SPONSORING INSURGENT GROUPS:
LESSONS FROM AFGHANISTAN AND ANGOLA

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ABSTRACT:

This thesis examines the role of foreign support to the mujahideen insurgency in Afghanistan and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) insurgency in Angola both beginning in the 1970’s and continuing into the early 1990’s. It analyzes state support to both conflicts in terms of safe haven, training, arms, money, advisors, and direct military support. It presents four key findings. First, direct military support, arms, and money tend to increase the capability of insurgents more than training or advisors. Second, only money and arms tend to provide a state sponsor long term influence over insurgent groups. Third, state support to insurgent groups works better when it is only a single component in a broader foreign policy which also utilizes economic, conventional military, and diplomatic power to influence the targeted state. Finally, only a well coordinated policy, which integrates the efforts of different domestic agencies as well as foreign allies, is likely to provide the desired mix of effectiveness, efficiency, and control over the insurgent group.
The author would like to thank Karl P. Mueller, Daniel Byman, and Thomas L. Moore for providing guidance during the development, research, and drafting of this thesis.

Many thanks,
Albert “Lee” Kirkpatrick
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I. Introduction

During the last two decades the United States (U. S.) has used conventional military power to influence or overthrow adversarial governments in Panama, Serbia, Iraq, and Afghanistan; yet, when Russia invaded Georgia in 2008, the U. S. and Europe offered only rhetorical support. The U. S. was able to marshal what was a successful sanctions regime following the first Iraq war to prevent Saddam Hussein from developing weapons of mass destruction; yet, the west has continually failed to impose similarly effective sanctions against a defiant Iran, which has a much more flagrant nuclear program. Even the 2003 conventional campaign in Iraq was marked by increasing international resistance and non-cooperation. This suggests that those who argue the U. S. is declining relative to the rest of the world may be right. Future policymakers are likely to face growing constraints when exercising traditional military, economic, and diplomatic power as Europe unifies; China consolidates its influence in East Asia; and regional powers like Russia, India, and Brazil grow stronger. To counter this relative decline, the United States may be forced to rely more frequently on supporting foreign proxies to influence intransigent governments which resist attempts to influence their policy or who are shielded from the effects of other forms of U. S. power by regional hegemons.

The decision to support an insurgent group is often complex and fraught with risk. Some relevant questions include:

- Are the insurgent group’s goals consistent with those of the United States?
- Does the group have the potential to be successful in achieving its goals?
- Can the U. S. sustain a policy of supporting the insurgents given the relevant moral, political, military, and economic consequences?¹

¹ Ty Groh addresses some of these questions in a thesis he wrote at Air University.
What type of assistance would be most useful to the insurgent group?

How much influence can the U. S. exercise over the group?

While all these questions must be answered before the U. S. should begin to support an insurgent group, this paper will only address the last two. Selecting the best means to assist an insurgent group and exert control over its actions is the most difficult strategic and operational decision following the initial decision to intervene, because most types of support have different costs and benefits and their value may vary over time.

The following paper is broken into four sections. The first section discusses in general terms how state support might benefit an insurgent group by first discussing why and how insurgent capability is important and later outlining some of the more common forms of state support and their influence on capability. This section also discusses the inherent difficulties in studying state support for insurgent groups and argues that process tracing is the best way to overcome them. The following two sections apply this theoretical framework to the mujahideen struggle against the Afghan government and its Soviet sponsor during the 1980’s and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola’s (UNITA) struggle against the Angolan government and its Cuban allies from the mid-1970’s through the early 1990’s. The final section discusses the conclusions and policy implications of the study.

II. How and When State Support Benefits Insurgent Groups

For states seeking to support an insurgent group there are a number of ways, both overt and covert, which may increase the probability that the insurgent group will

succeed by making it more capable. While the value of different forms of support is likely to vary widely across cases and over time depending on the nature of the insurgent group, the state it is challenging, or other exogenous factors, some rough generalizations should be possible. However, before analyzing the effects of different forms of state support, it is important to understand what is meant by insurgent capability and why or how making an insurgent group more capable might benefit a state sponsor.

a. Insurgent Capability: Measurement, Relevance, and Risks

Analyzing insurgent capability provides some unique challenges in terms of both measurement and utility. While it is difficult but usually possible to develop precise and quantitative measures of the military capability of a nation state, to do so for an insurgent group is much more difficult. First, unlike the commanders of the security forces of a country, many insurgent commanders face challenges specifying not only the quality but the quantity of their troops. Most insurgent organizations are composed of a dizzying array of full-time cadre, part time fighters, sympathizers, and political allies. While the local commander can probably list everyone who supports him, assessing the capability of the organization based on such data is inherently difficult because the roles and skills of course there are other ways a state can provide support to an insurgent group, which do not necessarily directly increase the capacity of that group. Perhaps the most prominent is diplomatic recognition and support. However, many of the benefits of such support stem from increased international legitimacy for the insurgent group, which often results in growing flows of more tangible types of support. For a more detailed discussion of the importance of diplomatic support and propaganda see Byman.


Byman classifies the types of state support for insurgent groups as critical, valuable, and minor establishing a ranking consistent with this paper’s hypothesis. However, not all of the types of state support discussed in the Byman study are included in this paper. Additionally, Byman does not include provision of advisors, but does address the provision of fighters, which is somewhat related.

Byman, Trends in Outside Support, 83-100.

Byman also wrote an excellent analysis of state support for terrorist groups entitled Deadly Connections. Many of his conclusions are similar to those of the earlier RAND analysis, but the book focuses on terrorist groups.

of those personnel are inconsistent and rarely explicit. Also unfortunate for the researcher, most insurgent groups are not likely to share information about their forces while the conflict is ongoing, and even if they are willing to provide such information it is likely to be distorted or incomplete.

Rather than depending on quantitative measures of capability, which are likely to be unreliable or impossible to collect, this paper will instead focus on the size, complexity, and outcome of insurgent operations; and the reactions of the adversarial regimes facing the insurgents. Indicators of insurgent success include the withdrawal or addition of foreign forces, the loss of key posts or territory, the defection of elements of the armed forces, changes in counterinsurgent tactics, or increasingly repressive government policies. These indicators relate directly to the capability of the insurgent group and the connections are particularly clear when references to insurgent actions are linked directly to government decisions in publicly available records and memoirs. Defining the dependent variable in these terms avoids setting the bar too high by requiring an insurgent group to actually defeat the government to demonstrate its capability, which in some cases may be impossible even with the most robust state support possible.

Equally important to defining insurgent capability is understanding how making an insurgent group more capable will help the sponsoring state achieve its goals. As has already been discussed, many experts predict the exercise of American power to be increasingly constrained by peer competitors. In such an environment it may be necessary to sponsor independent proxies who can coerce states to change their policies or overthrow adversaries directly and replace them with more friendly

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4 Some might argue survival often equals success for insurgent groups, but survival alone rarely achieves a group’s goals. Of course groups must survive if they are to succeed, but survival in and of itself achieves nothing. This is especially true from the perspective of a potential sponsor, who is usually seeking some change in the status quo. Only if a sponsor seeks only to disrupt an adversary with little to no concern with whether the insurgent group wins, are they likely to see survival as success.
governments, without risking American troops, prestige, or a wider conflict. In this context, identifying an insurgent proxy and then selecting amongst the means of supporting that insurgent group to maximize its capability makes more sense. Of course, such a strategy comes with significant risks, but it often may be the best or only option under some circumstances.

Increasing the capability of an insurgent force, which is not directly responsible to U. S. policymakers, poses some very unique risks when compared to more traditional military operations. Occasionally insurgent success has led to political outcomes inconsistent with American interests. An oft cited example of a policy whose cost grew in the long term was U. S. support for groups like Gulbuddin Hekmatyar’s Hezb-e-Islami (HiG) during the Soviet Jihad in Afghanistan. Today the U. S. is fighting the HiG, which forged an alliance with the Taliban following the 2002 occupation of Afghanistan. While supporting Hekmatyar to defeat the Soviets was probably the right decision at the time, it has had significant long term costs. Therefore, it is critical we choose our insurgent partners carefully to insure their long term goals are consistent or at least not at odds with our own. While under some circumstances we may decide to support such groups regardless of the long term costs, it is important to at least include those costs in policy making deliberations and to consider ways to mitigate them.

It is equally important for us to understand how different forms of aid may or may not increase a state’s influence over an insurgent group. If circumstances dictate supporting an insurgent group, who may only share our immediate, but not long term goals, it may be useful to support that group only just enough to sustain their resistance as long as it suits our needs, but to be prepared to cut off support abruptly should our interests diverge. This is especially likely to be the case when the U. S. supports an insurgent group to undermine an adversarial government without necessarily caring
whether the insurgents actually win.\(^5\) In such cases we may provide only limited support to keep an insurgent group fighting, without necessarily providing the means for victory. For example, should the U. S. be drawn into a confrontation with China over Taiwan it might make sense to support a Uighur insurgency to draw Chinese forces away from the Straits regardless of whether we share any of the Uyghur’s’ goals. Under such circumstances we may not seek to build insurgent capacity to a level where the insurgent group is successful, but only provide them minimal support to keep them fighting. Thus, understanding how different forms of state support influence insurgent capacity and not just whether it leads to victory is critically important.

**b. Forms of State Support: Advantages, Disadvantages, and Timing**

Intuitively most observers conclude that the provision of aid to an insurgent group makes it more effective. What are less intuitive are the relative merits of different forms of support, their costs, and when they will most benefit the insurgents. State sponsors must decide how they will distribute limited material resources and personnel amongst the different forms of support in order to both maximize the capacity of the insurgent group and maintain some level of control over its actions. Sponsors must also be careful not to undermine the insurgent cause either by delegitimizing the insurgents, rallying other organizations against them, or undermining their organizational integrity.\(^6\) Timing may also determine when an insurgent group will most benefit from certain forms of support. The following subsections will consider the implications of six of the more

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\(^5\) During the years immediately following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan there was little expectation that the mujahideen would be successful ejecting the invaders. It is possible the policy of the U. S. was premised on only tying down Soviet forces or bleeding them in Afghanistan. Senator Malcomb Wallop criticized this approach heavily, arguing there was nothing to keep us from supporting the mujahideen with the ultimate goal of ejecting the Soviets.

Malcomb Wallop, “U. S. Covert Action: Policy Tool or Policy Hedge?,” *Strategic Review*, vol. XII, no. 3, (Summer 1984), 10-12.

\(^6\) For a more complete discussion of these risks see: Byman, *Trends in Outside Support*, 100-102.
common forms of state support to insurgent groups: safe haven, training, money, arms, direct military support, and advisors.

i. Safe Haven

Safe havens allow insurgent groups to organize, train, recruit, plan, rest, and conduct logistical operations outside the reach of government security forces, and are often essential for insurgent survival. They should be particularly helpful to new and small groups who may be at greater risk of spectacular counter-insurgent successes, because a few well informed counterinsurgent operations can net the entire organization before it expands, increases its redundancy, or develops effective operational security measures. It should be equally important to less experienced groups who are incapable of establishing their own secure bases within the targeted state to conduct training and initial organizational tasks.

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7 Byman, 84-87.

Brian Jackson discussed the importance of safe havens in his analysis of organizational learning in sub-state groups. While his focus is on terrorism, much of his analysis applies equally well to insurgent groups. In fact, because insurgent groups are often larger and use slightly more conventional tactics than terrorist groups the importance of a safe haven for conducting organizational learning processes in insurgent groups is even greater.


Of the 89 insurgencies analyzed by Martin Libicki only four who did not benefit from a safe haven were ultimately successful. Libicki argues that the provision of a safe haven is often an indicator of broader and more valuable state support and may not in itself be as critical. While it is true that the provision of safe haven is often associated with other forms of support, this is not necessarily always the case. Newly established insurgent groups may receive sanctuary from weak or poor states, which lack the capacity to provide more robust support. While newly established insurgent groups would undoubtedly benefit from more robust support, their survival may hinge on a safe haven, where they can organize and lobby for more robust support from either the original sponsor or third parties.


Abdulkader Sinno makes a convincing argument that insurgent groups with sanctuaries who fail to adopt a centralized hierarchical structure are more likely to fail. However, the bulk of the evidence suggests that having a safe haven is generally beneficial.

However, accepting safe haven from an outside state is likely to damage an insurgent group more than accepting arms or money, because while a group can often deny the source of mobile resources it is more difficult to deny the location of a group’s leaders or logistical bases. However, a safe haven is probably less damaging than direct foreign intervention or the provision of advisors, because the direct participation of foreign forces suggests the insurgent group is working for them rather than the local people. For the state sponsor, the greatest disadvantage of only providing a safe haven is it affords the sponsor less influence over the insurgent group once they cross the border.

**ii. Training**

Insurgent groups, unlike government security forces, are often composed of tactically inexperienced ideologues at the outset of the conflict. Thus, even the most elementary training should benefit an insurgent group especially early in its campaign. Later, insurgent groups should develop their own capacity to train new recruits. However, more experienced groups may still need specialized training in technical or complex operations, particularly when it requires the use of new or unfamiliar types of equipment.\(^8\) Additionally, any insurgent group needs a place to train, whether it is in a state sponsored safe haven or an area liberated from the targeted state.\(^9\)

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\(^8\) Byman classifies training as only valuable, rather than critical like all the previous factors discussed. Nonetheless he asserts it is particularly important especially for new inexperienced groups and those seeking to conduct more complex or technical operations.  
Byman, 92-93  

Somewhat counter intuitively, Martin Libicki claims that more competent insurgent groups are not necessarily more likely to succeed, based on his data from 89 insurgencies. While it is hard to dismiss this evidence, it is also hard to explain why training does not seem to increase a group’s probability of success. It certainly should make the group more capable.  
Libicki, 383-384.

\(^9\) Byman, Comments on an earlier draft, 31 March 2010, Georgetown University, Washington, DC.
The provision of training by a state sponsor may erode the credibility of an insurgent group by making it look like a foreign puppet, especially if it is provided by a traditional adversary of the targeted state. However, such damage will likely be limited, because the provision of training does not afford a state sponsor the level of influence that safe haven, arms, money, advisors, or direct military support are likely to provide, because even if training is ended abruptly, it is unlikely to have immediate effects on insurgent operations. State sponsored training can usually be replaced by insurgent organizations once the state has created a trained and experienced cadre within the group, and even if the training cannot be replicated, the insurgent group can continue to operate with the trained personnel they already have. Therefore, training is probably useful to insurgent groups, but it provides little control to the state sponsor providing it.

iii. Money

There are few resources which compare to money in terms of its usefulness to insurgent groups. It is often needed to procure weapons, supplies and ammunition; pay fighters; bribe officials; transport goods; create propaganda; and a wide range of other purposes. For all these reasons money is critical to insurgent groups, and because these requirements never go away and because the costs of financing a growing insurgent group never diminishes, money is usually important for the duration of a conflict.

However, the importance of states as a source of revenue for insurgent groups has declined significantly since the end of the Cold War. Many insurgencies increasingly rely on both legal and illegal businesses, diasporas, and non-state sponsors.

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10 Byman points out how important money is, and in fact ranks it second only after the provision of safe haven as an important benefit of state sponsorship. However, he also acknowledges that modern insurgent groups have come to devise other ways of supporting themselves financially.

Byman, 87-88.
to provide funding. Additionally, insurgent groups can tax the local population, which not only provides money, but can serve to establish the foundation of a future government and provide a needed connection to the demands of the local population.\textsuperscript{11}

Nevertheless, if a state is willing to provide an insurgent group with money, it frees the leadership from having to worry about managing businesses or criminal enterprises, courting non-state sponsors, or expending resources supporting the local population, so it can focus its full attention on fighting the government. Additionally, money can be less damaging than other types of support, because it is easier to mask its origin. As was already mentioned there are multiple potential sources of insurgent finance, so groups can easily claim to be receiving help elsewhere. However, in cases where an insurgent group relies primarily on a state sponsor for finance, interruptions in the flow of money can be devastating, so the threat of withdrawal of financial support from an insurgent group affords a state sponsor significant leverage over that group. Thus, financial support is valuable to both insurgents and state sponsors.

\textit{iv. Arms}

Even the most competent insurgent groups can do little without weapons. While a well funded group may be able to procure everything it needs on the black or grey arms market, this is not always the case, especially later in a conflict when larger, more technical weapons may be required.\textsuperscript{12} The growing availability of small arms makes

\textsuperscript{11} In the absence of such connections, insurgent groups risk becoming political isolated from those they claim to represent and may gradually become marginalized as the local people increasingly side with the counterinsurgents.

Byman, Comments on an earlier draft, 31 March 2010, Georgetown University, Washington, DC.

\textsuperscript{12} Byman convincingly argues that most insurgent groups can procure almost everything they need on the black or grey market. However, he acknowledges that under some circumstances this can be difficult and particularly when insurgents seek technologically advanced systems.

Byman 93-95.
state sponsors less critical as suppliers of arms, but it does not completely eliminate the benefits of this type of support, particularly when insurgent groups seek to escalate the level of the conflict using more advanced weapons. Regardless of the type of weapons provided, arms and ammunition are likely to remain useful to insurgents for the duration of a conflict, because they allow the group to replace damaged, destroyed, or captured equipment; they allow the insurgent group to recruit and arm additional fighters; and they allow the group to replenish ammunition stocks. Weapons may also be bartered or sold when in abundance to gain access to other important resources like food, equipment, fuel, or transportation. The risks of accepting weapons from a state sponsor are similar to those of accepting monetary support. Because weapons and ammunition are continuously consumed in fighting an interruption in supplies can be devastating to insurgent operations, which allows the state sponsor to use the threat of supply disruptions as a tool to control the group. Weapons are also slightly easier to track than money, because there are normally fewer potential sources of arms. This is especially the case with advanced weapons or models not common in the region. Therefore, arms provide significant benefits to insurgents in terms of increasing their capacity and to state sponsors in terms of increasing their influence over the insurgent group.

v. Direct Military Support

States do sometimes use their own forces to support insurgent operations. Normally such support is limited to providing air support or indirect fires in support of insurgent ground operations, but it can even include the deployment of ground forces in

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Galula argues that small arms are easy to purchase or capture, but larger weapons systems like mortars, machine guns, and anti-tank weapons usually must come from a state sponsor.


This is probably even truer today than it was in Galula’s time. Highly technical systems like modern man portable air defense systems, which are useful to most insurgent groups, are unlikely to be found on the black market or captured in significant numbers.
some extreme cases. This type of intervention often fundamentally changes the nature of the conflict, transforming an insurgency into what looks like a conventional interstate war complete with sophisticated weaponry, well coordinated large scale operations, and maneuver strategies. In contrast to other types of support, direct intervention will almost certainly harm the credibility of the insurgent group, particularly when the group espouses a nationalist ideology. Insurgent groups will find it difficult to differentiate themselves from their state sponsors when they are fighting alongside the military forces of that state. However, the material benefit of direct intervention is likely to overcome the political costs. The risks of accepting direct military aid are high, because once the sponsoring state’s military becomes directly involved in the conflict the targeted state is more likely to negotiate with the sponsoring state than the insurgent group. The insurgents then risk a negotiated settlement that may not reflect their original goals, but instead those of the sponsoring state. Under such circumstances the state sponsor will have maximum control over the insurgent group and the outcome of the conflict, despite having provided the insurgent group significantly enhanced capabilities.

vi. Advisors

An often neglected form of state support is the provision of advisors. Though many of their duties may be related to training or direct support, either by supervising insurgent personnel in combat or directing air strikes and artillery, advisors may also be deployed alone. Just as tacit skills are not easily transferred to trainees without hands-on-instruction, training insurgent leaders to direct their forces in combat is difficult

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13 Byman, 91-92.
14 Byman does not directly address the provision of advisors, but he does discuss foreign fighters. He argues that such fighters often bring useful skills which may not be present in the insurgent population at large. However, he also suggests foreigners may damage the insurgent cause by undermining its legitimacy, particularly if the group has a nationalist ideology, and by creating tension with local customs and behaviors. Ibid., 95-97.
without actually advising them in combat. Additionally, states do at times attempt to provide close air support, artillery fires, and other difficult to coordinate forms of support in the absence of advisors to undeniably reduced effect. Thus, the provision of advisors is considered separately in this paper.

Accepting advisors is less damaging to the insurgent cause than direct military support because the impetus and direction of the campaign is likely to remain with the insurgent leadership. While advisors may be provided in concert with the less blatant forms of direct military intervention, even when combined with close air support or indirect fire they have less impact on the legitimacy of the insurgents than the deployment of large military formations. Of course, this provides the state sponsor with less influence over the insurgent group, but significantly reduces the costs and risks compared to conventional military intervention.

**b. Process Tracing and Case Selection**

Determining what impact state support has on insurgent capacity is made more difficult by the multitude of other variables that influence insurgent campaigns. Some examples include terrain, the strength of the targeted state, economic development, and the merits of the insurgent cause. While Martin Libicki made an attempt to sort out the relevant from the spurious in his study of 89 different insurgencies, there are still a

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According to Martin Libicki the following variables are important: whether a state is Islamic, income, urbanization, insurgent goals, force ratio, insurgent popularity, insurgent organizational structure, use of terrorism, state support for the insurgent group, insurgent sanctuary, insurgent leadership, government type, government competence, and government popularity. Most of the variables considered in this study are subsumed under state support, though the RAND study did consider sanctuary separately. Libicki’s analysis springs from a statistical study of 89 insurgencies. It is based on the somewhat subjective analysis of a team of regional experts who were believed to have sufficient subject matter expertise to judge the dependent variable, insurgent success, and the many independent variables included in the study. Despite the subjective nature of this form of measurement, it is still the most objective study of what most favors insurgent success. The study comes to the promising conclusion that groups who receive state support win more than half of the time, while those without state support are at best middling performers.
multitude of potential variables which could explain the success or failure of any insurgent group. Therefore, rather than conducting a broad survey of many cases of support for insurgent movements, this study will analyze how support for insurgencies in Afghanistan and Angola changed over time and how those changes influenced insurgent capability. Using process tracing to analyze within-case variation will eliminate the potential spurious variables, which are the product of the inherent differences amongst states and insurgent groups. Using this approach, the factors a state can influence by sponsoring an insurgent group are more easily isolated.\(^\text{16}\)

Magnifying the problems caused by potential confounding variables is the lack of cases with sufficient public information available for analysis. Programs to support insurgent groups are usually covert or clandestine to protect both the interests of the state sponsor and to maintain the insurgent group’s legitimacy. Therefore, there are relatively few cases to study, and it is difficult to make cross-case comparisons. Process tracing helps to overcome this deficiency of data, by allowing the researcher to analyze extended insurgent campaigns where the growth of insurgent capacity may reflect changes in the types of support being provided by state sponsors. Process tracing broadens the range of data by enabling this study to consider the effects of state support over time rather than across cases.

With this in mind there were three main selection criteria for the cases included in this paper: the insurgency must be of sufficient duration that the levels and forms of state support changed over time, each potential form of support must be present in at least one case, and there must be publicly available accounts of the type and quantity of assistance the insurgent movement received. These selection criteria limit the

generalizability of the study in two ways: first they exclude state sponsors with closed political systems who may approach support for insurgent groups differently; and second they exclude smaller, less developed, or shorter lived insurgent groups, which may never receive state sponsorship, but had the potential to be successful had they received it. Additionally, it is possible state sponsors provide certain forms of support depending on the success of the insurgent group, rather than success being contingent on the types or quantity of support provided by the sponsor. Based on the selection criteria, with these limitations in mind, this paper includes analysis of two cases: the U. S. led effort to support the mujahideen in Afghanistan, and South African and American support for UNITA in Angola.

The selection of two cases from the Cold War was necessary, because there are no other conflicts of sufficient duration or with a robust declassified record in the post-Cold War era. While this partially limits the generalizability of the study, the effect is smaller than many critics may assume. While the spectre of superpower conflict certainly loomed large over both Angola and Afghanistan, politics in many regions of the world still reflect conflicts between overwhelmingly powerful states. For example, Russian support during the recent coup against the U. S. supported president in Kyrgyzstan suggests that the traditional jockeying for power between Russia and the West in Central Asia is far from over. ¹⁷ Such competition is certainly not limited to Central Asia either. Future conflicts in developing countries are likely to include state sponsors on both sides in support of the insurgents and the government, so lessons from the Cold War still apply. Additionally, because this study focuses on building insurgent capacity rather than merely focusing on insurgent success it can provide a guide to a state sponsor seeking to topple adversaries as diverse as a near failed state.

¹⁷ Philip P. Pan, “Russia is said to have fueled unrest in Kyrgyzstan,” Washington Post, (12 April 2010).
to a global hegemon. States seeking to support insurgent groups ranging from Somalia’s al-Shabab to Lebanon’s Hezbollah are likely to be focused on increasing the capabilities of those groups despite the huge disparity in the relative strengths of the Somali and Israeli governments those groups seek to destroy. Thus, while a more diverse group of cases would be preferrable, their absence does not preclude drawing conclusions relevant to the world today.

The Afghan case is central to this analysis because the public record of both the types of support provided to the mujahideen and the Soviet decision making process is extensive. Over about thirteen years the United States gradually increased support to the mujahideen, ultimately resulting in the withdrawal of the Soviets and the collapse of the Afghan communist government. Representatives from the Central Intelligence Agency, Inter-Services Intelligence, and the Soviet Politburo\(^{18}\) have all granted extensive interviews or written books themselves, somewhat uncharacteristically for the field, which provide a detailed picture of the support provided and its effects on the battlefield. Unfortunately, the Afghan case alone does not provide the variation in types of support necessary to fully test the value of every form of support. It is particularly weak for testing the value of direct military support, because no such support was provided. Additionally, the mujahideen enjoyed safe haven in Pakistan throughout the conflict, which complicates efforts to assess its importance, though there are some indications of its value despite the lack of variation over time.

\(^{18}\) Milt Bearden was the chief of station responsible for the support of the mujahideen. Milt Bearden and James Risen, *The Main Enemy*, (Ballantine Books: New York, 2003). Brigadier General Mohammad Yousaf was the chief of the Afghan Bureau of the ISI. Mohammad Yousaf, *Afghanistan: The Bear Trap*, (Casemate: Havertown, PA, 2001). The Georgetown University Library alone has 66 different books, articles, speeches, and interviews in its catalog authored by General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev. The collapse of the Soviet Union shortly after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan made it especially easy for former leaders to write memoirs and publish other works that provide great insight into Soviet decision making during this critical period.
Angola is a useful case despite lacking a robust public record similar to the insurgency in Afghanistan, because it is one of the few cases where states provided extensive direct military support to an insurgent group. The South African Defense Forces intervened in Angola intermittently from 1975 through 1989 in support of UNITA. The insurgents also received varying levels of safe haven from neighboring states during the seventeen year conflict. There are a handful of former military and intelligence officers who were involved in supporting UNITA who have spoken publically about the conflict and the CIA has started to declassify more sources, as it has in the Afghan case. Unfortunately, less is known about the Cuban and Angolan government perspective on the conflict, largely because the former remains a police state and the latter was never terribly well organized and remains plagued by civil conflict. Nonetheless, it is important case with sufficient public records available for analysis.

III. Afghanistan: A Soviet Vietnam or an Economic and Diplomatic Liability

…the CIA’s contributions have played a vital role in the conduct of the Afghan Jihad. Without the backing of the US and Saudi Arabia the Soviets would still be entrenched in that country.  

- Brigadier Mohammad Yousaf, Afghan Bureau, Pakistani ISI

… I wrote to President Carter. We now have the opportunity of giving to the USSR its Vietnam War.

- Zbigniew Brzezinski, National Security Advisor

While Russia, the Soviet Union’s progenitor, had been involved in Afghanistan for centuries, the conditions which led to the Soviet invasion really emerged in 1973. In that year, Mohammad Daoud Khan, a cousin of King Zaher Shah, who had overseen the

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\(^{19}\) Yousaf, 96.

government on behalf of the King since 1953, staged a successful coup. Though he had a strong base amongst the military and Pashtun nationalists, his government leaned slightly to the left. Of course, at that time he was not alone in seeking to change the nature of the Afghan state; also active were a number of fundamentalist and moderate Islamist groups who were too weak to effect any real change. They would later form the nucleus of the opposition to Soviet occupation and the much harsher communist governments to come. In 1978, Daoud was deposed by more doctrinaire communist elements within the military, which promptly turned over power to the secretary general of the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), Nur Mohammad Taraki. Following a series of purges and internal violence, Taraki either succumbed to an illness or was assassinated to be replaced by the leader of a rival faction within the PDPA, Hafizullah Amin. These developments followed a massacre of Soviet Advisors and their families in Herat at the hands of rebellious Afghan Army forces. Then in 1979, as Amin tried to implement a foreign policy independent of the Soviet Union, he was deposed in a swift coup accompanied by the entrance of Soviet troops into Afghanistan.21 The invasion set the stage for both the insurgency and the foreign support which would follow.

a. Forms of Support

The invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union elicited one of the largest and most widely supported insurgent movements of the past century. By the time the Soviets departed the mujahideen had received support not only from the United States and Pakistan, but from China, Iran, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Israel, and numerous private

Islamic and Christian groups across the world. The Afghan case provides especially illuminating background on the importance of money, arms, training, and advisors.

i. Safe Haven

The Afghan mujahideen were provided safe haven in Pakistan, before the Soviet invasion, immediately following the coup by Daoud.\(^{22}\) Thus, it is difficult to objectively measure the direct effects of safe haven over time, because the mujahideen were never without it. However, such consistency over time only partially masks the important impact safe haven had on the insurgency. While the majority of Afghan mujahideen spent most of their time in Afghanistan, the warehouses, senior leadership, and training camps were all located in Pakistan.\(^{23}\) Thus none of the other forms of support would have been as effective and a few would not have been feasible without bases in Pakistan. It is also important that the families of many mujahideen took refuge in Pakistan where they needed not fear Afghan government retribution for supporting the insurgency.\(^{24}\)

The value of safe haven was highlighted later in the war when several Afghan factions built administrative and logistics facilities near Khost. The mujahideen along with their Pakistani advisors decided to defend these facilities against attack. While they

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\(^{23}\) Earlier in the war safe haven was less useful because the insurgency was small enough to be easily based in Afghanistan. Most insurgent groups used only captured weapons and commanders remained in Afghanistan. For an early assessment see:

\(^{24}\) Early in the war the CIA actually assessed safe haven for insurgent families as the single most important contribution of Pakistani safe haven.
were successful in repulsing several assaults, the bases did eventually fall. Government forces attempted to capture or destroy the supplies, ammunition, and weapons stored there and returned to their bases.\textsuperscript{25} While the loss of material at Khost had only a short-term impact on the performance of the mujahideen, it did clearly demonstrate the futility of trying to hold terrain against an enemy with overwhelming material superiority.\textsuperscript{26} The impact was short term only because the mujahideen could always rely on secure bases in Pakistan. Absent Pakistani support, the mujahideen would have faced much more significant logistical and administrative challenges.

An interesting contrast to the widespread use of Pakistani territory to organize logistics, training, and planning was the limited access groups had to Iranian territory. The Iranians prohibited all but the relatively weak pro-Iranian Shia groups from crossing the border. While the Iranians undoubtedly were unable to completely shut off access to their territory and there were some instances of cooperation between Pakistan, Iran, and the mujahideen, Iran never provided the kind of robust safe haven the seven mujahideen parties enjoyed in Pakistan.\textsuperscript{27} As a result, insurgent operations in the western provinces of Afghanistan were generally less complex and smaller in scope. The western provinces are predominantly Sunni Pashtun, so much of the support for insurgent groups there actually came thousands of kilometers from Pakistan. While the difference in intensity and complexity of insurgent operations could also be attributed to the sparsely populated desert geography of the west, it seems likely the lack of a nearby safe haven

\textsuperscript{25} Apparently the government forces tried to destroy the caves without searching them first. They detonated explosives to seal the entrances, but some weapons were left intact deeper inside the tunnels and were later recovered by the mujahideen. The facilities there were not permanently damaged and were used throughout the remainder of the war in a more limited capacity.

\textsuperscript{26} Yousaf, 158-173.

\textsuperscript{27} Iran did allow ISI to send shipments of small arms through Iranian territory to the western provinces of Afghanistan. However, all shipments had to be escorted by Revolutionary guards and the process to get approval for a convoy often took six months.

was an important factor. The same could be said for operations in the north, where the mujahideen could not use the neighboring Soviet republics. Operations there were hampered by long supply lines over some of the highest mountains in the world.

**ii. Training**

In addition to providing safe haven and serving as a pipeline for U.S. arms and funding, the ISI established up to seven camps dedicated to training ranging from basic rifle marksmanship, to employing Stinger missiles, to planning complex operations. In 1983 there were two of these camps capable of handling 200 students at a time; by 1987 they had seven with a capacity of 1,000 students each. In the four year period between 1984 and 1987 at least 80,000 mujahideen received training in camps in Pakistan. In addition, ISI helped the Afghans set up smaller camps within Afghanistan.

While Afghans, and particularly Pashtuns, are often regaled as natural born marksmen with a penchant for fighting, this has not been the experience of U.S. forces fighting there today. In most small arms engagements, despite expending huge quantities of ammunition, the Taliban rarely hit anyone due to a wide range of training, medical, and equipment deficiencies. There is little reason to believe the mujahideen fighting the

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29 Pakistani advisors monitored the training at these camps and insured the instructors had everything they needed.

Yousaf, 115-127.


Afghans, like Americans, have a variety of backgrounds and experience with weapons, which means some can shoot well naturally, but many cannot. Most U.S. trainers working in Afghanistan today comment on how inconsistent Afghan marksmanship is across recruits to the security services.

Soviets were any different, so the training provided by the Pakistanis was undoubtedly valuable in developing basic military skills which were passed on to subsequent generations of mujahideen. However, because many of these skills could be picked up on the battlefield over time, the real value of such training was in preparing the mujahideen to used advanced weapon systems and conduct strategically important small unit operations.

ISI would often invite strategically positioned commanders to bring a contingent of their men to Pakistan to plan and train for specific operations against high value targets like airfields, pipelines, and critical roads.31 ISI officers would confer with the mujahideen commanders to plan attacks using CIA provided imagery and maps, while their troops would be drilled by ISI trainers on techniques to employ systems like multi-barreled rocket launchers. These operations combined the best of mujahideen local knowledge with professional Pakistani military experience, to dramatic effect.32 The best known example of such an operation was the downing of three MI-24 gunships near Jalalabad in the first use of the Stinger missile in Afghanistan. The operation was very successful largely as a result of the extensive training the Stinger crews received on simulators at the Ojhri Camp near Rawalpindi, as well as careful planning of infiltration routes and hide sites. Three of the five missiles fired that day found their target.33 Thus, the value of training was particularly prominent in providing the mujahideen with technical skills and operational planning experience, which would otherwise have been beyond their reach. The training was indeed essential to effectively employ some of the

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32 Ibid., 121-127.
33 Ibid., 174-177.
more technical weapons systems, like the Stinger, which would greatly increase the mujahideen’s capabilities.

iii. Money

Official figures on the composition of aid to the mujahideen have never been published. However, it is possible to get a general sense of the magnitude of support provided by the U. S. through the memoirs of those involved. It is also possible to understand the important role of money by analyzing the differences amongst rebel groups who received different types of aid from different sources.

Official U. S. assistance began about six months prior to the Soviet invasion when President Carter signed a finding authorizing the expenditure of about half a million dollars on non-lethal support to the mujahideen. From 1979 to 1983, U. S. support to the mujahideen to include both money and arms totaled about $60 million per year, with Saudi Arabia officially matching that support dollar for dollar. In 1984 that amount was more than doubled to $175 million and the next year it rose to $250 million, every dollar matched by the Saudis. By 1988 that amount had risen to $600 million. Following the withdrawal of the Soviets, the Geneva Accords of 1988 allowed the U. S. to continue to supply the mujahideen commensurate to the level of Soviet material support to the Afghan government until an agreement was signed to cease support for both the government and the mujahideen by January 1992. The effects of this gradual

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34 Gates, 146.
35 Ibid., 251.
36 Ibid., 321.
37 Continued provision of aid to the mujahideen was premised on continued violation of the Geneva Accords by the Soviet Union. While Moscow claimed to have withdrawn all combat forces, many advisors remained, to include advisers allegedly dressed in Afghan uniforms firing Scud missile in support of Afghan government operations. Robert Pear, “U. S. Asserts Soviet Advisers are Fighting in Afghanistan,” New York Times, (10 October 1989), A1.
38 The cooperation that led to this agreement began to emerge in 1990 during meetings between Gorbachev and Bush. Neither government favored the establishment of a radical
escalation of aid were not particularly dramatic, but they were noticeable in the equally gradual increase in violence.\textsuperscript{39}

As was already mentioned it is hard to get a sense of how much of this aid came in the form of weapons or money. While undoubtedly the bulk of the funds were used to purchase weapons, there were significant costs associated with moving them from Pakistan to the battlefield in Afghanistan. Additionally, the mujahideen parties would purchase winter clothing, tents, rations, and medical care, as well as build and maintain training camps, warehouses, and other facilities using these funds.\textsuperscript{40} However, among the mujahideen parties there were decided differences in capability and efficiency, some of which can be attributed to their finances. The four fundamentalist parties and that of Abu Rasul Sayyaf in particular, had strong ties to businessmen, mosques, and other wealthy beneficiaries in the Arab world. As a result they received lavish donations, which did not pass through the ISI managed system. In contrast, the moderate parties relied primarily on government support. As a result the moderates were often accused of selling or bartering donated weapons for cash, while the fundamentalists maintained a very efficient distribution system, which put most weapons directly into the mujahideens’ hands. As a result, the fundamentalist parties’ performance on the battlefield was often

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Islamic government, but there were few attractive alternatives. Despite his general neglect of Afghanistan in his memoir, he does note the growing cooperation between the two governments following the withdrawal of Soviet troops.

\begin{itemize}
  \item Gorbechev, \textit{Memoirs}, 541-542.
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{39} As an example, Brigadier Yousaf estimated that the parties would spend $1.5 million dollars monthly to move supplies into Afghanistan, using a combination of trucks, pack animals, and porters.

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  \item Yousaf, 81-83.
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better.\textsuperscript{41} This highlights the importance of money, and the flexibility it provides an insurgent group. While weapons are important, they are useless unless they can be stored and later distributed to where they are needed along with other critical supplies, which often must be purchased locally.

\textit{iv. Arms}

The provision of weapons to the mujahideen by the U. S. and Saudi Arabia, through Pakistan’s ISI was significant for two reasons. First, it allowed the mujahideen to field far more fighters than they would have been capable of arming with captured weapons alone,\textsuperscript{42} and second, it provided them advanced weapons, which would have otherwise been unavailable.

There were a number of guerrilla groups operating in Afghanistan even before Taraki’s coup or the Soviet invasion, but they only had access to AK-47’s captured from the police, FN-FAL rifles provided by Pakistan, a few local copies of the pre-World War I era Lee Enfield,\textsuperscript{43} and various models provided by Iran.\textsuperscript{44} Later, defecting Afghan units provided significant quantities of weapons and equipment. The defection of Herat’s 10,000 strong 17\textsuperscript{th} Division under the leadership of Ismael Khan is perhaps the best known example. Literally thousands of soldiers joined the mujahideen taking their weapons with them.\textsuperscript{45} Thus, as a result of successful raids on government posts and government force defections, the mujahideen were less concerned with getting small

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 104-107.
\textsuperscript{42} Even as late as 1987 Jamiat-i-Islami claimed to have fighters in need of rifles. Mohammad Es’haj, \textit{Situation in the North of Afghanistan}, (Political Office of Jamiat’at Islami Afghanistan: Peshawar, Pakistan,1987), 18.
\textsuperscript{44} Between 1982 and 1983 the CIA estimated that Iranian arms shipments to Afghan insurgents in Herat and the Hazarajat doubled, though as a proportion of overall aid arriving in Afghanistan it was not significant.
\textsuperscript{45} Urban, 30-31.
arms early in the conflict than they were with finding ammunition for captured weapons or acquiring heavier weapons like mortars, heavy machine guns, and anti-tank missiles to conduct more complex operations against harder targets.\footnote{Ammunition shortages, especially of heavy weapons, but also of other types remained a problem throughout the conflict. A 1987 report from Jami’at Islami highlights the importance of the provision of more ammunition as a higher priority than arms. Es’haq, 18-20. While the lack of an effective anti-aircraft weapon system was an acute problem throughout the conflict, early in the war the mujahideen were more interested in heavy machine guns and mortars. Alex Alexiev, \textit{The War in Afghanistan: Soviet Strategy and the State of the Resistance}, (RAND Corporation: Washington, DC, November 1984). Urban focuses especially on the lack of ammunition, which seems to reflect the thoughts of Che Guevara in his battle with the Cuban government thirty years before when he said, “Ammunition is the great problem of the guerrilla fighter. Arms can always be obtained… (but) are not expended… while ammunition is expended… and never or rarely is ammunition only (captured).” Urban, 90. Che Guevara, \textit{Guerrilla Warfare}, (University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln, NE, 1961), 70. Alexiev, 7-12. Radek Sikorski, \textit{Moscow’s Afghan War: Soviet Motives and Western Interests}, (Alliance Publishers: London, 1987), 38. As late as January 1980, the CIA analysis suggested most of the weapons and supplies being used by the mujahideen were obtained through capture or defection of Afghan military forces.} This set the stage for the entrance of state sponsors.

Early U. S. efforts to support the mujahideen were very limited. During the Carter administration the United States provided some small arms and very limited stocks of ammunition. However, there were still huge deficits of all types of ammunition and particularly that for larger caliber arms. The situation improved somewhat in late 1984, but it was National Security Decision Directive (NSDD)-166 that transformed U. S. support. NSDD-166 directed the CIA to provide “all available means” to the mujahideen to defeat rather than just harass the Soviet Union and its Afghan allies.\footnote{Radek Sikorski, \textit{Moscow’s Afghan War: Soviet Motives and Western Interests}, (Alliance Publishers: London, 1987), 38. As late as January 1980, the CIA analysis suggested most of the weapons and supplies being used by the mujahideen were obtained through capture or defection of Afghan military forces.} Indeed while many of the mujahideen continued to claim they captured or purchased most of their weapons from the enemy, by 1986 most observers agreed that nearly all the mujahideens’ weapons were Chinese or Egyptian copies of Soviet models from the 1950’s which undoubtedly came through the CIA-ISI pipeline.\footnote{Urban, 90. Che Guevara, \textit{Guerrilla Warfare}, (University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln, NE, 1961), 70. Alexiev, 7-12. Radek Sikorski, \textit{Moscow’s Afghan War: Soviet Motives and Western Interests}, (Alliance Publishers: London, 1987), 38. As late as January 1980, the CIA analysis suggested most of the weapons and supplies being used by the mujahideen were obtained through capture or defection of Afghan military forces.} The growing supply of
weapons and ammunition from the West coincided not only with a huge spike in the violence but increasingly complex operations against harder targets. This trend was duly noted by the Russian General Staff in their assessment of the war. For example, raids on government posts rose from around 2,400 in 1986 to 4,200 in 1987. Of course to increase the complexity of attacks a commander needs more than just small arms.

While the increase in sophisticated attacks can be partially attributed to growth in weapons supplies in general, high profile weapons like the Stinger, the newer versions of the recoilless rifle, and the single barrel rocket launcher also had a unique impact on mujahideen capability. The following analysis will focus on the Stinger, as both the best known and most important of the more sophisticated weapon systems to be fielded during the war, but other unique weapon systems had similar effects. While the provision of the Stinger is often portrayed as the turning point in the war against the Soviets, its real impact was much more subtle. The Soviets made the decision to exit Afghanistan as the product of a long term negotiation between more traditional and more modern elements of the Soviet leadership less than fifty days after the Stinger attack at Jalalabad airfield. During the meeting when the decision was made, the introduction of the Stinger was not mentioned even once. However, the Stinger did make a tactical


Mark Urban argued that plastic-cased mines, military radios, and rocket launchers were as important as Stingers. However, it is unclear how they might have transformed Soviet tactics as much as the Stinger. Nonetheless, his arguments are consistent with the primary assertion made here that the type of arms was as important as the quantity.

Urban, 238, 303, 223-224.

The first use of the Stinger was at Jalalabad Airfield on 25 September 1985. Yousaf, 174.

The Soviet decision to withdraw was formalized on 16 November 1985. During the Politburo meeting when the decision was made there was no mention of the Stinger.
and strategic impact on the conduct of the war. In response to the deployment of the Stinger both Afghan and Soviet fixed wing pilots were forced to fly above the ceiling of the missiles until they were prepared to deliver their ordnance in an elevated single pass. Helicopters were only employed in areas bereft of Stingers and then only making single nap-of-the-earth passes, which were far less accurate than when they could loiter indefinitely over the battlefield identifying and engaging targets. These shifts in tactics allowed the mujahideen to mass more effectively and move supplies during daylight hours.\(^{52}\) While these changes had only nominal impact when the Stinger was first introduced, they became much more important when the mujahideen needed to mass to attack key cities like Jalalabad and Kabul. So the provision of Stingers significantly increased the capabilities of the mujahideen, even though they probably were not a key factor in forcing the Soviets out.

Interestingly, the Stinger was not the first attempt at dealing with the problem of Soviet aircraft. Earlier attempts included the Soviet SA-7 Grail, the British Blowpipe missile and the Swiss Oerlikon cannon. All these weapons were ineffective against the fast flying fixed wing Soviet aircraft and their heavily armored helicopters, and those involved with supporting the mujahideen understood this. These weapons were primarily introduced in response to political pressure from Congress.\(^{53}\) However, the importance of the process of identifying and fielding a weapon appropriate to the skills of the insurgents and the nature of the conflict, while also


responding to domestic political pressure in the sponsoring country should not be overlooked. These are problems most state sponsors will be forced to face and deal with if they are to succeed in providing the most effective support to an insurgent group. More importantly, the failure of these other weapons systems demonstrates the importance of states as suppliers of arms. With the Soviet Union deploying the most modern aircraft in its inventory in Afghanistan, the mujahideen needed the most modern countermeasures to effectively defeat them. The U. S. was the only supplier capable of providing an effective surface to air weapon system that could seriously challenge Soviet technology.

v. Direct Military Support

Neither the U. S. nor Pakistan directly participated in combat operations in Afghanistan. While the United States did provide high quality imagery, intelligence, and maps to the mujahideen indirectly through Pakistan’s ISI, such support was very limited.\(^\text{54}\) In fact observers noted that Jalaluddin Haqqani, a high level commander near Khost was using a hand drawn map well into the conflict.\(^\text{55}\) These materials were likely invaluable to ISI planners and mujahideen political leaders, who were particularly interested in electronic intercepts of Soviet and Afghan government communications, but the real impact of such support was likely to be limited.\(^\text{56}\) The mujahideen were rarely able to act on time sensitive intelligence gathered through such intercepts, because they lacked an effective communications system.\(^\text{57}\) For the mujahideen to take full advantage

\(^{54}\) Yousaf, 93-94.  
\(^{55}\) Alexiev, 10.  
\(^{56}\) ISI relied heavily on imagery and intercepted communications to assess the effectiveness of mujahideen operations and to better allocate weapons and other resources amongst the parties depending on their competence.  
\(^{57}\) The U. S. provided the mujahideen with several types of secure radios and the Pakistanis dutifully trained the Afghans to use them. However, only the HiG actually manned them and maintained them reliably to maintain contact with ISI.
of this sort of support, they would have needed far more sophisticated and robust command and control networks. Thus, it is hard to assess the impact of direct support to the mujahideen because it was so limited in this case and because the support provided was of little use based on the nature of the insurgency.

**vi. Advisors**

The Afghan bureau of the ISI deployed the first Pakistani advisors in support of mujahideen operations in 1981, and they continued to support the mujahideen through the end of the war. They averaged about two teams in the country at any one time from May to October, but did have surge capacity that at one point allowed them to place eleven teams in the field at once. Their responsibilities included training mujahideen within their bases in Afghanistan, advising mujahideen commanders in all aspects of operations and base defense, performing special technical tasks like construction of explosive charges, and collecting intelligence on both the mujahideen and Afghan government for ISI. While these advisors undoubtedly provided invaluable advice and assistance to individual commanders, and they may have contributed significantly to the success of specific missions, there is no real evidence of their assistance being critical to

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58 In his book Yousaf tells a story about an inexperienced CIA officer calling him in the middle of the night to warn him about an ambush about to take place on a mujahideen convoy 1,000 kilometers away, despite the mujahideen not having radios. Yousaf ridicules the CIA in the book for failing to understand the nature of the insurgency and ISI’s control over tactical operations. One of the most prominent problems was the lack of an effective communications system.
Ibid., 118-119, 91.

59 In his book Yousaf tells a story about an inexperienced CIA officer calling him in the middle of the night to warn him about an ambush about to take place on a mujahideen convoy 1,000 kilometers away. There was little anyone could do because it was impossible to identify the convoy or alert them of the impending attack due to the lack of centralized control over mujahideen operations.
Ibid., 91.

59 Ibid., 113-115.
strategic success. The effort was most likely too limited to make a deep impact and few of the headlining attacks were led by Pakistani advisors. Had the successful attack on the Kharga ammunition depot or the cross border incursions into the Soviet Union been led by a contingent of Pakistani advisors then it would be easier to argue that a handful of Pakistani experts were critical to the success of the mujahideen. Of course, the failure to effect strategic operations with the limited contingent of advisors was not for a lack of trying. Brigadier Yousaf consistently tried to persuade the Afghans to conduct attacks on critical infrastructure using explosive charges under the supervision of ISI personnel to no avail. As a result, the Afghans were never successful in creating any more than short term disruptions in fuel or electrical distribution systems, so it is unclear what real impact they might have had.

However, Pakistan’s limited contingent of advisors was probably valuable for helping to assess the competence of mujahideen factions and collect first hand information on the conduct of the jihad. This allowed the Pakistanis to assess the different parties and commanders to more efficiently distribute resources to those who would use them most effectively. Having advisors embedded in units also gave ISI a significantly greater influence over commanders and ultimately a larger hand in the post-war political wrangling following the Soviet withdrawal. In this sense, the advisors were invaluable, but not in terms of making the mujahideen more effective.

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60 A great example was the improved accuracy of attacks on Khost Airfield using 107mm rockets as a result of the activity of Pakistani advisors. These attacks severely disrupted resupply of the post, but their strategic effect was very limited. Mark Urban, War in Afghanistan, (St. Martin’s Press: New York, 1990), 223-224.
61 Yousaf, 126.
62 Bearden, 221-228.
63 Yousaf, 189-206.
64 The mujahideen’s unwillingness to conduct these sorts of attacks stemmed from Afghan culture and Soviet policy. The mujahideen generally shied away from anything that was not loud and dramatic, because it provided no opportunity to demonstrate one’s courage or add to one’s honor. Attacking poorly guarded infrastructure was much too quiet and could be conducted even without the use of a rifle. The Soviets also intelligently allowed local villages to tap electrical lines and petroleum pipes, which made attacks on this infrastructure unpopular. Ibid., 36-37, 127.
b. Conclusions

The massive infusion of foreign support, which began in 1984 and continued through the withdrawal of the Soviets until just before the Afghan government collapsed, does seem to have been critical to the success of the mujahideen. The increase in the number, scope, and sophistication of mujahideen attacks during that time does correspond to increases in arms, money, and training provided by foreign sponsors. While Pakistan simultaneously increased the number of advisors serving with the mujahideen, at the most there were eleven teams in the country at any one time. While their contribution was undoubtedly important to increasing Pakistan’s influence with the mujahideen, it was too limited to have any definitive effect on the outcome of the conflict. While the Stinger missile and other supposed “silver bullet” weapons did not force the Soviet withdrawal or precipitate the collapse of the Afghan government, they were nonetheless critical to increasing the scope and sophistication of mujahideen operations and allowed the mujahideen to attack targets previously beyond their reach. While the composition of foreign support to the mujahideen remains classified, differences between the performance of the moderate and fundamentalist parties, do seem to reflect the amount of direct financial support each type of group received from non-government sponsors. In this case, the U. S. support probably focused too heavily on weapons, without recognizing the costs of moving those weapons forward and of supporting the fighters in the field, which left the moderates at a distinct disadvantage. Additionally, safe haven in Pakistan did provide insurgent groups in the south and east of Afghanistan an advantage not shared by their northern and western counterparts.
IV. Angola: Saving UNITA Through Brute Force

*In the fantasy world of the American right, victory can only be achieved by physical muscle and sinew – that is, by the direct actions of the Defense Department and the CIA and their foreign clients.*

- Chester Crocker, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs

In the spring of 1974, when a group of young, left-leaning military officers staged a successful military coup against the Portuguese government, there were three significant liberation movements active in Angola. The smallest of the three was led by a member of the Ovimbundu tribe by the name of Jonas Savimbi. His organization, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), was based in the southeast of the country, and drew critical support from the Ovimbundu tribe. The group had few state sponsors, had only limited support from foreign non-governmental organizations, and had a cadre of eleven men trained by China who had passed their skills on to a core of fewer than 1,000 rebels.\(^6^5\) UNITA faced its greatest challenge in the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), a Marxist-nationalist party, which drew support from Cuba and the Soviet Union. UNITA was allied with the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA), a group seeking the restoration of the Kongolese monarchy, which was also concentrated in the north of the country.\(^6^6\) Despite a power sharing agreement with UNITA and FNLA, the MPLA was able to drive all other parties out of the capital by relying on its military strength, Cuban and Soviet support, and Portuguese government acquiescence.\(^6^7\) The Marxist ideology of the MPLA initially led the West to support the FNLA, but later they would shift their support to UNITA, which was seen to be more legitimate and more prone to peaceful

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\(^6^6\) Ibid., 124-125.

\(^6^7\) Ibid., 186-191.
compromise. Thus, the battle lines were drawn, and the conflict would rage from 1974 until 1992 with varying levels of state support on both sides, but the MPLA remaining in control of the country until a compromise in 1992 brought a short interlude of peace.

a. Forms of Support

Angola stands in stark contrast to Afghanistan in the direct role foreign military forces played in supporting the insurgents in combat. While it was a poorly kept secret that the U. S. was sponsoring the mujahideen, confirmation of a foreign hand supporting the insurgents in Angola came in the form of 1,000 man task forces from South Africa. However, in terms of the importance of money, arms, advisors, and training there are some similarities.

i. Safe Haven

In the years prior to 1974, when the Organization of African Unity finally recognized UNITA alongside MPLA and FNLA, UNITA could find no neighboring states willing to provide safe haven to the movement. While other forces were able to organize and train fighters in Zambia and Tanzania, UNITA could only operate in camps controlled by Namibia’s SWAPO (Southwest Africa People’s Organization). As a

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68 The decision to shift from supporting FNLA to UNITA came early in the civil war, likely as a result of pressure from other countries in the region, who did not believe FNLA had the capacity to face down MPLA and knew UNITA had a wider political base and growing military power. The early fighting between MPLA and FNLA inclined most to believe a compromise government would have to be led by UNITA.


69 Very early in the rebellion against the Portuguese, UNITA was allowed to use Zambian territory, but they were quickly expelled following a raid on the Benguela railway.


70 Zambia’s president feared UNITA would interfere with the Benguela railway line, which was critical to Zambian exports of copper. UNITA use of SWAPO camps was the result of an
result, UNITA was not considered a serious military force at the outset of the civil war in November of 1975, and Savimbi focused more on building political support among the Ovimbundu majority. Following the end of Portuguese rule, UNITA maintained an ambiguous relationship with Zaire and Zambia, with the former providing a more accommodating environment, while the latter often imprisoned UNITA fighters crossing the border. However, the need for a safe haven was less intense, because with South Africa occupying Namibia and maintaining a buffer zone in Southern Angola, UNITA had a de facto safe haven within Angola. It was only after UNITA gained this safe haven that the organization was able to make the transition from a political to a military organization. During this time UNITA grew progressively stronger, and its survival was only seriously threatened by increased Soviet and Cuban participation in operations. Those threats were often thwarted by South African air and ground troops, despite increases in UNITA capabilities. Thus, the safe haven provided in Southern Angola played a large part in allowing UNITA to survive and grow once the civil war began.

agreement with SWAPO’s leader rather than the government of Tanzania where the camp was located.

Heywood, 167-168.

Early on UNITA was far more of a political than a military force. While Savimbi was politically influential his military forces were incredibly weak. This can be attributed to both a lack of intent and organizational space to actually build military forces prior to the beginning of the civil war and the intervention of South Africa. The CIA acknowledged UNITA’s initial military weakness in a report in March of 1977.


James, 53.

Additionally, UNITA was also able to conduct some logistical operations within South Africa throughout the conflict, which undoubtedly helped as well.

Ibid., 179-180.

In fact, the CIA believed the SADF would try to convince UNITA to abandon semi-conventional operations altogether in favor of a guerrilla strategy.


Both UNITA and MPLA relied heavily on their allies, the USSR and South Africa respectively. Both groups depended on their sponsors for material support, advice, and direct military assistance in a pinch (in the case of the MPLA such support came from Cuban surrogates).
ii. Training

*We wanted only one thing from the Cubans: instructors. The war was becoming difficult and we were inexperienced…*  

-Lucio Lara, MPLA Commander

UNITA’s initial military training came from China, which agreed to train eleven insurgents including Savimbi himself. Training was also conducted by teams of mercenaries from Britain, South Africa, Portugal, and the United States, who were hired by the insurgent groups, the CIA, and other intelligence services. About 500 UNITA officers were later trained by Morocco in all types of military operations. By 1980 they had all returned to Angola to command UNITA elements or serve as trainers. Other African states probably also provided training, though the impact of the training was probably minor when compared to the assistance provided by the Chinese and the Moroccans. As a result, by mid-1982 UNITA had built up a sufficient cadre of professional officers so that outside training was no longer necessary. UNITA enjoyed freedom of action in Southern Angola, so setting up training facilities was not a problem, and by 1983 they claimed to be training 1,500 additional men every three months, as well as providing advanced and refresher classes in more specialized tasks. The only exception seems to be classes taught by American instructors in Zaire, who provided training on the use of more technical weapon systems like the Stinger and TOW.
missiles.\textsuperscript{79} The success of these programs reflected the hierarchical and centralized nature of the organization, which exceeded that of all but a few liberation movements in the world.\textsuperscript{80} As a result, UNITA appears to have reached a point where it was self-sufficient, and training no longer provided much additional benefit, especially in light of UNITA’s own internal efforts.

\textit{iii. Money}

Early financial support to UNITA was minimal. Between 1973 and 1974, during the resistance to the Portuguese government, UNITA received about $90,000 from African governments and some non-governmental organizations, which was equal to about half of that received by MPLA.\textsuperscript{81} In 1975, the end of Portuguese rule and growing communist support for the MPLA convinced the U. S. to provide more robust aid to both the FNLA and UNITA. In 1975, the United States spent a total of $31.7 million, with most of those funds being split evenly between the two groups. Of that total, $4 million were provided in cash to the rebels, while the remainder was spent buying and moving arms, supplies, and equipment into Angola.\textsuperscript{82} However, this support did not last long because in 1976, Senator Richard Clark proposed an amendment to the Arms Export Control Act, which prohibited the covert provision of material support to non-governmental groups opposing the government in Angola. The amendment passed, ending direct aid to UNITA until its repeal in 1985.\textsuperscript{83} Following the 1976 defeat of both

\textsuperscript{80} Girardet, 1.
\textsuperscript{81} Heywood, 170.
\textsuperscript{82} James, 144.
\textsuperscript{83} Stockwell, 206-207.
\textsuperscript{83} Senator Malcomb Wallop criticized the Ford and Carter administrations for not trying to support UNITA overtly, as the Clark amendment only limited covert support.
\textsuperscript{Wallop, 10.}

The Clark Amendment was the product of a visit to the region by Senator Clark who believed the CIA was concealing the true nature of operations. Stockwell asserts CIA personnel
the FNLA and UNITA by the MPLA and probably as a result of the Clark Amendment, a group of Arab, Iranian, and French governmental and non-governmental groups raised $18 million to destabilize the MPLA government. This support and particularly that from the Saudis, when combined with aid from South Africa was believed to make up for what UNITA and the FNLA lost in American aid until 1985 when the Clark Amendment was repealed. Shortly thereafter, President Reagan pledged $15 million a year to UNITA, which grew to $40 million by 1988. Following the withdrawal of South African forces from Southern Angola in 1989 and the negotiated independence of Namibia, the United States stepped in to replace between $50 and $80 million in aid formerly provided by Pretoria annually. Such support was not necessary in the short term, as UNITA claimed to have built up sufficient stores for at least two years, but in the long term Savimbi would still require support through the end of the war.

Interestingly the growth in UNITA strength came not when the United States was providing the maximum amount of aid either in 1975 or after 1985, but instead it started in 1983. In that year, UNITA expanded the scope and range of its guerrilla operations both increasing their frequency and striking closer to Luanda. This reflects the support

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were actively advising the insurgents, while the official CIA position was it was only sending officers into Angola to collect intelligence. The passage of the Clark Amendment probably reflected U. S. fatigue following the Vietnam War, continuing animosity toward the CIA following the Church Commission, and rumors of South African and mercenary involvement in the war in Angola.

Stockwell, 227-233.

James, 146.


James, 169-173.

Martin estimated the value of such aid at $80 million annually in 1989.

Martin, 248.

A year later Richard Hull estimated it was $50 million. It is hard to determine which number is correct.

Hull, 228.

James, 205-208.
UNITA was receiving from South Africa, which drastically increased support to UNITA that year. While there are no publicly available statistics on the quantity of support South Africa provided to UNITA before the late 1980’s, the SADF were active in the area beginning in 1978. The support provided by the South Africans, when combined with that provided by conservative Arab states and other sympathetic private organizations likely helped UNITA survive the Clark Amendment. When the United States once again started providing UNITA aid in 1985 it was as much in response to increasing Cuban interference as it was to build the capacity of UNITA to defeat the Angolan government. Such aid would ultimately prove critical to maintaining the stalemate following the withdrawal of South African support in 1989.

iv. Arms

UNITA received its first large shipment of arms directly from the United States in June of 1975 totaling $300,000.\(^89\) UNITA also reportedly received seven of ninety-three tons of arms offered by the Chinese in early 1975.\(^90\) Between 1975 and 1985, UNITA continued to receive or purchase small quantities of arms from many African and Arab states. Yet despite all this international support, most of the small arms used by UNITA were either South African or Soviet models. The former were either purchased from or donated by the South African government, while many of the latter were either captured from government forces by UNITA or captured from SWAPO or any of a number of other regional resistance movements by the SADF and turned over to UNITA.\(^91\) South African

\(^89\) Heywood, 198.
\(^90\) It is hard to estimate the total value of the arms provided to UNITA by the US. While Stockwell provides the most comprehensive breakdown he still includes not only the costs of shipping the arms but the costs of mercenaries to train and mentor UNITA in his figures. All combined the CIA spent $27.7 million on weapons, ammunition, trainers, and transportation. Stockwell, 206-207.
\(^91\) James, 144.
\(^91\) Ibid., 179.
support was relatively constant until 1983, when Pretoria reportedly provided three times as many arms as they had in years past. This increase was augmented in 1985, when the United States opened a covert pipeline through Kamina air base in Zaire to provide weapons, including Stinger anti-aircraft missiles and TOW anti-tank missiles to UNITA without being tainted by association with the Apartheid government in South Africa or Namibia. This support would continue and actually increase following the withdrawal of the SADF from Southern Angola and Namibia.

Throughout the conflict, not only the quantity of arms provided to UNITA increased, but their quality as well. In an interesting parallel to the debate over introducing the Stinger in Afghanistan, as early as October of 1975 the CIA asked to field the Redeye missile, a predecessor of the Stinger, to deal with the potential deployment of Cuban MIG aircraft over Angola. As with the Stinger, the Department of Defense opposed fielding the Redeye for fear one would be lost to the Soviets and the White House feared the capture of an advanced missile would reveal American support for UNITA. Ultimately, the CIA traded some Redeye missiles to the Israelis in exchange for SA-7 Grail missiles, which were then provided to UNITA. Interestingly the provision of Redeyes or SA-7’s was not as critical to UNITA as the Stinger was to the Afghans, because early in the war UNITA was able to capture some SA-7 missiles from the

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Girardet claims the majority of UNITA arms were either captured or bought on the black market. While UNITA probably did find these sources useful, most observers agree the majority of weapons following the passage of the Clark Amendment and before its repeal came directly from South Africa.

Bridgland, 434.

Tube-launched, optically tracked, wire-guided (TOW) anti-tank missiles were a particularly effective means to engage armored vehicles in the 1980’s. The U. S. Army continues to use updated versions of the TOW today.

James, 172.

The resumption of U. S. support was important not only because it increased UNITA’s capabilities, but also because it provide U. S. diplomats an important bargaining chip with the USSR, Cuba, and Angola. For a more in depth discussion of the diplomatic importance of the repeal of the Clark amendment see:


Stockwell, 181-182.
Cubans, who carried them to fend off South African aircraft, and they were also able to purchase SA-7’s on the black market.\textsuperscript{96} The SA-7 was also more effective against the older, less-advanced aircraft fielded by the Cubans and Angolans than it was against the modern aircraft fielded by the Soviets and the Afghans against the mujahideen. With either captured or purchased missiles Savimbi claimed to have brought down twenty enemy aircraft over four months at the end of 1980 and the beginning of 1981.\textsuperscript{97} Thus, important differences in both UNITA’s access to weapons and the forces arrayed against the insurgents made the provision of advanced arms less necessary than it was in Afghanistan, though later the provision of the Stinger and TOW missiles did help.

Over the course of the civil war in Angola the provision of arms played a significant role in building the capacity of UNITA. The influx of weapons allowed Savimbi to field larger more conventional units, particularly after South Africa significantly increased arms transfers in 1983.\textsuperscript{98} However, the impact of that growing capacity was largely mitigated by increasing numbers of Cuban troops and continued military aid and training provided by both the Cubans and the Soviets to MPLA’s army. Throughout the war the impact of arms transfers to UNITA were overshadowed by South African and Cuban direct military intervention in the conflict. The provision of technologically advanced weapons to UNITA was less important than in Afghanistan. UNITA had better access to anti-aircraft and anti-armor weapon systems both through the black market and through capture from Cuban forces, so transfers of these technologies were less

Savimbi claimed to have a shipment lined up in an interview in 1979. This is plausible as many of his African sponsors did have access to Soviet bloc arms.
\textsuperscript{97} Borchgrave, “Reagan’s African Ally.”
\textsuperscript{98} As late as 1979, even with 15,000 men under arms, UNITA still claimed to have another 8,000 recruits without weapons. The provision of weapons at this point clearly would have allowed Savimbi to increase the size of his forces.
de Borchgrave, “Savimbi Asks for Help.”
ultimately, the provision of arms significantly increased the capacity of UNITA, but any increase in UNITA capacity had little impact on the larger conflict as long as Cuba and South Africa refused to allow their proxies to be defeated.

v. Direct Military Support

As mentioned earlier, nowhere has direct military aid played such a large part in an insurgent conflict as it did in Angola. In March of 1975, in response to the MPLA’s move to consolidate control over the capital and the government, both Zaire and South Africa joined with the FNLA and UNITA to push toward Luanda. By December 1975, UNITA and the South Africans were within 180 miles of the capital, while the FNLA and a group of commandos from Zaire were within 40 miles.\footnote{Heywood, 198-201.} In response, the MPLA called upon the Soviet Union and its allies to provide material support, while the Cubans contributed 12,000 troops to reverse the tide of battle.\footnote{Heywood, 200.} This massive intervention allowed the MPLA to squeeze the FNLA out of the northern parts of the country entirely and to force UNITA into the sparsely populated south where they would be forced to

\footnote{\textsuperscript{99} There are very few accounts of the impact of the Stinger or TOW missile in Angola. However, it seems unlikely their impact would have been any different than the provision of the SA-7 almost ten years earlier. Throughout the conflict UNITA was able to capture advanced anti-aircraft and anti-armor weapon systems from the Cubans who faced similar threats from the South African air forces and army to those posed to UNITA by the Cubans themselves.}

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evade MPLA forces as they tried to regroup following the withdrawal of South African forces.\textsuperscript{102}

South African troops would continue to conduct raids from Namibia into Angola, allegedly in pursuit of SWAPO guerrillas who struck across the border out of Angola.\textsuperscript{103} MPLA claimed several of these raids were intended to strike Angolan forces rather than SWAPO, which would indirectly aid UNITA, who also received intermittent material support from the South African Defense Force (SADF). It seems likely these raids were intended to strike SWAPO camps as well as destroy Angolan defensive radars and other air defenses to allow the SADF free reign in southern Angola. The ultimate goal was the establishment of a buffer zone between Namibia and the MPLA dominated north, which was to be controlled by UNITA, and would contain SWAPO, while maintaining pressure on the MPLA.\textsuperscript{104} While several of these operations included more than 1,000 SADF personnel, they were far more limited than earlier joint operations in support of UNITA and FNLA against the capital. However, they still benefited UNITA, which reached its lowest ebb in 1979 when it was limited to the very southeastern corner of the country.\textsuperscript{105} Beginning in 1981 during these forays into Southern Angola, the SADF provided UNITA significant quantities of arms, which began to breathe new life into the movement.\textsuperscript{106} The growing capacity of UNITA allowed it to conduct more frequent raids against MPLA targets deeper within Angola, forcing the Cubans to become increasingly engaged in offensive operations to reclaim towns seized by UNITA.\textsuperscript{107} During this phase of the conflict, an increasingly capable UNITA practiced a guerrilla strategy, which was inflicting damage on both MPLA and Cuban forces. Of course, the effects of that

\textsuperscript{102}Heywood, 201.
\textsuperscript{104}James, 146-153, 156-162.
\textsuperscript{106}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{107}Girardet.
strategy were mitigated by continued Soviet and Cuban support to insure the MPLA remained in power, so the MPLA and its sponsors would need to do more if they wanted to decisively end the war rather than sustain the stalemate.

The communist approach to the problem of an increasingly capable UNITA was more of the same. The Cuban deployment in support of the MPLA government continued to grow until it peaked around 1985 near 60,000. The increased troop levels allowed the Cuban and Angolan forces to execute more effective counter-insurgent and conventional operations in Southern Angola. UNITA’s headquarters at Jamba was threatened, but then relieved by a South African thrust into Angolan territory and air raids on advancing Cuban and Angolan troops. While past operations had targeted Angolan forces, South Africa could legitimately claim to be focused primarily on SWAPO. The operations in the summer of 1985 were clearly in support of UNITA and probably prevented the organization from having to disperse and rebuild. Between South African support and a shift in U. S. opinion on supporting UNITA, Savimbi decided to stand and defend Jamba rather than revert to a guerrilla strategy in the face of growing government power augmented by Soviet and Cuban advisors and troops. A second government offensive toward Jamba was once again defeated by UNITA with SADF assistance in 1986. However, following the battle, UNITA and SADF pursued retreating MPLA forces and approached the strategically important city of Cuito Cuanavale. Despite being routed at Jamba, MPLA and Cuban forces were able to defend the city with support from an additional division sent from Cuba. Once again, South African direct intervention had played a huge role in these operations providing critical air cover and artillery support. It is likely UNITA would have been defeated at

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108 There were just under 60,000 Cubans fighting in Angola in 1985. While there were similar numbers in 1982 there was a partial withdrawal in the intervening years. After 1985 there would never be more than 45,000 Cuban troops in the country again. George, 303.

109 James, 162-166.

110 Ibid., 167-169.
Jamba without SADF support, and it would almost certainly have been impossible for
them to pursue the Cuban and government forces to Cuito without it.\textsuperscript{111} In 1989,
following additional conventional battles for the next two years and the withdrawal of
most foreign forces, the conflict settled back into a stalemate, which ultimately resulted
in the negotiation of a transitional government in 1992, temporarily ending the Angolan
civil war.\textsuperscript{112}

South African direct military support was a mixed blessing. While UNITA rarely
made significant conventional gains without the backing of the SADF and at times
UNITA’s base at Jamba would have been destroyed absent South African
intervention,\textsuperscript{113} critics argue the Cuban intervention would not have occurred if South
Africa had stayed out of Angola. South Africa’s intervention did seem to open the way
for Cuban aircraft to fly through several African countries’ airspace and to use air fields
otherwise unavailable to them, and Cuban and Soviet support was critical to the growing
capability of MPLA’s forces.\textsuperscript{114} The Cuban’s would have been unlikely to intervene
directly absent the South African invasion and Cuban forces and Soviet advisors were
critical to the success of operations against UNITA strongholds. However, given the
MPLA’s pre-existing relationships with both Cuba and the USSR, it seems unlikely they

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., 173-177.
\textsuperscript{112} In 1988, South Africa withdrew from southern Angola for the first time since 1981 in
exchange for a deal providing the phased withdrawal of Cuban forces. The South Africans were
more open to compromise because the Soviets had provided air defense systems to Angola,
which allowed them to deny the South Africans air superiority. The effect of these systems
became evident during the failed assault on Cuito Cuanavale.
Martin, 232.
\textsuperscript{113} UNITA did survive following the withdrawal of South African forces in 1976 despite an
intensive counter-insurgent campaign. Savimbi merely reverted to a guerrilla campaign and
dispersed his forces. However, it is unclear whether UNITA could have sustained itself in the
long term without significant South African aid and intervention.
\textsuperscript{114} While it did little harm to UNITA, South Africa was regularly castigated by both the
Soviets and the West for intervening in Angola. However, a lot of that criticism can be attributed
to South Africa’s pariah status, which was the result of Apartheid. For more see:
Ty Groh, “War on the Cheap? Assessing the Costs and Benefits of Proxy War,: (Ph. D.
diss., Georgetown University, 2010), 109-110.
would have hesitated to support MPLA had it been threatened by UNITA alone. While the late 1975 airlift of supplies and Cuban troops was important, the MPLA always controlled Luanda, the capital and major seaport in the country, so reinforcement was always possible. In addition, increased Cuban involvement would have been unnecessary absent South African intervention, because UNITA lacked the capability to drive toward Luanda alone.

Surprisingly, while UNITA also lost some international legitimacy as a result of accepting South African assistance, it seemed to have had little impact within Angola. As was already discussed many African states were more willing to support Cuban intervention in response to the South African invasion. In addition, some Western governments and eventually a majority of the members of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) condemned South Africa and UNITA, while extending recognition and assistance to the MPLA. Yet despite this diplomatic failure, UNITA was successful in maintaining a close relationship with most of the people of Southern Angola, capitalizing on tribal ties and the aid provided by South Africa to build a quasi-state in the area under their control. The provision of civilian aid through UNITA was actually a component of the SADF’s strategy to build the capacity of the rebel organization and reduce the loss of

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115 Prior to November 1975 the CIA estimated there were 7,500 Cuban soldiers and 400 Soviet advisors in Angola. Following independence and the South African intervention, Cuba sent an additional 4,500 troops. While Cuba or the Soviet Union might have tried to co-opt UNITA if the group had not been sponsored by South Africa or the U. S., this seems unlikely as UNITA had strong existing ties to China, which also sought to reduce Soviet influence in the region.


Heywood argues that the Clark Amendment reflected congressional backlash against South African support for UNITA. However based on Stockwell’s assessment, Senator Clark was primarily upset about the direct role the CIA was playing in the conflict and their attempt to cover it up. In the hearing where the amendment was approved two members of the Angola working group made contradictory statements about the role of the CIA, which was interpreted as further evidence of a CIA cover-up.

Heywood, 198-201.
Stockwell, 229-231.

116 Groh, 108-111.
legitimacy suffered by UNITA for being associated with Apartheid South Africa. Thus, despite the high costs of South African intervention, it was still the most important type of state support provided to UNITA and harmed the organization significantly less within Angola, where it really mattered, than internationally. Savimbi said it well when he commented on the South African intervention, “If I had had the choice I would not have chosen them. But they had come in and we had been made dirty. I said...let us move to Luanda...when you win a winner can explain himself...Winners write history.” UNITA did not get to write history in this case, but UNITA would likely have been crushed absent South African intervention.

vi. Advisors

From the beginning of the civil war in 1975, some CIA officers, ostensibly in Angola to collect intelligence, did advise UNITA and FNLA forces in combat. There were also several teams of mercenaries who operated with rebels from both groups. However, it is unclear whether such support continued after passage of the Clark Amendment. Some observers have asserted French advisors based in Zaire provided some specialized technical assistance and South Africa aided UNITA in setting up some of their communications infrastructure, but there is little evidence of a large scale advisory program. Through 1985 most observers who visited UNITA camps reported no

117 Ibid., 121-123.
119 John Stockwell, former chief of the CIA Angola Task Force, claimed paramilitary officers operated regularly on Angolan soil as advisors, despite having been prohibited to do so by U. S. policy. They were able to claim officers were collecting intelligence rather than advising foreign forces. Mercenaries were paid by both the insurgent groups and various intelligence agencies. FNLA relied more on foreign mercenaries than UNITA. Stockwell, 176-179, 219-226.
120 Girardet, 1.
significant foreign government presence.\textsuperscript{121} To be sure, there were plenty of expatriates paid by UNITA to fly transport planes and provide other technical assistance, but they were not actively engaged in advising or leading UNITA forces in combat. After the Clark amendment was repealed there were persistent reports of Americans being involved with moving weapons from Kamina Airfield in Zaire to dirt strips in southern Angola. The Americans were allegedly responsible for flying the aircraft, controlling the airspace, and supervising the unloading of the planes.\textsuperscript{122} However, once again Americans were not involved in actual combat. Thus, the direct impact of advisors on UNITA’s capabilities was limited to improving logistical and communications systems, which corresponded to UNITA’s greatest weaknesses.\textsuperscript{123} Thus, the impact of such assistance was probably significant. UNITA was a well organized and professional insurgent group, which had the capability to train recruits to fight, but did not have many trained pilots or logisticians. UNITA was able to fill this gap with either mercenaries, when state support was waning, or with intelligence contractors and personnel, when state support was robust.

\textit{b. Conclusions}

The civil war in Angola demonstrated the profound impact direct foreign military intervention can have on an insurgent struggle. While the provision of money, arms, and training all enhanced the capabilities of UNITA, those advances were overshadowed by

\textsuperscript{121} French assistance only occurred under President Giscard d’Estaing who was in office from 1984-1981. 
Girardet.
\textsuperscript{122} Brooke.
\textsuperscript{123} In his first visit to UNITA Stockwell assessed UNITA’s greatest weaknesses to be logistics, communications, and junior leadership. 
Stockwell, 155.
In fact, General Johannes Geldenhuys claimed the South Africans focused only on weapons training because UNITA was better at conducting the guerrilla style attacks they were capable of than the SADF. 
Groh, 115.
the effects of South African and Cuban operations. From 1981 to 1985 the South Africans did limit the scope of their own operations to raids primarily targeting SWAPO rebels, while simultaneously strengthening UNITA to face MPLA. However, when this strategy started to produce results the Cubans expanded their own operations against UNITA forcing SADF to intervene directly to insure the survival of the organization. This demonstrates the overwhelming effect of direct military intervention on both sides of an insurgency. The effects of more subtle approaches are quickly subsumed by such dramatic action. Of the different forms of support provided to UNITA, the provision of money and arms were the most consistently useful. When South Africa drastically increased the quantity of arms provided to UNITA there was an equally drastic increase in UNITA’s operations. South Africa would sustain this support until it was replaced by the U. S. following the withdrawal of the SADF from southern Angola in 1989. Early in the conflict the provision of training was also important, but over time UNITA developed a robust internal training system, which made efforts by foreign supporters unnecessary with exception to particularly technical systems. Advisors and mercenaries also played a significant role in supporting UNITA for the duration of the conflict. Their participation was critical to the sustainment of the organization, but they had little to no influence on the actual planning or execution of operations.

V. The Effects of State Support Across Cases

When these two cases are considered together there are important similarities and differences between the effects of support for both the mujahideen and UNITA. In the Afghan case money and arms seem to have had the most impact, but their influence was contingent on having a safe haven in Pakistan to receive and distribute them. In Angola, direct military intervention overwhelmed the effects of the other forms of state support, but once again money and arms seemed to have increased the capability of
UNITA more than anything else. In both cases, advisors played only a small role, while training was important especially early in the conflict and when dealing with more technical subjects like the use of advanced weapons. With the exception of direct military intervention in Angola, no form of support had an obviously damaging effect on a single insurgent group, though undoubtedly there were disadvantages to all forms of support. The following section will begin with a general assessment of each type of support; it will be followed with some general policy implications for states seeking to achieve some goal by sponsoring insurgent groups.

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<td>Essential to survival and effectiveness later in the campaign</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advisors</td>
<td>Useful, but no strategic effect</td>
<td>Useful, but no strategic effect</td>
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**FIGURE 1: Summary of the Effects of State Support**

**a. Safe Haven**

Contrary to this paper’s initial predictions, both UNITA and the mujahideen benefited more from their safe havens later in the conflict when their organizations were large and complex than early in the conflict when they were small and simple. As the insurgent movements grew larger they needed to conduct more complex planning, move

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124 Pakistan did harm the mujahideen cause by fomenting internal strife between the fundamentalist and moderate parties by selectively distributing supplies to their favored proxies. However, such damage was not inherent to the type of support, but instead to the way it was distributed. Thus, a state sponsor can choose to weaken an insurgent movement if it will better advance the state’s particular interests, but such damage is clearly avoidable.
larger quantities of more diverse supplies, and execute more extensive training in areas which were generally secure from enemy interference, and neither organization was able to provide that security without the support of a foreign sponsor. In fact, the most dramatic demonstrations of the importance of safe havens were in the later phases of both wars when the insurgents were rather strong. In the Afghan case the destruction of bases around Khost and in Angola the multiple thrusts toward Jamba significantly disrupted all types of insurgent non-combat operations. In contrast both groups survived before the civil wars broke out by focusing on small-scale guerrilla attacks, which required relatively little planning, coordination, or logistics and allowed the insurgents to stay in small dispersed groups, which were difficult for the government to target even without a safe haven. It seems likely insurgent groups are initially small enough that they can conduct all their training and logistics clandestinely within the targeted state and have less need for a safe haven than they will later when a safe haven is necessary to prepare more conventional operations. Thus, states seeking to support insurgent groups should not expect to be able to provide safe haven until the insurgent group is established and then force it onto the territory of the targeted state. Safe haven remains valuable well into a conflict, and any insurgent group that loses it risks serious degradation of its operations or worse.

Advocates of network-centric based warfare and information technologies have often argued that terrorists have less need for safe haven today than they did twenty years ago because the internet provides a virtual safe haven where they can train, plan attacks, and solicit funds with impunity.\(^\text{125}\) While this is probably true for small, cellular terrorist groups, which require only modest resources and rarely conduct guerrilla


attacks, insurgency still requires a much larger footprint to deal with the greater logistical and training requirements of supporting the wider scale, more conventional operations that distinguish advanced insurgencies from terrorist groups. One needs to look no farther than the current ongoing insurgency in Afghanistan to see the continued value of safe haven. The Taliban gain a significant advantage from being able to conduct training, logistical, and administrative task in the ungoverned tribal provinces of Pakistan. The U. S. continues to pressure the Pakistani government to move against such safe havens with only limited success. Many analysts believe the war in Afghanistan cannot be won until Pakistan reasserts control over its border region. Thus, safe haven remains just as important today as it was during the earlier conflicts in Angola and Afghanistan.

Despite its importance, neither in Angola nor Afghanistan were the insurgents able to establish a safe haven on their own, and while under some circumstances this may be possible, Martin Libicki found that insurgent groups who secure a safe haven from a state involuntarily are no more likely to succeed than the average group.\textsuperscript{126} This is most likely the product of the costs of establishing and defending permanent base camps, which are often the targets of counterinsurgent operations. Any resources expended in the defense of rear areas are not available for more traditional and productive insurgent operations. Therefore, it should not be surprising that even well-established insurgent groups benefit from a state sponsored sanctuary, because it allows them to focus their limited resources on offensive operations. On the other hand, being forced to establish a government complete with social services, infrastructure, and the rule of law is an important exercise for any group seeking to control the government. Hamas and Hezbollah have likely gained as much legitimacy from their public service projects as from their military operations and perhaps may be better prepared to form a government as a result. It is unclear whether UNITA gained as much from the

\textsuperscript{126} Libicki, 337-338.
experience. Savimbi established schools, public health services, and sanitation in the parts of Angola he controlled under the protection of South Africa, and while this increased the local legitimacy of UNITA, it is unclear whether this experience increased his group’s knowledge of post conflict state building. The resumption of the civil war in Angola shortly after the 1992 ceasefire masked the effects of any such experience. Future scholars should investigate the impact of establishing a government over a set territory not only in terms of improved legitimacy, but also in terms of the expertise it may provide a successful insurgent group as neither Angola nor Afghanistan enjoyed a stable government for long after the victory or negotiated peace which was secured by the insurgents. Studies of cases like Hamas and Hezbollah, which provide robust public services, would be particularly useful to gauge the indirect benefits of such policies.

Finally, providing a safe haven did not seem to provide either Pakistan or South Africa any more control over the insurgent groups than providing support in general. While it was undoubtedly beneficial to have access to both UNITA and mujahideen leaders for coordinating operations, both sponsoring countries were consistently frustrated in their efforts to control the conflict. For example, Pakistan, under U. S. pressure, occasionally tried to get the mujahideen to unify and coordinate their efforts, consolidate logistics operations, and release joint statements with only negligible success. Similarly, UNITA did nothing to help South Africa halt cross border attacks by SWAPO, forcing the SADF to make repeated incursions into Angola for that purpose. Perhaps the best explanation for this is that denying an insurgent group sanctuary is an active task, which requires significant resources. Consider recent U. S. efforts to get Pakistan to move against the Taliban. While some Pakistanis are hesitant to act because they sympathize with the Taliban, others justifiably fear retaliation and question whether the Pakistani army is capable of denying the Taliban safe haven within the Pashtun tribal areas. Thus, it is unlikely a state, which is sympathetic to an insurgent
group’s cause to begin with, will make the effort to deny that group safe haven. This hesitancy makes threats to eliminate safe havens less credible, which makes them an ineffective control mechanism.

\textbf{b. Training}

While it is hard to disaggregate the effects of increased training and growing supplies of money and arms in the Afghan case, the Angolan case confirms this paper’s initial assertion that basic military training is most useful early in an insurgent group’s life-cycle. Early in the war UNITA was at a significant disadvantage to both the MPLA and the FNLA, both of which were more involved in the struggle against the Portuguese and thus had more experienced men under arms. However, with Chinese and Moroccan help UNITA was able to build a base of trainers who passed their skills on to new recruits in mass, which allowed UNITA to build up its forces relatively quickly. What is even more significant is that UNITA was able to accomplish this while only having sent around 600 total personnel outside the country for the initial state sponsored training. One of UNITA’s greatest strengths was its cohesion and tight organization. This simplified the challenge of building an effective training system. The mujahideen were too factionalized to take a similar approach, and after having sent over 80,000 personnel for training in Pakistan, their own internal training efforts were negligible. Thus, states seeking to assist newly created insurgent groups can plan to provide basic military training initially to later hand off that training program to the insurgents themselves, but only when dealing with centralized hierarchical insurgent organizations. While the benefits of state sponsored training for decentralized groups like the mujahideen are difficult to assess, it does seem clear that any effort will have to be sustained if it is to provide benefits at all. Both centralized and decentralized groups are likely to benefit from training on technologically advanced weapon systems, like the Stinger or TOW
missile. Understandably, insurgent groups with no experience on a piece of equipment cannot train their own members to use it. Of course, in the long term the better organized insurgent groups are likely to master new technologies after they send a few groups for training by the state sponsor, which will make further external training unnecessary.

Unfortunately, the ease with which insurgent groups can replace state sponsored trainers limits the amount of control the state can expect from this sort of support. The mujahideen’s failure to conduct attacks on critical Soviet infrastructure is a great example of this phenomenon. For years, ISI tried unsuccessfully to convince the mujahideen to attack the electrical and fuel distribution system stretching from the Soviet Union into Afghanistan by providing training in the use and emplacement of small explosive charges. Yet this tactic was never widely employed by the mujahideen for cultural reasons related to the Afghan conception of honorable combat and for local reasons born of Soviet policies which benefited villages near critical infrastructure. Had the Pakistanis tried to force the mujahideen to conduct these sorts of attacks by threatening to withdraw the training, the mujahideen would have been unlikely to respond, because they saw no value in the training to begin with. State sponsors can expect the same response from insurgent groups who have built up a cadre of trained individuals who could easily step in to train new recruits if a state withdrew training support.

There was no clear evidence of the provision of training directly affecting either the local or international legitimacy of either UNITA or the mujahideen. While the Soviets consistently argued the mujahideen were nothing but American or Pakistani puppets, it seems unlikely the provision of training played any greater role in these accusations than any other form of support. Additionally, while the U. S. was at times concerned by Savimbi’s occasional references to some of Mao Zedong’s philosophies,
which he probably picked up while training in China, it was not a real obstacle to close cooperation with the U. S., which had normalized relations with the Chinese already anyway. It is equally hard to imagine that training, which had so little influence on the course of either insurgency and which was miniscule when compared to the intervention of Soviet and Cuban forces on behalf of both the Afghan and Angolan governments caused any great concern within Angola either. Thus, in situations where a state considering supporting an insurgency has no history of interfering in the targeted state and where there is significant foreign support propping up the government, then providing training is unlikely to have much effect on the legitimacy of the insurgency. However, it is doubtful the same would be true under different circumstances. Today if the U. S. sponsored an insurgent group against the Cuban government, the Cuban people and international community would probably reflect on the history of that relationship and judge the insurgents accordingly.

c. Money

Of all the types of support examined in this paper, money and arms seemed to have the most direct influence on the capability of insurgent groups for the duration of the conflict. Whenever material support for either UNITA or the mujahideen grew, the quantity and sophistication of insurgent attacks increased. Money proved especially important for the mujahideen, where clear differences between the performance of the fundamentalist and moderate parties highlighted the importance of money for financing storage and transportation of arms and purchasing other necessary supplies. However, it is important to note that dramatic expansions in the scope and complexity of attacks came at a high price. At the height of the Afghan conflict the U. S. and Saudi Arabia were providing approximately $600 million per year to the mujahideen in both money and arms, while the U. S. provided up to $80 million to UNITA at the height of that
conflict. In comparison, during the most recent conflict in Afghanistan, the CIA provided the Northern Alliance about $5 million in cash during the first forty days of the conflict.\textsuperscript{127} Of course neither UNITA nor the mujahideen were funded at these levels earlier in their campaigns, but these groups only became capable of challenging the survival of the state at the higher levels. While it is possible to increase the capability of smaller insurgent groups with less, over the long term if an insurgent group is to challenge a competent state large quantities of money will be necessary.

Despite the huge amounts of money provided to both the mujahideen and UNITA it is hard to determine how much foreign finance hurt the legitimacy of these two insurgent groups. While both UNITA and some of the mujahideen were notoriously corrupt it is hard to link this corruption to the influx of foreign funds. In Afghanistan, the parties most often portrayed as corrupt were the moderates, who were receiving less cash from both state sponsors and wealthy private groups and individuals than the fundamentalist parties who had a reputation for honesty. In fact most of the accusations of corruption, which were leveled against the moderate groups, suggested arms were being sold to benefit the leadership. However, even Brigadier Yousaf who was known for his bias in favor of the fundamentalist groups suggested that the moderates sold weapons to fund other requirements like storage and transportation of weapons, not primarily to enrich themselves. Thus, corruption in the insurgent groups probably reflected the group’s culture more than the amount of foreign cash it received.

Additionally, there is little evidence to suggest that the provision of money made the insurgents look any more like puppets of the U. S. or their regional sponsors than any other form of support. While it seems likely money is easier to hide than other forms of support.

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\textsuperscript{127} It is important to note that the majority of the conventional fighting in the most recent Afghan conflict was over in the first forty days as well, but if the CIA had continued spending at the same rate for the entire year it would have totaled almost $50 million.

support none of the evidence collected in this study support that assertion. However, diasporas, non-governmental organizations, multi-national corporations, and other non-governmental entities do seem to be playing a larger role in financing both insurgents and governments today. While this may reduce the need for insurgents to seek out state sponsors to receive money, it will also make it easier for states to mask the true source of funding flowing to an insurgent group by using these groups as intermediaries. Further research is needed to develop the potential of this technique.

While neither the U. S. nor its local allies tried to persuade the insurgents directly to conduct certain types of attacks or engage in specific negotiations by offering or withdrawing financial support, it does seem likely it would have been an effective technique. Both UNITA and the mujahideen built logistical systems that required large quantities of money to keep arms and other supplies flowing to the fighters in the field. In the absence of money, arms shipments would build up in ports and logistics bases, depriving frontline insurgents of the capacity to continue fighting. While most insurgent groups can tolerate a slowdown in operations, the loss of funding would have made it difficult to pay other fixed costs like salaries, or to purchase necessary items like food and shelter. Despite the lack of direct evidence that offering, withdrawal, or threat of withdrawal of monetary support allowed state sponsors to wield influence over the mujahideen or UNITA, it probably would have been effective.

d. Arms

Closely related to the provision of money is the provision of arms. Both are often provided simultaneously and in these two cases both varied proportionately throughout

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128 ISI’s Afghan bureau did provide specific commanders sought after weapons to entice them to conduct specific types of operations. However, the ISI commander, General Akhtar, controlled the distribution of money, and there is no evidence he used it to influence the types of operations the mujahideen conducted.
the respective conflicts, so it hard to differentiate their effects. However, leaders from both UNITA and the mujahideen consistently asserted they could field more fighters if they had more weapons. Additionally, most of the money provided directly to the mujahideen was likely consumed storing or moving weapons from their point of arrival in theater to the fighter on the ground. As important was the quality of the weapons provided, at least in the Afghan case. The effects of Stinger missiles, single barrel rocket launchers, and modern recoilless rifles can all be distinguished from the general effects of the increasing quantities of money and arms delivered beginning in 1984. Of course, in both Angola and Afghanistan the weapons and their shipment came at a high cost, likely comprising more than half of the multi-million dollar budgets dedicated to regime change in those countries. Thus, arms are one of the most useful but expensive types of support states can provide to insurgent groups.

Of course, while arms are usually beneficial to insurgent groups, there may be circumstances when the insurgents need something else even more. Fortunately for the insurgents, arms and money can be interchangeable if a conflict has been going on for a long time or if it occurs in a region where conflict is common and the insurgent group has close ties to local or international black arms markets. Such a situation benefits a state sponsor, because it allows them to choose between providing money or arms depending on what is cheaper, more mobile, more covert, or more politically palatable. Of course, unless there is a compelling reason to provide aid in one form or the other, states sponsoring an insurgent group should seek to provide whichever form is most convenient to the insurgents to reduce the transaction costs associated with trading on the black market.

The risks of providing weapons to insurgent groups range from provoking an unintended response from the targeted state to reducing the legitimacy of the insurgent group. However, in both the Angolan and Afghan case, state sponsors took precautions
primarily to prevent their involvement from becoming an international issue. In Angola most of the arms UNITA received from the U. S. or South Africa were captured from other insurgent groups or the Angolan government, purchased from third party states, or of South African manufacture. In Afghanistan, all arms except the Stingers were obtained from Chinese, Israeli, or Egyptian suppliers and were of Soviet design. However, the reasoning behind this approach is questionable. There was almost no international doubt the West was providing support to insurgent groups in both countries, so definitive proof was unlikely to influence the policy of outside actors. Within the targeted countries the insurgent groups were much better at controlling information, so the level of foreign support was not common knowledge, but to maintain the fiction that most arms were captured or purchased locally they at least needed to resemble the arms used by regional security forces. Thus, by providing only arms which could plausibly come from local sources, state sponsors can usually contribute to a myth of the self-reliant revolutionary, but rarely will they be able to fool the targeted state or the international community.

The loss of some degree of international legitimacy is often countered by the significant degree of control the provision of arms affords a state sponsor. In both Afghanistan and Angola, the U. S. and its regional allies consistently favored insurgent groups which were more effective in their use of resources and more responsive to their state sponsors’ requests when dividing up supplies of weapons. Pakistan occasionally convinced the mujahideen to conduct attacks favored by ISI by offering additional supplies of weapons in return. As the U. S. and South Africa gradually increased material support to UNITA over the FNLA, Savimbi shifted his rhetoric and policies away from creating an ideological Maoist state modeled after China, to a pragmatic democratic state modeled after westward leaning African nationalist governments. The influence afforded a state sponsor by arms transfers reflect their overall importance to increasing
an insurgent group’s capacity. Once a group starts receiving such support it is hard to suffer its loss. Unfortunately for state sponsors the proliferation of small arms following the end of the Cold War has made it a little easier. The growing black market has probably reduced the amount of control a state can exercise over an insurgent group because there are more alternative sources today than were available to the mujahideen and UNITA in the 1970’s and 1980’s. However, while arms are likely to provide state sponsors less control than they did twenty years ago, it is unclear how much less. As more insurgent and government leaders write memoirs and intelligence agencies and militaries declassify documents about state support for post-Cold War insurgencies, future scholars can determine if arms are still as effective for controlling insurgent groups. Despite the growing black market, it seems likely the provision of arms will remain an important form of state support to insurgent groups.

e. Direct Military Support

While the mujahideen never received significant direct military support, in Angola it did seem to drastically influence the capacity of UNITA. When UNITA was in danger of being annihilated, it was the actions of the SADF that insured they were not. When UNITA made long dramatic drives into central and northern Angola it was with South African armor, air, and fire support. Absent the SADF presence in Southern Angola UNITA would have been less able to receive, organize, and distribute supplies for guerrilla operations. Very few aspects of UNITA’s military strategy did not rely on direct South African military support. Thus, it is reasonable to expect direct military support to provide the most extensive improvements in insurgent capability of all available types of support a state can provide.

However, such support comes with significant costs, for both the sponsoring state and the insurgents. Most governments seeking to support an insurgent group are
looking for an inexpensive way to influence an adversary without necessarily having to deploy their own military forces. Direct military intervention obviously requires a state to compromise on this goal. Some critics may also argue that direct military intervention in an internal conflict on the side of insurgents is politically infeasible in a world increasingly governed by international organizations and laws which have enshrined a state’s right to non-interference. However, one need only look to Russia’s 2008 intervention in Georgia on behalf of the Ossetians to fully appreciate the continued feasibility of this type of policy. The political costs are great, but under some circumstances they are likely to be acceptable. Of course, there are also still benefits to supporting an insurgent group rather than deploying military forces more conventionally, because it reduces the size of the required force and allows the sponsor to delegate more costly and personnel intensive tasks to the insurgent group. As was the case with Angola, it also allows the state sponsor to conduct short, quick, and violent forays into the territory of the adversarial state without necessarily having to hold or govern that ground later.

Additionally, UNITA paid a significant price for South African intervention. Cuban and Soviet support to the MPLA was likely more intense both in reaction to South African intervention and because other African states were more willing to facilitate communist support as a response to the South African intervention. This was especially true in this case, because South Africa was so unpopular in the region as a result of Apartheid. Other state sponsors might not elicit such a strong reaction. Foreign intervention in support of an insurgent group is likely to be even more acceptable, as was the case in Afghanistan, when the intervention is perceived to be in response to foreign manipulation of the targeted government. Thus, despite the effectiveness of direct military intervention in increasing insurgent capacity, the costs are not insignificant, though they may be reduced if the intervening state is popular in the region or the intervention is seen as a response to foreign manipulation of the targeted state.
In addition to these high costs, contradictory to this paper’s initial prediction, the provision of direct military support did not seem to provide South Africa much additional control over UNITA, though it did give them significant influence over negotiations regarding the withdrawal of foreign forces from Angola. Despite the importance of direct support and the casual observations of many journalists, UNITA was able to remain politically independent of South Africa during much of the conflict. The best evidence of this independence was continued SWAPO and African National Congress (ANC)\textsuperscript{129} use of UNITA controlled territory. This was likely the product of South African policy, which sought to eject the Cubans and establish a neutral or favorable government in Angola under whoever could defeat the MPLA. South Africa withdrew from the conflict before UNITA success was likely, and there were no other credible opponents to the MPLA, so the South Africans picked the best of the bad options available to them at the time. Had South Africa remained engaged longer, it probably would have tried to exert more influence over UNITA. If that approach failed, it might have tried to identify a more malleable or agreeable faction of Savimbi’s organization and funded and promoted it as an alternative, much as the different state sponsors of mujahideen groups did following the withdrawal of the Soviets. In any case, direct South African involvement in Southern Angola, particularly in pursuit of SWAPO forces was a symptom of the lack of control South Africa exerted over UNITA. While UNITA had little choice but to go along with South African military operations, it produced only ethereal control because such operations were of short duration when compared to longer term forms of support like the provision of arms and money, and South Africa had no comparable alternative partner to challenge the MPLA. Thus, while direct military support was critically

\textsuperscript{129} The ANC was the anti-Apartheid political movement led by Nelson Mandela in South Africa. It had both political and military wings and was composed of a mix of communists, unionists, and black nationalists.
important to UNITA it provided few of the benefits of other forms of support and imposed significantly greater costs on South Africa.

f. Advisors

The value of advisors for increasing the capacity of an insurgent group remains unclear. U. S. efforts at providing advisors to both the mujahideen and UNITA were limited, and little is known about what they actually accomplished. While advisors were undoubtedly beneficial at the local level, the small scale of the effort suggests their role in strengthening the insurgent groups as a whole was probably minor. While advisors do provide a lower cost alternative to direct military intervention when deployed in small numbers, as they were in Angola and Afghanistan, they are far less effective than direct military support. Perhaps the better option is a hybrid of the two, similar to the approach the United States used to topple the Taliban in 2001. With a small contingent of special operations forces and intelligence officers on the ground, a little money, a few arms, and a lot of aircraft and ships, the United States was able to provide the Northern Alliance the critical edge they needed to be successful. All this was accomplished with minimal risk to American lives and at low costs relative to a more conventional invasion.

While the advisory effort in support of UNITA and the mujahideen did not accomplish nearly as much in terms of increasing the capability of the insurgents as the combination of advisors and direct military intervention did in Afghanistan in 2001, it did have some other benefits. The advisors did provide important feedback to their respective headquarters, which was used to allocate other forms of support, to understand the targeted state, and to identify or verify additional capabilities that would benefit the insurgents. While this did not directly provide the state sponsors that much more control over the insurgent groups it did allow them to position themselves and direct aid in ways that may have afforded them additional control in the future or to
strengthen those elements of the insurgent groups which were most amenable to the sponsor’s goals. For example, the U. S. was utterly unprepared for stiff competition with Saudi Arabia and Pakistan over influencing the direction of the mujahideen following the departure of the Soviets, because the CIA never sent advisors into Afghanistan. In contrast, the Pakistanis were well prepared to funnel aid to preferred groups like Hekmatyar’s HiG, because they had long standing personal relationships not only with the party leadership, but also with individual commanders who had hosted ISI advisors in the past. Thus, the provision of advisors does not seem to provide that much more control in and of itself, but it is useful for developing a better understanding of the different factions within an insurgency, which can then be leveraged to gain greater control over selected factions.

While the provision of advisors appears to have provided only local benefits in terms of increasing insurgent capacity and slightly more important benefits in terms of increasing the potential for state control over the insurgents, the provision of advisors came at a relatively small cost in both Afghanistan and Angola. As a part of a much larger operation the costs in personnel and equipment devoted to fielding advisors in both countries were dwarfed by the hundreds of million dollars of aid and arms sent to these groups. Additionally, the costs in lost legitimacy to the insurgent groups were only slightly more significant. In Angola the FNLA and to a much lesser degree UNITA were discredited by the presence and conduct of some of the mercenary advisors hired by different state sponsors early in the civil war. However, as time went on fewer foreign fighters were embedded in insurgent elements and UNITA gained a reputation as a “people’s army”. Similarly, the Pakistani advisors to the mujahideen were too few and blended in too well to seriously discredit the movement. While a more robust advisory effort might have had more pernicious effects, advisors are inherently limited in number,
so in other conflicts their impact is likely to be equally small both in terms of costs and lost legitimacy.

VI. Policy Implications: How States Should Support Insurgent Groups

Once a state has made the decision to provide support to an insurgent group there are several critically important general considerations in addition to the specific ones mentioned already. First, insurgents are by definition weaker than the government they seek to destroy, so states seeking to influence a state by supporting an insurgency within its borders should integrate that support into a larger strategy, which includes economic, conventional military, and diplomatic elements. Second, as a result of the interaction amongst different forms of support, the strengths of different agencies within a sponsoring state’s government, and the strengths of different states within an alliance, it is important to coordinate the overall effort carefully. Uncoordinated programs are likely to undermine a state’s control over the insurgents and produce a fragmented, ineffective insurgency. Finally, some forms of support provide the state sponsor more control over the insurgent group, and some are more likely to increase the capacity of the insurgent group. The types of support a state should choose depend on that state’s goals, capacity, and risk tolerance.

State sponsorship can successfully influence the outcome of an insurgent campaign, but usually only if it is integrated into a larger strategy. Aid to insurgent groups must be a part of a wider policy agenda, which also includes economic, diplomatic, and conventional military tools.\textsuperscript{130} The polarized debate over whether the

\textsuperscript{130} This sentiment is echoed in all the assessments of U. S. covert action, but particularly in Godson and Daugherty’s work. Policymakers are at particular risk of using covert action in an uncoordinated way, because it is often exempt from the same public scrutiny and debate overt policy faces.

Soviets withdrew because the mujahideen inflicted too high a cost on the Soviet Army, or because Gorbachev desperately needed western support to shore up a foundering economy obscures a larger truth. It was the combination of a persistent and deadly insurgency combined with economic pressures on the Soviet state, which ultimately forced the withdrawal of the Soviets from Afghanistan. Support for the mujahideen was a part of a wider U. S. strategy intended to wear down the Soviet Union in general, which accounts for both its success and its importance in the wider context of the Cold War. Future support to insurgent groups should only be a single component in a similar overarching strategy, which incorporates diplomacy, economic pressure, and conventional military force.

Also important is an appreciation for the relationship amongst the different forms of support a state can provide an insurgent group. While every insurgency is likely to be different, in general terms some sorts of support are often interchangeable. For example, South Africa did not need to provide UNITA safe haven on its own or Namibia’s territory, because through direct military intervention the SADF had firm control of the air and ground in Southern Angola for much of the conflict. UNITA could remain in Angola, which conferred some additional legitimacy on the group, without any real fear of being wiped out by either MPLA or Cuban forces. Another good example of similarly interchangeable forms of support was arms and money in Afghanistan. Once the conflict had been going on for several years and there were sufficient stocks of captured weapons available in Pakistani bazaars to at least partially sustain the conflict in Afghanistan as long as the mujahideen had money to pay for them. For states considering whether to provide support to an insurgent group, interchangeable types of support provide significant flexibility. For example, if the direct provision of arms is not

possible either because gaining access to the insurgents is difficult or because such arms would betray a policy the state sponsor would rather remain covert or clandestine, then that state can provide money, which is often easier to transport and harder to trace.

When different forms of support are interchangeable, it allows a state sponsor significant flexibility, which can make the task of supporting an insurgent group much easier. Interchangeable forms of support fall into three categories: sustainment, survivability, and capacity building. Sustainment includes those things that directly contribute to the logistical support of the insurgents: money and arms. While safe haven is important for conducting logistical operations it cannot compensate for the loss of either form of logistical support. Survivability includes those things that prevent counterinsurgent forces from destroying the insurgent group: safe haven and direct support. Capacity building includes those things which will provide skills to the insurgents, which later will make their independent operations more effective. Training and advisors fall into this category for obvious reasons. Direct support may also increase the capacity of insurgent groups if it includes joint operations, which give the insurgent group exposure to more conventional military tactics, planning, and operations. A well balanced approach to supporting an insurgent group will likely include at least one or two types of support from each category, though the types of support will likely be dictated by the needs of the insurgent group, the desire for the state’s role to be covert or clandestine, and the means of the state sponsor.

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<td>Sustainment</td>
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*Figure 2: Interchangeable Forms of Support*
While some forms of support are interchangeable, in other cases insurgent groups may have to receive something directly from a state or make do without it. A great example of this was the Stinger missile in Afghanistan. The mujahideen, the Pakistanis, and the CIA all tried to find ways of dealing with the threat from the air by providing alternatives to the Stinger, but none were effective against modern Soviet aircraft. This stands in stark contrast to UNITA who had access to SA-7 missiles for the duration of the conflict, which may have been inferior to the Stinger, but were sufficient to allow UNITA to defend itself against the older aircraft fielded by the Cubans and the Angolans. In the former example, the insurgent group needed state support to deal with the threat from the air; in the latter example it did not. Deciding whether an insurgent group needs a specific form of aid is likely to depend on the circumstances of the conflict, and state sponsors should focus on those types of support unavailable to an insurgent group through any other means.

With all this in mind, we can reasonably conclude that a fairly disciplined and well-coordinated approach to providing support to insurgent groups is both more effective and more efficient. At no time was this clearer than when the CIA was providing support to moderate mujahideen parties in Afghanistan. The moderate parties were not as well funded by private groups in the Gulf States and as a result were forced to barter some of the weapons they were given for cash to store and transport those weapons they did not sell. As a result, the moderate groups quickly gained a reputation for corruption and their share of the overall distribution of weapons was cut. Thus, the moderate parties lost influence relative to the fundamentalist parties, which ultimately proved to be damaging to American interests. To overcome this problem the CIA either needed to be more involved in the distribution of weapons to individual commanders in Afghanistan, as they were in Angola, or the mujahideen needed to be more involved in deciding what proportion of aid was devoted to money and arms. Unfortunately, despite the best
efforts of the CIA officers involved, this proved impossible. The actual arrangement was the result of negotiations between the CIA and ISI, the latter of which gained the upper hand and established a system that favored ISI’s particular interests over those of the CIA. Such negotiations are likely to be an important component of any paramilitary activity which requires the support of other governments, so similar constraints are likely to be a problem in the future. Thus, when possible it is important for the U.S. to establish a central authority to provide unity of command over the support effort. However, usually it will be necessary for policymakers to appreciate the constraints imposed by coalitions and understand that the outcome of operations where there is no central decision making authority are likely to be less efficient and effective than they otherwise would be. If this has unacceptable strategic implications, withdrawing support for the insurgents or threatening withdrawal may be the only way to salvage the situation.

A somewhat related topic, which was mentioned earlier in the paper, is the state sponsor’s need to exert some control over the insurgent group. This is important not only because it insures the sponsor can influence the insurgent group to do its bidding, but also because control may actually help make the insurgent group more effective. For example, in the years before the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, the United States and Pakistan exerted significant influence over the mujahideen by funneling all aid through the seven parties based in Peshawar. As imperfect a system as it was, when Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, the United States, Russia, and some of the former Soviet Republics started funding commanders and other alliances independently, the mujahideen were much less capable of coordinating their operations.\textsuperscript{131} The survival of

\textsuperscript{131} Libicki asserts the number of insurgent factions or groups makes no difference, but does not provide the data, which support this assertion. He does provide evidence indicating that hierarchical insurgent groups win more frequently than networked groups do, though it is unclear
Najibullah’s regime for three years after the Soviet withdrawal was at least partially the result of mujahideen in-fighting. Thus, sometimes state control actually makes an insurgent group more military effective, even if it does not support each factions’ political goals.

Additionally, the benefits of state sponsorship go beyond their indirect effects of increasing mujahideen capacity. Control also serves the larger purpose of influencing insurgent groups to act in ways consistent with the state sponsor’s goals. While it is probably too much to expect an insurgent group to favor the objectives of the state sponsor over its own survival, ideology, or goals, there are times when a state sponsor might be able to convince an insurgent group to act in ways it otherwise would not. For example, South Africa could have pressured UNITA to assist in its efforts to eliminate SWAPO from Southern Angola in exchange for continued support. While this would have contradicted Savimbi’s rhetoric, it would not have proven deadly to his organization. Given a choice between the destruction of his organization in the absence of South African support and the destruction of SWAPO, Savimbi would have chosen the latter. State’s sponsoring an insurgency should always assess their proxy’s strength in the absence of support and decide whether they can risk pressuring the group to change some aspect of its operations.

States seeking to maximize their long term influence over an insurgent group should focus on providing money and arms, which are crucial to not only increasing but maintaining an insurgent group’s capacity. They are also often provided for long periods of time, which makes them well suited to building up an insurgent group’s dependence and then making their continued provision contingent on the insurgent group supporting the sponsor’s goals. In both Angola and Afghanistan other forms of support provided whether network groups fail because they are networked, or if they are networked because they lack the unity or strength to create a hierarchical organization. Libicki, 385-386.
only indirect or fleeting control over the insurgent group. Advisors and training do increase the capacity of the insurgent group, but they fail to create the dependency that helps a state sponsor control the insurgent group. Direct military intervention may create dependency, but it requires a significantly greater commitment than the provision of money or arms, and so its withdrawal is often the product of pressure on the sponsoring state rather than an effort to control the insurgent group. Often, state sponsors only intervene directly when the insurgent group seems to be diverging from the state sponsor’s goals, because other forms of support have failed to provide the desired level of control. While this strategy is usually effective, it does not provide the kind of long term but lower cost approach which often inspires support for an insurgent group. Therefore, given a choice state sponsors should focus their efforts first on providing money and arms, and only later provide training and advisors if the state sponsor achieves sufficient control over the insurgent group. Later, if this approach is ineffective the state sponsor may be forced to intervene directly, but this will likely be at a higher cost and may be unsustainable in the long term.

Finally, these two cases suggest that some forms of support are more effective at increasing an insurgent group’s capacity than others. First, safe haven is often critical to the survival, effective support, and command of an insurgent group not only initially but for the duration of a conflict. Providing safe haven is often a prerequisite for delivering other types of aid, so it is one of the first types of support a state should consider, but it does not directly increase the capacity of the insurgent group, as much as it facilitates the processes which do. It is essential, but should often be combined with other forms of support to be exploited fully. Second, direct military intervention was decisive in sustaining and building the capacity of UNITA to a point where it was able to negotiate a peace with MPLA in 1992. However, South Africa incurred high monetary costs, moderate casualties, and a significant loss of international legitimacy as a result. Thus,
under some circumstances these costs will outweigh the benefits of direct military intervention and an alternative approach will be required. Under such circumstances the provision of money or arms is a highly effective alternative. In both the Afghan and Angolan case the provision of arms and money demonstrated a strong relationship with the growing capabilities of the insurgencies in those countries. The financial costs were significant, but aside from small losses of legitimacy the policy was otherwise cost free. Additionally, it provided those states sponsoring the insurgents with an important source of influence over insurgent operations. If the insurgent groups failed to respond to state demands, cessation in the supply of money or arms would likely have nearly ended the conflict, or at least drastically reduced the capabilities of the insurgent group. In contrast to state support and the provision of arms or money, training and advisors seemed to have little effect on the conflicts in Afghanistan and Angola. While advisors seem more promising when combined with direct military intervention, as the spectacular U. S. victory that was achieved using the Northern Alliance against the Taliban demonstrates, small advisory efforts like those in the cases studied in this paper are unlikely to be successful.

The two cases presented here tentatively suggest that state support is likely to make an insurgent group more capable of defeating its enemies. However, they also demonstrate many of the risks and limitations inherent in such a strategy. Supporting insurgent groups, like any other foreign policy, requires a carefully calibrated strategy and significant regional expertise to be efficient and effective. What is most likely to work in any specific case will be determined by the characteristics of the targeted state, the insurgent group, and the targeted government, but general trends do exist. Direct military support, arms, and money seem to be the most valuable types of support for insurgent groups, while arms and money seem to afford a state sponsor the most
influence over the sponsored group. Of course, this study leaves many questions unanswered. While it does seem likely that state support will make an insurgent group more likely to achieve its goals, it is more difficult to determine whether that will actually help the sponsor achieve its goals. This work leaves that question to future scholars. Should the U. S. face an increasingly constrained strategic environment in the future, supporting insurgent groups is likely to be one of many solutions, just as it was one of many solutions during the Cold War.
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