This book examines the internal politics of the war that divided Angola for more than a quarter-century after independence. In contrast to earlier studies, its emphasis is on Angolan people’s relationship to the rival political forces that prevented the development of a united nation. Justin Pearce’s argument is based on original interviews with farmers and town dwellers, soldiers and politicians in Central Angola. He uses these to examine the ideologies about nation and state that elites deployed in pursuit of hegemony, and traces how people responded to these efforts at politicisation. The material presented here demonstrates the power of the ideas of state and nation in shaping perceptions of self-interest and determining political loyalty. Yet the book also shows how political allegiances could and did change in response to the experience of military force. In so doing, it brings the Angolan case to the centre of debates on conflict in post-colonial Africa.

Justin Pearce is a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow in Politics and International Studies at the University of Cambridge and an associate of St John’s College. He has published in journals including African Affairs and the Journal of Southern African Studies.
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Political Identity and Conflict in Central Angola, 1975–2002

JUSTIN PEARCE

University of Cambridge
For Rafael, Fern and Okidi
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A Note on Anonymous Sources

The past is a politically sensitive subject in Angola. With the exception of my interviews with elite public figures, all interviews quoted in this book were conducted on the understanding of anonymity so as to allow interviewees to speak freely without fear of the possible consequences. I have assigned a single pseudonym to each interviewee so as to indicate to the reader when the same interviewee is quoted more than once.
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