

# An Elusive Peace: State Building and Reconstruction in Angola

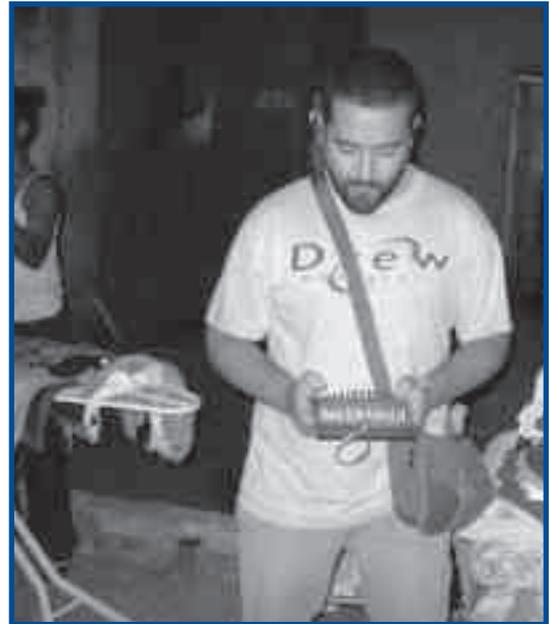
**RAMON GALIÑANES**

After several failed attempts to reach a peace settlement, Angolan political elites and non-state combatants negotiated a fragile ceasefire in 2002. This elusive peace and transition from civil war draws attention to a perplexing puzzle: (1) When do powerful political actors sit at the bargaining table to negotiate a peace settlement in a divided society? And (2) why are some divided societies able to establish a successful and durable democratic pact as a resolution to civil strife while others are not? I started to investigate this puzzle by conducting pre-dissertation fieldwork in Angola this past summer. The Angolan civil war remains largely understudied in the field of political science and it is an important case study to understand successful peace settlements in divided societies.

Previous studies on successful peace settlements in divided societies have largely focused on the importance of: (1) the costs of war; (2) the balance of power; (3) the divisibility of stakes; (4) the establishment of power-sharing institutions; (5) the salience of ethnic identity; and (6) the role of mediation. As a way of testing these competing theories of successful/unsuccessful peace

settlements, I conducted interviews in the Angolan cities of Luanda and Huambo.

In Luanda and Huambo, I was able to conduct interviews in Portuguese with former UNITA (União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola) combatants and FAPLA (Forças Armadas Populares de Libertação de Angola) military officers that had



participated in combat during the civil war. I attempted to include a range of different ranking military officers and combatants – including, colonels, majors, and foot soldiers – who had participated in the civil war. The interviews were used as a pilot study and as a way to collect data on the motivations for participating in the civil conflict as well as the perceptions that ex-combatants and military officers had of the transition period (including the role of mediation and elections). What was most interesting about these interviews was the different perceptions of the civil war and transition period according to the level of military rank and place of origin. I will be presenting my preliminary findings during the SASA lunch (sponsored by the Center for African Studies) in December.

Besides gathering preliminary data on the perceptions of the civil war and the motivations for fighting, conducting field research in Angola this summer was a great opportunity to refine my research methods and I'm excited to return to Angola next year during their presidential elections to conduct my dissertation field research.

*Ramon Galiñanes is a doctoral student in the Department of Political Science. He was a Center for African Studies FLAS fellow in 2006-07 and 2007-08. His summer 2008 research was supported by a CAS pre-dissertation travel award.*

