

Foreign Intervention and Warfare in Civil Wars:

The effect of exogenous resources on the course and nature
of the Angolan and Afghan conflicts



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Statement of Originality

This is to certify that to the best of my knowledge, the content of this thesis is my own work. This thesis has not been submitted previously, either in its entirety or substantially, for a higher degree or qualification at any other University or institute of higher learning. I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work and that all the assistance received in preparing this thesis and sources has been acknowledged.

Adam Lockyer

In memory of

Joy Lockyer

1925-2007

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Abbreviations

ANC	Africa National Congress [South Africa]
APC	Armoured Personnel Carrier
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
Dawlat	Dawlat-i Inqilabi-yi Islami-yi Nuristan (Islamic Revolutionary State of Nuristan) [Afghanistan]
DM	Direct Military Intervention
EFP	Explosive Formed Penetrators
ETA	Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (Basque Homeland and Freedom) [Spain]
EZLN	Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacion (Zapatista Army of National Liberation) [Mexico]
FALN	Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional (Armed Forces of National Liberation) [Venezuela]
FAZ	Forces Armées Zaïroises (The Armed Forces of Zaïre)
FDN	Fuerza Democrática Nicaragüense (Nicaraguan Democratic Force)
FLN	Front de Libération Nationale (National Liberation Front) [Algeria]
FMLN	Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front) [El Salvador]
FNLA	Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola (National Front for the Liberation of Angola)
FRELIMO	Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (Front for the Liberation of Mozambique)

GAM	Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (Free Aceh Movement) [Indonesia]
IPFL	Independent Patriotic Front of Liberia
MPLA	Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officers
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
NVA	North Vietnamese Army
PDPA	People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan
PIRA	Provisional Irish Republican Army
PKK	Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan (Kurdistan Workers' Party) [Turkey and Iraq]
RENAMO	Resistencia Nacional Moçambicana (Mozambican National Resistance)
RPG	Rocket-Propelled Grenade
SADF	South African Defence Force
SAF	Somali Armed Forces
SNM	Somali National Movement
SPLM	South People's Liberation Movement [Sudan]
SWAPO	South West Africa People's Organisation
TPLF	Tigray People's Liberation Front [Ethiopia]
UNITA	União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (National Front for the Total Liberation of Angola)
US	United States
VC	Viet Cong [South Vietnam]
WSLF	Western Somali Liberation Front [Ethiopia]

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Part I

Chapter One

Introduction: Foreign Intervention, Warfare and Civil War

When the first small groups of tribesmen began ambushing government troops in the Afghan mountains in 1978, they frequently did so using slingshots, axes and ancient British firearms. However, less than ten years later, some of these same groups were raining missiles down on Kabul. How did the warfare in Afghanistan change so dramatically and in such a short space of time? Any attempt to answer this question must discuss the role of foreign powers. Clearly, it was under the auspices of third-party states that the weapons, organisation and strategies of the opposing Afghan forces had developed. The regime's forces had been completely reequipped and retrained with some of the Soviet Union's most sophisticated weapons, while the rebels had been supplied with highly-advanced weapons and had in many cases received specialist training in Pakistan. The massive increase in the destructive potential of the opposing sides is one of the Afghan Civil War's most prominent characteristics, and is highlighted by the fact that the transformation occurred in a country with no indigenous arms industry beyond village blacksmiths and with only limited natural resources which could be traded for arms on the international market.¹

The dramatic influence of foreign intervention in the Afghan Civil War was neither unique nor peculiar. Even a cursory survey of civil wars from antiquity through to the modern Spanish, South Vietnamese and Bosnian conflicts suggests that foreign

¹ That is, until the opium industry began to flourish in the country towards the end of the Soviet occupation. See, Jonathan Goodhand, "From Holy War to Opium War? A Case Study in the Opium Economy in North-eastern Afghanistan," *Disasters*, Vol. 24, No. 2, (2002), 87-102; Amir Zada Asad and Robert Harris, *The Politics and Economics of Drug Production on the Pakistan-Afghanistan Border*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003); Barnett R. Rubin, "The Political Economy of War and Peace in Afghanistan," *World Development*, Vol. 28, No. 10, (2000), 1789-1803.

intervention is both common and can potentially have a major impact on the course of civil wars. Indeed, foreign intervention in civil war is the rule rather than the exception, with 71 percent of civil wars recording at least one intervention.² Furthermore, foreign intervention can be influential in changing the trajectory of civil wars. In part, the significant impact of foreign intervention on the course of civil wars is explained by the majority of interventions having taken the form of providing assistance to one side in the conflict. Between 1945 and 1994, over 95 percent of foreign interventions in civil wars consisted of the transfer of money, arms, or foreign troops to a belligerent in the civil war.³ Neutral interventions aimed at providing humanitarian assistance or fostering the conditions for a peace settlement have been rare. Viewed together, these observations suggest that states that are experiencing civil war are “more likely to be intervened in than those without conflict”, and the impact of that intervention will be more severe than in stable and peaceful states.⁴

Dylan Balch-Lindsay and Andrew Enterline have observed that “[t]o date, the literature on intrastate conflicts underscores the idea that the influence of third parties is often instrumental in shaping the dynamics of these conflicts.”⁵ The

² Ann Hironaka, *Neverending Wars: The International Community, Weak States, and the Perpetuation of Civil War*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 131. As could be expected, the percentage of civil wars that experience foreign interventions varies with different coding rules. For example, Regan found that 65 percent of civil wars have experienced foreign intervention. However, even with stricter coding rules, intervention remains the rule other than the exception. See Patrick M. Regan, *Civil Wars and Foreign Powers*, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2002), 27.

³ Regan, *Civil Wars and Foreign Powers*, 29.

⁴ Frederic S. Pearson, “Foreign Military Interventions and Domestic Disputes,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 18, No. 3, (1974), 271. Also see, David Kowalewski, “Core Intervention and Periphery Revolution, 1921-1985,” *The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 97, No. 1, (1991), 70-95; Ted R. Gurr and Vaughan F. Bishop, “Violent Nations, and Others,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 20, No. 1, (1976), 79-110; Erich Weede, “U.S. Support for Foreign Governments, or Domestic Disorder and Imperial Intervention, 1958-1965,” *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 4, (1978), 497-527; C.R. Mitchell, “Civil Strife and the Involvement of External Parties,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 14, No. 2, (1970), 166-194; George Madelski, “The International Relations of Internal War,” in James N. Rosenau, (ed.), *International Aspects of Civil Strife*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 14-44.

⁵ Dylan Balch-Lindsay and Andrew J. Enterline, “Killing Time: The World Politics of Civil War Duration, 1820-1992,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 44, No. 4, (2000), 620. It has widely been identified that foreign intervention influences the course of civil wars. Lawrence Freedman, for example, has argued that any external intervention “whether it be in setting rules for the conduct, easing suffering, broking a settlement, or intervening on one side, will influence the balance of power.” Lawrence Freedman, (ed.), *Military Intervention in European Conflicts*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), 9. Similarly, Regan asserted that intervening “on behalf of either the government or the opposition has the immediate effect of altering the balance of capabilities.” Patrick M. Regan, “Third-Party Interventions and the Duration of Intrastate Conflicts,” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 46, No. 1, (2002), 60. And,

principal question of this dissertation builds on this observation by asking *how* foreign intervention affects the course and nature of civil wars. I have divided this question into two secondary questions. The first asks what impact foreign intervention has on the military capabilities of the recipient, and the second asks how the provision of external resources to a belligerent influences the character of the warfare between it, and its opponent(s), in the civil war. This dissertation develops theoretical explanations in response to these questions which are tested against case material from the Angolan and Afghan civil wars. I argue that the impact of foreign assistance has historically been inconsistent between cases. I then take significant steps towards accounting for this variation.

At this point, one may ask what possible benefit there could be in better understanding the impact of foreign intervention in civil war. I argue that there are benefits for both scholarly understanding and policy. The first contribution is to social scientific knowledge. There has been a recent spurt of research which has examined the impact of warfare on outcomes and on violence in civil wars. On warfare and outcomes, Ivan Arreguín-Toft has shown that the type of warfare that characterises the conflict will be influential in determining which side is most likely to win.⁶ Even more recently, scholars have begun to study the effect of warfare in civil war on the patterns of violence. A new generation of scholars, such as Laia Balcells, are building upon Stathis Kalyvas's work on guerrilla warfare and violence to understand how different forms of warfare will affect violence.⁷ In turn, by better understanding the effect of foreign intervention on the warfare this dissertation will link in and contribute to this emerging literature.

when foreign powers supply "military equipment or troops in support of one side in the conflict, the relative capabilities of the combatants are altered – this is generally the intention of the intervener." Regan, *Civil Wars and Foreign Powers*, 7.

⁶ Ivan Arreguín-Toft, "How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict," *International Security*, Vol. 26, No. 1, (2001), 107. For an expanded explanation, see Ivan Arreguín-Toft, *How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁷ In particular, see, Laia Balcells, *Rivalry and Revenge: Making Sense of Violence against Civilians in Conventional Civil Wars*, Households in Conflict Network working paper 51, (Falmer: The University of Sussex, 2008) and Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

The findings and insights generated by this dissertation also have potential implications for two prominent and currently-pressing policy areas. First, the findings may assist in improving policy in the area of peacemaking and civil war management. In particular, the results may generate insights into the conditions under which the intervention of foreign powers' will be significant or innocuous and thus, indirectly suggest when the international community should be concerned by such actions and when such actions can be overlooked. Second, a debate is currently raging in Washington over the alternate pay-offs, risks, and costs of the competing policy options on Iraq and Afghanistan. Policymakers, commentators, and academics have been debating issues such as the costs and risks associated with withdrawal, the likely consequence of continued American military and economic sponsorship of these foreign governments, how the increased involvement of Iraq's or Afghanistan's neighbours in the civil war would change the course and nature of the conflict, and indeed, what type and level of intervention the United States can tolerate from regional powers and at what point Washington should react. Although these issues are currently being ferociously debated, few academic studies have attempted to address those same issues. This dissertation takes a modest step towards filling this void.

This introductory chapter is divided into three sections. The first section discusses the study of civil war. In this section I develop a "levels of analysis" framework through which to examine the current state of the art. This section serves two purposes. First, it functions as a review of the previous research conducted on foreign intervention in civil war and second, it demonstrates why I decided to predominantly conduct this study at the highest level of analysis. Section two presents my argument as to how foreign intervention affects the warfare in civil wars. It also defines the key concepts of this process. Finally, section three discusses the research design, methodology and case selection.

1. The Study of Foreign Intervention in Civil Wars

Following Kalyvas, I define civil war broadly as “armed combat within the boundaries of a recognized sovereign entity between parties subject to a common authority at the outset of the hostilities.”⁸ This definition captures all forms of internal war where two or more opposing centres of authority have emerged, including resistance against colonial and foreign occupation. Employing a broad definition holds both benefits and risks. The benefits flow from the definition’s inclusiveness and ability to capture more relevant cases and evidence. However, by capturing more of the social phenomena, the definition also increases the importance of critically and deliberately identifying the dependent variable’s level of analysis.⁹

It has become customary for civil war scholars to make a simple distinction between macro and micro levels of analysis in the study of civil war.¹⁰ However, I argue that there are difficulties with applying the macro-micro distinction to civil war theory. Foremost among these difficulties is reconciling the two-levels

⁸ See, Stathis N. Kalyvas, “Ethnic Defection in Civil War,” *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 8, (2008), 1064, (note. 1) For a similar definition, see Michael W. Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace: United Nations Peace Operations*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 31. For perhaps the best analysis of the challenges inherent in reaching definitive coding rules for civil war, see Nicholas Sambanis, “What is Civil War? Conceptual and Empirical Complexities of an Operational Definition,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 48, No. 6, (2004), particularly 815-825. For alternatives see, Meredith Reid Sarkees, “The Correlates of War Data on War: An Update to 1997,” *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, Vol. 18, No. 1, (2000), 58; Meredith Reid Sarkees, Frank W. Wayman, and J. David Singer, “Inter-State, Intra-State, and Extra-State Wars: A Comprehensive Look at their Distribution over time, 1816-1997,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 47, (2003), 58-59. For more definitions intended for qualitative research see, Steven R. David, “Internal War: Causes and Cures,” *World Politics*, Vol. 49, No. 4 (1997), 552-576. A similar definition to David’s is offered by, Andrew C. Janos, “Authority and Violence: The Political Framework of Internal War,” in Harry Eckstein, (ed.), *Internal War: Problems and Approaches*, (London: The Free Press, 1964), 130.

⁹ This is particularly important in light of Singer’s caution against moving between different levels of analysis in a single study, saying: “We may use one level here and another there, but we cannot afford to shift our orientation in the midst of a study.” See, J. David Singer, “The Levels-of-Analysis Problem in International Relations,” in Klaus Knorr and Sidney Verba, (eds.), *The International System: Theoretical Essays*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 90.

¹⁰ Nicholas Sambanis, “Using Case Studies to Expand Economic Models of Civil War,” *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 2, (2004), 273 (fn 4); Jeremy M. Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence*, 17, 20-21. Gurr and Bishop developed a similar typology of violence, which applied an “individual” and a “collective” level-of-analysis. See, Gurr and Bishop, “Violent Nations, and Others,” 79-110. In place of a “level of analysis” approach, Sambanis has also divided research on civil war along “theoretical paradigms”. See, Nicholas Sambanis, “A Review of Recent Advances and Future Directions in the Quantitative Literature on Civil War,” *Defence and Peace Economics*, Vol. 13, No. 3, (2002), 215-243.

framework with the literature on civil war. Civil war literature has tended to study either the dynamics of the strategic interaction between the belligerents, the behaviour of communal groups, or the behaviour of individuals. As such, recent research has begun to use a three-level framework when studying civil wars. I label these three levels as the system, communal, and individual levels respectively.¹¹ This largely follows the example of International Relations, broadly transposing the system, state and individual levels onto the study of intrastate conflict.¹² As will be explained below, I believe that in light of the nature of warfare in civil war, the system level of analysis is the most promising in terms of studying the impact of foreign intervention on the warfare in civil war and is therefore the most appropriate level to be adopted for this dissertation.

The system level of analysis and foreign intervention

The system level of analysis is the highest plain of abstraction within a civil war. The conceptualisation of the system level of analysis has largely been borrowed from International Relations theory and thus operates in a similar fashion but for being within the boundaries of a single state. At the system level of analysis, the emphasis is placed on studying the strategic interaction between the incumbent and insurgent(s) and, by doing so, arrives at “a purely positional picture.”¹³ It is assumed that the political and military capabilities of the belligerents are the key facilitator and constraint of the belligerents’ behaviour and are thus the principal determinant of the course and nature of a conflict.

¹¹ See, Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, and Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Sociology of Civil Wars: Warfare and Armed Groups*, (Unpublished paper, 2003). Also see, Adam Lockyer, *The “Levels of Analysis” Approach to the Study of Foreign Intervention in Civil War*, Paper presented at the Australasian Political Science Association Conference, Brisbane, Australia, 7-9 July 2008. In this paper I argue that anarchy is the defining characteristic at system, communal and individual levels of analysis.

¹² Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959).

¹³ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, (Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, 1979), 80. Also see, Arnold Wolfers, “The Actors in International Politics,” in William T.R. Fox, (ed.), *Theoretical Aspects of International Relations*, (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1959), 83-106; Steven R. David, “The Primacy of Internal War,” in Stephanie G. Neuman, (ed.), *International Relations and the Third World*, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), 77-102.

At the system level of analysis, scholars treat the incumbent government and its political challenger(s) as unitary, rational actors operating in the anarchic environment brought on by the civil war. Conceptually, the system level merges the various elites, sub-groups, and individuals of which a belligerent would be comprised into a single actor. For example, at this level of analysis the Confederates, the Kuomintang or the Viet Cong would be treated as unitary actors despite actual internal political, social, or leadership fractures. The system level of analysis also assumes that there are similarities in the political objectives, structure, and composition of incumbent and insurgent actors. Fundamentally, all belligerents seek to safeguard their own survival and enhance their security, interests and political objectives. Furthermore, although the system level of analysis does not deny the existence of other political entities, studies conducted at this level rarely bestow any actor other than the belligerents with substantial influence over the course of the conflict. Therefore, the only significant political actors at this level are the incumbent and one or more insurgents. For the scholar, this means that the system level of analysis offers “both advantages and disadvantages; the former flow from its comprehensiveness, and the latter from the necessary dearth of detail.”¹⁴

By stressing structure over agency, the system level creates a situation where the military balance is instrumental in predicting the course, duration and outcome of civil war. As such, measuring variations in the military balance, and the way which it affects different characteristics of conflicts, becomes the principal puzzle. For instance, some studies have argued that a parity of military capabilities between the belligerents will prolong civil wars as neither side will possess the ability to “disarm the other.”¹⁵ In contrast, other studies have hypothesised that an even

¹⁴ Singer, “The Levels-of-Analysis Problem in International Relations,” 81.

¹⁵ James D. Fearon, “Why Do Some Civil Wars Last So Much Longer than Others?” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 41, No. 3, (2004), 276.

distribution of military capabilities will create a “mutually hurting stalemate” and thus increase the likelihood of a negotiated settlement.¹⁶

The majority of system-level research on the impact of foreign intervention has focused on its effect on duration. Generally, these studies have been built around the proposition that one-sided intervention will usually shorten the length of a civil war. Richard Betts, for instance, was one of the first scholars to propose that “impartial” or “neutral” interventions are ineffective as they require the foreign power to supply sufficient forces to completely dominate the battlefield, which Betts considers to be a level of commitment few states would ever contemplate.¹⁷ In contrast, partisan interventions have the potential to successfully tilt the military balance with significantly less resources, and thus allow the recipient to achieve a military victory. Patrick Regan’s study attempted to theoretically develop, and empirically test, several of Betts’s hypotheses on intervention in civil wars. Regan predicted that external assistance to the incumbent “should in the norm shift the balance of capabilities towards preponderance” and thus shorten duration, whereas foreign intervention on the insurgent’s side “should, in the norm, shift the balance of capabilities towards parity,” resulting in longer civil wars.¹⁸ He found some support for each of his hypotheses, however, this finding was marginal because his study also found that *all* types of foreign intervention prolonged the duration of civil wars. Regan’s findings have subsequently been replicated by later

¹⁶ I. William Zartman, *Ripe for Resolution: Conflict and Intervention in Africa*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); I. William Zartman, (ed.), *Elusive Peace: Negotiating an End to Civil Wars*, (Washington, DC: Brookings Institute, 1995); Roy Likerlider, “The Consequences of Negotiated Settlements in Civil Wars, 1945-1993,” *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 89, No. 3, (1995), 681-690; Saadia Touval, “Gaining Entry to Mediation in Communal Strife,” in Manus I. Midlarsky, (ed.), *Internationalization of Communal Strife*, (London: Routledge, 1992), 255-272.

¹⁷ Richard K. Betts, “The Delusion of Impartial Intervention,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 73, No. 6, (1994), 20-33.

¹⁸ Regan, “Third-Party Interventions and the Duration of Intrastate Conflicts,” 60-61. In an interesting recent development of this thesis, Hironaka has argued that the length of civil wars is a function of state capacity and foreign intervention. The author submitted that during the Cold War the massive endowments flowing from the Superpowers’ coffers artificially strengthened otherwise weak incumbents. However, in the post-Cold War era weak incumbents have battled weak insurgents (frequently with both receiving foreign assistance) and, in turn, greatly increasing the duration of civil wars. See, Hironaka, *Neverending Wars*. An earlier version of this argument can be found in James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 97, No. 1, (2003), 75-90.

studies.¹⁹ A rare dissenting finding was produced by Collier, Hoeffler and Söderbom. They found that foreign intervention on the incumbent's side had no effect, while assistance to an insurgent shortened the duration. After reviewing their data, the authors inferred that a "possible interpretation is that with sufficient military support for rebels, government forces can be defeated...[but], because rebel groups have the option of concealment, military support for the government may not produce a decisive military outcome."²⁰

Mason, Weingarten and Fett's examination of the effect of foreign intervention on civil war termination is the most prominent study that supports the "hurting stalemate" thesis.²¹ In this examination, the authors found that timing had a significant influence on the impact of foreign intervention on the duration of civil wars. The study concluded that early intervention tended to prolong civil wars, whereas later intervention had a "positive effect on the probability of a negotiated settlement."²² The authors interpreted these results as suggesting that belligerents that received early foreign assistance fancied their prospects of ultimate military victory and thus pursued the military option for longer. In addition, each recipient had little motivation to change their original assessment while the foreign power continued to subsidise the cost of fighting. On the other hand, "war weary" belligerents that received foreign intervention later in the civil war had already arrived at the realisation that decisive military victory was unlikely, but with newly-acquired foreign support could improve their bargaining position when entering peace talks. An important, and rarely acknowledged, contribution of this study was its implicit assumption that the military balance does not directly determine the *strategies* of the belligerents; rather, the belligerents' estimation of

¹⁹ See, for example, Ibrahim A. Elbadawi and Nicholas Sambanis, *External Intervention and Duration of Civil Wars*, (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2000).

²⁰ Paul Collier, Anke Hoeffler and Måns Söderbom, "On the Duration of Civil War," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 41, No. 3, (2004), 267.

²¹ T. David Mason, Joseph P. Weingarten, and Patrick J. Fett, "Win, Lose, or Draw: Predicting the Outcome of Civil Wars," *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 52, No. 2, (1999), 239-268.

²² Mason, Weingarten and Fett, "Win, Lose, or Draw," 264.

their respective strategic positions acts to shape the belligerents' *perception* of the risks and likelihood of success of different strategies. This is addressed in further detail in Chapter Three.

Although system-level studies on the effect of foreign intervention on civil war duration and resolution have produced fruitful findings, they have largely failed to generate robust theory to explain these findings. The key reason for this is methodological. Generally, existing system-level studies have considered a large number of cases over an extended time frame, which has proven to be an excellent method to produce robust, reproducible and significant correlations between foreign intervention and different civil war phenomena. However, the method is ineffective in moving beyond correlations to uncover the precise processes by which foreign intervention interacts with the belligerents and the balance of capabilities.²³ Indeed, the large-*N* approach requires the authors to interpret country-level data as an approximation of local phenomena and then generate system-level explanations without suitable data on the specific mechanisms of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The limitations of this approach have been acknowledged by several scholars and, as a consequence, recent research has begun to include qualitative case studies with their "thick descriptions" to "help identify the causal mechanisms through which the independent variables" interact with the units of analysis.²⁴

The communal level of analysis and foreign intervention

The communal level of analysis focuses upon the behaviour of groups within the boundaries of the civil war state. Broadly, the communal level includes all social

²³ This is not solely a criticism of large-*N* studies with many instrumental case studies being confronted by a similar problem. See, for instance, Karen Rasler, "Internationalized Civil War: A Dynamic Analysis of the Syrian Intervention in Lebanon," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 27, No. 3, (1983), 421-456.

²⁴ Paul Collier, Anke Hoeffler, and Nicholas Sambanis, "The Collier-Hoeffler Model of Civil War Onset and the Case Study Project Research Design," in Paul Collier and Nicholas Sambanis (eds.), *Understanding Civil War: Vol. 1*, (Washington: The World Bank, 2005), 1; Sambanis, "Using Case Studies to Expand Economic Models of Civil War," 259-280.

aggregates as possible units of analysis, including families, villages, tribes, classes, and ethnic groups.²⁵ It shares much in common with the state level of analysis in International Relations theory in assuming that the units under examination are unitary, rational and represent the main agents in the study of civil war.²⁶ That is, belligerents will attempt to win the support of communal groups (frequently using both “carrot” and “stick”), and the course of the conflict will be determined by which side the communal groups decide to support. Thus, studies which adopt a communal-level approach elevate the communal group to the central unit of analysis and attempt to explain the whole through its parts.

Communal groups caught in a civil war are forced to make decisions such as which side to support and how much support to provide. Studies at this level of abstraction assume that the decision, once made, holds for all members. In other words, agential power is held by the community and not by the individual. For instance, one communal-level study of Mexican Civil War observed that once “a vote of confidence in the EZLN...[was] passed by the community assembly [it] in effect became ideologically binding on all the members of the peasant community itself.”²⁷ In the Vendée, although the small retailers and artisans did not hold the same grievances as other sections of the community, “as a small group in the village community they could not easily avoid taking sides with the party of the majority.”²⁸ Therefore, although the units at the communal-level can range in size from family groups through to entire ethnic groups, studies at this level share two

²⁵ A useful favourable analysis of the communal level of analysis is Michael Taylor, “Rationality and Revolutionary Collective Action,” in Michael Taylor, (ed.), *Rationality and Revolution*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 63-97.

²⁶ See, for example, Edward H. Carr, *Nationalism and After*, (London: Macmillan, 1945); Gabriel Almond, “The Return to the State,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 83, No. 3, (1988), 853-874; Stephen D. Krasner, “State Power and the Structure of International Trade,” *World Politics*, Vol. 28, No. 3, (1976), 317-347; Nils Petter Gleditsch and Håvard Hegre, “Peace and Democracy: Three Levels of Analysis,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 41, No. 2, (1997), 283-310; Daniel S. Geller and J. David Singer, *Nations at War: A Scientific Study of International Conflict*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 20-21; John M. Hobson, *The State and International Relations*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

²⁷ Marco Estrada Saavedra, “The ‘Armed Community in Rebellion’: Neo-Zapatismo in the Tojolab’al Cañadas, Chiapas (1988-96),” *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 2, (2005), 538.

²⁸ Claude Petitfrère, “The Origins of the Civil War in the Vendée,” *French History*, Vol. 2, No. 2, (1988), 202. Also see, Charles Tilly, *The Vendée*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964).

characteristics. First, the aggregate communal unit must navigate the uncertain politics created by the existence of two, or more, opposing centres of authority, and second, the communal group is monolithic and thus individuals and sub-groups do not possess significant agency.

The study of foreign intervention at the communal level of analysis has generally concentrated on uncovering the differences between foreign intervention in ethnic and ideological civil wars. Customarily, conflicts have been designated as ethnic when one of the belligerents is predominantly comprised of one communal group and is ethnically distinct to its opponent. In the past, ethnic civil wars have regularly been assumed to be fundamentally different from ideological civil wars.²⁹ Chaim Kaufmann, for instance, has argued that there are important differences between ethnic and ideological civil wars which alter the impact of foreign intervention.³⁰ He argued that foreign intervention in ideological civil wars is ineffective because the conflict is primarily a test of political competency, which no quantity of financial or military aid can improve. Furthermore, foreign troops will be operating in a war zone with no frontlines and thus be unable to identify the political affiliation of the population. In contrast, Kaufmann surmised that when the belligerents are comprised of different ethnic groups, there are clear territorial boundaries between the groups, affiliation is clearly identifiable by physical characteristics and the belligerents will generally engage in conventional warfare. As such, the outcome of ethnic civil war is “determined by the balance of forces, which outside powers can alter radically.”³¹

²⁹ See, for example, Robert Cooper and Mats Berdal, “Outside Intervention in Ethnic Conflicts,” in Michael E. Brown, (ed.), *Ethnic Conflict and International Security*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 181-206; Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985); Nicholas Sambanis, “Do Ethnic and Nonethnic Civil Wars Have the Same Causes? A Theoretical and Empirical Inquiry,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 45, No. 3, (2001), 259-282. Cutting-edge research, however, has begun to cast doubt on whether the assumed differences between ethnic and ideological civil wars are as great as regularly assumed. See Stathis N. Kalyvas and Matthew Adam Kocher, “Ethnic Cleavages and Irregular War: Iraq and Vietnam,” *Politics and Society*, Vol. 35, No. 1, (2007), 183-223; Kalyvas, “Ethnic Defection in Civil War.”

³⁰ Chaim Kaufmann, “Intervention in Ethnic and Ideological Civil Wars: Why One Can Be Done and the Other Can’t,” *Security Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1, (1996), 62-100; Chaim Kaufmann, “Possible and Impossible Solutions to Ethnic Civil Wars,” *International Security*, Vol. 20, No. 4, (1996), 140-145.

³¹ Kaufmann, “Intervention in Ethnic and Ideological Civil Wars,” 81.

Although Kaufmann's communal-level study was an admirable attempt to deduce the impact of foreign intervention in civil war, there are problems with his reflections. First, subsequent studies have shown that there is no significant correlation between ethnic civil wars and conventional warfare. Consider, for example, the guerrilla warfare in the ethnic civil wars in Kashmir, Turkey, Chechnya, Sudan, and Ethiopia.³² Second, there is emerging evidence to suggest that ethnic defection is more common than has previously been assumed.³³ One need not look any further than the collaboration with the Nazi forces in occupied Europe to realise the possible scale of ethnic defection. In sum, to date, the communal level of analysis has produced, comparatively, the least robust hypotheses on the impact of foreign intervention in civil war.

The individual level of analysis and foreign intervention

The behaviour of individuals is the ultimate devolution in the study of civil war.³⁴ This level of analysis represents the largest departure from the International Relations framework in not necessarily adopting statesmen as their units of analysis, but rather ordinary people caught in a civil war environment.³⁵ The individual level of analysis in the two fields do, however, share an emphasis on rational choice and decision making under conditions of great stress and uncertainty.

³² Kalyvas and Kocher, "Ethnic Cleavages and Irregular War," 183-223.

³³ Kalyvas, "Ethnic Defection in Civil War," 1043-1068.

³⁴ Typical of this level of analysis are, Paul Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest*, (Oxford: James Curry, 1996); Elizabeth Jean Wood, *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); and Mart Bax, "Warlords, Priests and the Politics of Ethnic Cleansing: A Case Study from Rural Bosnia Herzegovina," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 1, (2000), 16-36; Patricia Justino, *On the Links Between Violent Conflict and Household Poverty: How Much Do We Really Know?*, Microcon Research Working Paper 1, (Brighton: Microcon, 2007). On the risks of using aggregates as indicators of individual behaviour in civil war, see, Stathis N. Kalyvas, "Promises and Pitfalls of an Emerging Research Program: The Microdynamics of Civil War," in Stathis N. Kalyvas, Ian Shapiro and Tarek Masoud, (eds.), *Order, Conflict and Violence*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 397-421.

³⁵ Richard C. Snyder, H.W. Bruck and Burton Sapin, "The Decision-Making Approach to the Study of International Politics," in Richard C. Snyder, H.W. Bruck and Burton Sapin, (eds.), *Foreign Policy Decision-Making: An Approach to the Study of International Politics*, (New York: The Free Press, 1962), 60-74; Irving L. Janis and Leon Mann, *Decisionmaking: A Psychological Analysis of Conflict, Choice, and Commitment*, (New York: The Free Press, 1977).

Civil war creates a political and social environment that is fundamentally different from peace time. Historian Michael Fellman observed during the American Civil War that “normal expectations collapsed, to be replaced by frightening and bewildering personal and cultural chaos. The normal routes by which people solved problems and channeled behavior had been destroyed...Ordinary people, civilians as well as soldiers, were trapped...in a social landscape in which almost nothing remained recognizable or secure.”³⁶ Generally, individual level studies share an emphasis upon the uncertainty, fear, and opportunity that the anarchy of civil war produces. Individuals are faced with choices with possible mortal consequences, such as whether to actively participate, whether to denounce personal enemies, whether to flee, whether to collaborate and, if so, which side to collaborate with.³⁷ On balance, these questions are incompatible with the system and communal levels’ treatment of their chosen aggregates as unitary actors.

Research conducted at the individual level of analysis seeks to explain the course and nature of the civil war through emphasising the interpersonal ambiguity and uncertainty brought on by the civil war. As such, there has tended to be considerable analytical distance between studies on foreign intervention (which have generally been discussed within a larger political and strategic context) and the individual level of analysis. However, two prominent individual level studies have indirectly examined the impact of foreign intervention on the behaviour of individuals in civil war and how this can potentially influence the course of the conflict.

In the first, John Mueller argued that the intervention of foreign troops would quickly end “modern” civil wars which predominantly have been fought by armed

³⁶ Michael Fellman, *Inside War: The Guerrilla Conflict in Missouri During the American Civil War*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), xvi.

³⁷ Some individual level studies have shown that rational individuals will favour the interests of a group to which they belong, over that of outsiders and even their own interests. See, Jonathon Baron, “Confusion of Group Interest and Self-Interest in Parochial Cooperation on Behalf of a Group,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 45, No. 3, (2001), 283-296.

thugs, criminals and assorted riff-raff.³⁸ According to Mueller, in modern civil wars, the armed forces of both sides only very occasionally take time out of from preying upon the civilian population to fight other like units from rival ethnic, criminal, or business groups. Under these conditions, it is assumed that a foreign military intervention will have an immediate and sweeping impact. In the Bosnian Civil War, for instance, Mueller suggested that because the fighting was “carried out chiefly by small, ill-disciplined, and essentially cowardly bands of thugs and bullies, policing the situation would probably have been fairly easy for almost any organized, disciplined, and sizable army.”³⁹

A second individual level study examined the impact of foreign intervention in support of the insurgent actor. Jeremy Weinstein’s research has shown that the presence of externally-supplied resources – along with natural resources – tends to attract recruits that are drawn to short term gains, who he labels “consumers”, rather than individuals that are willing to endure high costs and risks for a possible future payoff, who he calls “investors”. Weinstein argued consumers engage in greater levels of indiscriminate violence and looting than investors, who are generally more disciplined, politically-motivated and frugal.⁴⁰ Hence, foreign assistance, by making available greater quantities of weapons, cash and equipment, may attract a larger number of consumers than investors into the insurgent’s ranks and thereby potentially change certain characteristics of the conflict.

³⁸ John Mueller, “The Banality of ‘Ethnic War’,” *International Security*, Vol. 25, No. 1, (2000), 42-70. Also see, John Mueller, *The Remnants of War*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004). There is ample evidence of similar observations in much earlier civil wars. For instance, Drake described Confederate guerrillas as “native ruffians, banditti, deserters, and desperate people generally” and “when authority collapses, [the guerrillas are] those most willing to resort to violence” and concluded that “when the pot boils, the scum rises.” Richard Drake, *A History of Appalachia*, (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 104.

³⁹ Mueller, “The Banality of ‘Ethnic War’,” 43-44. Also see, Jan Angstrom, “Towards a Typology of Internal Armed Conflict: Synthesising a Decade of Conceptual Turmoil,” *Civil Wars*, Vol. 4, No. 3, (2001), 93-116.

⁴⁰ Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion*; Jeremy M. Weinstein, “Resources and the Information Problem in Rebel Recruitment,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 49, No. 4, (2005), 598-624; Macartan Humphreys and Jeremy M. Weinstein, “Handling and Manhandling Civilians in Civil War,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 100, No. 3, (2006), 429-447.

The levels of analysis and warfare in civil wars

In light of the questions this dissertation is asking, and the manner in which it is asking them, I believe that the system level is the most appropriate level of abstraction to adopt. Although the pattern of violence is certainly influenced by the communal and individual levels, warfare is a function of the different belligerents' strategies and, as has already been outlined, the strategies adopted by belligerents are normally attributed to system level factors. Hence, the system level of analysis holds the most promising avenue for discovering the processes behind the relationship between foreign intervention and warfare in civil war.

Within the system level of analysis I assume that there are only two types of actor in a civil war: the incumbent and the insurgent. I take the incumbent to be the actor that controls the capital city of the civil war state.⁴¹ Capital cities are generally the centre of bureaucratic, military, and political control and as such are highly-prized by most belligerents whose war aim is to win control over the entire state. Therefore, a belligerent will usually remain the incumbent until it loses control over the capital city.⁴² Indeed, even if an actor is effectively besieged, having no direct control over anything further away than the outskirts of the capital, it will remain the incumbent.⁴³ Consistent with this definition, an incumbent may become an insurgent by losing control of the capital city, but staying in the game by

⁴¹ Also see, Marika Landau-Wells, *Capital Cities in Civil Wars: The Locational Dimension of Sovereign Authority*, Crisis States Occasional Paper 6, (London: London School of Economics, 2008). My motivation for employing the criteria is purely analytical and, unlike Landau-Wells, I make no normative claim that domestic and international actors necessarily perceive the belligerent in control over the capital as the legitimate sovereign of the entire state. Although, in sympathy with Landau-Wells' claim, I have found that historically there has been some correlation between the actor in possession of the capital and the side considered to be the "legitimate government". In the 1834 Spanish Civil War, for example, although France, England and Portugal were supporting the Cristina Government, in September 1837, they agreed "to recognize Carlos if he took Madrid, and by secret and joint instructions empowered their ambassadors in Paris to take this momentous step as soon as Carlos was in possession of his capital city." Philip E. Mosely, "Intervention and Nonintervention in Spain, 1838-39," *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 13, No. 2, (1941), 204.

⁴² Defining the incumbent in such a manner has several precedents in the empirical literature. Ngoga, for example, assumed that the capture of the Ugandan capital city instantly resulted in a transfer of governmental power. Pascal Ngoga, "Uganda: The National Resistance Army," in Christopher Clapham, (ed.), *African Guerrillas*, (Oxford: James Currey, 1998), 91-106.

⁴³ The case of the Rabbani Government in Afghanistan provides an excellent example of a "besieged government". In addition, Maley argued that much of the fighting over Kabul during the Afghan Civil War was for its "symbolic" importance. See Chapter Eight and William Maley, *The Afghanistan Wars*, (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 201.

retreating to rural areas to continue the fight.⁴⁴ An insurgent is defined as a significant contender for control over part, or all, of the state's territory, and which possesses the military means to pursue its goals. The organisation, capabilities and strategic objectives of insurgent groups certainly vary widely, yet this definition clearly distinguishes insurgents from other opposition groups such as non-violent dissidents and criminals.⁴⁵

2. Foreign Intervention, the Balance of Capabilities and Warfare in Civil War

It is now possible to begin to construct an explanation of how foreign intervention influences the warfare in civil war. My argument contains three variables: *foreign intervention*, the *balance of capabilities* and *warfare* in civil war. Foreign intervention refers to the transfer of resources from an external power to either the incumbent or an insurgent actor engaged in a civil war. The balance of capabilities is a system level attribute which refers to the distribution of the belligerents' collective military capabilities. Finally, warfare refers to the confluence of the belligerents' respective strategies. These definitions will be expanded upon below and over the course of the following chapters.

⁴⁴ This was exactly the case of the Former Government of Rwanda (FGOR) which after losing control of Kigali, withdrew to Zaire and began aggressive guerrilla operations against the new Rwandan government. For more detail see, Wm Cyrus Reed, "Guerrillas in the Midst," in Christopher Clapham, (ed.), *African Guerrillas*, (Oxford: James Currey, 1998), 134-154.

⁴⁵ See Daniel L. Byman, Peter Chalk, Bruce Hoffman, William Rosenau, David Brannan, *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements*, (Santa Monica: RAND, 2001), 4-5; On the aims of terrorism and the methods see, Grant Wardlaw, *Political Terrorism*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), in particular see, 34-58; Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Some scholars do not, however, view the differences between civil war and communal conflicts as being fundamentally different, but rather a similar phenomenon at a different level of violence. See, for example, Sarah Kenyon Lischer, "Causes of Communal Warfare: Fear and Feasibility," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 22, No. 4, (1999), 331-355.

Foreign intervention

In International Relations, the term intervention simply refers to one state's intrusion into the domestic affairs of another.⁴⁶ This includes behaviour that may not normally be considered significant enough to warrant the "foreign intervention" description in everyday parlance. However, for the purposes of this dissertation it is useful to employ a more precise definition. Foreign intervention is thus defined as the transfer of resources from an external state to a contesting party in a civil war.⁴⁷ As already mentioned, foreign intervention in civil war is usually in support of one side and hence this dissertation will focus solely upon partisan foreign intervention. Resources are broadly defined as any funds, weapons, equipment, materiel or personnel that have immediate or potential coercive value. This definition captures almost all across border transfers of resources from external state governments to civil war belligerents, and includes everything from currency and food through to weapons and training and even the foreign power's own military units.

A survey of scholarly research on this topic suggests that we can identify three broad categories of foreign assistance to belligerents: economic, indirect military and direct military.⁴⁸ Although these types of interventions are not mutually-

⁴⁶ Herbert K. Tillema, "Foreign Overt Intervention in the Nuclear Age," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 26, No. 2, (1989), 180. For a discussion of the definition of "intervention" see, James N. Rosenau, "Intervention as a Scientific Concept," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 13, No. 2, (1969), 149-171; James N. Rosenau, "The Concept of Intervention," *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 22, No. 2, (1968), 165-176.

⁴⁷ Regan, *Civil Wars and Foreign Intervention*, 6-7. Freedman, *Military Intervention in European Conflicts*, 9; Also see, Hans Morgenthau, "A Political Theory of Foreign Aid," *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 56, No. 2, (1962), 301-309. Young offered a similar definition arguing that "intervention refers to organized and systematic activities across recognized boundaries aimed at affecting the political authorities of the target...[These activities may be] designed either to replace existing structures or to shore up structures thought to be in danger of collapse." Oran R. Young, "Intervention and International Systems," *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 22, No. 2, (1968), 178.

⁴⁸ Dunér identifies five "instruments and levels of involvement" of foreign powers in civil wars: (I) direct combat involvement, (II) indirect combat involvement, (III) direct para-combat involvement, (IV) indirect para-involvement, and (V) direct supporting activities. See, Bertil Dunér, *Military Intervention in Civil Wars: the 1970s*, (Aldershot: Gower, 1985), 16. Richard Little, in contrast, identifies eight different steps on the intervention ladder: (1) A verbal intervention response, (2) *de jure* recognition, (3) the donation of economic and humanitarian aid, (4) the supply of arms, (5) permission (either explicit or implicit) for an actor to use their territory, (6) the threat to send troops, (7) military

exclusive, for analytical reasons, it is useful to treat them separately. Economic intervention is a category that captures all non-military forms of assistance, including finance, food, and humanitarian aid.⁴⁹ Indirect military intervention is the supply of military resources in support of the recipient's own forces. As a conceptual category, it captures a broad range of assistance, including the transfer of weapons, ammunition, intelligence reports, military advisors, and the provision of safe-havens.⁵⁰ Finally, direct military intervention is the injection of a foreign power's military units into the civil war in support of one side. It involves the deployment of combat units, such as infantry, armour and aircraft into the civil war state. Clearly, whatever of these three forms foreign intervention takes, it will contribute to the recipient's military capabilities. This, in turn, will influence the strategic balance between the belligerents.

Balance of capabilities

The next variable in the process is the balance of capabilities. The balance of capabilities is an aggregate representation of the belligerents' absolute and relative capabilities. It is explained further in Chapter Three; however, at this point, it

manoeuvres, and (8) the direct intervention with troops. See, Richard Little, *Intervention: External Involvement in Civil Wars*, (London: Martin Robinson, 1975), 9-10.

⁴⁸ See, Stephanie G. Neuman, "The Arms Trade, Military Assistance, and Recent Wars: Change and Continuity," *Annals of American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 541, (1995), 49. Some definitions of direct military intervention have postulated that, in this form of intervention, troops must "across borders", see for example, Pearson, "Foreign Military Interventions and Domestic Disputes," 261. However, there have been historical examples where this has not necessarily occurred. For example, the Soviet force that intervened in the 1956 Hungarian uprising were an army detachment already stationed in the country.

⁴⁹ Unlike other studies, I exclude international sanctions as a form of intervention because no resources physically cross the border into the civil war system. Patrick M. Regan, "Conditions of Successful Third-Party Intervention in Intrastate Conflicts," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 40, No. 2, (1996), 336-359; Elbadawi and Sambanis, *External Intervention and Duration of Civil Wars*; Regan, *Civil Wars and Foreign Powers*; David A. Baldwin, *Economic Statecraft*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985); James M. Lindsay, "Trade Sanctions as a Policy Instruments: A Re-examination," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 30, (1986), 153-173; Fredrik Hoffmann, "The Functions of Economic Sanctions: A Comparative Analysis," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 4, No. 2, (1967), 140-160; Robert A. Pape, "Why Economic Sanctions Do Not Work," *International Security*, Vol. 22, No. 2, (1997), 90-136; David A. Baldwin, "The Sanctions Debate and the Logic of Choice," *International Security*, Vol. 24, No. 3, (1999), 80-107.

⁵⁰ The provision of a safe-haven is not intervention *per se*, however, after spending time across the border, the forces that cross back into the civil war system will generally be better armed, trained, fed, and motivated than when they exited. Thus, the margin in the force's capabilities between when they exited and returned is considered the level of the foreign power's assistance. On safe-havens, more generally, see Idean Salehyan, "Transnational Rebels: Neighbouring States as Sanctuary for Rebel Groups," *World Politics*, Vol. 59, No.2, (2007), 217-242; Daniel Byman, *Deadly Connections: States that Sponsor Terrorism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 65-66.

should be emphasised that the balance of capabilities is rooted in each belligerent's overall military capabilities. A belligerent's *cumulative capabilities* is a conceptual representation of its overall military strength; that is, the quantitative and qualitative sum total of the belligerent's manpower, training, weapons, equipment, intelligence, and logistics. Cumulative capabilities are distinct from power.⁵¹ A belligerent's cumulative capabilities are its total means of inflicting military losses on an opponent; whereas power is generally understood to be an actor's ability to influence other political actors to behave in a way they would not otherwise.⁵²

The value of a belligerent's cumulative capabilities is intimately linked to its supply of resources.⁵³ A belligerent will expend capabilities contesting the civil war and therefore must possess the ability to replenish their stockpiles. These resources can be endogenous (that is, originate domestically) or exogenous (i.e., originate from outside the civil war system). Generally, endogenous resources will be a larger contributor to a belligerent's cumulative capabilities than exogenous resources.⁵⁴ Despite this, however, exogenous resources can markedly increase a recipient's cumulative capabilities and improve its survivability. A recent study found that belligerents that have two or more foreign sponsors are four times more likely to

⁵¹ Charles Wolf, Jr., *Foreign Aid: Theory and Practice in Southern Asia*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), 284. The distinction between "cumulative capabilities" and "power" is similar to the one made by Kindleberger between "strength" and "power". He argued that strength "exists independently of whether it is used to assert or achieve control over policies of another country." See, Charles P. Kindleberger, *Power and Money*, (New York: Basic Books, 1970), 56.

⁵² As is discussed in more detail below (section 3 of this chapter), the rationale for adopting "cumulative capabilities" rather than simply "capabilities" is that the former is intended to capture both tangible and intangible elements, while in the literature "capabilities" is frequently employed as a synonym for *military* capabilities.

⁵³ Nathan Leites and Charles Wolf, *Rebellion and Authority: Analytical Essay on Insurgent Conflicts*, (Chicago: Markham Publishing Company, 1970), 32-33.

⁵⁴ Foreign powers are, by far, the most significant source of exogenous resources. Although exogenous support may also come from an international diaspora, an alliance with neighbouring insurgent actors, or humanitarian organisations, rarely will these inputs match those supplied by third-party states. For example, the Irish American sponsorship of the Irish Republican Army is frequently held up as a major case of a foreign diaspora funding an insurgent actor; however, even at its peak in 1972 and 1981 the Irish American diaspora only contributed \$172,000 and \$250,000, respectively. These contributions are tiny when one considers that total IRA expenditure in 1980 was £19,680,000. In contrast, Iran contributed almost a million pounds a year to the IRA. James Adams, *The Financing of Terror*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986), 142; J. Bowyer Bell, *The IRA, 1968-2000: Analysis of a Secret Army*, (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2000), 187-188; Chris Dishman, "Terrorism, Crime and Transformation," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 27, (2001), 48-49; Adrian Guelke, "The United States, Irish Americans and the Northern Ireland Peace Process," *International Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 2, (1996), 524; William A. Tupman, "Where Has All the Money Gone? The IRA As A Profit-Making Concern," *Journal of Money Laundering Control*, Vol. 1, No. 4, (1998), 306; Michael McKinley, "The Irish Republican Army and Terror International: An Inquiry into the Material Aspects of the First Fifteen Years," in Paul Wilkinson and Alasdair M. Steward, (eds.), *Contemporary Research on Terrorism*, (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987), 196.

survive through to the end of the civil war.⁵⁵ Further, although exogenous support may also come from an international diaspora, a neighbouring insurgent actor, or humanitarian organisations, rarely will these inputs match those supplied by states. As such, foreign states are, by far, the most significant source of exogenous resources.

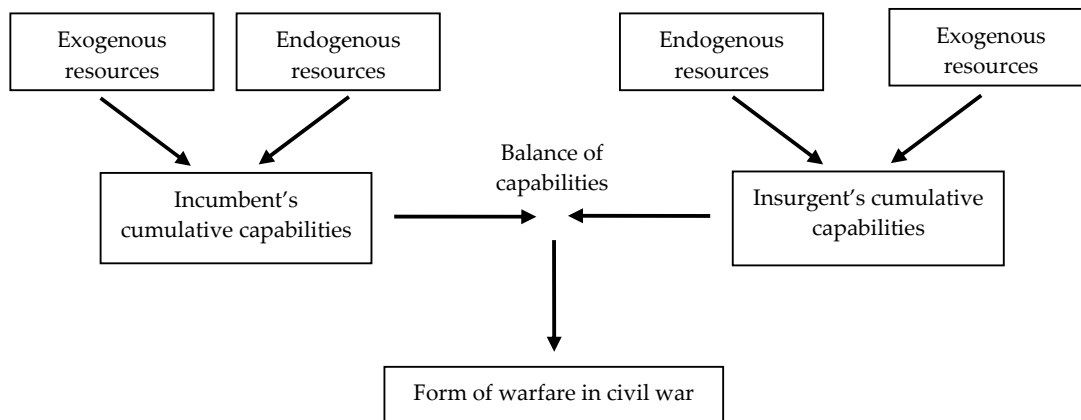
Warfare in civil wars

As has been suggested, a belligerent's strategy will be shaped by its perception of its relative position vis-à-vis its opponent(s). Hence, the form of warfare that emerges in a civil war will be influenced, but not determined by political objectives, geography or military culture. The causes, location, and population involved in the Burmese, South Vietnamese, and Algerian civil wars were vastly different, and yet they were all – for the most part – characterised by guerrilla warfare. Instead, the form of warfare that emerges in a civil war will principally be determined by the belligerents' reading of the balance of capabilities. The balance of capabilities in civil war rests solely upon military capabilities, which will usually lie – however marginally – in the incumbent's favour. Thus, it is highly susceptible to manipulation from external interference. (Note that this description of the balance of capabilities contrasts with the balance of power in International Relations theory, which is normally considered to encompass a broad set of political, military, economic and social components and to tend towards parity).⁵⁶ The causal argument of this dissertation is simplified in Figure 1.1 in a civil war with two belligerents.

⁵⁵ Abdulkader H. Sinno, *Organizations at War in Afghanistan and Beyond*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 289.

⁵⁶ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), 106-143; Richard Little, *The Balance of Power in International Relations: Metaphors, Myths and Models*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

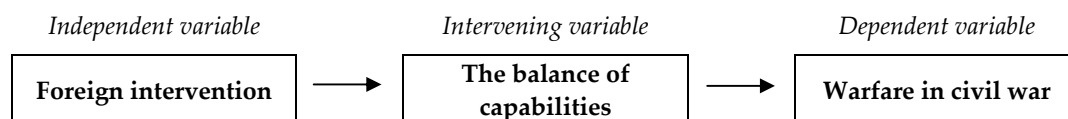
Figure 1.1: Resources, the Balance of Capabilities, and Warfare in Civil War



3. Research Design and Methodology

As mentioned earlier, the focus of this dissertation is on how foreign intervention affects the form of warfare in civil war. Thus, the research design designates foreign intervention as the independent variable and warfare as the dependent variable. The balance of capabilities acts as an intervening variable in this process. It is argued that foreign intervention will add to the recipient's pre-existing capabilities and thereby trigger a change in the balance of capabilities. The balance of capabilities will, in turn, influence the form of warfare that emerges in the civil war. For clarity, the causal argument is encapsulated in Figure 1.2.

Figure 1.2: Foreign Intervention and Warfare: The Causal Argument



As foreign intervention is only one of several sources of capabilities, a key methodological challenge is to isolate and then observe the impact of a single causal mechanism within what Charles Ragin described as a “case of multiple

causality".⁵⁷ Indeed, in most circumstances, endogenous resources are a more significant contributor to belligerents' cumulative capabilities than foreign assistance. I argue that a methodology based on the principles of the controlled comparative case studies approach offers the most promising means of isolating and empirically observing the "causal mechanism" and "causal effect" under study.⁵⁸ The comparative case study approach is sufficiently sensitive to account for other influences on the balance of capabilities while maintaining the focus on the impact of foreign intervention. The approach also offers the best balance between generality and detailed description, which are both essential for the development of a deep understanding of the effect of foreign intervention on warfare in civil war.

The empirical component of this dissertation discusses evidence from two cases: the Angolan and Afghan civil wars. These case studies are subsequently divided into multiple observations. As King, Keohane and Verba identified, "what may appear to be a single-case study, or a study of only a few cases, may indeed contain many potential observations."⁵⁹ An "observation" is defined as "one measure of one dependent variable on one unit (and for as many explanatory variable measures as are available on that same unit)."⁶⁰ As applied in this study, an

⁵⁷ Charles C. Ragin, *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 33; Janet Buttolph Johnson and Richard A. Joslyn, *Political Science Research Methods*, (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly, 1991), 37; Arend Lijphart, "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method," *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 65, No. 3, (1971), 684 and 687. See also Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 40.

⁵⁸ Hence, this objective and research design is strongly influenced by Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 12. On the comparative case research method more generally, see, Robert E. Stakes, "Case Studies," in Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, (eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing, 2005), 443-466; Christopher H. Achen and Duncan Snidal, "Rational Deterrence Theory and Comparative Case Studies," *World Politics*, Vol. 41, No. 2, (January 1989), 144-169; David A. Bositis, *Research Designs for Political Science: Contrivance and Demonstration in Theory and Practice*, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1990), 23; Stanley Lieberon, "Small N's and Big Conclusions," in Charles C. Ragin and H. Becker, (eds.), *What is a Case? Exploring the Foundations of Social Inquiry*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 105-118; Keith F. Punch, *Introduction to Social Research: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*, (London: SAGE Publishing, 1998); Robert Yip, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing, 2002); John Gerring, "What is a Case Study and What is it Good for?" *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 98, No. 2, (2004), 341-354;

⁵⁹ Gary King, Robert O. Keohane and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 208.

⁶⁰ King, Keohane, and Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry*, 217.

additional observation is cast at each point where there is a significant change in the independent variable (i.e. a large increase or reduction in the amount of exogenous resources being transferred to a belligerent). A measurement is then recorded of the size and type of each of the foreign intervention and the change, or lack of change, in the balance of capabilities and the warfare. Each observation is then able to be compared with earlier and later observations to permit causal inferences to be made. The major advantage of this methodological technique is that most alternate causal variables on warfare (such as, geography and leadership) are held relatively constant.⁶¹ The overall result is that this dissertation's two case studies, have been devolved into a group of twelve "observations" (i.e. N=12), which I compare in order to make causal inferences on the relationship between foreign intervention and warfare in civil war.

Observing and measuring foreign intervention, the balance of capabilities and warfare

Change can be observed across time or space. In this dissertation's cases, both longitudinal and cross-sectional observations are taken of foreign intervention, the balance of capabilities and warfare in civil war. That is, the dissertation examines both temporal and spatial variation in the impact of foreign intervention on warfare. However, for the most part, observations are longitudinal. Therefore, to use Sambanis's terms, this study employs the cases to "identify interactions between variables and establish a chronological sequence of events that helps map out the pathways linking the independent and the dependent variable."⁶² This dissertation identifies significant chronological changes in the type or size of the

⁶¹ A key drawback of this methodological technique is that results should be independent of each other, as though in laboratory experiments. This is obviously difficult to completely achieve in sequence and longitudinal analysis. However, for this study, the benefits of holding other variables constant are judged to outweigh any cross-trail contamination. See, Jeffrey Haydu, "Making Use of the Past: Time Periods as Cases to Compare and as Sequences of Problem Solving," *The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 104, No. 2, (1998), 339-371; Andrew Abbot, "Sequence Analysis: New Methods for Old Ideas," *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 21, (1995), 93-113. On other influences on strategy, see, Williamson Murray and Mark Grimsley, "Introduction: On Strategy," in Williamson Murray, Alvin Bernstein, and MacGregor Knox, (eds.), *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States and War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 1-23.

⁶² Sambanis, "Using Case Studies to Expand Economic Models of Civil War," 263.

foreign assistance to the belligerents; measures the impact of these changes in the flow of exogenous resources on the balance of capabilities; and, finally, observes any variation in the warfare in the civil war. To achieve this, reliable measures of the three variables are required.

The measurement of foreign intervention

To describe changes in the pattern of foreign intervention, in each observation all significant foreign assistance from major foreign sponsors is quantitatively and qualitatively recorded. To the extent that the available data allows, the size, type, value and timing of foreign assistance to belligerents is detailed. For example, in the instance of indirect military intervention, not only is the number of weapons noted, but also, where the data exists, their quality.

To aid empirical observation, the case selection favoured civil wars with highly visible interventions. In practice, this meant selecting larger instances of foreign intervention. The probability of inaccurate measurement increases as the volume of exogenous resource transferred to belligerents decreases. Large quantities of exogenous resources are more likely to 1) be accurately-measurable themselves, 2) have a more observable impact on the cumulative capabilities of the recipients, and 3) produce a more immediate impact on the balance of capabilities. This final point is particularly important. The shorter the time frame between a change in the pattern of foreign intervention and the warfare, the more likely any observable variation in the latter was caused by the change in former. This point is supported by Paul Stern and Daniel Druckman's submission that the "longer the time between the intervention and its expected effect, the harder it is to evaluate the intervention because there is more time in which extrinsic events can occur and influence outcomes."⁶³

⁶³ Paul C. Stern and Daniel Druckman, "Evaluating Interventions in History: The Case of International Conflict Resolution," *International Studies Review*, Vol. 2, No. 1, (2000), 39.

The measurement of the balance of capabilities

The balance of capabilities is deduced in this dissertation through an assessment of the belligerents' cumulative capabilities. That is, each belligerent's cumulative capabilities must first be ascertained before they can be combined in a judgement of the balance of capabilities. As a concept, cumulative capabilities encapsulates a belligerent's size, technology and fortitude in a single variable.⁶⁴ Hence, to measure a belligerent's cumulative capabilities I employ a composite qualitative approach which is primarily comprised of three factors: troop strength, technology and contemporary reports. I argue that, when combined, these measures provide a reasonably reliable judgement of each belligerent's cumulative capabilities and, more importantly, the state of each belligerent's cumulative capabilities relative to its opponent(s).

Some may argue that other factors are central to calculating a belligerent's cumulative capabilities, such as organisational structure and training. However, both organisational structure and training contain an endogeneity problem for this dissertation. That is, these factors not only make substantial contributions to the balance of capabilities but are also outcomes of a belligerent's choice of strategy. Hence, organisational structure and training feed into both the explanatory and dependent variables. To overcome this problem, this dissertation will not rely heavily upon these factors for measuring cumulative capabilities. In cases where superior organisation and training unmistakably influence the course and nature of

⁶⁴ Several authors have argued against using a purely materialistic definition for the capability of an actor. See, for example, Christopher S. Parker, "New Weapons for Old Problems: Conventional Proliferation and Military Effectiveness," *International Security*, Vol. 23, No. 4, (1999), 119-147; Stephen Biddle and Robert Zirkle, "Technology, Civil-Military Relations, and Warfare in the Developing World: Conventional Proliferation and Military Effectiveness in Developing States," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 2, (1996), 171-212; Stephen Biddle, *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004); Martin van Crevald, *Fighting Power: German and U.S. Army Performance, 1939-1945*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1982); Kenneth M. Pollack, *Arabs at War: Military Effectiveness, 1948-1991*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002); Allan R. Millet, Williamson Murray and Kenneth H. Watman, "The Effectiveness of Military Organizations," *International Security*, Vol. 11, No. 1, (1986), 37; Risa A. Brooks and Elizabeth Stanley, (eds.), *Creating Military Power: The Sources of Military Effectiveness*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007); Risa A. Brooks, "Making Military Might: Why Do States Fail and Succeed," *International Security*, Vol. 28, No. 2, (2003), 149-191.

the warfare, contemporary reports and commentary (being the third factor I employ in the measurement of cumulative capabilities) can carefully draw these elements into the explanatory variable. The technology factor also contains potential endogeneity; however, I argue later that this is to a lesser degree than either organisation or training.

Troop strength is a popular measure of military capabilities.⁶⁵ The main advantage of employing troop strength as a component of the measurement of cumulative capabilities flows from it being common to all belligerents, easily comparable and relatively precise.⁶⁶ Clearly, however, troop strength is deficient on its own, as superior technology and fighting ability can all potentially compensate for numbers.⁶⁷

The type and quantity of a belligerent's military technology – that is, its weapons and equipment – is an integral component of that belligerent's cumulative capabilities. It is important to include military technology in the measurement of cumulative capabilities because it can potentially make a significant contribution, dramatically increasing a belligerent's capacity for offensive and defensive operations. However, like organisational structure and training, incorporating military assets into the measurement of cumulative capabilities represents possible endogeneity within the context of this dissertation. That is, the weapons a belligerent possesses may not only shape its chosen strategy, but the belligerent may also select weapons based upon its strategy. However, I assume that in most instances, a belligerent will attempt to accumulate as much destructive potential as its resource base allows. Thus, the type, quantity, quality and sophistication of the

⁶⁵ Troop strength has frequently been a proxy for power in the literature. See, for example, J. David Singer, Stuart Bremer, and John Stuckey, "Capability Distribution, Uncertainty and Major Power War, 1820-1965," in Bruce M. Russett, (ed.), *Peace, War, and Numbers*, (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1972), 19-48; F. Clifford, "A Tentative Evaluation of World Power," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 4, No. 1, (1960), 138-144; Frank W. Wayman, J. David Singer, and Gary Goertz, "Capabilities, Allocations, and Success in Militarized Disputes and Wars, 1816-1976," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 27, No. 4, (1983), 497-515; Gary Goertz and Paul F. Diehl, "Measuring Military Allocations: A Comparison of Different Approaches," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 30, No. 3, (1986), 553-581.

⁶⁶ Philip Hayward, "The Measurement of Combat Effectiveness," *Operations Research*, Vol. 16, No. 2, (1968), 314-323.

⁶⁷ Richard G. Head, "Technology and the Military Balance," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 56, No. 3, (1978), 544-556.

military technology the belligerents employ will tend to be more of an expression of their cumulative capabilities than their strategies.

Finally, the measurement of belligerents' cumulative capabilities in this dissertation will rely on historical accounts. I will therefore draw upon the observations of reporters, participants and other assorted sources to gauge the absolute and relative strength of the belligerents. Charles Wolf, when confronted by a similar conceptual variable, suggested that when "important variables are conceptually unmeasurable, or, if conceptually measurable, are unmeasured in the sense that the requisite data are unavailable or unreliable...analytical methods cannot serve as substitutes for judgement."⁶⁸ Following Wolf, I have taken the view that contemporary accounts allow a judgement of a belligerent's cumulative capabilities to be made. Furthermore, the importance of contemporary accounts lies in their ability to confirm the impact that troop strength and technology have on belligerents' cumulative capabilities. Indeed, the contribution of troops and technology are likely to vary significantly. For example, not all soldiers will be equally disciplined and willing to fight, and military technology will vary in its state of repair and appropriateness to the terrain. Thus, overall, marshalling the views of contemporary sources captures many of the intangible elements which troop numbers and technology neglect, while also engaging contemporary observers' own evaluation of the balance of capabilities.

The measurement of warfare in civil war

There are three forms of warfare in civil war: conventional, guerrilla and irregular. The forms exhibit different empirical characteristics. As Chapter Three will explain, the differences in the forms of warfare are particularly distinguished by their offensive and defensive characteristics. In the case studies considered in this dissertation, the offensive and defensive features of the warfare are ascertained by

⁶⁸ Wolf, *Foreign Aid*, 356-357.

collecting, collating and analysing data from government archives, statistical databases, personal correspondences with former policymakers, military personnel and journalists, and the usual range of secondary sources. These sources allowed an observation to be recorded of the dominant form of warfare at a particular place and time.

Case selection: the Angolan and Afghan civil wars

There were four considerations in choosing the case studies.⁶⁹ First, there had to have been variation in the independent variable. That is, there had to have been substantial temporal or spatial change in the level and configuration of foreign intervention during the course of the civil war. Second, and as I have explained, to increase the reliability of the observation, the foreign intervention needed to have been on a significant scale. In essence, this means that the intervention should at some point have included substantial inflows of exogenous resources. Third, the dependent variable should have had the opportunity to be observed. In practice, this means that the cases needed to have been protracted. The longer the period of investigation, the clearer the effect, or non-effect, of intervention on the strategies adopted in the conflict.⁷⁰ Finally, the cases ought to have been continuous wars, as periods of peace could obscure the impact of intervention and thus weaken the validity of the study.

The Angolan (1974-1988) and Afghan civil wars (1978-1992) met all the above requirements. First, there was considerable variation in the amount of foreign assistance provided to the belligerents in both civil wars. In Angola, foreign powers initially provided modest quantities of assistance before progressively increasing their commitment over the course of the civil war. In Afghanistan, most foreign

⁶⁹ David Collier and James Mahoney, "Insight and Pitfalls: Section Bias in Qualitative Research," *World Politics*, Vol. 49, No. 1, (1996), 56-91.

⁷⁰ Alexander L. George, "Case Studies and Theory Development: The Method of Structured, Focused Comparison," in Paul Gordon Lauren, (ed.), *Diplomacy: New Approaches in History, Theory, and Policy*, (New York: The Free Press, 1979), 57.

powers were not heavily engaged in the civil war at its outset. However, following the Soviet Union's December 1979 direct military intervention, the conflict soon evolved into one of the Cold War's principal battlefields. Second, the size of the foreign intervention in the Angolan and Afghan civil wars permits the empirical study of its impact on the course and nature of the conflicts. At its height, Cuba had tens of thousands of troops operating in Angola, while the Soviet Union was bankrolling Luanda's war effort with money and advanced military equipment. A similar situation, but on a smaller scale, developed on the insurgent's side, with South Africa occasionally supplying troops and the United States supplying money, weapons and equipment. In Afghanistan, Moscow deployed a force over a hundred thousand strong and picked up the cheque for rebuilding the Afghan Army. The United States gradually increased its indirect military assistance to the Mujahideen, until, by the late 1980s, it was spending hundreds of millions of dollars a year in support of the Mujahideen.⁷¹ Finally, the periods of the Angolan and Afghan civil wars studied in this dissertation were prolonged and continuous. The Angolan Civil War was relentlessly fought for 16 years, while the Afghan Civil War ran continuously for the 14 years under investigation.

Plan of the dissertation

This dissertation is divided into an additional three parts: theory, cases and conclusion. Part II (consisting of Chapters Two to Four) generates explanations on how foreign intervention influences the course and nature of warfare in civil war. Part III (consisting of Chapters Five to Eight) seeks to test the theoretical explanations developed in Part II against case material from the Angolan and Afghan civil wars. Part IV (Chapter Nine) presents the findings and conclusions of this dissertation.

⁷¹ Barnett R. Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 180-183; Charles G. Cogan, "Partners in Time: The CIA and Afghanistan since 1979," *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 10, No. 2, (1993), 73-82.

Chapter Two reflects on the interaction between exogenous resources and belligerents. It argues that exogenous resources have two values: gross and interactive. Exogenous resources' gross value can be measured by bulk, cost, or quantity. However, the contribution exogenous resources make to belligerents' cumulative capabilities cannot purely be measured by their gross value. As such, exogenous resources' interactive value represents the amount by which they increase the recipient's cumulative capabilities. The chapter, through theoretical deduction, discusses the factors that cause there to be a greater or lesser margin between the exogenous resources' gross and interactive values.

Chapter Three, through a process of theoretical deduction and empirical induction, develops a model of the balance of capabilities. It deviates from earlier studies by developing an explanation that includes both absolute and relative variables that simultaneously act upon the balance of capabilities to influence the form of warfare that emerges in civil war. Chapter Three argues that because the balance of capabilities is fluid, warfare in civil war is normally a highly dynamic affair.

Chapter Four combines the causal inferences generated on foreign intervention and the balance of capabilities in the preceding two chapters to explain some of the processes involved in exogenous resources' influence on warfare. Although generally there is great temporal and spatial variation in warfare in civil wars, there have been numerous cases where civil wars have been characterised by guerrilla warfare for prolonged lengths of time without the warfare changing to a conventional confrontation. Chapter Four develops a theoretical explanation of this peculiar characteristic of warfare transition.

Chapter Five makes causal inferences on the impact of foreign intervention by examining temporal variation in the balance of capabilities and warfare in the Angolan Civil War. Between 1974 and 1976, at different times, three different

patterns of foreign intervention characterised the Angolan Civil War. An observation is made of each. In the first period, the belligerents received limited foreign assistance and the belligerents' forces were small in number and poorly-armed. In the next period, massive volumes of foreign intervention flowed into Angola, which allowed the contending sides to increase their respective cumulative capabilities. Finally, the foreign supporters of the insurgent actors disengaged from the civil war, changing the pattern of foreign intervention for a third time.

Chapter Six examines the period of the Angolan Civil War between 1977 and 1989. It shows that after the insurgent's initial period of rapid growth, equilibrium was reached in the balance of capabilities. The result was that the civil war entered an extended phase of guerrilla warfare, which was only overcome by a direct military intervention by South Africa. Chapter Six therefore contains two observations, the period characterised by low South African engagement and guerrilla warfare (1977-1984) and the period of greater South African intervention (1984-1988).

Chapter Seven analyses the balance of capabilities and warfare in the Afghan Civil War between 1978 and 1980. It contains four observations. Unlike the other empirical chapters, it examines spatial variation in the balance of capabilities and warfare in civil war. The cross-sectional analysis employs two observations to make causal inferences: the Nuristani Rebellion and Herat Mutiny. The December 1979 Soviet intervention radically altered the balance of capabilities across the entire country. Hence, the Soviet intervention allows the chapter to record later observations in both Nuristan and Herat.

Chapter Eight examines the impact of foreign intervention on the Afghan Civil War following the Soviet direct military intervention. The chapter contains three observations. The first is the period of the Soviet intervention and guerrilla warfare (1980-1983). In 1984, however, the pattern of intervention underwent a dramatic

change with the United States significantly increasing its aid to the Mujahideen. This change in the pattern of foreign intervention allows a second observation to be made between 1984 and 1988. The third observation focuses on the consequences of the Soviet withdrawal on the warfare in Afghanistan. The 12 observations in Chapters Five through to Eight are summarised in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Observations of Foreign Intervention in the Angolan and Afghan Civil Wars

Chapter	Observation	Comparison type	Location	Time period
5	N ₁	Temporal	Angola	Nov. 1974 – Oct. 1975
5	N ₂	Temporal	Angola	Nov. 1975 – Dec. 1976
5	N ₃	Temporal	Angola	Feb. 1975 – Dec. 1976
6	N ₄	Temporal	Angola	1977-1983
6	N ₅	Temporal	Angola	1984-1989
7	N ₆	Spatial	Afghanistan (Nuristan)	Jul. 1978 – Apr. 1979
7	N ₇	Spatial	Afghanistan (Herat)	Mar. 1979
7	N ₈	Spatial	Afghanistan (Nuristan)	1980-1988
7	N ₉	Spatial	Afghanistan (Herat)	1980-1989
8	N ₁₀	Temporal	Afghanistan	1980-1983
8	N ₁₁	Temporal	Afghanistan	1984-1989
8	N ₁₂	Temporal	Afghanistan	1990-1992

Chapter Nine summarises the results and suggests directions for future research on foreign intervention, the balance of capabilities and warfare in civil wars.

Part II

Chapter Two

Exogenous Resources and Belligerents' Capabilities

Foreign intervention can dramatically change the course of a conflict. One need look no further than the Greek, Lebanese, Malaysian and Somali civil wars to appreciate the potential impact of foreign involvement.¹ Indeed, as foreign powers typically intervene with a view to changing the trajectory of the civil war, even a partially-successful intervention will tend to alter the current direction of the conflict.² However, there has been great variation in the impact of different types of foreign assistance across time and between recipients. Even if different types of assistance – economic, indirect military or military – are provided at roughly equivalent levels, they tend to have different effects on the overall capabilities of recipients. Moreover, even similar quantities of foreign assistance, delivered in the same form, have had different impacts on the capabilities of different belligerents. The apparent randomness of the effect of foreign intervention is a major dilemma.

This chapter will address the variation in the impact of foreign intervention. Through doing so, the chapter develops theoretical explanations of the mechanisms through which foreign assistance impacts upon belligerents' capabilities in civil war.

¹ Doug Lemke and Patrick M. Regan, "Interventions as Influence," in Paul F. Diehl, (ed.), *The Scourge of War: New Extensions on an Old Problem*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 145-168. On democracies and intervention see, Charles W. Kegley and Margaret G. Hermann, "How Democracies Use Intervention: A Neglected Dimension of the Democratic Peace," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 33, No. 3, (1996), 309-322; Kurt Taylor Gaubatz, "Democratic States and Commitment in International Relations," *International Organization*, Vol. 50, No. 1, (1996), 109-139.

² Stern and Druckman have even defined intervention "broadly to include any action to change the course of a conflict process." See, Paul C. Stern and Daniel Druckman, "Evaluating Interventions in History: The Case of International Conflict Resolution," *International Studies Review*, Vol. 2, No. 1, (2000), 33-63.

The puzzle

Foreign intervention is, in essence, the transfer of resources from an external power to one side in the civil war.³ However, rarely will the decrease in a foreign power's military and economic resources translate into an identical increase in the belligerent's capabilities. Instead, two factors are at play. First, different types of foreign assistance seem to have varying impacts.⁴ In particular, relatively small direct military interventions can have a disproportional impact, especially when compared to indirect military and economic interventions. Second, there is considerable variation in the impact of foreign intervention on different belligerents. The same type of intervention, supplied in similar volumes, can produce two very different effects on the capabilities of different recipients.

What explains the variation in the impact of different types of foreign intervention on different belligerents? From the preceding discussion, any attempt to explain the impact of foreign intervention on the capabilities of recipients must take into consideration both the type of intervention and the characteristics of the recipient. As such, this chapter is divided into two sections. The first section proposes explanations for the varying impact that economic, indirect military and direct military assistance have on the capabilities of recipients. The second section explores the way in which variation in the characteristics of recipients themselves can affect the impact of foreign intervention.

³ This definition of foreign intervention encompasses most common forms of intervention while excluding atypical cases such as neutral multilateral interventions that attempt to maintain stability. For similar reasoning see, Ibrahim A. Elbadawi and Nicholas Sambanis, *External Intervention and the Duration of Civil Wars*, World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 2433, (2000), 8. For an alternative popular definition see, James N. Rosenau, "The Concept of Intervention," *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 22, No. 2, (1968), 169. The definition also avoids the possible tautological trap set by David Baldwin of equating "intervention" with "influence." This definition will not suffice when investigating the influence of intervention on civil wars. See, David A. Baldwin, "Foreign Aid, Intervention, and Influence," *World Politics*, Vol. 21, No. 3, (1969), 425-447; Standley Hoffman, "The Problem of Intervention," in Hedley Bull, (ed.), *Intervention in World Politics*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 7-28.

⁴ In particular, economic intervention has not performed well. Collier, Hoeffler and Söderbom found economic intervention was "completely insignificant" in influencing the course of civil wars. Odom later found that large sums of American economic aid did "not seem to correlate with improved economic conditions or better security." See, Paul Collier, Anke Hoeffler and Måns Söderbom, "On the Duration of Civil War" *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 41, No. 3, (2004), 267 and William E. Odom, *On Internal War: American and Soviet Approaches to Third World Clients and Insurgents*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), 205. Also see, Deepa Khosla, *Third Party Interventions in Ethnic Conflicts: A Force for Peace or Spiraling Violence*, PhD dissertation, The University of Maryland, 2004.

1. Types of Intervention and the Inconsistent Impact of Exogenous Resources

At a high level of abstraction, incumbents and insurgents are similar actors. All belligerents in a civil war extract resources from the territory and population they control, which they subsequently convert to military capabilities and finally apply to the “outputs” of the system (namely fighting their opponent or reinvest into expanding their resource base). This section submits that the resource conversion system is useful for explaining the varying impacts of different types of foreign intervention as each type enters the system at different stages.⁵

Resource conversion system

Before directly contributing to belligerents' cumulative capabilities, basic resources must undergo a process of extraction and conversion. For example, recruits must first be extracted from the population and then converted into soldiers. Only after recruits have been trained into soldiers and allocated to military units can they be used to fight the enemy. Hence, within the conversion system, resources can exist in the form of endogenous resources, inputs and cumulative capabilities. Endogenous resources are all persons and material that have potential utility for belligerents. Therefore, endogenous resources include sources of supply such as civilians, capital, trade routes, crops and natural minerals. Inputs are resources that are physically in the possession of belligerents but lack immediate coercive value. Resources in the inputs form would include, for example, raw recruits, tariffs, food or information. Finally, cumulative capabilities are the total sum of a belligerent's

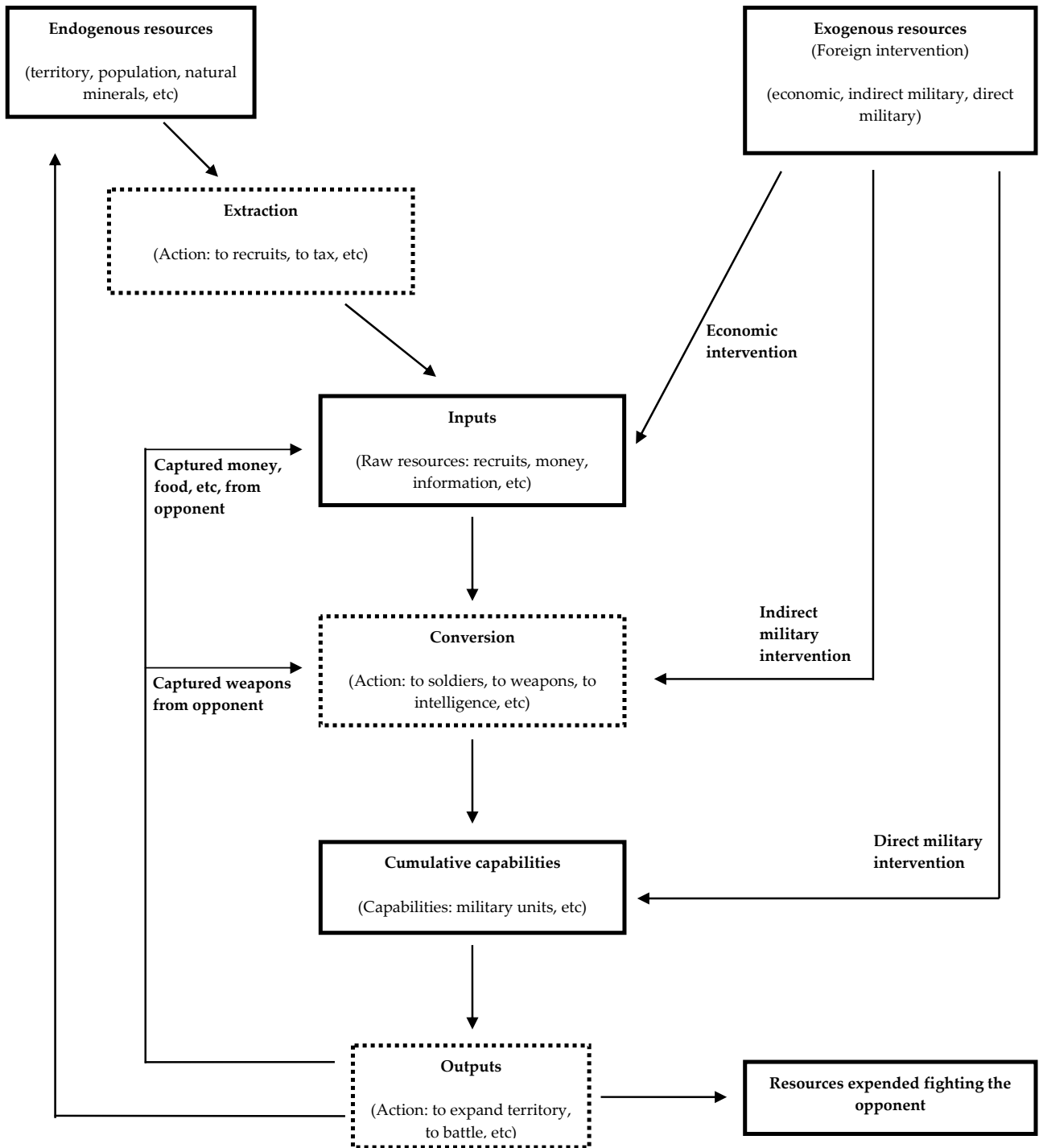
⁵ For another example of the system approach to civil war, see Charles Wolf, Jr., *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency: New Myths and Old Realities*, (Santa Monica: RAND, 1965). There is a long, but underdeveloped, tradition of treating insurgent actors as firms. Grossman, for instance, treated insurgent actors as an “industry” that generated profit from raiding and looting, so they became “indistinguishable from bandits and pirates.” Herschel I. Grossman, “Kleptocracy and Revolutions,” *Oxford Economic Papers*, Vol. 51, No. 2, (1999), 269; Herschel I. Grossman, “A General Equilibrium Model of Insurrections,” *American Economic Review*, Vol. 81, No. 4 (1991), 912-921.

coercive material resources. At reaching this form, resources have been fully converted into military units.⁶

Resources change forms by progressing through one of three processes: extraction, conversion, and outputs. Extraction is the process of taking physical possession of resources by removing them from the endogenous resource base. This process includes actions such as recruiting, collecting taxes and mining precious stones. Extraction actions take resources from the belligerent's endogenous resource base and convert them into inputs. The second process is conversion. Conversion is the action of transforming raw resources into military capabilities. The conversion process includes actions such as training recruits into soldiers, translating information into intelligence and trading natural minerals for weapons. The final process is the outputs of the resource conversion system. Outputs are the action of applying coercive instruments. Broadly, outputs can be divided into two activities: fighting the enemy or enlarging the endogenous resource base. As discussed further below, these two processes are not necessarily mutually exclusive. The design of the resource conversion system is illustrated in Figure 2.1.

⁶ Mearsheimer's work on the progression of power is useful here. Mearsheimer introduced the idea of "latent power", "military power" and "power over outcomes" and essentially all I have done is replace these terms with "resource base", "cumulative capabilities" and "outputs". See, John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), Chapter 3, especially, 75-76.

Figure 2.1: Resource Conversion System and Foreign Intervention⁷



⁷ Figure inspired by Nathan Leites and Charles Wolf, Jr., *Rebellion and Authority: Analytical Essay on Insurgent Conflicts*, (Chicago: Markham Publishing Company, 1970), 35.

The size and value of resources in each form are intrinsically related. A belligerent's endogenous resource base represents its total potential supply resources, including the size and wealth of the population and territory it can viably exploit.⁸ Generally, the quantity and quality of a belligerent's endogenous resource base will correlate with the size of its inputs and cumulative capabilities. The larger a belligerent's endogenous resource base, the more inputs that belligerents can extract and the more resources that can be converted to cumulative capabilities. As such, a central concern for belligerents is applying cumulative capabilities to enlarge their endogenous resource base. In Bosnia, for instance, intense "violence tended to occur in areas that were of strategic or economic importance",⁹ while other areas, with less endogenous resources, "remained relatively untouched by the war, loosely defended by local militias."¹⁰ The counter dynamic also operates. A shrinking endogenous resource base will result in fewer inputs. In South Vietnam, for example, the incumbent "lost more and more of its tax base to the Viet Cong as the war went on, dropping to an estimated 10 percent in 1970."¹¹ In another example, during the Laotian Civil War, the "steady drain of casualties" began to exhaust the insurgent's endogenous resource base which forced the "Vang Pao to call up thirteen- or fourteen-year olds."¹² However, it is not only a belligerent's proportionate control of the endogenous resource base that influences the portion of endogenous resources that eventually become cumulative capabilities. The efficiency of a belligerent's resource conversion system is also an important influence.

⁸ Thomas C. Schelling, *International Economics*, (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1958), 440-441; Charles Tilly, "Reflections on the History of European State Making," in Charles Tilly, (ed.), *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), 3-83; Charles Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime," in Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Theda Skocpol, (eds.), *Bringing the States Back in*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 182.

⁹ Stathis N. Kalyvas and Nicholas Sambanis, "Bosnia's Civil War: Origins and Violence Dynamics," in Paul Collier and Nicholas Sambanis (eds.), *Understanding Civil War: Vol. 2*, (Washington: The World Bank, 2005), 217.

¹⁰ Steven L. Burg and Paul S. Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Ethnic Conflict and International Intervention*, (Armonk: M.E. Sharp Publishing, 1999), 138 from Kalyvas and Sambanis, "Bosnia's Civil War," 217.

¹¹ Odom, *On Internal War*, 59.

¹² Douglas S. Blaufarb, *The Counterinsurgency Era: U.S. Doctrine and Performance*, (New York: Free Press, 1977), 164.

Attenuation and conversion efficiency

The processes of the resource conversion system are unlikely to ever be perfectly efficient. That is, one unit of endogenous resources will rarely be converted to one unit of cumulative capabilities, as outlay is required for resources to progress through the conversion system. The resource conversion system is an endothermic system (i.e. a system that absorbs energy). The most prominent endothermic system in the physical sciences is the process of heating water. It takes more energy to increase the temperature of water from 99 degrees to 101 degrees than from 97 degrees to 99 degrees, the reason being that excess energy is expended when water changes forms from liquid to gas. The resource conversion system operates in a similar fashion. Outlay is needed to house recruits in the barracks, but it costs even more to train them into soldiers, that is, to change their form. I refer to this particular feature of the resource conversion system as the attenuation effect.

Outlay is an inescapable feature of the resource conversion system and occurs throughout. During the extraction process, costs must be incurred in order to change resources from endogenous resources to inputs. Take, for instance, the process of recruiting. Even popular belligerents will incur a cost of recruiting individuals from their endogenous resource base.¹³ In Vietnam, for example, a potential recruit was worried about the wellbeing of his grandmother if he joined the Viet Cong, saying that “[I] brought these apprehensions up with the cadres and they said that they were certain that the village authorities would take care of my grandmother. After I left, my grandmother was given 0.6 hectare of rice field.”¹⁴ Reportedly, many of Hezbollah’s recruits joined because they would receive “\$150-200 a month, along with free education and medical care.”¹⁵ Forced recruitment also requires the belligerent to outlay time and capabilities to coerce civilians into

¹³ Lichbach, for example, has examined the important role of selective incentives in recruiting, which he argued is required to overcome the free-riding dilemma. See, Mark Lichbach, *The Rebel's Dilemma*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994).

¹⁴ Quoted in Samuel Popkin, *The Rational Peasant: The Political Economy of Rural Society in Vietnam*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 240.

¹⁵ Daniel Byman, *Deadly Connections: States that Sponsor Terrorism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 89.

their organisation. In Burundi, for instance, "rebel groups purchased Kenyan street children at the price of \$500 for 150 boys."¹⁶

There are also many incidental costs incurred during the process of converting inputs into capabilities. For example, consider the investment required to convert money into arms. Money is not transferred into the equivalent volume of weapons as buyers will need to invest time, suppliers will take profit, and the weapons will need to be transported back to the buyer's forces. During the American Civil War, for example, given "that the North depended on profit-taking contractors for most of its supplies throughout" the war, the role of middle-men became a heated topic in Washington.¹⁷ Many citizens and politicians felt that the middle-men were making too much profit from the North's war effort. In effect, people were angry that Treasury monies (inputs) were not being converted efficiently enough to weapons and war materials (cumulative capabilities) because the middle-men's profits were too high (attenuation).

In the resource conversion system, in short, attenuation represents the costs associated with converting resources. There is considerable variation in the value of attenuation at different stages within a belligerent's resource conversion system. For instance, a belligerent might be efficient at recruiting, but not at training, new soldiers. In this instance, attenuation will be low in the extraction process, but high in the conversion process. More broadly, there is a marked difference in attenuation between belligerents. In Burma, for example, while insurgent groups generally purchased weapons and munitions directly from corrupt elements in the Royal Thai Army, certain enterprising groups established trade routes from Thailand's eastern border with Laos and Cambodia where "prices were considerably cheaper than those offered by the middle-men" in the Royal Thai

¹⁶ Nicholas Sambanis, "Using Case Studies to Expand Economic Models of Civil War," *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 2, (2004), 267.

¹⁷ Mark R. Wilson, *The Business of Civil War: Military Mobilization and the State, 1861-1865*, (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2006), 148.

Army.¹⁸ In contrast, some insurgent groups have been fleeced when converting inputs to capabilities. When, for instance, Biafran arms buyers flocked to Europe, “they reportedly were duped into squandering huge sums on faulty and inappropriate equipment”¹⁹ and the Nigerian insurgent was increasingly unable to pay the “exorbitant transportation costs” of “\$25,000 payable in advance and in cash, for the round trip” to Lisbon.²⁰ And finally, in South Vietnam, the “reason the south Vietnamese could not resist the pressure from the North was not a lower level of economic resources in the south but rather a political system there that performed below average in extracting such resources.”²¹

Belligerents can reduce the effect of attenuation by improving the efficiency of their resource conversion systems. For instance, moving from plundering, to collecting and then to accepting voluntary donations will progressively decrease attenuation in the extraction process.²² When Charles Wolf argued in support of this point, he also hinted at what we are now calling attenuation:

[f]rom an operational point of view, what an insurgent movement requires for successful and expanding operations is not popular support, the sense of attitudes of identification and allegiance, but rather a supply of certain inputs (e.g. food, recruits, information) at reasonable cost, interpreting cost to include expenditure of coercion as well as money.²³

¹⁸ Ashley South, *Mon Nationalism and Civil War in Burma*, (London: Routledge, 2003), 128.

¹⁹ John J. Stremlau, *The International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 360 and 220. Similarly, during the American Civil War, a Select Committee on Government Contracts in 1861 found “that the quartermaster himself was in collusion with corrupt and unprincipled men, who combined together to swindle the government.” Gov Con I Report, in Wilson, *The Business of Civil War*, 83-84

²⁰ John de St. Jorre, *The Nigerian Civil War*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1972), 322. Stremlau, *The International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War*, 360 and 220. On top of this, many of the arms purchased by the Biafran buyers “were never delivered; some of the ships were intercepted by the Federal government; other arms dealers having been paid in advanced by the desperate rebels, simply reneged on the theory that Biafra did not or would not have the means to catch them.” George Thayer, *The War Business: The International Trade in Armaments*, (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1969), 165.

²¹ A.F.K. Organski and Jacek Kugler, *The War Ledger*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), 97.

²² Samuel E. Finer, “State- and Nation-Building in Europe: The Role of the Military,” in Charles Tilly, (ed.), *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), 84-163, particularly 96.

²³ Wolf, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency*, 5.

"Reasonable cost" can be achieved with or without popular support. Minter observed that "guerrillas are just as capable of imposing themselves on civilians as is a conventional force."²⁴ Indeed, there are many examples of guerrilla groups using coercion to extract information, force to conscript new recruits, and physical intimidation to seize money and possession from civilians.²⁵ However, reducing attenuation will be particularly important for weaker belligerents as they are less capable of enduring any unnecessary costs due to inefficiency. Thus, in an attempt to minimise attenuation, guerrilla groups will generally be more concerned with gaining popular support than their larger and more resource-rich rivals.

In sum, due to attenuation, a unit of resources in the endogenous resources form will not be likely to become one unit of inputs, which, in turn, will not be likely to translate into an equivalent amount of cumulative capabilities. To move resources from each form and process, belligerents are required to incur financial, time, and labour costs, which reduce the impact of each unit of endogenous resources extracted. These reflections on the nature of belligerents hold important implications for foreign intervention in civil war.

Types of foreign intervention and the resource conversion system

Attenuation answers one of the questions posed at the outset of this chapter: why do different types of intervention tend to have varying impacts on the cumulative capabilities of recipients? That is, why do exogenous resources entering the

²⁴ William Minter, *Apartheid's Contras: An Inquiry into the Roots of War on Angola and Mozambique*, (London: Zed Books, 1994), 204. Also see, R.G. Cole, "A System Description of Counter Insurgency Warfare," *Policy Sciences*, Vol. 18, No. 1, (1985), 63.

²⁵ Even the much celebrated Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) was not above forceful recruitment. Young reported "that Eritrean youth did occasionally report that as well as fleeing the Derg, they also left their homes to avoid being forcefully conscripted into the EPLF." See, John Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia: The Tigray People's Liberation Front, 1975-1991*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 127.

resource conversion system at different points incur varying degrees of attenuation?²⁶

To review, economic intervention is all non-military resources transferred from a foreign power to a belligerent. As such, economic intervention commonly arrives in the form of finance, food or petroleum. Indirect military intervention is the transfer of all military weapons, equipment and training to a belligerent. Indirect military intervention provides the recipient with weapons, materiel, training, advisors, and intelligence. Finally, direct military intervention is the transfer of a foreign power's own military units into the civil war in support of one side.

Different types of foreign intervention enter the resource conversion system at different points. Economic intervention provides belligerents with resources that exist at the inputs form. In other words, economic aid "supplements the resources otherwise available to recipients."²⁷ Indirect military intervention assists belligerents to convert inputs to cumulative capabilities. Thus, in the Nicaraguan Civil War, the United States' "CIA agents established training centres in both Honduras and Nicaragua...[where] the troops learned to march in single file and similar rudimentary manoeuvres. In these camps flowed shipments of rifles and other small arms, machine guns, and ammunition from the agency storehouse in

²⁶ Dunér has argued that "the amount of force [the foreign power] uses is just one side of the coin, the other side being the level in terms of the form or instrument of involvement." See, Bertil Dunér, *Military Intervention in Civil Wars: The 1970s*, (Aldershot: Gower, 1985), 14.

²⁷ Charles Wolf, Jr., *Soviet Economic Aid in Southeast Asia: Threat or Windfall?* (Santa Monica: RAND, 1956), 94. Generally, exogenous resources will only "supplement" endogenous resources; however, there have been occasions when most of a belligerent's inputs have been provided by foreign powers. For example, during the Lebanese Civil War, "foreign financial assistance to the warring parties totaled twice the amount they raised locally, or about \$30 billion, if not more." See, Samir Makdisi and Richard Sadaka, "The Lebanese Civil War, 1975-90," in Paul Collier and Nicholas Sambanis, (eds.), *Understanding Civil War*, Vol. 2, (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2005), 75. Another example of an "atypical" case of exogenous resources amounting to more than endogenous resources would be the United States' support for the Contra insurgent actor in Nicaragua, see, Ted Walker, (ed.), *Reagan Versus the Sandinistas: The Undeclared War on Nicaragua*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987); Noam Chomsky, *Turning the Tide: U.S. Intervention in Central America and the Struggle for Peace*, (Boston: South End Press, 1985).

France's Field."²⁸ Finally, direct military intervention injects military units straight into the belligerent's cumulative capabilities.

Therefore, attenuation will have a differing degree of effect on the types of intervention. Economic intervention, entering the resource conversion system at the inputs form, will be most affected, followed by indirect military intervention and finally direct military intervention. The differing impact of attenuation can be demonstrated by a brief illustration. Consider giving a gift to two separate people. The first recipient is provided with a car, while the second is given the equivalent price of the car as money. The second recipient must convert the money to a car by taking time off work so as to invest the further costs of travelling to visit car dealers and then transporting the car home. Perhaps, after incidental costs are deducted, the second recipient will only be able to afford a less expensive car. Therefore, the impact of providing a recipient with money is not as great as simply providing the finished product. Thus, due to attenuation, the further along exogenous resources enter the resource conversion system, the greater impact they will have on the recipient's cumulative capabilities.²⁹

²⁸ Richard H. Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), 162-163.

²⁹ As Barrett and Maxwell observed in the context of humanitarian food aid: "Food is necessarily a more efficient form of transfer when the recipient ultimately want food because recipients do not incur costs to cash in food aid." Indeed, after incidental transfer costs, such as shipping premiums and source country procurement costs, Barrett and Maxwell found that only 47 percent of total US expenditure on food aid arrived at the target. That is, "more than half of the dollars appropriated for food aid in the United States leaks out in delivering food to poor and hungry people abroad." See, Christopher B. Barrett and Daniel G. Maxwell, *Food Aid After Fifty Years: Recasting its Role*, (New York: Routledge, 2005), 166-167. Also see, George Mavrotas, *Which Types of Aid Have the Most Impact?* Discussion paper No. 2003/85, (Helsinki: United Nations University – WIDER, 2003); George Mavrotas, "Foreign Aid and Fiscal Response: Does Aid Disaggregation Matter?" *Review of World Economics*, Vol. 138, No. 3, (2002), 534-559; Howard White, "What Do We Know About Aid's Macroeconomic Impact? An Overview of the Aid Effectiveness Debate," *Journal of International Development*, Vol. 4, No. 2, (1992), 121-137. Similarly, Heraclides, in a study of foreign intervention in secessionist civil wars, found that escalation of involvement passed through three stages. The first was humanitarian (economic), followed by the provision of sanctuary or financial assistance (economic and indirect military) and finally direct military intervention. See, Alexis Heraclides, "Secessionist Minorities and External Involvement," *International Organization*, Vol. 44, No. 3, (1990), 368.

2. The Characteristics of the Recipient and Inconsistent Effects

In addition to the type of the exogenous resources, the characteristics of the belligerent will also cause variation in the impact of foreign intervention. The resources the recipient already possesses, along with its size, structure and tactics will influence the impact that exogenous resources have on the recipient's cumulative capabilities. The fact that foreign intervention has different effects on different belligerents is repeatedly noted in the literature.³⁰ This section argues that, in particular, there are four important characteristics of belligerents that will influence the impact of foreign intervention. The first is the efficiency of the belligerent's resource conversion system. The second is how well the exogenous resources complement and supplement the recipient's existing endogenous resources and capabilities. The third is the size of the belligerent's cumulative capabilities compared to the amount of foreign intervention. The fourth is the activities to which the belligerent applies the exogenous resources.

Efficiency of resource conversion system and binding restraints

The efficiency of the recipient's resource conversion system will influence the impact of foreign intervention and, in particular, the effect of economic and indirect military assistance. Variation in the value of attenuation means that some belligerents will convert a greater proportion of economic and indirect military assistance into cumulative capabilities than others.³¹ At one extreme, where the resource conversion system is close to collapse, it becomes extremely difficult for economic or indirect military intervention to contribute to cumulative capabilities. It was observed, for instance, that in 1979, the Afghan Government's resource

³⁰ For instance, Collier, Hoeffler and Söderbom, found that no type of intervention to incumbents had an effect, while only direct military intervention was useful for insurgents. Collier, Hoeffler and Söderbom, "On the Duration of Civil War," 267.

³¹ Sinno, for instance, argued that "Resources are also important because some structures are more costly to maintain than others. The more centralized the structure, the higher the administrative overhead, as numerous studies in the business management and public administrative literatures convincingly show." Abdulkader H. Sinno, *Organizations at War in Afghanistan and Beyond*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 92.

conversion system was in such disarray that no amount of economic aid “could have substituted for troops.”³² Similarly, in 1965, as the Dominican Armed Forces, “plagued by defection, exhaustion, low morale, and poor communications ... continued to disintegrate”, the United States’ economic and indirect military assistance was no longer sufficient to maintain the recipient’s cumulative capabilities and, as such, “it was beginning to appear the U.S. troops would have to be ordered into the city to combat the rebels.”³³ Clearly, when the resource conversion system begins to fail, there will be a corresponding reduction in the impact of economic and indirect military assistance.

In contrast, where the resource conversion system is efficient, the impact of economic or indirect military assistance can potentially be substantial. In recent times, Iran has provided Hezbollah with substantial financial assistance, regularly topping \$100 million a year, which Hezbollah uses to sustain its large militia force and fund its social welfare program.³⁴ Saad-Ghorayeb reported that “without Iran’s political, financial, and logistical support, [Hezbollah’s] military capability and organisational development would have been greatly retarded. Even by [Hezbollah’s]’s reckoning it would have taken an additional 50 years for the movement to score the same achievements in the absence of Iranian backing.”³⁵ In this instance, the resource conversion system allowed the economic and indirect military assistance to be efficiently converted to cumulative capabilities.

Influences on efficiency include the level of corruption, troop discipline, type of structure and binding restraints. It is this final cause of inefficiency in the resource conversion system which foreign intervention can most viably address. A binding constraint is a bottleneck that emerges in the resource conversion system due to

³² David C. Isby, “Afghanistan: Low-Intensity Conflict with Major Power Intervention,” in Edwin C. Corr and Stephen Sloan, (eds.), *Low-Intensity Conflict: Old Threats in a New World*, (Boulder: Westview, 1992), 206.

³³ Abraham F. Lowenthal, *The Dominican Intervention*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 108 and 115.

³⁴ Byman, *Deadly Connections*, 88.

³⁵ Amal Saad-Ghoreyeb, *Hizbu'llah: Politics and Religion*, (Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 2002), 14, quoted in Byman, *Deadly Connections*, 97.

insufficient inputs of a particular resource.³⁶ At times, for instance, a belligerent may have plentiful supplies of recruits, food, and trainers, but not enough weapons. Therefore, the lack of weapons becomes a binding restraint that restricts the flow of inputs to cumulative capabilities and therefore prevents the belligerent from reaching its full military potential. In this instance, the provision of weapons would relieve the binding restraint and thereby improve the resource conversion system's efficiency. Hence, where foreign intervention acts to relieve a binding restraint in a belligerent's resource conversion system, it can produce a disproportionate impact on the recipient's cumulative capabilities.³⁷

Binding restraints can emerge at any stage in the resource conversion system. At the extraction stage, constraints could include a lack of recruits, food, money or informants. For example, if a belligerent is extracting an insufficient volume of food, it may be forced to divert soldiers away from the frontlines to agricultural production, which will directly influence its cumulative capabilities.³⁸ Binding restraints can also be present at the conversion stage. For example, during the Nigerian Civil War, the "greatest constraint facing Biafran military planners during the summer of 1967 was not...a shortage of arms, but the lack of trained manpower."³⁹ The opposite was true in Indonesia, where "GAM [had] been hindered by a shortage of weapons. Although in 2001-2002 it had between 15,000 and 27,000 regular and irregular soldiers, they were thought to have only 1,000-

³⁶ See, Eliyahu M. Goldratt and Jeff Cox, *The Goal – A Process of Ongoing Improvement*, (Great Barrington, MA: North River Press, 1992); Eliyahu M. Goldratt, *What is this thing Called Theory of Constraints?* (Croton-on-Hudson, NY: North River Press, 1990); H. William, *Goldratt's Theory of Constraints: A Systems Approach to Continuous Improvement*, (Milwaukee, WI: ASQC Quality Press, 1997); Gerhard Plenert, "Optimizing Theory of Constraints when Multiple Constrained Resources Exist," *European Journal of Operation Research*, Vol. 70, No. 1, (1993), 126-133.

³⁷ On the other hand, however, foreign powers by supplying too much of one material can potentially create a binding restraint and thus have a negative impact on the efficiency of the recipient's resource conversion system. Galula hints at this fact when he observed that: "Military support short of direct intervention, in particular, cannot be absorbed in a significant amount by the insurgent until his forces have reached a certain level of development." See, David Galula, *Counter-Insurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, (London: Pall Mall, 1964), 40.

³⁸ Jeremy M. Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 174-175.

³⁹ Stremlau, *The International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War*, 220.

2,500 modern firearms."⁴⁰ Similarly, in Algeria, after 1959, the "situation of the FLN forces...became so critical that most of their automatic weapons were buried for lack of ammunition."⁴¹ In these cases, potential existed for exogenous resources (i.e. military instructors and weapons) to relax the respective binding restraints and allow the more efficient conversion of endogenous resources to cumulative capabilities. Conversely, the absence of these exogenous resources disproportionately affected the belligerent's cumulative capabilities.

Positive and negative interaction effects

Exogenous resources have two values. The first is the resources' gross value. For example, the gross value of indirect military intervention can be estimated by the resource's market price, sophistication and technical data (such as range, calibre and weight). The second is the exogenous resources' interactive value, or how valuable the resources are to the recipient. In most cases, exogenous resources will increase a belligerent's cumulative capabilities; however, rarely will a single unit of exogenous resources increase the cumulative capabilities of the belligerent by exactly that amount. The contribution that exogenous resources make to the cumulative capabilities of the recipient can either be greater or lesser than the gross value of that aid. In other words, one unit of exogenous resources that supplements or complements a belligerent's existing capabilities and the physical geography of the battlefield can have an interactive value greater than its gross value. On the other hand, one unit of inappropriate or incompatible assistance can potentially increase the recipient's cumulative capabilities by less than the aid's gross value. These observations are owed to the interaction effect, which is the process by which two capabilities combine to produce an impact different from the value of the component parts.

⁴⁰ Michael L. Ross, "Resources and Rebellion in Aceh, Indonesia," in Paul Collier and Nicholas Sambanis, (eds.), *Understanding Civil War: Evidence and Analysis*, Vol. 2, (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2005), 47-48.

⁴¹ Galula, *Counter-Insurgency Warfare*, 41.

A positive interaction effect occurs when one unit of exogenous resources is combined with one unit of existing capabilities to contribute more than two units to the recipient's cumulative capabilities. For example, in Malaya, the British recognised that "[a]dditional troops [would] certainly not pay full dividend"⁴² and so supplied a number of helicopters "which allowed units to be transported between their base and the area of operations...and [thus] allowed a more efficient deployment of troops."⁴³ The pre-existing Malay troops complemented the British contribution. When combined, the two contributions had an impact greater than the separate gross value of the helicopters or troops.⁴⁴ Similarly, the United States Congress placed tight restrictions on the level of support that the Pentagon could provide to the government in El Salvador's civil war between 1981 and 1992. The United States assistance ultimately consisted of the provision of only 55 advisors, however "it is argued that their influence within the security forces provided decisive. They slowly reformed the army and police force, making them more efficient and loyal to the government."⁴⁵

Conversely, poorly-chosen exogenous resources frequently have an interaction value less than the resources' gross value. For example, during the Ethiopian Civil War, East Germany supplied the Mengistu regime with 6-tonne trucks that became notorious for breakdowns in the dry, hot and dusty conditions of Ethiopia.⁴⁶ In Mozambique, it was reported that South Africa provided RENAMO with man-

⁴² Attributed to General Sir John Harding, Commander in Chief, Far East Land Forces, April 1950 as quoted in John A. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 73.

⁴³ Richard Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds in Guerrilla Warfare: The Malayan Emergency 1948-1960*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 159.

⁴⁴ The provision of crucial technology that is not available from endogenous resources will be particularly valuable. For example, at the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, Franco's troops were stationed in Africa and could not get back to Spain after the Republicans took control of the Fleet. At this point, Germany radically altered the course of the civil war by providing 20 Junker-52 transport planes. See, Burnett Bolloten, *The Spanish Civil War: Revolution and Counterrevolution*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 97-98. Similarly, during the Congolese Civil War the United States intervened by purchasing B-26 bombers and C-47 transport planes. The transport aircraft, in particular, had the effect of multiplying the effectiveness of the incumbent's army. See, David N. Gibbs, *The Political Economy of Third World Intervention: Mines, Money, and US Policy in the Congo Crisis*, (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 156. Also see, Stephen R. Weissman, "CIA Covert Action in Zaire and Angola: Patterns and Consequences," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 94, No. 2, (1979), 271.

⁴⁵ M.G.W. Caldwell, "Iraq Under the Surge," *Strategic Comments*, Vol. 13, No. 2, (2007), 2.

⁴⁶ Pranay B. Gupte, "Ethiopian Civil War Hurts the Economy," *The New York Times*, 10 July 1980.

portable anti-aircraft missiles, but not with training in the use of the weapon, and therefore the guerrillas "did not know how to use them."⁴⁷ The anti-aircraft missiles would have made a contribution to RENAMO's cumulative capabilities, but less than the missiles' gross value. Clearly, inappropriate, incompatible or superfluous foreign assistance can contribute to the cumulative capabilities of the belligerent to a lesser degree than the exogenous resources' gross value.

Positive feedback loop

The final process through which the structure of the belligerent influences the impact of exogenous resources is the "feedback loop". The feedback loop operates when belligerents use their existing cumulative capabilities effectively so as to enlarge their endogenous resource base or capture resources from the opposition. This action, in turn, increases the belligerent's cumulative capabilities, which restarts the process from a more advanced point.⁴⁸ Through this process the cumulative capabilities of the belligerent incrementally increase each time the feedback loop plays out. The feedback loop is not unusual and is, in practice, how most belligerents experience growth (the feedback loop is represented in Figure 2.1 on the left of the diagram). For instance, Deger and Smith argued that increased coercive capabilities "may enable the state to increase the rate of exploitation of available resources. Surplus labor may be mobilized, raw materials production developed in the face of opposition, agrarian surplus allocated to industry, consumption restricted, industrial disputes suppressed, and the rate of work increased."⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Paul Moorecraft, "Mozambique's Long Civil War," *International Defense Review (Geneva)*, October 1987, 114 from William Finnegan, *A Complicated War: The Harrowing of Mozambique*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 8.

⁴⁸ See, Virgil Ney, "Guerrilla Warfare and Modern Strategy," in Franklin Mark Osanka, (ed.), *Modern Guerrilla Warfare: Fighting Communist Guerrilla Movements, 1941-1961*, (New York: Free Press, 1962), 32.

⁴⁹ Saadet Dager and Ron Smith, "Military Expenditure and Growth in Less Developed Countries," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 27, No. 2, (1983), 338.

The effectiveness of different belligerents' feedback loops will be uneven and so the impact of foreign intervention is inconsistent.⁵⁰ That is, some belligerents will more effectively apply exogenous resources they receive from foreign sponsors to capture large amounts of territory, population and weapons than others. For instance, when South Africa increased the volume of exogenous inputs going to RENAMO, "the group grew rapidly in size."⁵¹ However, other belligerents might use exogenous resources ineffectively, or solely to combat the opposition, which will expend resources without creating beneficial feedback loop. In Greece, for instance, most of the incumbent's exogenous resources were expended on fighting the insurgent, rather than enlarging its endogenous resource base. General Marshall stated, on 12 January 1948, that the "destruction [of the] guerrilla forces and [the] establishment of internal security...now have clearly assumed a paramount importance."⁵² Thus, instead of using its newly-acquired economic aid to develop Greece's industry, agricultural production and infrastructure (to which 48.5 percent was supposed to be directed), 80 percent of all the incumbent's financial inputs were expended on fighting the insurgent. Similarly, in Venezuela, the insurgent allocated too many resources to fighting the incumbent instead of expanding its endogenous resource base. Later, the leader of the FALN, Douglas Bravo, explained: "[w]e wanted to overthrow Betancourt in a few hours, in one or two battles. This resulted in very far-reaching defeats, and prevented us from

⁵⁰ The variation in different militaries' ability to achieve their aims has been widely studied with as many causes of this variation identified. See, for example, Christopher S. Parker, "New Weapons for Old Problems: Conventional Proliferation and Military Effectiveness," *International Security*, Vol. 23, No. 4, (1999), 119-147; Stephen Biddle and Robert Zirkle, "Technology, Civil-Military Relations, and Warfare in the Developing World: Conventional Proliferation and Military Effectiveness in Developing States," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 2, (1996), 171-212; Stephen Biddle, *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004); Martin van Crevald, *Fighting Power: German and U.S. Army Performance, 1939-1945*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1982); Kenneth M. Pollack, *Arabs at War: Military Effectiveness, 1948-1991*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002); Allan R. Millet, Williamson Murray and Kenneth H. Watman, "The Effectiveness of Military Organizations," *International Security*, Vol. 11, No. 1, (1986), 37; Risa A. Brooks and Elizabeth Stanley, (eds.), *Creating Military Power: The Sources of Military Effectiveness*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007); Risa A. Brooks, "Making Military Might: Why Do States Fail and Succeed," *International Security*, Vol. 28, No. 2, (2003), 149-191.

⁵¹ Jeremy M. Weinstein and Laudemiro Francisco, "The Civil War in Mozambique: The Balance Between Internal and External Influences," in Paul Collier and Nicholas Sambanis, (eds.), *Understanding Civil War: Evidence and Analysis*, Vol. 1, (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2005), 171.

⁵² Lawrence S. Wittner, *American Intervention in Greece, 1943-1949*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 187-188.

getting down to building a guerrilla army. We were throwing far too many forces into a hopeless struggle."⁵³

Finally, belligerents can, at times, simultaneously increase the resources being reinvested into the resource conversion system and also fight their opponent.⁵⁴ Insurgent actors, in particular, are frequently effective at employing cumulative capabilities to capture weapons from the incumbent. Byman observed, for instance, that insurgents are commonly able to acquire most of their military requirements "through theft; raids on police, paramilitary, and army outposts; from corrupt members of the security forces or sympathizers within their ranks; or from adversaries who simply leave their weapons behind after an attack."⁵⁵ In China, "the Communists avoided pitched battles, used hit-and-run tactics, and captured large amounts of equipment from the government."⁵⁶ In South Vietnam, the Viet Cong captured some 30,000 weapons from the government,⁵⁷ and in Georgia, the rebels were initially armed mostly with hunting rifles and vintage weapons from the Second World War before they used these weapons to capture modern small arms from Russian stocks.⁵⁸ Indeed, in some instances, the insurgent will value the captured endogenous resources more than the exogenous resources. It has been observed, for example, that as "a rule, guerrillas prefer the conventional infantry weapons gained from the enemy because such weapons use ammunition which can also be stolen or won from the enemy."⁵⁹ As such, at times, the real advantage of foreign assistance is in its ability to be used to capture resources off the opponent.

⁵³ Richard Gott, *Guerrilla Movements in Latin America*, (London: Nelson, 1970), 115.

⁵⁴ Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime," 169-191.

⁵⁵ Daniel L. Byman, et. al., *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements*, (Santa Monica: RAND, 2001), 94.

⁵⁶ Douglas J. MacDonald, *Adventures in Chaos: American Intervention for Reform in the Third World*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 107.

⁵⁷ Micheal Clodfelter, *Warfare and Armed Conflicts: A Statistical Reference to Casualty and Other Figures, 1500-2000*, (Jefferson: McFarland and Co., 2002), 741.

⁵⁸ Spyros Demetriou, *Politics From The Barrel of a Gun: Small Arms Proliferation and Conflict in the Republic of Georgia (1989-2001)*, Occasional Paper No. 6, (Geneva: Small Arms Survey, 2002), 8-10. Similarly, in Cuba, it was reported that Castro captured enough weapons in his first attack to double the size of his force. See, Robert Taber, *War of the Flea*, (Dulles, VA: Brassey, 2002), 30.

⁵⁹ J. K. Zawodny, "Guerrilla and Sabotage: Organization, Operations, Motivations, Escalation," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 341, (1962), 13.

3. Conclusion

Two puzzles were identified at the outset of this chapter. The first asked why different types of assistance, provided in similar quantities, seem to produce a range of impacts. The second question asked why when the intervention is held constant, and the belligerent is changed, there is, again, a frequently different effect. This chapter used a systems approach to suggest an explanation for these observations. It argued that attenuation explains much of the variation in the impact of different types of exogenous resources. Second, the characteristics of the recipient contribute to the impact of foreign intervention. More precisely, the efficiency, size, current capabilities and function to which the belligerent applies the exogenous resource will influence their effect.

This chapter solely examined the relationship between exogenous resources and the recipient's cumulative capabilities. In Part II of this dissertation, these theoretical explanations are empirically tested against case material from the Angolan and Afghan civil wars. Prior to this, however, this dissertation's theoretical framework will be expanded upon in Chapter Three which explores the dynamics warfare in civil war. Chapter Four will then conclude the establishment of the theory by combining the reflections on foreign intervention and warfare to develop hypotheses on this relationship.

Chapter Three

The Dynamics of Warfare in Civil Wars

While warfare in civil wars has received extensive scholarly attention, the variation in this warfare has been virtually ignored. This is a curious omission given that there has been great temporal and spatial variation in warfare in civil war. At different times, different forms of warfare dominated the fighting in the Chinese, South Vietnamese and Afghan civil wars. In addition, different forms of warfare have been fought simultaneously in different geographical regions of a single civil war. In the American Civil War, for instance, fighting in Missouri was characterised by guerrilla warfare, while conventional warfare dominated the Eastern Theatre.¹ Indeed, the significant longitudinal and cross-sectional variation in warfare is one of the defining characteristics of civil wars more generally.

What causes this variation in warfare in civil wars? This chapter explores the dynamics of warfare in civil war and attempts to identify the variables that influence its temporal and spatial variation. In doing so, it builds upon the intuition of numerous civil war theorists by regarding the strategic balance between the belligerents as the instrumental determinant of many phenomena in civil wars, including the course and nature of warfare.² This chapter makes several important theoretical advances on previous attempts at a balance of capabilities approach. First, whereas strategic balances have previously been understood and applied as a

¹ See, Kenneth W. Noe, "Who Were the Bushwhackers? Age, Class, Kin, and Western Virginia's Confederate Guerrillas, 1861-1862," *Civil War History*, Vol. 49, No. 1, (2003), 5-31.

² See, Lawrence Freedman, (ed.), *Military Intervention in European Conflicts*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), 9; James D. Fearon, "Why Do Some Civil Wars Last So Much Longer Than Others?" *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 41, No. 3, (2004), 275-301; T. David Mason, Joseph P. Weingarten, Jr., and Patrick J. Fett, "Win, Lose, or Draw: Predicting the Outcome of Civil Wars," *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 52, No. 2, (1999), 239-268; Paul Collier, Anke Hoeffler and Måns Söderbom, "On the Duration of Civil War" *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 41, No. 3, (2004), 268. Patrick M. Regan, "Third-Party Interventions and the Duration of Intrastate Conflicts," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 46, No. 1, (2002), 55-73.

simple relative measure comparing belligerents' capabilities,³ in this chapter, a model of the balance of capabilities is developed that includes both absolute and relative measurements. This innovation accounts for a belligerent's selection of a strategy being a function of its own physical ability and its strength vis-à-vis its opponent(s). Second, unlike previous attempts, the explanation of the balance of capabilities presented in this chapter allows for the possibility of there being more than a single insurgent actor. Finally, the variables in this chapter are more sensitive and fluid than previous models. As will be demonstrated, this allows for increased dynamism, a stronger predictive element and a more sophisticated method of analysis overall.

This chapter is divided into three sections. Section one examines the types and character of strategy and warfare in civil wars. It establishes a triple typology of civil war warfare: conventional, guerrilla and irregular warfare.⁴ Although the terminology differs, this typology is conceptually similar to that developed in Kalyvas' seminal work. Yet, this section makes an important contribution by submitting that the offensive and defensive characteristics of each form of warfare represent the best method of empirical identification. Section two develops a revised model of the balance of capabilities. The third section demonstrates the role of the balance of capabilities in influencing the form of warfare that develops in a particular region, at a particular time, by briefly outlining the variation in warfare in the American and Somali civil wars. The American and Somali civil wars are normally considered to be ideal examples of conventional and irregular warfare; however, as the third section will point out, even in these civil wars there was significant spatial and temporal variation in warfare.

³ See, for example, Fearon, "Why Do Some Civil Wars Last So Much Longer Than Others?" 298.

⁴ Stathis N. Kalyvas, "Warfare in Civil Wars," in Isabelle Duyvesteyn and Jan Angstrom, (eds.), *Rethinking the Nature of War*, (Abingdon: Frank Cass, 2005), 91. The major difference in terminology is between my choice of "irregular" to describe the form of warfare that Kalyvas labeled "symmetrical non-conventional". Although, "symmetrical non-conventional" has the virtue of being descriptive, it also suffers from carrying the connotation of being a "new" term for a "new" form of warfare. As the fundamental characteristics of each form of warfare can be traced back to – at least – the middle-ages, a new term was judged as inappropriate. Therefore, I argue that "irregular" – being sufficiently vague and ill-defined in the literature to allow redefinition – is a more suitable label.

1. Warfare in Civil Wars

There are fundamental differences between warfare in interstate and civil wars. Historically, almost all interstate warfare has been conventional in nature. In contrast, there has been significant variation in the warfare that characterises civil war. As outlined in this section, at a broad, idealised level, there are three forms of warfare in civil war: conventional, guerrilla and irregular. Each form exhibits different operational characteristics.⁵ In particular, the key differences in the forms of warfare are illustrated through a comparison of each form's offensive and defensive operational elements. Sections two and three will show how variations in the belligerents' cumulative capabilities act to shape warfare.

Conventional warfare

The concept of conventional warfare derives from the traditional image of warfare between states. Its guiding principle is to deploy the maximum amount of force at a decisive point and thereby destroy an opponent's ability to resist in a "set piece battle". The similarities between conventional warfare in interstate and civil wars are many. As Enzensberger observed, during the Russian, American and Spanish civil wars,

...there were regular armies and fronts; the central command structures attempted to carry out their strategic objectives in a planned way through strict control of their troops. As a rule there was political as well as military leadership, following clearly defined goals, and ready and able to negotiate when necessary.⁶

Indeed, scholars have tended to analyse conventional warfare in civil and interstate wars as if they were one and the same – for instance, by drawing analogies

⁵ On the operational dimension of strategy, see Michael Howard, "The Forgotten Dimensions of Strategy," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 57, No. 5, (1979), 975-986.

⁶ Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *Civil Wars: From L.A. to Bosnia*, (New York: The New Press, 1994), 20.

between the American Civil War and the First World War.⁷ The implication of this for civil wars is that conventional warfare is normally associated with instances that involve movements with some form of pre-existing state structure (as in the Confederate States in the American Civil War), large army units which choose to fight for the insurgent (as in the Spanish Civil War), or direct external state intervention (as in the Angolan Civil War).

Operationally, conventional warfare is characterised by a clear distinction between offensive and defensive actions. In offence, conventional strategy generally involves massive coordinated “pushes” or “thrusts” into enemy held territory. The key aim is to decisively engage and destroy the opposition’s forces through attrition, *blitzkrieg* or “normal progress”.⁸ It requires a belligerent to decrease the force-to-space ratio by concentrating its forces at the most advantageous location before advancing into enemy-held territory.⁹ In defence, conventional warfare assumes frontlines as the defining feature. The principal aim of fortified positions is “to repel attack, to protect people and property, to hold territory, and to minimize damage by the attacker.”¹⁰ Although not every inch of territory may be protected, strategically-important locations are prepared to be held against the enemy’s assaults for as long as possible. This emphasis on territory, in both defence and offence, is alluded to in the common reference to conventional warfare as “positional warfare”.¹¹

⁷ See, for example, Edward Hagerman, *The American Civil War and the Origins of Modern Warfare: Ideas, Organization, and Field Command*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); Howard, “The Forgotten Dimensions of Strategy,” 979.

⁸ See, John J. Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 30-56; Hew Strachan, *European Armies and the Conduct of War*, (London: Allen and Unwin, 1983), ch. 9-10.

⁹ Force-to-space ratios are equally important to offence and defence. For example, Posen examines the force-to-space ratio required to “wedge” a defensive line and how much is necessary to defend it. See, Barry R. Posen, “Measuring the European Conventional Balance: Coping with Complexity in Threat Assessment,” *International Security*, Vol. 9, No. 3, (1983/1984), 47-88. Also see, John J. Mearshemier, “Why the Soviets Can’t Win Quickly in Central Europe,” *International Security*, Vol. 7, No. 1, (1982), 3-39.

¹⁰ David Tarr, “Defense as Strategy: A Conceptual Analysis,” in Stephen. J. Cimbala, (ed.), *National Security Strategy: Choices and Limits*, (New York: Praeger, 1983), 217-235.

¹¹ Mao Tse-Tung, *Selected Military Writings of Mao Tse-Tung*, (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1963).

Guerrilla and counter-guerrilla warfare

In guerrilla warfare, the incumbent and insurgent apply very different strategies. This makes it unique among the types of warfare in civil war. The insurgent adopts a guerrilla strategy which involves it waging a protracted war of attrition while avoiding open engagements with the adversary. Offence in guerrilla strategy attempts to hold the initiative by engaging in surprise attacks, raids, sabotage and ambushes, thereby avoiding a pitched battle.¹² An insurgent applying a guerrilla strategy endeavours to create the impression that its forces may strike anywhere and anytime, which compels the incumbent to spread its forces thinly in order to protect all important infrastructure. As a consequence, the incumbent has fewer available forces with which to aggressively pursue the guerrilla force. In defence, guerrilla forces do not attempt to defend territory or population. Instead, and in contrast to conventional strategy, guerrillas attempt to decrease the force-to-space ratio.¹³ As Che Guevara emphasised, “the essential task of the guerrilla fighter is to keep himself from being destroyed.”¹⁴ Defensive guerrilla strategy thus requires the insurgent to withdraw from territory when challenged by the enemy forces, even if this means leaving highly-valued assets like family homes and sites of symbolic value unprotected.¹⁵ For this reason, Clausewitz appropriately likened the strategy to a cloud that parts as solid pressure moves towards it.¹⁶

In order to avoid an incumbent’s military forces, an insurgent who has adopted a guerrilla strategy will frequently attempt to blend into particularly rugged territory or a section of society. However, as a French colonel in Algeria identified, “this

¹² Andrew C. Janos, “Unconventional Warfare: Framework and Analysis,” *World Politics*, Vol. 15, No. 4, (1963), 643. See also, V.K. Anand, *Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency: A Study of Modern Guerrilla Warfare*, (New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publications, 1985), 17 – 18.

¹³ B.H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, (New York: Meridan, 1991), 366-367.

¹⁴ Che Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare*, (London: Souvenir Press, 1998), 15.

¹⁵ Ivan Arreguín-Toft, “How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict,” *International Security*, Vol. 26, No. 1, (2001), 104.

¹⁶ See Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, eds. and trans. by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, (New York: Everyman’s Library, 1993), 580; Similarly, T.E. Lawrence compares the guerrilla strategy to “gas” being “a thing intangible, invulnerable, without front or back, drifting like a gas...” David Garnett, (ed.), *The Essential T.E. Lawrence*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1951), 99.

total dependence upon terrain and population is ... [also] the guerrilla's weak point."¹⁷ Thus, offensive counter-guerrilla strategies adopted by incumbents may attempt to isolate the guerrillas from their social support base and deny them readmission, tempt or force them out of cover and into a direct confrontation, or annihilate the social base from which the insurgency originates.¹⁸ Although the methods used in counter-guerrilla strategy are unusual within a conventional context, their primary strategic objective is similar: to locate the enemy and destroy it through superior manoeuvre and firepower.

In defence, counter-guerrilla strategy requires the protection of important political, economic and military positions. However, this task can be problematic, as the insurgent by striking at unpredictable places and at times, can create an "air defence" dilemma for the incumbent.¹⁹ When constructing an air defence strategy, the required number of air defence units is more a function of the targets that must be defended than the number of enemy bombers. Similarly, in counter-guerrilla strategy, an incumbent with many potential targets will have to invest heavily in defending these installations regardless of the actual number of enemy guerrilla units. Hence, an incumbent may be forced to construct elaborate conventional defences (such as trenches, bunkers and observation posts) at all important installations in the area which the guerrilla forces can presumably reach. Furthermore, much of the incumbent's numerical advantage can be absorbed by defensive duties. This final defensive characteristic of counter-guerrilla strategy

¹⁷ Roger Trinquier, *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency*, trans. Daniel Lee, (New York: Praeger, 1964), 63.

¹⁸ Gil Merom, *How Democracies Lose Small Wars*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Gil Merom, "Strong Powers in Small Wars: The Unnoticed Foundations of Success," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 9, No. 2, (1998), 38-63. Counter-guerrilla strategies often include an attempt at "winning the hearts and minds" of the population. However, this is outside the limits of our current discussion on warfare. For an earlier analysis of many of the counter-guerrilla strategies discussed in Merom and the "hearts and minds" approach, see, Charles T.R. Bohannon, "Antiguerrilla Operations," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, Vol. 341, *Unconventional Warfare*, (1962), 19-29.

¹⁹ Nathan Leites and Charles Wolf, *Rebellion and Authority: An Analytical Essay on Insurgent Conflicts*, (Chicago: Markham Publishing, 1970), 68. For a similar discussion, see, Derek J. Clark and Kai A. Konrad, "Asymmetric Conflict: Weakest Link against Best Shot," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 51, No. 3, (2007), 457-469; S. J. Deitchman, "A Lanchester Model Guerrilla Warfare," *Operations Research*, Vol. 10, No. 2, (1962), 820. Guevara argues that "since the guerrilla band is a division unto itself, and since there are large zones of territory not controlled by the enemy, it is always possible to carry out guerrilla attacks in such a way as to assure surprise; and it is the duty of the guerrilla fighter to do so." See, Guevara, *On Guerrilla Warfare*, 13.

was noted by Jomini when he concluded that no regular army “can contend successfully against...[a guerrilla strategy] unless it be strong enough to hold all the essential points of the country, cover its communications and at the same time furnish an active force sufficient to beat the enemy wherever he may present himself.”²⁰

Irregular warfare

The principles of irregular strategy fundamentally differ to those of guerrilla and conventional strategies and, unlike them, are not well-established in the theoretical literature on civil war. However, it has long been assumed by historians that warfare in civil wars cannot always be divided into a simple conventional/guerrilla dichotomy. Historians writing on various civil wars have rejected the dichotomy in favour of triple strategic categories, for instance, by dividing the Confederate Army into conventional, guerrilla and militia units.²¹ Irregular warfare has been commonplace since the Middle Ages, when European lords organised civilians into local militias for their personal use and to repel marauding mercenaries and raiders.²² The modern-day equivalents of these earlier wars have been seen in Bosnia, Georgia, Haiti, Lebanon, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sri Lanka, the Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo.²³ Thus, historians and other

²⁰ Henri Jomini, *Précis de l'art de la guerre*, (Paris: 1838), 72 in Walter Laquer, “The Origins of Guerrilla Doctrine,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 10, No. 3, (1975), 349. Also see R.G. Cole, “A System Description of Counter Insurgency Warfare,” *Policy Sciences*, Vol. 18, No. 1, (1985), 66.

²¹ On the distinction between regular, guerrilla, and militia units and their conduct in the American Civil War see, Robert R. Mackey, *The Uncivil War: Irregular Warfare in the Upper South, 1861-1865*, (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), especially, 4-7. For a discussion of regular, guerrilla and militia units in the Spanish Civil War see, Antony Beevor, *The Battle for Spain: The Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939*, (London: Phoenix, 2006), 230. Conventional, guerrilla and irregular strategies are closely related to the Chinese Communist usage of three different types of forces in the Chinese Civil War (1945-1949): *cheng-shih-tui* (regulars), *yu-chi-tui* (guerrillas) and *min-ping* (militia); see Chalmers A. Johnson, “Civilian Loyalties and Guerrilla Conflict,” *World Politics*, Vol. 14, No. 4, (1962), 654ff.

²² Mark Charles Fissel, *The Bishops' Wars: Charles I's Campaigns Against Scotland, 1638-1640*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), in particular the chapter “The Perfect Militia”, 174-195; Philippe Contamine, *War in the Middle Ages*, trans. Michael Jones, (New York: Basil Blackwell Publisher, 1984), 14-16 and 82-84.

²³ The warfare in Liberia, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo are discussed in William Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States*, (London: Lynne Rienner, 1998). For a similar discussion with the inclusion of Nigeria, see William Reno, “The Politics of Insurgency in Collapsing States,” *Development and Change*, Vol. 33, No. 5, (2002), 837-858; William Reno, “Sierra Leone: Warfare in a Post-State Society,” in Robert I. Rotberg, (ed.), *State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror*, (Washington: World Peace Foundation 2003), 71-100; John Mueller, “The Banality of ‘Ethnic War’,” *International Security*, Vol. 25, No. 1, (2000), 42-70; Stephen Ellis, “Liberia’s Warlord Insurgency,” in Christopher Clapham, (ed.), *African Guerrillas*, (Oxford: James Currey, 1998), 155-171; Alex de Waal, “Contemporary Warfare in

observers have been right to elevate irregular warfare to a prominence equal to that of conventional and guerrilla warfare.

In offensive operations, irregular strategy attempts to achieve two objectives: to capture territory and avoid battles of annihilation. Generally, clashes tend to break off before one side sustains heavily casualties. In Congo, for instance, Lendu militiamen armed with rifles,²⁴ spears, poison-tipped arrows and machetes clashed in a series of encounters with the similarly equipped Hema militia. However, the battles were indecisive, with the first side to suffer casualties withdrawing.²⁵ At other times, the attacking militia may attempt to avoid a direct clash altogether. To achieve this, irregular forces will frequently telegraph their approach by intentionally sparking rumours, communicating the approach by demonstrating their strength by firing into the air, or even forwarding written letters to the target area.²⁶ An aid worker in Sierra Leone reported that the “rebels sent a message saying that they would attack Kailahun on Holy Saturday...We thought the army would quell it. But soldiers told us they had only four rounds [of ammunition] and were fleeing to Guinea. The army left, then the police, then the civilians.”²⁷ Similarly, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, as the rebel’s reputation for effectiveness and brutality spread, “it became sufficient to surround a town (leaving one road open), announce its fall, and wait for the panicked and demoralised Zaïrean army (FAZ) to loot and flee.”²⁸ As a result, the rebels in both Sierra Leone and the Congo could move into territory without confronting resistance.

Africa,” in Mary Kaldor and Basker Vashee, (eds.), *Restructuring the Global Military Sector. Volume I: New Wars*, (London: Cassel, 1997), 305; Paul Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest: War, Youth, and Resources in Sierra Leone*, (Oxford: James Currey, 1996), 13-14

²⁴ Many of these rifles were reportedly “held together with duct tape and wire”, see, Bryan Mealer, *All Things Must Fight to Live: Stories of War and Deliverance in Congo*, (New York: Bloomsbury, 2008), 1.

²⁵ These clashes, however, contrast greatly with Lendu and Hema attacks on enemy villages, which would normally descend into genocidal massacres. See, Mealer, *All Things Must Fight to Live*, 1.

²⁶ Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest*, 6.

²⁷ David Keen, *Conflict and Collusion in Sierra Leone*, (New York: Palgrave, 2005), 83.

²⁸ Mel McNulty, “The Collapse of Zaïre: Implosion, Revolution or External Sabotage,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 1, (1999), 75.

Irregular offensives exhibit different characteristics in urban and rural areas. In urban areas, irregular offensives frequently resemble severe gang violence,²⁹ with seemingly “confused street battles”³⁰ and, in more recent times, the increasing use of civilian cars, motorbikes and trucks for swift hit-and-run attacks. The militias in Iraq provide a useful example of an irregular strategy in an urban area. Beginning in 2003, irregular warfare emerged as the dominant form of warfare between the rival militia groups in Iraq, while many of these same organisations concurrently applied a guerrilla strategy against the American and Iraqi Government forces.³¹ In offensive operations, the Iraqi militias would frequently target their opponent’s headquarters or mosque in the neighbouring suburb using drive-by shootings, grenade attacks or car bombs, since generally, these two buildings were the core points for opposing militia members to congregate, coordinate, and store their weapons. In the suburb of Hurriya, for example, the Mahdi Army attacked the Sunni headquarters “several times and the Sunnis finally shut it down and then began to flee the neighbourhood.”³² According to one Mahdi militiaman, the attackers then “established [their] own headquarters on the far edge of Hurriya.”³³

Unlike the thrusts of conventional warfare or the “hit and run” strikes of guerrilla strategy, irregular offensive operations to capture rural areas frequently resemble trickles. Irregular advances often follow the route of least resistance. In Sierra Leone, for example, the RUF’s decentralised advance edged forward following the path of least resistance. A farmer from the Pujehun District in Sierra Leone recounted that: “[t]he RUF boys had two-way walkie-talkies. News of the easy

²⁹ Malcolm W. Klein, *The American Street Gang: Its Nature, Prevalence, and Control*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); James Diego Vigil, “Urban Violence and Street Gangs,” *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 32, (2003), 225-242; John P. Sullivan and Robert J. Bunker, “Drug Cartels, Street Gangs, and Warlords,” *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 13, No. 2, (2002), 40-53; Richard W. Wrangham and Michael L. Wilson, “Collective Violence: Comparisons between Youth and Chimpanzees,” *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, Vol. 1036, (2004), 233-256.

³⁰ Michael Roddy, “Liberian rebels attack central Monrovia,” *Reuters*, 27 July 1990.

³¹ As one perceptive study concluded, the Iraqi case underscores “the view that civil wars are typically aggregations of multiple, highly fragmented conflicts.” Stathis N. Kalyvas and Matthew A. Kocher, “Ethnic Cleavages and Irregular War: Iraq and Vietnam,” *Politics and Society*, Vol. 35, No. 2, (2007), 186.

³² ICG, *Iraq’s Civil War, The Sadrist and the Surge*, Middle-East Report No. 72, (Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2008), 2.

³³ ICG, *Iraq’s Civil War*, 2.

advance was passed on. They said, 'come, there's no resistance. The [All Peoples' Congress] is nothing.' Another group entered Pujehum [district] at Suluma, hearing the word."³⁴ Clearly, instead of concentrating its forces for a conventional drive, or using guerrilla infiltration, the RUF captured territory through a third form of offensive strategy, that is, capturing territory and asserting its control over population by advancing into unprotected space.

In defence, belligerents employ an irregular strategy attempt to hold and defend territory and population. Indeed, militias, paramilitaries and youth gangs are frequently raised and paid for by belligerents to deny territory and population to the enemy.³⁵ In practice, this characteristic finds physical expression in a number of ways. One example is the roadblocks and checkpoints that frequently litter civil wars that are fought using irregular warfare.³⁶ In a typical instance, in Iraq, roadblocks were constructed on most main approaches into suburbs and were manned by between 6 to 20 militiamen, armed with pistols, rifles and walkie-talkies. In Hurriyah, an observer reported that the "three main streets are blocked by checkpoints run by teenagers, none wearing uniforms, but with pistols sometimes tucked in their belts and walkie-talkies in hand."³⁷ Across cases of civil war, the sturdiness of roadblocks varies dramatically, from concrete guard houses through to "a few stones or empty plastic crates", as reported in Rwanda.³⁸ Regardless of construction, the role of roadblocks remains to assert a belligerent's control over a territory and population. The appearance of roadblocks and checkpoints in a civil war frequently create unmistakable frontlines. However, unlike the frontlines in conventional warfare, frontlines in irregular warfare are relatively lightly-defended and frequently appear in large numbers. Indeed, a

³⁴ Keen, *Conflict and Collusion in Sierra Leone*, 84.

³⁵ Territorial control, according to the Giustozzi, is a prerequisite for a warlord to be able to maintain a militia. See, Antonio Giustozzi, *The Debate on Warlordism: The Importance of Military Legitimacy*, Discussion Paper No. 13, (London: Crisis States Programme, LSE, 2005), 14-16.

³⁶ Kalyvas, "Warfare in Civil Wars," 92. Pre-state warfare was also often shaped by the combatants' attempts to gain or defend territory: see Lawrence H. Keely, *War before Civilization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 108-112.

³⁷ Sally Busbee, "Anti-U.S. Mahdi Army Keeps the Calm in Shiite-Only Areas," *Charleston Gazette*, 19 August 2007.

³⁸ Roméo Dallaire, *Shake Hands With the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda*, (London: Arrow Books, 2004), 277.

single city may be divided between several belligerents, each asserting its control over different suburbs, such was the case in Beirut, Mogadishu, Baghdad and Monrovia. In Baghdad, for instance, “clear battle lines have appeared on city streets”³⁹ behind which “cars full of gunmen” patrol the suburbs under their control.⁴⁰ In Monrovia, the different militias “raced around in pickup trucks on their side of the city, clutching assault rifles, rocket launchers and two prized anti-aircraft guns.”⁴¹

Several characteristics of irregular warfare appear similar to conventional or guerrilla warfare. Therefore, some may question what distinguishes irregular warfare from conventional or guerrilla warfare. However, I argue that as an amalgamation, the characteristics of irregular warfare justify its status as a third distinct form of warfare. For instance, although raids and ambushes are a common feature of both guerrilla and irregular strategies, in a sharp deviation from the central tenet of guerrilla/counter-guerrilla warfare, only in irregular warfare do both the incumbent and insurgent forces employ similar techniques. Likewise, roadblocks are commonly used to control territory and population in both counter-guerrilla and irregular strategy. Yet, as these small obstacles represent easy targets for powerful opponents, generally it is only in irregular warfare that insurgent actors also use these constructions. For example, the techniques the Iraqi militias developed to fight other militia (such as, street skirmishes, roadblocks, etc.) were significantly different from techniques they developed to fight the central government (such as, roadside bombs, sniping and evasion).⁴²

³⁹ Oren Dorell, “Thousands Displaced as Unrest Grows,” *USA Today*, 9 February 2007.

⁴⁰ James Hider, “My Friends Live in Fear as a Savage Civil War Rips Apart Their Home,” *The Times*, 14 July 2006.

⁴¹ Ellen Knickmeyer, “Battle lines leave some Liberians locked in hunger/fighting persists outside capital,” *Associated Press*, 9 August 2003.

⁴² Ahmed S. Hashim, “The Insurgency in Iraq,” *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 14, No. 3, (2003), 10-11. Iraqi militiamen at roadblocks – guarding against rival militiamen’s intrusion into their territory would quickly revert to guerrilla defensive tactics when confronted by American or Iraq Security Forces. Captain Wayman, of the United States’ Army, for instance, reported that whenever Mahdi Army members “at an informal checkpoint, caught sight” of an approaching American patrol they “scuttled out of sight, disappearing into the crowds of men watching the Americans.” See, Ellen Knickmeyer, “‘Shiite Giant’ Extends Its Reach: Sadr’s Armed Movement Becomes Pivotal Force in Fractured Country,” *The Washington Post*, 24 August 2006. Indeed, roadblocks were extremely susceptible to attack from the Coalition’s forces. For example, On 11 June 2005, American aircraft attacked a “rebel roadblock near the Syrian

Table 3.1 summarises the defining operational characteristics of conventional, guerrilla and irregular strategies. However, although it is analytically useful to discuss the three different types of warfare in civil war separately, they are not mutually exclusive. As the table suggests, there is frequently substantial blurring between the idealised analytical categories. Moreover, as this chapter argues, it is common for regular, guerrilla and militia units to be found operating in different regions, or at different times, in a single civil war. These different types of units, applying different techniques, often ascribe civil war with a seemingly confusing complexion. The following section attempts to take steps towards overcoming some of this confusion by identifying the variables that influence which form of warfare develops at a particular place and time.

border" which the Pentagon claimed "killed approximately 40 insurgents who had been stopping civilians." Thalia Assuras, "Violence Intensifies in Iraq," *CBS News*, 11 June 2005.

Table 3.1: Operational and Organisational Characteristics of the Different Forms of Strategy in Civil War

	Conventional Strategy	Irregular Strategy	Guerrilla Strategy
Units	Regular soldiers	Militias and paramilitaries	Guerrillas
Logistics	Most incorporated into the state	Mixed	Most incorporated into society
Organisational structure	Centralised	Decentralised	Decentralised
Force-to-space ratio	High	Medium	Low
Offensive characteristics	Concentrated thrusts	Dispersed trickles, raids	Strikes, sabotage, raids
Defensive characteristics	Strong fixed	Weak fixed	Evasion

2. Warfare and the Balance of Capabilities

The form of warfare that emerges in a civil war corresponds closely with the configuration of the balance of capabilities. Only to a lesser extent will warfare be influenced by political objectives, geography and military culture. For example, the causes, location, and population involved in the Burmese, South Vietnamese, and Algerian civil wars were vastly different and yet, for the most part, they were all characterised by guerrilla warfare. This section will show that the incumbent and

the insurgent actors' method of war making will principally be influenced by the distribution of military capabilities within the civil war system.

Cumulative capabilities and conventional, guerrilla and irregular warfare

The three forms of warfare in civil wars correspond to different configurations of the balance of capabilities. Conventional warfare is the result of a strong force confronting another strong force; guerrilla warfare is the outcome of a strong force opposing a relatively weak force; and irregular warfare is the product of a weak force challenging another weak force.

There are two prerequisites for conventional warfare to appear in civil war. First, each belligerent must be able to field sufficient numbers of disciplined troops and equip them with military equipment. In practice, this normally means that both belligerents must have access to the full range of instruments that are commonly associated with a state: territory, manpower, a considerable material resource base, a bureaucracy and a relatively sophisticated military machine.⁴³ In other words, conventional warfare is the result of opposing belligerents each having access to large volumes of cumulative capabilities. The second prerequisite is that both protagonists must calculate that there is a good probability that they will be victorious by pursuing such a strategy.⁴⁴ If the success of a conventional strategy is considered unlikely, a belligerent may consider dissolving its conventional units and converting to a guerrilla strategy. In short, conventional warfare is the result of both absolute and relative variables.

Guerrilla warfare is the result of an asymmetry in belligerents' relative cumulative capabilities. In other words, guerrilla warfare is the outcome of the insurgent

⁴³ Janos, "Unconventional Warfare," 637. For a description of conventional warfare in the "post-industrialised age" see C. Dandeker, "The Bureaucratization of Force," in Lawrence Freedman, (ed.), *War*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 118 – 123.

⁴⁴ Kalyvas, "Warfare in Civil Wars," 90.

perceiving its opponent's strength as being decisively greater than its own. In choosing to pursue a guerrilla strategy, a belligerent is acknowledging the inherent inferiority of its cumulative capabilities vis-à-vis its opponent.⁴⁵ As such, guerrilla strategy has "always existed as a natural form of fighting for the initially weaker side."⁴⁶ However, belligerents that adopt guerrilla strategy may not be weak in absolute terms, only when compared to their opponent. Hence, the size of guerrilla forces and their capabilities may vary greatly between cases. For example, when Mao pursued a guerrilla strategy, his army consisted of a sizeable 10,000 to 30,000 fighters. However, Mao's forces were opposed by armies three to ten times greater in size, ensuring that a conventional confrontation with the enemy would have been disastrous.⁴⁷

Finally, irregular warfare emerges when the belligerents remain weak in absolute terms, but have relatively-balanced cumulative capabilities. That is, this form of warfare will occur when the belligerents do not possess the capabilities to employ a conventional strategy and when guerrilla warfare is rendered unnecessary by the fact that the incumbent is not substantially stronger than the insurgent. Irregular warfare will therefore generally emerge where the state's "structure, authority, power, law, and civil order have fragmented."⁴⁸ As the incumbent's relative resources decline, its ability to project influence out from the capital also decreases. This process creates an opportunity for regional centres of authority to emerge.⁴⁹ Francis, for example, observed that "militias mushroom in weak, failed and

⁴⁵ See Walter Laquer, *Guerrilla: A Historical Analysis*, (Boston: Little and Brown, 1976); Robert B. Asprey, *War in the Shadows: The Guerrilla in History*, (New York: William Morrow, 1994); Loren B. Thompson, (ed.), *Low-Intensity Conflict*, (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1989); Avi Kober, "Low-Intensity Conflicts: Why the Gap Between Theory and Practice?," *Defense and Security Analysis*, Vol. 18, No. 1, (2002), 17. Azeem Ibrahim, "Conceptualisation of Guerrilla Warfare," *Small Wars and Insurgency*, Vol. 15, No. 3, (2004), 112-124.

⁴⁶ Pierre Allan and Albert A. Stahel, "Tribal Guerrilla Warfare against a Colonial Power: Analyzing the War in Afghanistan," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 27, No. 4, (1983), 593.

⁴⁷ Janos, "Unconventional Warfare," 644.

⁴⁸ Alice Hills, "Warlords, Militias and Conflict in Contemporary Africa: A Re-examination of Terms," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 8, No. 1, (Spring 1997), 35; Mark Duffield, "Post-Modern Conflict: Warlords, Post-Adjustment States and Private Protection," *Civil Wars*, Vol. 1, No. 1, (1998), 66-102. Also see, Clapham's discussion on "warlord insurgencies" in Christopher Clapham, *Africa and the International System*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 212.

⁴⁹ Michael T. Klare, "The Deadly Connection: Paramilitary Bands, Small Arms Diffusion and State Failure," in Robert I. Rotberg, (ed.), *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 117.

collapsed states, where the state does not have control or monopoly of the threat of force.”⁵⁰ The levelling of the belligerents’ capabilities leads to comparable methods of warfare. The collapse of the state frequently not only sees the government shift from relying on regular forces to militia and paramilitary forces, but also the emergence of warlords employing similar forces.

The balance of capabilities: Average cumulative capabilities and concentration

At this point it is now possible to begin constructing an explanation of the balance of capabilities. A belligerent’s freedom to choose a strategy is restricted and shaped by two factors. The first is an absolute measure – the total value of the belligerent’s own capabilities. That is, the range of strategies available to a belligerent is limited by what it is physically able to achieve. The second factor influencing a belligerent’s strategic decisions is a relative measure – specifically, the measure of a belligerent’s relative strength vis-à-vis its opponent(s).⁵¹

The first determinant of warfare in civil war is the average cumulative capabilities. This variable is an absolute measure, which is equal to the sum of all the belligerents’ cumulative capabilities divided by the total number of belligerents. A belligerent’s cumulative capabilities shapes its own behaviour by permitting and restricting different strategies. However, the overall form of warfare that takes hold in a civil war will be a confluence of all the belligerents’ strategies. Thus, warfare will be a function of the sum of all the belligerents’ cumulative capabilities and the number of belligerents involved in the civil war.

As a rule, the greater the number of belligerents in a civil war, the weaker each side is likely to be. The number of belligerents in a civil war will have a major influence

⁵⁰ David J. Francis, (ed.), *Civil Militias: Africa’s Intractable Security Menace?* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 2.

⁵¹ Barry Buzan, Charles A. Jones and Richard Little, *The Logic of Anarchy: Neorealism to Structural Realism*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

on the cumulative capabilities it is possible for each side to possess, as the number of belligerents roughly corresponds with the number of divisions of territory, fighters, and resources. In June 1990, for instance, the Liberian Civil War was seemingly reaching its climax with the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) reaching the outskirts of Monrovia. Although, the NPFL numbered some 10,000 fighters, only several hundred core fighters were trained and relatively-disciplined, and with victory imminent in July 1990, many of these fighters decided to break away and form the Independent Patriotic Front of Liberia (IPFL). The short-term consequences of the insurgent actor's split into two mutually antagonistic belligerents was to weaken the NPFL, carve Monrovia into three different spheres of control, and allow the Liberian Government to stave off immediate defeat.⁵² To capture the importance that the number of belligerents has on the balance of capabilities, the first variable that is identified here is the average cumulative capabilities, which is equal to the sum of all capabilities in the system divided by the number of belligerents. When applied to the balance of capabilities, the average cumulative capabilities will range between a low and a high measure.⁵³

The second variable that affects the balance of capabilities is the concentration of capabilities (i.e. the overall distribution of capabilities) in the civil war. It is nonsensical to assume that there will ever be a perfectly equal distribution of capabilities between the belligerents, as the average cumulative capabilities variable would suggest if presented alone. Hence, the division of capabilities must also be considered. In fact, unlike the concept of the "balance of power" in International Relations theory which is assumed to tend towards equilibrium,⁵⁴ the

⁵² Herbert Howe, "Lessons of Liberia: ECOMOG and Regional Peacekeeping," *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 3, (1996), 145-176; Stephen Ellis, "Liberia 1989-1994: A Study of Ethnic and Spiritual Violence," *African Affairs*, Vol. 94, No. 375, (1995), 165-197. Conversely, the collapse of any belligerent would result in more open territory, available recruits and weapons for the remaining belligerents to integrate. Under these circumstances, the surviving belligerents' cumulative capabilities would be expected to increase, although, unevenly.

⁵³ This concept operates in international politics in a similar fashion. As Waltz explains: "Although capabilities are attributes of units, the distribution of capabilities is not. The distribution of capabilities is not a unit attribute, but rather a system-wide concept." See, Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), 98.

⁵⁴ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), 161-218; Ernest B. Haas, "The Balance of Power: Prescription, Concept and Propaganda," *World Politics*, Vol. 5, No. 4, (1953),

logic of the balance of capabilities suggests that the “natural state” of the concentration of capabilities will be in the incumbent’s favour.⁵⁵ There are three reasons for this proposition. First, the incumbent is, by definition, partially in control of the coercive instruments of the state, and is therefore in a better position to extract resources. Even in a weak or failing state, the cumulative capabilities at the disposal of the incumbent will generally be – however marginally – greater than those of its challengers. Second, even during peacetime, most states continue to prepare for the possibility of war, while most sections of society do not. As such, the incumbent will usually be better organised for war than the insurgent, at least at the outset of hostilities.⁵⁶ Finally, if the balance of capabilities shifts in favour of an insurgent, one of three outcomes will usually occur. An insurgent with a greater concentration of capabilities may 1) win the war, 2) capture the capital (driving the incumbent into rural areas),⁵⁷ or 3) fractionalise and dampen its strategic advantage vis-à-vis the incumbent.⁵⁸ In the last situation, the division of the insurgent will result in a corresponding division of its cumulative capabilities and leave the concentration in favour of the incumbent.⁵⁹ When incorporated into the balance of

448-449; Richard Little, *The Balance of Power in International Relations: Metaphors, Myths and Models*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

⁵⁵ See, Regan, “Third-Party Interventions and the Duration of Intrastate Conflicts,” 60.

⁵⁶ Galula, for instance, argued that: “An appraisal of the contending forces at the start of a revolutionary war shows an overwhelming superiority in tangible assets in favor of the counterinsurgent.” David Galula, *Counter-Insurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, (London: Pall Mall, 1964), 6. A similar view, except focussing on the incumbent and insurgent’s respective financial positions, is discussed in, Jan Angstrom, “Towards a Typology of Internal Armed Conflict: Synthesising a Decade of Conceptual Turmoil,” *Civil Wars*, Vol. 4, No. 3, (2001), 101.

⁵⁷ For instance, at different times, the Sihanoukists and Khmer Rouge had held the capital and been the incumbent actor, however, by 1978 both these belligerents had become challengers to the Vietnamese-installed Heng Samrin regime. See, Mark P. Lagon, “The International System and the Reagan Doctrine: Can Realism Explain Aid to ‘Freedom Fighters?’” Vol. 22, No. 1, (1992), 39-70.

⁵⁸ Alternately, if a weaker insurgent believes that a stronger insurgent’s capture of the capital city is evitable may decide to “bandwagon” in order to share in the spoils of victory. On theoretical examination of this behaviour see, Randall L. Schweller, “Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In,” *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 1, (1994), 72-102. As the TPLF, for example, increasingly looked certain to depose the ruling military junta in Ethiopia other ethno-nationalists groups decided to join with the TPLF to form the EPRDF. See, John Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia: The Tigray Peoples Liberation Front, 1975-1991*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

⁵⁹ When the insurgent’s relative position exceeds that of the incumbent, realists in particular, would expect to see alliances end. See, Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), especially 9, 16. This expectation is also implicit in other realist work: see, Kenneth N. Waltz, “The Emerging Structure of International Politics,” *International Security*, Vol. 18, No. 2, (1993), 44-79 and John J. Mearsheimer, “Back to the Future: Instability in Europe After the Cold War,” *International Security*, Vol. 15, No. 1, (1990), 5-56. As discussed previously, the Liberian Civil War was an example of this latter case. It has been reported that perhaps the INPFL did not split from the NPFL, but rather was pushed out by the NPFL’s leader Charles Taylor, who (incorrectly) calculated that he no longer required his senior fighters and did not wish to share the inevitable spoils of victory with them. See, Stephen Ellis, *The Mask of*

capabilities, the concentration of capabilities is a purely relative measure that will range between disparity and parity of concentration between belligerents.

For clarity on the absolute and relative nature of these variables, consider the example of national income. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) offers few clues to a population's actual income. People living in a country with a large GDP, which also has a massive population, could, in fact, be living in poverty. Therefore, per capita income (GDP divided by population) offers a better insight into whether income in a given society is high or low. Although per capita income is an average calculation, it remains an absolute measure. In addition, income distribution is also sometimes employed, which reports the degree of disparity of wealth between the rich and poor. Income distribution is a relative measure. The absolute nature of per capita income correlates with the *average cumulative capabilities* and the relativity of income distribution with the *concentration of capabilities*.

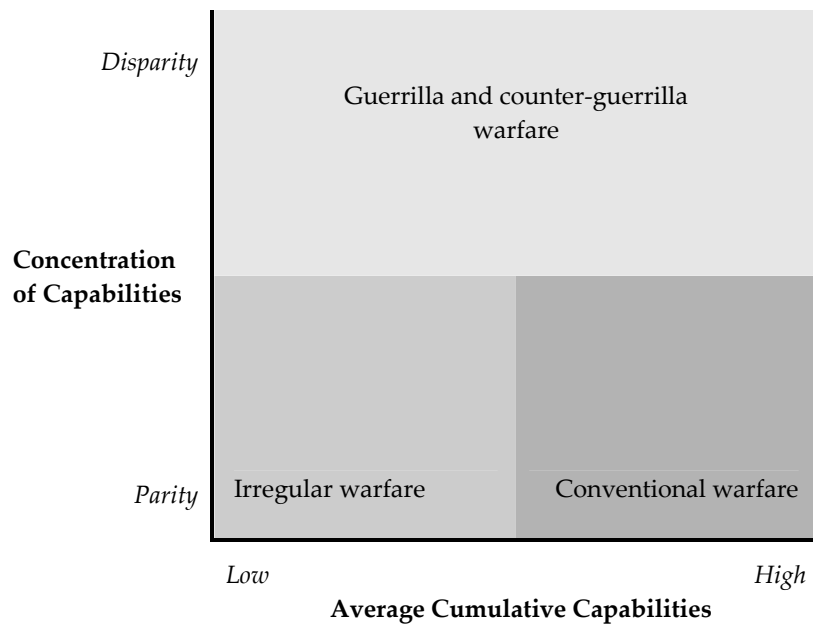
By considering average cumulative capabilities and concentration of capabilities in light of the different characteristics of conventional, guerrilla and irregular warfare, it is possible to formulate some hypotheses about the form of warfare that will emerge at a particular time and place in a civil war.

First, conventional warfare will be adopted when the average cumulative capabilities is high and the belligerents mutually calculate that there is relative parity in the concentration of capabilities. Second, guerrilla will occur with high or low average cumulative capabilities, when the concentration of capabilities is disparate. Although the average cumulative capabilities will influence the volume of firepower each belligerent can apply, it will not affect the fundamental nature of the warfare which occurs. Finally, irregular warfare will take place when the average cumulative capabilities is low and there is parity in the concentration of

capabilities. In this case, although there is military symmetry in the civil war, neither side possesses sufficient cumulative capabilities to attain the high force-to-space ratio required for conventional offensives or secure strong positional defences.

Figure 3.1 illustrates how the two variables interact to influence the form of warfare that emerges in a civil war. However, this depiction remains static. Hence, two further factors must be taken into consideration in order to better capture the dynamics of warfare in civil war.

Figure 3.1: The Balance of Capabilities and Warfare in Civil Wars



First, longitudinal measurements of the balance of capabilities at different temporal points will generally show some variation in one or both variables. That is, the cumulative capabilities of the belligerents will continually be in flux as soldiers are recruited or killed, territory changes hands, and military equipment is destroyed,

purchased or captured. Foreign assistance can also quickly or gradually increase the capabilities available to the belligerents.

Second, there may be spatial variation in the balance of capabilities. Certain geographic factors can potentially create regional variation in the balance of capabilities and therefore warfare. For instance, even belligerents with extremely high cumulative capabilities are unlikely to spread their forces evenly across an entire civil war state. Hence, some areas will have higher concentrations of troops than others. Regional differences in terrain and internal political boundaries can also affect the particular balance of capabilities in a region. This regional variation in warfare has been frequently identified by historians and has often labelled as representing “civil wars” within civil wars.⁶⁰

Accordingly, the balance of capabilities will constantly fluctuate. These sudden or gradual shifts in the balance of capabilities, across time and between regions, may cause the belligerents to change their type of strategy. There are two factors influencing a belligerent’s change in strategy: physical and cognitive. The value of a belligerent’s cumulative capabilities imposes physical limitations on strategy. For instance, a belligerent that lacks a sufficient number of skilled and disciplined troops and conventional military assets (such as tanks, artillery and other heavy weapons) may well find it physically impossible to employ a conventional strategy. This physical threshold will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four.

After this physical threshold in a belligerent’s cumulative capabilities has been crossed, and it becomes materially able to change forms of strategies, there is no guarantee that a belligerent will instantly decide to do so. A belligerent will have to decide if the time is right to adopt a different strategy. Hence, the second determinant of whether a belligerent’s strategy changes is a construct of their

⁶⁰ See, for instance, Noel C. Fisher, *War at Every Door: Partisan Politics and Guerrilla Violence in East Tennessee, 1860-1869*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 3.

perception of the balance of capabilities. Therefore, the exact point that warfare changes will be different between cases. In Vietnam, for instance, although the insurgent probably possessed the cumulative capabilities to make a conventional stand, the leadership “concluded that U.S. forces were so adept at combining maneuver and firepower that...[the] NVA and VC main-force unit would invariably be destroyed” in conventional warfare and so decided to adopt a guerrilla strategy.⁶¹ Similarly, in Iraq, insurgent “groups know that they are even less capable of standing up to the full might of US forces than was Ba’thist Iraq and they will avoid the misplaced heroics of the war days when hundreds of lightly-armed irregular forces were slaughtered when they rushed firepower-heavy US forces.”⁶² Hence, as Robert McColl asserted, there “is no quantitative measure as to when this change must occur. It is a purely subjective matter that depends upon the objective realities of any given geographic and political situation.”⁶³ That is, the second factor influencing the transition of strategy from one form to another will rest upon the calculations of the politico-military leadership of the contending belligerents.

This last point suggests that although the balance of capabilities is instrumental in shaping the behaviour of belligerents in civil war, it is not deterministic. At times, belligerents will miscalculate the balance of capabilities and independently choose an inappropriate strategy. For example, a belligerent may choose to adopt a conventional strategy when it is still too weak and will subsequently be punished for its mistake, cases of which are littered throughout history. For example, in the Greek Civil War, the Communists’ abandonment of “guerrilla tactics led to the inevitable: the victory of the government army, which had superiority in numbers

⁶¹ Arreguín-Toft, “How the Weak Win Wars,” 115.

⁶² Hashim, “The Insurgency in Iraq,” 9; Brain Burton and John Nagl, “Learning as We Go: the U.S. Army Adapts to Counterinsurgency in Iraq, July 2004-December 2006,” *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 19, No. 3, (2008), 303-327.

⁶³ Robert W. McColl, “The Insurgent State: Territorial Bases of Revolution,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 59, No. 4, (1969), 622.

and fire-power.”⁶⁴ Similarly, in 1946, the Viet Minh converted to a conventional strategy and was inflicted with heavy losses by the superior French forces as a result. In response, the Viet Minh quickly “renounced open combat, and dissolved its divisions and its regiments” and reverted back to a guerrilla strategy.⁶⁵

Given the aforementioned factors, it is perhaps unsurprising that the precise point at which the form of warfare changes in civil war has differed between cases. The problem of identifying a precise universal “tipping point” is further complicated by the fact that the balance of capabilities will frequently change progressively over time and space and, thus, the warfare may likewise change gradually. For instance, a civil war characterised by irregular warfare may increasingly witness elements of conventional warfare as the belligerents’ cumulative capabilities grow. Hence, predicting the precise value that the average cumulative capabilities and concentration must reach before the form of warfare will change has frequently been a difficult task for observers and practitioners alike.

3. Spatial and Temporal Variation in the Balance of Capabilities and Warfare

The purpose of this section is to empirically illustrate the fluid nature of the balance of capabilities and the impact this characteristic has on warfare in civil war. It briefly reflects on the relationship between the balance of capabilities and warfare in two conflicts: the American and Somali civil wars. The American and Somali civil wars are, respectively, popular examples of conventional and irregular warfare. However, as the American and Somali civil wars illustrate, even in these extreme examples, there was significant spatial and temporal variation in warfare.

⁶⁴ See, Amikam Nachmani, “Civil War and Foreign Intervention in Greece: 1946-49,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 25, No. 4, (1990), 512. For another prominent example in the Ethiopian Civil War, see, Gebru Tareke, “From Af Abet to Shire: the Defeat and Demise of Ethiopia’s ‘Red’ Army, 1988-1989,” *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 2, (2004), 239-281.

⁶⁵ Philippe Devillers, *Histoire du Viet-Nam de 1940 à 1952*, (Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1952), 166 in Leites and Wolf, *Rebellion and Authority*, 59.

Spatial variation and the American Civil War

The American Civil War is frequently held up as an idealised example of a civil war fought by conventional warfare. There are good reasons for this practice. In the Eastern Theatre, Union and Confederate generals employed what General Schofield labelled a “territorial strategy”.⁶⁶ The focus was on capturing the enemy’s territory or, in the South’s case, invading the North so as to draw the Union army away from Virginia. What is lesser known, however, is that outside the narrow corridors of the Eastern Theatre, warfare assumed a very different character. In fact, guerrilla warfare characterised much of the remaining fighting in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Missouri, Tennessee, Texas and north-western Virginia.⁶⁷ In these regions, small bands of loyalist or secessionist guerrillas harassed the occupying armies. This section will demonstrate the relationship between regional variation in the balance of capabilities and the warfare that develops in different locations by comparing the conventional warfare of the Eastern Theatre with the warfare in Missouri.

Conventional warfare and the Eastern Theatre

The popular image of the American Civil War is of two grand armies, marching out onto an open field in rank and file before commencing to slaughter each other with musket, cannon and sabre; in other words, a civil war fought by conventional warfare. This view is not erroneous, as most of the strategically-significant warfare was conventional in nature. This was particularly true of the Eastern Theatre, where conventional strategy was available to belligerents due to their significant and relatively-even strength in the zone.

⁶⁶ Ulysses S. Grant III, “Military Strategy of the Civil War,” *Military Affairs*, Vol. 22, No. 1, (1958), 21.

⁶⁷ Fisher, *War at Every Door: Partisan Politics and Guerrilla Violence in East Tennessee, 1860-1869*, 3.

The balance of capabilities in the Eastern Theatre was characterised by high average cumulative capabilities and parity in the concentration of capabilities. Although the Union possessed an overall quantitative superiority in troop strength, the Confederacy was successful in deploying a comparable number of soldiers to all major battles.⁶⁸ For instance, at the First Battle of Bull Run on 21 July 1861, the Union fielded 28,452 men compared to the Confederacy's 32,232. At the Battle of Gettysburg, the North had 88,289 to the South's 75,000.⁶⁹ Furthermore, in the Eastern Theatre, both belligerents issued their forces with weapons of similar sophistication and quality and thus neither side possessed "an asymmetrical advantage" in technology.⁷⁰ With roughly equal numbers facing off on the battlefield, both belligerents had a reasonable expectation that they could be victorious by pursuing a conventional strategy.

The Eastern Theatre was fought through a combination of conventional forms of offensive operations, namely manoeuvre and attrition. The respective armies attempted to manoeuvre their forces into a favourable position and engage the enemy in a decisive battle. This was implied by General Grant's 1864 statement that: "[m]y general plan now was to concentrate all the force available against the Confederate armies in the field...I [then] arranged for a simultaneous movement all along the line."⁷¹ The two sides threw tens of thousands of soldiers into the pursuit of a decisive victory. In defence, the belligerents' forces frequently sought shelter behind a "protective wall or entrenchment, to shield themselves from the attackers'

⁶⁸ In 1863, the Union army numbered some 2,128,948 men compared to the Confederacy's 1,082,119 soldiers. See, Micheal Clodfelter, *Warfare and Armed Conflicts: A Statistical Reference to Casualty and Other Figures, 1500-2000*, (Jefferson: McFarland and Co., 2002), 305.

⁶⁹ Clodfelter, *Warfare and Armed Conflicts*, 306-314. A study of some sixty battles discovered that, on average, the Union had a 37 percent numerical advantage over the Confederacy. See, Peter Maslowski, "To the Edge of Greatness: The United States, 1783-1865," in Williamson Murray, Macgregor Knox, Alvin Bernstein, (eds.), *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States and War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 236.

⁷⁰ Mark Grimsley, "Surviving Military Revolution: The U.S. Civil War," in MacGregor Knox and Williamson Murray, (eds.), *The Dynamics of Military Revolution, 1300-2050*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 76.

⁷¹ Grant, "Military Strategy of the Civil War," 24. He later revised his stated plan to "fight it out on this line if it takes all summer." See, Grimsley, "Surviving Military Revolution," 83.

rifles.”⁷² However, due to the introduction of rifled artillery and small arms, the American Civil War saw the first signs that the nineteenth century fortresses were becoming obsolete. During the civil war, traditional structures were gradually replaced by other forms of defensive technologies, namely “redoubts” and “rifle pits”.⁷³

Guerrilla warfare and the Border States

The American Civil War is not normally associated with guerrilla warfare. However, guerrilla warfare was the principal form of warfare across much of the country. Michael Fellman noted that in Missouri, when the Confederate’s regular army was absent, the “war often assumed a deadly guerrilla nature as local citizens took up arms spontaneously against their neighbours. This was a war of stealth and raid, without a front, without formal organization, with almost no division between the civilian and the warrior.”⁷⁴ As Fellman suggested, it was the presence of large numbers of troops and militiamen on the side of the Union, and the absence of any significant body of troops on the side of the Confederates, that transformed the warfare in Missouri into guerrilla.

The balance of capabilities and warfare in Missouri was typical of much of the country outside that occupied by both a large Union and Confederate regular army. In Missouri, the Union had between 40,000 and 60,000 regular and part-time

⁷² Russell F. Weigley, *A Great Civil War: A Military and Political History, 1961-1865*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 33.

⁷³ Redoubts were earthen defensive works, generally “rectangular and usually with two or more artillery emplacements or bations at the corners. A ditch or moat surrounded walls carefully sloped to provide maximum deflection of shots fired into them.” John F. Bradbury, *Fort No.5: A Civil War Field Fortification in Springfield, Greene County, Missouri*, Unpublished manuscript: available through “State Historical Society of Missouri Civil War Collection”, (1984), 10. Rifle pits consisted of a timber or stone reinforced trench and an earthen parapet. Rifle pits were frequently, but not exclusively, used in conjunction with redoubts.

⁷⁴ Michael Fellman, *Inside War: The Guerrilla Conflict in Missouri During the American Civil War*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 23. Also see, Kenneth W. Noe, “Exterminating Savages: The Union Army and Mountain Guerrillas in Southern West Virginia, 1861-1862,” in Kenneth W. Noe and Shannon H. Wilson, (eds.), *The Civil War in Appalachia: Collected Essays*, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1997), 104-130.

soldiers scattered throughout the major towns and garrisons.⁷⁵ In comparison, at any one time, there was unlikely to have been more than 300 active Confederate guerrillas.⁷⁶ Generally, these guerrillas were organised into bands of between 20 and 60 men. Clearly, the Union possessed a vast advantage in cumulative capabilities. The guerrillas' only advantage was in weaponry. For the most part, Union soldiers were armed with single-shot muzzle-loading carbines and sabres, whereas the guerrillas employed revolving pistols and repeating rifles, which allowed the guerrilla bands to lay down "a tremendous volume of fire."⁷⁷ However, the guerrillas' weaponry only marginally improved the bushwhackers' cumulative capabilities and therefore the overall concentration of capabilities was desperate.

Throughout the civil war, Union forces in Missouri employed a counter-guerrilla strategy. In offence, the Union forces used a combination of eradication and isolation techniques. The most notorious of these was an isolation strategy called "General Order No. 11". When in June 1863, Brigadier General Thomas Ewing assumed command of the Union forces of the District of the Border, he estimated that two-thirds of the civilian population in the district had kin riding with the guerrillas and wrote: "I can see no prospect of an early and complete end to the war on the border, without a great increase of troops, so long as the families remain here."⁷⁸ As there were no more troops to deploy, Ewing issued General Order No. 11, which stipulated that the Missouri border counties be depopulated of civilians

⁷⁵ Dale E. Davis, *Guerrilla Operations in the Civil War: Assessing Compound Warfare During Price's Raid*, (Fort Leavenworth: General Staff College, 2004), 26.

⁷⁶ Don R. Bowen, "Quantrill, James, Younger, et.al.: Leadership in a Guerrilla Movement, Missouri, 1861-1865," *Military Affairs*, Vol. 41, No. 1, (1977), 42. Elsewhere, Bowen had rounded the number down to 200 guerrillas, see, Don R. Bowen, "Guerrilla War in Western Missouri, 1862-1865: Historical Extensions of the Relative Deprivation Hypothesis," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 19, No. 1, (1977), 30. Davis had estimated that 450 guerrillas participated in the August 1863 raid on Lawrence, Kansas, which is commonly reported to have been the largest of its kind and involved every available Missouri guerrilla fighter. See, Davis, *Guerrilla Operations in the Civil War*, 2.

⁷⁷ Richard S. Brownlee, *Gray Ghosts of the Confederacy: Guerrilla Warfare in the West, 1861-1865*, (Richmond, VA: Louisiana State University Press, 1958), 24.

⁷⁸ *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Serial 1, Vol. 22, Part 2, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), 428 as reproduced in Davis, *Guerrilla Operations in the Civil War*, 23.

by 9 September 1863.⁷⁹ During the civil war, coercive isolation strategies, like those employed in Missouri, were popular counter-guerrilla techniques of both Union and Confederate authorities. In defence, the Union forces were restricted to defending fixed positions against guerrilla raids. As Bowen observed, “the Union forces were rendered relatively immobile by the necessity to protect fixed points such as urban areas, supply depots, and lines of communication.”⁸⁰ Therefore, although the Union forces enjoyed a vast numerical superiority, a substantial proportion of these soldiers were tied down guarding towns and other strategic sites.

The Missouri guerrillas had a number of favourite methods for attacking Union infrastructure and troops. The most militarily significant were sabotage operations against Missouri’s railway network. It was reported that, due to railroad sabotage, over a hundred miles of railroad had been destroyed across northern Missouri alone and St. Louis was practically cut off from the rest of the state.⁸¹ Another popular offensive technique was ambush. As historian Albert Castel documented:

[the guerrillas’] favorite device was to lie in ambush besides a road along which some unwary Union patrol was approaching. When the soldiers drew close, the guerrillas would suddenly gallop out of the bush, screeching the rebel yell and blazing away with their pistols. In a matter of seconds the affair would be over. The partisans would strip the dead, round up their horses, and disappear once more into the thicket...⁸²

As this description suggested, the Confederate bushwhackers did not attempt to hold and defend territory. Instead, after conducting sabotage, raid or ambush

⁷⁹ Albert Castel, “Order No. 11 and the Civil War on the Border,” *Missouri Historical Review*, No. 62, (1963), 357-368; Thomas Goodrich, *Black Flag: Guerrilla Warfare on the Western Border, 1861-1865*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 96-105. General Order No. 11 was used in conjunction with the Union’s “assessment” policy. Essentially, “assessments” were aimed at forcing suspected Confederate sympathisers to financially compensate loyal Unionists for damages done by guerrillas. At first, the policy met with some success, however, it was open to fraud and other abuses, which, over time, diminished its effectiveness. See, W. Wayne Smith, “An Experiment in Counterinsurgency: The Assessment of Confederate Sympathizers in Missouri,” *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 35, No. 3, (1969), 361-380.

⁸⁰ Bowen, “Guerrilla War in Western Missouri,” 30.

⁸¹ Brownlee, *Gray Ghosts of the Confederacy*, 24.

⁸² Albert Castel, “Quantrill’s Bushwhackers: A Case Study in Partisan Warfare,” in John T. Hubbell, (ed.), *Battles Lost and Won: Essays from Civil War History*, (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1975), 180.

operations, they would disperse into the civilian population or terrain or cross the border into Confederate territory.

Spatial variation in the strategies that belligerents employ is a frequent feature of civil war. Clearly, even the American Civil War (which is frequently cited as an example of a civil war fought by conventional means) experienced significant spatial variation in warfare. Distance, topography and political borders act to separate territories, which create independent regional balances of capabilities and thus different forms of warfare.

Temporal variation and the Somali Civil War

If the American Civil War is normally classified as being characterised by conventional warfare, the Somali Civil War has frequently been cited as an ideal example of irregular warfare. However, as with the American Civil War, the Somali Civil War was, in fact, also characterised by forms of warfare other than the one for it is typically identified. Unlike the American Civil War, the most prominent variation in warfare in Somalia was temporal and not spatial. That is, the conflict passed through a number of different phases, each characterised by a different form of warfare. This section will briefly illustrate the relationship between temporal changes in the balance of capabilities and warfare by sketching the course of the Somali conflict from 1982 until the multinational intervention in 1992. Over the course of these ten years, the warfare moved from guerrilla to irregular warfare following changes in the balance of capabilities. This section will specifically outline the changing nature of the conflict between the Somali Armed Forces (SAF) and the insurgent Somali National Movement (SNM).

Guerrilla warfare phase (1982-1990)

Following the disastrous 1977-1978 Ogaden War, opposition to the presidency of Siyaad Barre grew across many sections of Somali society. Hostility toward Siyaad was particularly fierce in northern Somalia, which felt that an insufficient amount of state investment had flowed to the north. In 1982, the SNM, drawing its support principally from the Isaaq clan-family lineage, commenced guerrilla operations against the SAF.

At the outbreak of hostilities, the average cumulative capabilities in Somalia was quite high. The Siyaad presidency had been characterised by the militarisation of Somali society. In 1976, Somalia was the only country with a per capita annual income of less than \$150 which was classified as a major arms importer.⁸³ By the early 1980s, it was likely that there were more small arms in Somalia than people. Nevertheless, the concentration of capabilities remained firmly in the SAF's favour. In 1982, the SAF had 120,000 soldiers,⁸⁴ while the SNM may have constituted some 2,000-3,000 guerrillas.⁸⁵ In addition, although the SAF had been mauled during the 1977 war with Ethiopia, it continued to possess a large qualitative and quantitative advantage in weaponry over the SNM. In 1982, the SAF could field some 150 tanks, 200 armoured fighting vehicles and small numbers of combat aircraft.⁸⁶ In contrast, the SNM was armed mainly with light weapons. Hence, overall, the average cumulative capabilities in Somalia was reasonably high and the concentration was disparate. As the theory expects, this configuration of the balance of capabilities resulted in the SNM adopting a guerrilla and the SAF a counter-guerrilla strategy.

⁸³ Hussein M. Adam, "Somalia: Militarism, Warlordism or Democracy?" *Review of African Political Economy*, No. 54, (1992), 20.

⁸⁴ By 1985, however, it is likely that the SAF numbered half this figure, with the International Institute of Strategic Studies and the Economist Intelligence Unit both placing the size of the SAF at 62,550. See, The Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Profile: Ethiopia, Somalia, Djibouti*, (London: EIU, 1986), 31.

⁸⁵ Paul B. Rich, "Warlords, State Fragmentation and the Dilemma of Humanitarian Intervention," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 10, No. 1, (1999), 82.

⁸⁶ IISS, *The Military Balance, 1981-1982*, (London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1981), 64.

The SAF's counter-guerrilla tactics targeted the general Isaaq population, which was seen as providing "an inexhaustible source of guerrilla recruits for the SNM."⁸⁷ Siyaad decided to separate the guerrillas from their social base by forcing Isaaq civilians over the border into Ethiopia. The SAF destroyed watering wells, ruined grazing grounds and indiscriminately raped and killed Isaaq civilians.⁸⁸ The strategy was both brutal and effective. Almost a million Isaacs fled to Ethiopia and large tracts of northern Somalia were depopulated.⁸⁹ A foreign traveller reported that: "one can ride for half a day hardly seeing a soul except for some shepherds, all of whom carry guns."⁹⁰ To defend larger towns and garrisons, the SAF deployed artillery, armoured vehicles and aircraft. These proved devastating when the SNM concentrated its limited and lightly-armed guerrilla fighters to assault these targets. For instance, when the SNM launched a series of major offensives against the SAF in northern Somalia, between May and December 1988, the SAF responded by deploying tanks, artillery and aircraft to inflict thousands of casualties on the hapless guerrillas.⁹¹

The SNM's guerrilla strategy emphasised raids, ambushes and evasion. The SNM guerrillas were armed with a mixed assortment of small arms, including old bolt-action rifles and captured assault rifles. Grenades and land-mines were also in plentiful supply. However, during the early 1980s, the SNM possessed no tanks,

⁸⁷ Said S. Samatar, *Somalia: A Nation in Turmoil*, (London: The Minority Rights Group, 1991), 19.

⁸⁸ Robert Gersony, "Why Somalis Flee: A Synthesis of Conflict Experience in Northern Somalia by Refugees, Displaced Persons and Others," *International Journal of Refugee Law*, Vol. 2, No. 1, (1990), 4-55; Samatar, *Somalia: A Nation in Turmoil*, 19; Anonymous, *Somalia: A Long-Term Human Rights Crisis*, (London: Amnesty International, 1988), 38.

⁸⁹ Gersony, "Why Somalis Flee," 5.

⁹⁰ Gerald Prunier, "A Candid View of the Somali National Movement," *Horn of Africa*, Vol. 13-14, No. 3-4/1-2, (1990), 107. Furthermore, Ogaden refugees fleeing Ethiopian counter-guerrilla operations were encouraged to move to northern Somalia. As Lewis explained: "male Ogadeni refugees in northern Somalia, who have long been subject to illegal recruitment into Somalia's armed forces, have been conscripted as paramilitaries militias to fight the SNM and man checkpoints on the roads. Ogadeni refugees have been encouraged to take over the remains of Isaaq shops and houses in what are now ghost towns. Thus, those who were received as refugees guests have supplanted their Isaaq hosts, many of whom – in this bitterly ironic turn of fate – are now refugees in the Ogaden." Ioan M. Lewis, "The Ogaden and the Fragility of Somali Segmentary Nationalism," *African Affairs*, Vol. 88, No. 353, (1989), 577.

⁹¹ Samatar believed there to have been 5,000 SNM casualties in this offensive, see Samatar, *Somalia: A Nation in Turmoil*, 19. Ethiopia had allowed the SNM use its territory and supplied some indirect military assistance to the guerrilla groups. According to one account, the "Ethiopian 'presence' is everywhere obvious (in the form of tinned food, various objects and so on), but Ethiopian military aid seems relative limited." Prunier, "A Candid View of the Somali National Movement," 115.

armoured vehicles or aircraft. The limited size and potency of the SNM meant that offensive operations were generally restricted to ambushing SAF patrols and raiding government positions. Indeed, according to one report, during this phase, "SNM offensives amounted to guerrilla attacks on military outposts and occasional publicity stunts, such as the kidnapping of 10 French aid workers from a refugee camp near the Ethiopian frontier in January 1987."⁹² In defence, the SNM seemed to blend into the civilian population and northern Somalia's rugged terrain. "The SNM is a close expression of the people," one report noted, "and is as much at home in its environment as the ubiquitous camel."⁹³ Following a raid, the SNM also had the option of fleeing over the Ethiopian border where Addis Ababa allowed it, until 1988, to pass freely through the Isaaq refugee camps.

Irregular warfare phase (1990-1992)

During most of the 1980s, although the SAF was unable to defeat the SNM, it had effectively checked its expansion. However, in the late 1980s, spurred on by the example of the SNM, all the major Somali clans began to create their own forces. These belligerents encouraged their clansmen serving in the SAF to desert, taking with them all their weapons and equipment. At the close of 1990, the proliferation of clan-based militias left Siyaad in control of no more than 10 to 15 percent of Somalia and, by 1991, Siyaad "was often referred to as the major of Mogadishu, because that was the only area of the country he controlled. The military had disintegrated into what looked like clan militia."⁹⁴ On 27 January 1991, Siyaad plundered the Central Bank and fled south by tank to the capital of his native clan, Kismayu.⁹⁵ Lewis reported that the:

⁹² Robert Powell, "Somali rebels seek credibility as force independent of Ethiopia," *Reuters*, 9 June 1988.

⁹³ Prunier, "A Candid View of the Somali National Movement," 112.

⁹⁴ Samuel M. Makinda, *Seeking Peace from Chaos: Humanitarian Intervention in Somalia*, (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1993), 17.

⁹⁵ Gerard Prunier, "Somalia: Civil War, Intervention and Withdrawal, 1990-1995," *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, Vol. 15, No. 1, (1996), 45. Also see, Richard H. Shultz, "State Disintegration and Ethnic Conflict: A Framework for Analysis," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 541, (1995), 75-88.

political geography of the Somali hinterland in 1992, consequently, closely resembled that reported by European explorers in the 19th century, spears replaced by Kalashnikovs and bazookas. These clan areas could only be entered or traversed by outsiders (people of other clans, foreigners), with the consent of the locals and, usually the payment of appropriate fees or 'protection'.⁹⁶

The balance of capabilities had undergone a dramatic change. First, although the total cumulative capabilities in Somalia remained relatively steady (i.e. there had been no substantial injection or removal of troops, weapons or equipment from the country), the average cumulative capabilities decreased as those existing resources were divided between more belligerents. In 1991, there were at least ten major belligerents contesting the civil war, along with countless smaller groups.⁹⁷ The growth of these militias was generally at the expense of the SAF, whose members deserted to their respective clan militias. The disintegration of the SAF was also responsible for moving the concentration of capabilities toward parity. By 1991, the SAF had effectively ceased to exist as a coherent organisation and its troops and equipment were divided up by the competing militias.⁹⁸ Thus, while the average cumulative capabilities moved towards lower levels, the concentration of capabilities moved in the direction of parity.

As the SAF continued to dissolve, its organisational structure, procurement of resources, and tactics became "hardly distinguishable from the insurgent groups."⁹⁹ The 1991 Battle of Mogadishu "was basically a confrontation between

⁹⁶ Ioan M. Lewis, *Blood and Bone: The Call of Kinship in Somali Society*, (Lawrenceville, NJ: Red Sea Press, 1994), 231.

⁹⁷ A (incomplete) list of belligerents in 1991 would include: the SNM, the Somali Democratic Movement (SDM), United Somali Congress (USC), United Somali Congress-Aydid (USC-Aydid), Somali People's Movement (SPM), Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF), Somali National Front (SNF) and Southern Somali National Movement (SSNM), United Somali Front (USF), Somali Democratic Alliance (SDA), Somali National Democratic Union (SNDU), Somali African Muki Organisation (SAMO), and Somali National Union (SNU).

⁹⁸ SAF weapons and equipment that were not pilfered, had long since fallen into disrepair. The SAF's aircraft, for instance, had "all been grounded, one by one, as a result of poor maintenance rather than SNM fire." Prunier, "A Candid View of the Somali National Movement," 108. Also see, IISS, *The Military Balance, 1991-1992*, (London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1991), 119.

⁹⁹ Jutta Bakonyi and Kirsti Stuvøy, "Violence and Social Order Beyond the State: Somalia and Angola," *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 32, No. 104, (2005), 365-366. Also see, Belachew Gebrewold, "Civil Militias and Militarisation of Society in the Horn of Africa," in David J. Francis, (ed.), *Civil Militia: Africa's Intractable Security Menace?* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 187-212; Roland Marchal, "Forms of Violence and Ways to Control it in an Urban War Zone: The

Hawiye clan militias on one side, and Daarood elements of the Somali army and armed Daarood civilians on the other, rather than a battle between an insurgency and a state that no longer existed.”¹⁰⁰ Indeed, of the estimated 15,000 combatants fighting in Mogadishu, less than 1,500 were said to be organised into units recognisable as being conventional forces. Over the period of 1990-1993, these “decentralised and barely institutionalised militias developed their own dynamic of violence.”¹⁰¹ That is, the characteristics of the belligerents’ strategies began to conform to that of irregular warfare.

While light weapons remained the norm in most skirmishes, some of the rival militia groups also had access to small numbers of artillery, mortars and even tanks.¹⁰² However, the most popular offensive weapons of the irregular phase were converted Land Rover and Toyota four-wheel-drives. These vehicles (called “technicals”) were frequently equipped with a heavy-calibre machine gun, an anti-aircraft gun, or a recoilless rifle and could carry up to 14 militiamen who were usually armed with Soviet-style weapons.¹⁰³ The militiamen in these vehicles “roamed the cities and roadways plundering, extorting, and killing.”¹⁰⁴ The technicals of the rival militias raced through the streets of Mogadishu in a “constant cat-and-mouse game”.¹⁰⁵ The United Nations chronicled the situation as follows:

armed clashes tended to take the form of wild, chaotic exchanges of fire, featuring front-lines which could shift fifty or one hundred kilometers in a day as lines of defense disintegrated and regrouped. Supply lines were ad

Mooryaan in Mogadishu,” in Hussien M. Adam and Richard Ford, (eds.), *Mending Rips in the Sky*, (Lawrenceville: Red Sea Press, 1997), 193-209.

¹⁰⁰ Daniel Compagnon, “Somali Armed Movements: The Interplay of Political Entrepreneurship and Clan-Based Factions,” in Christopher Chapman, (ed.), *African Guerrillas*, (Oxford: James Curry, 1998), 77.

¹⁰¹ Bakonyi, “Violence and Social Order Beyond the State,” 366; Ismail I Ahmed and Reginald Herbold Green, “The Heritage of War and State Collapse in Somalia and Somaliland: Local-Level Effects, External Intervention and Reconstruction,” *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 20, No. 1, (1999), 113-127.

¹⁰² See, John Sislin and Fredric S. Pearson, *Arms and Ethnic Conflict*, (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), 38.

¹⁰³ Michael Hedge, “Drug gives young gunmen courage,” *The Washington Post*, 9 December 1992, 2.

¹⁰⁴ David D. Laitin, “Somalia: Civil War and International Intervention,” in Barbara Walter and Jack Snyder, (eds.), *Civil War, Insecurity, and Intervention*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 148.

¹⁰⁵ Donatella Lorch, “As U.N. girds to leave Somalia, renewed fighting,” *The New York Times*, 27 February 1995.

hoc to nonexistent, relying mostly on looting; occasionally a [technical] was captured or destroyed simply because it ran out of fuel.¹⁰⁶

Although the belligerents were unable to mount large coordinated offensives, the near-constant street skirmishes within Mogadishu took a very heavy human toll; between 1991 and 1994, annual deaths from fighting in Somalia averaged nearly 55,000 people.¹⁰⁷ In defence, the key features of the warfare were the “innumerable roadblocks” which were guarded by young militiamen.¹⁰⁸ The roadblocks were usually guarded by youths armed with machine guns and rocket propelled grenades.¹⁰⁹ Roadblocks served two purposes. First, they acted to guard against rival clan militia infiltration. Second, they were a major source of revenue, levying large tolls from merchants and foreign travellers.

The comparative evidence from the United States and Somalia seems to support the claim that warfare in civil war is highly dynamic. The main cause of this fluidity is the belligerents’ cumulative capabilities, which are constantly in flux. Belligerents will not generally be able to maintain large quantities of troops and equipment in all areas, at all times. This will cause substantial spatial variation in the balance of capabilities. A comparison of the Eastern Theatre and Missouri during the American Civil War highlights this point. In addition, the course of a civil war is frequently defined by the respective belligerents’ military successes and failures and the formation and termination of political alliances, all of which will impact the balance of capabilities. The course and changing nature of the Somali Civil War underlines this point.

¹⁰⁶ United Nations Development Office for Somalia (UNDOS), *Study on Governance in Gedo Region*, (Nairobi: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 1998), 75.

¹⁰⁷ This is an average over the five years of 4,500 per month. Patrick M. Regan, *Civil Wars and Foreign Powers: Outside Interventions in Intrastate Conflict*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 80. Bryden estimates that in fighting over Mogadishu alone in 1992 nearly 30,000 people were killed, see Matthew Bryden, “Somalia: The Wages of Failure,” *Current History*, Vol. 94, No. 591, (1995), 146-147.

¹⁰⁸ Bakonyi, “Violence and Social Order Beyond the State,” 366.

¹⁰⁹ Marshall V. Ecklund, “Task Force Ranger vs. Urban Somali Guerrillas in Mogadishu,” *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 15, No. 3, (2004), 56.

4. Conclusion

In this chapter I sketched out the relationship between the balance of capabilities and warfare in civil war. The chapter made three assertions. First, it aimed to identify and define the three forms of warfare in civil war. Second, the chapter suggested that the balance of capabilities was responsible for influencing the form of warfare that develops in a particular place and at a particular time. Third, it was submitted that spatial and temporal variation in the balance of capabilities causes substantial differences in warfare across space and time within a single civil war. This final point suggests that, due to the dynamic nature of the balance of capabilities and warfare, it will be difficult to code the warfare in a civil war as being entirely conventional, guerrilla or irregular. Indeed, attempts to do so overlook one of the distinguishing characteristics of warfare in civil war: its dynamism.

The relationship between the balance of capabilities and warfare in civil war raises the prospect that foreign powers have the potential to dramatically influence the course of a civil war by supplying resources to one side in the conflict. Indeed, I will argue that the exogenous supply of financial assistance, arms, training, or additional troops will increase the cumulative capabilities of the recipient and thereby alter the balance of capabilities. Chapter Four, will further discuss how foreign intervention influences the balance of capabilities' processes.

Chapter Four

Foreign Intervention and Warfare Conversion in Civil War

In ancient Rome, it was common knowledge that the balance of capabilities affects the nature of combat between actors. Romans were also well aware that an intervention could change the course and nature of fighting. A favourite pairing of gladiators was between the lightly armed *retiarius* (the “fisherman”) and the much more heavily-armed *secutor* (“the pursuer”). The *retiarius*, on the one hand, was armed only with a trident, net and long knife. As he was expected to lose, the *retiarius* was not given armour or a helmet so the crowd could see his wounds and watch his face as he died. In contrast, the *secutor* had thick armour on his legs, arms and head. He was heavily-armed with a curved rectangular shield and the Roman sword (the *gladius*). Regardless of the competitors’ physical stature, culture, skill, or experience, the *retiarius* would always attempt to exploit his superior speed, agility and reach, while the *secutor* would, using his shield for protection, charge his opponent, hoping to finish the fight quickly.¹ Although there was an obvious asymmetry in the capabilities between the two gladiators, if the *secutor* could not finish the fight quickly, he risked falling victim to exhaustion. If the game’s convener had not enjoyed the previous match, he had the power to intervene and thereby change the following bout by either giving more arms to one, or both, belligerents or by taking weapons and equipment from them. This action would alter the balance of capabilities between the gladiators and, subsequently, change the nature of the competition. The techniques and tactics used in combat between

¹ Marcus Junkelmann, “Familia Gladiatoria,” in Eckart Köhne and Cornelia Ewigleben, (eds.), *Gladiators and Caesars: The Power of the Spectacle in Ancient Rome*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 59-62; Thomas Wiedeman, *Emperors and Gladiators*, (London: Routledge, 1992); Donald G. Kyle, *Spectacles of Death in Ancient Rome*, (London: Routledge, 1998); Roland Auguet, *Cruelty and Civilization: The Roman Games*, (London: Routledge, 1994), 72.

two *retiari* or, alternately, two *secutores*, would have appeared very different from the original fight.

The fundamental principles of an ancient duel are little different from those applying to foreign intervention in civil war. Foreign intervention can manipulate the balance of capabilities, and therefore warfare, in three ways. First, in foreign intervention's simplest configuration, a foreign power can provide a single belligerent with additional resources. Second, two foreign powers may intervene in an opposing configuration and increase the capabilities of two, or more, belligerents. Finally, foreign powers can deny resources by disengaging from the civil war and, thereby, decrease the cumulative capabilities of one, or more, belligerents.

In this chapter I weave together the theory developed in the previous chapters and present an explanation of how foreign intervention influences the warfare in civil war. This chapter is divided into four sections. It begins with an examination of the three processes listed above and identifies the move from guerrilla to conventional warfare as containing several unusual characteristics. The second section analyses the differences in attenuation and effectiveness between guerrilla and conventional structures and strategies to show that the guerrilla structure and strategy will commonly outperform that of a conventional structure and strategy. The third section explains several unusual mechanisms in the balance of capabilities that explain why guerrillas have difficulty in converting to a conventional strategy and delivering the death blow to the regime. The final section discusses the implications of these insights for foreign intervention, the balance of capabilities and warfare in civil war.

1. Foreign Intervention and the Balance of Capabilities

The definitions of the average cumulative capabilities and concentration of capabilities are not independent from one another and thus the variables are indivisibly bound. In other words, any change in the value of one variable will correspond, to some extent, with a change in the other. For instance, supplying one unit of exogenous resources to the insurgent will simultaneously increase the average cumulative capabilities and decrease the incumbent's concentration of capabilities. Hence, movement in the balance of capabilities will usually conform broadly to one of the four slanted lines in Figure 4.1. That is, although the amount and speed of variation in the balance of capabilities will vary dramatically (as would be indicated in Figure 4.1 by changes in the length and gradient of the lines), theoretical deduction suggests that any change will be unlikely to hold one variable constant (that is, as a perfectly horizontal, or vertical, line in Figure 4.1).²

² Perfect horizontal or vertical movement will be rare, but not impossible. For perfectly horizontal movement to result, all sides' cumulative capabilities would have to increase, or decrease, by exactly the same ratio. For instance, to increase the average cumulative capabilities, while maintaining constant the concentration of capabilities, all the belligerents' cumulative capabilities would have to grow by exactly 50 percent over the same period. As suggested in Chapter Two, accounting for all the factors that influence the impact of additional resources (both endogenous and exogenous) on cumulative capabilities, perfect symmetrical growth in military strength will be rare.

Figure 4.1: The External Manipulation of the Balance of Capabilities

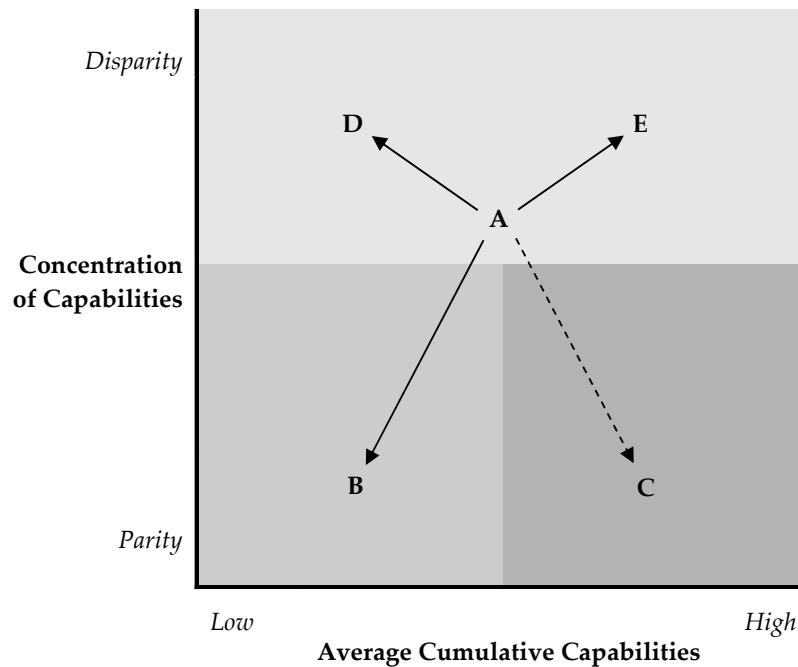


Figure 4.1 helps to illustrate some of the possible effects of exogenous resources on the balance of capabilities. As mentioned above, movement within the balance of capabilities can potentially be in any direction and on any scale. Therefore, from the universe of possible interactions, the four lines plotted on this figure merely serve to simplify and clarify some of the more likely interactions between foreign intervention and the balance of capabilities.

Foreign intervention increases the recipient's cumulative capabilities and therefore, by definition, also the total cumulative capabilities in the civil war system. Thus, in most cases of foreign intervention, the average cumulative capabilities will move towards higher levels. However, the way in which foreign intervention affects the concentration of capabilities will depend on whether it is the incumbent or insurgent which benefits most from foreign assistance. If the insurgent is the greatest recipient, concentration will move towards parity (in Figure 4.1 this process is represented by line AC). If the incumbent benefits most from exogenous

resources, concentration will be projected towards disparity (line AE). The logic of the balance of capabilities suggests that disengagement will have the opposite result. First, a foreign power's disengagement from the civil war will push the average cumulative capabilities towards lower levels. Second, the effect of disengagement on concentration will depend on which belligerent had been receiving more, if any, assistance. If the insurgent had been the largest recipient, concentration will move towards disparity (line AD), while if the incumbent had been provided with the greatest amount of additional resources, the concentration will be projected towards parity (line AB).

Significant volumes of exogenous resources can potentially influence the balance of capabilities sufficiently to change the form of warfare. However, the pattern of foreign intervention will create different pressures on the balance of capabilities and cause a range of effects on warfare; indeed, in certain configurations, foreign intervention may not fundamentally change the form of warfare in the civil war. For example, if a foreign power was to intervene in a civil war fought through guerrilla warfare and either provide the incumbent with additional resources or cease supporting the insurgent, the form of warfare would be unlikely to change (these two situations are represented by lines AE and AD in Figure 4.1).³ In both these circumstances, the civil war would continue to be characterised by guerrilla warfare, although with the incumbent having an even greater advantage. In contrast, if a foreign power was to withdraw its support from an incumbent engaged in a guerrilla confrontation, this could trigger a decrease in the former recipient's military superiority over the insurgent and subsequently project the warfare from guerrilla to irregular warfare (in Figure 4.1, this process is simplified as line AB). It has been comprehensively documented that the scaling back of the

³ Indeed, when the incumbent's concentration increases the guerrilla warfare may become even more important for the insurgent's survival. As General Giap described: "When the U.S. imperialists shift to "limited war" by sending increasingly massive numbers of their troops into South Viet Nam, equipping them with ever more sophisticated weapons and raising their mobility, the importance of the local people's war in defeating the enemy showed all the more clearly." Võ Nguyên Giáp, *Selected Writings*, (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1977), 148.

superpowers' foreign aid budgets at the end of the Cold War sparked the collapse of several already-weak incumbent governments, and caused a corresponding change in the form of warfare from guerrilla to irregular.⁴ I argue that the fluidity with which warfare moves between guerrilla and irregular is facilitated by the fact that the military units of both actors must undertake structural and doctrinal changes in parallel, which results in no belligerent having a temporary strategic advantage over the other. A similar process occurs when the warfare moves between irregular and conventional or between conventional and irregular. In these instances, once again, both sides must simultaneously undergo structural changes and thus neither belligerent receives a transitory advantage. Thus, frequently the move from irregular to conventional, or the reverse, occurs quickly.

The movement from guerrilla to conventional warfare (represented in Figure 4.1 by line AC) is unique in the balance of capabilities in being the sole process where only one belligerent, namely the insurgent, is required to undertake structural and doctrinal changes. As the insurgent reconfigures itself for conventional warfare, its forces will, for two reasons, become vulnerable. First, the incumbent will already be prepared for conventional warfare and thus be in a superior position. Second, and as Ivan Arreguín-Toft has verified, conventional warfare will favour the more powerful actor, which will, at least in the short term, remain the incumbent.⁵ Hence, this process of transitioning from a guerrilla to a conventional strategy

⁴ These "new wars" have been extensively written on, see, Edward Rice, *Wars of a Third Kind: Conflict in Underdeveloped Countries*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988). Also see Mats Berdal, "How "New" are "New Wars"? Global Economic Change and the Study of Civil War," *Global Governance*, No. 4, Vol. 9, (2003), 477-502; Donald M. Snow, *Uncivil Wars: International Security and the New Internal Conflicts*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1996); Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars: Organised Violence in a Global Era*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999); John Mueller, "The Banality of 'Ethnic War'," *International Security*, Vol. 25, No. 1, (2000), 42-70; Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *Civil Wars: From L.A. to Bosnia*, (New York: The New Press, 1994); Michael Ignatieff, *The Warrior's Honor: Ethnic War and the modern Conscience*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1998); Raj Desai and Harry Eckstein, "Insurgency: The Transformation of Peasant Rebellion," *World Politics*, Vol. 42, No. 4, (July 1990), 441-461; Chris Gray, *Post-Modern War: The New Politics of Conflict*, (London: Routledge, 1997); Jonathan Goodhand, "From Holy War to Opium War? A Case Study of the Opium Economy in North East Afghanistan," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 19, No. 2, (2000), 265-280; Mats Berdal and David M. Malone, (eds.), *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2000); Dietrich Jung, (ed.), *Shadow Globalization, Ethnic Conflicts and New Wars: A Political Economy of Intra-State War*, (London: Routledge, 2003); Kalevi J. Holsti, *The State, War and the State of War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

⁵ Ivan Arreguín-Toft, "How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict," *International Security*, Vol. 26, No. 1, (2001), 107.

represents a major hurdle for an insurgent. As explained below, this insight into the balance of capabilities bears significantly on our understanding of how foreign intervention influences the warfare in civil war.

2. Conversion from Guerrilla to Conventional Warfare

There is a puzzling disjuncture between the established theory on guerrilla warfare and empirical observations of the phenomena. Much of today's theory on insurgents' conversion from guerrilla to conventional warfare assumes a prolonged, but smooth, transition. It predicts that a competent insurgent actor will steadily wear away at the incumbent and thereby slowly, but fluidly, make the transition to conventional warfare. Mao Tse-tung, the founder of much of the modern thinking on guerrilla warfare, asserted that there "must be a gradual change from guerrilla formations to orthodox regimental organizations."⁶ Che Guevara postulated that guerrilla warfare "is one of the initial phases of warfare and will develop continuously until the guerrilla army in its steady growth acquires the characteristics of a regular army."⁷ Mao, Guevara, and Giáp argued that the warfare between the belligerents would pass through three different stages: contention, consolidation and the counter-offensive.⁸ During the contention stage, there is a disparity in the concentration of capabilities and therefore the insurgent is forced to adopt a guerrilla strategy. However, by undertaking continual hit-and-run attacks and avoiding casualties, the insurgent supposedly experiences a prolonged and steady rate of growth. Eventually, as the incumbent's strength decreases and the insurgent grows, the belligerents "consolidate" their positions.⁹ Finally, it is predicted that the concentration of capabilities will move

⁶ Mao Tse-tung, *On Guerrilla Warfare*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith, (New York: Praeger, 1962), 113.

⁷ Che Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare*, (London: Souvenir, 2003), 13.

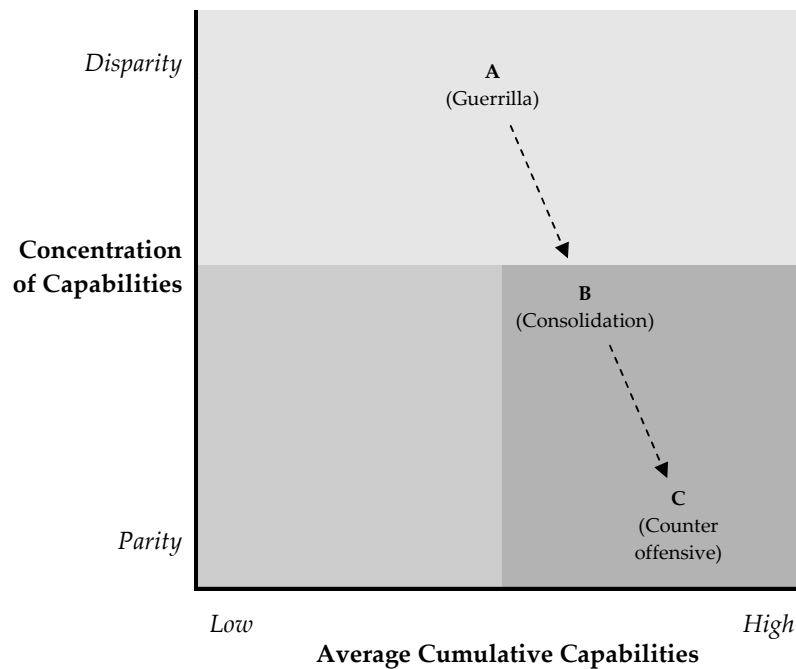
⁸ Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works, 1937-1938*, Vol. II, (New York: International Publishers, 1954), 183-84; Mao Tse-Tung, *Selected Military Writings*, (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1963), 141; Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare*, 13; Vo Nguyen Giap, *People's War People's Army*, (New York: Praeger, 1965), 101-110.

⁹ Mao, *Selected Military Writings*, especially "On Protracted War," 210-215 and "Problems of Strategy in China's Revolutionary War," 113-115.

yet further towards parity, allowing the insurgent to undertake a conventional counter-offensive.

This depiction of the insurgent's transition from guerrilla to conventional warfare contains three assumptions. First, although the duration of the transition will vary from case to case, it will be a steady process. Second, after reaching the first equilibrium, the insurgent will have the political, military, and social momentum to progress to conventional warfare. Finally, unless defeated, a proficient insurgent will invariably be able to match the incumbent's concentration of capabilities and successfully adopt a conventional structure and strategy. These assumptions are illustrated in Figure 4.2 by the linear progression from A through to C. According to the literature, although the gradient of the line may vary between different insurgent actors (indicating different rates of growth), the path will remain linear.

Figure 4.2: The Theoretical Linear Transition from Guerrilla to Conventional Warfare



However, the linear depiction of the insurgent's transition from guerrilla to conventional strategy is incompatible with two common empirical observations. First, most insurgents that adopt guerrilla warfare do not successfully convert to conventional warfare before the end of the conflict.¹⁰ That is, most insurgent actors do not reach Mao's "counter-offensive" stage. Second, insurgents rarely experience steady linear growth rates. Rather they experience different rates of growth depending upon the availability of endogenous resources. In sum, the move from guerrilla to conventional strategy is rarely smooth, steady or gradual.

Frequently, insurgents that apply guerrilla strategy initially achieve impressive rates of growth, making the emergence of conventional warfare seem probable. However, the transition from guerrilla to conventional warfare is often excessively difficult for the insurgent. Arreguín-Toft found that most "asymmetric wars contain a single strategic interaction from start to finish."¹¹ That is, most guerrilla forces are unable to successfully convert to a conventional strategy before the end of the civil war. Why is this the case?

Attenuation and guerrilla strategy

Every insurgent actor's pattern of growth will be different. However, insurgent actors that apply a guerrilla strategy frequently experience an early period of rapid growth in their cumulative capabilities. In southern Sudan, the SPLM numbered some 3,000 guerrillas in 1984, but, by 1988, had expanded to some 20,000 fighters.¹² More recently in Iraq, between 2005 and 2008, the Mahdi Army reportedly grew from 10,000 to 60,000 combatants.¹³ There are several reasons why insurgent actors might enjoy rapid growth early in a civil war. First, the insurgent may have

¹⁰ Arreguín-Toft, "How the Weak Win Wars," 110; Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil Wars*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 83.

¹¹ Arreguín-Toft, "How the Weak Win Wars," (fn. 57).

¹² Institute for International Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance*, (London: IISS, multiple years).

¹³ Kenneth Katzman, *Iran's Activities and Influence in Iraq*, CRS report for Congress, (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2008), 2, Anna Mulrine, "Men in Black: Why Iraq's Shiite Militias are so Brutally Effective," *U.S. News and World Report*, 18 December 2006.

cultivated a broad political base of potential fighters prior to the onset of the civil war. In Ireland, for instance, the Volunteer movement had begun swelling its ranks two years before hostilities commenced in 1916.¹⁴ As such, when fighting begins, the insurgent's cumulative capabilities grow rapidly as politically-active individuals agree to become guerrilla fighters or, at least, sympathisers. Second, the insurgent is normally starting from a low base and, therefore, its rate of growth will predictably be significant. These first two explanations are reasonably self-evident. However, a further explanation is required as to why insurgents continue to grow in the period following the onset of the civil war, beyond what could reasonably be expected to be an initial spurt. In my view, the reason for this continued growth is that, in the initial period of guerrilla warfare, the insurgent outperforms the incumbent both in converting resources to cumulative capabilities and on the battlefield.

Chapter Two outlined that inputs cannot be transformed into predetermined outputs. In a similar vein, Harvey Leibenstein uncovered considerable variation in the outputs of different businesses given a fixed amount of input.¹⁵ He showed that variables such as the applicability of inputs to production, the morale and motivation of the labour force and the firm's access to inputs all affect the efficiency with which inputs are converted to outputs. Moreover, the more efficiently inputs are converted to outputs, the sharper growth will be. For Leibenstein, it was "clear that for a given set of resources, if real costs per unit of output are decreased, then total outputs will grow, and outputs per unit of input will also rise. Such efforts to reduce cost are part of the contribution of the residual to economic growth."¹⁶ Or, more simply, lower attenuation causes improved growth. So what brings about

¹⁴ On the birth of the Irish Volunteer movement see, Peter Hart, *The I.R.A. at War, 1916-1923*, (London: Oxford University Press, 2003); Peter Hart, *The I.R.A. and Its Enemies: Violence and Community in Cork, 1916-1923*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1998).

¹⁵ Harvey Leibenstein, "Allocative Efficiency vs. 'X-Efficiency'," *The American Economic Review*, Vol. 56, No. 3, (1966), 407. This argument was significant as the "conventional theoretical assumption, although it is rarely stated, is that inputs have a fixed specification and yield a fixed performance."

¹⁶ Leibenstein, "Allocative Efficiency vs. 'X-Efficiency'," 408.

greater efficiency in the conversion process? Leibenstein determined that “we have instances where competitive pressures from other firms or adversity lead to efforts towards cost reduction, and the absence of such pressures tends to cause costs to rise.”¹⁷ In other words, small firms, or insurgent groups, that are under greater competitive pressures to survive will develop more efficient conversion processes than those of more secure organisations, such as incumbents.

In a situation involving guerrilla warfare, insurgents’ endogenous and exogenous resource constraints compel them to find efficient means of converting resources into cumulative capabilities. With fewer inputs than their larger competitors, insurgent actors cannot allow the existence of waste, redundancy and binding restraints in their resource conversion system. To this end, guerrilla structures commonly develop decentralised logistical systems. That is, guerrilla actors’ frugality and efficiency is improved by the individual fighter or, at most, the tactical commander, deciding logistical requirements. Guerrilla fighters decide what to equip themselves with, which gives the unit a high degree of flexibility and innovation in adapting to the environment and enemy. For Mao “guerrilla equipment will in the main depend on the efforts of the guerrillas themselves.”¹⁸ As Griffith clarified further, guerrilla strategy “is not dependent for success on the efficient operation of complex mechanical devices, highly organized logistical systems or the accuracy of electronic computers. Its basic element is man.”¹⁹ For example, the frugal nature of guerrilla strategy meant that although in 1965 the guerrilla forces in South Vietnam numbered some 200,000, their requirements in food, ammunition, medical supplies, petrol, “never exceeded roughly 380 tons a day, of which only 34 tons came from the North.”²⁰

¹⁷ Leibenstein, “Allocative Efficiency vs. ‘X-Efficiency’,” 408-409.

¹⁸ Mao, *On Guerrilla Warfare*, 85.

¹⁹ Mao *On Guerrilla Warfare*, 7. In contrast, conventional strategies “depend on tremendous amounts of ammunition, fuel, and other supplies, which flow from rear areas to forward combat units. Supply consumption is especially high in intense battles, and strategy breaks down quickly when the flow of needed supplies is interrupted; [and unlike for guerrilla strategies] logistical demands are inelastic.” Robert A. Pape, *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 30.

²⁰ Pape, *Bombing to Win*, 74.

In contrast, the regular military structure and organisation of actors engaging in counter-guerrilla operations are notorious for their cumbersome logistics, rigid hierarchy and general wastefulness. Studies have shown that frequently a conventional force and the accompanying “military bureaucracy entails unnecessary expenditures, wastage of scarce resources, or operational redundancy,”²¹ which “inhibits efficiency and responsiveness.”²² In 1992, for example, the United States invested \$80.5 billion in research and development but “changes in demand for a weapon due to changes in the external threat, changes in the availability of substitute weapons, or simply changes in Congress’s willingness to purchase certain weapons” meant that much of this capital was not successfully converted into the United States military’s cumulative capabilities.²³ In 2005, governmental mismanagement in Iraq resulted in the “loss of hundreds of millions of dollars through the purchase of worthless equipment.”²⁴ Moreover, in a civil war context, the bureaucratic structure required to support a conventional force usually presents many opportunities for embezzlement and corruption. In 2005, in the Congo, of the “\$8 million set aside each month to pay and feed the army, more than half was disappearing before it ever reached the men.”²⁵ In other words, generally, the inputs of endogenous and exogenous resources into a conventional military structure are not converted into cumulative capabilities as efficiently as in a guerrilla structure. However, because of the greater value of inputs, the gross value of incumbents’ cumulative capabilities will still be greater than those of guerrillas.

²¹ Alan N. Sabrosky, James C. Thomson and Karen A. McPherson, “Organized Anarchies: Military Bureaucracy in the 1980s,” *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, Vol. 18, No. 2, (1982), 147.

²² Sabrosky, “Organized Anarchies,” 137; William Duncombe, Jerry Miner and John Ruggiero, “Empirical Evaluation of Bureaucratic Models of Inefficiency,” *Public Choice*, Vol. 93, No. 1-2, (1997), 1-18.

²³ William P. Rogerson, “Economic Incentives and the Defense Procurement Process,” *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 18, No. 4, (1994), 67.

²⁴ Anthony H. Cordesman and William D. Sullivan, *Iraqi Forces Development in 2006*, (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2006), 76.

²⁵ Bryan Mealer, *All Things Must Fight to Live: Stories of War and Deliverance in Congo*, (New York: Bloomsbury, 2008), 77.

Insurgents will decide to apply a guerrilla strategy and structure in response to a highly hostile strategic environment. Generally, an insurgent applying a guerrilla strategy will possess a relatively small endogenous resource base and be vulnerable to discovery by the incumbent's security forces. In contrast, Petraeus has observed that one "common feature of insurgencies is that the government that is being targeted generally takes a while to recognize that an insurgency is occurring."²⁶ Clearly, the incumbent is not, at least initially, under the same competitive constraints as the insurgent and therefore is not under the same pressure to reduce attenuation. The aggregate effect of these processes is that, compared to conventional structures, guerrilla forces tend convert a greater proportion of their inputs into outputs. These outputs are then available to be sunken back into expanding the belligerent's endogenous resource base. However, in the same way that inputs do not produce predetermined levels of outputs, the degree to which outputs are converted into an expanded endogenous resource base will be determined by the belligerent's effectiveness.

Effectiveness and guerrilla strategy

In addition to the structure of guerrilla forces being able to reduce attenuation, guerrilla strategy has also proven to be cost-effective from an operational perspective. There are several possible ways in which to attempt to measure combat effectiveness. Some may argue that "cost per kill" or the amount of

²⁶ David H. Petraeus, James F. Amos and John A. Nagl, *Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), LII. At times, this can have severe consequences. After independence, for example, the Mozambican government converted to a conventional force structure. However, "when Renamo's guerrilla-style attacks spread, Frelimo's tanks, artillery, and interceptor aircraft were of little use." William Finnegan, *A Complicated War: The Harrowing of Mozambique*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 60. It is also significant that incumbents are generally slow to change their regular force structures to make them more appropriate to counter-guerrilla strategy. This is probably due to most insurgents beginning life with very limited cumulative capabilities, and as such, the incumbent underestimating the threat posed by the "bandits" or "terrorists". Similarly, there is much economic literature on the ferocity of competition and the innovation and efficiency between large and small firms. For example, Boone found that when the ferocity of competition is low, the smaller firm will innovate and "leap-frog" the larger firm. But if the competition is fierce, the larger firm will increase its dominance. See, Jan Boone, "Intensity of Competition and the Incentive to Innovate," *International Journal of Industrial Organization*, Vol. 19, No. 5, (2001), 705-726. Also see, Theodore N. Beckman, "Large Versus Small Business After the War," *The American Economic Review*, Vol. 34, No. 1, (1944), especially 102-103; Avi Fiegenbaum and Aneel Karnani, "Output Flexibility – A Competitive Advantage for Small Firms," *Strategic Management Journal*, Vol. 12, No. 2, (1991), 101-114.

collateral damage, employed as a proxy for wasted effort, might offer suitable ways forward.²⁷ However, for this brief discussion, which focuses specifically on guerrilla strategy, two alternate measures of effectiveness are applied. First, guerrilla strategy is effective because it avoids decisive defeat; and, second, it is proficient at creating a positive feedback loop and expanding the insurgent's endogenous resource base.

At the outset of hostilities in particular, the military impact of a guerrilla force can be quite limited. As guerrilla groups commonly possess limited cumulative capabilities, the insurgent's offensive capacity will be low. Nevertheless, and as Henry Kissinger acknowledged, the "guerrilla wins if he does not lose."²⁸ Initially, it is sufficient for the insurgent's forces to merely survive in order to attract recruits and begin disturbing the incumbent's control over sections of the country. At the task of surviving, insurgent actors employing a guerrilla strategy frequently excel. For example, the guerrillas in Western Missouri "probably numbered no more than 200 individuals", however, for three years they were able to "tie up more than 40,000 Union troops."²⁹ Similarly, the French in Algeria had "a luxury of materiel and manpower unequalled in French history for a force that size – yet a solution of the conflict by decisive French military victory" did not materialise.³⁰ In Bolivia, it took two regular army divisions and eight months to hunt down Guevara and his band of 16 guerrillas.³¹ By emphasising elusiveness, the weaker side can effectively begin to disrupt the incumbent's claim of authority.

²⁷ Several studies have attempted to measure the effectiveness of different military organisations. For example, Martin van Creveld concluded that: "Man for man, unit for unit the Germans were twenty to thirty percent more effective than the British or American forces facing them." Martin van Crevald, *Fighting Power: German and U.S. Army Performance, 1939-1945*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1982), 5.

²⁸ Henry A. Kissinger, "The Vietnam Negotiations," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 47, No. 2, (1969), 214.

²⁹ Don R. Bowen, "Guerrilla War in Western Missouri, 1862-1865: Historical Extensions of the Relative Deprivation Hypothesis," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 19, No. 1, (1977), 30.

³⁰ Bernard B. Fall, *Street Without Joy: Indochina at War, 1946-54*, (Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole, 1961), 297.

³¹ Jose A. Moreno, "Che Guevara on Guerrilla Warfare: Doctrine, Practice, and Evaluation," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 12, No. 2, (1970), 126.

The elusiveness of guerrilla groups has the additional benefit of diminishing the effectiveness of the incumbent's outputs. Although guerrillas avoid giving the incumbents' forces a target, they often still feel compelled to expend ordinance and ammunition. At the strategic level, for example, the United States dropped more bombs on Vietnam than it did during the Second World War.³² Similarly, at the tactical level, a French officer in Algeria noted: "[t]he armored patrol that scoured the country in the evening had made a rule never to come back without 'emptying its magazines.'" ³³ Through frustration, doctrine or caprice, the incumbent's forces frequently expend more resources than necessity demands.

In addition to frustrating the incumbent's larger forces, guerrilla strategy is also effective at expanding the insurgent's endogenous resource base. Generally, guerrilla forces have two sources of endogenous resources: the incumbent and society. From an operational perspective, insurgents applying a guerrilla strategy are often proficient in looting weapons, equipment and other supplies from the incumbent. A Russian officer in Chechnya, for instance, reported that after "the explosives are detonated, especially if the convoys are relatively small, the bandits move in and fire on the troops' vehicles relentlessly for 5-15 minutes, using all types of weapons. They then seize as many weapons, documents, and prisoners as they can and swiftly disappear into the thickets of the surrounding mountains and forests."³⁴ The objective of guerrilla strategy is to employ speed and surprise in order to achieve a tactical advantage over the incumbent's forces. In other words, although the insurgent's forces might be fewer in number than the incumbent's at a state-wide level, at the moment of the raid or ambush they frequently hold the

³² Pape, *Bombing to Win*, Ch. 6. Indeed, in the two years 1966 and 1967 the United States dropped 2,865,808 tonnes of bombs on South East Asia compared to 2,057,244 tonnes throughout the Second World War. Michael Clodfelter, *Warfare and Armed Conflicts: A Statistical Reference to Casualty and Other Figures, 1500-2000*, (Jefferson: McFarland and Co., 2002), 751.

³³ Jean-Jacques Servan-Schrieber, *Lieutenant in Algeria*, (New York: Knopf, 1957), 33 quoted in Nathan Leites and Charles Wolf, *Rebellion and Authority: Analytical Essay on Insurgent Conflicts*, (Chicago: Markham Publishing Company, 1970), 91. The cumulative result of these processes was that in Algeria, "the FLN budget at its peak amounted to \$30 or \$40 million a year, less than the French forces had to spend in two weeks." See, David Galula, *Counter-Insurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, (London: Pall Mall, 1964), 11.

³⁴ Mark Kramer, "The Perils of Counterinsurgency: Russia's War in Chechnya," *International Security*, Vol. 29, No. 3, (2004), 19.

initiative. This mode of warfare can be extremely effective at capturing significant quantities of resources from the incumbent at minimal cost.

The social component of guerrilla strategy is also effective. Insurgents applying a guerrilla strategy tend to expand their influence over population through the two normal avenues of social control: increasing the probability of violent retribution and/or increasing the costs of retribution. As Mendes and McDonald affirmed, deterrence and compellence theory “holds that increasing the certainty of punishment, in the form of a higher probability of arrest and conviction, or increasing the severity of punishment, in the form of longer sentences, will raise the prospective costs of committing a crime.”³⁵ Through shaping the calculations and incentive structure of the population, guerrilla strategy can effectively increase an insurgent’s endogenous resource base.

With respect to increasing the probability of violent retribution, it is often the case that insurgents will be able to use violence more discriminately than incumbents. This is a huge advantage, as studies have shown that discriminate violence is more effective in gaining the compliance of the population.³⁶ The deterrence and compellence threats of actors capable of discriminate violence will be more personalised, more credible, more likely to occur, and therefore, more effective.³⁷ Discriminate, or selective, violence allows civilians to weigh the likelihood of sanctions against the potential benefits of their behaviour. Indiscriminate violence, on the other hand, does not. As Gross maintained, it “makes no sense, in the context of random punishment, to style one’s life according to the possibility of being victimized, any more than it makes to orient all of one’s everyday acts to the

³⁵ Silva M. Mendes and Michael D. McDonald, “Putting Severity of Punishment Back in the Deterrence Package,” *Policy Studies Journal*, Vol. 29, No. 4, (2001), 588. Also see, Steven Klepper and Daniel Nagin, “The Deterrent Effect of Perceived Certainty and Severity of Punishment Revisited,” *Criminology*, Vol. 27, No. 4, (1989), 721-746.

³⁶ Stathis N. Kalyvas, “Wanton and Senseless? The Logic of Massacres in Algeria,” *Rationality and Society*, No. 3, Vol. 11, (1999), 251. On Deterrence and Compellence see, Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), especially 69-91.

³⁷ There is strong empirical evidence that the probability, or perceived probability, of punishment for action is a key determinant in deterring criminal activity in society. See, Charles R. Tittle and Alan R. Rowe, “Certainty of Arrest and Crime Rates: A Further Test of the Deterrence Hypothesis,” *Social Forces*, Vol. 52, No. 4, (1974), especially 456.

possibility of an accident.”³⁸ In Poland, for instance, “whether one tried to meet German demands or not, one was equally exposed to violence”³⁹ and consequently the threats of the occupiers came to weigh less on the population’s mind.⁴⁰ Indeed, indiscriminate violence by the incumbent can often have the counterproductive effect of increasing support for the insurgent. In Spain, for instance, Franco frequently retaliated against the entire Basque population for ETA’s actions, to the extent that the “litany of beatings, torture, and unpunished shootings” became a recruiting catechism for the insurgent.⁴¹

With respect to increasing the costs of retribution, it is noted that civil wars have become a byword for barbarity and brutality. However, although regularly framed as “wanton and senseless”, Kalyvas has shown that violence in civil wars often serves rational purposes.⁴² In 1995, for example, Sierra Leonean guerrillas wanted to stop the food harvest so that their recruits would not be tempted to return home. To achieve this, the rebels introduced the practice of hacking the hands off village women who they found in the fields. The move was both brutal and effective. Richards noted that when “the news of rebel amputations spread in central Sierra Leone (the rice granary of the affected region), few women were prepared to venture out in the fields. The harvest ceased”.⁴³ Leites and Wolf offer an illustrative instance of the effectiveness of brutality from the Algerian Civil War:

³⁸ Jan T. Gross, *Polish Society Under German Occupation: The Generalgouvernement, 1939-1944*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 212. Also see, Stathis N. Kalyvas, “The Paradox of Terrorism in Civil War,” *The Journal of Ethics*, No. 1, Vol. 8, (2004), 104.

³⁹ See, Gross, *Polish Society Under German Occupation*, 212.

⁴⁰ The value of intelligence is perfectly illustrated in a contemporary account of the difference between rural and urban occupied Poland. “In the countryside – where the Germans know local people and local affairs after having been in the area for a few years – people walk around a German in the street as if he were a mad dog, they are afraid of him and not infrequently they assume the horrible smile of a slave. In Warsaw, one passes by a German as if he were a moving tree which does not deserve to be pushed away. A passer-by in Warsaw does not push a German, but he does not see him...” Quoted in Gross, *Polish Society Under German Occupation*, 239-240. Note that occupied Poland seems to be an atypical case in that the incumbent had better intelligence and therefore greater control over the rural areas than in Warsaw. As it is explained later in the chapter, generally the reverse is the case.

⁴¹ Paddy Woodworth, “Why Do They Kill? The Basque Conflict in Spain,” *World Policy Journal*, No. 1, Vol. 18, (2001), 6.

⁴² See, Kalyvas, “Wanton and Senseless?” 243-285; Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil Wars*.

⁴³ Paul Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest*, (Oxford: James Curry, 1996), xx.

[a]n old Muslim, arrested for having sawed off telegraph poles, explains to a captain who expresses surprise about the deed: 'Sir, the French come and tell me: you musn't [sic] saw off poles; if you do, you go to prison. I say to myself: I don't want to go to prison, I won't do it. The French leave. At night, the rebel comes and says: saw off the poles from here to here. I answer: no, the French would put me in prison. The rebel tells me: You cut the poles or I cut your throat. I calculate: If I don't cut the poles, he'll surely cut my throat; he has done it to others, in the next village. I prefer going to prison. So Sir, I cut the poles; you caught me; put me in prison!⁴⁴

Although insurgents do not have a monopoly on the use of violence against civilians, incumbents frequently have political and social constraints on the amount of brutality they can employ in the pursuit of their war aims.⁴⁵ By frequently being more brutal than the incumbent, the insurgent actor can decrease some of the cost of surveillance while maintaining the effectiveness of their threats. Schelling's thoughts on the subject are enlightening. He argued that "a factional probability of a large threat is sometimes more economical than the certainty of a smaller one: one chance in twenty of a thousand-dollar fine for parking at a hydrant may be more cost-effective than the certainty of a five-dollar fine."⁴⁶

The overall picture is that insurgents using a guerrilla strategy are frequently able to outperform their more powerful opponents, thus making the strategy "cheap to create and very costly to prevent."⁴⁷ Hence, in the initial stages of a civil war, the growth rate of the insurgent's cumulative capabilities is commonly greater than that of the incumbent.

⁴⁴ Leites and Wolf, *Rebellion and Authority*, 129.

⁴⁵ Gil Merom, *How Democracies Lose Small Wars: State, Society, and the Failures of France in Algeria, Israel in Lebanon, and the United States in Vietnam*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Andrew Mack, "Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars: The Politics of Asymmetric Conflict," *World Politics*, Vol. 27, No. 2, (1975), 175-200.

⁴⁶ Thomas C. Schelling, *Strategies of Commitment: And Other Essays*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 4.

⁴⁷ Galula, *Counter-Insurgency Warfare*, 11.

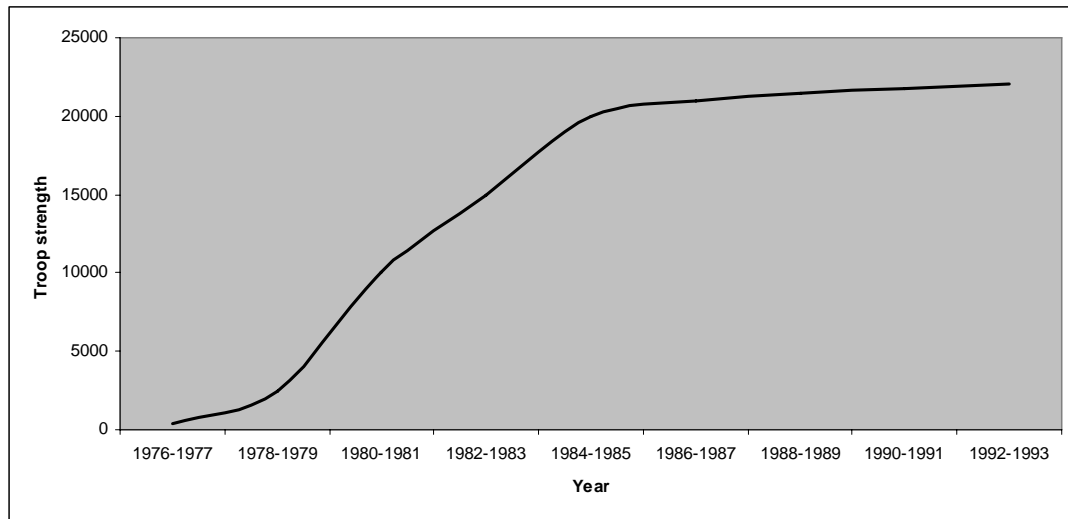
3. Explaining the Uneven Transition from Guerrilla to Conventional Warfare

At this point, the paradox in guerrilla warfare becomes clear: despite guerrillas frequently outperforming incumbents and expanding their cumulative capabilities, few guerrilla actors successfully convert from guerrilla to conventional warfare. Indeed, a “striking empirical observation is that very few civil wars are fought by means of conventional warfare.”⁴⁸ Why is it that the efficiency and effectiveness of guerrilla warfare does not translate into to a straight and swift conversion to a conventional strategy? This section suggests an explanation for this puzzle.

As discussed above, an insurgent applying a guerrilla strategy often – but not always⁴⁹ – experiences a period of rapid expansion. However, it has frequently been observed that after this initial growth spurt, an insurgent’s growth will begin to slow. Indeed, the insurgent’s early rate of growth is usually so rapid that it is, in fact, unsustainable over a prolonged period. The fact that insurgents will experience diminishing rates over time is not merely an empirical generalisation but a logical necessity as the endogenous resource base reaches capacity. That is, as the insurgent’s endogenous resource base expands to incorporate all easily-accessible resources, the insurgent’s correlating growth will slow. This process is demonstrated by the growth rate of RENAMO, which closely followed the growth pattern common to insurgent actors (this growth pattern is illustrated in Figure 4.3 which uses “troop strength” as a proxy for to the insurgent’s cumulative capabilities).

⁴⁸ Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil Wars*, 83 and 90. Also see, Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Sociology of Civil Wars: Warfare and Armed Groups*, (Unpublished paper, 2003), 8.

⁴⁹ The Communist insurgent in the Chinese Civil War represents one example where the insurgent experienced slow initial growth. The Chinese Communist Party grew steadily from 50 members in 1921 to 1,000 in 1925, before then experiencing a period of rapid growth. Between 1925 and 1926, the CCP grew to 59,000 members: Galula, *Counter-Insurgency Warfare*, 34.

Figure 4.3: Growth of RENAMO (1976-1993)

Source: Jeremy M. Weinstein and Laudemiro Francisco, "The Civil War in Mozambique: The Balance Between Internal and External Influences," in Paul Collier and Nicholas Sambanis, (eds.), *Understanding Civil War*, Vol. 1, (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2005), 170-171.

Although Rosenau is correct to argue that "capabilities tend to change in the direction of greater balance",⁵⁰ this movement will not be at a constant rate. The high early growth rates of insurgents are physically unsustainable. As seen in Figure 4.3, between 1977 and 1978 RENAMO experienced a yearly growth rate of over 600 percent, expanding from 400 to 2,500 members. Clearly, a continuation of this growth rate would have quickly exhausted the available number of potential recruits. The Taliban, as another example, began as "a band of 30 men in the spring of 1994" and grew to "an army of 25,000 a year later."⁵¹ However, this growth was obviously unsustainable and the "size of the Taliban army subsequently hovered between 25,000 and 30,000 men."⁵² In short, the growth of guerrilla forces tends to be rapid before tapering off.

⁵⁰ James Rosenau, "Internal War as an International Event," in James Rosenau, (ed.), *International Aspects of Civil Strife*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 6.

⁵¹ Daniel Byman, *Deadly Connections: States that Sponsor Terrorism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 192.

⁵² Byman, *Deadly Connections*, 192.

Emergence of the urban-rural divide

At what point will the insurgent's growth plateau? Or, phrased differently, where is the "steady state" in guerrilla warfare? I argue that certain structural, organisational and physical characteristics of guerrilla formations place restrictions on their growth. In other words, there will be a point at which guerrilla strategy is no longer suitable for continued endogenous resource growth. This is due to two interrelated dilemmas. First, guerrilla warfare is better suited to, and generally takes place in, rural areas. In order for insurgent actors to capture cities and major garrisons, they will generally need to convert to a conventional structure and strategy. Second, while converting their arms, equipment, doctrine and structure in preparation for these pitched battles, insurgents will be highly vulnerable to attack from incumbents which now have visible and fixed targets to attack. Mao pointed at this second problem himself, when he argued that "defeat is the invariable outcome where native forces fight with inferior weapons against modernized forces *on the latter's terms*."⁵³ However, during the transition period from guerrilla to conventional warfare, the insurgent will be forced to do exactly this.

Studies have noted that urban guerrilla warfare is uncommon.⁵⁴ In rural areas, guerrilla warfare is efficient and effective; however, in urban areas, much of the guerrilla's competitive advantage is lost. From the Paris Commune to the Boxer Rebellion and the Hungarian uprising, urban insurrections are normally quickly and decisively suppressed by incumbents.⁵⁵ For example, during the late 1950s and early 1960s in Venezuela, Weitz reported that despite "much popular hostility to the Betancourt government within the cities", the guerrillas were unable "to create

⁵³ Mao as quoted (with emphasis) in Mack, "Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars," 176.

⁵⁴ Laqueur observed that: "Guerrilla operations, in contrast to terrorist, take place far from big cities, in the countryside, in remote or mountainous regions, or in jungles." See, Walter Laqueur, *Guerrilla Warfare: A Historical and Critical Study*, (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1998), x. Also see, Roger Trinquier, *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency*, trans. Daniel Lee, (London: Pall Mall Press, 1964), 18; Ian Beckett, "The Future of Insurgency," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 16, No. 1, (2005), 25.

⁵⁵ This is far from an exhaustive list. McColl adds, "the Chinese Communist movement made several early attempts to capture major cities, the most notable being the short-lived Canton Commune of 1927." Robert W. McColl, "The Insurgent State: Territorial Bases of Revolution," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 59, No. 4, (1969), 616.

an urban base to assist their rural operations.”⁵⁶ In areas of Latin America where urban guerrilla warfare was attempted, the “arrest of even a single guerrilla led the security forces to the entire group along with its arsenal and headquarters.”⁵⁷ Therefore, “to reduce the risk of discovery, [guerrillas] had to be small in number; but the political impact of a small anonymous group proved to be insignificant.”⁵⁸ In El Salvador, the FMLN began as an urban insurgent; however, following the first major offensive by the government in 1981, the FMLN was driven from the major cities.⁵⁹ A French colonel in Algeria concluded that “[w]orking openly in a systematic way and with great resources, the forces of order will often be able to outrun the enemy, who, obliged to operate in secret, has only limited resources at his disposal.”⁶⁰ Despite careful planning and preparation, the urban-based ANC’s attempt to begin guerrilla activity came to naught when the South African police simply arrested the “National High Command” at Rivonia in July 1963, effectively decapitating the organisation.⁶¹ Fearon and Laitin noticed the conspicuous absence of urban guerrilla warfare from history and concluded that in “the city, anonymous denunciation is easier to get away with”⁶² and thus incumbents will receive better and more frequent intelligence than they would from more transparent rural areas.

It is unsurprising, therefore, that rural guerrilla forces have difficulty in capturing urban centres from the incumbent. Indeed, historically insurgent actors have been punished for attempting to attack cities with guerrilla forces. Unless insurgents

⁵⁶ Richard Weitz, “Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Latin America, 1960-1980,” *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 101, No. 3, (1986), 403. Similarly, Guillen’s analysis of the failed Tupamaros guerrilla campaign in Uruguay blamed logistical problems inherent to urban guerrilla warfare that are not present in rural guerrilla warfare. In particular, he suggested that urban guerrillas “have to provide their own clandestine infrastructure by renting houses and apartments. By tying themselves to a fixed terrain in this way, the Tupamaros have lost both mobility and security: two prerequisites of guerrilla warfare.” See, Abraham Guillen, “Urban Guerrilla Warfare,” in Gérald Chaliand, (ed.), *Guerrilla Strategies: An Historical Anthology from the Long March to Afghanistan*, (Berkeley: University of California, 1982), 317.

⁵⁷ Azeem Ibrahim, “Conceptualisation of Guerrilla Warfare,” *Small Wars and Insurgency*, Vol. 15, No. 3, (2004), 121.

⁵⁸ Ibrahim, “Conceptualisation of Guerrilla Warfare,” 121.

⁵⁹ José Angel Moroni Bracamonte and David E. Spencer, *Strategy and Tactics of the Salvadorian FMLN Guerrillas*, (Westport: Praeger, 1995), 26.

⁶⁰ Trinquier, *Modern Warfare*, 44.

⁶¹ Sheridan Jones, “Obstacles to Guerrilla Warfare – the South African Case Study,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 11, no. 2, (1973), 274.

⁶² James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War,” *American Political Science Review*, No. 1, Vol. 92, (2003), 80.

have been able to successfully convert to a conventional organisation and strategy, when the insurgent's forces attempt to attack the incumbent's forces in cities and major garrisons, the results can be devastating. The massive 1968 Tet Offensive, for example, involved a coordinated attack by some 85,000 Viet Cong guerrillas on major towns and cities in South Vietnam. However, most cities and towns did not fall and the few that did were quickly recaptured. In total some 40,000 Viet Cong were killed while the incumbent lost only 3,400 troops.⁶³ Clearly, when guerrillas concentrate their forces to openly assault fixed positions they work to the conventional force's strengths and their own weaknesses.

The result of incumbents' urban competitive advantage and insurgents' rural advantages is the creation of a "steady state". The steady state represents an equilibrium in the balance of capabilities which is difficult for the belligerents to escape. Operationally, it produces a stalemate where the incumbent has insurmountable difficulties in extending its control outside urban areas, but the insurgent is checked from successfully capturing population centres. The course of the civil war then enters a period where, as a Vietnamese communist observed in 1975, one "side is not strong enough to win and the other is not weak enough to lose."⁶⁴

Comparative evidence largely confirms the notion that a "steady state" exists in guerrilla and counter-guerrilla warfare, where the incumbent's forces become

⁶³ Mark McNeilly, *Sun Tzu and the Art of Modern Warfare*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 11.

⁶⁴ As quoted in Thomas C. Thayer, *War Without Fronts: The American Experience in Vietnam*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), 97. This urban-rural divide is a unique characteristic of guerrilla warfare and does not seem to affect the course of either irregular or conventional warfare. For example, in the irregular warfare that characterised much of the Sierra Leonean Civil War, the "war had become a see-saw conflict with towns changing hands with dizzying rapidity." Lansana Gberie, *A Dirty War in West Africa: The RUF and the Destruction of Sierra Leone*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 79. And in the conventional warfare in the American Civil War, General Lee "had been a threat only so long as his army remained mobile; once confined to the trenches at Richmond and Petersburg, the end had been merely a question of time." In the West, the Confederates suffered a series of reverses because of what scholars have described as a "defensive attitude" cumulating in the annihilations of an entire field army at Vicksburg "because it became tied to its fortifications." Jay Luvaas, *The Military Legacy of the Civil War: The European Inheritance*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1959), 69-70. As such, the Confederate's conventional forces were more easily defeated because they remained concentrated in the cities. Hence, unlike guerrilla warfare, the urban-rural divide does not act upon irregular and conventional warfare, pushing the course of these conflicts towards a strategic equilibrium and impeding the belligerents conversion between forms of warfare.

confined to urban areas and the insurgent's forces to rural areas. During the Philippines Civil War, for instance, the incumbent "established American-held enclaves around the towns and left the countryside under the control of the guerrillas."⁶⁵ In the late 1920s, in China, Linn reported that the "Communists made several attempts to capture important provincial cities, including Canton, but all were singularly unsuccessful. Failing to gain an urban base, the remnants of these uprisings sought refuge in the mountainous districts around cities."⁶⁶ And, in the period 1965-1968 "Chad had become a patchwork of urban centres under permanent siege and frequently connected only by air."⁶⁷ By 1984, in Ethiopia's Tigray region, the TPLF had confined the government's forces to the "major towns" and "a few rural garrisons".⁶⁸ A similar pattern evolved in Indonesia, where Nasution reported that "[a]fter two weeks at war, our troops in general are all round towns as though encircling them, with a great desire to recapture the towns although there are no heavy arms to be able to drive the enemy away as far as is necessary."⁶⁹ Another insurgent leader, this time in Vietnam, explained that in "rural regions (mountains and plains) there exist immense revolutionary forces...[however] [u]rban centres, especially the cities and big provincial towns...are centres where the enemy concentrates his command and means of domination and repression."⁷⁰ In Burma, "Government forces rarely ventured

⁶⁵ Brian McAllister Linn, *The US Army and Counterinsurgency in the Philippine War, 1899-1902*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 105.

⁶⁶ Robert W. McColl, "A Political Geography of Revolution: China, Vietnam, and Thailand," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 11, No. 2, (1967), 157.

⁶⁷ For a description of Chad in the 1965-1968 period, see, Samuel Decalo, "Chad: The Roots of Centre-Periphery Strife," *African Affairs*, Vol. 79, No. 317, (1980), 500. Similar descriptions also came from Africa, including Mozambique where Finnegan reported that "Renamo's leaders claimed that they controlled more than 80 percent of Mozambique. The claim was absurd, if only because Mozambique is far too large and underdeveloped for any small group to "control" much of it. That includes the government, of course, which itself "controlled" little outside the towns and cities." See, Finnegan, *A Complicated War*, 62. Similarly, in 1990 Hall reported that: "At the time of writing, FRELIMO, reigns unchallenged in the cities and, indeed, remains in control of the towns, but the rural insurgency has become endemic throughout." See, Hall, "The Mozambican National Resistance Movement (Renamo)," 43. And, Weinstein reported that the "guerillas controlled most of the rural areas outside of the southern provinces, while government forces were confined to urban centers and populated outposts in the countryside. See, Jeremy M. Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 79.

⁶⁸ Gayle Smith, "With the Tigray Peoples' Liberation Front," *Boston Globe*, 22 April 1984, 2.

⁶⁹ Abdul Haris Nasution, *Fundamentals of Guerrilla Warfare*, (London: Pall Mall Press, 1965), 185. Passage taken from Nasution's orders to his regional commanders titled "Working Instructions for Operation of Mobile Units, 1948".

⁷⁰ Giáp, *Selected Writings*, 246-247. Similarly, McColl noted that "In 1953 the French found themselves in the same position as the Chinese Nationalists in 1949. They controlled the major cities and transport lines but were surrounded by the countryside." McColl, "A Political Geography of Revolution," 163.

beyond the town gates after dark. The forests, the mountains and the rural countryside still belonged to the rebels.”⁷¹ Indeed, according to Mao, the aim of guerrilla warfare is “to confine the enemy to...a few strongholds, namely to the big cities and along the main communication lines.”⁷²

The technology of guerrilla warfare and the urban-rural divide

The second, and related, driver of decreasing endogenous resource growth is the technology used by guerrilla forces, and, more precisely the equipment, weapons and force structure required to mount attacks against cities and garrisons defended by regular troops. Guerrillas generally begin the civil war with basic weaponry. Mao, for instance, observed that in guerrilla strategy, “the standard of equipment is of low order”, perhaps only “revolvers, pistols, bird guns, spears, big swords, and land mines and mortars of local manufacture.”⁷³ As was discussed above, these weapons are usually effective at wresting rural areas away from the incumbent’s control. Indeed, the restriction of guerrilla strategy to small units, light weapons, and loose strategic coordination is the trade-off for the ability to appear as a “cloud”. However, the technology of insurgent actors employed in a guerrilla strategy is only effective to a certain point, after which structural reform is required in order to capture towns, cities and garrisons. After confining the incumbent to large population centres and military garrisons, an insurgent actor must make preparations for a pitch battle. That is, to ensure continued growth, insurgents must move from a guerrilla to a conventional strategy.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Martin Smith, *Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity*, (Dhaka: The University Press, 1991), 160.

⁷² Mao, *Selected Works*, 143. A similar pattern developed in Somalia while the SNM was employing a guerrilla strategy in the north. In the mid-1980s, despite the SNM being much weaker, the conflict developed into an “impasse, with Siyaad’s forces in control of the ruined Iraaq towns while the countryside remains largely in the hands of SNM guerrillas and their civilian allies.” Ioan M. Lewis, “The Ogaden and the Fragility of Somali Segmentary Nationalism,” *African Affairs*, Vol. 88, No. 353, (1989), 576-577. Another observer reported: “the government’s ground forces are penned up in the cities and move between them only along the main tarmac road that links Berbera, Hargeisa and Borama. They do so only in heavily escorted convoys, firing rather widely at anything they perceive as a threat.” Gerard Prunier, “A Candid View of the Somali National Movement,” *Horn of Africa*, Vol. 13-14, No. 3, (1990), 108.

⁷³ Mao, *On Guerrilla Warfare*, 51 and 83.

⁷⁴ Guevara, for instance, argued that “[t]riumph will always be the product of a regular army, even through its origins are in a guerrilla army.” Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare*, 13.

However, the conversion from a guerrilla to conventional strategy and structure is generally a prolonged process during which the insurgent will be highly vulnerable. The restructuring process from small, lightly-armed, and decentralised forces into larger units, organised around heavier weapons and with a more centralised command structure, will take time. The moment a guerrilla formation has more weapons, equipment, or command structures than it can move and conceal effectively, it has, on the one hand, restarted the process of increasing its cumulative capabilities, but, on the other hand, it has given the incumbent's more powerful conventional forces fixed targets against which it may exploit its superior firepower. These embryonic conventional units, storage depots and training camps will be highly vulnerable. Indeed, during the Greek Civil War, a British advisor believed that the insurgent's transition from a guerrilla to a conventional strategy made it increasingly exposed to attack. He reported that: "[t]he fact that the bandits are acquiring heavy equipment, necessitating increase in their animal transport, should be regarded as an advantage, because the mobility of the bandits, which has been their chief asset, will be impaired."⁷⁵ Similarly, in Malaya, the insurgent began storing food and other material to allow the concentration of forces. However, these "[d]umps of food were found [by the incumbent's forces] which could supply a hundred men for twenty days but guerrilla units did not normally hold more than a ten days reserve" partly for fear of being discovered during one of the incumbent's sweeps.⁷⁶ Clearly, the storing of any materials in large caches, such as ammunition, weapons or troops, in preparation for a conventional attack on an occupied city, runs the increased risk of discovery and destruction.

Hence, guerrilla forces face a dilemma. In order to engage in a conventional pitched battle for control over cities and garrisons, it must amass sufficient military capabilities. In the process, however, an insurgent will become a fixed, visible

⁷⁵ Major General Rawlings, the Officer Commanding the British Military Mission to Greece, "Review of the Anti-Bandit Campaign," October 1947, 8 as quoted in Amikam Nachmani, "Civil War and Foreign Intervention in Greece: 1946-49," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 25, No. 4, (1990), 503.

⁷⁶ See, Anthony Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya 1945-1960*, (London: Fredrick Muller, 1975), 97.

target and therefore be highly vulnerable to the incumbent's already established conventional military forces.

The poverty trap of warfare conversion

The concept of "poverty traps" is well developed in economic theory with an abundance of associated theoretical and empirical literature.⁷⁷ The problem economists faced was that their "achievement model of income distribution" assumed that the wealth of a country, or a person, was largely under the agent's own control. It theorised that poverty did not entrap but, on the contrary, that an actor's wealth reflected its own ingenuity and effort. However, as with warfare in civil war, the data did not match the theory. That is, despite good governance, peace and abundant natural resources, underdeveloped countries remained in that condition. And in the United States, the home of the "rags to riches" tale, adults were 24 times more likely to be in the lowest percentile band if they were born into it.⁷⁸

The poverty trap concept was introduced to explain these data. The line of argument is that poor countries, or families, initially experience some growth before becoming caught in self-reinforcing cycles from which it is difficult to escape. As all their income is consumed, poor actors get caught at a subsistence level and find saving difficult, thus becoming caught in a poverty trap. In effect, the poverty trap describes a Sisyphean cycle of gain and loss, where the actor quickly sees any progress disappear and perpetually returns to the starting point. It is only after the actor reaches a certain threshold of savings that growth will recommence.

⁷⁷ See, Robert Solow, "A Contribution to the Theory of Economic Growth," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 70, No. 1, (1956), 65-94. Also see, Robert J. Barro and Xavier Sala-i-Martin, *Economic Growth*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1995), 49-52; Costa Azariadis, "The Economics of Poverty Traps," *Journal of Economic Growth*, Vol. 1, No. 4, (1996), 449-489; Costa Azariadis and Allan Drazen, "Threshold Externalities in Economic Development," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 105, No. 2, (1990), 501-526; Robert E. Hall and Charles I. Jones, "Why Do Some Countries Produce So Much More Output Per Worker Than Others?" *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 114, No. 1, (1999), 83-116; Walt W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Noncommunist Manifesto*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Charles I. Jones, *Introduction to Economic Growth*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002), 20-53.

⁷⁸ Samuel Bowles, Steven N. Durlauf and Karla Hoff, "Introduction," in Samuel Bowles, Steven N. Durlauf and Karla Hoff, (eds.), *Poverty Traps*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 1.

With sufficient savings, an actor not only accrues larger returns through investments, but also acquires a buffer against sliding back into subsistence. Thus, not only does the poverty trap explain why poor families and countries remain living “hand to mouth”, but also why wealthy families and countries seem to resist falling back into poverty.

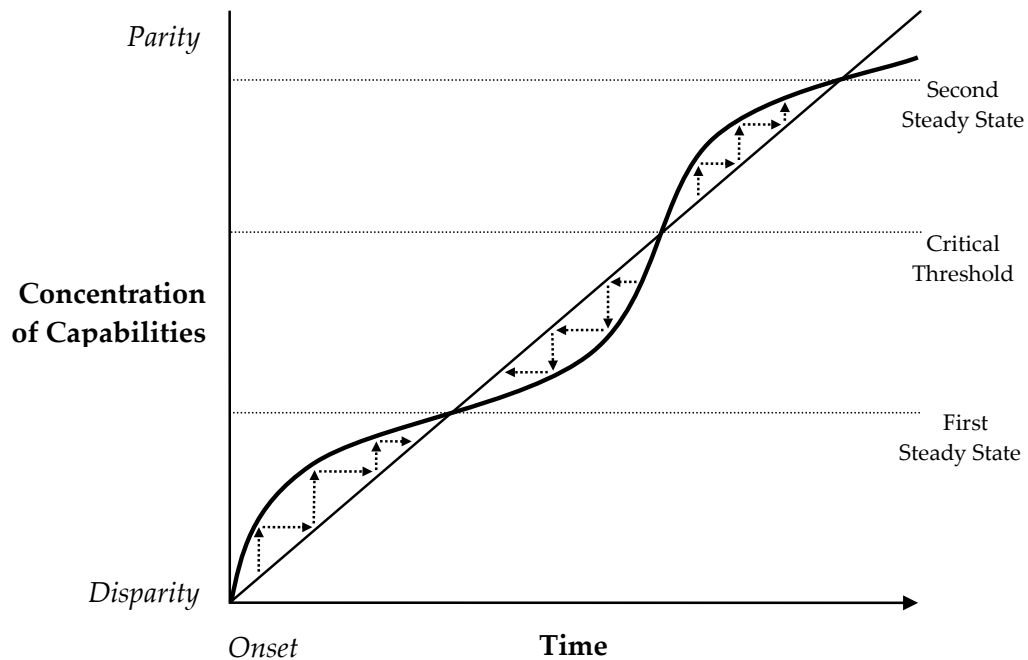
Put succinctly, I argue that the poverty trap is a useful analogy in explaining why insurgents, although efficient and effective, tend to remain trapped in guerrilla strategy.⁷⁹ The analogy of the poverty trap is useful in conceptualising the difficulties insurgent actors face when attempting to convert from a guerrilla to a conventional strategy. Figure 4.4 describes the poverty trap as it applies to the conversion from guerrilla to conventional warfare in civil war. There are two “steady states” in the concentration of capabilities. The first steady state is reached by an insurgent after an initial period of high growth. At this point the insurgent has arrived at the peak of its growth while still applying a guerrilla strategy. Empirically, the first steady state is recognisable by 1) guerrilla warfare, 2) the emergence of the urban-rural divide. If the insurgent successfully overcomes the poverty trap it will arrive at the second steady state. At this point the insurgent becomes resistant to sliding back to the first steady state. The second steady state will be empirically associated with parity in the belligerents’ relative cumulative capabilities and thus conventional warfare.

In addition to the two steady states, Figure 4.4 also depicts the “critical threshold”. The critical threshold is the point that must be reached before dependable growth in an insurgent’s cumulative capabilities can resume. Any increase in cumulative capabilities before reaching the critical threshold is liable to be lost and the insurgent’s cumulative capabilities will slip back to first steady state. The poverty

⁷⁹ Conventional warfare is likely to be resistant to sliding back into guerrilla warfare. Indeed, Shy reported that “During the American War of Independence both sides made a serious effort to keep warfare within conventional forms and limits.” John Shy and Thomas W. Collier, “Revolutionary War,” in Peter Paret, (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 824.

trap suggests that without an injection of substantial volumes of cumulative capabilities, or a collapse in the incumbent's cumulative capabilities, the insurgent will find it challenging to "save" sufficient resources and conventional assets to enable it to reach the second steady state.

Figure 4.4: Transition from Guerrilla to Conventional Warfare with a "Poverty Trap"



The poverty trap has been a familiar feature in civil war. In the Indo-China War (1946-1954), the Viet Minh had begun to convert its guerrilla forces into conventional units. However, when it was confronted by superior French forces in the autumn and winter of 1946, the Viet Minh "renounced open combat, and dissolved its divisions and its regiments."⁸⁰ In 1959-1960, the insurgent in the Algerian Civil War also disbanded its embryonic conventional units in the face of French offensives. The Viet Cong, fighting a guerrilla style of warfare in the 1960s,

⁸⁰ Philippe Devillers, *Histoire du Viet-Nam de 1940 à 1952*, (Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1952), 166 in Leites and Wolf, *Rebellion and Authority*, 59.

found that although the incumbent's search-and-destroy operations "rarely resulted in the destruction" of their units, the operations were more successful at destroying training centres, supply depots, hospitals and command posts.⁸¹ In our terminology, after the Viet Cong had reached the first steady state, for every incremental increase in its cumulative capabilities the insurgent managed to "save" as it edged towards the "critical threshold", the incumbent was able to inflict a loss, which would cause the insurgent's cumulative capabilities, to slide back to the first steady state. Finally, the Chinese Civil War provides a useful illustration, with the Communist forces being able to overcome the poverty trap on their second attempt and progress to conventional warfare. Historian Harold Tanner noted that:

...from 1945 through the first part of 1947, the Communists initially adopted a conventional war strategy and doctrine in order to take advantage of the rapidly changing conditions. As the situation developed...the strategic reality...sometimes put the Communist forces into positions that proved to be indefensible. However, after suffering several setbacks and making a number of operational and doctrinal blunders, the Communist forces recovered, learned from their mistakes, and developed a decisive strategy and doctrine that enabled them to turn the tide of the civil war and to make a second, more successful transition from guerrilla to mobile and base warfare. Far from being a seamless evolution, this transition was instead full of internal contradictions, setbacks, disappointments, and defeats that had to be endured before the Communist forces were able to turn the tide in the winter of 1946-47.⁸²

Concentration of capabilities and the poverty trap

Although the poverty trap is a useful analogy to help explain the difficulties insurgents frequently have when attempting to covert from a guerrilla to a conventional strategy, there is an important difference between the poverty trap's traditional conceptualisation and how it applies to the balance of capabilities. The key distinction between the economic poverty trap model and that of warfare transition lies in the former's atomistic determinism and the latter's relative

⁸¹ James J. Wirtz, *The Tet Offensive: Intelligence Failure in War*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 42.

⁸² Harold M. Tanner, "Guerrilla, Mobile, and Base Warfare in Communist Military Operations in Manchuria, 1945-1947," *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 67, No. 4, (2003), 1184.

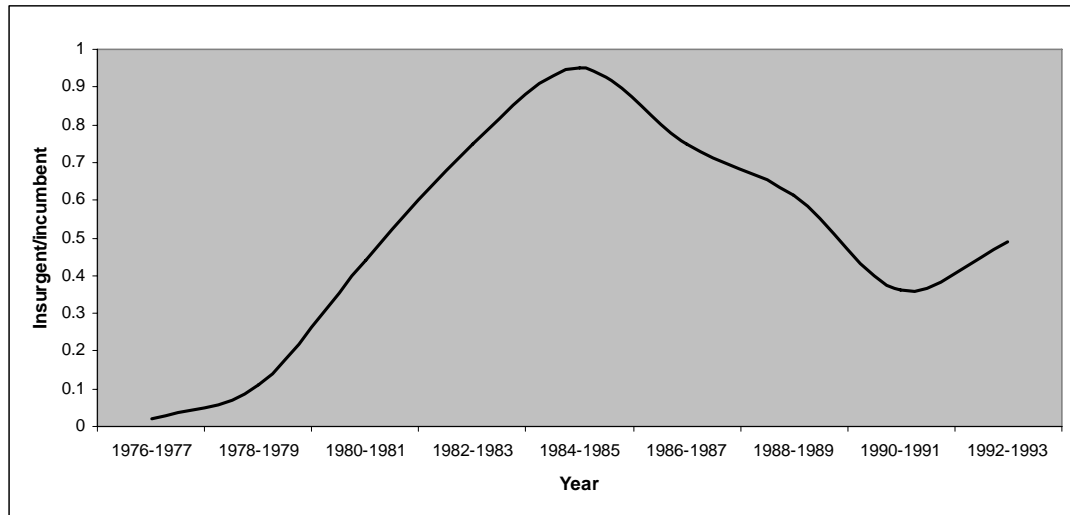
determinism. As was shown in Chapter Three, guerrilla warfare is the product of disparity in the concentration of capabilities. That is, the concentration of capabilities is a greater determinant of whether guerrilla warfare will emerge in a civil war than the average cumulative capabilities. Hence, the poverty trap of warfare conversion exists as a relative measure between the insurgent and incumbent. Consequently, it is not good enough that the insurgent's cumulative capabilities increase. Rather, the insurgent must make gains relative to the incumbent.

Therefore, the instrumental factor in overcoming the poverty trap is the insurgent's growth rate relative to that of the incumbent. That is, changes in the concentration of capabilities occur as a *ratio of relative growth*.⁸³ Put succinctly, if both the incumbent and insurgent experienced roughly the same growth rate as a percentage of their own cumulative capabilities, then the insurgent would not have made any gains against the incumbent and the strategic balance would remain in equilibrium. In this instance, both belligerents would become stronger (affecting the average cumulative capabilities), yet the gap between them would not close. Hence, in order to understand the insurgent's ability to convert from guerrilla conventional warfare, Figure 4.3 (which mapped RENAMO's absolute growth) reveals only half the story, since the critical factor was RENAMO's growth relative to that of the incumbent. Figure 4.5 presents RENAMO's relative growth between 1976 and 1993 by dividing the change in the insurgent's troop strength by that of Mozambique's FRELIMO government. In this depiction, the insurgent's relative

⁸³ Unlike the *relative absolute gains* that are generally applied in International Relations, scholars from the Realist school of International Relations usually apply *relative absolute gains* in their studies. That is, it is assumed that states – being positional units – are concerned with the growth in power of other states in absolute terms. So it is surmised that State A will be more concerned by State X gaining 6 units of power than State Y gaining 4 units of power. This holds true even if State X started with 12 units of power and thus grew by a factor of only 50 percent while State Y – starting with only 1 unit of power – grew by a massive 400 percent. For examples of this realist thinking see, Joseph M. Grieco, "Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism," *International Organization*, Vol. 42, No. 3, (1988), 485-507; Joseph M. Grieco, *Cooperation Among Nations: Europe, America and Non-Tariff Barriers to Trade*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990); Duncan Snidal, "Relative Gains and the Pattern of International Cooperation," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 85, No. 3, (1991), 701-726; Joseph M. Grieco, Robert Powell and Duncan Snidal, "The Relative Gains Problem for International Cooperation," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 87, No. 3, (1993), 729-743. Also see, James S. Mosher, "Relative Gains When the Number of States in the International System Increases," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 47, No. 5, (2003), 642-668.

strength rose until the mid-1980s, when it began to dip as a consequence of the incumbent's military expansion. By incorporating the incumbent's cumulative capabilities, Figure 4.4 arrives at a more accurate representation of changes in the concentration of capabilities than Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.5: Relative Growth of RENAMO (1976-1993)



Source: Jeremy M. Weinstein and Laudemiro Francisco, "The Civil War in Mozambique: The Balance Between Internal and External Influences," in Paul Collier and Nicholas Sambanis, (eds.), *Understanding Civil War*, Vol. 1, (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2005), 170-171; International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance*, (London: IISS, multiple years).

Finally, a significant decrease in the incumbent's cumulative capabilities may allow the insurgent to escape the poverty trap. The logic of the poverty trap suggests that it is possible for the insurgent to reach the critical threshold, and renew its growth, because the incumbent experiences a sudden drop in cumulative capabilities. For instance, if the incumbent suffered a military mutiny, or a foreign sponsor disengaged from the civil war, this may allow the insurgent to overcome the poverty trap and convert to a conventional strategy.⁸⁴ In this particular case, the insurgent's cumulative capabilities would not reach the critical threshold; rather

⁸⁴ In Cuba, for instance, the desertion and mutiny of the regime's forces in the Oriente capital of Santiago turned over "tanks and artillery into the hands of the rebels. Further surrenders in Las Villas gave them the means to confront any remaining army regiments that might have been disposed to fight." Robert Taber, *War of the Flea*, (Dulles, VA: Brassey, 2002), 36-37.

the critical threshold itself is lowered to meet the level of the insurgent's cumulative capabilities.⁸⁵

4. Foreign Intervention and the Poverty Trap

The poverty trap model broke from previous thinking on the nature of economic growth in asserting that actors caught in poverty can generally only escape stagnation with substantial assistance. Indeed, the implications of the poverty trap deviated from previous economic theories (such as the "achievement model of income determination") precisely because the reasoning of the poverty trap suggested that underdeveloped countries and poor families often do not possess the ability to lift themselves out of poverty. As such, the concept of the poverty trap suggests that substantial volumes of aid will be required for impoverished actors to overcome the self-reinforcing cycles of gain and loss.⁸⁶ Similarly, foreign intervention can be instrumental in four ways in allowing insurgent actors to overcome the poverty trap and successfully convert from a guerrilla to conventional strategy.⁸⁷

First, foreign powers can provide the insurgent with significant quantities of troops, tanks, artillery and aircraft. This sudden injection of conventional assets can potentially push the insurgent's cumulative capabilities through the critical threshold to the second steady state. During the Moldovan Civil War, for instance, it was the introduction of Russian soldiers and armoured vehicles which allowed

⁸⁵ See, Costa Azariadis, "The Theory of Poverty Traps: What Have We Learned?" in Samuel Bowles, Steven N. Durlauf and Karla Hoff, (eds.), *Poverty Traps*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 33.

⁸⁶ Jeffery Sachs, for instance, has argued that "if the foreign assistance is substantial enough, and lasts long enough, the capital stock rises sufficiently to lift households above subsistence...Growth becomes self-sustaining through household savings and public investments supported by taxation of households." Jeffery Sachs, *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time*, (New York: Penguin, 2005), 246.

⁸⁷ Whereas, I argue that the sudden injection of a large volume of exogenous resources is frequently required for the insurgent to overcome the poverty trap, convert to a conventional strategy, and continue to expand its cumulative capabilities, other studies disagree. While hinting at the poverty trap, Kaufmann argued that: "Moderate arms transfers can be helpful, but gifts of massive firepower are likely to be counterproductive. The guerrillas can absorb only limited weaponry without becoming a conventional military force, providing the government with a lucrative target." See, Chaim Kauffmann, "Intervention in Ethnic and Ideological Civil Wars: Why One Can Be Done and the Other Can't," *Security Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1, (1996), 83.

the guerrillas to adopt a conventional strategy.⁸⁸ Similarly in Ethiopia, the West Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) had been fighting a protracted guerrilla campaign against Addis Ababa until, on 18 June 1977, the Somali Armed Forces crossed into the Ogaden region with 35,000 regular soldiers, 250 tanks, 300 armoured personnel carriers and 200 pieces of mobile artillery. The WSLF instantly converted to a “light infantry” role and fell in behind the advancing army.⁸⁹

Second, foreign powers that share a contiguous border with the civil war state may agree to provide sanctuary to guerrilla units, which, within the reasoning of the poverty trap, would be akin to putting funds into a protected savings account. Daniel Byman, for instance, has observed that the provision of a foreign “sanctuary allows guerrillas and their commanders to organize, train, plan, recuperate, and otherwise conduct essential operations outside the reach of the targeted state.”⁹⁰ In some cases, the access to a foreign sanctuary may allow the insurgent actor to accumulate sufficient conventional forces to convert to a conventional strategy. During the Sudanese Civil War, for example, the South People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM), relying solely on captured government weapons, was able to stockpile captured conventional assets inside Ethiopia, before it suddenly redeployed its hoarded forces back into southern Sudan, in 1987, and engaged the incumbent in a series of conventional battles.⁹¹

Third, the incumbent’s airpower plays a significant role in preventing escape from the poverty trap. The limited effectiveness of aerial bombing against an insurgent

⁸⁸ For an analysis of the outbreak of hostilities and the role played by foreign powers, see Stuart J. Kaufman, “Spiraling to Ethnic War: Elites, Masses, and Moscow in Moldova’s Civil War,” *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 2, (1996), 108-138.

⁸⁹ Patrick Gilkes, *Revolution and Military Strategy: The Ethiopian Army in the Ogaden and in Eritrea, 1974-84*, Proceedings of the Eleventh International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa, 1-6 April, 1991, 722; Gebru Tareke, “The Ethiopia-Somalia War of 1977 Revisited,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 3, (2000), 635-667; Harold Marcus, *A History of Ethiopia*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 196-197; David Laitin, “The War in the Ogaden: Implications for Siyaad’s Role in Somali History,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 1, (1979), 95-115.

⁹⁰ Daniel L. Byman, *et. al.*, *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements*, (Santa Monica: RAND, 2001), 84.

⁹¹ International Institute of Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance*, (London: IISS, 1987).

applying a guerrilla strategy has been well-documented.⁹² However, aerial bombing can inflict tremendous damage on an opponent's conventional forces. Hence, even if the incumbent's forces are restricted to large towns and garrisons, airpower allows the incumbent to retain the capacity to effectively destroy large concentrations of the insurgent's conventional forces. Thus, if a foreign power provides the incumbent with attack aircraft, helicopters and airborne troops, this may deny insurgents the opportunity to exploit rural areas as "base areas" where they can accumulate conventional assets and escape the poverty trap. Of course, foreign powers can also intervene and restrict the incumbent's use of airpower by providing the insurgent with air cover. For instance, between 1992 and 2003, the United States deployed about 200 aircraft to patrol the northern and southern "no-fly zones" in Iraq.⁹³ The American-enforced "no-fly zones" contributed to Kurdish guerrilla groups' ability to establish base areas along the mountainous Iraq-Turkey border, which had previously been vulnerable to aerial bombardment.

The final means through which foreign powers may affect the poverty trap and allow the insurgent to convert to a conventional strategy is by withdrawing support from the incumbent. The disengagement of a foreign power will usually result in a corresponding decrease in the former-recipient's cumulative capabilities as not only do military resources cease to be available, but the determination of the incumbent's remaining forces to continue the fight may plummet. Hence, if a foreign power were to cease supplying an incumbent with exogenous resources, it may project the concentration of capabilities towards parity. For instance, the disengagement of the United States from South Vietnam permitted the Viet Cong (VC) and North Vietnamese Army (NVA) to convert to conventional warfare and

⁹² Robert A. Pape, Jr., "Coercive Air Power in the Vietnam War," *International Security*, Vol. 15, No. 2, (1990), 103-146; Dennis M. Drew, "U.S. Airpower Theory and the Insurgent Challenge: A Short Journal to Confusion," *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 62, No. 4, (1998), 809-832; Edward B. Westermann, "The Limits of Soviet Airpower: The Failure of Military Coercion in Afghanistan, 1979-89," *Journal of Conflict Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 2, (1999); Alan Rugus Waters, "The Cost of Air Support in Counter-Insurgency Operations: The Case of the Mau Mau in Kenya," *Military Affairs*, Vol. 37, No. 3, (1973), 96-100; Marie-Catherine Villatoux and Paul Villatoux, "Aerial Intelligence during the Algerian War," *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 2, (2002), 65-78.

⁹³ Daniel Byman, "After the Storm: U.S. Policy Toward Iraq Since 1991," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 115, No. 4, (2000), 506.

capture major cities. According to Brigadier-General Tran Dinh Tho, the United States' withdrawal from South Vietnam "gravely affected not only the [South Vietnamese Armed Forces] combat capabilities, but also the morale of their cadres and troops."⁹⁴ The immediate result of the decrease in Saigon's concentration of capabilities was the VC-NVA's rapid build-up of conventional assets in South Vietnam. From the beginning of 1974 until the end of 1975, 823,146 tonnes of weapons and equipment were transported from the North to the South (1.6 times the amount of materiel transported in the previous 13 years).⁹⁵ As such, the VC-NVA forces were able to convert to a conventional strategy "with their Russian T54 tanks clearing the way and truck-loads of soldiers following behind."⁹⁶

In sum, an insurgent actor caught in the poverty trap of warfare conversion will struggle to convert to a conventional strategy and renew its growth. It will frequently require either the incumbent's own regular soldiers to defect or, failing this, the intervention of a foreign power. However, in practice, foreign powers have proven to be reluctant to escalate their commitment to sufficient levels to permit the insurgent's conversion to conventional warfare, which has often resulted in prolonged periods of guerrilla warfare.

5. Conclusion

This chapter first showed that providing exogenous resources to one, or both sides, in a civil war will affect the balance of capabilities and therefore the warfare. However, in most cases, when the warfare changes form, all involved parties must undergo structural and doctrinal changes. The move from guerrilla warfare to conventional warfare is unique as only one belligerent, namely the insurgent, must

⁹⁴ Lewis Sorley, *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam*, (New York: Harvest, 2000), 372.

⁹⁵ Sorley, *A Better War*, 372.

⁹⁶ Julian Manyan, *The Fall of Saigon*, (London: Rex Collings, 1975) 97; Also see, Larry Engelmann, *Tears Before the Rain: An Oral History of the Fall of South Vietnam*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

undertake structural changes. Second, this chapter explained why the insurgent's progression from guerrilla to conventional strategy is rarely steady. It was submitted that a poverty trap exists in warfare conversion, which has major implications for the effect of foreign intervention on warfare in civil wars. Finally, deducing from the logic of the balance of capabilities, this chapter identified the means through which foreign intervention can potentially assist the insurgent in overcoming the poverty trap and converting to a conventional strategy. The following empirical chapters will further explore the dynamics associated with the poverty trap and foreign intervention.

Part III

Chapter Five

Warfare Variation in the Angolan Civil War

The behaviour of external powers not only shaped the conflict in the Angolan Civil War, but was in fact responsible for its onset. On 25 April 1974, in what became known as the Carnation Revolution, the authoritarian Portuguese government in Lisbon was overthrown by a cabal of army officers. The new government announced, on 27 July, that all Portuguese overseas territories would be granted full independence. In Angola, the distant coup instantly transformed the political and military landscape of the anti-colonial struggle between the Portuguese Governmental Authority and the African guerrilla movements. Since the outbreak of hostilities in the early 1960s, competition between the anti-colonial guerrilla movements had always been an undercurrent in the overall war against Portuguese rule. However, the Lisbon coup elevated that rivalry to the principal political and strategic motivation of the belligerents. Thus, with independence imminent, the rival anti-colonial movements trained their limited capabilities away from the Portuguese and onto each other.

At the outbreak of the Angolan Civil War, there were three leading contenders for power: the *Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola* (MPLA), the *Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola* (FNLA), and *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola* (UNITA). The MPLA and FNLA had fought the Portuguese, and occasionally each other, since 1961. UNITA was formed by Jonas Savimbi in 1965 after splitting from the FNLA. There were a number of contributing factors to the belligerents' irreconcilable differences. These included their contending political ideologies and the contending ideologies of their respective Cold War sponsors, their leaders' egos

and the fact that they each recruited from different ethnic populations.¹ Clashes between the three belligerents escalated from late 1974 to plunge the country into civil war.²

Foreign intervention in the Angolan Civil War was complicated, contradictory and, at times, convoluted.³ At different times and volumes, the MPLA was supported by the Soviet Union, Cuba, East Germany, Algeria, Guinea, and several Eastern European countries. The FNLA and UNITA were assisted by the United States, South Africa, China, Romania, North Korea, France, Israel, West Germany, Senegal, Uganda, Zaire, Zambia, Morocco and Tanzania.⁴ Although the belligerents had received assistance in their struggle against Portugal, the announcement of Angola's pending independence represented a turning point in the pattern of intervention in Angola. Suddenly, following the 1974 Lisbon coup, the MPLA could now request assistance from Moscow and Cuba to resist the "neo-colonial challenge" represented by its opponents, while on the other hand, the FNLA and UNITA could seek outside help in resisting the "communist threat" posed by the MPLA.⁵ The actors and interests remained constant; however, foreign capitals began to conceive the conflict as a contest between East and West, an impression the belligerents were more than happy to cultivate.

¹ Like many civil wars – and especially those in Africa – Angola defies the neat distinction frequently made in academic circles between "political", "ethnic", and "social" conflicts. Because of the belligerents' respective "Socialist" and "Western" leanings, most studies portray the Angola Civil War as a political conflict. However, as the belligerents drew their recruits primarily from one ethnic population the "ethnic" title has also been applied. See, for example, Karl Maier, *Angola: Promises and Lies*, (Guildford, England: William Waterman Publications, 1996), 34-35; Tony Hodges, *From Afro-Stalinism to Petro-Diamond Capitalism*, (Oxford: James Currey, 2001), 21-28. Finally, Angola is also often categorised a "social" conflict because, it has been claimed that in essence Angola was a conflict between an "urban capitalist society (MPLA) and rural peasant societies (FNLA, UNITA)" and therefore "a center-periphery conflict". On the "social" dimension see Kirsti Stuvøy, *War Economy and the Social Order of Insurgencies: An Analysis of the Internal Structure of UNITA's War Economy*, Arbeitspapier No. 3, (Hamburg: Universität Hamburg, 2002), 44. For a similar argument that the Angolan Civil War was a "class conflict" between the urban bourgeoisie and rural peasants, see W.G. Clarence-Smith, "Class Structures and Class Struggles in Angola in the 1970s," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 1, (1980), 109-126.

² The most influential volume on this period is John Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution: Exile Politics and Guerrilla Warfare, 1962-1976*, Vol. II, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1978).

³ To highlight this point, consider the seemingly-counterintuitive case of oil production in Angola. In Cabinda, an American oil company – Gulf Oil (later Chevron) – pumped oil for the MPLA, which in turn paid Cuban soldiers to protect the installations from CIA-funded guerrillas. Joseph Hanlon, *Beggar Your Neighbours: Apartheid Power in Southern Africa*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 170-171.

⁴ Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, 221-243.

⁵ Fernando Andersen Guimarães, *The Origins of the Angolan Civil War: Foreign Intervention and Domestic Political Conflict*, (London: Macmillan, 2001), 97.

How did foreign intervention affect the warfare in the Angolan Civil War? To answer this question, this chapter trails the causal relationship between foreign intervention and warfare. Empirically, it focuses upon the first period of the civil war (November 1974 – March 1976) and is divided into four sections. The first section provides an overview of the initial period of the civil war. The next three sections trace the impact of foreign intervention on the balance of capabilities and the pattern of warfare during the initially period of the Angolan Civil War. The significant variation in the level of foreign intervention carves out three distinct phases to the conflict in the initial period. The final section discusses the conclusions that can be drawn from these three phases.

1. The First Period of the Angolan Civil War (November 1974 – March 1976)

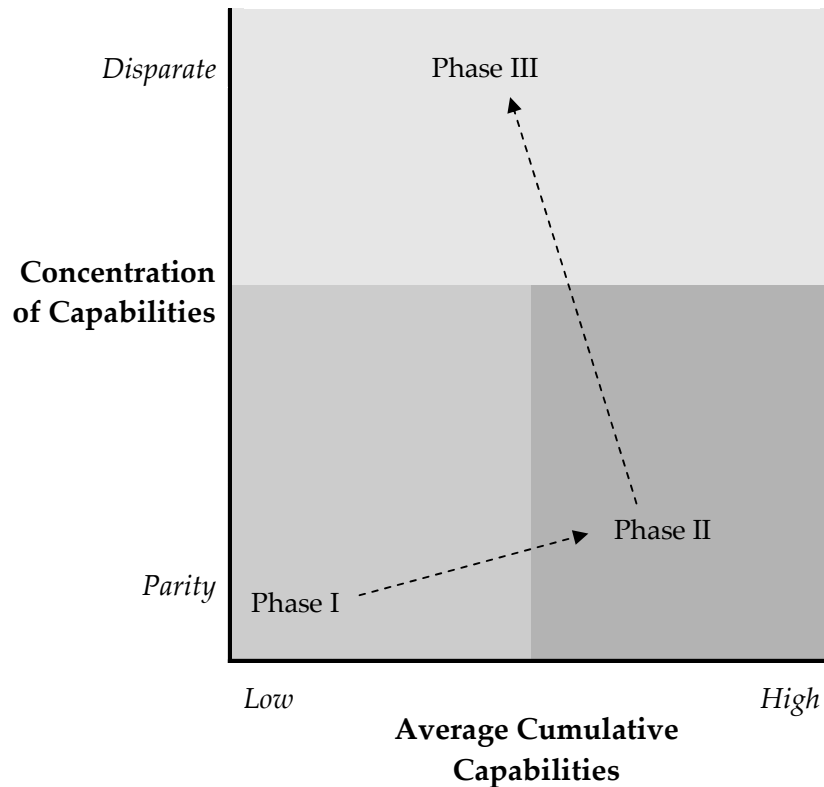
Scholars have generally divided the Angolan Civil War into three distinct periods. The first, and shortest, stretched from the close of Portuguese colonialism through to 1976 when the MPLA decisively defeated its rivals and consolidated its hold over the capital, Luanda, and indeed most of the country and thereby confirmed its incumbent status. The second period opened with UNITA's reconstitution in 1977 and concluded with the Angolan elections in 1992. The final period was sparked by UNITA's refusal to accept the election results and was only ended with the death of Savimbi in 2002.

This chapter concentrates on the temporal changes that occurred during the first period of the Angolan Civil War. Over the span of the first period (November 1974–March 1976), there were three significant changes in the pattern of foreign intervention. The first configuration of foreign intervention extended from November 1974 through to October 1975. Phase I of the civil war was characterised by very small volumes of foreign intervention. However, during the second quarter

of 1975, the pattern of foreign intervention underwent a dramatic change, with all sides gaining access to increased quantities of sophisticated foreign weaponry, finance and troops. This change catalysed the advent of a second distinct phase in foreign sponsorship from November 1975 to January 1976. Finally, in late January 1976, the pattern of foreign intervention changed significantly for a third time. Phase III the FNLA and UNITA lost their foreign sponsors, while the MPLA consolidated its position with the assistance of large volumes of foreign assistance.

The temporal variation in the foreign intervention permits a longitudinal analysis of its impact on the balance of capabilities and warfare. Corresponding with the three different patterns of foreign intervention, there were also three changes in the balance of capabilities and the type of warfare. During the purview of Phase I, the civil war was contested by three, roughly evenly-matched belligerents, each with very low cumulative capabilities. As the theory predicts, this configuration in the balance of capabilities produced irregular warfare. In Phase II, the introduction of large volumes of exogenous resources to all belligerents maintained a relative parity in concentration of capabilities while significantly increasing the average cumulative capabilities. The result was conventional warfare. In Phase III, the disengagement of the FNLA and UNITA's sponsors, coupled with battlefield defeats, had two impacts on the balance of capabilities. It propelled the concentration of capabilities in the MPLA's favour and it decreased the average cumulative capabilities in the civil war. These changes in the balance of capabilities led to guerrilla warfare. Figure 5.1 traces the changes in the balance of capabilities during the first period of the Angolan Civil War.

Figure 5.1: Temporal Variations in the Balance of Capabilities in the Angolan Civil War (November 1974-March 1976)



The next sections in this chapter will compare the variation in the pattern of foreign intervention (being the independent variable), the balance of capabilities (being the intervening variable) and warfare (being the dependent variable) during these three phases of warfare.

2. Foreign Intervention and Irregular Warfare, First Period: Phase I

In November 1974, a year before formal independence, the belligerents' ongoing political jostling broke out into open warfare. At first, the major clashes were centred in Angola's political and economic capital, Luanda. Initially a MPLA stronghold, a ceasefire in October 1974 between the departing Portuguese administration and the anti-colonial movements led the FNLA and UNITA to challenge the MPLA's authority in the capital by establishing political headquarters

within the city. Almost immediately, street clashes erupted between the respective militias, which on 10 November resulted in almost 50 dead.⁶ The street fighting rapidly escalated and as is typical of irregular warfare, there were almost daily clashes between the different belligerents' militias without any significant, let alone decisive, battles. Nonetheless, by March 1975, the street skirmishing in Luanda had resulted in the deaths of some 20,000 people.⁷ UNITA was considerably weaker than either the MPLA or FNLA and so did not risk competing for the capital.

Meanwhile, outside of the capital, Angola had been carved up by the three leading warlords: Agostinho Neto, Holden Roberto and Jonas Savimbi. Neto's MPLA controlled the coast (including the oil rich province of Cabinda) and incorporated parts of the inland province of Moxico, Roberto's FNLA remained rooted in the north, while Savimbi's UNITA was concentrated mostly in the central highlands and south-eastern Angola.⁸ During Phase I there was sufficient buffer space between the different spheres of influence that major clashes in rural areas were infrequent. However, when clashes did occur in the vast areas separating the belligerents' base areas, the low troop density resulted in small groups of poorly armed and inexperienced militia sporadically attacking other like units.

⁶ See, Chester A. Crocker, *High Noon in Southern Africa: Making Peace in a Rough Neighbourhood*, (New York: Norton, 1992), 145; Thomas A. Johnson, "Violence on wane in Angola capital after 50 killed," *New York Times*, 12 November 1974, 6; Gerald J. Bender, "Kissinger in Angola: Anatomy of Failure," in Rene Lemarchand, (ed.), *American Policy in Southern Africa*, (Washington: University Press of America, 1978), 80.

⁷ Colin Legum, "A Study of International Intervention in Angola," in Colin Legum and Tony Hodges, (eds.), *After Angola: The War Over Southern Africa*, (New York: Africana, 1976), 13.

⁸ Linda M. Heywood, "Unita and Ethnic Nationalism in Angola," *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 1, (1989), 47-66.

Map 5.1: Angola



Foreign intervention in Phase I

Foreign powers showed only cursory interest in the anti-colonial war in Portuguese Angola.⁹ Although Moscow had begun providing economic and indirect military aid to the MPLA following Neto's 1964 Soviet Union visit, the value of Soviet aid up until 1974 nevertheless probably only totalled in the vicinity of \$63 million.¹⁰ Scholars generally agree that whatever the precise value of Soviet assistance to the MPLA, it was "relatively low, affording minimum operations, but never providing

⁹ On this period see, W.S. van der Waals, *Portugal's War in Angola, 1961-1974*, (Rivonia: Ashanti Publishing, 1993); Arslan Humbaraci and Nicole Muchnik, *Portugal's African Wars: Angola, Guinea Bissao, Mozambique*, (London: Macmillan, 1974); John P. Cann, *Counterinsurgency in Africa: the Portuguese Way of War, 1961-1974*, (St. Petersburg, Fla: Hailer, 2005); Don Barnett and Roy Harvey, *The Revolution in Angola: MPLA, Life Histories and Documents*, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1972).

¹⁰ Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, 229. Also see, Iain Hamilton, *Angola After Independence: Struggle for Supremacy*, (London: Institute for the Study of Conflict, 1975), 10-15. Legum put the total Soviet assistance to the MPLA between 1960 and 1974 at £27 million. See, Legum, "A Study of International Intervention in Angola," 19.

the movement with the means to prevail against the Portuguese.”¹¹ It was Cuba which showed a greater interest in the MPLA. Since 1966, most MPLA cadres had received some political and military training from 1,000 Cuban advisors, who had been based in Brazzaville to support the revolutionary Congolese government.¹² When the MPLA members passed through Cuban training schools, they were also supplied with an unknown quantity of light weapons, technical training and financial support. The combined effect of the Soviet and Cuban efforts was to maintain the MPLA as a viable organisation, but not to significantly increase its cumulative capabilities.

The United States and South Africa were even less interested in Portuguese Angola. Prior to 1974, Washington transferred no resources to any of the belligerents in Angola. The United States broadly adhered to the United Nations’ embargo on providing equipment to Portugal destined for Africa. However, as a member state of NATO, the United States did provide Portugal with some dual-purpose items such as heavy trucks and passenger airliners, whose subsequent appearance in Angola the United States chose to overlook.¹³ South Africa, like the United States, did not support any of the future civil war belligerents prior to 1974. Indeed, South Africa cooperated extensively with the Portuguese authorities in Angola, which allowed the South African Defence Force (SADF) to search for South West Africa People’s Organisation (SWAPO) guerrillas in southern Angola. In exchange, the SADF would attack any MPLA, FNLA or UNITA guerrillas it discovered during its incursions.¹⁴

¹¹ Guimarães, *The Origins of the Angolan Civil War*, 166; Legum, “A Study of International Intervention in Angola,” 11.

¹² Guimarães, *The Origins of the Angolan Civil War*, 138-139; Gillian Gunn, “Cuba and Angola,” in Helen Kitchen, (ed.), *Angola, Mozambique, and the West*, (New York: Praeger, 1987), 71-72.

¹³ Stephen R. Weissman, “CIA Covert Action in Zaire and Angola: Patterns and Consequences,” *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 94, No. 2, (1979), 277; Guimarães, *The Origins of the Angolan Civil War*, 187. The Nixon Administration was also accused of propping up Lisbon’s counter-insurgency strategies in Angola through economic aid and cheap loans. See, Aaron Segal, “African rebels vs. Portugal: The world’s longest war grinds on,” *Chicago Tribune*, 8 July 1973.

¹⁴ Jan Breytenbach, *The Buffalo Soldiers: The Story of South Africa’s 32 Battalion, 1975-1993*, (Alberton: Galago, 2002), 26; James Barber, *South Africa’s Foreign Policy, 1945-1970*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 256-257; Guimarães, *The Origins of the Angolan Civil War*, 125.

The balance of capabilities in Phase I

When the MPLA, FNLA and UNITA forces began to emerge from the Angolan hinterland in 1974, “they were little more than a collection of small guerrilla units that had rarely seen their comrades let alone fought alongside them.”¹⁵ The groups that emerged from the jungle were small in number, poorly-armed and ill-equipped. At the outbreak of the civil war, the MPLA could count on only an estimated 1,500 fighters.¹⁶ However, this belies the fact that the MPLA was also the fastest-growing belligerent and, by January 1975, could scrape together some 6,000 militiamen.¹⁷ In 1975, the MPLA also had several factors operating in its favour. Foremost among these was that the MPLA’s forces were concentrated in Luanda and represented that largest militia force in the city. This allowed the MPLA leadership to gain control over its forces more quickly than the other belligerents, whose forces were still scattered in rural areas. Nevertheless, the FNLA’s 10,000-strong force was the largest military force in Angola and looked poised to sweep through and capture both Luanda and the oil-rich enclave of Cabinda.¹⁸ UNITA was the weakest of the belligerents, fielding a particularly poorly-equipped force of only about 2,000 fighters.¹⁹ Hence, as Guimarães pointed out, “UNITA attempted to stay out of the fighting and continued to argue in favour of sticking to the transitional process...[it] at this time, saw its best chances as lying in the formal role determined for it by the Alvor accords.”²⁰ UNITA sheltered its forces in the hinterland, content to remain a bystander as the MPLA and FNLA fought for control over Luanda.

¹⁵ Guimarães, *The Origins of the Angolan Civil War*, 97.

¹⁶ Edward George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola, 1965-1991: From Che Guevara to Cuito Cuanavale*, (London: Frank Cass, 2005), 53; Guimarães, *The Origins of the Angolan Civil War*, 100. Wiessman reported that American diplomats in Luanda did not believe that the MPLA achieved military parity with the FNLA until spring. Wiessman, “CIA Covert Action in Zaire and Angola: Patterns and Consequences,” 282.

¹⁷ Arthur Jay Klinghoffer, *The Angolan War: A Study in Soviet Policy in the Third World*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1980), 15.

¹⁸ George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 52.

¹⁹ Klinghoffer, *The Angolan War*, 15; John Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, (New York: WW. Norton, 1978), 155

²⁰ Guimarães, *The Origins of the Angolan Civil War*, 103.

The quality of the MPLA, FNLA and UNITA's militias was also poor. Although the commanders frequently had years of guerrilla warfare experience gained through fighting the Portuguese, they typically led untrained and inexperienced militiamen. The MPLA Comandante Ndozi reported that the "troops with me are boys taken straight from the streets to the front. They ought to be in school, but we closed the schools in order to have an army, since we have to defend ourselves."²¹ Not only were belligerents limited to poorly-trained, inexperienced troops, but none of them possessed heavy weapons, armoured vehicles or even adequate small arms. For instance, in 1974 it was estimated that UNITA possessed no heavy weapons and only about 1,500 antiquated rifles.²² Along with a general lack of weapons, commanders also complained to journalists of an "eternal" shortage of ammunition.²³ Thus, at the outbreak of the civil war, there was a low average cumulative capabilities and the concentration of capabilities between the MPLA and FNLA was close to parity.

Irregular warfare in Phase I

During Phase I, the principal offensive aim of the MPLA and the FNLA was to eradicate the influence of their rivals in the capital.²⁴ Underlining this aim was the belief that the party that controlled the capital at the time of formal independence would be in a strong position to claim sovereignty over all Angola. To this end, the belligerents employed similar, violent methods in their attempts to seize power. First, the belligerents began by targeting all of the smaller movements and factions in Angola. In a typical example, on the night of 3 February 1975, a MPLA gang loyal to Neto walked across town and attacked the headquarters of a rival MPLA

²¹ Ryszard Kapuściński, *Another Day of Life*, trans. William R. Brand and Katarzyna Mroczkowska-Brand, (New York: Vintage, 2001), 33.

²² Bender, "Kissinger in Angola: Anatomy of Failure," 73.

²³ Kapuściński, *Another Day of Life*, 30.

²⁴ James reported that the "MPLA leaders realized if they could maintain firm control of Luanda until independence, the other movements would then become 'outlaws' rather than competing centres for power." This reasoning by the MPLA may have been presumptuous; however, this does not change the fact that the side that controlled the capital would have greater legitimacy to government independent Angola. See, W. Martin James, *A Political History of the Civil War in Angola, 1974-1990*, (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1992), 64.

faction, led by Daniel Chipenda, called the "Eastern Revolt". The MPLA attackers used rifles and grenades to kill 17 occupants and force Chipenda's remaining men to flee Luanda and eventually join with the FNLA.²⁵ Following the expulsion of the smaller political groups, the MPLA and FNLA began targeting each other with greater regularity. Emblematic of the evolving character of the conflict in Luanda, while the MPLA's Secretary General, Lopo do Nascimento, was making an official visit to the MPLA office in Vila Alice on 23 March, the FNLA drove by, throwing grenades into the offices.²⁶ Over the subsequent months, drive-by grenade attacks became a common method of both the MPLA and FNLA.

The fighting in Luanda was disorganised, opportunistic and brutal. The respective belligerents had distributed rifles and grenades freely among their supporters – including to teenage boys – which resulted in running street battles between the rival sides.²⁷ As the violence intensified, the MPLA began to gain the upper hand over its competitors. By the end of April 1975 the momentum was with the MPLA as the impact of the Soviet weapons deliveries the previous month and the recruitment by the MPLA of 3,500-6,000 experienced Katangese gendarmerie swung the street fighting in its favour.²⁸ The fighting between the militias continued in Luanda until 20 July 1975, when the FNLA was forced to withdraw from the capital city.²⁹ It then regrouped, about 150 kilometres north, in Ambriz,

²⁵ Later still, Chipenda's men joined the SADF, constituting the initial core of its renowned 32 battalion. See, George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 59. On these events, also see, Tony Hodges, "How the MPLA Won in Angola," in Colin Legum and Tony Hodges, (eds.), *After Angola: The War Over Southern Africa*, (New York: Africana, 1976), 49-51.

²⁶ Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, 258; Donald Rothchild and Caroline Hartzell, "The Case of Angola: Four Power Intervention and Disengagement," in Ariel E. Levite, Bruce W. Jentleson and Larry Berman, (eds.), *Foreign Military Intervention: The Dynamics of Protracted Conflict*, (New York: 1992), 174.

²⁷ Frequently irregular warfare is depicted as "criminal, depoliticized, private, and predatory," and this phase of the Angolan Civil War received a similar portrayal. For example, Portuguese officials described much of the violence occurring in the Angolan capital as "some bandits and criminals creating disorders under the names of liberation movements." See, Johnson, "Violence on wane in Angola capital after 50 killed," 6; Stathis N. Kalyvas, "'New' and 'Old' Civil Wars: A Valid Distinction?" *World Politics*, Vol. 54, No. 1, (2001), 100. Also see, Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, 259; Bender, "Kissinger in Angola: Anatomy of Failure," 79-80.

²⁸ Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, 259; Rothchild and Hartzell, "The Case of Angola: Four Power Intervention and Disengagement," 174.

²⁹ There was also a social and ethnic dimension to the fighting in Luanda. In July 1974, due to the MPLA's offensive there as a "mass exodus of the Bakongo and Ovimbundu minorities living in Luanda, a fact which reflected, and in turn reinforced, the identification of the three movements with the three major ethnic groups." See, F.W. Heimer, *The Decolonization Conflict in Angola 1979-75*, (Geneva: Institut Universitaire de Hautes Etudes Internationales, 1979), 73.

where it immediately began military preparations to return to Luanda before Independence Day and claim power.³⁰

The pattern of offensive tactics in rural areas took the form of skirmishes, which essentially involved rival militia groups engaging in “displays of firepower”.³¹ Fighting would result when one side attempted to encroach on another’s area of influence. Kapuściński – one of the few journalists physically on the frontline – described a typical offensive attack as follows:

the [MPLA] unit moves up close to where the enemy is. We open fire just before dawn. The inexperienced soldier thinks the main thing is to make a big racket. He fires like a man possessed, blindly, because all he cares about is noise, communicating to the enemy how much strength is approaching. This is a form of warning, a way of evoking a fear in the opponent that will be greater than ours. And there is a sort of rationale to it. Because the other side is also unfamiliar with war, unfamiliar with gunfire; surprised by volley, they withdraw and flee.³²

The effectiveness of offensive operations created a paradox. At the tactical level the warfare was fluid. Journalists reported that travelling through rural areas was highly unpredictable as villages and roadblocks regularly changed hands. But, at the strategic level, no side possessed the cumulative capabilities to make decisive and permanent gains into their rivals’ territory.

Early in the civil war, the defences of the belligerents were generally flimsy and unsophisticated. In Luanda, defensive positions were limited to securing buildings and establishing roadblocks,³³ while outside the capital, defensive positions were mostly limited to roadblocks. The aim of roadblocks was to assert control over, and hamper an enemy’s encroachment into, a controlled area. They were generally

³⁰ George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 60.

³¹ Kapuściński, *Another Day of Life*, 31.

³² Kapuściński, *Another Day of Life*, 31.

³³ Johnson, “Violence on wane in Angola capital after 50 killed,” 6.

feebly-constructed, using whatever materials were on hand. As one observer chronicled,

[o]n important routes where major checkpoints are found, the road is blocked by colorful barriers that can be seen from a distance. But since materials are scarce and improvisation is the rule, others do the best they can. Some stretch a cable at the height of a car's windshield, and if they don't have cable they use a length of sisal rope. They stand empty gasoline drums in the middle of the road or erect obstacles of stones and volcanic boulders. They scatter glass and nails on the macadam. [Or t]hey lay down dry thorn branches.³⁴

Besides being flimsily built, the roadblocks, inside and outside the capital, were usually guarded by poorly-armed, equipped, and trained militias. The individuals manning the roadblocks were of "diverse professions and ages. Rear-guard soldiers, homegrown militia, and boys caught up in the passion of war, and often simply militia."³⁵ The gunmen defending the roadblocks were lightly-armed with a miscellaneous assortment of weapons, including "submachine guns, old carbines, machetes, knives, and clubs."³⁶ This weaponry, although sufficient to manage traffic, failed to provide much protection against enemy forces. Thus, the roadblocks were intended to impose the belligerent's control over, and deter rival movements expansion into, an area, rather than repel a determined enemy assault.

3. Foreign Intervention and Conventional Warfare, First Period:

Phase II

By the second half of 1975, the strategic situation in Angola had changed considerably since the outbreak of civil war a year before. By August 1975, the MPLA had cemented its control over the capital city and emerged as the largest and most militarily capable belligerent in the country. The FNLA, meanwhile, had

³⁴ Kapuściński, *Another Day of Life*, 39.

³⁵ Kapuściński, *Another Day of Life*, 40.

³⁶ Kapuściński, *Another Day of Life*, 40.

concentrated its forces to the north of Luanda and UNITA's forces were still scattered in pockets across central and southern Angola. The FNLA and UNITA had also entered into an uneasy "alliance".³⁷ Three factors made this tenuous partnership possible. First, the MPLA had managed to attract larger volumes of external assistance and was thus, as mentioned above, had become more militarily capable than either the FNLA or UNITA. Hence, *realpolitik* favoured an alliance. Second, the FNLA and UNITA independently marketed themselves to Western countries as being stalwarts against Marxist expansion in southern Africa. Considering the extent of the overlap in the FNLA's and UNITA's constructed narratives, the FNLA and UNITA were probably concerned that continued animosity might have been viewed in the West as a contradiction to their stories. Finally, as pointed out above, the two sides were largely geographically separated; thus, even in the absence of an alliance, the two belligerents were unlikely to have participated in much direct fighting.

Throughout 1975, all the foreign powers gradually increased their respective commitments in the civil war. However, late October and early November represented a clear qualitative and quantitative divide in the pattern of foreign intervention in Angola. Until this point, the exogenous resources received by the belligerents had principally been in the form of economic or indirect military intervention. However, from late October, Cuban, Zairian and South African troops began to appear inside Angola in support of their respective allies.

Foreign intervention in Phase II

At the outbreak of the civil war, the small size and limited capabilities of the belligerents encouraged foreign powers to intervene in the Angolan Civil War. That is, foreign powers could "get in the game" at relatively low cost. However, once involved Moscow, Havana, Washington and Pretoria found that they were

³⁷ Michael T. Kaufman, "Angolans in Luanda area try to regroup," *New York Times*, 6 November 1975, 37.

collectively obliged to continually escalate their respective interventions in response to each others' actions and the resulting rise in capabilities of the belligerents, which needed greater levels of assistance for exogenous resources to have any significant impact. The overall effect was that by November 1975, vast quantities of exogenous resources were flowing to the belligerents, radically altering the pattern of foreign intervention in the civil war.

Although the MPLA received assistance from a range of sources, its two principal sponsors remained the Soviet Union and Cuba. In the last four months of 1974, the Soviet Union began supplying the MPLA with \$1 million worth of desperately-needed small arms, mostly AK-47 assault rifles.³⁸ In addition, in December 1974, Moscow invited the MPLA to send 250 cadres to the Soviet Union to undertake military and political training.³⁹ The dawn of 1975 heralded a new wave of Soviet indirect military aid to the MPLA. Between March and November 1975, Moscow delivered an estimated 30 to 40 cargo planes and 27 shiploads of weapons to the MPLA. By January 1976, it is estimated that Soviet military aid to the MPLA had already reached \$200 million, which included conventional assets such as T-34 and T-55 tanks, armoured personnel carriers, 122-mm Katyusha rockets and MiG-17 and MiG-21 aircraft.⁴⁰ The flood of more sophisticated Soviet weaponry to the MPLA created a need for foreign trainers and advisors. On 25 July 1975, it was Cuba which responded to Neto's appeals and deployed 50 weapons specialists to Brazzaville.⁴¹ The Cuban commitment to the Angolan Civil War then too proceeded to rapidly escalate. In August, the Cuban training contingent was increased to 480 specialists.⁴² Next, on 4 November, the decision was made to launch "Operation

³⁸ Fred Bridgland, *Jonas Savimbi: A Key to Africa*, (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 1986), 116.

³⁹ Guimarães, *The Origins of the Angolan Civil War*, 100.

⁴⁰ Keith Somerville, *Angola: Politics, Economics and Society*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1986), 162; George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 303. For specific weapon types see, *SIPRI Arms Transfer Database*, (Stockholm: Swedish International Peace Research Institute, 2007).

⁴¹ George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 64.

⁴² The four camps were located in Cabinda, Salazar (N'Dalatando), Benguela and Henrique de Carvalho (Saurimo). See, Jay Mallin, *Cuba in Angola*, (Miami: University of Miami Press, 1987), 4; George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 64. When the existing 50 Cuban instructors redeployed from Brazzaville to Luanda, their Soviet colleagues remained behind. It was intended that the Cuban instructors would take 4,800 MPLA recruits, combine the recruits with Soviet

Carlota” which would eventually inject over 30,000 Cuban troops into the Angolan Civil War. The first of these troops – mostly specialist artillerymen and Special Forces – landed in Luanda on 7 November. The first Cuban ships carrying the bulk of the intervention force steamed into Luanda on 27 November, with carrying in excess of 1,200 troops and all their equipment.⁴³

On the FNLA and UNITA’s side, the key intervening powers were China, the United States, Zaire and South Africa. In March 1974, China was the first power to react to the new political dynamic in Angola by establishing a training camp in Zaire with 112 advisors and some 450 tonnes of arms for FNLA soldiers.⁴⁴ The weapons delivered by China to the FNLA were estimated at \$26 million, which included 25 Type-59 tanks (a Chinese clone of the Soviet T-55 which Moscow had supplied to the MPLA).⁴⁵ China, however, quickly grew deeply uncomfortable with its role as a major sponsor of the FNLA, which, by this stage, was also being supported by the United States and South Africa. Hence, on 24 October 1975, China announced its disengagement from the conflict. The United States’ intervention in Angola began tentatively, only providing Holden Roberto with \$265,000 between 22 January and 14 July 1975.⁴⁶ Washington’s timidity was in contrast to CIA field officers who reported that “[g]iven the weakness of the contending armies, one modern weapons system such as [C-47 gunship] could make a dramatic difference, completely dominating the battlefield.”⁴⁷ The field officers therefore lobbied for an additional \$200,000 to purchase such a weapon. However, significant volumes of American assistance did not arrive until after President Ford signed “Operation IAFeature”, on 18 July 1975, which allocated \$31.7 million to the FNLA, by which

supplied weapons, and convert them into 16 infantry battalions, 25 mortar batteries and anti-aircraft units. Also see, Gunn, “Cuba and Angola,” 72-73.

⁴³ George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 81.

⁴⁴ Ian Taylor, *China and Africa*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 78-79; George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 54; SIPRI *Arms Transfer Database*.

⁴⁵ SIPRI *Arms Transfer Database*.

⁴⁶ Although intended to purchase weapons a considerable proportion was used to acquire Luanda’s leading daily newspaper and a television station. Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 54; Bender, “Kissinger in Angola: Anatomy of Failure,” 76-77; George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 54.

⁴⁷ Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 134 and also see 88.

time the growth in the belligerents' cumulative capabilities would operate so as to diminish the impact of the sum.⁴⁸

Direct military intervention in support of the FNLA and UNITA came from Zaire and South Africa. In May 1975, approximately 1,200 Zairian troops crossed into northern Angola in support of the FNLA. The South African involvement in Angola was a mix of economic, indirect and direct military intervention. First, in July 1975, Pretoria sent \$14 million-worth of weaponry to the FNLA and UNITA. Next, in September, the South African intervention was expanded to include training camps inside Angola itself. The belligerents were in dire need of expertise and, therefore, the SADF training camps relieved a pressing binding restraint for the belligerents. 12 South African instructors established the first camp at M'pupa to train several hundred FNLA soldiers from Chipenda's former-MPLA faction. A second camp was set up at Calombo by 18 SADF instructors to convert UNITA recruits into two infantry brigades.⁴⁹ Finally, in October, South Africa launched "Operation Savannah" which represented South Africa's first direct military intervention in the civil war. On 28 October, the FNLA recruits at M'pupa were reinforced by 1,000 Bushman infantry, 50 armoured cars manned by 250 soldiers, and an additional 750 SADF support troops to become Combat Formation Zulu.⁵⁰ Similarly, a second battle group, codenamed Foxtrot, was organised from the UNITA and SADF soldiers at Calombo and allocated a squadron of Eland armoured cars.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 206. Bender asserted that this figure was a gross underestimated as the CIA delivered older weapons and included devaluation. For instance, ex-service .45 automatic pistols were valued by the CIA at \$5 each and .30 automatic carbines at \$7.55. When recalculated to allow for devaluation estimates US aid to the FNLA have been as high as \$100 million. See, Bender, "Kissinger in Angola: Anatomy of Failure," 134-135.

⁴⁹ The SADF's UNITA training mission was later expanded to 40 SADF personnel. Bridgland, *Jonas Savimbi*, 167.

⁵⁰ Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 165; Hodges, "How the MPLA Won," 56.

⁵¹ James, *A Political History of the Civil War in Angola*, 145.

The balance of capabilities in Phase II

As weapons, equipment, and combat troops flooded into the civil war, the balance of capabilities underwent radical changes. Since the outbreak of the civil war, all the belligerents' cumulative capabilities had been steadily increasing, a trend that accelerated sharply during the first six months of 1975. The result, in Phase II, was that the average cumulative capabilities moved towards much higher levels.

Indeed, in this phase, the MPLA had already quadrupled in size, the FNLA had grown by half and the number of UNITA troops had doubled.⁵² The quality of these forces also improved. Large numbers of the belligerents' soldiers received training in conventional military proficiencies by Cuban, Chinese, and South African instructors. These new regular formations were, on the whole, led directly or indirectly by foreign officers. In addition, the quantity and quality of the equipment used by the belligerents' forces steadily improved during the first year. From using antiquated rifles, grenades, and machetes, the belligerents had upgraded their arsenals to include armoured vehicles, artillery and, in some instances, combat aircraft. For example, the MPLA acquired some 198 BTR-40, BTR-50 and BTR-60PB armoured personnel carriers, 68 PT-76 light tanks, 80 T-34/85 tanks, 150 T-54 main battle tanks, 100 BM-21 122mm mobile rocket launchers, 40 ZSU-57-2 anti-aircraft guns, and 8 MiG-17 and 24 MiG-21MF/Fishbed-J fighter aircraft.⁵³ Finally, in addition to the increasing volumes of exogenous resources pouring into the country, the departing Portuguese army abandoned significant quantities of arms that also found their way into the possession of the belligerents.⁵⁴ In sum, hundreds of millions of dollars worth of weapons and thousands of troops pumped into the civil war by foreign sponsors greatly increased the coercive potential of the belligerents.

⁵² Guimarães, *The Origins of the Angolan Civil War*, 100.

⁵³ SIPRI, *Arms Transfer Database*.

⁵⁴ Klinghoffer, *The Angolan War*, 41.

During this phase, the concentration of capabilities remained relatively balanced. All belligerents could call upon thousands of soldiers, many trained by foreign instructors and organised into regular formations, along with tanks, armoured cars, heavy artillery and mortars. However, it was the MPLA which benefited the most from its foreign sponsors and, consequently, it began to increase its advantage over its rivals. The MPLA's particularly rapid growth meant that by August 1975 it had overtaken the FNLA as the largest of the belligerents in Angola. By the end of 1975, the MPLA could call upon an estimated 20,000 soldiers.⁵⁵ Furthermore, due to Cubans being the most numerous foreign soldiers in Angola, the MPLA forces were generally better trained and organised than their rivals. A correspondent from the London *Times* reported that the "major advantage" of the MPLA, "which did not possess any significant weaponry superiority" over its competitors, was its "manifestly superior organisational and infrastructural capability."⁵⁶ Structural superiority, along with greater volumes of external assistance, allowed the MPLA to gradually gain an edge over the FNLA and UNITA. The overall result was that the MPLA was able to cement its authority over Luanda and obtain control over 11 of Angola's 15 provinces. On 1 October 1975, the commander of the Cuban contingent to Angola reported that the "present military situation favours the MPLA."⁵⁷

However, the MPLA's position was not insurmountable and the FNLA and UNITA continued to pose a serious challenge. The FNLA remained the MPLA's main rival with an army of 15,000 troops in a threatening position to the north of Luanda.⁵⁸ It was reinforced by a thousand Zairian troops, along with armoured vehicles and

⁵⁵ Taylor, *China and Africa*, 80; Daniel Spikes, *Angola and the Politics of Intervention: From Local Bush War to Chronic Crisis in Southern Africa*, (Jefferson, NC: Farland and Company, 1993), 192.

⁵⁶ Jon Blair, "Unscrambling America's Role in the Angolan Fiasco," *Times*, 23 June 1976 as quoted in Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution*, 262; Bender, "Kissinger in Angola: Anatomy of Failure," 79. It was reported, for example, that the FNLA had "no regular organization beyond what Holden Roberto could personally control" and so at "the time of the civil war it had a large but poorly disciplined military." Steven F. Jackson, "China's Third World Foreign Policy: The Case of Angola and Mozambique, 1961-93," *The China Quarterly*, No. 142, (1995), 388.

⁵⁷ George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 67.

⁵⁸ At this stage, Heimer reported there to have been 20,000 FNLA soldiers. Heimer, *The Decolonization Conflict in Angola 1979-75*, 66.

artillery. UNITA's force strength, concentrated in the south of the country, is more difficult to estimate. However, at the end of 1975, UNITA is likely to have fielded about 4,000 troops.⁵⁹ Hence, when combined, the FNLA and UNITA could assemble almost as many troops as the MPLA.

Conventional warfare in Phase II

From October 1975, observers of the Angolan Civil War began reporting dramatic changes in the nature of the warfare. Kapuściński, for instance, observed that the "war in Angola has changed in character. Until recently it was primarily...fought with light weapons...[but t]oday it is more and more a war of regular armies and heavy equipment."⁶⁰ Similarly, a Western journalist reported that the warfare "is no longer a bush war of small resistance bands. It is becoming a sort of conventional war of rapidly moving vehicle columns, artillery and projectiles."⁶¹ The rapid change in warfare was a direct result of the large volumes of exogenous resources provided to all sides in the civil war.

Over the course of the conflict's first year, offensives changed from disorganised, sporadic, and random assaults on enemy buildings in Luanda and occupied villages, to massed, concentrated, drives towards key cities and strategic positions. From October, large columns of motorised troops, supported by armour and artillery, zig-zagged across Angola following the road system that linked the major provincial towns. On the southern front, as battle groups Zulu and Foxtrot advanced into Angola, they entered a theatre dominated by irregular warfare. Previously, as the belligerents had possessed limited cumulative capabilities, neither side had been able to exploit the weakness of their rival. Thus, as George

⁵⁹ Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 91 and 155; Kenneth L. Adelman, "Report from Angola," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 53, No. 3, (1975), 570.

⁶⁰ Kapuściński, *Another Day of Life*, 122. Other journalists agreed that the MPLA was "seeking to shift its widely scattered guerrilla units into conventional military commands." See, Kaufman, "Angolans in Luanda area try to regroup," 37.

⁶¹ *The Observer*, 30 November 1975, quoted in Robin Hallett, "The South African Intervention in Angola, 1975-76," *African Affairs*, Vol. 77, No. 308, (1978), 373.

described, “the war in southern Angola had degenerated into a messy stalemate, each movement skirmishing with its opponents whilst making no effort to capture their power bases.”⁶² Hence, it is unsurprising that when injected into this environment, Zulu and Foxtrot made easy progress, driving deep into Angola. Their concentrated thrust captured 250 miles in only five days, making quick and easy progress against the MPLA. Zulu captured many of the main southern towns before, on 28 October, the South African force, along with 1,000 UNITA soldiers, captured its objective: the southern port of Namibe.⁶³ Meanwhile, Foxtrot was tasked with securing Huambo, Angola’s second-largest city. On 5 October, Foxtrot successfully captured the city after defeating the dug-in MPLA-Cuban defenders in a pitched battle to the west of Huambo.

In the north, the conventional offensive operations were more geographically compressed. The majority of the fighting took place between Luanda and Caxito, a provincial town roughly 30 kilometres north-east of the capital. On 30 August 1975, the MPLA pushed the FNLA from a series of tactically-important hills to the north of the capital. The MPLA’s armour-led offensive continued until, following a major pitched battle, it expelled the FNLA forces from Caxito. However, the arrival of 1,200 Zairian troops swung the momentum of the campaign back in favour of the FNLA, and on 17 September the combined FNLA-Zairian force recaptured Caxito.⁶⁴ The significance of Caxito was that it had been used by the FNLA to concentrate its forces for the inevitable attack on the capital. With its recapture, the FNLA set about rebuilding its forces. As George argued, it was clear that “Roberto believed that without control of Luanda any future FNLA government would lack international legitimacy”; thus he would have to attempt to capture the city before the official transition of power.⁶⁵

⁶² George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 72.

⁶³ Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 165; Hodges, “How the MPLA Won,” 56.

⁶⁴ See, George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 73.

⁶⁵ George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 86.

Over the span of Phase II, a clearer distinction between offensive and defensive tactics emerged. In defence, the belligerents prepared fixed defensive positions characterised by trenches, bunkers, dug-in artillery and machine guns. For the belligerents, equally as important as the tools of war that had been supplied by the foreign powers were the knowledge and skills supplied by Cuban, Zairian and South African specialists, who instructed the belligerents' former-guerrilla fighters and raw recruits in the methods of positional defence. The effect of this training became evident in the MPLA's defence of Luanda.

As the MPLA held the capital and the Cabinda region, it was a greater proponent of defensive tactics.⁶⁶ The moment the first Cuban Special Forces battalion landed in Luanda on 8 November, it set about organising the defence of the city. The topography to the north of Luanda is favourable to a defender. Here, the main northern road passes through the Quifangondo Valley, a natural defile with the Atlantic Ocean to the west and the impassable Panguila Lagoon to the east. Upon landing, Cuban combat engineers immediately began preparing deep bunkers and trenches and digging in the MPLA's artillery batteries along the northern heights of Luanda, which overlooked the Quifangondo Valley. Surveying the MPLA's defensive preparations, Kapuściński described the frontline as being "heaps of earth, lines of entrenchments, artillery, tents, crates" and on "the other side, in the distance, a sunlit hill, the enemy's fortifications" at Caxito.⁶⁷ After a week of probing, and with less than 24 hours until independence, Roberto finally ordered the major FNLA assault on Luanda. The FNLA offensive began with it laying down a barrage from three South African-supplied 140-mm howitzers on the MPLA's positions, which was followed by a bombing run by three South African Canberra bombers flying from Namibia. The assault column was led by 12 armoured cars, followed by a mass formation of FNLA and Zairian troops.

⁶⁶ Tore Linné Eriksen, "The Origins of a Special Relationship: Norway and Southern Africa, 1960-1975," in Tore Linné Eriksen, (ed.), *Norway and National Liberation in Southern Africa*, (Stockholm: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2000), 85.

⁶⁷ Kapuściński, *Another Day of Life*, 103-104.

The MPLA and Cuban defenders withstood the opening bombardment and then patiently waited for the entire assault force to enter the valley. At the precise moment when the last FNLA-Zairian infantry had entered the north-east end of the valley and the first armoured car was about to reach the MPLA-Cuban forward-most defensive positions, the defenders opened fire with machine-guns, mortars, artillery and rocket fire, trapping the FNLA's helpless column. Particularly devastating were the Soviet-supplied and manned, 122-mm "Stalin Organs" rocket launchers. Reportedly, in only minutes, these weapons fired two thousand rockets onto the massed FNLA troops filling the Quifangondo Valley with sharp splinters of shrapnel and thunder clap-sounding explosions, which quickly turned the FNLA army into a disorganised and retreating mob.⁶⁸ Roberto's troops fled in disorder, abandoning weapons, vehicles, and wounded comrades, never again to pose a serious challenge to the MPLA. Stockwell concluded that the Russian supplied rocket launchers "as much as any one thing, eventually decided the outcome of the civil war in Angola."⁶⁹

On the southern front, the defending MPLA-Cuban troops faced a very different enemy and military situation. UNITA and SADF forces had made relatively easy gains towards Luanda and so, on 13 November, Cuban engineers blew up the bridges over the Queve River. The MPLA-Cuban's forces established a southern defensive line running along the northern bank of the Queve with the aim of

⁶⁸ James, *A Political History of the Civil War in Angola*, 63-64; Spikes, *Angola and the Politics of Intervention*, 259-262; Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 214-215.

⁶⁹ Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 163 and 162. This was a particularly interesting interaction effect. As Stockwell also observed: "Well-organized troops could endure such shelling indefinitely, by digging in or by aggressive patrolling [sic] and manoeuvring. The 122 could also be neutralized by coordinated artillery fire, tactical aircraft, or electronically guided rocketry, but these were unavailable to the FNLA" (163). Stockwell's analysis was given voice in Ethiopia. Here, "the Soviets tried to take a chapter from the Angolan civil war by supplying the Ethiopians with a number of Stalin organ rocket launchers, but in this case they proved relatively ineffective against highly trained and disciplined Somali troops." Bruce D. Porter, *The USSR in Third World Conflicts: Soviet Arms and Diplomacy in Local War, 1945-1980*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 203. Thus, this example underlines the fact that the interaction effect does not only include the capabilities of the recipient, but also must consider those of the opposition.

blocking every crossing point.⁷⁰ On the southern bank, Zulu strung “itself out over a long defensive line and [dug] itself in.”⁷¹ Meanwhile, Foxtrot redeployed to central Angola to defend Huambo, which it did by building up a layered defence in the area of Quibala.

Clearly, in sum, the new pattern of foreign intervention was instrumental in changing the form of warfare in Angola from irregular to conventional. This shift required “know-how, leadership and planning on a level which [was] not readily available among Angola’s black population.”⁷² Thus, the move from irregular to conventional warfare was, to a large extent, “fuelled by increasing amounts of arms received by the three movements from abroad.”⁷³ What was also critical for this particular dynamic was that all sides received sufficient levels of foreign assistance to allow the change to a conventional strategy. Indeed, at least initially, the volume of exogenous resources being supplied to the belligerents was relatively even (although, over time, it was the MPLA which began to benefit most from its particular patrons).

4. Foreign Intervention and Guerrilla Warfare, First Period: Phase III

By the end of January 1976, the pattern of foreign intervention in the Angolan Civil War had changed for a third time. The MPLA received less exogenous resources than it had previously, although it did continue to receive substantial volumes of foreign assistance. However, the real changes in the pattern of foreign intervention occurred on the side of the FNLA and UNITA. The FNLA and its supporters had been decisively defeated at Quifangondo, while UNITA’s principal sponsors disengaged from the civil war, cutting its flow of exogenous resources. This

⁷⁰ Rothchild and Hartzell, “The Case of Angola: Four Power Intervention and Disengagement,” 176; Michael Wolfers and Jane Bergerol, *Angola in the Frontline*, (London: Zed Press, 1983), 37-44.

⁷¹ Jane Bergerol, *Financial Times*, 3 December 1975, quoted in Hallett, “The South African Intervention in Angola,” 373.

⁷² *The Observer*, 30 November 1975, quoted in Hallett, “The South African Intervention in Angola,” 373.

⁷³ Rothchild and Hartzell, “The Case of Angola: Four Power Intervention and Disengagement,” 167.

deviation in the independent variable was sufficient to produce Phase III beginning from late January 1976.

In Phase III, the majority of the fighting shifted from the outskirts of Luanda and the southern coastal roads to central Angola. This was primarily for two reasons. First, UNITA's ethnic base was among Angola's 2 million Ovimbundu people located in the central highlands, who became its main source of endogenous resources.⁷⁴ Second, the MPLA's political, economic and military centre was in Luanda and, like most weak regimes, its authority decreased over distance.⁷⁵ Hence, UNITA was able to avoid the MPLA by escaping into Angola's remote outer provinces from where it was able to begin a guerrilla campaign.

Foreign intervention in Phase III

In early 1976, the pattern of foreign intervention changed for a third time. Somewhat ironically for the Soviet Union and Cuba, the MPLA's victory over the FNLA and UNITA committed them even more heavily to Angola. For Moscow and Havana the price of maintaining an ally in southern Africa was that it could not immediately disengage from the civil war. Nevertheless, they both made attempts to extricate themselves from the conflict. The Soviet Union honoured its commitment to supply \$400 million worth of arms in 1976, but swiftly cut its aid in 1977 to \$150 million per year, which remained steady until 1980.⁷⁶ Havana, likewise, attempted to scale back its involvement. However, continued fighting and political disorder within the MPLA resulted in only a slight drop from the provision of 36,000 Cuban troops at the start of 1976 to 34,000 troops in January

⁷⁴ Legum, "A Study of International Intervention in Angola," 10.

⁷⁵ Håvard Hegre and Clionadh Raleigh, *Population Size, Concentration, and Civil War: A Geographical Disaggregated Analysis*, World Bank Policy Research Working Paper, No. 4243, (2007).

⁷⁶ Somerville, *Angola*, 162; George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 303. For specific weapon types see, SIPRI, *Arms Transfer Database*.

1977. This downward trend was reversed in 1979 when the number of Cuban soldiers in Angola climbed to 40,000.⁷⁷

The United States and South Africa disengaged from the Angolan Civil War in December 1975 and January 1976, respectively, leaving a defeated UNITA, scattered, demoralised, and without any source of exogenous resources. The growing realisation in Washington that Moscow and Havana were deeply committed to the Angolan conflict caused great anxiety among certain political circles. On 13 December, the resolve of the United States' Senate broke with the publishing of a *New York Times* article detailing the direct military intervention of Apartheid South Africa in the Angola Civil War. To the fury of Kissinger, the United States Senate passed the *Clark Amendment* on 19 December, prohibiting further CIA assistance to any belligerent in the civil war. Among the repercussions of this decision was that South Africa was left politically and strategically isolated. With the loss of Washington's unspoken, but yet clearly visible political support, and with its troops operating deep inside Angola against the MPLA, Cuba and (indirectly) the Soviet Union, Pretoria decided to disengage from the conflict. The first South African direct military intervention in the Angolan Civil War ended on 24 January 1976, after the South African Prime Minister announced that he was "not prepared to fight on behalf of the free world alone."⁷⁸

The balance of capabilities in Phase III

The American and South African disengagement from Angola radically reshaped the balance of capabilities. The average cumulative capabilities within the civil war system experienced some changes. In 1976, significant amounts of military capabilities were removed from Angola, with the defeat of the FNLA's army

⁷⁷ George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 117.

⁷⁸ James, *A Political History of the Civil War in Angola*, 75. Tvedten supports this assessment arguing that "The U.S. refusal to lend further support was one of the main reasons for the withdrawal of South African forces, which on November 20, 1975, stood only 100 kilometres south of Luanda." Inge Tvedten, *Angola: Struggle for Peace and Reconstruction*, (Boulder: Westview, 1997), 37. However, the subsequent South African direct military interventions in Angola suggest that acting unilaterally was no a major concern for Pretoria.

catalysing the removal of roughly 20,000 FNLA personnel, 1,200 Zairian troops and all their armoured vehicles and artillery,⁷⁹ and the withdrawal of all of the SADF's armoured vehicles, artillery, and personnel to Namibia. In 1977, Cuba withdrew 2,000 troops out of Angola, scaling its commitment back to 34,000 soldiers.⁸⁰ These factors combined to decrease the average cumulative capabilities in the civil war system.

However, the most significant change in the balance of capabilities in Phase III was in concentration. In 1977, the combined MPLA-Cuban army totalled over 56,000 personnel, equipped with Soviet-supplied tanks, artillery and advanced attack aircraft.⁸¹ On the other hand, neither the FNLA nor UNITA were potent military forces. Indeed, following the battle at Quifangondo Valley, the FNLA had ceased to exist as a coherent belligerent.⁸² The UNITA, for its part, could only call upon between one and three thousand poorly-armed and trained guerrilla fighters scattered across central and south-eastern Angola.⁸³ "Practically alone against the MPLA-Cuban forces" observed Guimarães, "UNITA was routed and its forces dispersed."⁸⁴ By September 1976, one journalist summed up the military situation in Angola as follows:

[the] MPLA had gained control of twelve out of Angola's sixteen districts. But their real position was in fact much stronger than this position may indicate. Nourished by a flood of volunteers and led by veterans of the long struggle against the Portuguese, the army of the MPLA is now in control of the whole of Angola except for the two

⁷⁹ Most estimates are close to this figure, for instance Ebinger calculated FNLA strength in 1975 at 14,000. Charles K. Ebinger, "External Intervention in Internal War: The Politics and Diplomacy of the Angolan Civil War," *Orbis*, Vol. 20, No. 3, (1976), 674.

⁸⁰ Personal correspondence with Edward George on 2 August 2007. Also see, George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 303 (appendix 4).

⁸¹ Personal correspondence with Edward George on 2 August 2007. Also see, George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 303 (appendix 4). Indeed, it was clear that victory in 1975 had "went to the best trained, armed and supplied of the three groups, the MPLA" Human Rights Watch, *Angola: Violations of the Laws of War By Both Sides*, (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1989), 28.

⁸² The remains of the FNLA lingered in the Angolan-Zairian border until the MPLA and Zaire agreed not to harbour each others' insurgent actors in 1978. The FNLA was quickly reined in by Zaire and Holden Roberto went into exile in 1979. Human Rights Watch, *Angola: Violations of the Laws of War by Both Sides*, 36.

⁸³ Most estimates are close to this figure, for instance Ebinger calculated FNLA strength in 1975 at 14,000. Ebinger, "External Intervention in Internal War", 674.

⁸⁴ Guimarães, *The Origins of the Angolan Civil War*, 113.

northerly districts...[and] two central districts...and a few scattered points in the far south."⁸⁵

Indeed, in April 1976, the MPLA had captured N'Giva, which had been the last remaining provincial capital outside of its control. Clearly, the relative capabilities between the MPLA and UNITA was extremely wide. The MPLA's concentration of capabilities was almost total, with UNITA's cumulative capabilities representing a tiny fraction of the total capabilities present in the civil war system.

The interplay of the decrease in the average cumulative capabilities and the shift towards disparate concentration had consequences for the course of the civil war. Only three days after the South African evacuation, UNITA abandoned its political and operational capital at Huambo and retreated into Angola's eastern bushland.⁸⁶ Most observers predicted that the ill-trained peasant force would quickly disintegrate.⁸⁷ However, the cumulative capabilities of the MPLA were not sufficient to impose control over all Angola and as a consequence, UNITA was able to retreat into Angola's extensive rural areas and adopt a guerrilla strategy. Savimbi disclosed that since "early January my feeling had been that the conventional war was over." He argued that the determining cause of UNITA's adoption of guerrilla strategy was the change in the pattern of foreign intervention, insisting that it "was not possible for us to continue because we were not being given the right kind of arms, and even if we did begin to get them we did not have enough people trained to use them effectively...[so I gave] the order to our people to disperse into the bush so that we [could] save men and arms."⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Basil Davidson, *West Africa*, 19 September 1975 as quoted in Hallett, "The South African Intervention in Angola, 1975-76," 359-360.

⁸⁶ James, *A Political History of the Civil War in Angola*, 75. Also see, Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 232.

⁸⁷ John A. Marcum, "UNITA: The Politics of Survival," in Helen Kitchen, (ed.), *Angola, Mozambique, and the West*, (New York: Praeger, 1987), 3.

⁸⁸ Bridgland, *Jonas Savimbi*, 176.

Guerrilla warfare in Phase III

In 1976, guerrilla warfare emerged as the dominant mode through which the civil war was fought.⁸⁹ However, unlike previous evolutions in warfare, where the belligerents' style of warfare had changed in similar ways, this time their tactics evolved differently. On the one hand, the MPLA attempted to hunt down the remaining UNITA fighters by conducting large, multi-brigade, conventional sweeps through central and southern Angola. On the other hand, UNITA attempted to avoid contact with the MPLA's forces while striking at its economic base. In other words, the warfare had evolved into a classic guerrilla pattern.

The MPLA dubbed its operation against UNITA as the "Fight against the Bandits".⁹⁰ Between April and November 1976, Cuban soldiers spearheaded four search-and-destroy operations in the Moxico, Cuando Cubango and Cunene provinces against UNITA guerrillas. Until the early 1980s, such joint MPLA-Cuban search-and-destroy operations became the regime's primary form of aggressive action against UNITA. Villages would be surrounded by the MPLA-Cuban forces which then "searched for hidden supplies, ammunition and any valuables, all of which was confiscated (and a great deal looted by the troops) before the [village] was set alight and the troops withdrew."⁹¹

For UNITA's part, in early 1977, Savimbi declared that his military objective was to bring "the Angolan economy to its knees."⁹² As such, UNITA's early attacks took the form of sabotage and raids on government sources of endogenous inputs. One of UNITA's favourite targets was the Benguela railway, which ran from the Zairian border across provinces where UNITA was active to the Angolan port city of

⁸⁹ The precise date of the change in strategy was reported to have been the first week of February 1976 when news agencies reported that UNITA "abandoned conventional warfare against their rivals...and fled into the bush" to begin its "guerrilla attacks." See, "Pro-Western Angola force says it has begun guerrilla warfare," *New York Times*, 17 February 1976, 3.

⁹⁰ George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 119; "Angola reported to wage all-out drive on guerrillas," *New York Times*, 9 November 1976, 4.

⁹¹ George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 154.

⁹² William Minter, *Apartheid's Contras*, (London: Zed, 1994), 194.

Benguela.⁹³ Indeed, sabotaging a section of the 1,000-kilometre track was a relatively easy task for UNITA. Suspended, destroyed, or stolen cargo cost the MPLA some \$89 million per annum.⁹⁴ Besides the railway, UNITA also ambushed commercial and military traffic on Angola's road network. Between 1975 and 1976, due in large part to UNITA ambushes, the number of operational trucks in Angola decreased from 28,000 to fewer than 6,000.⁹⁵ The final pillar of UNITA's offensive strategy was against the civilian population. UNITA attempted to coerce the civilian population to settle outside areas under the MPLA's control. Thus, as Minter observed, UNITA "attacked villages whose residents refused to leave government-controlled zones to join Unita in the bush."⁹⁶ UNITA would then frequently lay landmines in MPLA-controlled areas to deter the civilians from returning to their villages.

Although UNITA's forces were focussed in the south-east, on occasion its guerrilla units struck as far north as Luanda and even in Cabinda. On 30 November 1981, for instance, UNITA attacked and damaged an oil refinery in Luanda.⁹⁷ As a consequence, the MPLA was forced to allocate fixed and permanent garrisons to defend all of Angola's provincial capitals and commercial centres, especially along the Benguela railway and around oil-producing installations in Cabinda. The task of protection was so large that eventually the majority of the MPLA's troops were assigned to defensive duties. In addition, most of the Cuban contingent was also appointed to defensive positions. Each of Angola's 17 provincial capitals was defended by at least one Cuban regiment and much of the remaining Cubans defended Luanda.⁹⁸ The larger garrisons, such as those at Huambo and Lubango, had up to 5,000 Cuban soldiers assigned to their defence, supported by tanks,

⁹³ Marvine Howe, "New Angola move by Cuba reported: opposition guerrilla group said to step up attacks against key rail line," *New York Times*, 4 June 1976, 7; Somerville, *Angola*, 57; Rothchild and Hartzell, "The Case of Angola: Four Power Intervention and Disengagement," 178; James, *A Political History of the Civil War in Angola*, 112-114.

⁹⁴ Minter, *Apartheid's Contras*, 194. Although successful at attacking the railway, UNITA did not have the capabilities to immobilize trains for any significant time. See, Wolfers and Bergerol, *Angola in the Frontline*, 228.

⁹⁵ Minter, *Apartheid's Contras*, 192.

⁹⁶ Minter, *Apartheid's Contras*, 194.

⁹⁷ James, *A Political History of the Civil War in Angola*, 114.

⁹⁸ George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 120.

artillery, radar and anti-aircraft missile defences. Thus, the “air defence dilemma”, common to incumbents fighting against a guerrilla force, severely diminished the number of MPLA units available for offensive operations against UNITA.

In defence, UNITA’s strategy had two dimensions. First, UNITA’s forces refused to stand and fight against the MPLA’s larger, more sophisticated and better-trained forces. Savimbi boasted that when the MPLA “come with tanks, it is true, we will run away. But we will return when they have passed. They’ve just wasted petrol.”⁹⁹ UNITA had developed an organisational structure that was highly mobile. Even UNITA’s “capital” called Jamba was, in practice, nothing more than a roving command centre. It was reported that Jamba, for security reasons, was sporadically relocated in the south-eastern part of Cuando Cubango province.¹⁰⁰ The second dimension of UNITA’s defence strategy was social. UNITA used the forceful relocation of civilian populations as a security measure against “information leakage”.¹⁰¹ UNITA developed a classification system which only allowed those deemed to be loyal to UNITA to remain near areas controlled by the MPLA. All “others were displaced to areas more difficult to flee, such as the bush.”¹⁰²

Overall, the guerrilla warfare phase of the conflict highlights some of distinctions between it and the previous forms of warfare. In earlier phases, although the MPLA’s cumulative capabilities were not dramatically superior to those of its opponents’ MPLA was, paradoxically, better able to bring about its desired outcomes, namely expelling its rivals from Luanda and engaging the FNLA in a short, decisive, pitched battle. In contrast, as the MPLA increased its endogenous

⁹⁹ Bridgland, *Jonas Savimbi*, 237.

¹⁰⁰ James, *A Political History of the Civil War in Angola*, 99.

¹⁰¹ Stuvøy, *War Economy and the Social Order of Insurgencies*, 57.

¹⁰² Stuvøy, *War Economy and the Social Order of Insurgencies*, 57. Also see, Bridgland, *Jonas Savimbi*, 290-294; Africa Watch, *Angola: Civilians Devastated by 15 Year War*, (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1991), 1-3; Minter, *Apartheids Contras*, 218-219.

resource base and cumulative capabilities in both absolute and relative terms, its ability to inflict a decisive blow against UNITA diminished.¹⁰³

5. Conclusion

Temporal variation in the pattern of foreign intervention and the balance of capabilities were instrumental in shaping the type of warfare that emerged in the first period of the Angolan Civil War. Indeed, the distinguishing characteristic of the first period of the Angolan Civil War was the ease with which foreign intervention influenced the course of the conflict. The significant impact that foreign intervention had on the warfare has not been lost on students of the period. For instance, commenting on the change from irregular to conventional warfare, George remarked that “Cold War military technology had arrived dramatically in Angola, and the scale of forces engaged at Quifangondo demonstrated how far foreign intervention had escalated the conflict since street-fighting broke out exactly one year before.”¹⁰⁴ The ease with which the warfare changed from irregular, to conventional, and then to guerrilla was the most striking feature of the first period.

The theory developed in Chapter Two offers several explanations for why foreign intervention played such a central role in determining the form of warfare that emerged in the first period of the Angolan Civil War. First, at the outset of the civil war, each of the belligerents possessed only limited cumulative capabilities. As a result, even modest volumes of foreign assistance had a dramatic effect on the belligerents’ overall military capabilities. Second, prior to the final Portuguese evacuation, the belligerents were poorly-armed and had restricted access to endogenous sources of weapons. Hence, the foreign powers’ economic and indirect

¹⁰³ This dynamic seems to be a case of what Maoz called the “power paradox”, by which he meant that “increased control over resources hurts some actors, while decreased control over resources may well benefit others.” See, Zeev Maoz, “Power, Capabilities, and Paradoxical Conflict Outcome,” *World Politics*, Vol. 41, No. 2, (1989), 261.

¹⁰⁴ George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 90.

military assistance relived a critical binding restraint, which allowed the belligerents to rapidly convert a greater number of recruits to military units. Finally, during the first period, all sides received direct military assistance. Cuba, Zaire and South Africa all deployed conventional military assets and sufficient numbers of trained personnel to utilise the tanks and artillery and organise many of the belligerents' own forces. Hence, this form of intervention would be expected to have a larger and more immediate impact on the recipients' cumulative capabilities than other forms.

In sum, and as the theory predicted, the warfare in the first period of the Angolan Civil War moved quickly and smoothly. Clearly, there was little friction in the balance of capabilities stifling the change between the different forms of warfare. However, this period failed to capture an observation of what happens when warfare moves between guerrilla and conventional forms. When this occurs, the theory suggests that the mechanics of the balance of capabilities behaves differently. Accordingly, the next chapter focuses on the second period of the Angolan Civil War, which was characterised by UNITA's attempt to convert from a guerrilla to a conventional strategy.

Chapter Six

Foreign Intervention and Warfare Conversion in the Angolan Civil War

In the first period of the Angolan Civil War, the warfare moved quickly and freely from irregular, to conventional and finally to guerrilla warfare. In contrast, during much of the second period of the Angolan Civil War (1977 through to 1992), UNITA was frustrated in its efforts to convert from a guerrilla to conventional strategy. This was despite UNITA's battlefield success, rapid growth and substantial amounts of foreign assistance. What explains the stark difference in the dynamics of the warfare between the first and second periods of the Angolan Civil War? This chapter submits that the poverty trap appeared in the second period of the Angolan Civil War to hamper UNITA's progression from guerrilla to conventional warfare. The poverty trap in warfare conversion only affects belligerents attempting to make the transition from a guerrilla to a conventional strategy. As such, the poverty trap was not present during the first period of the Angolan Civil War, but did manifest itself in the second period.

Whereas Chapter Five concentrated on examining the influence foreign intervention had on warfare in the first period of the Angolan Civil War, this chapter deals with uncovering the effect of foreign intervention on warfare when a poverty trap is present. Empirically, this is achieved by examining the second period of the Angolan Civil War. The second period experienced two distinct patterns in foreign intervention. Phase I (Second Period: Phase I) spanned from 1977 through to 1983. During this phase, substantial volumes of exogenous resources continued to be provided to the MPLA, while UNITA received only small amounts of economic and indirect military assistance from South Africa.

Nevertheless, UNITA experienced a period of rapid growth until the early 1980s, when it reached the limits of its sustainable growth while applying a guerrilla strategy. Beginning in 1984, Phase II (Second Period: Phase II) featured a significant change in the pattern of foreign intervention. The United States reengaged in the civil war, supplying UNITA with, among other things, Stinger and TOW missiles. South Africa tripled its indirect military assistance and began to intervene with its own military forces more regularly and in greater strength. Later, the Cuban and South African agreement to begin withdrawing their troops from Angola in the late-1980s moved to close the bracket on the second period of the Angolan Civil War. This chapter is divided into two sections, each dedicated to a different phase of the second period.

1. UNITA's Rapid Rise and the First Steady State, Second Period:

Phase I

From this study's perspective, the most interesting feature of the Angolan Civil War in the late 1970s and early 1980s was UNITA's inability to convert into a successful conventional force. This was all the more puzzling considering that initially UNITA experienced fast growth and that this created significant strategic momentum in the insurgent's favour.

Foreign intervention in Phase I

Between 1977 and 1983, the MPLA continued to receive substantial foreign assistance. As Table 6.1 presents, foreign military aid to the MPLA was maintained at a roughly constant rate between 1977 and 1981, until it began to increase in 1982. The Soviet Union maintained its economic and indirect military intervention at between \$150 and \$250 million for most of this phase, until dramatically increasing it to \$2 billion in 1982. Similarly, the number of Cuban troops in Angola remained

more or less level until 1982, when Cuba's commitment also began to significantly increase.

Table 6.1: Soviet and Cuban Assistance to the MPLA, 1975-1983

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
USSR*	50	400	150	150	150	200	250	2,000	800
Cuba#	1	36	34	36	40	40	40	47	52

* In millions of dollars

In thousands of troops

Sources: Personal correspondence with Edward George on 2 August 2007. Also see, Edward George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola, 1965-1991: From Che Guevara to Cuito Cuanavale*, (London: Frank Cass, 2005), 303 (appendix 4).

In 1977, the most significant change in the pattern of foreign intervention occurred in relation to UNITA's supply of exogenous resources. In the second period of the Angolan Civil War, UNITA once again gained access to sources of exogenous support, with an estimated \$18 million in economic and indirect military assistance arriving mainly from South Africa.¹ Pretoria's support for UNITA increased gradually during the late 1970s until it began to hover around \$66 million between 1980 and 1983. Although the South African intervention was small, especially when compared to later transfers, the appropriateness of the intervention resulted in the exogenous resources having a large impact. This aspect of the intervention was alluded to by Jakkie Potgieter when he reported that "[m]ost of the weaponry and ammunition used by UNITA [was] suited for guerrilla warfare, which [was] portable, easy to maintain, and easy to replenish...This enable[d] one planeload of weapons and ammunition to go a long way in terms of engaging and keeping a much larger and better equipped conventional force occupied beyond what simple numbers and standards normally suggest."²

¹ Jakkie Potgieter, "Taking Aid From the Devil Himself: UNITA Support Structures," in Jakkie Cilliers and Christian Dietrich, (eds.), *Angola's War Economy The Role of Oil and Diamonds*, (Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, 2000), 260.

² Potgieter, "Taking Aid From the Devil Himself: UNITA Support Structures," 269.

Foreign intervention and the growth of the MPLA

The growth of the MPLA's cumulative capabilities was a more gradual process than for UNITA. In 1976, the MPLA's armed forces already numbered some 20,000 personnel which, under Soviet and Cuban tutelage, became one of the most formidable regular armies in sub-Saharan Africa. By 1980, the MPLA had grown further to 32,500 regular soldiers organised into seventeen infantry brigades and outfitted with relatively-advanced weaponry, including T-34 and T-54(5) tanks, BRDM-2, BM-21 122-mm rocket-launchers and MiG-21 fighter aircraft.³ The majority of the MPLA's weapons and equipment had arrived as military aid from Moscow. In addition, the MPLA was reinforced by between 34,000 to 52,000 Cuban troops stationed throughout the country assigned to garrison, counter-guerrilla and training missions. With substantial foreign assistance, the MPLA was able to maintain a large gap in the concentration of capabilities.

Table 6.2: The Growth of the MPLA and Cuban Forces in Angola, 1975-1983 (in thousands)

Actors	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
MPLA	20	~25	~33	33	35	32.5	33	37	40
Cuban	1	36	34	36	40	40	40	47	52
Total	21	~61	~67	69	75	72.5	73	84	92

Sources: W. Martin Jams, *A Political History of the Civil War in Angola, 1974-1990*, (New Brunswick: Transaction 1992), 95, 96, 149; International Institute of Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance*, (London: IISS, multiple years); Fred Bridgland, *Jonas Savimbi: A Key to Africa*, (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 1986); John Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, (New York: WW. Norton, 1978); Colin Legum and Tony Hodges, (eds.), *After Angola: The War Over Southern Africa*, (New York: Africana, 1976), 50; John A. Marcum, "A Quarter Century of War," in Helen Kitchen, (ed.), *Angola, Mozambique, and the West*, (New York: Praeger, 1987), 29; Colon Legum, *The Battlefronts of Southern Africa*, (London: Africana Publishing, 1988), 170, 345; William Minter, *Apartheid's Contras*, (London: Zed, 1994), 195.

However, the MPLA's regular force structure contained much inefficiency. First, the MPLA's resource conversion system contained many wasteful practices, especially in recruitment. The rapid increase in the MPLA's manpower was only possible with the widespread use of forced recruitment. Minter reported that

³ Keith Somerville, *Angola: Politics, Economics and Society*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1986), 166.

recruitment was “often abusive and disorganised, with a substantial portion of recruits being youth caught up in draft raids.”⁴ The result was that the MPLA had notoriously poor morale, which was exacerbated by Luanda’s inability to adequately pay, supply, and house troops. Furthermore, the MPLA officer corps was not able to be expanded as rapidly as the rank-and-file, which contributed further to low morale and ill-discipline.⁵ Third, the MPLA’s solution to its knowledge and experience deficiency was to employ the services of increasing numbers of Soviet and Cuban officers and NCOs. Yet, the use of foreign soldiers was far more expensive than their native equivalents. In order to provide the superior housing and amenities to which the Cubans were accustomed, the MPLA spent \$40 per day for every Cuban soldier stationed in Angola. The expense of maintaining such a large foreign contingent in the country was immense. In 1982, for instance, only 21 percent of total government expenditure was spent on the military (\$502 million). However, by 1988, when there were 65,000 Cubans in Angola, the MPLA expended 80 percent of its revenue on defence.⁶

In addition to being inefficient, the particular conventional structure adopted by the MPLA proved to be ineffective against guerrilla strategy. The MPLA was organised, equipped and trained in rigid adherence to Soviet doctrine. As Marcum attested, there was “much wastage of equipment due to Soviet efforts to impose a costly European technology and style of warfare on a Third World state.”⁷ Under Soviet and Cuban instruction, the MPLA’s organisation closely followed the Soviet model of integrating tanks, armoured fighting vehicles, and infantry at the unit level. As such, each of the MPLA’s 17 brigades contained one tank and two

⁴ William Minter, *Apartheid’s Contras*, (London: Zed, 1994), 240. Also see, Human Rights Watch, *Angola: Violations of the Laws of War by Both Sides*, (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1989).

⁵ Fred Bridgland, *Jonas Savimbi: A Key to Africa*, (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 1986), 278.

⁶ W. Martin James, *A Political History of the Civil War in Angola, 1974-1990*, (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1992), 200 and 202. This sharp increase in the percentage of the military’s share of total expenditure was also inflated by a slump in the world price of oil. Also see, Horace Campbell, *The Siege of Cuito Cuanavale*, (Uppsala: The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1990), 23.

⁷ John A. Marcum, “United States Options in Angola” in Helen Kitchen, (ed.), *Angola, Mozambique, and the West*, (New York: Praeger, 1987), 51.

infantry battalions.⁸ The Soviet organisational structure, designed for rapid armoured advances across Europe, had the opposite effect in rugged, heavily forested, Angola.⁹ The areas of operation were frequently not suited to armoured vehicles and they acted only to encumber mobility. A recurring feature of the MPLA's offensive operations were the large bottlenecks that developed on Angola's narrow and unpaved bush tracks, as tanks, armoured vehicles, supply trucks and command vehicles all clamoured to reach the front.¹⁰ The MPLA's structural inefficiencies and combat ineffectiveness meant that UNITA was easily able to outperform the MPLA's growth rates and expand its endogenous resource base. However, as will be discussed below, once UNITA began to concentrate its forces and attempt to convert to conventional warfare, the effectiveness of the MPLA's force structure, doctrine, and equipment emerged as a major advantage. The overall result was the ironic contradiction common to incumbents waging a counter-guerrilla campaign, namely that it become more effective as UNITA's cumulative capabilities grew.

Foreign intervention and the growth of UNITA

Throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s, UNITA experienced significant and sustained growth. In 1977, UNITA's forces comprised approximately 3,000 poorly-armed and inexperienced guerrilla fighters.¹¹ Observers also reported that UNITA's endogenous resource base was small. For instance, in May 1977, a journalist travelling in Angola reported that "UNITA's forces were fairly restricted in their

⁸ Somerville, *Angola*, 166.

⁹ Soviet advisors have frequently been blamed for the poor outcome of the MPLA massed armoured pushes into UNITA territory during the 1980s. See, for example, See, Joseph B. Treaster, "Castro faults Soviet tactics in war in Angola," *The New York Times*, 28 July 1988; Karl Maier, *Angola: Promises and Lies*, (Guildford, England: William Waterman Publications, 1996), 25; Robert S. Jaster, *The 1988 Peace Accords and the Future of Southwestern Africa*, Adelphi Papers, (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1990); Chester Crocker, *High Noon in Southern Africa: Making Peace in a Rough Neighborhood*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992); Edward George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola, 1965-1991: From Che Guevara to Cuito Cuanavale*, (London: Frank Cass, 2005), 193; David Deutschmann, *Changing the History of Africa: Angola and Namibia*, (Melbourne: Ocean Press, 1989).

¹⁰ Flying over a MPLA offensive operations against UNITA, reporter Karl Maier observed that at "several points the road is blocked by immense traffic jams, with inevitable crowds of soldiers arguing with each other about how to clear the war." Maier, *Angola*, 27.

¹¹ James, *A Political History of the Civil War in Angola*, 92.

zones of operation and were dependent on arms left over by South Africa.”¹² Former-UNITA members added to this observation, claiming that “supplies were scarce”.¹³ Indeed, one study reported that UNITA was fortunate to be “able to cling to the last vestiges of support from the Ovimbundu people and to survive into the 1980s.”¹⁴

However, UNITA’s apparent weakness belied the fact that the movement had positioned itself for a period of sustained and rapid growth. By 1979, the number of UNITA guerrillas had grown to an estimated 15,000. That is, in only two years, UNITA had grown fivefold. This rapid growth was due in large part to UNITA’s ability to economically convert resources into cumulative capabilities. This can especially be seen in UNITA’s recruitment practices, which were aided by two important developments. First, between 9 February and 28 August 1976, Savimbi, in the company of several hundred surviving guerrillas, completed what he frequently referred to as a “Long March”, which took them back to the central highlands, UNITA’s traditional area of support during the anti-Portuguese war and a ready source of willing recruits. Second, many MPLA soldiers began to defect across to UNITA. The systemically-poor morale of the MPLA forces was exacerbated in 1978 with the withdrawal of the Cuban contingent back into the major garrisons. Savimbi noted that up “to 1978 most of the fighting was being done by the Cubans and not by the MPLA...[However, after they] had trained many MPLA soldiers and they began to concern themselves mostly with logistics, intelligence, protecting the MPLA military convoys, and flying helicopters and MIGs.”¹⁵ By the end of 1978, it is estimated the MPLA’s forces were responsible for 70 percent of the frontline fighting, which resulted in a “marked increase in the

¹² David Birmingham, “The Twenty-Seventh of May: An historical Note on the Abortive 1977 “Coup” in Angola,” *African Affairs*, Vol. 77, No. 309, (1978), 562.

¹³ William Minter, *The National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) as Described by Ex-participants and Foreign Visitors*, (Washington, DC: Swedish International Development Authority, 1990), 8.

¹⁴ Somerville, *Angola*, 57; Rothchild and Hartzell concluded that the threat posed by UNITA to the “government’s authority during the 1976 to 1980s period remained manageable.” Donald Rothchild and Caroline Hartzell, “The Case of Angola: Four Power Intervention and Disengagement,” in Ariel E. Levite, Bruce W. Jentleson and Larry Berman, (eds.), *Foreign Military Intervention: The Dynamics of Protracted Conflict*, (New York: 1992), 178.

¹⁵ Bridgland, *Jonas Savimbi*, 270.

number of MPLA desertions to UNITA.”¹⁶ These two factors meant that UNITA did not face any barriers to its growth from a manpower perspective until well into the 1980s.

Next, UNITA decreased the cost of converting recruits into trained soldiers by outsourcing that activity. From October 1977, UNITA guerrillas were sent to the Moroccan military training facility at Benguirir, near Marrakesh, to undertake a 6-month training program in a range of different skills, including infantry tactics, radio communication, explosives and the use of mortars. At final count, probably several thousand UNITA personnel graduated from the Moroccan training program.¹⁷ For UNITA, the advantage of outsourcing training was that it dramatically reduced the financial outlay required to convert recruits into soldiers and, unlike the MPLA’s arrangement with Cuba, its troops were foreign trained while avoiding the financial burden of housing and sustaining foreign troops.

UNITA’s guerrilla strategy emphasised efficiency and effectiveness. Possessing limited resources instilled a culture of frugality within UNITA’s ranks. For example, during his inaugural Independence Day speech, Savimbi famously censured the audience for firing their weapons in celebration. Indeed, throughout the war, wastage of ammunition was severely punished with standing orders that any member who fired a gun “not in combat” was to receive “20 strokes with a cane.”¹⁸ While minimising expenditure, UNITA also chose targets that would produce the greatest loot. On the one hand, UNITA attacks on Angola’s rail and road network were designed to cripple the MPLA’s economy; however, on the other, transport routes also produced the greatest return on expenditure, representing the best and most vulnerable source of weapons, food, and equipment. “Since the foundation in the 1960s,” observed Stuvøy, “UNITA

¹⁶ Perhaps even more significantly for UNITA, was that it was able to capture “more enemy arms because the MPLA were simply less efficient” than the Cuban troops. Bridgland, *Jonas Savimbi*, 278.

¹⁷ Bridgland, *Jonas Savimbi*, 256.

¹⁸ Luis Rodrigues, a BBC report who visited with UNITA as quoted in Bridgland, *Jonas Savimbi*, 231.

continuously practiced the strategy of capturing arms from the enemy.”¹⁹ In September 1976, for instance, a UNITA guerrilla band tore up a stretch of the Benguela railway, which forced a train to stop. After blowing up the carriage where the MPLA guards were housed with an American-supplied LAW rocket, the raiders discovered 150 MPLA political activists, who were then marched off to work on cassava plantations. The raiders then pilfered supplies of tinned cheese, fish and relief agency rations.²⁰ In a sign of how fruitful such raids were, in 1978, UNITA attacks the Benguela railway averaged three a week, but, by 1979, they had risen to one a day.²¹ Later, a UNITA officer told an American journalist that “[w]e take anything we can use. We are *guerrilleros*.”²²

These factors allowed UNITA to grow from a mere 3,000 guerrillas in 1976 to over 15,000 in 1979. However, whereas UNITA initially experienced rapid growth, between 1979 and 1983 it experienced only a negligible increase in size. Most estimates of UNITA size during the early 1980s hold it steady at around 15,000 guerrillas.²³ Why did UNITA’s solid growth rates come to a halt? The answer to this question lies in strategic developments that occurred in Angola in the early 1980s.

Guerrilla warfare

Prior to 1979, possibly the only issue President Neto and Savimbi agreed upon was the weakness of UNITA. Neto believed in 1977 that the “enemy is not the poor

¹⁹ Kirsti Stuvøy, *War Economy and the Social Order of Insurgencies: An Analysis of the Internal Structure of UNITA’s War Economy*, Arbeitspapier No. 3, (Hamburg: Universität Hamburg, 2002), 83. Also see, Robert R. Fowler, *The “Fowler” Report*, (New York: The United Nations, 2000), paragraph 39 and 51; Tony Hodges, *Angola from Afro-Stalism to Petro-Diamond Capitalism*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 63-65; Potgieter, “Taking Aid From the Devil Himself: UNITA’s Support Structures,” 269.

²⁰ Bridgland, *Jonas Savimbi*, 232.

²¹ Bridgland, *Jonas Savimbi*, 275 and 343.

²² Leon Dash, *The Washington Post*, 7 to 13 August 1977.

²³ Colin Legum, *The Battlefronts of Southern Africa*, (London: Africana Publishing, 1988), 170; James, *A Political History of the Civil War in Angola*; John A. Marcum, “A Quarter Century of War,” in Helen Kitchen, (ed.), *Angola, Mozambique, and the West*, (New York: Praeger, 1987), 29; Minter, *Apartheid’s Contras*, 195.

Savimbi” but rather South Africa.²⁴ In a similar assessment, Savimbi admitted that “until 1979 the MPLA could just regard us as an irritant element.”²⁵ However, by late 1979, UNITA had experienced rapid growth to become a formidable guerrilla army and, as Legum asserted, had “sufficient strength and support to keep sections of the country in a state of insecurity.”²⁶ Indeed, the dynamics of the warfare began to assume a familiar pattern. Particularly, in central and southern Angola, the MPLA’s effective control gradually became restricted to Angola’s major urban centres, while UNITA began to dominate the rural landscape.

By the early 1980s, reports from Angola clearly described the emergence of the urban-rural divide. For instance, one study reported that “[r]epeated hit-and-run attacks wore down the Angolan government’s capacity to exercise effective control over the country...Hence the war became a stalemate: a relatively well-trained and well-equipped [MPLA] army controlled the major cities and the oil-producing areas of the country, but lacked the capacity to defeat the South African-backed UNITA insurgents in any decisive manner.”²⁷ Likewise, James observed that the MPLA “was situated in the major cities, though with little effective control in the countryside,”²⁸ while Philippe Le Billion witnessed the same process, writing that “UNITA progressively took over the hinterland in the 1980s and left the government in control of only the coast and provincial towns.”²⁹ In other words, the warfare in Angola had reached the first steady state. The MPLA firmly held the towns, while UNITA had placed large parts of rural Angola outside the MPLA’s effective control. Birmingham concluded that

²⁴ Neto quoted in Colin Legum, *Africa Contemporary Record, 1978-79*, (New York: Africana, 1980), 489.

²⁵ Bridgland, *Jonas Savimbi*, 279. Also see Rothchild and Hartzell, “The Case of Angola: Four Power Intervention and Disengagement,” 178.

²⁶ Legum, *Battlefronts of Southern Africa*, 170.

²⁷ Rothchild and Hartzell, “The Case of Angola: Four Power Intervention and Disengagement,” 182.

²⁸ James, *A Political History of the Civil War in Angola*, 113.

²⁹ Philippe Le Billion, “Resources Wealth and Angola’s Uncivil Wars,” in Cynthia J. Arnson and I. William Zartman, (eds.), *Rethinking the Economics of War: The Intersection of Need, Creed, and Greed*, (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2005), 117.

[t]he military situation was now the reverse of the one that had prevailed during the military stalemate of the early 1970s when the Portuguese held the towns and the MPLA caused insecurity in parts of the countryside and along some of the strategic highways. The MPLA now holds the towns but has lost the countryside and the roads. Efforts by South Africa [and UNITA] to capture even one small town in the south have been effectively thwarted by a combination of Soviet air cover, Cuban ground troops and the popular militia.³⁰

From UNITA's perspective, the late 1970s and early 1980s marked the beginning of the urban-rural divide's influence, on the expansion of its endogenous resource base. That is, UNITA's growth rate had begun to be capped by the strategic environment. Consequently, between 1979 and 1983, UNITA did not grow much beyond 15,000 guerrillas. If UNITA was to resume significant growth, it would need to begin challenging the MPLA for control over urban centres. This required a distinct change in strategy.

UNITA's early attempts to convert to conventional warfare

In the early 1980s, the MPLA maintain an unsurmountable average in the concentration of capabilities. The MPLA's armed forces had climbed to over 95,000 personnel, while UNITA's growth stagnated at around 15,000 combatants. Yet, the state of the balance of capabilities at the time camouflages three currents that were working in UNITA's favour. First, the bulk of Cuba's contingent of 52,000 troops was tied down defending "fixed positions at airports, major towns and at the Chevron oil complex" in Cabinda.³¹ Indeed, the majority of the MPLA's forces had been dispersed to defend key towns and facilities. Second, the MPLA's "air defence" dilemma had left large tracts of rural Angola open for UNITA to restructure its forces for conventional warfare. Third, by the early 1980s, South Africa's assistance of UNITA had increased, with economic and indirect military

³⁰ David Birmingham, "Angola Revisited," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 1, (1988), 13. Indeed, Birmingham characterized the civil war as being between the "town and country".

³¹ James Brooke, "Cuba's strange mission in Angola," *The New York Times*, 1 February 1987. Falks observed that only five of the Cuban regiments in Angola were operating against UNITA, the remaining were on outskirts of Luanda or in Cabinda. See, Pamela S. Falks, "Cuba in Africa," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 65, No. 5, (1987), 1084.

intervention climbing to some \$66 million annually. The result of South Africa's assistance was that UNITA's force had been rearmed, retrained, and reorganised.

Nevertheless, even with these factors working in UNITA's favour, it had not reached the critical threshold. Hence, UNITA's early attempts to convert to a conventional strategy were thwarted.³² For instance, one of UNITA's early attempts to utilise a conventional strategy occurred in August 1983 at Cangamba. Although on a larger scale, this particular battle was largely characteristic of much of the fighting during the early 1980s. Preceding the battle for Cangamba, the MPLA had attempted to push into UNITA's base area with several armoured brigades. However, the MPLA force had been repelled due to poor logistics and harassing guerrilla attacks. By driving off the MPLA, UNITA had increased its relative cumulative capabilities in the region and edged towards the critical threshold. On the heels of this tactical victory, UNITA attempted to exploit the MPLA's retreat by capturing Cangamba which had been left exposed by the withdrawal. By 1983, Cangamba's civilian population had mostly migrated west and the tiny township had little strategic value. Nevertheless, the town did possess an airstrip which warranted a garrison of two MPLA brigades, totalling some 2,800 troops, with an additional 200 Cuban advisors.³³ UNITA, for its part, had surrounded Cangamba with captured Soviet 75-mm artillery pieces and over 6,000 guerrilla fighters.³⁴ On 2 August, UNITA signalled the start of the battle with an ineffective artillery barrage. The defenders failed to suffer a single casualty and indeed the artillery pieces themselves proved an attractive target for the MPLA's airpower with MiG-21

³² Along with the concentration of capabilities moving somewhat away from the great disparity of the late 1970s, there was also a significant increase the average cumulative capabilities in the civil war. These two dynamics led Domínguez to write that the "level of fighting intensified but the war remained stalemated." See, Jorge I. Domínguez, *To Make a World Safe for Revolution: Cuba's Foreign Policy*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 153. Similarly, Rothchild observed that the "continuing low-intensity conflict that marked the first five years of Angola's independence escalated noticeably in the late 1980s." Rothchild and Hartzell, "The Case of Angola: Four Power Intervention and Disengagement," 178.

³³ Bridgland, *Jonas Savimbi*, 409-411.

³⁴ Bridgland, *Jonas Savimbi*, 410; Somerville, *Angola*, 66.

fighters and Mi-8 attack helicopters quickly destroying most of the attacker's artillery.³⁵

UNITA's infantry fared little better. On 10 August, Cuban MiGs and BM-21 rocket artillery caught the densely-packed UNITA infantry in the open and inflicted devastating casualties on the attackers.³⁶ After nine days of fighting it seemed likely that the battle would conclude, like earlier UNITA attempts to capture urban centres, with the heavily outnumbered, but technologically superior, MPLA successfully repelling the assault. However, in a surprise move, on 12 August, South African Canberra and Impala bombers attacked Cangamba, catching the defenders unprepared and forcing them to abandon their positions to UNITA.³⁷ After its eleventh hour reprieve, UNITA troops victoriously entered the flattened township only to immediately be forced to withdraw again due to the danger posed by the MPLA's airpower and the tons of unexploded ordinance which littered the battlefield. George concluded that the battle of Cangamba was an "inconclusive (and costly) stand-off, drawing attention not only to the MPLA's forces' vulnerability but also to UNITA's weakness in fighting conventional operations."³⁸ Similarly, Marcum concluded that the MPLA's "dominance of the air is what deters UNITA from holding the towns that it captures, but the government's resort to motorized patrols (using Soviet tanks and armored cars) seems a questionable choice of response to UNITA's attack-at-dawn, blow-it-up, pillage, and melt-away tactics."³⁹

The Battle of Cangamba and the preceding MPLA's offensive highlights three important aspects of the warfare in Angola during the early 1980s. First, the battle

³⁵ George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 168.

³⁶ George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 168.

³⁷ Joseph Hanlon, *Beggar Your Neighbours: Apartheid Power in Southern Africa*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 161-163; Peter Vanneman, "Soviet Foreign Policy for Angola/Namibia in the 1980s: A Strategy of Coercive Diplomacy," in Owen Ellison Kahn, (ed.), *Disengagement from Southwest Africa: The Prospects for Peace in Angola and Namibia*, (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1991), 72; Joseph Lelyveld, "Rebels Undercut Plan for Namibia," *New York Times*, 21 August 1983, 9; Somerville, *Angola*, 66.

³⁸ George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 166.

³⁹ Marcum, "A Quarter Century of War," 27.

demonstrated the strategic stalemate that had developed in Angola. Clearly, the MPLA was unable to effectively project military power into remote rural areas. When they attempted to do so in near Cangamba, poor roads and a heavy reliance upon armour, artillery and airpower turned what had originally been an offensive operation into a desperate defence of a garrison town. Second, when UNITA attempted to capture the township it was forced to employ some of its conventional assets. However, by employing artillery batteries and concentrating its troops, UNITA became vulnerable to the MPLA's superior technology. Here, the dynamics of the poverty trap are apparent. Although UNITA was physically able to attempt a conventional stand, it probably ought not to have done. Attempting to use artillery and densely-packed troops resulted in all of UNITA's artillery pieces being destroyed, along with 1,100 casualties.⁴⁰ UNITA's cumulative capabilities had still failed to cross the critical threshold into the second steady state, where it could permanently apply a conventional strategy. These first two elements of the fighting interacted to produce a stalemate. Finally, the battle hinted at the future role South African intervention would play in allowing UNITA to successfully overcome of the poverty trap and convert to conventional warfare.

2. Overcoming the Poverty Trap and the Conversion to Conventional Warfare, Second Period: Phase II

By late 1984 the balance of capabilities began to experience significant changes. Foremost among these was that the concentration of capabilities passed the critical threshold at which UNITA perceived it to be possible to begin a permanent conversion to a conventional force structure. In 1984, the MPLA could call upon a force of approximately 43,000 troops and 52,000 Cuban soldiers. In opposition,

⁴⁰ George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 169.

UNITA had grown to some 35,000 personnel of which approximately half had been organised into regular units.⁴¹

What caused UNITA to be able to renew its growth and convert to a conventional strategy? As will be detailed below, there appears to be a direct line of causation between the greater volumes of foreign assistance flowing from South Africa to UNITA and the sharp increase in latter's cumulative capabilities. Human Rights Watch reported that in 1984, South Africa's provision of weapons and other materiel to UNITA tripled.⁴² The increase in foreign assistance was followed by the expansion of the area under UNITA's control. By 1986, an observer reported that "Angola is not a country with a guerrilla problem. Rather, it is a divided country, much as Korea is. The larger portion is controlled by the leftist government supported by Cuban troops. The southeastern quarter is controlled by [UNITA]."⁴³ Another journalist, after visiting the frontline, reported that "Savimbi's forces control one-third of Angola's territory and exercise political influence over about 60 percent" of the country's population.⁴⁴ The cumulative capabilities of UNITA had made significant progress towards decreasing the disparity in the concentration of capabilities. However, UNITA was never "considered strong enough to defeat" the MPLA.⁴⁵ Indeed, a South African colonel calculated that "even without Fidel Castro's help, [the MPLA] had more than enough combat power to take on and destroy UNITA's regular forces."⁴⁶ Thus, South African sponsorship had two consequences for UNITA's cumulative capabilities. First, the increase in indirect military intervention helped provide the exogenous shock required for UNITA to

⁴¹ Helmoed-Römer Heitman, *War in Angola: The Final South African Phase*, (Gibraltar: Ashanti Publishing, 1990), 13. At the end of 1985, an UNITA officer reported that UNITA had a force of 60,000. Of these, 26,000 were regulars and 34,000 were still operating in guerrilla formations. Although these numbers are probably exaggerated, the ratios seem to match reports from other sources. Somerville, *Angola*, 128.

⁴² Human Rights Watch, *Angola: Violations of the Laws of War by Both Sides*, 43.

⁴³ Jay Mallin, *Cuba in Angola*, (Miami: University of Miami Press, 1987), 1.

⁴⁴ Roxinne Ervasti, "Soviets, Cuba, Angola meet in Moscow; Angolan rebels leader in Washington," *The Associated Press*, 30 January 1986.

⁴⁵ Tom Baldwin, "Rebel leader says Soviets behind Angolan offensive; Wants U.S. help," *The Associated Press*, 21 September 1985.

⁴⁶ Jan Breytenbach, *The Buffalo Soldiers: The Story of South Africa's 32 Battalion 1975-1993*, (Alberton, RSA: Galago, 2002), 252.

overcome the poverty trap and resume its growth. Second, direct military intervention was essential for UNITA's fledgling conventional units to engage and potentially defeat the militarily superior MPLA.

The pattern of foreign intervention in Phase II

Beginning in 1984, the volume of exogenous resources provided to the belligerents increased manifold. The Soviet Union's economic and indirect military assistance to the MPLA peaked in 1985 at \$2 billion, before levelling out to around \$1.5 billion per year until 1989. After 1989, the Soviet Union began the process of disengaging from the civil war.⁴⁷ However, in the meantime, its deliveries included some of the most advanced weaponry in the Soviet arsenal, including new models of the T-62 tank, BMP-2 infantry fighting vehicles, 130-mm artillery pieces, Su-25 attack aircraft and the SA-8 mobile anti-aircraft system.⁴⁸ Similarly, the Cuban deployment remained relatively stable throughout the 1980s, with the exception of 1988, when Castro hurriedly deployed an extra 13,000 soldiers to participate in Operation *Saludando Octubre* and the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale.

Table 6.3: Soviet and Cuban Assistance to MPLA, 1984-1989

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
USSR*	1,000	2,000	1,200	1,500	1,500	800
Cuba#	52	52	52	52	65	20

* In millions of dollars # In thousands of troops

Sources: Personal correspondence with Edward George on 2 August 2007. Also see, Edward George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola, 1965-1991: From Che Guevara to Cuito Cuanavale*, (London: Frank Cass, 2005), 303 (appendix 4).

The major change in the pattern of foreign intervention occurred on UNITA's side. During the mid-1980s, there were significant changes in the amount of exogenous resources flowing to UNITA. In July 1985, the United States repealed the *Clark*

⁴⁷ Marina Ottaway, "The Soviet Union and Africa," in John Harbeson and Donald Rothchild, (eds.), *Africa in World Affairs*, (Boulder: Westview, 1991), 235.

⁴⁸ Rothchild and Hartzell, "The Case of Angola: Four Power Intervention and Disengagement," 183.

Amendment and re-established support for UNITA.⁴⁹ By the dawn of 1986, the United States had already delivered \$15 million worth of aid and proceeded to provide \$12 million throughout that year. In 1987, it sent \$13 million worth of economic and indirect military assistance before doubling its assistance in 1988 and 1989 to about \$26 million annually.⁵⁰ Washington's assistance to UNITA was mostly in the form of boots, uniforms and small arms; however, it also included some items reserved for its closest allies, such as the Stinger anti-aircraft missile and the TOW anti-tank missile.⁵¹ In total, it is estimated that Washington delivered some 300 Stinger hand-grips and 150 MILAN and 100 TOW anti-tank launchers, all of which were intended to reduce the incumbent's air and armour superiority.⁵²

⁴⁹ Michael McFaul, "Rethinking the 'Reagan Doctrine' in Angola," *International Security*, Vol. 14, No. 3, (1989), 106. There have been claims that American assistance to UNITA began before the repeal of the *Clark Amendment*. For instance, Volman insisted that "A secret meeting to arrange support for UNITA took place in Kinshasa in 1983, in which US officials met with representatives from South Africa, Israel, Zaïre and UNITA. In November of that year, the US Navy delivered arms shipments for UNITA to the ports of Boma and Matadi in Zaïre." However, at this point, evidence corroborating Volman's claims are scarce. See, Daniel Volman, "Africa and the New World Order," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 1, (1993), 23.

⁵⁰ SIPRI *Arms Transfer Database*, (Stockholm: Swedish International Peace Research Institute, 2007). The dollar value of American aid to UNITA varies between sources. Other studies have put the figure at \$15 million for all three years, see for example, Hannelie de Beer and Virginia Gamba, "The Arms Dilemma: Resources for Arms or Arms for Resources," in Jakkie Cilliers and Christian Dietrich, (eds.), *Angola's War Economy: The Role of Oil and Diamonds*, (Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, 2000), 90 fn. 24; Tvedten, however, puts the figure at \$25 million per annum, see Inge Tvedten, *Angola: Struggle for Peace and Reconstruction*, (Boulder: Westview, 1997), 39, while the *New York Times* reported that the United States was furnishing UNITA with \$60 million annually in economic and indirect military assistance. See, Rachel L. Swarns, "Oil Abounds. Misery Too: A Case Study," *New York Times*, 14 January 2001. James cited a figure of \$50 million for 1990. James, *A Political History of the Civil War in Angola*, 179.

⁵¹ See, McFaul, "Rethinking the 'Reagan Doctrine' in Angola," 106. See also, International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance*, (London: IISS, 1987), 120.

⁵² SIPRI *Arms Transfer Database*; McFaul, "Rethinking the 'Reagan Doctrine' in Angola," 106. See also, IISS, *The Military Balance*, 120. Jay Mallin argued that the Stinger's interactive value was greater than its net value because it was "a fine equalizer in view of the fact that UNITA ha[d] no air power." See, Mallin, *Cuba in Angola*, 21. More to the point, the MPLA's receipt of MiG-23s, which outperformed South Africa's Mirages III, made Pretoria increasingly reluctant to provide UNITA with air support. See, Bridgland, *The War for Africa*, 98-108. It is unclear how effective the Stinger missile was in Angola. UNITA claimed to have shot down 40 helicopters and aircraft in 1985 and 46 in 1986, however, despite reporters being frequent visitors to the area during this period there were few independently confirmed reports of aircraft being shot down by UNITA. Bridgland, *The War for Africa*, 98-108; David B. Ottaway, "Angola gets infusion of Soviet arms; Major drive expected against guerrillas," *The Washington Post*, 12 May 1987. George Gedda, "Rebels say no help received from South Africa," *The Associated Press*, 28 May 1987. UNITA told reporters David Ottaway and Patrick Tyler that in only two months (June and July 1986) they had shot down "10 Soviet-made aircraft, including jets, helicopter gunships, and one Antonov 22 transport." See, David B. Ottaway and Patrick E. Tyler, "Angola: Two Faces of War," *The Washington Post*, 27 July 1986. There were two independently confirmed reports of a MiG-21 being shot down by Stingers on 28 October 1987 and a MiG-23 on 29 February 1988. "Angolan rebel victory aided by U.S. arms, Savimbi says," *The Globe and Mail*, 13 November 1987. The "Fowler Report" confirmed that two United Nations transport aircraft were shot down by UNITA in December 1998 and the second one a week later in January 1999, however, unlike frequently reported these were bought down by Russian IGLA man-portable anti-aircraft missiles and not Stringers. See, Fowler, *The "Fowler" Report*, paragraph 168-169; Thomas B. Hunter, "The Proliferation of MANPADS," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, (September 2001), 42-45.

However, it was the South African intervention which had the largest impact on both UNITA's cumulative capabilities and the course of the conflict. In 1984, Pretoria dramatically expanded its indirect military assistance to UNITA, which also corresponded with its direct military interventions increasing in regularity, size, and sophistication. These developments, above all else, allowed UNITA to overcome the poverty trap and convert to a conventional force structure.

South Africa's involvement in the Angolan Civil War escalated significantly during the 1980s, but maintained constantly in its overall objective and form. South Africa continued to be UNITA's principal supplier of weapons, equipment, food and other supplies. However, by the mid-1980s, South African logistical support for UNITA had expanded from negligible volumes in the late 1970s to tally some \$200 million annually.⁵³ By 1983, UNITA operated a fleet of 250-300 trucks which supplied a constant flow of arms, ammunition, and materiel from Namibia.⁵⁴ Indeed, South Africa's logistical lines to south-eastern Angola had become so integrated with its forces based in north-eastern Namibia that Pretoria designated these two areas as one "operational zone". In addition, the more frequent presence of South African forces in southern Angola led to additional supplies – above the \$200 million officially allocated – being provided to UNITA. The SADF regularly captured large volumes of weapons during its operations against the MPLA, Cuba and SWAPO units, of which the majority was passed onto UNITA. In particular, large quantities of AK-47s, RPG-7s and SAM-7 missiles were commonly salvaged and handed over to UNITA.⁵⁵ However, following UNITA's conversion to a conventional force structure, the SADF began providing heavier weapons to UNITA. For instance, during the 1987 Operation "Modular", the SADF captured significant volumes of conventional assets, including T-55 tanks and BTRs, some of

⁵³ Potgieter, "Taking Aid From the Devil Himself: UNITA Support Structures," 260.

⁵⁴ Minter, *Apartheid's Contras*, 189.

⁵⁵ Fred Bridgland, *The War for Africa: Twelve Months that Transformed a Continent*, (Gibraltar: Ashanti, 1990), 150-151.

which found its way to UNITA and contributed significantly to its growing conventional warfare capabilities.⁵⁶

In addition to supplies, South Africa contributed to UNITA's growing cumulative capabilities by training many of its troops. Although, the SADF had been training UNITA members since at least 1979, the importance of exogenous training grew greatly as UNITA attempted to make the transition to a conventional force structure. Most of UNITA's officers and senior NCOs had begun as guerrillas fighting against the Portuguese and thus possessed little experience in conventional warfare techniques. Accordingly, South African trainers and intelligence advisors were crucial in providing the expertise necessary for UNITA to make a rapid and successful transition to conventional warfare. As a senior SADF liaison officer described:

[m]y team taught UNITA to realise the limitations and possibilities in conventional warfare...UNITA is one of the most remarkable foot-slogging armies since the Romans. It meant that they thought in terms of four kilometres an hour; to enable them to carry out a conventional offensive we had to get them to think in terms of 40 km an hour, and that wasn't easy.⁵⁷

The direct military intervention of the SADF performed a different role to that of South Africa's indirect military intervention. Unlike the near-continuous flow of indirect military aid to UNITA, Pretoria's direct military interventions were temporary, *ad hoc* deployments, which generally assumed the form of cross-border incursions aimed at either assisting UNITA to capture towns or to repulse MPLA offensives. The composition of most South African interventions attempted to exploit the SADF's superiority in technology and training. The intervention forces tended to consist mostly of armoured vehicles, mobile rocket launchers, artillery

⁵⁶ The SADF even captured a SAM-8 missile launcher, which Savimbi made a failed appeal for. Although SAM-8 anti-aircraft missile launchers had been seen in Moscow since the late 1970s, the one salvaged by the SADF on 4 October 1987 was the first of its type captured by the West.

⁵⁷ Colonel Fred Oelsig as quoted in Bridgland, *The War for Africa*, 381.

and attack aircraft (taking off from Namibia). Indeed, Pretoria was very conscious of minimising the number of white SADF personnel exposed to danger in Angola. As such, South Africa relied on the interaction effect between its latest technology and UNITA's conventional infantry brigades. The SADF and UNITA contingents complemented and supplemented the other to produce a combined impact greater than the component parts.⁵⁸ Hence, it was possible for the number of SADF personnel involved in the 1983 Operation Askari and 1985 Operation Magneto to run into the mere hundreds, not thousands.

Foreign intervention and conventional warfare in Phase II

In 1984, the assistance of increased volumes of exogenous resources meant that UNITA was able to successfully convert to a conventional force structure and reignite the expansion of its endogenous resource base. However, although the adoption of a regular force structure was necessary for UNITA to capture more territory and population, and thus renew its growth, the change of strategy also contained risks. In fact, although the conversion to conventional warfare allowed UNITA to expand its endogenous resource base – and subsequently grow from 15,000 members in 1983 to approximately 41,000 by 1985 – the decision to adopt conventional warfare almost led to its complete annihilation. This is because although the concentration of capabilities had moved towards parity, the MPLA remained the largest and most capable belligerent in Angola. Indeed, despite UNITA possessing the capabilities to convert to a conventional structure and strategy, many observers believed it to be a mistake, judging the MPLA's concentration of capabilities to still be too great. A SADF colonel noted that "it became apparent that UNITA could no longer prevent [the MPLA] from launching a conventional offensive into [its south-eastern] heartland" and that this "was primarily because UNITA had prematurely abandoned its second phase of

⁵⁸ The importance of South African direct assistance to UNITA was made by Marcum, who, in 1987, argued that: "The military realities of Angola will not be altered by a few tens of millions of dollars, let alone 'humanitarian aid'." Marcum, "United States Options in Angola," 50.

intensive guerrilla war in favour of the final phase of mobile warfare that involved the use of semi-conventional and conventional battalions.”⁵⁹ The two most severe examples of this occurred in 1985 and 1987.

Operation Congresso II, 1985

In 1985, the MPLA, buoyed by the recent delivery of \$2 billion worth of Soviet indirect military aid, decided to mount Operation *Congresso II*. The MPLA assault began that August, with a diversionary deployment of an armoured column to Cazombo Bight, in what appeared to be an attempt to perform a wide arc and cut UNITA’s supply lines to Zaire. UNITA fell for the bait and transferred all but one of its regular brigades the 1,000 kilometres from Mavinga to face the MPLA in the Cazombo Bight. On cue, the main MPLA-Cuban force began its methodical advance across south-east Angola from Cuito Cuanavale in the direction of Mavinga and Jamba. The operation was the largest yet attempted by the MPLA, consisting of eight brigades, each with roughly 700 men and supported by MiG-23 fighter-attack aircraft and Mi-25 attack helicopters.⁶⁰ The MPLA’s main advance towards Mavinga easily scattered the only UNITA regular battalion on the east bank of the Cuito River, crossed the river, devastated UNITA’s semi-regular formations on the west bank and marched to within 20 kilometres of Mavinga.

The final annihilation of UNITA seemed inevitable. The cost of fighting a conventional battle strained UNITA’s endogenous resource base to its limits. Therefore, it is reported that the United States’ resumption of support in the form of weapons, ammunition and equipment “came just in time for UNITA”.⁶¹ The SADF’s 28 Squadron then assisted UNITA by flying to the Cazombo Bight and

⁵⁹ Breytenbach, *The Buffalo Soldiers*, 252.

⁶⁰ Legum, *The Battlefronts of Southern Africa*, 390; Hanlon, *Beggar Your Neighbours*, 164. Some observers have put the number of MPLA bridges deployed in the offensive as high as 11. See, Vanneman, “Soviet Foreign Policy for Angola/Namibia in the 1980s,” 75.

⁶¹ Potgieter, “Taking Aid From the Devil Himself,” 261-262. The impact of American resources is consistent with what Savimbi told reporters in 1986 that “We don’t need American personnel...what we need, is only material aid.” Andrew Torchia, “Savimbi hopes for U.S. missiles by April,” *The Associated Press*, 17 February 1986.

transporting UNITA's mis-positioned regular troops back to Mavinga to confront the main MPLA force. This increased the number of UNITA regulars in the sector to approximately 5,500 troops.⁶² The SADF also directly intervened to assist UNITA's crumbling regular units in defending Mavinga. South Africa's 32, 101, and 201 Battalions, along with artillery and armoured vehicles, were deployed to the area, and were also supported by Mirage and Canberra bombers.⁶³ A combination of UNITA infantry and South African artillery, armour and airpower, broke the back of MPLA's drive towards Mavinga.

Although UNITA had halted the MPLA offensive, it had done so at great cost, and in the knowledge that it had only been rescued from a decisive defeat due to the intervention of South African troops.⁶⁴ UNITA's poor performance has almost universally been attributed to its conversion to conventional warfare. James, for instance, argued that UNITA, by switching to positional defence had simply been "overwhelmed by superior materiel."⁶⁵ Similarly, George concluded that UNITA's regular units were still mostly armed with light weapons and "it quickly became clear that without armour and artillery" they would be unable to stop the MPLA.⁶⁶ However, following the near-miss of catastrophe, UNITA, surprisingly, did not decide "to scale down its conventional forces", but rather "saw a golden opportunity to modernise its regular forces."⁶⁷ The UNITA leadership resisted the pressure to revert back to its more efficient and successful guerrilla strategy.

⁶² Rothchild and Hartzell, "The Case of Angola: Four Power Intervention and Disengagement," 181.

⁶³ One journalist reported that many "government units seem to have been taken by surprise, possibly suggesting the suddenness" of the air strikes. See, Michael Hornsby, *The Times*, of London, 9 October 1985, as quoted in Bridgland, *Jonas Savimbi*, 445.

⁶⁴ Marcum, "United States Options in Angola," 49; Legum, *The Battlefronts of Southern Africa*, 390-391; Hanlon, *Beggar Your Neighbours*, 164.

⁶⁵ James, *A Political History of the Civil War in Angola*, 170.

⁶⁶ George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 193-194.

⁶⁷ Breytenbach, *The Buffalo Soldiers*, 265.

Operation Saludando Octubre and the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale, 1987

The year 1987 marked the culmination of the Angolan Civil War's second period. The MPLA had assembled an even larger military force than in 1985, this time reinforced by 10,000 Soviet advisors and \$1.5 billion worth of newly-unloaded Soviet hardware. The MPLA's plan of attack remained largely unchanged: fake a diversionary attack to the north before switching the axis of advance to the south and swamping UNITA's strongholds of Mavinga and Jamba with overwhelming numbers. Likewise, UNITA's structure and tactics remained little changed since 1985. Although barely escaping a decisive defeat the previous battle, Savimbi was confident that his now larger regular force possessed the capabilities to prevail with a positional defence. Others were less convinced. A SADF official, for example, predicted that: "[i]f [Savimbi] tries to defend Mavinga, Jamba and the infrastructure of the liberated zone in force Mr. Savimbi gives up his highly successful role as guerrilla leader and risks taking heavy losses in set-piece battles with a numerically superior and better-armed enemy."⁶⁸ Nevertheless, by 1987, "regular" and "semi-regular" battalions continued to constitute the bulk of UNITA's forces with the guerrilla units playing a supporting role. It seems that both belligerents learnt the same (incorrect) lessons from the battles of 1985. Operation *Congresso II* had been such close run that both sides seemed to have believed that they could prevail if only they possessed more conventional assets and troops.

When, on 10 July 1987, the MPLA's 3rd and 39th Brigades launched its diversionary attack from Lucusse, UNITA had no regular units in the area. However, unlike in 1985, UNITA refused to be tricked into deploying regular forces from the south. Hence, in a case of spatial variation in warfare, UNITA's forces around Lucusse reverted to guerrilla warfare to counter the 3rd and 39th Brigades. The UNITA guerrilla units traded space for time while mounting effective ambushes and raids

⁶⁸ As cited in James, *A Political History of the Civil War in Angola*, 172.

against the advancing MPLA brigades and their supply lines. Although the MPLA had assigned an additional three brigades (the 45th, 54th, and 43rd) to protect the logistical routes of the two advancing brigades, by 22 August there had been 55 ambushes along the main line of communication.⁶⁹ Unable to adequately supply the advancing two brigades, by mid-August the advance had stalled. Heitman reported that the contest of the battle then assumed a familiar dynamic as the MPLA "...settled down in a passive posture in the Cazombo salient, holding most of the towns but not seriously contesting control of the countryside by Unita."⁷⁰ By refusing to commit regular units to the Lucusse front, and instead choosing to confront MPLA with guerrilla warfare, the dynamic of the warfare in that region had reverted to the first steady state.

Within days of the Lucusse offensive, the MPLA ordered four brigades stationed in Cuito Cuanavale (the 47th, 59th, 16th and 21st Brigades) to advance to the Lomba River and make preparations to ford it and capture Mavinga. The regular UNITA formations were no match for the technology and sheer number of troops deployed by the MPLA. South African advisors working with the regular UNITA battalions found them to be dedicated and extremely hardy, yet reportedly continued to have difficulties evolving from a guerrilla to a conventional strategy. When MPLA tanks advanced on their positions the UNITA infantry simply "up and ran". However, one advisor did admit that "it was [the SADF] who had taught them to run from tanks at the beginning."⁷¹

Once again, it became clear that without South African intervention UNITA would not be able to stop the MPLA advance. Luckily for UNITA, on 4 August 1987, the SADF's 20th Brigade crossed into Angola, marking Pretoria's second significant direct military intervention in the civil war. The brigade consisted mostly of the

⁶⁹ Heitman, *War in Angola*, 333.

⁷⁰ Heitman, *War in Angola*, 333.

⁷¹ Bridgland, *The War for Africa*, 385.

elements lacking from UNITA's order-of-battle, including engineers, artillery, air defence units, medics and armour units. All in all, the intervention involved less than 3,000 South African troops. Indeed, as Heitman observed, "the South African force was small and only intended to counter-balance the mechanised elements of [the MPLA]." ⁷² That is, reflecting previous practice, the SADF's intervention was intended to exploit the possibility of an interaction effect to greatly enhance both the SADF's and UNITA's forces.

At the Battle of Lomba River, fought between 9 September and 7 October 1987, the combined forces of UNITA and South Africa fought the four MPLA brigades to a halt. The combination of UNITA's light regular infantry and South African firepower had a devastating impact on the MPLA brigades operating in difficult terrain. Particularly demoralising were the highly-accurate South African G-5 155-mm artillery pieces. ⁷³ During the battle, the MPLA's 47th Brigade became separated from the rest of the MPLA force. This separation literally cost the 47th Brigade its life when, on 3 October, it was attacked by SADF armoured cars, artillery and aircraft. In the attack, the 47th Brigade was practically obliterated, losing over 600 of its original 700 men-complement along with 127 armoured vehicles which were either destroyed or captured. Following the 47th Brigade's crushing defeat, the remaining MPLA forces fell back to defensive positions surrounding Cuito Cuanavale, this time with UNITA and SADF forces in pursuit.

Following years of inconclusive MPLA offensives and desperate UNITA defensives, the two armies stood ready for a decisive pitched battle. For the occasion, Havana rushed in its most elite unit, the 50th Division, from defending against Guantánamo Bay to reinforce the MPLA and existing Cuban forces around Cuito Cuanavale. Similarly, Pretoria ordered the 4th South African Infantry

⁷² Heitman, *War in Angola*, 332.

⁷³ Rothchild and Hartzell, "The Case of Angola: Four Power Intervention and Disengagement," 183; Breytenbach, *The Buffalo Soldiers*, 280-282; David Rogers, "UNITA Rebels Besiege Angolan Garrison," *Reuters*, 21 January 1988.

Battalion, along with additional armoured cars and the new Olifant tanks and G-6 self-propelled artillery, to reinforce the 20th Brigade.⁷⁴ The fighting around Cuito Cuanavale began in November 1987 and escalated to become the largest battle in Africa since the 1942 Battle of El Alamein. The respective armies stabbed at each other's defences with armoured vehicles and infantry assaults, while also laying down prolonged artillery and aerial bombardments. Inconclusive and highly-costly fighting was waged around the small Angolan town until late March 1988, when both sides began to scale back operations. Before withdrawing from what had degenerated into an artillery-dominated war of attrition, the foreign powers on both sides helped the MPLA and UNITA to lay minefields, bounce wire, and dig trench systems on their respective sides of the Cuito River. Satisfied that any conceivable approach route had been adequately fortified, the Soviets, Cubans and South Africans began political negotiations to disengage their respective forces from the Angolan Civil War.

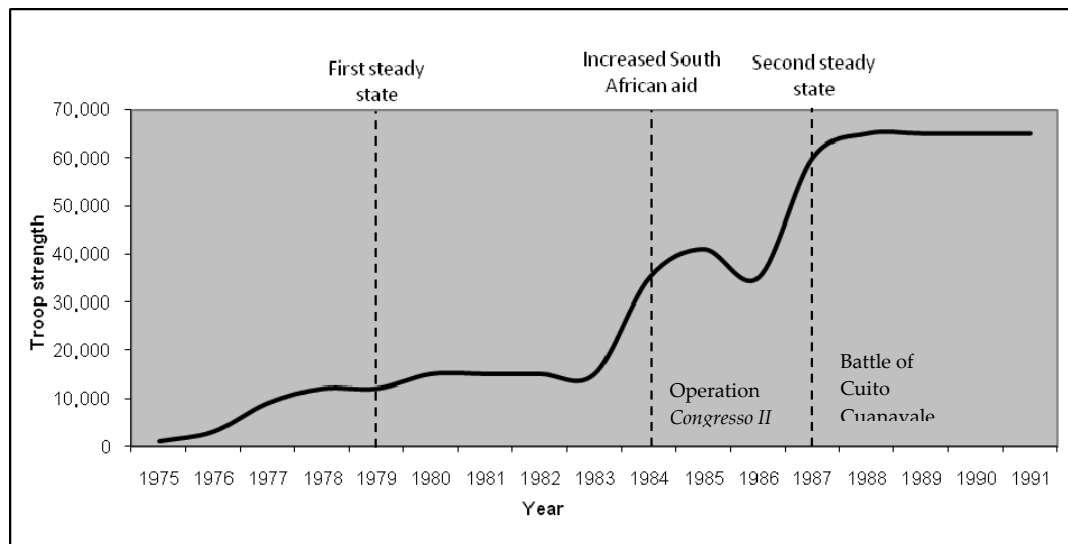
3. Conclusion

The picture emerging from the second period of the Angolan Civil War suggests that the poverty trap influenced both the impact of foreign assistance and the course of warfare. First, South Africa's assistance contributed to UNITA's strong growth during Phase I, before diminishing in effect as the guerrilla force reached its maximum endogenous expansion without converting to a conventional structure and strategy. Phase I and Phase II were demarcated by a change in the pattern of foreign intervention, namely a significant increase in the exogenous resources flowing from South Africa. The distinction between the two phases also represented a divide in the dependent variable. In Phase II, UNITA was able to permanently convert to a conventional structure and strategy. As other relevant variables were held relatively constant between the phases, the causal inference is,

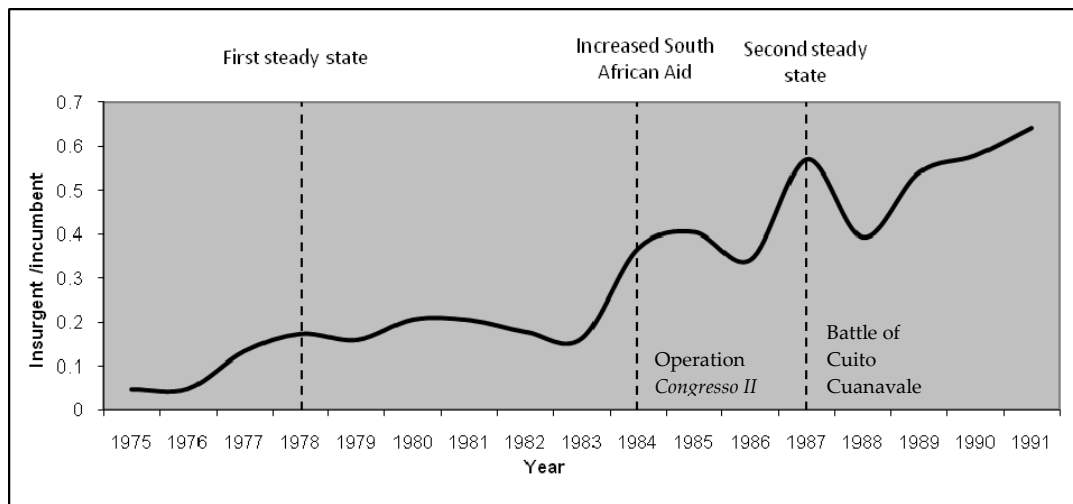
⁷⁴ George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 209.

therefore, that it was the increase in exogenous resources that permitted the change in strategy.

A longitudinal survey of UNITA's troop strength (such as presented in Figure 6.1) clearly indicates the influence of the poverty trap. Although troop numbers is a crude, and far from complete, measure of cumulative capabilities, here it served as a visible estimate of UNITA's strength. At the outset of Phase I, UNITA's cumulative capabilities increased quickly, growing to roughly 15,000 men by 1979. At this point, however, UNITA become caught in the poverty trap and between 1979 and 1983, there was little change in its cumulative capabilities. In 1984, South Africa greatly increased its support for UNITA, which allowed the belligerent to convert to a conventional strategy and renew its growth. UNITA's conversion to a conventional strategy ensured that subsequent engagements with the MPLA would be more decisive than they had been during the guerrilla phase. Indeed, they were, but not as UNITA had hoped and, in 1986, UNITA's conventional units suffered a serious defeat and only narrow escaped being comprehensively destroyed. Nevertheless, UNITA received even greater amounts of assistance from the United States and South Africa, which allowed it to recover its losses from the MPLA's 1986 Operation *Congresso II* and continue to increase its cumulative capabilities.

Figure 6.1: Growth of UNITA

The ratio of UNITA's relative gains tells a similar tale. UNITA's relative growth was estimated by dividing its troop strength (depicted in Table 6.1) by those of the size of the MPLA/Cuban forces. In essence, by computing the difference between the belligerents' troop strength, over time, we (very roughly) trace the path of the concentration of capabilities over the course of the civil war. The closer the X-axis is to 1, in any year, the nearer the belligerents are to parity. It shows that the gradient of UNITA's early growth is even steeper than in absolute terms, while the first steady state is still visible between 1978 and 1983. The most prominent difference between Figure 6.1 and 6.2 is the additional dip in 1988, which is explained by Havana's decision to contribute an additional 20,000 Cuban soldiers for Operation *Saludando Octubre* and the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale. This moved the concentration of capabilities closer toward disparity. From late 1988, Cuban soldiers began to be flown out of Angola, causing the concentration of capabilities to begin moving towards parity (this is despite Figure 6.2 showing UNITA's troop strength remaining constant during this period).

Figure 6.2: Relative Growth of UNITA

This chapter examined the impact of foreign intervention on warfare in the second period of the Angolan Civil War. It showed that changes in foreign intervention overtime can be instrumental in allowing belligerents to overcome the poverty trap and convert to a conventional strategy. The following chapter breaks from the temporal examination of this chapter by asking how regional differences in the balance of capabilities can produce spatial variation in warfare in civil war and turns our attention to the Afghan Civil War.

Chapter Seven

Warfare Variation in the Afghan Civil War

On 27 April 1978, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) successfully overthrew the government of President Mohammad Daoud Khan and seized power in Afghanistan in an episode known as the "Saur Revolution". Shortly after, radical young Marxists began to fan out from Kabul with the intention of modernising rural Afghanistan. They were violently opposed by traditional rural notables, former military officers, and radical Islamists, who led a fragmented coalition called the Mujahideen. The sequence of events which followed became known as the Afghan Civil War, a civil war which has been waged for over 30 years, taken over 1.5 million Afghan lives,¹ caused the world's largest refugee crisis² and attracted interventions from over 45 countries, including the Soviet Union, the United States and China.³

The people and geography of Afghanistan are highly segregated. Afghanistan is a patchwork of over 21 different "ethnic" groups with thousands of further subdivisions along linguistic, religious, *qawm*, and tribal cleavages.⁴ These small, distinct communities are physically, and thus politically, separated by towering mountains, rugged ridges and deep valleys. Throughout its history, geographic and social factors have limited Kabul's control over Afghanistan's rural

¹ Marek Sliwinski, "Afghanistan: The Decimation of a People," *Orbis*, Vol. 33, No. 1, (1989), 39-56; Arnold Anthony, "Afghanistan," in Michael Radu, (ed.), *The New Insurgencies: Anti-communist Guerrillas in the Third World*, (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1990), 244.

² Alex Marshall, "Managing Withdrawal: Afghanistan as the Forgotten Example of Attempting Conflict Resolution and State Reconstruction," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 18, No. 1, (2007), 70.

³ On foreign intervention in the Afghan Civil War post-1989 see, Citha D. Maass, "The Afghanistan Conflict: External Involvement," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 18, No. 1, (1999), 65-78.

⁴ Anwar estimated that there are over seven million ethnic and sub-cultural groups. Raja Anwar, *The Tragedy of Afghanistan*, trans. Khalid Hasan, (London: Verso, 1989), 1.

communities. In the absence of a strong leviathan, Afghan rural communities have generally had to provide for their own security, a genuine concern given that relations between neighbouring communities have frequently been adversarial.⁵ Thus, when resistance to the PDPA began to spread in 1978 and 1979, there was great variation in the nature, character, and timing of the violence. Because of this, Afghanistan offers a valuable opportunity to study spatial and temporal variation in warfare in civil war.

This chapter will empirically examine spatial variation in warfare in civil war. It focuses on two different regions of Afghanistan directly before, and after, the Soviet direct military intervention in December 1979. This chapter is divided into three sections. Section one will review the overall dynamics of the balance of capabilities and warfare in Afghanistan over the period under examination. Section two will discuss foreign intervention, the balance of capabilities and warfare in the Nuristan and Herat regions before the Soviet direct military intervention. For methodological reasons, the rural Nuristani rebellion and the military mutiny in Herat are valuable examples to consider as they were both the first of their respective types in the Afghan Civil War. As such, the structure and tactics of the combatants could not have been influenced by previous events. That is, the warfare could not have mimicked other rebellious regions. Nuristan is an isolated, mountainous region in eastern Afghanistan and was the first region to rebel against the central government in 1978. Similarly, Herat was the first significant military mutiny in Afghanistan. Section three of this chapter repeats the discussion of the balance of capabilities and warfare in Nuristan and Herat. However, it focuses on the period after the 1980 Soviet intervention.

⁵ See, James Rupert, "Afghanistan's Slide Towards Civil War," *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 6, No. 4, (1989), 776; Louis Depree, *Afghanistan*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980). Even the PDPA had important divisions, see, Anthony Arnold, *Afghanistan's Two Party Communism: Parcham and Khalq*, (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institute Press, 1983).

1. Foreign Intervention and Warfare in the Afghan Civil War (1978-1980)

In previous empirical chapters in this dissertation, the impact of foreign intervention on the belligerents' strategies had largely been studied at the country level, since although the Angolan case suggested some regional differences in warfare, it principally focused on temporal variation in the balance of capabilities and warfare. However, as the theory expects that both temporal and spatial variation in the balance of capabilities will affect the warfare which takes place in a civil war, this chapter supplements the Angolan case by conducting a cross-sectional analysis that focuses on regional differences in the warfare in the Afghan Civil War.

This chapter centres on two regions in Afghanistan: Nuristan and Herat. These regions were selected as they are representative of the dynamics of warfare early in the Afghan Civil War. Generally, violent uprisings against the PDPA took one of two forms depending on whether it was located in rural or urban areas. The Nuristani Rebellion was typical of the pattern of violence across much of rural Afghanistan. In rural areas, uprisings were usually instigated by tribal, religious or other notables who led their local communities against the provincial military and police garrison. The Afghan state only had a small military presence in most rural areas, hence in those areas the average cumulative capabilities was low and the concentration of capabilities was close to parity. As the theory predicts, this configuration in the balance of capabilities resulted in irregular warfare characterising much of the early violence across rural Afghanistan. Warfare in the cities took a very different form. As the PDPA's capabilities were concentrated in the provincial capitals, successful urban uprisings required the active defection of the army. The initial mutiny and the PDPA's response in Herat were representative of events in other major Afghan cities, where the military garrison defected to the

Mujahideen. Indeed, the Herat Mutiny catalysed a series of similar events in Jalalabad, Asmar, Ghazni, Nahrin and the Upper Fortress in Kabul.⁶ The PDPA responded to these mutinies by deploying loyal military units to bring the towns back under its control, creating a clash in the area between loyal and renegade military units which was characterised by high average cumulative capabilities and parity in the concentration of capabilities. The result was usually a short, decisive, conventional battle as the two forces faced off.

Map 7.1: Afghanistan

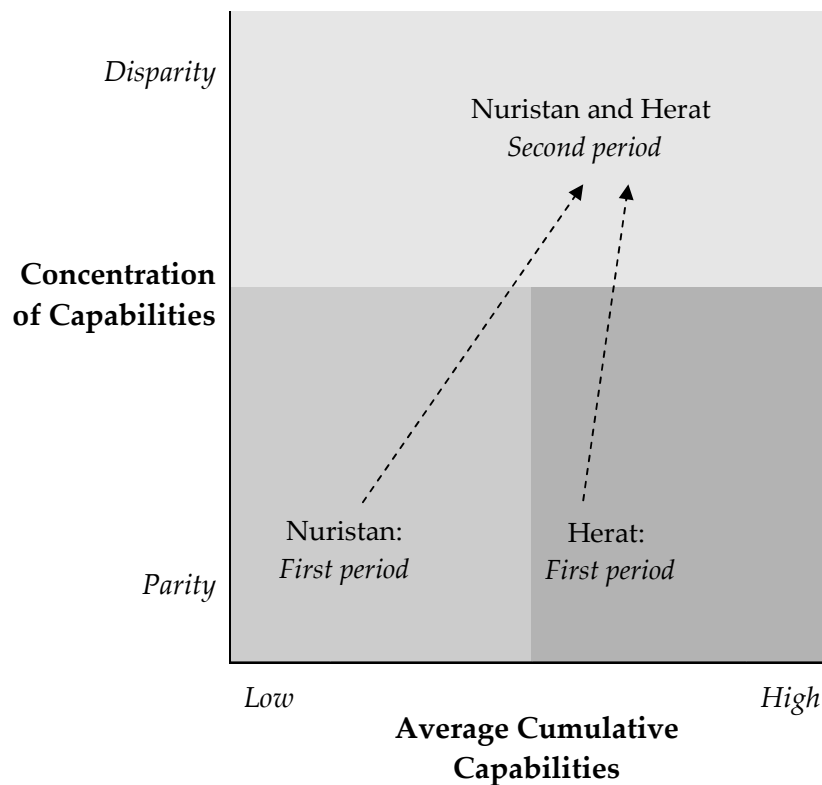


The Soviet intervention in December 1979 radically altered the balance of capabilities in all regions of Afghanistan. It significantly increased the average cumulative capabilities in the country, while moving the concentration of capabilities toward disparity. Neither in Nuristan nor Herat could the Mujahideen

⁶ Barnett R. Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 120.

hope to confront the PDPA with anything approaching a parity of capabilities. As such, the Mujahideen naturally turned to a guerrilla strategy. However, there were some major differences between the two regions with respect to variation in the balance of capabilities. First, in contrast with Nuristan, which remained unoccupied by PDPA-Soviet forces during the civil war, Herat was the base of a reinforced PDPA division. Second, while Nuristan was a rugged, isolated, mountainous region, unsuitable for armoured vehicles, Herat was relatively flat and arid, a geographic setting in which traditional Soviet tactics proved to be more appropriate. Figure 7.1 illustrates this spatial and temporal variation in the balance of capabilities and warfare between the first and second periods of the Afghan Civil War.

Figure 7.1: Spatial and Temporal Variation in the Balance of Capabilities



2. First Period of the Afghan Civil War (April 1978 – December 1979)

The 27 April 1978 coup in Afghanistan triggered three decades of almost continuous civil war. Shortly after seizing power, the PDPA began to introduce radical policies intended to rapidly transform Afghan society.⁷ Bands of young PDPA members spilled out of Kabul, filled with revolutionary fervour. They brushed aside traditional village elders and directly ordered the peasants to begin implementing the PDPA's new policies, which included land reform, the abolishment of feudalism, the establishment of literacy classes, and the banning of certain religious customs, including bride prices. The violent backlash to the PDPA was swift, severe and almost universal.⁸ However, as is discussed below, the specific nature of the resistance and the PDPA's response varied between regions.

Pattern of foreign intervention in Afghanistan

Between 1954 and 1978, Afghanistan had attempted to remain non-aligned and thus receive economic and military assistance from both the Soviet Union and the United States. However, as Afghanistan grew to be the third-largest recipient of Soviet aid, it became increasingly difficult for Kabul to balance its foreign policy. By 1978, total Soviet aid to Afghanistan had reached \$1.265 billion.⁹ In contrast, between 1954 and 1978, the United States showed far less interest in the country, providing a total of only \$471 million. Thus, Afghanistan had increasingly been tilting towards Moscow, which the Saur Revolution only acted to accelerate.

⁷ However, it is misleading to conceptualise the situation in Afghanistan as a clash between "the state" and "society". "Afghan society" suggests a degree of cohesion and structure that was never present. David Chaffetz, "Afghanistan in Turmoil," *International Affairs*, Vol. 56, No. 1, (1980), 20.

⁸ Gilles Dorronsoro and Chantal Lobato, "The Militias in Afghanistan," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 8, No. 4, (1989), 95.

⁹ M.S. Noorzoy, "Long-Term Economic Relations between Afghanistan and the Soviet Union: An Interpretive Study," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 2, (1985), 159.

The Saur Revolution finalised Afghanistan's slide towards the Soviet Union. Barnett Rubin mapped out this process when he wrote that the "PDPA transformed the international orientation of the Afghan state from balanced nonalignment, with some advantages to the USSR, to total alignment with the USSR."¹⁰ From the Saur Revolution through to December 1979, Moscow rapidly increased its aid to Kabul, while Western and Islamic aid moved in the other direction.¹¹ This was particularly true after the American ambassador to Afghanistan, Adolph Dubs, was killed by terrorists in February 1979.

By the time of the Nuristani Rebellion and Herat Mutiny, the PDPA had become increasingly reliant on the Soviet Union for all manner of support. For example, in 1978, there were already 2,000 Soviet technical, bureaucratic and military officers in Afghanistan.¹² Indeed, several Soviet military officers were reportedly present in Jalalabad to offer advice on the PDPA's response to the Nuristani Rebellion.¹³ Moscow was more active in helping the PDPA respond to the Herat Mutiny. A request from President Taraki for Soviet troops to help crush the Herat Mutiny "triggered a major discussion in the Politburo of the Afghanistan situation."¹⁴ Eventually, Moscow postponed sending troops, however the Soviet Air Force did fly missions in support of the PDPA, bombing large tracts of Herat city to the ground.

Initially, neither the Mujahideen in Nuristan nor Herat received any exogenous resources. Until the Soviet Union direct military intervention, the United States was uninterested in the conflict. The only significant assistance during this period was supplied by Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.¹⁵ However, even Riyadh and Islamabad

¹⁰ Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 112.

¹¹ Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 109; Noorzoy, "Long-Term Economic Relations between Afghanistan and the Soviet Union," 159-160.

¹² Noorzoy, "Long-Term Economic Relations between Afghanistan and the Soviet Union," 159-160.

¹³ Vincent Schneider, "La Guerre de Liberation au Nouristan," *Les Temps Modernes*, No. 408-409, (July-August 1980), 243.

¹⁴ William Maley, *The Afghanistan Wars*, (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 30.

¹⁵ Between 1978 and 1980, Saudi Arabian support was modest, reportedly providing a "few million dollars" in economic assistance. Pakistan was the most enthusiastic supporter of the Mujahideen. Immediately following the first violent

only provided modest support to the Mujahideen and none reached the Nuristanis or Heratis. Overall, prior to December 1978, Soviet assistance to the PDPA and Saudi and Pakistani aid to the Mujahideen had only a marginal influence on the balance of capabilities in Afghanistan.

The Nuristani Rebellion

Nuristan covers an area of about 5,000 square miles in eastern Afghanistan. Politically and socially isolated by its remote geography, Nuristan is populated by some 100,000-130,000 people.¹⁶ Nuristanis immediately understood that the PDPA coup in Kabul was detrimental to their interests. For the traditional Kabuli elite, the Nuristanis had exemplified the Afghan ideals of “bravery, love of freedom, simplicity, and ability to survive in a harsh and hostile environment” and, as a result, the region and its people had enjoyed a privileged status under former regimes.¹⁷ Indeed, through their privileged status, the Nuristanis achieved considerable influence over policy-making in Kabul which they effectively used to enhance the region’s security against hostile neighbours, particularly the Gujar tribe. It did not take long for Nuristanis to realise that their political intimacy with former regimes would make them suspect in the eyes of the PDPA. The PDPA’s crackdown on what it viewed as counterrevolutionary activity resulted in the Nuristanis becoming the first people to violently rebel against the Marxist regime.

reactions to the Saur Revolution, in 1978, Pakistan constructed eight training camps to convert Afghan refugees into guerrilla units. By the end of 1978, the first 5,000 graduates, armed with Chinese weapons, crossed back into Afghanistan and attacked Asadabad (a Pashtun town to the east of Nuristan). Anwar, *The Tragedy of Afghanistan*, 153; Robert S. Litwak, “The Soviet Union in Afghanistan,” in Ariel E. Levite, Bruce W. Jentleson and Larry Berman, (eds.), *Foreign Military Intervention: The Dynamics of Protracted Conflicts*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 72; Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 180.

¹⁶ Katarina Larsson, *Provincial Survey of Nuristan*, (Stockholm: Swedish Committee of Afghanistan, 2005), 15; David J. Katz, “Response to Central Authority in Nuristan: The Case of the Vaygal Valley Kalasha,” in N. Nazif Shahrani and Robert L. Canfield, (eds.), *Revolutions and Rebellions in Afghanistan: Anthropological Perspectives*, (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, 1984), 95. Ahmad Yusuf Nuristani, *Emergence of Ulama as Political Leaders in the Waigal Valley: The Intersection of Islamic Identity*, PhD dissertation, (Tucson: The University of Arizona, 1992), 29-46.

¹⁷ Katz, “Response to Central Authority in Nuristan,” 100 and 101. Nuristani men were highly valued for their skill at arms and distance from Pashtun tribal politics, which allowed a disproportionate number of them to climb to senior ranks in the Afghan military. While Nuristani women, with their fair skin and hair, and green and blue eyes, were highly prized as wives, concubines or servants.

The Nuristani Rebellion was the first in what became a long series of similar revolts across rural Afghanistan. The rebellion began in June 1978, when word reached the provincial capital that a *mullah* and some followers in Shigal, a small mountain village in Nuristan, had been preaching against the communist regime. A PDPA army officer and a small number of men were dispatched to round up and arrest the rabble-raisers. However, the two small groups got locked in a fire-fight, which lasted all night. At dawn one of the *mullah's* men had been killed along with the army officer.

With the aim of quelling the violence of the previous night, the PDPA deployed more troops to the area with orders to arrest elders from Shigal and the surrounding villages. However, the squad simply arrested “whomever they could get their hands on”,¹⁸ resulting in many families fleeing the violence to the neighbouring village of Waigal. In turn, the PDPA expanded its extra-judicial arrests to include Waigal.¹⁹ As the disorder escalated, the general population became increasingly involved. “All the people were aware that a communist government had arrived,” reported Muhammad Anvar Amin,²⁰ “and everyone had their ears cocked, wondering what they should do.”²¹ However, the event that made rebellion in Nuristan inevitable occurred in the Pashtun-Safi village of Nangalam. Following an exchange of gunfire, PDPA troops burnt large tracts of the town, marking a significant escalation in the violence.²² The PDPA’s extremely violent (and ineffective) response encouraged the entire region to mobilise for war.

¹⁸ Muhammad Anvar Amin, “The True Story of Our Jihad,” trans. Richard R. Strand, in *Nuristan: The Hidden Land of the Hindu Kush*, (unpublished manuscript, 2007).

¹⁹ Interestingly, relations within the wider-Nuristani community had not been good. For example, there had been a “war” between the villagers of Shigal and Waigal, however, as Amin recalled “Afghans have a virtue that if a person escapes into a person’s home, even if he is an enemy we are supposed to take care of him well. Our people gave up their homes, their cattle, their milk, and their dairy products to them and took care of them.” Amin, “The True Story of Our Jihad.” Also see, Wilfred Thesiger, “The Journey in Nuristan,” *The Geographical Journal*, No. 123, No. 4, (1957), 457-462.

²⁰ At the outbreak of hostilities, Muhammad Anvar Amin was the government sub-district administrator; however, he quickly defected to the Mujahideen and became leader the Mujahideen Front in Kumar Province.

²¹ Amin, “The True Story of Our Jihad.”

²² Max Klimburg, “The Situation in Nuristan,” *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 20, No. 3, (2001), 384.

The balance of capabilities in Nuristan

During the first period of the Afghan Civil War, the balance of capabilities in Nuristan was similar to most other isolated and rugged Afghan provinces. Since 1896, when Nuristan was incorporated into the Afghan state, Kabul's authority over the region had been limited. Indeed, in 1978, the PDPA's presence in Nuristan was limited to several scattered government outposts, each manned by a few hundred soldiers. The soldiers had a limited mandate, being assigned only to deter major inter-communal violence and guarantee the security of the village *mullahs*.²³ By and large, the Nuristanis had been "left to themselves as long as they created no disturbances, did not openly challenge the government, supplied the required number of conscripts, paid their taxes, and helped provision the soldiers garrisoned at the [outposts]."²⁴ Hence, at the outbreak of hostilities, the PDPA's cumulative capabilities in the area were low.

In response to the rebellion, the PDPA deployed two types of units to Nuristan. The majority of the troops were tribal militia, numbering between 15,000 and 20,000 men.²⁵ Kabul offered money, weapons, and land to tribal groups that had longstanding disputes with the Nuristanis.²⁶ The three tribes enlisted by the PDPA were the Gujar, Meshwani and Shinwari.²⁷ The Gujar, in particular, had deep grievances against the Nuristanis after having fought a protracted and bitter tribal war against them during the 1960s, and thus agreed to supply the majority of the militiamen to the coalition.²⁸ The PDPA paid the tribal militiamen 2,000 Afghani

²³ Katz, "Response to Central Authority in Nuristan," 99.

²⁴ Katz, "Response to Central Authority in Nuristan," 100.

²⁵ Some estimates have been higher. For example, Schneiter calculated that there were 20,000 Gujar and 15,000 Shinwaris. See, Schneiter, "La Guerre de Liberation au Nouristan," 241.

²⁶ Olivier Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 98.

²⁷ The Gujar are nomadic cattle-breeders who had often come into conflict with the Nuristani over pasturage rights. The Meshwani and Shinwari are both neighbouring Pashtun tribes which were traditional enemies of the Nuristani. See, Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, 100; Dorransoro and Lobato, "The Militias in Afghanistan," 96; Gilles Dorransoro, *Revolution Unending: Afghanistan 1979 to the Present*, trans. John King, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 93.

²⁸ On Nuristani-Gujar relations, see, Richard F. Strand, "Ethnic Competition and Tribal Schism in Nuristan," in Jon W. Anderson and Richard F. Strand, (eds.), *Ethnic Processes and Intergroup Relations in Contemporary Afghanistan*, Occasional paper 15, (New York: The Afghanistan Council of the Asia Society, 1978), 9-14.

rupees (equivalent of two months' pay) and supplied volunteers with sub-machine guns.²⁹ The second type of unit deployed by the PDPA were three mechanised battalions hurriedly deployed from Jalalabad. However, the regular army units eventually played a supporting role to the tribal militias as the regular units' armoured cars had difficulty advancing far beyond the entrance to the Landay Sin and Waigal Valleys.

The Nuristanis' force consisted entirely of tribal militia. The leaders of Nuristan's traditionally antagonistic tribes were able to form a tentatively-united front against the PDPA.³⁰ Unlike the PDPA's forces, the Nuristanis had to rely solely upon local resources, which meant Nuristani militiamen went into combat with whatever weapons were available, including antiquated flintlock rifles, sling-shots and even "sticks and clubs and axes".³¹ However, in July 1978, the Nuristani front could field in the vicinity of 15,000 tribal militiamen.³² Therefore, although the PDPA possessed a marginal advantage in men and equipment, overall there was roughly parity between the sides.

In sum, the balance of capabilities in Nuristan during the first period of the civil war had not changed much since the 1960s Nuristani-Gujar War; the average cumulative capabilities were low and the concentration of capabilities was close to parity. As a consequence, the warfare that emerged in Nuristan also resembled traditional irregular tribal conflict.

²⁹ Schneider, "La Guerre de Liberation au Nouristan," 241.

³⁰ In 1980, the coalition of Nuristani tribes was given greater cohesion and structure with the formation of the Kunar Tribal Alliance for the Islamic Holy War. See, Richard F. Strand, "The Evolution of Anti-Communist Resistance in Eastern Nuristan," in N. Nazif Shahrani and Robert L. Canfield, (eds.), *Revolutions and Rebellions in Afghanistan: Anthropological Perspective*, (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, 1984), 78.

³¹ Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 189; Roy, *Islam and Resistance*, 106; David B. Edwards, *Before the Taliban: Genealogies of the Afghan Jihad*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 165; Anthony Hyman, *Afghanistan Under Soviet Domination, 1964-83*, (London: Macmillan, 1982), 125.

³² Pierre Allan and Albert A. Stahel, "Tribal Guerrilla Warfare Against a Colonial Power: Analyzing the War in Afghanistan," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 27, No. 4, (1983), 598.

Irregular tribal warfare in Nuristan

The round of fighting in Nuristan spanned from July 1978 to April 1979.³³ In July and August 1978, the Nuristani Mujahideen was primarily on the offensive as the Nuristani tribal militias attacked and eradicated the PDPA's presence from the province. However, from October, the PDPA took the offensive in an attempt to reassert its control over the renegade region. The fighting that ensued was typical of two evenly-matched opponents sharing low overall cumulative capabilities.

On 20 July 1978, the first offensives of the conflict were mounted by the Nuristani Mujahideen. Following the PDPA's burning of Nangalam, and the harassment of Shigal, Waigal and the surrounding villages, 2,000 men armed with 500 antique flintlock rifles and sling-shots, retaliated by marching down to the local government garrison and burning it down.³⁴ Encouraged by their success, the village militia then proceeded to the neighbouring town of Manugei and burnt down the government headquarters located there as well.³⁵ The Nuristani Mujahideen's displays of strength were largely responsible for the fall of the PDPA garrisons. Although the garrisons were defended by over a hundred men, most of these confrontations were relatively bloodless. Indeed, at Manugei, the entire garrison of 150 soldiers surrendered and were taken prisoner. They were subsequently sent to Nuristani villages to work in agriculture to compensate for the absent men.³⁶

Other villages in Nuristan followed the lead of Waigal. On 4 October 1978, tribal forces from the Landay Sin Valley attacked the district government post near the hamlet of Yurmur. While the Nuristani village elders were debating whether or not to wait to attack after winter, the young men, who had been excluded from the

³³ Chaffetz, "Afghanistan in Turmoil," 25.

³⁴ Schneider reported that the garrison was guarded by over a hundred soldiers and armoured cars. Schneider, "La Guerre de Liberation au Nouristan," 238.

³⁵ Casualties during the engagement were light on the PDPA's side, with only the army commander being killed. See, Amin, "The True Story of Our Jihad."

³⁶ Schneider, "La Guerre de Liberation au Nouristan," 239.

discussions, decided to take it upon themselves to fire shots at the government post. The older men, hearing the shots and realising their discussions had been overtaken by events, immediately rushed down the mountain to help with the attack. The attackers cut the telephone line to the provincial capital and besieged the post.³⁷ The PDPA troops held back the band of tribal warriors for three days until they surrendered.³⁸ The attackers then telephoned a second force of Kati tribesmen to tell of their success and encouraged them to attack the sub-district post at Bragimatal, which the Katis subsequently captured along with additional weapons and supplies. Indeed, the Nuristanis' reportedly captured "enough arms and ammunition to equip all military-aged men in the district – that is, aged between ten and seventy."³⁹ Following the fall of the small PDPA post at Bragimatal, the PDPA had no further presence in eastern Nuristan.

The PDPA did not possess adequate initial capabilities to quash the Nuristani Rebellion. Indeed, at first, the PDPA's only, and somewhat meek, retaliation was to launch two air strikes (in July and August 1978), with three fighter-bombers and an attack helicopter on Nuristani villages.⁴⁰ It was not until October 1978 that the PDPA went on the offensive by deploying two regular armoured battalions to the foot of the Waigal Valley and a third to the lower end of the Landay Sin Valley. However, the terrain was unsuitable for armour and the battalion was halted at the entrance to the valley. Nuristan has few roads and consists entirely of a series of rugged mountain ranges, deep, wooded valleys and wide rivers, with much of the territory linked only by narrow goat trails. As the armour slowly lumbered up the trails, which were cut into the sides of steep ravines, the armoured cars could rarely rotate their turrets, let alone move laterally. When the armoured battalions

³⁷ Strand, "The Evolution of Anti-Communist Resistance in Eastern Nuristan," 88.

³⁸ The quantities of weapons captured included AK-47s, RPG-7s, Dshika anti-aircraft guns, and 76-mm guns. Each mujahid was allowed to keep one rifle, while the tribal council, at least initially, took possession of the rest of the stockpile. See, Edwards, *Before the Taliban*, 150 and Strand, "The Evolution of Anti-Communist Resistance in Eastern Nuristan," 77.

³⁹ Chaffetz, "Afghanistan in Turmoil," 24.

⁴⁰ Chaffetz, "Afghanistan in Turmoil," 25.

did manage to creep forward, they were susceptible to Nuristani-triggered mudslides.⁴¹ With the PDPA's armour column stymied, the Nuristani tribal militia and PDPA infantry proceeded to fight sporadic skirmishes against each other for two months.⁴²

In late November, the arrival of the Gujar tribal militia broke the indecisive skirmishing and allowed the PDPA's forces to finally begin advancing up the valley. Like the Nuristanis they confronted, the Gujar-led tribal militias were experienced in high-altitude mountain fighting and advanced along the crests of the mountains. The attackers trickled up the valley, raiding and looting in the tradition of inter-communal warfare. The Gujar militia and PDPA troops plundered the Nuristanis' fruit harvests, cattle and goats, before burning each village to the ground. The PDPA advance continued until January 1979, when the Nuristanis flung 250 men at the PDPA winter camp at Kamdesh. During the fighting, a Nuristani fighter killed the Gujar commander, Gul Muhammad Gujar, with a captured bazooka. Following the death of their commander, the Gujar tribal militia abandoned the PDPA's regular troops and retreated back down the valley.⁴³ The PDPA's regular forces' training, doctrine and weapons again proved ill-suited to the environment and by the end of spring 1979 they had retreated from the Waigal and Landay Sin Valleys to take refuge at Barokot. Inspired by the Nuristani example, other ethnic groupings in the neighbouring Kunar Province mobilised and moved upon Barokot from other directions. Although the PDPA's forces were able to hold Barokot, they had effectively lost control over both the Nuristani and Kunar provinces.

⁴¹ Schneiter, "La Guerre de Liberation au Nouristan," 240.

⁴² Strand, "The Evolution of Anti-Communist Resistance in Eastern Nuristan," 89.

⁴³ Strand, "The Evolution of Anti-Communist Resistance in Eastern Nuristan," 90. Besides killing the Gujar leader, this attack was also extremely lucrative. The Nuristanis successfully captured 9 rocket launchers, 300 rocket missiles, one anti-aircraft machine gun with 1,930 rounds, 39 AK-47s with 400 magazines, two radios and two pairs of binoculars. The Nuristanis attackers carried out the raid armed only with ancient flintlock rifles and sling shots. Schneiter, "La Guerre de Liberation au Nouristan," 242.

The key influence on the warfare in Nuristan was the extremely low force-to-space ratio. This meant that defence on both sides was often *ad hoc* and unstructured. During the Nuristani Rebellion, defence was largely consigned to individual reactions and initiative. For example, in the Pech Valley, it was reported that men would simply stop whatever activity they were doing and rush towards the sound of gunfire. In one case, a young husband armed only with an “antique” short-barrelled, large-calibre rifle disappeared for three days. On his return, he explained that after hearing the sound of remote fighting he had spent three days fruitlessly searching for the enemy.⁴⁴ Although this form of defence lacked overall strategic coordination, it was effective at deploying significant numbers of militiamen to confront the enemy.

The Herat Mutiny

Another early case of violent opposition to the PDPA’s new policies occurred at Herat, when on 15 March 1979, rioting broke out in the city. Enraged by the PDPA’s ongoing land reforms, large numbers of people from villages surrounding Herat marched into the city and began to congregate around the central mosque. This crowd was quickly joined by many townspeople, who together listened to *mullahs* and *’ulama* preach against the PDPA.⁴⁵ After being whipped into frenzy, the protesters proceeded to charge through the city, destroying all symbols of the PDPA and communism.⁴⁶ In the ensuing violence, all reminders of the PDPA were targeted, including between 50 and 200 Soviet advisors and their families who were killed by the protesters.⁴⁷ As the mob gained momentum and confidence, an element marched to the prison and forced the release of the PDPA’s political opponents.

⁴⁴ Edwards, *Before the Taliban*, 142.

⁴⁵ Maley, *The Afghanistan Wars*, 30.

⁴⁶ Dorronsoro, *Revolution Unending*, 99.

⁴⁷ It is commonly reported that the bodies of the Soviet advisors and their families were mutilated, heads stuck on spikes and paraded through the city. See, for example, Larry P. Goodson, *Afghanistan’s Endless War: State Failure, Regional Politics, and the Rise of the Taliban*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 57. However, several well-informed researchers dispute the more gruesome version of events. See, Dorronsoro, *Revolution Unending*, 99.

At this juncture, the role of the military garrison in the city became crucial. The 17th Division, which represented the PDPA's largest concentration of soldiers in western Afghanistan, could have quickly suppressed the mostly-unarmed, unorganised, and untrained Heratis. Yet, by the afternoon of 15 March, the entire Herat Division had refused to take action against the protesters, essentially signalling their intent to mutiny against the PDPA.⁴⁸ That afternoon, 17th Division soldiers shot several senior officers and two Soviet advisors. The Herat Mutiny was significant for two reasons. First, although the Afghan army's desertion rate remained high throughout the civil war, at no other time did an entire division cross over to the Mujahideen. Second, the scale of the Herat Mutiny signalled to Moscow that its greater intervention in the civil war was probably going to be necessary.

The balance of capabilities in Herat

The mutiny of the 17th Division in Herat radically altered the balance of capabilities in the province. On the PDPA's side, the mutiny striped much of its military capability in western Afghanistan. To restore its control over Herat, the PDPA was forced to use military units from other provinces. First, Kabul deployed the 4th and 15th Armoured Brigades from Pol-e-Charkhi. However, it was going to take this force several days to reach Herat, so the PDPA also dispatched Major-General Sayed Mukharam (commander of the Kandahar garrison) and an armoured battalion from Kandahar.⁴⁹ Major-General Sayed Mukharam's force was much smaller than the one deployed from Pol-e-Charkhi, consisting of only some 30 tanks and around 300 men.⁵⁰ However, the attackers also had the advantage of being able to call upon assistance from the Soviet Air Force flying from bases in

⁴⁸ Mohammad Yousaf and Mark Adkin, *Afghanistan – The Bear Trap: The Defeat of a Superpower*, (Havertown, PA: Casemate, 2001), 57.

⁴⁹ Mark Urban, *War in Afghanistan*, (London: Macmillian, 1990), 30.

⁵⁰ Dorransoro, *Revolution Unending*, 100. Also see, Antonio Giustozzi, *Genesis of a "Prince": The Rise of Ismail Khan in Western Afghanistan, 1979-1992*, working paper number 4, (London: London School of Economics, Crisis States Research Centre, 2006), 3.

Turkmenistan and Afghan Air Force IL-28 bombers of 335th Air Regiment based nearby at Shindand.

Opposing the PDPA's forces were the remnants of the 17th Division, which had an original complement of 10,000 men. However, it is likely that only half this number crossed over to the Mujahideen and agreed to defend the city while the other half probably returned to their homes in other regions of Afghanistan.⁵¹ In addition to the 5,000 soldiers, Herat was also defended by bands of armed civilians which had looted hundreds of automatic weapons from the 17th Division's arsenal.⁵² However, the Herat Mujahideen force's formidable size masked several critical internal weaknesses. Foremost among these was the lack of leadership and organisation. On the civilian side, the original uprising had been instigated by a mixture of traditional notables, landlords, *mullahs* and *'ulama*, none of whom had access to an existing political structure with the capacity to organise the rebellion. On the military side, the mutiny was prompted by relatively junior officers.⁵³ As such, these officers did not have the authority, or experience, to assert leadership over an entire division of mutineers. The lack of clear leadership restricted coordination and the eventual viability of the uprising.

In sum, following the defection of the 17th Division to the Mujahideen, the PDPA's initial advantage was eroded and the concentration of capabilities moved dramatically towards parity between the PDPA and the Herati Mujahideen. The PDPA's response of flinging multiple armour brigades towards a city which had been occupied by several-thousand heavily-armed former soldiers and civilians ensured the creation of a high force-to-space ratio. That is, unlike in other regions of Afghanistan where the opposing sides were scattered across entire provinces, at

⁵¹ In 1982, when Olivier Roy met with the Mujahideen in Herat, they were almost all native Heratis. This suggests that non-Heratis returned to their home provinces. Personal correspondence with Olivier Roy, 11 and 16 June 2008. Also see, Urban, *War in Afghanistan*, 30.

⁵² Urban, *War in Afghanistan*, 30.

⁵³ Giustozzi, *Genesis of a "Prince": The Rise of Ismail Khan in Western Afghanistan*, 3.

Herat, two large conventional forces were deployed within a confined geographical space.

Conventional warfare in Herat

The conventional warfare in Herat was a short and highly-bloody affair. Although the battle was waged for only one day, 20 March 1979, it cost the lives of up to 25,000 Heratis, from the city's original population of 80,000.⁵⁴ Following the events of 15 March and prior to the decisive battle on 20 March, the city plunged into anarchy. According to one report, the "bazaar was repeatedly looted, contradictory rumours circulated, and no organisation seemed able to control events."⁵⁵

When the first contingent of PDPA's troops under the command of Sayed Mukharam arrived from Kandahar they immediately took up positions around the city, presumably unobserved by the defenders.⁵⁶ The PDPA's forces had expected to have to wage a conventional battle to recapture the city from the Mujahideen. In preparation for such a conflict, the PDPA's force began by launching air attacks against the city. Squadrons of Soviet ground-attack aircraft, based at Doshanbe, along with Afghan bombers from Shindand airbase, bombed the Mujahideen's positions inside Herat.⁵⁷ Much of the city was repeatedly bombed, including the 17th Division's headquarters and the defensive positions of the rebel forces. Rashid reported that "[f]ifteen years later, large tracts of the city still looked like a lunar landscape with rubble stretching to the horizon."⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Estimates of the total number of Afghans killed in the Herat fighting vary greatly. For instance, Roy offers a range from 5,000 to 25,000, see, Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, 108. Most other analyses offer a figure that falls at the higher end of this bracket. See, for instance, Hassan Kakar, *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion and the Afghan Response, 1979-1982*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 34 and 113.

⁵⁵ Dorransoro, *Revolution Unending*, 99.

⁵⁶ Urban, *War in Afghanistan*, 30.

⁵⁷ Kakar, *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion and the Afghan Response*, 34.

⁵⁸ Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil & Fundamentalism in Central Asia*, (New Haven, CT.: Yale University Press, 2001), 37. Rashid claims that the Soviet Union was responsible for crushing the Herat Mutiny by deploying 300 tanks from Turkmenistan. However, I have failed to find support for this claim in any other source.

The Herat Mujahideen's defensive positions were mostly located at the outskirts of the city, with little in the way of layered defence. The lack of senior civilian or military leadership resulted in junior officers taking charge of the troops immediately under their command with little overall coordination or overarching strategy. The Mujahideen commanders moved most of their heavy weapons and armoured vehicles to fixed positions around the outskirts of the city. The result was that although some fixed defences were effectively constructed at the most likely entry points into the city, orders for what should occur after contact with the PDPA's forces was made did not exist.⁵⁹

From their positions overlooking the city, the PDPA expeditionary forces observed the Herat Mujahideen's slow, inefficient, and uncoordinated construction of the city's defences. Not waiting for the two armoured brigades from Pol-e-Charkhi, the PDPA's force of 30 tanks and 300 men drove directly at the defenders, brandishing Korans and waving green flags. Seeing this procession driving towards their forward line of defence, the Herati Mujahideen's forces – believing the rebellion had spread to Kandahar – were fooled by the Trojan horse and allowed the attackers to proceed through the frontline and into the centre of city.⁶⁰ Once the PDPA's forces were inside the city, the Herat Mujahideen's forces were unable to effectively respond. They had neither a command structure to manoeuvre and coordinate forces nor properly-positioned capabilities. As such, the confusion in the Mujahideen units – many of which were still located at the entrances to the city – quickly turned to panic. The PDPA's forces recaptured the key government buildings in Herat, while the Mujahideen formations disintegrated.

The warfare in Herat was fundamentally different from the irregular warfare that developed in much of rural Afghanistan. First, it involved two relatively-balanced regular forces. The eventual one-sided result was caused by a mixture of the Herat

⁵⁹ Dorransoro, *Revolution Unending*, 100.

⁶⁰ Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, 108.

Mujahideen's lack of an effective command structure and the intervention of Soviet airpower. Second, the geography of the confrontation influenced the nature of the warfare. Herat's flat, arid terrain offered little strategic advantage to either side. Thus, the Herat Mujahideen was compelled to concentrate their forces in the city itself. Finally, the battle was short, intense and decisive. Aerial bombing and the exchange of gunfire was responsible for the single largest loss of Afghan life during the Afghan Civil War. These factors shaped the distinctly-conventional characteristics of the warfare in Herat during the second period.

3. Second Period of the Afghan Civil War in Nuristan and Herat (1980-1988)

The December 1979 Soviet direct military intervention represented a distinct change in the course of the Afghan Civil War. Its impact was felt across the country. Following the direct military intervention, the Mujahideen could no longer face the combined PDPA-Soviet forces on military parity. However, in some regions, the Mujahideen was slow to adjust their strategy to conform to the shift in the balance of capabilities. In these instances, the Mujahideen units remained structured as tribal militia (or *lashkars*). Similar in appearance to the Nuristani forces, these tribal militias were "comparative strong forces and they did not back off from direct contact. This allowed the Soviet forces to destroy strong antirevolutionary groupings near Faizabad, Taleqan, Takhar, Baghlan, Jalalabad, and other cities."⁶¹ These maulings forced the Mujahideen, nation wide, to change from a traditional irregular tribal structure to a guerrilla strategy and organisation. *Pravda* chronicled the change, reporting that the "Afghan rebels have reduced the size of their individual fighting units to 30-40 men, and they like to use ambushes

⁶¹ The Russian General Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War: How a Superpower Fought and Lost*, trans. Lester W. Grau and Michael A. Gress, (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas, 2002), 19.

at bridges and narrow places.”⁶² This was an effective ploy as the Soviet Air Force, which had “readily ripped apart the Afghan *lashkars*, was useless against a guerrilla that it could not target.”⁶³

Hence, following the Soviet direct military intervention, guerrilla and counter-guerrilla warfare became the dominant form of warfare in all regions of Afghanistan. However, there remained some regional variation in the precise characteristics of the guerrilla warfare, which is evident from a comparison of Nuristan and Herat.

Change in the pattern of foreign intervention

The combination of widespread violent resistance and the mass desertion of elements of the Afghan Army compelled the Soviet Union to intervene in the Afghan Civil War. At 11 p.m. on 24 December 1979, the main body of the Soviet intervention force began crossing into Afghanistan. Soviet Airborne troops flew into Afghanistan’s major airfields at Kabul, Shindand (near Herat), and Kandahar. On the heels of the Airborne troops were the motorised infantry, which sped towards Afghanistan’s major cities.⁶⁴ The initial Soviet intervention force consisted of 52,000 soldiers, which quickly grew to over 105,000.⁶⁵ The Soviet 40th Army arrived equipped with 600 tanks, 4,400 armoured-fighting vehicles, 500 aircraft and helicopters and 500 artillery pieces.⁶⁶ In addition, the force was supplemented by a

⁶² As reproduced in Nancy P. Newell and Richard S. Newell, *The Struggle for Afghanistan*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 140. Similarly, the Russian General Staff reported that the “opposition, having suffered significant military casualties in [their first encounters with Soviet forces], moved their main forces into the mountain region, which is difficult to enter and where it is practically impossible to use modern equipment.” Russian General Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War*, 20.

⁶³ Lester W. Grau, “The Soviet-Afghan War: A Superpower Mired in the Mountains,” *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 1, (2004), 129.

⁶⁴ Maley, *The Afghanistan Wars*, 34.

⁶⁵ For details of the initial intervention see, Lester W. Grau, “The Takedown of Kabul: An Effective Coup de Main,” in William G. Robertson and Lawrence A. Yates, (eds.), *Block by Block: The Challenges of Urban Warfare*, (Fort Leavenworth: U.S. Army Command and General staff College Press, 2003), 291-324.

⁶⁶ The Russian General Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War*, 20.

further 20,000-30,000 Soviet soldiers based in the neighbouring Soviet Central Asian Republics, who also took part in operations inside Afghanistan.⁶⁷

Warfare in Nuristan after the Soviet intervention (1980-1988)

By April 1979, a few months prior to the Soviet direct military intervention, the Mujahideen had been successful in driving all of the regime's forces out of Nuristan and much of the neighbouring Kunar Province. These early victories earned the region its virtual political autonomy from Kabul. Isolated and sparsely populated, Nuristan was not considered strategically significant enough to warrant the massive effort that would be required to reassert Kabul's control over the region. As such, over the following eight years, much of Nuristan escaped the severe physical damage suffered by other regions. However, sections of Nuristan did experience heavy fighting between the Mujahideen and PDPA-Soviet forces, namely along the Afghan-Pakistani border and in the Kunar Valley, through which large volumes of supplies flowed into Afghanistan. Over the course of the conflict, villages and agriculture in these areas were completely destroyed by air and artillery bombardments. In the Kunar Valley, in particular, there were frequent clashes between Mujahideen guerrillas and PDPA-Soviet troops.⁶⁸ Large numbers of Nuristani men from the relatively-peaceful parts of the province would infiltrate into the Kunar Valley to conduct guerrilla operations against the regime's forces.

Although over the course of the civil war the Nuristanis managed to marginally increase their cumulative capabilities, their gains were never sufficient to challenge the regime through anything other than guerrilla warfare. Nuristan was home to two Mujahideen fronts. The larger front, called the Islamic Jihad of Nuristan (*Jihad-i Islam-i Nuristani*), was led by Muhammad Anwar Amin. Islamic Jihad never successfully attracted foreign sponsorship and, as such, relied solely on

⁶⁷ There are some minor deviations between estimates of the exact numbers of Soviet troops. See, Litwak, "The Soviet Union in Afghanistan," 79; Maley, *The Afghan Wars*, 125.

⁶⁸ Klimburg, "The Situation in Nuristan," 384-385.

endogenous resources.⁶⁹ As the amount of fighting in Nuristan decreased, so did the Mujahideen's ability to capture weapons and ammunition. Therefore, although Islamic Jihad was the numerically larger of the two fronts, it was progressively marginalised towards the end of the Soviet occupation.⁷⁰ Exploiting northern Nuristan's relative peace and political autonomy, Mawlawi Afzal founded the second Nuristani Mujahideen front, called the "Dawlat" (*Dawlat-i Inqilabi-yi Islami-yi Nuristan* or the "Islamic Revolutionary State of Nuristan"). Although numerically smaller than Islamic Jihad, Dawlat possessed lucrative sources of both endogenous and exogenous resources.⁷¹ Dawlat's principal endogenous inputs were from the hefty taxes and tolls imposed on convoys transporting weapons, ammunition and equipment from Chitral in Pakistan to northern Afghanistan. Before setting off, a convoy was required to purchase a permit from the Dawlat "consulate" in Chitral and then pay a series of tolls while passing through Nuristan.⁷² The Dawlat's main source of exogenous resources was economic assistance from the Arab states, principally Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Mawlawi Afzal, a Panjpir-educated religious leader, was able to attract substantial support from Salafi religious groups in these countries.⁷³ Yet, although Dawlat was able to enrich itself through such operations, its cumulative capabilities still remained much lower than those of the PDPA.

After 1979, the PDPA did not attempt to regain control of Nuristan and besides some early aerial bombing raids, largely ceased offensive operations across most of the region.⁷⁴ However, the Kunar River, at the southern base of several Nuristani valleys, was the stage of intense fighting. The river valley runs parallel to the Pakistani border and thus made it an attractive stage for the regime's interdiction

⁶⁹ Strand, "The Evolution of Anti-Communist Resistance in Eastern Nuristan," 91.

⁷⁰ Dorransoro, *Revolution Unending*, 139.

⁷¹ Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, 138.

⁷² Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 242.

⁷³ Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 242.

⁷⁴ For instance, in 1980, Kamdesh, the central town in Nuristan, was extensively bombed by PDPA or Soviet aircraft. See, Committee for International Afghanistan Hearing, *International Afghanistan Hearing*, (Oslo: CIAH, 1986).

operations.⁷⁵ Indeed, in 1980 alone, there were four offensive operations along the Kunar River that involved several divisions, employing tanks, BMPs and Mi-24 attack helicopters.⁷⁶ Each offensive was preceded by some of the heaviest aerial bombing of the civil war, which forced most of the civilian population of the Kunar River Valley to become refugees in Pakistan. Following each offensive operation, the PDPA attempted to hold the captured territory by building a series of fortified observation outposts along the river's course. These outposts were intended to interdict Mujahideen supplies coming over the Pakistani border.⁷⁷ However, because of Mujahideen ambushes and raids, in the periods between PDPA's offensives, most of these outposts could only be supplied by air.⁷⁸

Generally, the heavy PDPA-Soviet activity in the Kunar Valley meant that only the most highly militarised Mujahideen fronts, which had secured foreign assistance, were able to survive.⁷⁹ However, as the Nuristani fronts were not faced with these same difficulties, they were able to conduct raids into the Kunar Valley, before returning to the relative safety of the Nuristani highlands. Nuristani raids into the Kunar Valley were common. Although a highly individualistic society, within Nuristani society every man belonged to a *sazi* (which roughly translates to a "work party") made up of roughly 50 men. The *sazi* worked in a rotation system providing public goods, such as the building of a public building, maintaining roads, or providing men for military service. During the civil war, each *sazi* in Nuristan provided ten men for one month rotations to participate in the *jihād*.⁸⁰ These guerrilla bands would then be used to cross into the Kunar Valley to conduct ambushes, raids, or sabotage against PDPA-Soviet troops.

⁷⁵ Michael T. Kaufman, "Afghan guerrillas tell of Soviet drive," *The New York Times*, 5 October 1980.

⁷⁶ "Afghan rebels, Soviets in fierce fight near Pakistani border," *The Globe and Mail*, 3 January 1980; "Pakistani newspapers report fighting in various parts of the country," *The New York Times*, 3 January 1980, 10.

⁷⁷ Kaufman, "Afghan guerrillas tell of Soviet drive."

⁷⁸ Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 242; Urban, *War in Afghanistan*, 168 and 220.

⁷⁹ The only Mujahideen front that was able to maintain a permanent presence in the Kunar River region was Commander Jamil ur-Rahman Front, which was a part of Hikmartyar's Hezb-i Islami, until he split from it in 1986. In 1990 and 1991, Jamil ur-Rahman and Hezb-i Islami fought for control over the province, which Hezb-i Islami eventually won. For details see, Dorronsoro, *Revolution Unending*, 230-231; Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 242.

⁸⁰ Strand, "The Evolution of Anti-Communist Resistance in Eastern Nuristan," 91.

Fighting in Herat after the Soviet intervention (1980-1988)

On 20 March 1979, the combination of PDPA-Soviet airpower and armour had decisively re-established the PDPA's control over Herat. Following the sudden and dramatic collapse of the uprising, the surviving rebels abandoned their heavy weapons and vehicles and redeployed to the surrounding mountains of Kuh-e Doshakh.⁸¹ It was recognised that confronting the PDPA's "regular army on its own terms, not to mention the Soviet Army, would have cost heavy casualties and brought little reward."⁸² After some months' gap, the Mujahideen forces began to organise themselves into small armed groups.⁸³

The balance of capabilities in the Herat region was similar to much of Afghanistan. The combined PDPA-Soviet force's cumulative capabilities were clearly greater than those of the Mujahideen, but it was the Soviet contingent which made the largest contribution. On paper, in 1982, the PDPA should have had in excess of 18,000 troops based in Herat; however, after taking desertions into account, its forces probably totalled closer to 6,000 soldiers.⁸⁴ The regime's cumulative capabilities were further reduced by the newly reconstituted 17th Division being responsible for a massive area, including the Herat, Badghis, Ghowar Farah and Nimroz provinces.⁸⁵ Fortunately for the PDPA, there were a number of major Soviet detachments stationed near Herat. At the Shindand airbase, just south of Herat, the Soviets maintained the 5th Guards Motor Rifle Division, along with a Spetsnaz brigade and an artillery regiment.⁸⁶ The airbase was also home to a helicopter and two fighter squadrons. All told, Soviet forces in the Herat Province totalled over 12,000 men. Furthermore, the Herati terrain was more favourable to

⁸¹ Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, 190-191.

⁸² Giustozzi, *Genesis of a "Prince": The Rise of Ismail Khan in Western Afghanistan*, 8.

⁸³ Giustozzi, *Genesis of a "Prince": The Rise of Ismail Khan in Western Afghanistan*, 3.

⁸⁴ Urban, *War in Afghanistan*, 96. The rebuilding of the 17th Division progressed rapidly. By 1988, the PDPA's forces in Herat had grown to over 55,000, although more than 30,000 were militiamen. See, Antonio Giustozzi, *War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan, 1978-1992*, (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2000), 213.

⁸⁵ The Russian General Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War*, 17.

⁸⁶ Urban, *War in Afghanistan*, 314-315.

PDPA-Soviet tactics than other regions of Afghanistan, making the Soviet contingent, in particular, a highly-capable fighting force.⁸⁷

In contrast, at its peak, the main Mujahideen front, under the command of Ismail Khan, had no more than 2,000 core guerrilla fighters, with an additional 13,000 fighters who were more loosely connected to the structure.⁸⁸ Moreover, unlike the PDPA's force, the Mujahideen's weaponry was not sufficient to "allow a real concentration of firepower."⁸⁹ For instance, in 1982, Alluadin Khan's "regiment" (or *ghund*), the most capable in Herat, possessed only six 12.7-mm machine-guns, three recoilless guns and four mortars. Similarly, the *ghund* at Lawlash had a dozen 12.7-mm's, a mortar and two recoilless guns.⁹⁰

The structure and organisation of the Mujahideen forces near Herat was appreciably different to those in most other regions. The Herat region is flatter, more arid, and more urbanised than the average Afghan terrain, and thus less suitable for a guerrilla strategy. In addition, most of the Mujahideen commanders were former army officers and, therefore thought in terms of a regular military structure. As such, Ismail Khan adopted Pashto organisational terms for a regular force structure. He named his front the "Amir Hamza Division", which on paper had five *ghunds* each supposedly consisted of some six to nine hundred men. The *ghund* were, in turn, divided into battalions (*kundak*) of about two hundred, and each battalion into companies (*tulay*). The smallest unit category was the "group" of roughly 25 to 50 men.⁹¹ Although, in theory Ismail Khan could conduct operations at the *ghund* level, observers reported that, in fact, operations were

⁸⁷ Urban, *War in Afghanistan*, 96.

⁸⁸ Giustozzi, *Genesis of a "Prince": The Rise of Ismail Khan in Western Afghanistan*, 16. Urban estimated that Ismail Khan led a force of approximately 5,000 guerrillas in 1982. See, Urban, *War in Afghanistan*, 95.

⁸⁹ Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, 180-181.

⁹⁰ Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, 180-181.

⁹¹ Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 239.

rarely attempted beyond the basic “group” level of about 25 mujahideen and at most the *kundak* level.⁹²

From the end of the Herat uprising until the Soviet withdrawal, the warfare in the Herat Province was guerrilla in character. There were few major clashes between PDPA-Soviet and Mujahideen forces. The Mujahideen guerrillas were usually able to disperse when confronted by superior PDPA-Soviet forces, but were rarely capable of concentrating into large numbers for operations. Indeed, even the much-celebrated 1985 Mujahideen attack on the Shindand airbase, which successfully destroyed a number of Il-28 bombers of the Afghan Air Force, was in fact only a commando raid involving one *kundak* unit.⁹³ Nevertheless, by using a guerrilla strategy, the Herati Mujahideen was able to effectively wrestle away control of rural areas in the province. As Giustozzi reported, by “the beginning of 1981 most district authorities were effectively besieged in the towns, protected by small police contingents and a growing number of regular army troops and pro-government militias.”⁹⁴ Thus, even in the Herat Province, where the terrain was more favourable to conventional forces, there was the emergence of the urban-rural divide.

In offence, the objective of the PDPA-Soviet forces was to intercept the Mujahideen’s supply columns from Iran and Pakistan. Unlike most other Mujahideen fronts, the majority of the Herati Mujahideen’s inputs were from exogenous resources.⁹⁵ Indeed, one study found that although “farmers were taxed,

⁹² Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, 180; Giustozzi, *Genesis of a “Prince”: The Rise of Ismail Khan in Western Afghanistan*, 4; Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 239.

⁹³ Anthony H. Cordesman and Abraham R. Wagner, *The Lessons of Modern War: The Afghan and Falklands Conflicts*, (Boulder, CO.: Westview Press, 1990), 55; Giustozzi, *Genesis of a “Prince”: The Rise of Ismail Khan in Western Afghanistan*, 8.

⁹⁴ Giustozzi, *Genesis of a “Prince”: The Rise of Ismail Khan in Western Afghanistan*, 4.

⁹⁵ The majority of the Mujahideen supplies to the Herat Province originated at Girzi-Jungle in Pakistan. Ismail Khan alone received US\$500,000 per annum from Pakistan. Unlike other Mujahideen supply bases, Girzi-Jungle was located in a sparsely populated, arid, desert region that made supply convoys travelling north relatively easy for the PDPA’s forces to spot. Once located, convoys passing to, and from, Girzi-Jungle were extremely vulnerable to attack. Truck convoys took a week to reach Herat. Grau reported that seldom did a truck convoy reach its destination without an incident. Whenever possible to minimise the time a convoy was exposed to attack, the Mujahideen would loop through

this source of revenue played a rather marginal role in the jihad.”⁹⁶ Thus, cutting the Mujahideen’s logistical pipeline had extra importance. The PDPA-Soviet forces made extensive attempts to seal the Afghan-Iranian border but, like elsewhere in Afghanistan, the PDPA never had the troops to completely and permanently achieve this.⁹⁷ The PDPA-Soviet forces attempted to exploit the favourable terrain and its technological superiority by conducting frequent multi-unit offensives along the Afghan-Iranian border. For instance, in 1984 alone, the PDPA-Soviet forces conducted division-sized offensives in June, July, August and November.⁹⁸ In addition, the PDPA-Soviet forces also attempted to cut the Mujahideen’s logistical routes by conducting extensive aerial bombing of villages and mining large tracts of the border, so that the area was “practically depopulated.”⁹⁹ Already by 1984, there were 1,500,000 refugees in Iran, most of whom were former inhabitants of the Herat Province.¹⁰⁰

The PDPA-Soviet forces’ defence of Herat developed over time. Initially, the guerrillas found penetrating the PDPA-Soviet’s defences a feasible challenge and there were almost nightly reports of gunfire within the city. The geography made defending Herat more difficult than other Afghan cities. As the Herati urban area is an agglomeration of the city itself and surrounding villages that blend into its outskirts, there was no clear frontier demarcating the edge of the city. Early on, this allowed guerrillas to infiltrate into Herat through the outlying townships. However, in 1982, the PDPA built a second ring of defence around Herat, which sharply limited the Mujahideen’s access to the city. The defensive perimeter was

Iran and approach Herat from the west. See, Yousaf and Adkin, *Afghanistan – The Bear Trap*, 110; Urban, *War in Afghanistan*, 204; Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 260.

⁹⁶ Giustozzi, *Genesis of a “Prince”: The Rise of Ismail Khan in Western Afghanistan*, 16; V. M. Bogdashkin, “Assault on the Outskirts of Herat,” in Lester W. Grau, (ed.), *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan*, (London: Frank Cass, 2005), 48.

⁹⁷ For instance, in September 1980, the Soviet Afghan forces launched an offensive operations that aimed to block sections of the Afghan-Soviet border from Zyl’fagar to Esdan. Although this represented a distance of 300 kilometers only a signal motorized rifle battalion was available. This meant that each motorized company was responsible for 100 kilometers. When, after a month on the border, the battalion was called back to Herat, no unit was available to replace it. See, The Russian General Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War*, 124.

⁹⁸ Goodson, *Afghanistan’s Endless War*, 65; Urban, *War in Afghanistan*, 96.

⁹⁹ Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 142.

¹⁰⁰ Urban, *War in Afghanistan*, 157.

similar to those in other Afghan cities. The army created “defensive zones” consisting of multiple concentric layers of bunkers, observation posts, minefields, and entanglements that reached out into the surrounding rural areas.¹⁰¹ Reportedly, once cut off from their families and source of basic supplies, the morale of the local Mujahideen fighters plummeted.¹⁰² The Mujahideen “at the cost of heavy losses,” made repeated unsuccessful attempts “to destroy the security belts established west of Herat city.”¹⁰³

The Mujahideen, in attack, also attempted to intercept their opponent’s supply routes, however, applied very different tactics to the PDPA-Soviet forces when attempting to do so. Guistozzi reported that “[a]lmost all” of the Mujahideen offensive operations around Herat “were fought by small groups of *mujahidin*, mostly under a single commander (20-50 men).”¹⁰⁴ These small groups attempted to intercept the PDPA’s supply convoys between their main supply base, near the town of Kushka, just inside Soviet Turkmenistan, and Herat and Shindand. In the Herat Province, the location of the Herati Mujahideen’s ambushes was different from other parts of Afghanistan. The province’s flat, open terrain sharply limited possible ambush sites. As such, the Mujahideen conducted many ambushes in small villages along the road linking Kushka and Herat.

The Mujahideen’s defensive measures were also typical of guerrilla warfare. Nevertheless, there were several particularities unique to the defensive tactics of the Herati Mujahideen. In defence, the most prominent regional difference was the Herati Mujahideen’s use of tunnels. The natural terrain of Herat Province did not offer the guerrilla the same level of cover and concealment as other Afghan regions. As a result, the guerrillas of Herat frequently used prepared tunnels and trenches

¹⁰¹ Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 137; Edgar O’Ballance, *Afghan Wars: Battles in a Hostile Land*, (London: Brassey’s, 2002), 100.

¹⁰² Guistozzi, *War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan*, 75. Also see Urban, *War in Afghanistan*, 204.

¹⁰³ Guistozzi, *War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan*, 208.

¹⁰⁴ Guistozzi, *Genesis of a “Prince”: The Rise of Ismail Khan in Western Afghanistan*, 8.

to evade the PDPA-Soviet forces and store weapons and supplies. Mark Urban, for instance, noted that in “the dangerous open ground near Herat the guerrillas sometimes used tunnels, many of which had been dug for drainage and irrigation, to move between villages. Just as the Americans in Vietnam found themselves trying to flush an unseen enemy from an underground haven, so the Soviets tried to hunt them.”¹⁰⁵ In a 1984 case, retold by a Soviet soldier, after an entire village had been encircled by three motorised regiments, it began to take heavy fire from a number of houses. However, when the Soviet forces fought through the village, they found that several hundred guerrillas had escaped their trap by using tunnels to dissolve into the nearby mountains.¹⁰⁶

4. Concluding Remarks

This chapter demonstrated spatial variation in the balance of capabilities and warfare in civil war. Chapter Three hypothesised that different regions of a civil war frequently contain separate strategic balances between the belligerents. That is, the balance of capabilities can vary across regions. The evidence presented in this chapter suggested that three factors influence the amount of spatial variation of warfare in a civil war: geography, leadership structure, and the deployment of forces.

Geography acts on the balance of capabilities in a number of ways. First, different topography will favour different tactics. Indeed, it has been found that without favourable terrain, weak belligerents are unlikely to survive.¹⁰⁷ Rough terrain can act to reduce the incumbent’s concentration of capabilities by decreasing its force-to-space ratio. Practically, it is more difficult to focus troops and assert control over

¹⁰⁵ Urban, *War in Afghanistan*, 189.

¹⁰⁶ Bogdashkin, “Assault on the Outskirts of Herat,” 48-52.

¹⁰⁷ James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 97, No. 1, (2003), 75-90; Halvard Buhaug and Scott Gates, “The Geography of Civil War,” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 39, No. 4, (2002), 417-433.

the local population in particularly rugged mountains and dense forests. Hence, large states, covered in highly-diverse terrain, are more likely to experience regional variation in the balance of capabilities. Second, endogenous resources heavily influence the cumulative capabilities of belligerents. Generally, the more endogenous resources, the easier extraction becomes, and the greater the belligerent's resulting cumulative capabilities. As such, forces in resource rich regions are likely to be able to tap into the local wealth and increase their cumulative capabilities faster than forces in poor regions. Finally, belligerents are likely to compete more fiercely for rich areas than poor ones. Hence, the sides will concentrate their forces in resource rich areas, thus creating regional inequity in the balance of capabilities.¹⁰⁸

Political and military structures will also influence the amount of spatial variation in the warfare in civil wars. The strategy adopted by a force is influenced by the commander's perception of the balance of capabilities. Therefore, it is expected that highly-decentralised belligerents will exhibit greater diversity in warfare, as the local commanders possess greater autonomy to adapt their force's methods in response to regional conditions. Hence, it is more likely that belligerents with organisational structures similar to that of the Mujahideen will be characterised by a more diverse range of strategies than those featuring a more hierarchical structure, such as, was the case in Angola.

Finally, few belligerents will possess the capabilities to disperse their forces evenly across the entire civil war state. Hence, for strategic, political, or economic reasons, some regions will have a greater concentration of forces than others, creating regional variation in the balance of capabilities and warfare. For example, during the American Civil War, political boundaries played a significant role in the course of the conflict, as some army, militia and police units did not have jurisdiction to

¹⁰⁸ Stathis N. Kalyvas and Nicholas Sambanis, "Bosnia's Civil War: Origins and Violence Dynamics," in Paul Collier and Nicholas Sambanis (eds.), *Understanding Civil War: Vol. 2*, (Washington: The World Bank, 2005), 217.

cross state borders. This caused sharp geographical distinctions in the balance of capabilities and consequently, warfare.

This first empirical chapter on Afghanistan reflected on the role of regional differences in the balance of capabilities and warfare. It suggested that foreign intervention has the potential to have different effects across regions. The following chapter takes a wider view of the Afghan Civil War and discusses the impact of foreign intervention and the poverty trap on the course of the war from 1980 to 1992.

Chapter Eight

Foreign Intervention and Warfare Conversion in the Afghan Civil War

The poverty trap frequently surfaces to restrict guerrilla groups' attempts to close the military gap between themselves and their more powerful opponents. I have argued that insurgents applying a guerrilla strategy often have difficulty "saving" sufficient conventional assets with which to capture fortified cities and garrisons, which causes their growth and military progress to stagnate. After becoming caught in this strategic equilibrium, foreign powers often play a crucial role in supplying the necessary resources for a guerrilla group to match the incumbent in conventional confrontations. However, what if a foreign power increases its supply of exogenous resources to an insurgent but does not transfer conventional assets? Further, what if a rival power also increases the amount of assistance it is providing to the incumbent? The Afghan Civil War offers some insights in response to these questions.

This chapter advances three arguments on the relationship between foreign intervention and warfare over the period of 1980 to 1992 in the Afghan Civil War; first, that between 1980 and 1988, the poverty trap was the defining feature in the balance of capabilities; and second, that increasing the exogenous resources to both sides in the conflict acted not to overcome, but to reinforce, the poverty trap. That is, the stalemate continued, but at higher absolute levels. Finally, after 1988, the disengagement of the Soviet Union and the United States radically reduced the cumulative capabilities of the belligerents and projected the warfare towards an irregular style.

The changes in the volumes of exogenous resources provided to the belligerents between 1980 and 1992 carved out three distinct phases in the pattern of foreign intervention. Phase I spanned from 1980 through to 1983 and captured the stage of the conflict immediately following the Soviet direct military intervention and prior to the United States' heavy commitment in favour of the Mujahideen. Phase II stretched from 1984 to 1988 and was characterised by increasing volumes of exogenous resources to both sides in the civil war. Phase III witnessed the Soviet Union's direct military disengagement from Afghanistan and a sharp reduction in the United States' supply of exogenous resources to the Mujahideen. This chapter is divided into three sections with each corresponding to a different phase of the foreign involvement in the conflict.

1. The Stabilisation of the Warfare in the Afghan Civil War, Phase I (1980-1983)

The Nuristani Rebellion was the first of a string of uprisings across rural Afghanistan. By mid-1979, only a year after the first outbreaks of violence, 24 of Afghanistan's 28 provinces were experiencing revolt and the Mujahideen had placed roughly 85 percent of Afghanistan outside the control of the PDPA. Much of what remained under the PDPA's control were urban areas.¹ Hence, when, on 24 December 1979, the first Soviet troops began arriving in Afghanistan, the country had already largely been divided into urban centres, which were held by the regime, and rural areas, which were guerrilla territory.

¹ Henry S. Bradsher, *Afghanistan and the Soviet Union*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1985), 85; Goodson's estimate is 75 percent of Afghanistan being outside the PDPA's control by 1981. Larry P. Goodson, *Afghanistan's Endless War: State Failure, Regional Politics and the Rise of the Taliban*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 60; David Isby, *Russia's War in Afghanistan*, (London: Osprey, 1986), 12.

Pattern of foreign intervention in Afghanistan

For most of its time in power, the PDPA was completely dependent upon the Soviet Union for its survival. This was particularly true in the early 1980s. Between 1980 and 1983, Soviet military aid to the PDPA held steady between roughly \$360 and \$400 million a year.² This aid allowed the PDPA to compensate for its high desertion rate by recruiting ever larger numbers of conscripts. Nevertheless, as significant as the economic support was, it was the stationing of the 40th Soviet Army in Afghanistan that made the greatest contribution to the PDPA's cumulative capabilities, curtailing the military mutinies that had swept the army's ranks in 1979 and relieving pressure from the PDPA units, which has been struggling to confront the rural rebellion. The 105,000 regular Soviet troops along with 600 tanks, 1,500 BMPs, 2,900 BTRs, 500 artillery pieces and 500 aircraft and helicopters made an instant impact on the cumulative capabilities of the regime.³

However, it was the size of the Soviet direct military intervention, rather than its appropriateness, which had the greatest effect on the PDPA's cumulative capabilities. Initially, in terms of doctrine and equipment, the Soviet 40th Army Group committed to Afghanistan did "not differ in anyway from the other Soviet armies"⁴ and it quickly proved inappropriate for performing counter-guerrilla tasks in the mountains of Afghanistan. Soviet doctrine had undergone little development since the Second World War, continuing to emphasise the use massed

² Lyakhovskii, *Tragediya i dodlest' afgana*, appendix 14, as reproduced in Antonio Giustozzi, *War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan, 1978-1992*, (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2000), *War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan*, 266.

³ The Russian General Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War: How a Superpower Fought and Lost*, trans. Lester W. Grau and Michael A. Gress, (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas, 2002), 20.

⁴ Olivier Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 195. One point of difference between the intervention force and a regular Soviet army group was its ethnic composition. Initially, the 40th Army included a disproportionately large number of Central Asian nationalities. Moscow had believed that the Afghans would feel more comfortable with the Soviet Tajik and Uzbek troops. However, to the horror of the Soviet General Staff, many of these troops began to desert over to the Mujahideen and were subsequently quickly rotated out of Afghanistan.

tanks in conjunction with infantry travelling in their own armoured fighting vehicles, all of which found operating in Afghanistan's rugged terrain tricky.⁵

Between 1980 and 1983, the Mujahideen received moderate levels of foreign assistance. Just days after the Soviet invasion, President Carter signed off on weapons deliveries to the Mujahideen. On 10 January 1980, 14 days after the Soviet invasion, the first American purchased weapons arrived in Pakistan.⁶ Crates of Lee-Enfield .303 rifles, purchased from Greece and India, represented the majority of the delivery. However, the speed with which the Carter Administration responded in opposing the Soviet escalation disguised the fact that it was unconvinced of the Mujahideen's prospects for long-term survival against the combined PDPA and Soviet forces.⁷ Hence, between 1980 and 1983, the level of American foreign assistance to the Mujahideen remained at a low level, reflecting Washington's aim of "harassing" the Soviets, rather than defeating them militarily. In 1980, the United States delivered \$30 million worth of economic and indirect military aid to the Mujahideen. In 1981, there was a modest increase to \$50 million.⁸ This limited assistance had no substantial impact on the Mujahideen's cumulative capabilities;⁹ indeed, at the close of 1981, journalists filing from inside Afghanistan continued to report that almost no outside weapons had reached the Mujahideen.¹⁰

⁵ Furthermore, the Afghan Army was also modelled on the Soviet structure. The "Sovietisation" of the Afghan Army was well underway by the time of the Saur Revolution, and was accelerated by the PDPA. By 1979, 3,723 Afghan military personnel had received training in the Soviet Union. See, Henry S. Bradsher, *Afghan Communism and Soviet Intervention*, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 2; Edgar O'Ballance, *Afghan Wars*, (London: Basseys, 2002), 88.

⁶ Charles G. Cogan, "Partners in Time: The CIA and Afghanistan since 1979," *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 10, No. 2, (1993), 76.

⁷ In 1982, President Zia told CIA Director Bill Casey that the task in Afghanistan was to "keep the pot boiling." That is to say, the volume of resources being transferred to the Mujahideen should be enough to punish the Soviets, but not enough for the conflict to boil over into Pakistan. See, Alan J. Kuperman, "The Stinger Missile and U.S. Intervention in Afghanistan," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 114, No. 2, (1999), 225; Carl Bernstein, "Arms for Afghanistan," *The New Republic*, (18 July 1981), 8-10; Thomas Hammond, *Red Flag Over Afghanistan*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1984).

⁸ Barnett R. Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 180-183.

⁹ Indeed, the resources sent by the United States to the Mujahideen were not universally well selected and included some "defective and ill-suited weapons". Abdulkader H. Sinno, *Organizations at War in Afghanistan and Beyond*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 135.

¹⁰ Edward Girardet, *Christian Science Monitor*, September 23-26, 1981. The volume of assistance continued to increase marginally in 1983 and 1984, with the Mujahideen receiving some 10,000 tones of supplies in each of three years. In comparison, in a year later it had jumped to 50,000 and, in 1987, to 60,000. See, Giustozzi, *War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan*, 113.

The balance of capabilities and the poverty trap

During this phase, the balance of capabilities was characterised by moderate average cumulative capabilities and disparity in the concentration of capabilities. Prior to 1980, the troop strength of the PDPA had fallen dramatically. Between 1978 and 1979, desertions and defections caused the Afghan Army to almost halve in size, dropping from 110,000 to 60,000 personnel.¹¹ Indeed, Rubin argued that it was “the disintegration of the army rather than the initial military strength of the insurgents that allowed the resistance to spread in 1979.”¹² However, the Soviet direct military intervention put a halt to the mass military mutinies and acted to stabilise, and then increase, the PDPA’s cumulative capabilities. By 1983, the PDPA’s forces had not only recovered, but gone beyond, pre-war levels, reaching 121,000 soldiers.¹³ Yet, this impressive quantitative recovery largely masks the actual military capacity of the PDPA itself. Significantly, it was not until 5 October 1982 that the PDPA was able to mount an offensive operation, of any size, against the Mujahideen.¹⁴ Until this time, Soviet forces carried the entire burden of offensive operations with, at most, token PDPA involvement.

By the end of 1978, there were probably already roughly 30,000-40,000 Afghans fighting for the Mujahideen.¹⁵ However, the Mujahideen reached these numbers after its period of rapid growth and, so, after 1978 its growth rate began to slow. Indeed, between 1980 and 1984, the Mujahideen only increased by roughly 10,000 men.¹⁶ The Mujahideen forces were also poorly-armed. Before significant quantities

¹¹ Giustozzi, *War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan*, 266; Anton Minkov and Gregory Smolyne, *Economic Development in Afghanistan During the Soviet Period, 1979-1989: Lessons Learned from the Soviet Experience in Afghanistan*, (Ottawa: DRDC Centre for Operational Research and Analysis, 2007), 4.

¹² Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 120.

¹³ Giustozzi, *War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan*, 188.

¹⁴ O’Ballance, *Afghan Wars*, 125.

¹⁵ Coll’s estimates roughly correspond with those of Giustozzi. Coll calculated there to have been roughly 20,000 to 40,000 Mujahideen fighters in 1981 in the field at any one time. See, Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: the Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and bin Laden, from Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*, (New York: Penguin, 2004), 57.

¹⁶ Giustozzi, *War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan*, 279. Some estimates have put the Mujahideen troop strength, by 1982, as high as 100,000. However, these estimates probably capture many Afghans who rarely, or very rarely, engaged in guerrilla activity. Thomas M. Cynkin, “Aftermath of the Saur Coup: Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Afghanistan,” *The Fletcher Forum*, Vol. 6, (Summer 1982), 288; Bearden places the figure even higher at 250,000 by 1985.

of weapons began to be captured off Soviet and PDPA soldiers, the Mujahideen guerrillas were mostly armed with captured weapons from Afghanistan's earlier wars against the British, including muskets, breech-loading rifles, Lee-Enfields and Martini-Henris.¹⁷

Clearly, the PDPA-Soviet forces held an advantage in the concentration of capabilities. Nevertheless, the PDPA's resource conversion system was costly, inefficient and wasteful. Indeed, the recovery of the regime's cumulative capabilities was due entirely to the massive volume of the exogenous resources it received from the Soviet Union. As such, despite the disparity in cumulative capabilities in favour of the regime, the Mujahideen was able to remain competitive for two reasons. First, the Mujahideen's resource conversion system was far more efficient and effective than its PDPA-Soviet competitor. Second, the Mujahideen's adoption of guerrilla warfare was able to dampen the effectiveness of the regime's superior forces.

The PDPA's recruitment practices demonstrate its highly inefficient resource conversion system. Throughout the 1980s, desertions hovered at around 30,000 per year, making recruitment a major preoccupation for the regime.¹⁸ However, the loss of rural Afghanistan greatly reduced the PDPA's endogenous resource base. As Mohammad Yousaf suggested, the PDPA's recruitment problem "was that the manpower pool from which to take recruits had been cut dramatically by the war. Kabul found it impossible to tap the rural areas outside their control, which only left the larger cities which could provide conscripts."¹⁹ As serving in the PDPA's

See, Milton Bearden, "Afghanistan, Graveyard of Empires," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 80, Iss. 6, (2001), 21. Giustozzi estimated that up to two-thirds of fighters "never or hardly ever fired a shot against Soviet or Kabul troops, sometimes just because of geographical location, while on average during the war only a third of the remaining third (i.e., a ninth of the total) exerted a constant military pressure on Kabul." See, Giustozzi, *War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan*, 188.

¹⁷ Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, 184. Also see, Louis Dupree, "Tribal Warfare in Afghanistan and Pakistan: A Reflection of the Segmentary Lineage System," in Akbar S. Ahmed and David H. Hart, (eds.), *Islam in Tribal Societies: From the Atlas to the Indus*, (New York: Routledge, 1984), 270-271.

¹⁸ Giustozzi, *War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan*, 260.

¹⁹ Mohammad Yousaf and Mark Adkin, *Afghanistan-The Bear Trap: The Defeat of a Superpower*, (Havertown, PA: Casemate, 2001), 57. Indeed, in 1987, Afghan President Najibullah admitted that 92 percent of conscripts came from

army increasingly fell solely upon urban dwellers, draft evasion became pervasive. Rubin confirmed that in interviews “with refugees in Pakistan and reports of travellers with the mujahideen testified to a constant escape of potential troops from the grasp of the Afghan state.”²⁰ To compensate for a shrinking endogenous resource base, the PDPA reached deeper into the pool of recruits which remained. This was achieved by first lowering the age of conscription from 22, to 20, and then to 18 years, and lengthening the mandatory military service from 2, to 3, and eventually to 4 years.²¹

Predictably, the reduction in the supply of potential recruits led to higher extraction costs. To fill its ranks, the PDPA employed a “carrot-and-stick” recruitment strategy. As a “carrot”, pay was first increased from Af 2,000 per month to Af 3,000, and then to Af 4,000. In addition, recruits that successfully completed their military service (who were “apparently a small minority”)²² were offered admission to university or other institutes of higher education. The “stick” played a larger role in recruitment. All men were forced to carry identification papers which detailed their military status. Those without the appropriate documentation were liable for immediate duty. To enforce these policies, the PDPA created an extensive and costly recruiting apparatus at the provincial and district levels.²³ However, these measures still were not adequate in extracting sufficient recruits. Consequently, press-ganging became prevalent in Kabul and the larger cities.²⁴ The overall result of increased enticements, surveillance and coercion was

Kabul. Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 322 (fn. 21). Also see, Mark Urban, *War in Afghanistan*, (London: Macmillian, 1990), 55.

²⁰ Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 131.

²¹ Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 132; Hassan Kakar, *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion and the Afghan Response, 1979-1982*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 170-173.

²² Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 132.

²³ Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 131-132.

²⁴ Press-ganging would typically take the form of troops blocking off the bazaars in Kabul or conducting sweeps through neighbourhoods. The PDPA had issued orders to its military that persons fleeing conscription should be shot. This was more than an idle threat with a “number of young men” being shot dead while fleeing press-gangs in Kabul during summer 1981. See, Kakar, *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion and the Afghan Response*, 170. Also see, Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 132.

that the PDPA's recruitment costs remained extremely high throughout the civil war.

In contrast, the Mujahideen had few recruitment problems. Resisting the PDPA was perceived by much of the population as a moral, social and religious obligation. For these reasons, the Mujahideen had an ample number of willing young men wishing to join the resistance.²⁵ Indeed, as resisting the PDPA and Soviet forces was popularly understood to be a *jihad*, the Mujahideen had no shortage of volunteers or people willing to offer food, shelter and information either. In the early 1980s, Roy observed that:

[t]hroughout the country there is no shortage of willing guides, people who will lend out their horses, provide shelter, education and finance, without any coercion. To anyone who knew the old Afghanistan where, apart from individual hospitality, everything had to be paid for, the spiritual growth of the people is a striking phenomenon.²⁶

Thus, in contrast with the PDPA, the Mujahideen was able to extract most of the resources it required at very low expense, which greatly reduced the effect of attenuation in its resource conversion system. In addition, much of what could not be extracted from the Mujahideen's endogenous resource base could be captured, stolen or even purchased from the regime's forces. For instance, Haasan Kakar reported on the process, writing that to "acquire weapons, the mulla commanders of Logar...would ambush enemy forces when they were in their locality...The commanders would submit such weapons to their headquarters as spoils...[Thus t]he Logaris were successful in acquiring weapons from the regime forces. During the twenty months following the soviet invasion the Kabul regime lost 25,000 Kalashnikovs to the mujahideen in Logar."²⁷

²⁵ William Maley, *The Afghanistan Wars*, (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 59.

²⁶ Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, 159.

²⁷ Kakar, *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion and the Afghan Response*, 147. In a typical case of ambush in Afghanistan, the Mujahideen "gained a small fortune in slightly charred banknotes and a truck full of melons." Richard H. Shultz Jr., and Andrea J. Dew, *Insurgents, Terrorists, and Militias*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 149.

Guerrilla warfare and the urban-rural divide

Between 1980 and 1983, the characteristics of the warfare conformed to the guerrilla class. As with most cases of guerrilla warfare, the early stages of the Afghan Civil War contained three prominent features. First, the Mujahideen's tactics were more effective than those of the PDPA-Soviet forces. This allowed the weaker side to compensate for its lower cumulative capabilities. Second, the Mujahideen's employment of a guerrilla strategy created an "air defence" dilemma for the regime. This feature of guerrilla warfare tied a significant proportion of the PDPA-Soviet to static defence and allowed the Mujahideen greater freedom in rural areas. Finally, indicative of the first steady state, the urban-rural divide was evident during this phase. Although the Mujahideen guerrillas were able to move relatively freely in rural areas, the guerrillas were unable to capture occupied towns and garrisons.

The regime applied a range of counter-guerrilla methods.²⁸ Of these, the regime's eradication strategy is most representative of many of the problems it faced in Afghanistan. In offense, the PDPA-Soviet attempted "search and destroy" operations against the Mujahideen. However, Soviet and PDPA officers initially resisted tactical pressures to separate infantry from their armoured vehicles. This resulted in PDPA-Soviet units being largely confined to Afghanistan's limited road network. These large, slow and noisy mechanised patrols were vulnerable to ambush. Rarely in the early years of these patrols did the regime's forces make contact with the Mujahideen without the guerrillas being the initiating side. While conducting offensive operations, the regime's forces also relied on overwhelming

²⁸ There are extensive reports on the PDPA-Soviet's isolation strategies. Scott McMichael, for instance, details how rather than "drive the *mujadehin* from the countryside, the Soviets elected to drive off the population." Scott McMichael, *Stumbling Bear: Soviet Military Performance in Afghanistan*, (London: Brassey's, 1991), 47. Also see, Frédéric Grare, "The Geopolitics of Afghan Refugees in Pakistan," in Stephen John Stedman and Fred Tanner, (eds.), *Refugee Manipulation: War, Politics, and the Abuse of Human Suffering*, (Washington: Brookings Institute Press, 2003), 57-94; William Maley and Fazel Haq Saikal, *Afghan Refugee Relief in Pakistan: Political Context and Practical Problems*, Working Paper, (Canberra: The Australian National University, 1986); Kerry M. Connor, "Rationale for the Movement of Afghan Refugees to Peshwar," in Grant M. Farr and John G. Merriam, (eds.), *Afghan Resistance: The Politics of Survival*, (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1987), 151-190; Marek Sliwinski, "The Decimation of a People," *Orbis*, Vol. 33, (1989), 39-56.

firepower. A Soviet officer reported that patrols “chose to expend massive firepower in order to save Soviet lives and to compensate for their lack of infantry. It was an expensive, indiscriminate and, probably, ineffective practice.”²⁹ Overall, the increase in the regime’s cumulative capabilities did not necessarily translate into more military pressure on the Mujahideen.

In contrast, the Mujahideen was extremely frugal. In contrast, the rebels made many decisions intended to minimise expenditure. Anthony Hyman, for instance, observed at the time that the “Afghan preference for 303s is not conservatism as such, but economy and its suitability for accurate sniping. Bursts of machine-gun fire are not only erratic, but cost too much for ordinary tribesmen buying bullets at one dollar apiece.”³⁰ The Mujahideen fighters’ preferences only changed to AK-47s when these rifles and their ammunition decreased in price due to increase quantities being pumped into Afghanistan from the Soviet Union and Pakistan.

Similarly, the guerrillas were able to exploit their skill and knowledge of the land and the people to compensate for their shortcomings in numbers and equipment. As a Soviet Colonel described, the guerrillas “don’t need a lot of equipment, maps, or sophisticated technological gadgets, they know every stone, every track, they are highly mobile and they are masters of placing an ambush as well as escaping ambushes themselves.”³¹ As the Mujahideen’s required inputs were low, many groups fighting in Afghanistan were virtually self-sufficient, which meant that any exogenous receipt of supply immediately boosted the front’s capabilities.³² Giustozzi highlighted this point when he observed that the quantity of foreign assistance flowing to the Mujahideen may “seem small in comparison to what

²⁹ V. M. Bogdashkin, “Assault on the Outskirts of Herat,” in Lester W. Grau, (ed.), *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan*, (London: Frank Cass, 2005), 52.

³⁰ Anthony Hyman, *Afghanistan Under Soviet Domination, 1964-83*, (London: Macmillan, 1982), 136.

³¹ Arie Bender, “Interview with Lieutenant Colonel Uri Ludtzky – Soviet Air Force,” *Maariv Daily*, 5 October 2001, as reproduced in Geoff Shaw and David Spencer, “Fighting in Afghanistan: Lessons from the Soviet Intervention, 1979-89,” *Defense & Security Analysis*, Vol. 19, No. 2, (2003), 179.

³² For instance, in 1986, Ahmed Shah Massoud’s front – the largest in Afghanistan – collected one-third of its revenue from “booty”; one-third from sales and taxes on lazuli and emerald mines; and only 4.5 percent from sources in Pakistan. See, Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 236.

Kabul was receiving, but the mujahidin enjoyed the tremendous advantage of not being constrained by the heavy logistics of a regular army. Furthermore, their supplies were better suited to the kind of war to be fought in most of the Afghan countryside.”³³ In defence, the Mujahideen was able to minimise its casualties by effectively avoiding the regime’s superior firepower. While the Mujahideen units were conducting operations, they were risk averse, only venturing out to set an ambush when the probability of being caught in a counter-ambush was deemed to be low. Then, immediately following a mission, the Mujahideen units would “quickly dissolve into the local population.”³⁴ As a result, Mujahideen fatalities were very low throughout the conflict. It is estimated that at no time was the Mujahideen losing more than 3 percent of its total fighting force in a year.³⁵

As mentioned, the second prominent feature of the warfare in Afghanistan was the emergence of an “air defence” dilemma. The Mujahideen’s guerrilla strategy forced the regime to employ the majority of its troops in static defensive duties. As such, although the regime had a massive advantage in cumulative capabilities, 40 percent of the Soviet contingent was assigned to defending urban centres and installations, another 35 percent were occupied with securing roads linking urban areas, and a large portion of the remaining troops were involved in supply and maintenance.³⁶ In total, the “Soviets found that it took some 85 per cent of their force and [PDPA] forces to provide basic security – guarding cities, industry, airfields, garrisons and outposts along the supply routes from the Soviet Union.”³⁷ Consequently, there were very few reserve troops to conduct offensives operations

³³ Giustozzi, *War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan*, 112-113

³⁴ The Russian General Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War*, 59.

³⁵ Giustozzi, *War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan*, 115.

³⁶ The Russian General Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War*, 331 (fn. 22).

³⁷ Lester W. Grau, “The Soviet-Afghan War: A Superpower Mired in the Mountains,” *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 1, (2004), 140. Litwak’s analysis, however, suggested that the high number of troops were positioned in the cities was because “Soviet military strategy emphasized control over the major urban centres and the road network linking them...The security of Kabul – the seat of the PDPA regime – was the centrepiece of Soviet strategy.” See, Robert S. Litwak, “The Soviet Union in Afghanistan,” in Ariel E. Levite, Bruce W. Jentleson and Larry Berman, (eds.), *Foreign Military Intervention: The Dynamics of Protracted Conflicts*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 79; Rasul Bakhsh Rais, *War Without Winners: Afghanistan’s Uncertain Transition After the Cold War*, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1994), 102-104.

and, as such, “a traditional insurgency pattern developed. The regime held the cities and a string of bases and outposts while the resistance controlled the countryside.”³⁸ Coll reported that by “late 1981 the rebels roamed freely in nearly all of Afghanistan’s twenty-nine provinces.”³⁹

A third feature of the warfare following the Soviet direct military intervention was the Mujahideen’s inability to capture cities and garrisons. Until the Soviet military units disengaged from the civil war in 1989, the Mujahideen never captured a garrison that was defended by more than just a few hundred government soldiers.⁴⁰ This remained the case even when the Mujahideen greatly outnumbered the defenders. For instance, in the summer of 1988, the 700-strong garrison of Qalat, completely isolated, was attacked by 7,000 guerrillas and did not fall.⁴¹ At best, the Mujahideen could harass cities and garrisons and, on the odd occasion, inflict a little damage.⁴² Indeed, Lt. Gen. Abdul Haq Uloomi, the PDPA’s defence chief, explicitly stated that he “preferred the Mujahideen to attack their cities and bases because only then can government forces concentrate strikes on a mass of rebel forces.”⁴³ Clearly, the Mujahideen forces lacked the structure, training and weapons to engage the PDPA-Soviet troops in the pitched battle that was required to capture defended towns.

The outcome of these three features was a strategic stalemate along the urban-rural divide. The problem for each belligerent, explained Cronin, was that the “regime’s forces probably [were] spread too thinly to defend their vital supply lines, while the resistance forces lack[ed] the training, discipline and firepower to stage frontal

³⁸ Goodson, *Afghanistan’s Endless War*, 60; The Russian General Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War*, 24; Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 184 and 132.

³⁹ Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 58-59.

⁴⁰ Giustozzi, *War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan*, 114-115.

⁴¹ Giustozzi, *War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan*, 114-115.

⁴² An isolated, but spectacular, example of this was on 20 August 1986, when the Mujahideen fired a 107-mm rocket and luckily hit the PDPA ammunition depot in Kabul. For details see, Bearden, “Afghanistan, Graveyard of Empires,” *Foreign Affairs*, 22.

⁴³ Steve Coll, “Attack on Afghan air base underscores stalemate,” *Washington Post Foreign Office*, 16 September 1989.

attacks on Kabul and other cities and regime strongholds.”⁴⁴ That is, while the Mujahideen continued to apply a guerrilla strategy, the PDPA could not muster sufficient force to project control over the entire country. Indeed, Olivier Roy pointed out that it was the “very flimsiness of the military infrastructure of the resistance (lack of artillery, depots, training camps or centralised general staff)” that caused the PDPA-Soviet forces to have “no military objectives.”⁴⁵

In sum, the 1980-1983 phase witnessed three developments in the pattern of foreign intervention, the balance of capabilities and warfare. First, the 1979 Soviet direct military intervention sharply affected the configuration of the balance of capabilities and the trajectory of the warfare. It ended the series of military mutinies that had caused the PDPA’s cumulative capabilities to plunge into free fall. The massive volumes of exogenous resources first stabilised and then allowed the PDPA’s cumulative capabilities to steadily increase. Meanwhile, however, the Mujahideen was able to offset the disparity in concentration by effectively employing guerrilla strategy. Finally, the poverty trap was evident with the warfare reaching the first steady state. The first steady state manifested itself empirically by the Mujahideen’s growth slowing and the emergence of the urban-rural divide.

2. Foreign Intervention, Guerrilla Warfare and Stalemate, Phase II (1984-1988)

The poverty trap operates primarily within the concentration of capabilities, and only indirectly in the average cumulative capabilities. Thus, if the pattern of foreign intervention manipulates the latter, but not the former, the poverty trap will persist. In other words, if both sides’ cumulative capabilities increase in roughly

⁴⁴ Richard P. Cronin, *Afghanistan After the Soviet Withdrawal: Contenders for Power*, CRS Report for Congress, (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 1989), 1.

⁴⁵ Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, 203.

the same ratio, although the belligerents become more powerful, the insurgent will not make gains on the incumbent. The changes between 1984 and 1988 in the pattern of foreign intervention, the balance of capabilities and warfare in the Afghan Civil War demonstrates this feature of the poverty trap.

In 1984, the pattern of foreign intervention in the Afghan Civil War experienced major changes. First, the Soviet forces in Afghanistan began to develop its structure, training and doctrine to better suit the terrain and enemy. Second, the United States greatly increased both the size and sophistication of its assistance to the Mujahideen. These changes in foreign intervention had a significant impact on the belligerents' cumulative capabilities. In a statement that could have equally applied to the PDPA, Rubin observed that, "the resistance passed through several stages of development, largely determined by changes in the policies of international actors."⁴⁶

Changes in the pattern of foreign intervention in Afghanistan

In the mid-1980s, the Soviet Union began to greatly improve its structure, equipment and doctrine for counter-guerrilla operations in mountainous terrain. As early as 1982, the Soviet General Staff were beginning to question the appropriateness of the force structure and tactics deployed in Afghanistan. They later reported that at "this time, the inadequacies of heavy military equipment, which had limited application in mountainous terrain, became apparent. Tanks, BMPs, and self-propelled artillery were road bound and lacked the operational expanse for their employment."⁴⁷ However, it would take several years before there would be substantial qualitative improvements in the Soviet intervention force.

⁴⁶ Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 179.

⁴⁷ The Russian General Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War*, 23. Also see, Urban, *War in Afghanistan*, 64-65.

The Soviet intervention improved in three ways. First, there was an improvement in the top Soviet leadership in Afghanistan. This process began in spring 1985, when the rising star of the Red Army, General Mikhail Zaitsev, was transferred from the prestigious post of commander of the Soviet forces in Germany to the equivalent position in Afghanistan.⁴⁸ Second, in late 1986, structural improvements were made to the 40th Army, when three tank and three anti-aircraft regiments – clearly unneeded in Afghanistan – were replaced by additional *Spetsnaz* and airborne regiments, bringing the total number of each in Afghanistan to seven.⁴⁹ Third, from 1984, the equipment supplied to the Soviet and PDPA armies in Afghanistan improved dramatically. Moscow considered Afghanistan to be an important “proving ground” for much of its latest technology and, as such, rushed several of its most modern weapons to the 40th Army, including the AK-74 assault rifle, the RPG-18 grenade launcher, the 120-mm version of the BMP troop carrier, the Su-25 attack aircraft and the Mi-24D attack helicopter.⁵⁰

However, the Soviet Union’s qualitative improvements were not matched by quantitative increases. Between 1984 and 1988, the number of Soviet troops in Afghanistan remained constant at around 105,000. As Yousaf explained, the Soviets “seemed content with improving their tactics, rationalizing their forces, developing the use of air power, bolstering their Afghan allies, and introducing more suitable weapons, in fact trying desperately to improve the quality of their troops rather than the quantity.”⁵¹ Indeed, Moscow was apparently hesitant to escalate its commitment to a war that was increasingly unpopular in the Soviet Union.

⁴⁸ Steve Coll, “Anatomy of Victory: CIA’s Covert Afghan War,” *The Washington Post*, 19 July 1992.

⁴⁹ O’Ballance, *Afghan Wars*, 155; The Russian General Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War*, 27; Eliot A. Cohen, “Dynamics of Military Intervention,” in Ariel E. Levite, Bruce W. Jentleson and Larry Berman, (eds.), *Foreign Military Intervention: The Dynamics of Protracted Conflicts*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 272-273; Alexander Alexiev, *Inside the Soviet Army in Afghanistan*, (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 1988).

⁵⁰ Craig Karp, “Afghanistan: Eight Years of Soviet Occupation,” *US Department of State Bulletin*, (Washington: United States Department of State, 1988); Almerigo Grilz, “Afghanistan: The Guerrilla is Changing,” *Military Technology*, Vol. 6, (1987), 86.

⁵¹ Yousaf and Adkin, *Afghanistan – The Bear Trap*, 48. Commenting on the Soviet change in tactics, Grilz in 1986 reported that: “Night ambushes are now standard procedure, and there have been several surprise attacks against the guerrilla camps. These attacks were usually carried out immediately before dawn, when the Mujahideen were praying, and it

By 1984, it was becoming clear that the Mujahideen would not be quickly swept aside by the Soviet military. As a consequence, the United States' Afghan policy became increasingly aggressive and confident. American assistance to the Mujahideen increased in three ways. First, there was a quantitative improvement with significant increases in the sums spent by the United States on the war. Second, the United States made available increasingly-sophisticated weaponry and equipment to the Mujahideen. Finally, the training of Mujahideen guerrillas in Pakistan was expanded.

On the Mujahideen's side, by 1984, the sums spent by the United States on the Afghan Civil War began to rise exponentially. By the mid-1980s, vast quantities of arms were being purchased from China, Egypt and Israel with CIA money, before being shipped to Karachi.⁵² In 1984, the United States' aid to the Mujahideen more than doubled the previous year's aid, with a total of \$200 million being provided.⁵³ The following year, President Reagan signed National Security Directive 166, which elevated the previous American aim of the "harassment" of occupying Soviet troops, to a new objective: "to defeat Soviet troops in Afghanistan through covert action and encourage a Soviet withdrawal."⁵⁴ As such, in 1985, the United States delivered \$250 million worth of economic and indirect military aid. In 1986, the United States' aid rose to \$470 million. In 1987, the year before the Soviet withdrawal, Washington pumped \$670 million into increasing the cumulative capabilities of the Mujahideen.⁵⁵ Naturally, these sums purchased significant quantities of weapons, equipment and supplies. For instance, it is estimated that

took a tremendous effort for the guerrillas to change their religious habits and leave some armed men on watch during the prayers (five times a day)." Grilz, "Afghanistan: The Guerrilla is Changing," 83.

⁵² At first, China, Egypt, and Israel may seem like an unlikely group of countries that would be willing to help the United States assist the Mujahideen. However, they all had their respective interests. China was highly concerned about Soviet expansion in Central Asia, to the point of reportedly adding extra weapons into shipments above which the CIA had paid. Egypt saw this chance to help Muslims as a means of rehabilitating its reputation in the Muslim world after signing a peace agreement with Israel. And, Israel had storehouses full of captured weapons of Soviet origin, which it now had a buyer, in the form of the CIA.

⁵³ Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 65.

⁵⁴ Coll, "Anatomy of Victory: CIA's Covert Afghan War."

⁵⁵ Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 180-183; Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 151.

between 1983 and 1988, Washington delivered approximately 400,000 AK-47 rifles to the Mujahideen.⁵⁶ In addition to American aid, and of equal importance to the Mujahideen, throughout the conflict Saudi Arabian aid matched the American aid increases dollar-for-dollar.

There was also a qualitative improvement in the equipment supplied to the Mujahideen. Most famously, the obsolete and inappropriate Oerlikon anti-aircraft cannon and Blowpipe anti-aircraft missile were replaced by the ultra-sophisticated Stinger. The Oerlikon had required "some twenty mules to transport a section of three guns...[and t]here was no way mules could use the steep mountain trails, making its deployment so restricted as to make the weapon more of a liability than an asset."⁵⁷ In contrast, the Stinger was portable and potent with some believing it was a "war-winning acquisition"⁵⁸ and U.S. Congressman Charlie Wilson asserting that it was a "silver bullet".⁵⁹ Indeed, although the impact of the Stinger is at times grossly overstated, its appearance certainly curtailed and limited the PDPA-Soviet's use of airpower. Eventually, 250 grip-stocks were delivered to the Mujahideen along with 1,000-1,200 missiles,⁶⁰ which were used to bring down roughly 269 PDPA-Soviet aircraft in 390 engagements "for a remarkable 79 percent kill ratio."⁶¹

⁵⁶ David C. Isby, "Afghanistan: Low-Intensity Conflict with Major Power Intervention," in Edwin C. Corr and Stephen Sloan, (eds.), *Low-Intensity Conflict: Old Threats in a New World*, (Boulder: Westview, 1992), 206; James Rupert, "Afghanistan's Slide Towards Civil War," *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 6, No. 4, (1989), 760. These sums, however, also had to pay for transportation. Rubin reported that "in 1986 it cost \$15-20 per kilogram to move supplies from Pakistan to northern Afghanistan, amounting to about \$1,100 for one mortar or \$65 for one bomb." Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 198. Indeed, Sinno reported that: "The two billion dollars in U.S. funds earmarked to the mujahideen over ten years of Soviet occupation included shipping costs, defective and ill-suited weapons, camouflaged aid illegally sent to the Contras in Nicaragua, weapons diverted to the Pakistani Army's depots, and weapons resold on the international market." Sinno, *Organizations at War in Afghanistan and Beyond*, 135. Also see Hyman, *Afghanistan under Soviet Domination*, 241-244.

⁵⁷ Yousaf and Adkin, *Afghanistan-The Bear Trap*, 87.

⁵⁸ Yousaf and Adkin, *Afghanistan-The Bear Trap*, 177.

⁵⁹ Kuperman, "The Stinger Missile and U.S. Intervention in Afghanistan," 220.

⁶⁰ Yousaf and Adkin, *Afghanistan-The Bear Trap*, 182. Also see, Olivier Roy, *The Lessons of the Soviet/Afghan War*, Adelphi Papers 259, (London: IISS, 1991), 53.

⁶¹ Kuperman, "The Stinger Missile and U.S. Intervention in Afghanistan," 246. While the Mujahideen's average hit rate was 79 percent under battlefield conditions, the average hit rate for an American soldier - under training conditions - was only 60-65 percent, which the Americans regarded as satisfactory. The significant difference in hit rate can be put down to the Mujahideen's determination to bring down PDPA-Soviet aircraft. Rather than using the Stinger as a defensive weapon, the Mujahideen hunted the incumbent's aircraft. For instance, there were reports of Stinger groups

In addition, there were also many other examples of qualitative improvements in indirect military assistance. The CIA supplied the Mujahideen with the full equipment required to successfully carry out highly sophisticated guerrilla attacks, including, extensive satellite data of PDPA-Soviet targets inside Afghanistan, Soviet communication intercepts, sophisticated chemical timing devices for C4 explosive (along with the C4 itself), sniper rifles, a targeting device for mortars that was patched into United States' Navy satellites, the TOW anti-tank missile and other equipment.⁶² The equipment provided to the Mujahideen was carefully selected to improve the recipient's ability to conduct guerrilla operations.

Finally, the United States and Pakistan increased and improved the training provided to the Mujahideen. At first, the Mujahideen's fighters received very little training before going into combat. Most guerrillas were "simply peasants with a rifle, with no true military training."⁶³ The Afghan warrior ethos meant that most rural adult men were reasonably proficient with an assortment of small arms. However, by 1984, a greater number of Mujahideen guerrillas required instruction and training to keep pace with the more sophisticated weapons and equipment being supplied by the United States and the PDPA-Soviet forces' more refined counter-guerrilla tactics. For this purpose, the Mujahideen's access to training camps located in Pakistan was expanded. By 1988, an estimated 60 percent of guerrillas operating in Nagrahar province had been trained in Pakistan.⁶⁴ Indeed, a Pakistani general claimed that by 1989, over 80,000 Mujahideen had been trained at camps in Pakistan.⁶⁵

laying ambushes at the end of the incumbent's runways and hitting warplanes as they took off and landed. See, Yousaf and Adkin, *Afghanistan-The Bear Trap*, 183.

⁶² Coll, "Anatomy of Victory: CIA's Covert Afghan War."

⁶³ Grilz, "Afghanistan: The Guerrilla is Changing," 85.

⁶⁴ Giustozzi, *War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan*, 114.

⁶⁵ Christina Lamb, *The Sewing Circles of Herat*, (New York: Harper Collins, 2002), 287.

The quantitative and qualitative increase in weapons, equipment and training to the Mujahideen increased its cumulative capabilities; however, as will be seen, it was not sufficient to overcome the poverty trap. The type of weapons and training provided by the United States was clearly intended to improve the Mujahideen's guerrilla tactics, rather than to assist it in overcoming the poverty trap and converting to a conventional strategy. In order for this to have occurred, the United States would have had to provide tanks, armoured vehicles and artillery to significantly close the gap in the belligerents' concentration of capabilities. This level of commitment was never contemplated by Washington. Indeed, in 1984, Senator Birch Bayh explained that the assistance to the Mujahideen was not meant to "raise the conflict to the level of a conventional warfare...or to provide so much assistance that the Soviets would pour in troops."⁶⁶ Pakistani President Zia was of a similar view, frequently telling visiting American congressmen and CIA officers that the key in Afghanistan was to "keep the pot boiling."⁶⁷ That is, the Mujahideen should be supplied with sufficient exogenous resources to maintain a high degree of pressure on Kabul, without the conflict "boiling over" and drawing in Pakistan.

The balance of capabilities

The change in the pattern of foreign intervention had a predictable impact on the balance of capabilities. The average cumulative capabilities in Afghanistan moved towards higher levels. However, as both sides were receiving greater external assistance, the concentration of capabilities remained in the regime's favour. Halliday and Tanin wrote of the period that the "overall picture of PDPA control in this period remain[ed] relatively stable, the growing strength of the regime, with

⁶⁶ Senator Birch Bayh was chair of the Senate Committee which approved Reagan's massive expansion of US assistance to the Mujahideen. See, Cynkin, "Aftermath of the Saur Coup: Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Afghanistan," 288.

⁶⁷ President Zia as quoted in Kuperman, "The Stinger Missile and U.S. Intervention in Afghanistan," 225.

Soviet backing, being countered by the growing influence of the opposition, itself receiving increased external support.”⁶⁸

In 1984, the PDPA had 139,000 soldiers, which progressively increased to 160,000 men in 1987.⁶⁹ These troops were in addition to the 105,000 Soviet soldiers that remained deployed in Afghanistan. Between 1984 and 1988, the most significant change was in the quality of the Soviet and PDPA troops. In 1984, Massoud told a commander that the PDPA-Soviet “commandoes have learned a great deal about mountain guerrilla warfare and are fighting much better than before.”⁷⁰ The radical qualitative development of the Soviet forces is also evident in Shaw and Spencer’s comparison of the forces that entered Afghanistan and those that exited, reporting that in 1980:

[t]here were only a small number of specialized scout units and commando or Spetsnaz troops. Equipment was basic, with little protective gear except for the standard Soviet steel helmet. Ten years later, the Soviet soldiers that withdrew from Afghanistan were markedly different. They were still mostly recruits, but there was a far greater proportion of elite units as such. In addition, their uniforms, equipment and training had changed. They wore body armor, and muted insignia. Essentially, the army that went into Afghanistan looked like the army of Stalin, but the one that left looked like a modern army.⁷¹

Similarly, the Mujahideen grew steadily in size and calibre. In 1987, the strength of the Mujahideen peaked at around roughly 75,000 full-time fighters.⁷² With no shortage of willing recruits, weapons had developed into a key binding restraint for the Mujahideen. The growing supply of exogenous resources and an efficient feedback loop helped to alleviate this restraint. By 1987, the Mujahideen was plentifully-equipped with the AK-47, along with some newer AK-74 and AKM

⁶⁸ Fred Halliday and Zahir Tanin, “The Communist Regime in Afghanistan 1978-1992: Institutions and Conflicts,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 50, No. 8, (1998), 1366.

⁶⁹ Giustozzi, *War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan*, 266.

⁷⁰ Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 122.

⁷¹ Geoff Shaw and David Spencer, “Fighting in Afghanistan: Lessons from the Soviet Intervention, 1979-89,” *Defense & Security Analysis*, Vol. 19, No. 2, (2003), 183.

⁷² Giustozzi, *War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan*, 279.

rifles and RPG-7s grenade launchers, DShK 12.7 machine-guns, TOW missiles, Stingers, and C4 plastic explosive. Although, the growth in the Mujahideen's cumulative capabilities probably outperformed that of the regime, it was not sufficient to significantly close the gap in the concentration of capabilities.

The growth of both the PDPA's and Mujahideen's cumulative capabilities corresponded with a marked increase in the intensity of the conflict. In 1983, for example, there were, on average, 200 clashes per month between the Mujahideen and PDPA-Soviet forces. However, following the expansion of the foreign assistance program to each belligerent, by 1987, the monthly average had climbed to 796.⁷³ Similarly, there was a significant increase in the number of casualties. In 1982, the PDPA lost 10,704 killed or wounded, which by 1987, had almost doubled to 19,015 for the year.⁷⁴ The effect of the foreign intervention in Afghanistan during the 1980s was to escalate the conflict well beyond the limits of what the belligerents' endogenous resources bases alone would have otherwise permitted.

Warfare and the poverty trap

From 1984, the warfare in Afghanistan increased in intensity, sophistication and brutality; however, the pattern of warfare did not fundamentally change from guerrilla. The basic offensive and defensive characteristics of the PDPA and Mujahideen's strategies remain recognisably counter-guerrilla and guerrilla, respectively. Furthermore, the inflow of arms, equipment and trained fighters did not fundamentally affect the factors that cause the poverty trap. Indeed, as this section will show, the enormous volumes of foreign intervention acted to heighten the prominence of the poverty trap.

⁷³ Giustozzi, *War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan*, 278.

⁷⁴ Karmal Matinuddin, *Power Struggle in the Hindu Kush: Afghanistan 1978-1991*, (Lahore: Wajidalis, 1991), 167.

Despite the belligerents receiving largely volumes of exogenous resources, the warfare in Afghanistan did not progress to conventional warfare. The Mujahideen's inability to overcome the poverty trap was the result of three developments, which were visible in the dynamics of the warfare. First, as suggested earlier, the exogenous resources provided to the Mujahideen were intended to improve the effectiveness of the Mujahideen's guerrilla strategy, not to allow the conversion to a conventional strategy. Hence, although its cumulative capabilities increased, its ability to engage in pitched battles with the regime did not. "Eight years of war," argued Roy, "proved good training for the Mujahidin, who learnt to use new weapons and new materials, like radio and even computers. [But]...the Mujahidin were unable to upgrade their tactics and strategy...that could really threaten the cities."⁷⁵ Thus, in the absence of an exogenous supply of conventional assets and training, the Mujahideen remained caught in the poverty trap.

Second, as the PDPA-Soviet cumulative capabilities grew, so did the restrictions on the Mujahideen. From 1984 onwards, the PDPA used its new capabilities to tighten the security zones around Kabul and the provincial capitals. The regime established concentric rings of defence around the perimeter of cities by first systematically bombing the surrounding villages to create a "no-man's land", before positioning regular army and militia units in these areas.⁷⁶ As one journalist described, the Shindand airfield was "surrounded by rings of armor, bunkers and observation and security posts", which represented "a virtually insurmountable tactical challenge to a guerrilla force that ha[d] no air support and very few tanks or armored personnel carriers."⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, 210. Also see, Charles Dunbar, "Afghanistan in 1986: The Balance Endures," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 27, No. 2, (1987), 127-142.

⁷⁶ Gilles Dorronsoro and Chantal Lobato, "The Militia in Afghanistan," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 8, No. 4, (1989), 103.

⁷⁷ Coll, "Attack on Afghan air base underscores stalemate."

Third, the increased volumes of exogenous resources to the Mujahideen created new logistical problems for the guerrilla force. The volume of supplies arriving from Pakistan was so great that the Mujahideen was compelled to construct large depots ("*markhaz*") within Afghanistan.⁷⁸ The supply depot system made it possible for the guerrilla fighters to apply greater firepower on the PDPA's forces. However, they also restricted the Mujahideen guerrilla's mobility, created defensive problems and, most importantly, meant that the regime had static targets to attack.⁷⁹ The Mujahideen's supply depots were concentrated around the areas of Tora Bora, Zhawar and the Sharikot Valley which also became the areas of the most intense PDPA-Soviet offensive activity.⁸⁰ To take only one example of the problems faced by the belligerents, in November 1987, elements of the Soviet 9th, 7th, and 11th Division, 71st Brigade and 4th Armoured Brigade (numbering some 7,000-8,000 men in total) attacked the Mujahideen's *markhaz* at Shelman and Murey, near the Khyber Pass. Using helicopters, tanks, and APCs, the regime's forces captured Shelman and Murey on 19 and 22 November, respectively.⁸¹ However, after capturing and blowing-up the caves, where reportedly huge quantities of weapons and supplies had been stored, the Soviet Airborne troops were quickly evacuated out of the area. Thus, following this operations, both belligerents returned to the relative position they had occupied before the Mujahideen had received the exogenous resources. This example is typical of the poverty trap in operation. By constructing *markhazs* the Mujahideen took one step towards expanding its cumulative capabilities. However, this enabled the regime to attack fixed targets, and thereby reset the balance of capabilities in its favour and thwarting the Mujahideen's move towards a conventional strategy.

⁷⁸ Lester W. Grau and Ali Ahmed Jalali, "The Campaign of the Caves: The Battles of Zhawar in the Soviet-Afghan War," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 3, (2001).

⁷⁹ Grau and Jalali, "The Campaign of the Caves"; Grau, "The Soviet-Afghan War," 140.

⁸⁰ See, for instance, the description of a Soviet attack on a Mujahideen supply post in Major N.G. Ten'kov, "Conducting a Tactical Air Assault in the 'Melava' Fortified Region," in Lester W. Grau, (ed.), *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan*, (London: Frank Cass, 2005), 102-105.

⁸¹ Grilz, "Afghanistan: The Guerrilla is Changing," 86; Alex Marshall, "Managing Withdrawal: Afghanistan as the Forgotten Example of Attempting Conflict Resolution and State Reconstruction," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 18, No. 1, (2007), 76.

In sum, a stalemate had developed in Afghanistan. As both sides received an increasing volume of exogenous resources, the conflict grew in intensity, while not changing character from guerrilla to conventional warfare.

3. Foreign Disengagement and the Slide toward Irregular Warfare, Phase III (1989-1992)

On 15 February 1989, the last Soviet combat soldiers crossed the “Friendship Bridge” from Afghanistan to Uzbekistan and, by doing so, marked the end to the Soviet Union’s direct military intervention in the Afghan Civil War. At this point, the majority of analysts predicted that the “pro-Soviet government in Afghanistan [had] little prospect of surviving the Soviet withdrawal for very long.”⁸² The American intelligence community produced a rare joint Special National Intelligence Estimate, which concluded that the “regime will not long survive the completion of Soviet withdrawal even with continued assistance.”⁸³ However, to most observers’ surprise, the PDPA remained in power until 1992. Its longevity is explained by the two most significant influences on the balance of capabilities between 1989 and 1992: the PDPA’s continued receipt of large volumes of indirect military aid and the fragmentation of the Mujahideen.

Soviet disengagement and the disintegration of the PDPA’s army

Although the Soviet Union withdrew its military units from Afghanistan, in 1989, it did not abandon the PDPA. The Red Army left behind over \$1 billion worth of equipment that was transferred to the PDPA, which included 767 tanks, 1,338 armoured personnel carriers, 76 fighter aircraft and 36 helicopters.⁸⁴ This was complemented by an additional delivery of highly-sophisticated weapons,

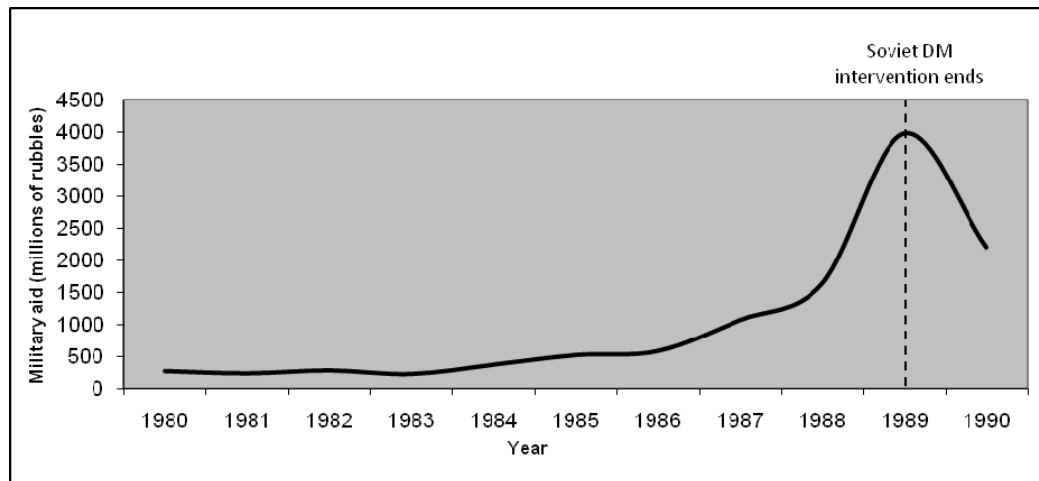
⁸² Cronin, *Afghanistan After the Soviet Withdrawal*, 5.

⁸³ Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 172.

⁸⁴ Minkov and Smolyneec, *Economic Development in Afghanistan During the Soviet Period*, 5.

including the latest MiG fighter-attack aircraft, helicopters and long range Scud-B missile launchers.⁸⁵ Observers noted that on “the eve of withdrawal, the Afghan leadership was asked by the Soviets what it needed and all its requests were satisfied. Basically the armed forces were re-equipped as if they were full strength.”⁸⁶ Conservative Western estimates valued the fresh weapons deliveries at over \$3 billion, which brought the total Soviet aid to Afghanistan in 1989 to \$14.2 billion.⁸⁷ Although military aid decreased slightly in 1990, the volume remained well above pre-withdrawal levels (see figure 8.1).

Figure 8.1: Soviet Indirect Military Aid to the PDPA



DM: Direct military. Source: Data from Lyakhovskii, *Tragediya i doblest' afgana*, appendix 14, in Antonio Giustozzi, *War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan, 1978-1992*, (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2000), 266.

However, despite the massive infusion of economic and indirect military assistance, the PDPA’s regular force structure began to erode. Accordingly, the

⁸⁵ Maley, *The Afghanistan Wars*, 145; Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 157. The International Institute for Strategic Studies estimated that before departing, Moscow transferred over 1,788 armoured vehicles, over 1,000 artillery pieces, 1,000 mortars, 600 anti-aircraft guns, 193 combat aircraft and 74 helicopters. See, O’Ballance, *Afghan Wars*, 199. For slightly more modest, but still highly significant, figures see, Marshall, “Managing Withdrawal,” 77. Marshall calculated that 990 armoured vehicles, 3,000 automobiles, 142 artillery pieces, and 14,443 infantry weapons were left by the departing Soviet forces. However, the author also pointed out that much of this was lost *en route* to frontline units because of “corruption and inefficiency”.

⁸⁶ Giustozzi, *War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan*, 112.

⁸⁷ Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 149; Sinno, *Organizations at War in Afghanistan and Beyond*, 175; Gilles Dorronsoro, *Revolution Unending: Afghanistan 1979 to the Present*, trans. John King, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 204

PDPA became progressively more reliant upon militia units. There were three pressures forcing the PDPA to change its military structure. First, following the Soviet direct military disengagement, the cost of training and maintaining regular soldiers grew. For instance, most training facilities were located in Kabul and from 1989 the PDPA was forced to shoulder all transportation costs, frequently traversing across territory where the Mujahideen operated. The lack of skilled instructors also acted to increase the costs associated with converting recruits into regular soldiers.⁸⁸ Second, the cost of maintaining the bureaucracy necessary for sustaining a regular army also increased beyond the PDPA's resources, especially with soaring levels of corruption.⁸⁹ Finally, although between February and December 1989 the PDPA received 51,012 tonnes of ammunition from Soviet Union, this proved to be only partially sufficient to cover the regular army's outputs.⁹⁰ Indeed, it was reported that the Kabul artillery batteries alone fired 800-1,000 shells a day against the Mujahideen. Therefore, although considerable resources were still being funnelled to the regular units, these were low when compared with the extra burden that was placed on the structure. The result of insufficient inputs was that the regular military structure began to come under strain and eventually virtually collapsed. The figures tell the tale. A year after the Soviet withdrawal, already between 30 to 50 percent of the PDPA's military equipment was inoperable due to lack of parts or unfinished repairs. In 1990, 60 percent of the Afghan regular army deserted.⁹¹ As its regular army disintegrated, the PDPA increasingly drew upon militias to conduct the war.

In contrast with regular units, the PDPA's militia units were more self-sufficient and thus required fewer resources from the central administration to function. The

⁸⁸ Antonio Giustozzi, "The Demodernisation of an Army: Northern Afghanistan, 1992-2001," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 15, No. 1, (2004), 17.

⁸⁹ During this time, many high ranking officials entered into business deals with the Mujahideen. In one case, hundreds of trucks of filled with Soviet aid were driven to Pakistan and the profits split between the parties. See, Minkov and Smolyne, *Economic Development in Afghanistan During the Soviet Period*, 17.

⁹⁰ Marshall, "Managing Withdrawal," 78.

⁹¹ Marshall, "Managing Withdrawal," 78 and 81.

PDPA's militia units supplemented the salary they received from Kabul with looting, road taxes and other local entrepreneurial enterprises.⁹² Moreover, it has been asserted that the militias were frequently more effective than their regular counterparts. One studied concluded that militia units "proved to be more motivated on the battlefield and more apt at engaging forces of a similar type."⁹³ These units' motivation sprung from the prospect of loot, in addition to settling old scores with the local Mujahideen fronts.

By the completion of the Soviet withdrawal, the PDPA's militia units had already come to comprise the majority of the regime's armed forces. Indeed, the number of militiamen in the PDPA's army grew rapidly after the Soviet Union signalled its intentions to withdraw from Afghanistan. The PDPA's militia expanded from barely 46,000 men in 1983 to roughly 170,000 in 1989.⁹⁴ By the last months of 1989, two-thirds of the PDPA's forces defending Herat and Shindand were tribal militia.⁹⁵ Frequently, the PDPA's militia were former-Mujahideen fronts, which, because of local rivalries with neighbouring Mujahideen groups, had decided to come over to the PDPA. Observers noted that the PDPA's militiamen were "often difficult to distinguish from those of the anticommunist resistance."⁹⁶ The temptation for Mujahideen fronts to come over to the PDPA grew in 1988, when the PDPA, "having nothing to lose", began to deliver heavy weapons, such as machine-guns, armoured vehicles and even tanks, "to local militias, which were until this time considered not reliable enough to be given too many weapons."⁹⁷ Therefore, a commander that decided to defect to the PDPA could gain a clear

⁹² Anthony Davis, "The Afghan Army," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, Vol. 5, No. 7, (1993), 327-331; Giustozzi, "The Demodernisation of an Army," 5; Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 148.

⁹³ Giustozzi, "The Demodernisation of an Army," 5.

⁹⁴ Giustozzi, *War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan*, 285 (Table 53).

⁹⁵ Marshall, "Managing Withdrawal," 81.

⁹⁶ Antonio Giustozzi, *Respectable Warlords? The Politics of State-Building in Post-Taliban Afghanistan*, Working Paper No. 33, (London: Crisis States Programme, LSE, 2003), 5; Astri Suhrke, "Afghanistan: Retribalization of the War," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 27, No. 3, (1990), 243.

⁹⁷ Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, 214 and Maley, *The Afghanistan Wars*, 109. The temptation for individuals to enlist in the PDPA's militia also grew. Militiamen received a monthly salary of Af 6,000, along with an enlistment premium, five acres of land, and a brand new Kalashnikov rifle. See, Grilz, "Afghanistan: The Guerrilla is Changing," 81.

advantage over his local rivals. For instance, Commander Doud, in Herat Province, who only led 1,000 men and was not even, therefore, the strongest commander in the area, was nevertheless given 5 tanks by Kabul after his defection, which he used against his rivals in the region.⁹⁸

The balance of capabilities and fragmentation of the Mujahideen

In 1989, a “certain quantitative balance of forces existed” between the PDPA and Mujahideen.⁹⁹ The PDPA had roughly 135,000 regular and semi-regular troops along with 170,000 affiliated militiamen. On the Mujahideen’s side, there were 55,000 active and some 190,000 inactive fighters.¹⁰⁰ However, these numbers disguise the increasing fragmented nature of both belligerents, particularly on the side of the Mujahideen. The political fracturing of the resistance meant that its growing strategic parity with the PDPA could not be converted into a national victory. Indeed, many Mujahideen commanders began fighting each other with more vigour than that reserved for the PDPA. Following the Soviet withdrawal, Rubin observed that as “in more normal times – but with more weapons – they engaged in struggles for local power.”¹⁰¹ As Rubin suggested, the total military capabilities in Afghanistan was enormous. Although the United States’ assistance to the Mujahideen decreased after 1989,¹⁰² its assistance programme expanded to include conventional weaponry. The CIA station in Riyadh gathered up several hundred abandoned Iraqi T-62 and T-72 tanks, APCs, artillery pieces and anti-aircraft guns and shipped them to Karachi.¹⁰³ Yet, increasingly, the different

⁹⁸ Giustozzi, *War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan*, 211.

⁹⁹ Giustozzi, *War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan*, 113. Throughout the civil war, the number of “inactive” mujahideen was substantially higher than the full-time guerrillas. Generally, after the PDPA-Soviet forces had been ejected from their territory the Mujahideen’s forces would quickly demobilise. Grau aptly observed that traditionally Afghans are “fierce warriors but indifferent soldiers.” Grau, “The Soviet-Afghan War: A Superpower Mired in the Mountains,” 131.

¹⁰⁰ Giustozzi, *War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan*, 266 (table 27) and 279 (table 47).

¹⁰¹ Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 247. Similarly, Roy wrote that “Both the Mujahidin and Kabul reverted to the traditional rules of the power game, although the changes brought by the war, mainly accumulation of modern weapons...undermined the traditional ways of regulating the conflicts with opposed communal groups to each other or to the state.” See, Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, 207.

¹⁰² In 1989, the United States provided the Mujahideen with \$290 million. However, Saudi Arabian assistance continued at extremely high levels: \$435 million plus \$100 million from independent Saudi princes. See, Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 216.

¹⁰³ Steve Coll, “Afghan Rebels to use Iraqi tanks,” *Washington Post Foreign Office*, 1 October 1991; Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 226.

Mujahideen fronts were using their newly acquired weapons on each other, instead of the regime.

In sum, following the Soviet withdrawal, the balance of capabilities underwent another dramatic shift. Although the total amount of military capabilities remained high, the belligerents fragmented, which significantly pushed the average cumulative capabilities towards lower levels. The Soviet withdrawal also moved the concentration of capabilities towards parity. Moscow had attempted to limit the impact of its troop withdrawal, yet even large volumes of indirect military assistance was not sufficient to compensate for the greater attenuation in the PDPA's conversion process. However, due to significant fragmentation within the Mujahideen, the regime maintained an overall advantage in concentration. Patricia Gossman identified this dynamic in the balance of capabilities, observing that "President Najibullah's position grew stronger as the opposition became more divided."¹⁰⁴ As the theory predicts, as the average cumulative capabilities reduced, and concentration moved towards parity, the warfare edged away from guerrilla in the direction of irregular.

Irregular warfare in Afghanistan

From 1989, the nature of the warfare in the Afghan Civil War began to move away from the guerrilla warfare that had characterised the period of the Soviet direct military intervention. The different regional militias, regardless of whether they were affiliated with the PDPA or opposition, reverted to more traditional forms of tribal warfare, albeit on a much greater scale than anything previously seen in Afghanistan. The PDPA-affiliated militias and local Mujahideen commanders

¹⁰⁴ Patricia Gossman, *Afghanistan: The Forgotten War: Human Rights Abuses and Violations of the Laws of War Since the Soviet Withdrawal*, (Washington: Human Rights Watch, 1991). Weintraub and Rupert described the balance of capabilities following the Soviet withdrawal in a similar fashion. They reported that the conflict pitted "two internally weak and unstable sides in a fight to the finish," however because the Mujahideen were spread "across the country, they by no means matched in numbers or weaponry the forces of Kabul's army" which was "entrenched in Kabul and a few other cities and towns." See, Richard M. Weintraub and James Rupert, "With Soviet troops finally gone, Afghans await last round of war," *Washington Post Foreign Service*, 16 February 1989 and Richard M. Weintraub and James Rupert "Afghan's civil war far from finished even after Soviets' pullout," *Washington Post*, 19 February 1989.

began to resemble regional warlords, who proceeded to carve out areas of influence.¹⁰⁵ The evolution of the warfare is evident by examining the change in nature of offensive and defensive operations during this phase.

Following the Soviet withdrawal, there was considerable spatial variation in the warfare in Afghanistan. The PDPA focussed its remaining regular forces in Afghanistan's major cities, while relying on affiliated militia groups in rural settings. This caused the continuation of the urban-rural divide around the major cities, while irregular warfare increasingly characterised the fighting in rural regions.

Around urban areas, the stalemate between the belligerents continued. In these areas, neither belligerent had the capabilities to mount successful offensive operations. After 1989, the PDPA withdrew from small towns and garrisons so as to focus its more limited regular forces in a few key cities.¹⁰⁶ However, the PDPA became locked in the cities, unable to conduct operations far outside their outskirts. Commenting on this process, Abdulkader Sinno observed that the PDPA "was structurally incapable of going on the offensive because of the intense factionalisms that riddled its structure and the readiness of its troops to defect when outside of their garrisons. It had little to gain anyway from engaging in military offensives because it enjoyed the benefits of the well-constructed defensive structures it inherited from the Soviets."¹⁰⁷ Meanwhile, the Mujahideen factions remained unable to assemble the necessary capabilities to capture PDPA-held cities. When the Mujahideen factions concentrated troops and equipment to attack PDPA occupied-cities, the defenders retaliated with overwhelming firepower. For

¹⁰⁵ Jalali observed that: "the structure of opposing forces and methods of their tactical and operational employment are in stark contrast with conventional models. Militia formations tailored for guerrilla warfare fight conventional battles." Ali A. Jalali, "Afghanistan: The Anatomy of an Ongoing Conflict," *Parameters*, Vol. 31, No. 1, (2001), 85.

¹⁰⁶ Clifford Krauss, "Afghanistan: The place where the Cold War didn't go out of style," *The New York Times*, 17 February 1991.

¹⁰⁷ Sinno, *Organizations at War in Afghanistan and Beyond*, 195. When asked why the PDPA could not pursue the Mujahideen beyond the urban areas one official replied that "[o]ur military strategy has a defensive character." Steve Coll. "Fighting for Afghan city intensifies: rebels second attempt to take major centre," *Washington Post Foreign Office*, 7 September 1989.

example, following the failed 1989 Mujahideen attack on Jalalabad, the Soviet ambassador, Yuli Vorontsov, complained that “the amount of ammunition spent in Jalalabad was four times that spent in the battle of Stalingrad because unlike the German and Soviet armies the Afghans are getting it for free and so are not economical.”¹⁰⁸ Although wasteful, the PDPA tactics were also effective. At the Battle of Jalalabad, the Mujahideen suffered its heaviest casualties of the war, which Yousaf and Adkin have blamed on its mistaken transition “from guerrilla to conventional warfare prematurely.”¹⁰⁹

In frustration, both the PDPA and Mujahideen took to relying heavily upon artillery and rockets to maintain pressure upon their opponents. On the PDPA’s side, the SCUD missile system increasingly became a staple weapon.¹¹⁰ Between October 1988 and February 1992, the PDPA launched over 2,000 missiles – the heaviest use of ballistic missiles since the Second World War.¹¹¹ In one attack, within one hour, the PDPA fired 100 assorted rockets at Mujahideen positions at Paghman, north-west of Kabul.¹¹² Likewise, the warlords came to use rockets as their primary offensive weapon. The Mujahideen had been plentifully supplied with Chinese Type 63 107-mm multiple rockets that had a range of 8 to 10 kilometres.¹¹³ Kabul suffered the heaviest bombardment of any Afghan city, with up to 60 rockets landing within the city every day.¹¹⁴ It was during this phase that the majority of the destruction to Kabul was done.¹¹⁵ However, it seems that the principal (and

¹⁰⁸ Lamb, *The Sewing Circles of Herat*, 72. Prior to the first Mujahideen offensive on 10 March 1989, the PDPA had concentrated an additional 15,000 troops from surrounding garrisons in Jalalabad. Dorronsoro, *Revolution Unending*, 228; Lamb, *The Sewing Circles of Herat*, 65; Sinno, *Organizations at War in Afghanistan and Beyond*, 176; Rubin, “Afghanistan: Back to Feudalism,” *Current History*, Vol. 88, Iss. 524, (1989), 445.

¹⁰⁹ Yousaf and Adkin, *Afghanistan – The Bear Trap*, 235.

¹¹⁰ In the months that followed the Soviet withdrawal it was not unusual for 6 to 8 Scuds to be fired each day. Marshall, “Managing Withdrawal,” 77.

¹¹¹ Marshall, “Managing Withdrawal,” 77.

¹¹² James Rupert, “Afghans prepare for summer offensives,” *The Washington Post*, 13 July 1989.

¹¹³ Grilz, “Afghanistan: The Guerrilla is Changing,” 86.

¹¹⁴ Rupert, “Afghans prepare for summer offensives.”

¹¹⁵ Although the Mujahideen’s rockets were aimed at military targets they invariably landed randomly. Jean-Jacques Fresard, head of the Kabul mission of the International Red Cross in 1989, reported that “99 percent of the casualties” in rocket attacks were civilians. Steve Coll, “The Last Battleground,” *The Washington Post*, 26 April 1992; Steve Coll, “Afghan war bleeds on,” *The Washington Post Foreign Service*, 9 May 1991. Rupert, “Afghans prepare for summer offensives.”

unintended) effect of the Mujahideen's rocket attacks was only to further erode civilian and international support for their cause.¹¹⁶

In rural Afghanistan, rival warlords battled one another for control over tactical and economically-important territory.¹¹⁷ Karmal Matinuddin described a typical irregular offensive as follows: "[t]heir commanders do not carry out military appreciation. There are no assembly areas, forming-up places, or start lines before an attack is launched. No fire plans area made. [Instead a] large number of rockets are fired in the general direction of the objective, accompanied by a hail of bullets from automatic weapons, and hopefully the rival militia surrenders."¹¹⁸ Matinuddin's report highlights the characteristic common to irregular warfare of displaying firepower in the hope of avoiding a direct confrontation. To overcome the lack of conventional offensive capabilities, alternate technology was developed especially for irregular offensives. Specifically to overcome their lack of offensive capabilities, the different militias introduced motorbikes and pickup trucks as their principal platforms. The pickup truck, in particular, became the mainstay vehicle of the southern fronts. These vehicles could carry 10 militiamen, had excellent speed and manoeuvrability, and were frequently armed with a 12.7-mm machine-gun. The "technicals" were used in a similarly fashion to traditional tribal cavalry, exploiting speed, surprise and shock to make tactical gains. However, the lightness of these vehicles also made them extremely vulnerable to even small numbers of disciplined and well-equipped defenders.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Rupert, "Afghanistan's Slide Towards Civil War," 770.

¹¹⁷ As the Soviet forces withdrew from Afghanistan and the PDPA's forces shrunk into their major cities, the Mujahideen captured all the territory along the Afghan-Pakistani border. Shortly, thereafter, the first towns began to fall to the Mujahideen. In August 1988, Kunduz, Dara-i Suf and Bamyan fell and in early September Imam Saheb and Spin Boldak were also captured. On 11 and 21 October, Asadabad and Muhmud Raqi (provincial capital of Kapisa) fell, respectively. Finally, Taliqan (provincial capital of Takhar) fell to Massoud. Dorrnsoro, *Revolution Unending*, 227; Steve Coll, "Despite U.S.-Soviet weapons cutoff, Afghans' War unlikely to end soon," *The Washington Post*, 14 September 1991.

¹¹⁸ Kamal Matinuddin, *The Taliban Phenomenon*, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 59.

¹¹⁹ For instance, although the Taliban successfully deployed pickup trucks as their principal offensive weapon, they were unable to make any significant gains against Massoud's troops after 1996. Between 1994 and 1996, the Taliban (the force that most enthusiastically embraced the pickup) was able to use them to quickly capture 65 percent of the country; however, they were then unable to make any significant gains for the following 5 years. Jalali, "Afghanistan: The Anatomy of an Ongoing Conflict," 92. Also see, Some Mujahideen Fronts possessed small numbers of captured Soviet tanks (either captured or supplied by the PDPA, or provided by the United States after being captured in the 1991 Iraq

In regions where irregular warfare became the dominant form of warfare, defence was generally *ad hoc* and reactionary. The low force-to-space ratio on extended fronts meant the boundary between different regions of control were generally completely undefended, or thinly-defended with observation posts and check points. As such, attackers were frequently able to penetrate their rival's territory to raid villages and destroy crops with little difficulty. However, the actors' mutual weakness, which was the key factor in the success of the attacker's initial raid, also made the intruders highly vulnerable to a defender's counter-attack.¹²⁰ The result was a situation where although the frontlines that divided the warlord's territories were weakly defended, they were surprisingly stable.

4. Conclusion

Foreign intervention is frequently the deciding factor as to whether an insurgent overcomes the poverty trap and converts to a conventional strategy. However, although foreign assistance is one of the keys ways in which an insurgent can "save" sufficient capabilities to successfully convert to a conventional strategy, the case of the Mujahideen shows that this is not always enough. In addition to the volume of exogenous resources, the type of resources provided is crucially important. Unlike UNITA, the Mujahideen was not provided with the necessary armoured vehicles, artillery and air-cover to convert to a conventional strategy. Without conventional assets, the Mujahideen was ultimately unable to progress to a conventional strategy.

This chapter identified some of the factors why the Mujahideen was unable to overcome the poverty trap. Between Phase I (1980-1983) and Phase II (1984-1988),

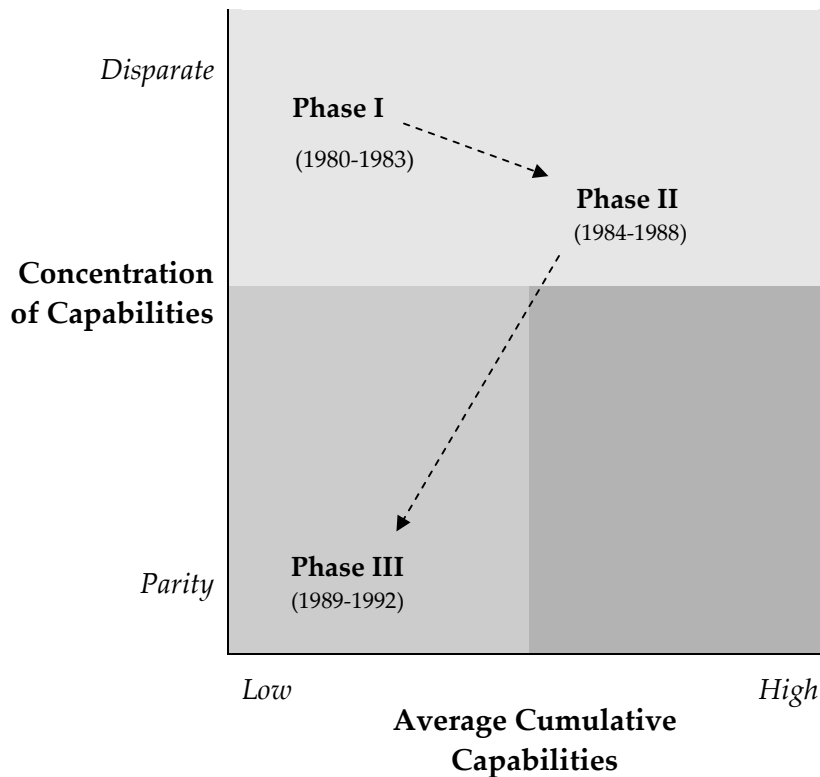
War). However, it was uncommon for the fronts to use them effectively. The exception was during the Battle of Khost, where a "coordinated Mujahideen assault using captured tanks from the Kabul side contributed to a rare rebel victory." Khost highlights the need for the Mujahideen to successfully convert to conventional warfare to make gains against the PDPA.. Coll, "Afghan rebels to use Iraqi tanks."

¹²⁰ Jalali, "Afghanistan: The Anatomy of an Ongoing Conflict," 94.

the Mujahideen received increased quantities of exogenous resources. However, in parallel with increases in exogenous resources to the Mujahideen, the impact of the Soviet assistance to the PDPA also increased. Hence, while the average cumulative capabilities moved towards higher levels, the concentration of capabilities only moved marginally towards parity. Phase III (1989-1992) was demarcated by the Soviet direct military disengagement and the United States' sharp curtailing of support to the Mujahideen. The change in the pattern of foreign intervention had a dramatic effect on the balance of capabilities. The decrease in exogenous resources resulted in the gradual disintegration of the PDPA's regular army. For the Mujahideen, exogenous resources had been the glue that had held the various fronts together and following the United States' disengagement from the conflict, many fronts either switched sides or went into business for themselves.¹²¹ Overall, this resulted in the average cumulative capabilities moving towards low levels as the existing military capabilities were divided between a greater number of belligerents and the concentration headed towards parity. As the theory predicts, corresponding with this change in the balance of capabilities, the warfare in Afghanistan began to move from guerrilla to irregular. Figure 8.2 maps the broad course of the Afghan Civil War from 1980 to 1992.

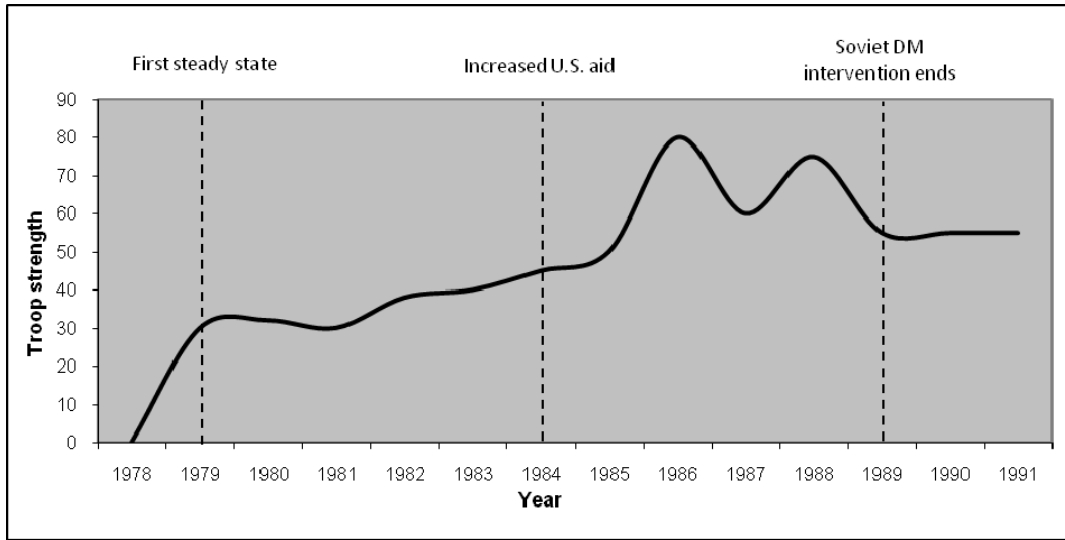
¹²¹ Antonio Giustozzi, *The Missing Ingredient: Non-Ideological Insurgency and State Collapse in Western Afghanistan, 1979-1992*, Crisis States Working Paper No. 11, (London: London School of Economics, 2007); Antonio Giustozzi and Noor Ullah, *"Tribes" and Warlords in Southern Afghanistan, 1980-2005*, Crisis States Working Paper No. 7, (London: London School of Economics, 2006).

Figure 8.2: Foreign Intervention, the Poverty Trap, and Afghan Civil War



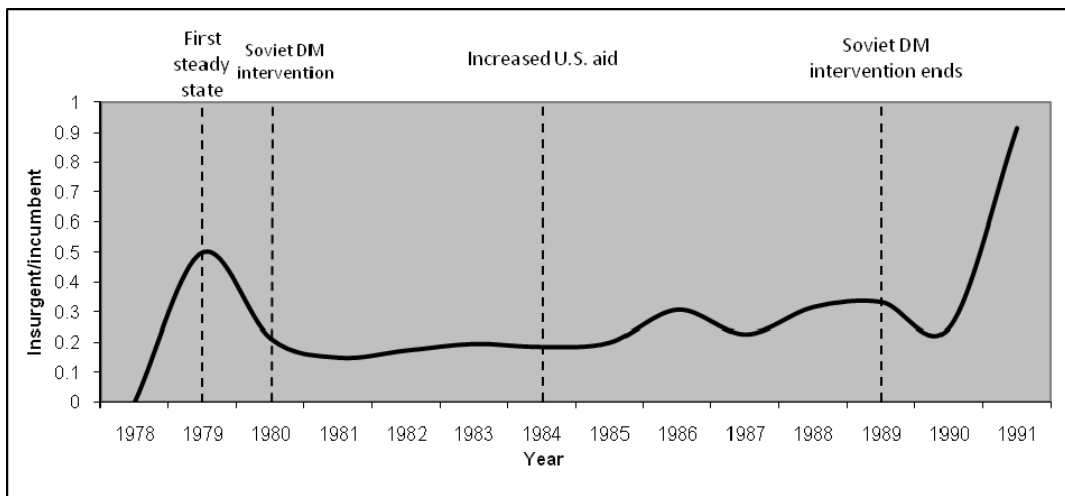
The poverty trap is also visible in a longitudinal analysis of the growth of the Mujahideen across the span of the war. As Figure 8.3 illustrates, the Mujahideen grew quickly in the period covered by the Chapter Seven. However, by 1980, the Mujahideen had reached the first steady state, and its manpower did not increase significantly until 1986. At this point, the United States' 1984 decision to increase aid started to be felt on the battlefield. The Mujahideen had a greater number of willing recruits than weapons and equipment to supply them. Therefore, National Security Directive 166 eased this binding restraint in its resource conversion system. Finally, in 1989, the number of active fighters in the Mujahideen decreased slightly as those individuals dedicated solely to resisting the Soviet intervention left the movement. However, most of the Mujahideen fronts maintain the majority of their fighters, who increasingly trained their weapons as frequently against their rivals as against the PDPA.

Figure 8.3: Growth of the Mujahideen



DM: direct military. Source: Antonio Giustozzi, *War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan, 1978-1992*, (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2000), 279.

Figure 8.4: Relative Growth of the Mujahideen



DM: direct military. Source: Antonio Giustozzi, *War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan, 1978-1992*, (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2000), 188 and 279.

Figure 8.4 paints a relative picture of the Mujahideen’s growth by comparing its troop strength to the regime’s between 1978 and 1991. There are three significant differences between the Mujahideen’s absolute growth (depicted in Figure 8.3) and the relative course of the belligerents’ strength (illustrated in Figure 8.4). First, in Figure 8.4, the impact of the December 1979 Soviet direct military intervention on

the balance of capabilities is highly visible. In 1980, the concentration of capabilities clearly took a dive towards disparity. A second difference between the Mujahideen's absolute and relative growth occurred in 1986. Whereas in 1986 the Mujahideen's cumulative capabilities increased (as seen in Figure 8.3), the relative depiction in Figure 8.4 suggests that its relative growth was far more modest. Clearly, the PDPA's growth had largely kept pace with that of the Mujahideen, resulting in only minor changes in the concentration of capabilities. The final significant difference between the absolute and relative figures occurred in the 1990-1991 period. Although the absolute strength of the Mujahideen remained relatively steady over this period, Figure 8.4 shows a sharp move toward parity. This suggests that the change in the balance of capabilities was triggered by the Soviet's direct military disengagement from the Afghan Civil War, rather than any growth in the Mujahideen's cumulative capabilities.

Part III of this dissertation has empirically examined the explanatory power of the theory contained in Part II. Overall, the theory holds, with several minor case specific deviations. Chapter Nine, which follows, will briefly discuss the theoretical conclusions and empirical results of this dissertation.

Part IV

Chapter Nine

Conclusion

As observed at the outset of this dissertation, there has been a paucity of theory which has sought to explain how foreign intervention influences the course of civil wars. Hence, the aim of this study was to develop an understanding of how foreign assistance affects the course and nature of ongoing civil wars. This research question was subsequently divided into two further questions. The first asked how exogenous resources affect the cumulative capabilities of the recipient belligerent, while the second, sought to investigate how changes in the balance of capabilities influence the form of warfare that characterises a civil war.

Beginning by concentrating on the first sub-question, a review of instances of foreign intervention showed that the impact of exogenous resources on recipient's cumulative capabilities has varied greatly between cases. In some cases, exogenous resources dramatically increased the recipient's cumulative capabilities, while similar assistance, provided elsewhere, only marginally increased the recipient's cumulative capabilities. The apparent randomness in the impact of foreign intervention across cases, and time, became the first puzzle. To solve this riddle, I introduced the idea that exogenous resources possess both a gross and interactive value. A number of factors determine the marginal difference between the gross value and interactive value of resources. First, the efficiency of the recipient's conversion system will influence the impact of exogenous resources on its cumulative capabilities. The margin of inefficiency during a belligerent's conversion of inputs into outputs was labelled attenuation. The amount of attenuation varies between considerably belligerents and thus influences the impact of foreign intervention. Attenuation also goes some way towards explaining

why direct military intervention has tended to have a greater impact on the cumulative capabilities of recipients than either economic or indirect military intervention. Three further influences on the impact of exogenous resources on the cumulative capabilities of belligerents were identified: binding restraints, the interaction effect and the feedback loop. Taken together, these concepts explained much of the variation in the impact of foreign intervention in the cases of the Angolan and Afghan civil wars and thereby made sense of the apparent randomness in the impact of foreign intervention.

However, the impact of exogenous resources on the recipient's cumulative capabilities is only part of the story. Thus, the dissertation asked how changes in one, or more, belligerent's cumulative capabilities will affect the character of the warfare in civil war. To answer this question, I developed the concept of the balance of capabilities. The difficulty I faced was that a belligerent's cumulative capabilities are at once a characteristic of the actor and also a system-level attribute. I overcame this problem by developing a conceptualisation of the balance of capabilities which included both absolute and relative variables. It was submitted that the balance of capabilities in the civil war shapes the perceptions of the belligerents and, in turn, influences the strategies they choose to adopt. That is, a belligerent's decision to utilise a conventional, guerrilla, or irregular strategy will principally be the result of one or more of the belligerents' calculation of the balance of capabilities.

Foreign intervention manipulates the balance of capabilities in a predictable manner. A survey of civil wars suggests that the balance of capabilities moves steadily between different forms of warfare. The one exception to this is during an insurgent's transition from guerrilla to conventional strategy, which was observed to be frequently prolonged and inconsistent. After initially growing quickly, insurgents which seek to convert to a conventional strategy often get trapped in a

strategic stalemate with the incumbent which both contenders find difficult to overcome. To help explain this puzzle, I introduced the idea of the existence of a poverty trap in warfare conversion. Once an insurgent actor gets caught in the poverty trap, the role of foreign powers often becomes crucial. An external injection of conventional assets, the provision of safe havens, or the withdrawal of the incumbent's foreign supporters can all potentially break the belligerents free from the poverty trap.

Summary of results

Part III presented evidence that foreign intervention in the Angolan and Afghan civil wars had a significant impact on the contending strategies of the belligerents in those conflicts. Although the impact of foreign intervention varied between recipients, regions and time periods, the cases suggest certain patterns in the effect of exogenous resources on the cumulative capabilities of belligerents and warfare in civil war.

Broadly, the comparative cases support the theory developed in this dissertation on the relationship between foreign intervention and warfare in civil war. In particular, the empirical evidence contributes two valuable observations on the impact of foreign intervention on the course of civil wars. First, in both Angola and Afghanistan foreign intervention was instrumental in changing the form of warfare at several points in both wars. This suggests that the balance of capabilities in civil wars tends to be susceptible to manipulation by foreign powers. The second significant result to emerge from the cases was that the foreign assistance to UNITA and the Mujahideen tended to have a greater impact on their cumulative capabilities than their opponent's. This observation suggests that guerrilla groups tend to receive a disproportionate benefit from exogenous resources. These two findings are discussed more comprehensively below.

The comparative evidence supports the notion that foreign intervention, by altering the balance of capabilities, influences the warfare in civil wars. As Tables 9.1 and 9.2 summarise, significant changes in the pattern of foreign intervention in the Angolan and Afghan civil wars correlated with adjustments in the balance of capabilities and, frequently, in the form of warfare. These changes occurred in a manner anticipated by the theory. Foreign intervention changed the form of warfare relatively quickly and easily in all instances, except when it was moving from guerrilla to conventional warfare. In this particular instance, it became evident that UNITA and the Mujahideen had gotten caught in a poverty trap which stifled their growth and thwarted their transition to a conventional strategy. Only UNITA was able to eventually successfully convert to a conventional strategy, significantly assisted in this endeavour by the direct military assistance of the South African Defence Force.

A survey of the observations supports this view, recalling that an "observation" is a single measurement of the pattern of foreign intervention (independent variable), the balance of capabilities (intervening variable) and the form of warfare (dependent variable) at each point there is a significant change in the pattern of foreign intervention. From our perspective, perhaps the most striking feature of the Angolan observations was the ease with which the form of warfare changed from irregular to conventional and then to guerrilla. As was demonstrated, the form of warfare in the Angolan Civil War changed three times in only 17 months. Clearly, in order for foreign intervention to have had such a dramatic impact on the nature of the warfare, there must have been little friction present in the balance of capabilities. The swift change in the forms of warfare between the first three observations contrasted sharply with the prolonged and difficult transition in the fourth and fifth observations. Even though UNITA received substantial exogenous resources during the early 1980s, it was unable to successfully convert to a conventional structure and strategy. Evidently, the dynamics of the warfare in

Angola obstructed UNITA's easy transition from guerrilla to conventional strategy, even after UNITA was able to quickly expand its cumulative capabilities in the early stages of its guerrilla campaign. This evidence supports the argument that a poverty trap exists in the balance of capabilities. UNITA successfully evolved to conventional strategy in the period of the fifth observation, but only at great cost, risk and with the provision of substantial quantities of conventional military assets from South Africa.

Table 9.1: Summary of Results (Angola)

Observation		Foreign intervention to incumbent (MPLA)		Foreign intervention to insurgents (FNLA and UNITA)		Balance of capabilities		Warfare
No.	Description	Volume	Type	Volume	Type	Avg. cum. capabilities	Concentration	
N ₁	Period 1, Phase 1	low	IM	none		Low	parity	irregular
N ₂	Period 1, Phase 2	high	DM	high	DM	high	parity	conventional
N ₃	Period 1, Phase 3	high	DM	none		intermediate	disparity	guerrilla
N ₄	Period 2, Phase 1	high	DM	intermediate	IM	high	disparity	guerrilla
N ₅	Period 2, Phase 2	high	DM	high	DM	high	parity	conventional

DM: direct military intervention

IM: indirect military intervention

EI: economic intervention

The warfare in the Afghan Civil War was also highly influenced by foreign intervention. The reaction of the warfare to the injection of exogenous resources suggests that the balance of capabilities in Afghanistan behaved in a similar way as in the Angolan case. That is, transitions between different forms of warfare, on the whole, experienced little resistance and occurred relatively swiftly. As was seen, the irregular warfare in Nuristan and the conventional warfare in Herat moved rapidly to guerrilla following direct military intervention by the Soviet Union. Similarly, following Soviet disengagement from the civil war, the pattern of warfare quickly moved towards irregular warfare. These rapid transitions contrast with the prolonged period of guerrilla warfare during the 1980s. The Mujahideen's

inability to convert to conventional warfare, despite its many battlefield successes and the growth in its cumulative capabilities, suggests that the insurgent was caught in the poverty trap of warfare conversion. This assertion is supported by the case evidence from Chapter Eight. Unlike UNITA, however, the Mujahideen was never able to overcome the poverty trap and convert to a conventional strategy. The evidence suggests this was for two reasons. First, the foreign supporters of the Mujahideen did not supply the conventional military assets required to overcome the poverty trap. Second, the Soviet support for the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) continued to increase throughout its direct military intervention, thus elevating the critical threshold that the Mujahideen had to reach before conventional warfare became possible. These two features of the pattern of foreign intervention in Afghanistan meant that guerrilla warfare continued until the Soviet Union began to disengage from the conflict.

Table 9.2: Summary of Results (Afghanistan)

Observation		Foreign intervention to incumbent (PDPA)		Foreign intervention to insurgent (Mujahideen)		Balance of capabilities		Warfare
No.	Description	Volume	Type	Volume	Type	Avg. cum. capabilities	Concentration	
N ₆	Period 1, Nuristan	none		none		low	parity	irregular
N ₇	Period 1, Herat	low	DM	none		High	parity	conventional
N ₈	Period 2, Nuristan	high	DM	low	IM	intermediate	disparity	guerrilla
N ₉	Period 2, Herat	high	DM	intermediate	IM	intermediate	disparity	guerrilla
N ₁₀	Period 2, Phase 1	high	DM	low	IM	intermediate	disparity	guerrilla
N ₁₁	Period 2, Phase 2	high	DM	intermediate	IM	high	disparity	guerrilla
N ₁₂	Period 2, Phase 3	intermediate	IM	low	IM	low	parity	irregular

DM: direct military intervention

IM: indirect military intervention

EI: economic intervention

The second key empirical result to emerge from the cases was the significant variation in the impact of exogenous resources on different belligerents' cumulative

capabilities. In both Angola and Afghanistan, the assistance provided to the incumbent eclipsed that provided to the insurgent. Between 1975 and 1991, Moscow delivered nearly \$13 billion to the MPLA and tens of thousands of Cubans were permanently stationed in Angola,¹ while over the same period, UNITA received roughly \$90 million in American aid and the sporadic and temporary assistance of usually only a few hundred South African troops.² In Afghanistan, between 1980 and 1990, the Soviet Union provided the PDPA with over \$36 billion in military aid and many billions more in economic aid,³ and stationed in excess of 105,000 troops in the country; the United States furnished the Mujahideen with \$2.5 billion in weapons and finance, which was roughly matched by Saudi Arabia. When compared, the assistance transferred to the insurgent actors seems strikingly small. However, as the cases showed, external aid had a dramatic affect on the fighting capacity of UNITA and the Mujahideen. This finding supports Leites and Wolf's observation that

...the value of external (or internal) inputs cannot be inferred by their bulk, or their market prices. For example, external provision of leadership, money, intelligence, training, sanctuary, propaganda, and diplomatic pressure may have an importance in the emergence and growth of [rebellion] which is not adequately measured by the flow of tons of supplies, or numbers of people, across a contiguous border.⁴

Foreign intervention in the Angolan and Afghan civil wars reinforces the notion that exogenous resources will have an inconsistent impact on the fighting abilities

¹ Edward George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola, 1965-1991: From Che Guevara to Cuito Cuanavale*, (London: Frank Cass, 2005), 1 and 303.

² The total sum of American aid to UNITA is unclear exactly how much of "Operation IAFeature" funds went to UNITA. However, it is clear that the majority went to the FNLA. Furthermore, as Chapter Six catalogued, in detail, South Africa was UNITA's main source of economic and indirect military aid, which by 1985 probably amounted to some \$200 million annually. See, John Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978), 206; Jakkie Potgieter, "Taking Aid From the Devil Himself: UNITA Support Structures," in Jakkie Cilliers and Christian Dietrich, (eds.), *Angola's War Economy The Role of Oil and Diamonds*, (Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, 2000), 260; Michael McFaul, "Rethinking the "Reagan Doctrine" in Angola," *International Security*, Vol. 14, No. 3, (1989), 106.

³ Barnett R. Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 113; Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: the Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and bin Laden, from Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*, (New York: Penguin, 2004), 238.

⁴ Nathan Leites and Charles Wolf, Jr., *Rebellion and Authority: An Analytical Essay on Insurgent Conflicts*, (Chicago: Markham Publishing, 1970), 39-40. Also see, Karl W. Deutsch, "External Involvement in Internal Wars," in Harry Eckstein, (ed.), *Internal War: Problems and Approaches*, (London: The Free Press, 1964), 109.

of recipients. For an external state's perspective, the theory and case evidence presented in this dissertation suggests that foreign intervention to insurgents employing a guerrilla strategy will produce the best returns on investments. Generally, to exist in the highly-competitive environment created by the civil war, a successful guerrilla group must be frugal and flexible. Hence, it will use exogenous resources more efficiently and effectively than belligerents that are under less strain. This finding provides theoretical context and additional empirical support to Galula's observation that guerrilla activity is "so cheap to carry out and so expensive to suppress."⁵

Future directions

Since 1945, civil war and foreign intervention have largely replaced international war as the most frequent form of armed conflict. Especially across Africa, leaders have demonstrated a preference towards supporting insurgent groups in neighbouring countries rather than international war.⁶ Indeed, in many cases, bilateral agreements to stop supplying insurgent organisations within each others' countries have replaced traditional "peace treaties". The decline in the incidence of international war has been caused by a number of factors; however, prominent among these is the growing normative convention in international society against inter-state war.⁷ Yet, this has created a paradox. That is, whereas international wars tend to strengthen states,⁸ civil wars, interventions and counter-interventions only act to weaken states and create favourable conditions for yet further civil wars and

⁵ David Galula, *Counter-Insurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, (London: Pall Mall, 1964), 53.

⁶ Robert H. Jackson and Carl G. Rosburg, "Why Africa's Weak States Persist: The Empirical and the Judicial in Statehood," *World Politics*, Vol. 35, No. 1, (1982), 1-24.

⁷ James Lee Ray, "The Abolition of Slavery and the End of International War," *International Organization*, Vol. 43, No. 3, (1989), 405-440; John Mueller, *Retreat From Doomsday: The Obsolescence of Major War*, (New York: Basic Books, 1989). For a statistical review of the decline in international war, see, Margareta Sollenberg and Peter Wallensteen, "The End of International War? Armed Conflict 1989-95," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 33, No. 3, (1996), 353-370.

⁸ Charles Tilly, "Reflections on the History of European State Making," in Charles Tilly, (ed.), *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), 3-83; Charles Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime," in Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Theda Skocpol, (eds.), *Bringing the States Back in*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 169-191.

intervention.⁹ The weaker a state, the more likely it is that it will suffer future civil war. Hence, the paradox emerges that a norm intended to promote peace and stability can, in practice, lead to weaker states and more civil war and intervention. Foreign intervention and civil war are likely to remain common phenomena into the foreseeable future and thus any progress in understanding their dynamics and particular characteristics must be welcomed. The theory and comparative evidence presented here make a modest contribution to current understanding of how foreign intervention influences the course and nature of civil wars. Yet, there remains no shortage of different aspects of foreign intervention that require attention. For example, possible areas of future research include the impact that foreign intervention has on post-civil war politics, society and economics. As discussed directly above, this is a pressing concern. Finally, as was discussed in the introduction, this study operated at the system level of analysis. However, there is also a need for future research on the impact of foreign intervention on different aspects of civil war at the communal and, particularly, individual levels of analysis.

⁹ For an excellent exposition of these and related issues, see Boaz Atzili, "When Good Fences Make Bad Neighbors: Fixed Borders, State Weakness, and International Conflict," *International Security*, Vol. 31, No. 3, (2006), 139-173. Also see, Tanisha M. Fazal, "State Death in the International System," *International Organization*, Vol. 58, No. 2, (2004), 311-344; Robert H. Jackson, "Juridical Statehood in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol 46, No. 1, (1992), 1-16; Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime," 169-191; James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 97, No. 1, (2003), 75-90; Barbara F. Walter, "Does Conflict Beget Conflict? Explaining Reoccurring Civil War," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 41, No. 3, (2004), 371-388; J. Michael Quin, T. David Mason and Mehmet Gurses, "Sustaining the Peace: Determinants of Civil War Reoccurrence," *International Interactions*, Vol. 33, No. 2, (2007), 167-193.

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