structural vulnerabilities, diversifying the economy, and strengthening fiscal resilience. Without a more competitive and productive economic base, Angola's foreign policy will remain exposed to external pressures and cyclical dependencies.

Equally, the country must reinforce its defence and security capacities, not as instruments of projection but as foundations of credible sovereignty. A state with functional military institutions and coherent security structures possesses greater deterrence, greater resilience, and greater legitimacy in regional mechanisms—key assets for any country seeking to exercise agency in a complex geopolitical environment.

Only by combining economic transformation with institutional and military strengthening can Angola develop the leverage necessary to sustain a calibrated foreign policy and move beyond the paradigms inherited from the post-war period.

Prof. Dr. Rui Verde is a leading international expert on the politics, law and economy of Angola. He is a Research Associate at the African Studies Centre, University of Oxford and at CEPED, Université Paris-Cité.

Erik Kennes is a Senior Research Fellow in the Africa Programme at the Egmont Institute and an Associate Researcher at the Institute of Development Policy (IOB) of the University of Antwerp.

Endnotes

1 Tom Burgis, The Looting Machine: Warlords, Tycoons, Smugglers and the Systematic Theft of Africa's Wealth (London: William Collins, 2015).

2 There was an ecosystem of intermediaries: Chinese state-owned enterprises and brokers, but also Angolan businessmen and political fixers who operated through private channels while serving state interests. The private agents were not only Chinese and were not acting only for China. Many were Angolan actors working for Angolan state elites, others were foreign consultants or firms drawn into this opaque structure. This hybrid network – public and private, Chinese and Angolan- is what made the "model" both discreet and highly vulnerable to corruption.

3 Rui Santos Verde, Redefining the China–Angola Relationship: Privatization, Development, and Disenchantment (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2026). First published in the U.S. of America in September 2026.

4 According to interviews done with diplomatic sources.

5 Samuel Ramani, Russia in Africa: Resurgent Great Power or Bellicose Pretender? (London: Hurst Publishers, 2024).

6 Interviews with officials in Luanda, February-March 2026.

7 Angola has undertaken actions to increase stability in the Gulf of Guinea, a region plagued by piracy, trafficking and offshore energy vulnerabilities. The United States expanded its cooperation with Angola by strengthening military education programs, deepening joint work on Gulf of Guinea maritime security, and using regular naval port calls, allowing Washington to anchor itself in the region without the political costs of establishing a permanent base.

8 "The U.S. should transition from an aid-focused relationship with Africa to a trade- and investment-focused relationship, favoring partnerships with capable, reliable states committed to opening their markets to U.S. goods and services. An immediate area for U.S. investment in Africa, with prospects for a good return on investment, include the energy sector and critical mineral development." (*USA National Security Strategy*, November 2025, p. 29).

9 It hinges on the neutralization and end of state support for the FDLR armed group. Its verification presents a huge challenge.

10 The agreement refers to the minerals the sale of which is controlled by the DRC authorities or public enterprises.

11 The "Orion Critical Minerals consortium" was created by Orion Resource Partners LP (an investment firm specialized in metals and minerals) and "designed to support the U.S. and its allied and partner nations to develop secure, responsible, and resilient supply chains for the critical minerals that underpin future economic growth and security."(https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/1-8-billion-orion-critical-mineral-consortium-formed-to-strengthen-us-economic-competitiveness-and-national-security-302592595.html)

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14 Rui Verde, Breve historia de Angola desde a Independência (1975-2025), Autores Club, Lisboa, 2026, p. 289-292.

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