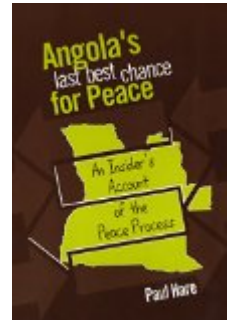


**Paul Hare.** *Angola's Last Best Chance for Peace: An Insider's Account of the Peace Process.* Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998. xix + 182 pp. \$14.95, paper, ISBN 978-1-878379-80-1.



**Reviewed by** Inge Brinkman

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"Diplomacy is an art, not a science" (p. 131). This sentence already indicates that it is no easy task to give a scholarly assessment of this book. The author interprets the events from his background as a diplomat in the U.S. Foreign Service and does not specifically address an academic audience. His aim is to give an account of the negotiations between the Angolan fighting parties which led to the ratification of the Lusaka Protocol in 1994 and the subsequent attempts made to implement it. In chronological order he provides a detailed description of the UN-led peace talks. As of October, 1993, Paul Hare became personally involved in the negotiations as special representative for the United States. This position has enabled him to present information otherwise inaccessible. Thus, the reader gathers a picture of the sensibilities of the parties, the corridors of power, the character of the personalities involved, etc. At times it is a painful read; the decisions influencing the lives of millions are in some instances taken on the basis of flimsy and spurious arguments. Thus, a visit of Savimbi to South Africa nearly torpedoed the entire process (pp. 82-83, 111), and the parties bickered over the order of the swearing-in

ceremony of UNITA deputies (p. 116). Such matters may constitute the very gist of politics but probably also form the reason why many Angolan citizens so profoundly distrust high-level politics.

The author is honest enough to admit the partiality of his story: "... it should be noted that this study is written from an American perspective" (p. xix). This focus clearly shows in the account. The author repeatedly states that his mission was aimed to support Maitre Alioune Beye, the special representative of the United Nations who led the negotiations. He also underlines the importance of unity in the 'Troika', the three supporting delegations sent by Russia, Portugal and the United States. Yet, the information he provides reflects his American stance; we learn very little about the motives and background of the other parties. From an accomplished diplomat, such as Paul Hare, we could have expected a sound interpretation of this larger political context. Another missing part is the historical context of the Angolan war. Apart from brief and incomplete notes on earlier negotiations, no information is provided on the background of the conflict. The author

stresses that knowledge of earlier peace negotiations is prerequisite for an understanding of the present situation (p.e. on p. 131). Yet he fails to acknowledge that not only previous peace initiatives but also the history of the war in its entirety has to be taken into account. A historical introduction would have helped to gain more insight into the motives of the actors, the nature of their sensibilities and the political language employed. Hare's intention is "to describe how American influence and prestige can be employed effectively in a highly charged, multilateral context" (p. xix), and in his "Final observations" he gives guidelines as to how to successfully utilize this American potential. Yet, especially in a 'multilateral context', the wider political setting and the specific history of the war in Angola ought to play a larger role in America's policies and hence also in Hare's account.

The author expresses cautious optimism about Angola's future: "Peace still seemed within reach" (p. 129). In the meantime, Angola has gone back to war, the fighting parties have resumed employing gruesome violence against civilians and hunger reigns in many parts of the country. Hopefully, another 'last best chance for peace' will soon lead to more enduring results.

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