DEMORALIZATION: A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON ONE-SIDED VIOLENCE BY REBELS

—a case study of UNITA in Angola

Magnus Lundström
Bachelor Thesis
Department of Peace and Conflict Research
Uppsala University, fall 2017
Supervisor: David Larsson Gebre-Medhin
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ABBREVIATIONS
UNITA – União Nacional para Independência Total de Angola
FNLA – Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola
MPLA – Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola
SWAPO – South West African Peoples Organizations of Namibia
Abstract

For those who observe conflicts from a distance, the killing of civilians might seem as a senseless dimension of war. Multiple theories have been presented, trying to explain this phenomenon. This paper is another contribution to the debate. It is a qualitative study of the phenomenon of one-sided violence by rebel groups. The method used is a structured focus comparison (SFC). The study tests the demoralization theory as an explanation of the varying levels of one-sided violence perpetrated by rebel groups. I claim, based on this theory, that demoralization within a rebel group causes the group to increase its level of violence against civilians. This is a measure to deter demoralized rebel fighters from deserting from the group. Used as the unit of analysis in this paper is the rebel group União Nacional para Independência Total de Angola (UNITA), actor in the Angolan Civil War. The results show some support for the theory, however, there is variation in one control variables. On the other hand, this variation could be regarded as a part of the demoralization theory. Therefore, I claim that the hypothesis of this paper to a large extent is correct and should be accepted.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Violence where civilians are specifically targeted by an organized actor is a tragic part of conflicts. In civil wars, both governments as well as rebel groups are responsible for this behavior. However, rebel groups commit this one-sided violence more frequently than governments do (Hultman & Eck, 2007: 237). The general consensus prior to the 1990s was that civilian casualties were “collateral damage” and that civilians were unfortunate to be caught in the crossfire. Another widespread belief was that violence against civilians was caused by old, ethnic rivalry and hatred (Valentino, 2014: 91-94). Described in terms of “tribal” violence in uncivilized societies. This perception was expressed by both journalists and world leaders, and exemplified with the wars in former Yugoslavia during the last decade of the twentieth century (ibid). The view changed during the 1990s with several reports by both academic scholars and NGOs, which concluded that the killing of civilians between ethnicities based on “ancient hatred” was very rare (ibid). During this period, the new consensus emerged where the
scholars either identified the motives behind one-sided violence as driven by either politics or war (Valentino, 2014: 94). Another popular theory has been that violence against civilians is a tool for an actor to coerce the civilians into supporting its side in the conflict. However, analyses of data have shown that such occurrences are exaggerated (Raleigh, 2012: 463).

However, as rebel groups target civilians more frequently, it is highly relevant to analyze the causes behind their varying levels of one-sided violence. The purpose of this paper is to identify what determines the different levels of rebel-based one-sided violence. The research question can thus be formulated as why does the level of one-sided violence employed by rebel groups vary? To determine what increases or decreases the violent behavior by rebel groups against civilians is of importance within the field of peace and conflict research. Newfound knowledge of this sort could contribute to sparing more civilian lives in conflicts, or at least help us understand and comprehend the phenomenon.

With this paper I aim to contribute with a new perspective on one-sided violence. The research gap that I have found is in the causal explanations of rebel-based one-sided violence, presented by many scholars. With a different approach, I argue that the level of one-sided violence by a rebel group is determined by in-group dynamics. The focus is the phenomenon of demoralization. If a rebel group experiences demoralization among its members following setbacks, they engage to a higher degree in violence against civilians. Instead of focusing on the relationship to the government, I follow the line that the level of one-sided violence is determined by how the rebels feel and behave. In order to test this theory, I am using a qualitative case study with one rebel group, União Nacional para Independência Total de Angola (UNITA) in Angola, on two occasions during the 1990s and early 2000s.

A section devoted to elaboration of the theory follows this introduction. Thereafter comes a section of research design. The results and interpretation of these results follow, and I end this paper with a conclusion and a summary.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this section, I lay out the theoretical framework which will be tested in this paper. It is based on the concept of “demoralization.” The hypothesis derived from the theory of demoralization is that a presence of demoralization will cause higher levels of one-sided violence by a rebel group.
2.1 Previous research on rebel groups’ violence against civilians

Many scholars have explored the field of rebel-based one-sided violence in attempts to establish the causes behind the phenomenon. Metelits (2009) argues that rebel groups can transform in their behavior towards civilians, becoming increasingly violent if their control over resources and other sources of income is threatened (Metelits, 2009: 106-107). Sources of income such as drug trafficking or revenues from natural resources constitute the backbone of rebel groups’ activities. Without the adequate resources, fighting against a government would be impossible (ibid). The sources of income determine the existence of a rebel group, and if that existence is threatened, the behavior against civilians will change to more violent methods in order to establish dominance and control (ibid).

Wood (2010) claims that it is the rebel group’s capabilities and government “counter-insurgent strategy” decide the rebel group’s proneness to one-sided violence. Rebel groups which are weak and face heavy tactics from the government use more violence against civilians according to Wood’s study (Wood, 2010: 612). Pospiesnza and DeRouen (2016) took a different approach, concluding that rebel groups’ violence against civilians – as well as the probability of it – increased if a third party tried to mediate between the parties in the conflict (Pospiesnza & DeRouen, 2016: 516).

Raleigh and Choi (2017) conducted a study of Sudan and DR Congo where they tested the theory that violence against civilians is strategic. They took a line where they argue that rebels and government influence each other regarding the level of one-sided violence. If a government increases its level of one-sided violence, the rebel group is more likely to increase its level of one-sided violence in turn (Raleigh & Choi, 2017: 874-875). Furthermore, the one-sided violence is a way for a rebel group to signal power and gain respect through fear (ibid). Other theories explaining the reasons for rebel groups’ violence against civilians have been presented, among others by Thaler (2012). According to his article, it was the Marxist-Leninist ideology embraced by MPLA (in Angola) and FRELIMO (in Mozambique) which caused the one-sided violence (Thaler, 2012: 560-561). This, since the driving Marxist-Leninist ideology “demanded” support from the people. When this demand was not met, the groups responded with violence and coercion (ibid).

Overall, we can see that the study field of one-sided violence is very broad and diverse. No consensus seems to have been reached. Various scholars have presented different theories on the root of the phenomenon. However, when many scholars seem to focus on the causes of the
phenomenon of one-sided violence, I am interested in another aspect: what factor determines the varying level of one-sided violence by a rebel group. The causes behind the phenomenon are highly relevant, of course. However, the focus of my paper is slightly different. A basic assumption in this paper is that all rebel groups are capable of one-sided violence (it will probably be difficult to find a rebel group which has not killed civilians intentionally). The fairly deterministic approach is disregarded here. Instead of concluding that if $x$ is present rebel-based one-sided violence will occur, I try to incircle the determinant of the level of one-sided violence. This attempt to establish the determinant of one-sided violence is not original, but I do think it has received a limited amount of attention.

Hultman (2007) argues that when faced with battlefield losses, or unsuccessful enterprises toward the government, rebel groups try to inflict costs on the government through the killing of civilians (Hultman, 2007: 205-206). Hultman’s argument is based in bargaining theory. This means that a conflict is bargaining situation where once strength determines how much influence and power you have in a negotiation with the other actor. Since a rebel group often is weaker than the government, the rebel group is in need of alternative ways of demonstrating their resolve and strength (which in turn buys them a better situation at the negotiation table) (Hultman, 2007: 208-209). However, if they lose soldiers on the battlefield, the perception of the rebel group’s weakness might cause the government not to negotiate. This, since the government considers the rebel group an easy opponent. The rebel group must thus manifest its strength and resolve to the government. One way of doing so is targeting civilians, causing the government both political and military costs (ibid: 209). This theory is more nuanced and focuses more on the level of one-sided violence, rather than the phenomenon itself.

However, I do think there is a flaw in the reasoning put forward by Hultman: the causal mechanism. The theory I will present in this paper is more focused on the human beings fighting in the conflict – something which the bargaining theory Hultman uses do not address. To some extent, conflicts often are about emotions, not only strategic bargaining-thinking. Especially among the lower ranks, where those who fight often are motivated by an ideology or religion. The demoralization addresses the feelings of these fighters as crucial part of the rebel group’s activities. Bargaining theory could be a good explanation for phenomenon during conflict, however, feelings such as demoralization cannot be disregarded. Instead of focusing on the bargaining situation with the government, I argue that in-group dynamics are more important. The theoretical mechanism will be presented after a section devoted to central concepts and definitions.
2.2 Concepts and definitions

One-sided violence is a central concept in this paper, and can take many expressions. It could be everything from targeted killings, to sexual violence or abductions. However, I will disregard everything but deliberate killings of civilians when speaking of violence against civilian (i.e. one-sided violence). As Hultman and Eck I define “one-sided violence” as “the deliberate and intentional killing of civilians by an armed actor in conflict” (Hultman & Eck, 2007: 233-235).

Furthermore, I feel that I once again need to stress that one-sided violence can both be conducted by rebel groups or governments, but in this paper, I focus on rebel-based one-sided violence. When I write “violence against civilians” or “killing of civilians,” I refer to one-sided violence, nothing else.

Since this paper discuss violence against civilians, it is also necessary to define the term “civilian.” In this paper, I use the definition by the Geneva Convention. Everyone who is not a combatant is thus regarded as a civilian (Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions 1977: article 50).

“Rebel group” is also in need of definition. In this case I will apply the definition presented by Hultman. “Rebel group” is defined as an organized non-state actor fighting a government over either territory or governmental power (Hultman, 2007: 206). Connected to the subject of rebel groups, is the concept of “rebel leadership.” With this I both include the central leadership, but also local commanders in a more decentralized rebel structure. The decisions made can be attributed to both the central as well as the local command.

In this paper, I also use the concept of “threatened rebel source of income.” During a conflict it is logical to assume that the enemy always threaten your source of income. It is in the enemy’s interest to hamper your funding. However, this constant “threat” does not qualify as threat in this study. Instead, the rebel source of income is threatened if it is attacked by the government, or if fighting is concentrated in an area central for the source of income. Furthermore, if the revenues of a source of income are decreased following such activities, this also qualifies as “threatened rebel source of income.” This, since the funding is threatened of being eliminated if further action is imminent.

There are a number of scholars discussing the concept of demoralization. Overall, there is a general consensus about the demoralization’s attributes. Schuyler (2015) emphasizes the loss of morale, and a sense of hopelessness (Schuyler, 2015). This description, however, is too vague. Instead, I define demoralization in line with Clarke and Kissane (2002) as following:
“the inability to cope with internal or external stresses, which leads to a deprivation of spirit, courage and discipline.” Therefore, the concept of demoralization is more of a phenomenon, which consists of multiple steps and takes place over time (Clarke & Kissane, 2002: 734). One thing to keep in mind is that I regard demoralization as a phenomenon which takes place over time, not instantly.

When concerned with desertion from the rebel group, I am only interested in the lower and middle ranks of the group. Defection from the group’s leadership is not as relevant, since the major part of fighting is conducted by the soldiers and their non-commissioned commanders. Desertion is defined as when you make a conscious decision to leave the group, as well as the cause, you are fighting for.

2.3 Theoretical mechanism
This paper takes a new approach in explaining rebel-based one-sided violence. I do believe that in-group dynamics with a focus on demoralization is central to the varying levels of rebel-based one-sided violence.

Demoralization is defined, as mentioned, as the deprivation of courage, spirit and discipline following the inability to cope with internal and/or external stresses. The scholars of psychology discuss demoralization on an individual level. Despite this, I do think that there is a possibility to expand the concept. Since a rebel group consists of many individuals who, in many ways are dependent on each other, demoralization should also be considered a phenomenon on a group level. A group can be demoralized, as well as individuals.

The following Figure I illustrates the chain of demoralization as described by Clarke and Kissane.

Figure I – The process of demoralization

Inability to cope with internal or external stresses

Deprivation of spirit, courage and discipline

Demoralization
The inability to cope with these internal and external stresses can take different shapes and forms. Multiple failures to counter government offensive initiatives, or weakening due to internal power struggles can severely affect spirit, courage and discipline. If a group is unable to cope with the external or internal stresses which are put on them during an armed conflict, multiple individuals in the group are deprived of courage, spirit and discipline. If a sufficient number of individuals in the group feel this way, the group becomes demoralized. Demoralized fighters without courage, spirit and discipline are probably more likely to desert from the rebel group.

This is where the violence against civilians comes in. Here we have two possible explanations for why the targeting is a way for the rebel leadership to prevent desertion. The first way is that the killing of civilians inflicts costs on the government, and in such a way increases in-group morale. Few things are as bad for the rebels’ in-group morale as a notion that the government can hurt you, but you cannot hurt the government. It is the inability to cope with the external stress which causes the demoralization. By regarding the country’s civilians as the responsibility or “property” of the government, the rebel group might feel that they hurt the government by killing its citizens. Another way the in-group morale could be increased by killing civilians is the notion of power among the rebels. Demonstrating their power against unarmed civilians can create the impression – both among the civilians and the rebel group’s ranks – that the rebels are able to do whatever they feel like doing.

The second way is that the killing of civilians serves as a deterrent for rebels who consider desertion. Instead of serving as inspiration and morale boost, the killing of civilians can just as well be a way of instilling fear among the rebel group’s ranks. By killing of innocent civilians, the rebel leadership demonstrates its resolve and ruthlessness towards everyone who is not in the group. If this violence is practiced against civilians who are unrelated to the rebel group, the risks coming with being caught as a defector from the group are not appealing. The deterrence-effect would be especially efficient if the methods of killing civilians are very cruel and brutal.

Both of these ways can be a part of a carrot-and-stick-reasoning. Being part of the rebel group equals power over civilians, and ability to decide over life and death. If you, on the other hand, leave the group, you are a victim and a target. Vulnerable and open for the cold ruthlessness of your former comrades. However, in a situation where a rebel group is under high levels of stress and feels demoralized, it is difficult to see how mere killing of civilians is efficient as a morale boost. Instead, I believe that fear is a stronger force. Therefore, I will take
the deterrence-trail when testing this theory. In sum, when faced with internal or external stress which they are unable to cope with, the rebels lose discipline, courage and spirit. Thus, becoming demoralized. If demoralized, the risk is that some rebels desert, whereas others consider it. In order to deter desertion, the rebel group’s leadership engage the rebel group in higher levels of one-sided violence. The leadership is nothing without its rebel group. The ambitions they have need the rebel group in order to be achieved; that is the leadership’s incentive to deter its fighters from desertion.

I make the assumption that the decision to target civilians comes from the leadership in a rebel group, not a phenomenon among rogue rebel fighters. This, since I adhere to the school of thought which considers one-sided violence strategic and intentional acts of terror. The decision to engage in violence against civilians thus lies at the local or central commander.

Wood (2010) and Hultman (2007) might not be incorrect in their observations of correlation between their different independent variables, and the level of rebel-based one-sided violence. I argue here that they are mistaken when explaining the causal mechanism. Relative weakness and battlefield losses can both affect the level of one-sided violence. However, these are factors which might increase demoralization, and by increasing the demoralization the factors also increase the level of one-sided violence. The causal mechanism proposed by me in this paper is illustrated in Figure II.

Figure II – Causal mechanism of the “demoralization theory”

As mentioned, a rebel group becomes demoralized following the inability to cope with external or internal stress. This demoralization is manifested through a loss of discipline, spirit and courage. The leadership of a very demoralized rebel group risks losing support by its members. If demoralization has hit, it is likely that the demoralized fighters desert from the group and the cause. If some fighters desert from the group, it is likely that more fighters follow the same train of thought. It should be in the interest of the rebel group leadership to prevent
further desertion from the rebel fighters. Thus, they increase the level of one-sided violence. One assumption here is that rebel fighters are unlikely to desert from a rebel group if the group is successful in its cause and vice versa.

2.4 Hypothesis

The hypothesis derived from this theory is that the varying level of one-sided violence by a rebel group depends on whether the group is demoralized or not. If a rebel group is demoralized, the leadership will engage the rebel group in higher levels of one-sided violence as a measure to deter rebels from deserting.

\textbf{H: If a rebel group experiences demoralization, the rebel group will engage in higher levels of one-sided violence.}

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Methods and case selection

Hultman (2007) and Wood (2010) conducted large-N, quantitative studies and came up with correlations showing a positive relationship between one-sided violence and battlefield losses (Hultman), as well as relative weakness in combination with hardline counterinsurgency (Wood). Lacking from these quantitative studies is an in-depth approach, which I will try to cover. This paper is a qualitative study and will use a structured focus comparison (SFC) as research methods. This structured focus comparison is structured in the sense that I ask the same set of questions to the two cases. A “case” in this paper is a year in which a rebel group killed a recorded number of civilians.

Since this is a small-n, qualitative study I need to select my cases strategically. I take a “most similar-approach” when doing this. This guides me to select two cases which are very similar apart from variation in the dependent variable (level of one-sided violence). For this paper, I have selected the years of 1993 and 2001 from the civil war in Angola. The rebel group in focus is União Nacional para Independência Total de Angola – the National Union for Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). In 1993 UNITA killed a comparatively small number of civilians, whereas in 2001 that number had increased significantly (UCDP, n.d. b). Thus, there is variation in the dependent variable.
I compare the level of one-sided violence conducted by UNITA during the two phases of the civil war. The first in 1993, and the second in 2002. One major advantage of using only one rebel group, and compare it on two occasions regards the causal criteria of isolation. During the few years which separate the two episodes, the surrounding circumstances are unlikely to have changed significantly. It is more difficult to isolate the phenomenon when comparing two rebel groups fighting in different contexts. Therefore, this design with one case compared over time is ideal to conduct this study.

3.2 Variables

3.2.1 Independent variable and dependent variable

The independent variable \((x)\) of this paper is “demoralization.” I define it as Clarke and Kissane (2002) do: the inability to cope with external or internal stresses, which causes the deprivation of courage, spirit and discipline. This concept is very vague, thick and multilayered. In order to measure it, I need to break it down into multiple pieces. How that is done will be demonstrated in the section of operationalization.

My dependent variable \((y)\) in this paper is “level of one-sided violence.” In other words, the level of one-sided violence is the number of non-combatants, i.e. “civilians” who are killed during the selected year.

3.2.2 Control variables

A number of control variables will be tested in this paper in order to isolate the potential covariation in dependent and independent variable. These control variables could constitute alternative explanations and are derived from theories by previous scholars.

The first control variable \((z_1)\) is “type of incompatibility.” Some scholars might argue that the level of violence against civilians depends on whether the conflict is about a territory or the government. Hypothetically, if a rebel group fights for a territory, they might be less prone to kill the civilians in the territory due to local ties or a sense of belonging. This is a control variable, also used by Hultman (2007). This variable is nominal, i.e. merely descriptive.

The second control variable \((z_2)\) is “exclusive ethnic targeting of civilians.” As mentioned, the theory that high levels of one-sided violence only occur within ethnic conflicts has more or less been abandoned. However, I do feel that there still is a need for this control variable to be included since it is not irrelevant. If the conflict has an ethnic dimension – which Angola has – there is a risk of ethnic targeting. A rebel group which select civilians to kill, only based on the
civilians’ ethnicity conducts ethnic targeting. This was, for instance, the case in Rwanda in 1994, or in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1995. However, I will only count exclusive ethnic targeting. That is, if there is evidence that the rebel group’s attacks on civilians are not exclusive to other ethnicities, this variable will score a “No.”

The final control variable (z3) is “threat to rebel group’s source of income.” I base this control variable on previous research by Metelits (2009). The theory behind this variable has been explained in the theory section, under Previous research. In sum, the author claims that rebel groups tend to change their behavior if their control over sources of income is threatened. This variable is very relevant – to this case study in particular. Angola holds vast amounts of natural resources: oil; diamonds; and other valuable minerals (Malqauis, 2007: 120). During the civil war Angola’s oil production largely funded the government’s war efforts against UNITA (Le Billon, 2005: 6-7). Furthermore, UNITA enjoyed large diamond revenues which to a large extent financed their struggle against the government (Weigert, 2011: 156-157).

3.3 Operationalization

3.3.1 Operationalization of the independent variable

Measuring “demoralization” is a major challenge. In order to do so, I need to break down this multilayered concept in to number of questions. I base the questions on the components of the definition by Clarke and Kissane (2002): (i) external stress and internal stress; (ii) inability to cope with external stress and internal stress; and (iii) deprivation of courage, spirit and discipline.

Firstly, there is the “inability to cope with external stresses.” I have decided to measure the level of external stress, and then measure UNITA’s inability to cope with this external stress.

I measure external stress in two ways: (x1) offensive initiatives by the government; and (x2) external support to the government. If the government launches large offensives against the rebel group in question, there is no doubt that the level of external stress increases. A rebel group under attack is a rebel group under stress. Secondly, the external stress can be increased through external support to the government. To be attacked on two fronts by two different actors is a certain way of measuring the level of external stress. This external support must be of a military nature; either military equipment or active military support. Financial support is not included in this paper. However, the essential part of this component is the inability to cope with the external stresses.
I measure the inability to cope with said external stress in two ways as well. \((x_3)\) By analyzing rebel military failures, and \((x_4)\) rebel group reorganization during the set period of time. A rebel group which tries to counter the external stress with military initiatives, but fails is unable to cope with this external stress. Furthermore, if a rebel group reorganizes it is a sign that the current strategy is not working adequately. There is no need to mend something which is not broken. These are the measures I use to establish UNITA’s potential inability to cope with external stresses.

The “inability to cope with internal stresses” \((x_5)\) is also included. The internal stress could be measured through observations of internal power struggles, within the rebel group. I call this variable “frequent or long-lasting internal power struggle.” If the rebel leadership often experience challenges for the top spot, or is incapable of ending such a challenge there are both internal stress, and inability of coping with said stress. I operationalize the inability to cope with internal stresses through controlling if the rebel group experience a long-term or frequent power struggles. By “long-lasting” I mean a power struggle which has been going on for more than a year. I define “frequent” as more than one challenge to the leadership during the selected time period. The section on internal stress is less comprehensive than the section devoted to external stress. This is a result of scarcity of data and difficulties regarding the operationalization.

Demoralization also includes a final component, “deprivation of spirit, courage and discipline” which follows previously mentioned inabilities. Of all the components of demoralization, this is the easiest to grasp. I operationalize the deprivation of spirit, courage and discipline through controlling if there is significant desertion from the rebel group. This part is called “Significant desertion from the lower or middle ranks of the rebel group.”

It might be easy to imagine how a deprivation of discipline is manifested, but it is more difficult to obtain detailed data on number of deserting rebels. Hence, I must use the data I have access to in another way. The numbers are too vague, and too few to establish a level of desertion. On the other hand, reports of an increased level of desertion during phases of the war are available. Thus, this is another dichotomous variable. The level of desertion is considered “significant” if there is a reported pattern of rebels leaving the group. As mentioned, I am only concerned with desertion from the lower and middle ranks.

However, there is a problem here which needs to be acknowledged: Demoralization can be visible, but it can be very difficult to detect from merely gathering observable data. Rebel fighters might be openly demoralized, and thus desert from the rebel group. Or they might be demoralized secretly, and not doing anything about it. If this is the case, the demoralization
would almost be impossible to operationalize without first-hand interviews with former rebel fighters.

It is very difficult to assess the level of demoralization, even when one combines the results from these sub-variables. Should a threshold of demoralization be the number of rebel fighters who desert from the group? I do not think that is wise, since it is very difficult to obtain reliable data on such matters. Since this is the case, I chose to make this a dichotomous variable. Either demoralization is present, or it is absent. Demoralization is present if the case scores a “Yes” on all components of the demoralization variable. However, it is not a requirement for the demoralization to include both internal and external stress. Internal and external stresses can, in their own right, constitute the basis of demoralization. Therefore, one of those is sufficient.

3.3.2 Operationalization of the dependent variable

The dependent variable is, as mentioned, the level of rebel-based one-sided violence. It is operationalized through measuring the number of civilians killed by the rebel group selected (UNITA). I can obtain this data in various ways since there are multiple datasets covering this phenomenon. There is the Konstanz One-Sided Violence Dataset (KOSVED) which is based in Germany and funded by the German Peace Foundation. There is also the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) dataset on one-sided violence. Due to its comprehensiveness and detailed data, I will use UCDP’s dataset on one-sided violence when measuring my dependent variable.

The level of one-sided violence is measured in three levels: (i) high; (ii) moderate; and (iii) low. This rather uncontroversial ranking has thresholds for each level. Between 0 and 500 civilians killed (during one year), is considered as low levels of one-sided violence. Between 500 and 1,000 civilians killed is regarded as moderate levels of one-sided violence, and 1,000 or more civilians killed is considered as high levels of one-sided violence. Unlike the dichotomous independent variable, the dependent variable is ordinal.

3.3.3 Operationalization of the control variables

The control variables are operationalized in many different ways. The first variable, “type of incompatibility” \((z_l)\) is measured through the Uppsala Conflict Data Program’s coding of incompatibilities. The variable is nominal – in other words, purely descriptive. Either the conflict’s incompatibility is “government” or “territory.”
The second control variable ($z_2$) “exclusive ethnic targeting of civilians” is a dichotomous variable. I measure it through determining if there has been ethnic targeting of civilians, mainly through reports by human rights groups or other NGOs. As defined in the theory section of this paper, ethnic targeting is coded as “Yes” or “No” depending on whether the rebel group in question targets civilians of another ethnicity exclusively.

The final control variable is “threatened rebel sources of income” ($z_3$). It is operationalized through determining whether the rebel group has some sort of concrete income from natural resources (e.g. diamond and oil), illicit drug or arms trade. If this source of income is threatened, the explanation scores a “Yes” and vice versa. However, there is a need to specify what is meant with “threatened.” I count the rebel source of income as threatened if: there is fighting going on between the government and the rebels in the areas which provide the rebels with income; or if the government conquers areas which hold resource wealth or are key in the chain of smuggling. This often hampers the utilization of the resources, and threatens thus the rebel source of income.

### 3.4 Sources of data

Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) will serve as the primary source of data regarding the level of rebel-based one-sided violence. The dataset contains very reliable and accurate information regarding the number of casualties, both battle-related and among civilians. UCDP dataset also include rich and detailed descriptions of the conflict dynamics, where one also can discover if an external party was involved in the conflict. Data on the threatened sources of income can be found in reports from various government agencies or NGOs, as well as the UCDP database.

I do not only make use of datasets in this paper. I also utilize books by scholars which provide with rich in-depth descriptions of the Angolan Civil War. Stephen Weigert’s book from 2011 contain detailed data on the military aspects of the war, whereas Assis Malaquais (2007) provides with a broader picture of the conflicts different aspects. Weigert works as a research specialist at the US State Department, which opens for doubt regarding the objectivity of his work. However, I focus on the time period after the American involvement in Angola had seized (or at least decreased). Due to the decreased American interests, I do not see a problem when using Weigert’s book as a source of data. I also make use of numerous journal articles by scholars of both psychology and political science.
One issue I would like to acknowledge is the difficulties regarding data collection on variables. To find numbers on the number of rebels who have deserted, or whether the rebels feel unable to cope with internal or external pressure are challenging tasks.

3.5 Scope conditions and time limits

The demoralization theory presented and tested in this paper has certain scope conditions. It might be redundant to mention this; however, the theory is only applicable to rebel groups. Rebels tend to be the weaker actor in intra-state conflicts, and do often have different preconditions compared to a governmental actor. That is one reason why it might be difficult to generalize about both governments and rebel groups. Secondly, it only accounts for the deliberate killings of civilians in intra-state conflicts. Rebel actors are more or less exclusively active in intra-state conflicts, and inter-state conflicts are very rare in the contemporary world. These are the reasons why I have crafted this theory, which only applies to rebel groups in intra-state conflicts.

Furthermore, demoralization is not an instant phenomenon, instead it occurs over time. Therefore, I need to measure the independent variable a few years in advance of the chosen years (1993 and 200 – where the variation in the dependent variable is the largest). I have set the time limit so I measure the two years before mentioned years. The time intervals are thus 1991 to 1993, and 1999 to 2001. By doing this, the phenomenon – if found – could be tracked back a number of years. This will provide with a more adequate image.

4. Results & Interpretation

4.1 Brief introduction to the Angolan civil war

Angola’s post-1945 history is turbulent. Following the end of the Second World War, the Portuguese control over its colonies was challenged by domestic, nationalist movements (Malaquais, 2007: 29-30). In Angola, these movements grew in strength and by the 1970s, a war of liberation was fought between the Portuguese colonizers and the indigenous people (ibid). There were three major nationalist movements, and each of these movements had strong connections to their own ethnicity (ibid). This fractionalization, with many actors and their strong interests, combined with a poor and careless decolonization of Angola caused a civil war after independence (Malaquias, 2007: 50).
Three groups dominated the war. There was the Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA). The group was formed in 1956, and their primary base of support was the ethnicity of Mbunbu (ibid). A Marxist- Leninist organization, MPLA received external support from the Soviet Union and Cuba during the late 1970s and 1980s (ibid: 56-57). The second group was Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola (FNLA). They were formed in 1962, and fought the MPLA Marxists, with a vision of the restoration of the old Kongo Kingdom. This group was partly supported by the United States in the early period of the civil war and their main source of support was the ethnic group of Bakongo (Malaquias, 2007: 57-58). The third major group in the Angolan conflict was União Nacional para Independência Total de Angola (UNITA). Sprung from FNLA and created by Jonas Savimbi in 1964, UNITA had support from the largest ethnic group in Angola; the Ovimbundu (Malaquias, 2007: 65). Both ideology, politics and ethnicity played a part when UNITA was created. The dominating Ovimbundu felt that they were not represented by any of the other two liberation movements. Furthermore, the leader, Savimbi sensed that such a large ethnicity’s own nationalist movement would be powerful and influential (ibid: 70-71). When the Portuguese left in 1975, the scene was set for major confrontation between these groups and their ambitions to ascend to power.

The civil war’s first half was fought from independence to 1991 (Weigert, 2011: 69). During this time, the conflict became a pawn in the Cold War. MPLA was supported by the Communist Soviet Union, and Cuba whereas FNLA was supported by Zaire (now DR Congo) and UNITA by the United States. Especially, during the 1980s with the Reagan Administration in Washington, UNITA was widely regarded as freedom fighters (Malaquais, 2007: 82-85). Moreover, as a reaction to MPLA’s support to ANC (African National Congress) and SWAPO (South West African Peoples Organizations of Namibia) the South African Apartheid government also intervened with armed forces in Angola. Frequently during the 1980s. These campaigns aimed to aid UNITA in its fight against MPLA (Weigert, 2011: 78-88).

With the end of the Cold War and collapse of the Soviet Union, the war in Angola decreased in intensity and attempts were made to reach a negotiated settlement (UCDP, n.d. a). The different sides agreed on demobilizing, but by this stage, FNLA’s significance was almost completely eradicated (Malaquais, 2007: 64-65). The two remaining rivals over the government power were UNITA and MPLA. A settlement was reached with the Bicesse Peace Accord in 1991. However, tensions rose again in 1992 with Savimbi claiming that UNITA’s defeat in the election was a result of election fraud (UCDP, n.d. a). In 1992 following an election defeat for UNITA, fighting resumed. Two phases of the civil war were fought throughout the 1990s.
Another major attempt for peace was made. The Lusaka Accord was signed by the warring parties in November 1994 (UCDP, n.d. a). Between the signing of the agreement and 1998, large trust issues between the parties made the implementation of the agreement very difficult (ibid). Eventually, this lack of trust and unwillingness to disarm led to the complete failure of the Lusaka Accord. Fighting resumed.

Gradually, the government gained the upper-hand in the conflict – mainly due to untenable war strategy of UNITA who, due to over-confidence, initiated in conventional warfare. By the early 2000s, UNITA was on the verge of defeat, with neighboring Namibia actively supporting the MPLA government (UCDP, n.d. a).

In 2002, the conflict came to an end with the death of Jonas Savimbi in combat with the governmental forces. After this, UNITA more or less seized to fight. They were an organization under extensive pressure and without a strong leader. Negotiations commenced and resulted in a peace agreement the very same year (ibid). New elections were held, and MPLA came to power. This time, without UNITA reigniting the civil war (ibid).

4.2 Results from independent and dependent variables

4.2.1 \((x_1)\) Offensive initiatives from the government:

(1991–1993) The end of the Cold War contributed to a decreased intensity in the civil war in Angola. By the early 1990s, negotiations took place between MPLA and UNITA. Thus, this was not the time for offensive initiatives for the government (Weigert, 2011: 99-103). By the time of the collapse of the Bicesse Peace Accord and the 1992 election, the MPLA (which won the election and remained as the recognized government) was in a difficult position. UNITA had not demobilized as many troops as they claimed to have done (UCDP, n.d. a). Rather soon after the reignition of the conflict, UNITA’s troops controlled a quarter of the country. No major offensives by the government occurred, and UNITA was in a rather good position (ibid). The government was caught off guard, and not able to put any significant pressure on UNITA. Thus, we can conclude that during 1991, 1992 and 1993, no major government offensive took place. In fact, at this point it was rather the other way around; UNITA had the tactical initiative.

(1999–2001) In the late 1990s, and early 2000s, the situation was radically different. UNITA was under massive external pressure. In 1999, the MPLA government launched a major offensive against UNITA-held territories – Operation Restauro (Weigert, 2011: 148-150). The
offensive led to UNITA losing control over several important strongholds such as Andulo and Bailundo (ibid).

At this point, the Angolan army was well-equipped with new aircraft and land-based missiles, both outnumbering and outmatching UNITA militarily (ibid). In the beginning of the 2000s, the Angolan government launched two new offensives. Operation Hexagono in 2000, aimed to crush UNITA which responded with guerilla warfare (Weigert, 2011: 154-155). The third offensive – Operation Triangulo – quickly followed, and the government managed to conquer some airfields wherefrom UNITA smuggled diamonds (ibid: 156-158). This severely hampered UNITA’s capabilities from this point forward. Following a devastating government offensive, Savimbi himself was encircled by government forces and killed. After the death of Savimbi, UNITA quickly surrendered and a peace agreement ended the almost 27-year long conflict (ibid).

In sum, the Angolan MPLA government did not initiate any offensives during the time period of 1991 to 1993. Instead, UNITA had the tactical initiative – primarily after the reignition of the civil war. During the 1999-2001-time period, the number and scope of the government offensives were much greater. The situation differed considerably between the time periods.

4.2.2 (x2) **External support to government:**

In the conflict’s early stages in the 1970s and particularly in the 1980s, MPLA received support from the Soviet Union and Cuba. Their Leninist-Marxist agenda appealed to the decision-makers in Moscow and Havana. Mainly based on this, UNITA was supported by the Reagan Administration in the United States as a part of the Reagan Doctrine. Washington’s aim with this was to prevent Communist organizations such as MPLA from gaining power and influence. This support continued under the administration of George H.W. Bush (Malaquais, 2007: 42-43; Weigert, 2011: 92). Not only were the big international actors invested in the Angolan civil war, but also regional actors. The apartheid regime in South Africa in particular. Throughout the 1980s, the South African army intervened on multiple occasions in neighboring Angola, supporting UNITA (Weigert, 2011: 78-89). The support was manifested by both military equipment and soldiers (ibid).

**(1991-1993)** Despite this large foreign involvement in the civil war’s first phase, relatively few external actors were active in Angola during the 1990s. During the time period 1991 to 1993 the recognized MPLA government did not receive any clear, active military support from external parties.
The situation in 2001 was vastly different. The government of Angola had got the permission by the government of Namibia to use Namibian soil to fight UNITA. This led to UNITA taking offensive action against the Namibian government (UCDP, n.d. a). Against UNITA’s expectations, the Namibian government responded with direct military action against rebel group, supporting the Angolan government (ibid).

One could summarize the findings from the variables measuring external pressure. In 1992, and the two years before, UNITA was under a relatively low amount of external stress. No external parties supported the government, which had not performed especially well in the battlefield. No major government offensive took place in those years. In 2001, the tide had turned. UNITA had faced a number of large and successful government offensives in the years 1999, 2000 and 2001. Furthermore, UNITA simultaneously had to fight the government of Namibia. The external stress which UNITA was exposed to in the early 2000s had drastically increased compared to the early 1990s.

4.2.3 (x₃) Rebel military failures:

As we could see in the previous parts of the independent variable, the level of external stress was considerably lower in 1991-1993, compared to 1999-2001. How well did UNITA cope with the different levels of external stresses put on them? In order to determine this, one could analyze both if UNITA experienced some major (x₃) military failures and if (x₄) UNITA reorganized during these time periods.

(1991-1993) In the beginning of the civil war’s second phase, it was government rather than UNITA, which experienced military failures. In 1992, following the collapse of the peace process the UNITA rebels did not experience major military failures. On the contrary, due to the fact that UNITA had not demobilize as agreed, they achieved great military successes. At one point, UNITA controlled a quarter of Angola (UCDP, n.d. a). Moreover, in late 1992, UNITA had successful gained control over two-thirds of Angola’s big cities. Rather than experiencing military failures in 1991, 1992 and 1993, UNITA saw strategic successes against the government troops. The successful operations in late 1992 were followed by rapid offensives against the government forces (Weigert, 2011: 112-116).

(1999-2001) The years 1999 to 2001 differed from the years of UNITA’s success in the early 1990s. As mentioned, the Angolan government launched a number of offensives in 1999 and 2000 as well as in 2001 (Weigert, 2011: 148-158). A consequence of the government’s
advances and victories was severe defeats for UNITA. In September of 2000, UNITA lost all major cities in Angola’s Uige Province following fierce attacks from the government’s troops (Weigert, 2011: 157). Some counteroffensives were launched by UNITA, but despite small “victories” against the government the major defeats kept coming (ibid). In April 2001, the government troops conquered one of UNITA’s bases, capturing substantial amounts of artillery pieces, armed vehicles, approximately 8,000 60-mm mortars, 370 cases of small arms and light weapons (SALWs), among other military equipment (Weigert, 2011: 163).

In sum, in 1991-1993, UNITA achieved success in their military enterprises. There were no major, rebel military failures. However, in 1999-2001, the rebel group’s struggle against the government was dominated by military failures and defeats.

4.2.4 (xi) Reorganization of rebel group

UNITA and Savimbi did use various strategies when engaging with the MPLA government of Angola. One can see a clear pattern in time when these strategies were used.

(1991-1993) During the 1980s and early 1990s, UNITA’s warfare resembled that of a conventional army, not an insurgency (Weigert, 2011: 153). The campaigns and other offensive initiatives were often well-coordinated, across the country (ibid). This tactic and subsequent disposition of UNITA’s forces also applied in the beginning of the civil war’s second phase. Large use of artillery and tanks, followed by charge of infantry (ibid). In 1992, this conventional warfare was very successful, and UNITA even threatened to conquer the capital of Luanda (Malaquais, 2007: 105). This strategy was, however, costly for UNITA. This overconfidence was based in UNITA’s revenues from diamonds and other minerals (ibid: 110-111).

(1999-2001) Due to high costs and the inability to counter the government’s gains, UNITA eventually had to change its strategy and organization. After a government offensive in 1999 – Operation Restauro – the leadership of UNITA, convened and decided to abolish the conventional tactics (Weigert, 2011: 152-153). Instead, UNITA went back to traditional insurgent warfare with sporadic and quick hit-and-run assaults. Much of the centralized command was changed as local leaders got mandate to initiate offensive actions against the government (ibid). The following year, in May 2000, UNITA reorganized again. Once again, this reorganization entailed even more decentralization of the command since the units of UNITA became even more cut off and isolated from each other (Weigert, 2011: 152-153).
Table 1 – Findings summarized

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(x₁) Offensive initiative from government? <em>(high external stress)</em></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(x₂) External support to government? <em>(high external stress)</em></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(x₃) Rebel military failures? <em>(inability to cope with external stress)</em></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(x₄) Reorganization of rebel group? <em>(inability to cope with external stress)</em></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(x₅) Frequent or long-lasting internal power struggle? <em>(inability to cope with internal stress)</em></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(x₆) Significant desertion from middle and lower ranks the rebel group? <em>(loss of discipline, courage and spirit)</em></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(y) Level of one-sided violence</td>
<td>Low levels (343 civilians killed, in 1993)</td>
<td>High levels (1,029 civilians killed, in 2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(z₁) Exclusive ethnic targeting of civilians in the conflict?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(z₂) Type of incompatibility</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(z₃) Threatened rebel sources of income?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
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In sum, we can see that UNITA at the start of the civil war’s second phase in 1992 kept its semi-conventional strategy. It had been successful during the 1980s, and there was no reason to mend something which was not broken. However, at the end of the decade in 1999 and 2000 UNITA did change its strategy. The semi-conventional tactics had become too costly, and did
not bring any success. Instead, UNITA reverted to classic guerilla warfare. Yet another reorganization took place following advances by the government. When severely pressured, UNITA was forced to reorganize and change its strategy. Hence, “reorganization of the rebel group” scores a “No” during the period 1991-1993. Meanwhile, UNITA reorganized multiple times during 1999-2001 and thus, scores a “Yes.”

4.2.5 (xs) Frequent or long-lasting internal power struggles:

(1991-1993) Before I write anything more, I need to acknowledge that there is limited data on this subject. However, what is recorded is that Jonas Savimbi conducted regular purges within the leadership in UNITA (Malaquais, 2007: 92) This was a measure to eliminate every potential challenger to the leading post in UNITA. (However, this also hampered the UNITA’s capabilities, since many of the senior commanders, politicians and strategists were executed.) (Malaquais, 2007: 97) Thus, one can conclude that Savimbi both realized the potential internal threat, and dealt with in a preemptive manner. From the period 1991 to 1993, there are no recorded cases of internal power struggles.

(1999-2001) Nor does the time period 1999 to 2001 provide with any evidence that internal power struggles took place. During 1999 and 2000, Savimbi decentralized command over UNITA considerably. Despite several units being isolated, no claims on the main leadership were made (Weigert, 2011: 152-153). The absence of central command certainly opened up the field for competition among the lower commanders in UNITA. However, this did not occur. If an internal power struggle did not take place when such a golden opportunity presented itself, one can conclude that no major internal power struggles took place in UNITA. Possibly due to Savimbi’s strong position, his authority and due to fear for being purged.

In 1998, there were some fractionalization within UNITA. Moderates within the organization decided to suspend Jonas Savimbi – mainly due to his unwillingness to reach a negotiated settlement (UCDP, n.d. a). This enterprise failed. The vast majority of UNITA’s members remained loyal with Savimbi. Events such as these could be defined as power struggles within the rebel group. However, there are some reasons why I do not count this particular event as one. First and foremost, the event took place in 1998. My study only covers the years 1991 to 1993 and 1999 to 2001. Thus, everything occurring in 1998 falls outside the set time frame. Secondly, since the moderates’ aim was to oust Savimbi in order to reach a negotiated settlement, the motive behind the action was not power, but a desire for peace (ibid).
Based on these results, this variable receives a “No” for both the periods 1991-1993 and 1999-2001.

4.2.6 (x₆) Significant desertion from lower and middle ranks in the rebel group:
The deprivation of courage, discipline and spirit is the final part of demoralization. It is the result of the inability to cope with internal and/or external stresses. However, I need to acknowledge that data on desertion among rebel fighters is difficult to obtain.

(1991-1993) From the years 1991 to 1993, there are reports of some senior officers in UNITA’s leadership defected from the rebel group to join the Angolan government’s army (Weigert, 2011: 116). Among these were central commanders such as Adriano Mackenzie, Geraldo Nuna, generals who had fought with UNITA and achieved much success since the civil war began (ibid). On the other hand, despite these defections from the leadership, no noticeable desertion took place among the lower ranks (ibid). It is the broad defections from the lower and middle ranks which are signs of demoralization.

(1999-2001) The years 1999 to 2001 UNITA saw an increase in desertion (UCDP, n.d. a). For instance, UNITA’s loss of the strongholds of Andulo and Bailundo in 1999 came after a large number of UNITA fighters deserted the rebel group as the government’s army approached (Weigert, 2011: 148-150). There are no clear figures on how many UNITA fighters deserted from the group at the turn of the new millennium. However, according to Uppsala Conflict Data Program, in the early 2000s the number of rebels deserting or giving themselves up to government forces increased drastically (UCDP, n.d. a).

The desertions occurring between 1999 and 2001 seems to be of a different nature, compared to ones occurring between 1991 and 1993. In the early 1990s, the defections came from the top of UNITA. Commanding officers left the rebel group in order to cooperate with the government forces. In the early 2000s, the defections came from the lower ranks. Rebel fighters likely left UNITA following the military setbacks. We can only speculate in their motives, but a logical one could be that they had lost faith in the cause. Their discipline had deteriorated due to the “inability to cope” with the external stress put on them by any external actors.

These findings suggest that no significant desertion from the lower and middle ranks took place during the time period 1991-1993. However, during the time period 1999-2001 saw occurrence of this significant desertion. The deprivation of courage and discipline was thus present in 1999-2001, and not in 1991-1993.
4.2.7 (y) Level of UNITA’s one-sided violence:
(1993) Many civilians were killed during Angola’s long civil war. The levels varied quite a lot over the years of conflict. According to Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 1993 saw an estimated 343 civilians killed by UNITA (UCDP, n.d. b). This level of civilians killed came after the civil war between the government of Angola and UNITA had resumed in 1992. By this time, UNITA had made significant gains and, as mentioned, controlled large parts of Angola.

(2001) In 2001, following the government’s multiple offensives and military failures along with multiple reorganizations, UNITA was responsible for an estimated 1,029 civilian deaths (UCDP, n.d. b). Compared to 1993, the increase is rather remarkable.

We can clearly see the variation between 1993 and 2001. Much higher levels of civilians were killed in 2001 compared to 1993. According to this paper’s threshold, low levels of civilians were killed in 1993, whereas high levels of civilians were killed in 2001.

4.3 Result from the control variables
The first control variable ($z_1$), “exclusive ethnic targeting of civilians by the rebel group” shows an interesting result. Earlier in this paper, I described how the different rebel groups in Angola were formed along different ethnic lines. MPLA primarily had support from the Mbunbu, or mulattos, assimilated by the Portuguese colonizers, whereas FNLA had support from the Bakongo. UNITA had close ties to the ethnic group of Ovimbunbu, who regarded themselves as proper “Africans” alienated by the Portuguese colonizers (Malaqaus, 2007: 50-51; 65).

Uppsala Conflict Data Program stated that UNITA usually – not exclusively – targeted the other ethnic groups in Angola when exercising its one-sided violence (UCDP, n.d. b). However, the other ethnicities of Angola were not exclusively the targeted for the one-sided violence. No findings have indicated that UNITA’s goal was to purge all the other ethnicities in Angola. If it had been similar to the ethnic wars in former Yugoslavia, the selection of victims would have been more careful. The killings and torture were to a large extent indiscriminate (Malaqaus, 2007: 105). An example of the indiscriminate use of violence and other contentious tactics by UNITA, was when the rebels changed tactics in the late 1990s. UNITA forced civilians to leave their homes in order for the civilians to become a burden for the government. This increased the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) put large pressure on the government to deal with the situation. My point here is that this forced deportation of people was not based on the civilians’ ethnicity (Birkeland, 2000: 111-112). Furthermore, the ethnic dimension had decreased in significance during the late stages of the conflict. There were large parts of the
Ovimbundu people among both the government and UNITA’s ranks (ibid). This shows that ethnicity had not much significance during the latter part of the civil war. Not between 1991 and 1993, nor between 1999 and 2001. Hence, the variable scores a “No” in both cases.

Secondly, there was “type of incompatibility” ($z_2$). Both before and after the failed election of 1992, the civil war was fought over who was going to rule Angola. In other words, the incompatibility of the time period 1991 and 1993 was “government.” In the time span 1999 to 2001, nothing had changed. The civil war was still fought over the governmental power (UCDP, n.d. a). Thus, the incompatibility stayed constant over time.

The last control variable ($z_3$) “threatened rebel sources of income” differs from the other ones. Here, we can see a clear variation over time.

First, however, UNITA’s main source of income needs to be determined. Angola is a country with great natural resource wealth. Oil, valuable minerals and diamonds in large quantities are to be found in different regions of the country and have attracted many international companies (Malaquais, 2007: 120). During large parts of the conflict, UNITA’s main source of income was revenues from diamond smuggling. It was the income from diamonds which made it possible for UNITA to endure against the government for so long (Le Billon, 2001: 71). In 1999, UNITA earned approximately $300 million from this diamond smuggling (Weigert, 2011: 157).

Logically, this source of income was constantly threatened. In a war, your enemy often strive to cut off the funding of your rebel group. As Metelits states, the backbone of a rebel group’s activities is funding through resources (Metelits, 2009: 105-106). As stated, I would claim that a rebel group’s source of income is threatened if it is heavily reduced due to government advances. During the period of 1991 to 1993, UNITA’s control over diamond revenues was threatened. However, due to UNITA’s military successful military enterprises in 1992, this threat was not as serious as it could have been. Moreover, during the time period 1991 to 1993, there were no recorded blows struck against UNITA’s diamond revenues. The time period 1999 to 2001 was different in this sense. With the Triangulo offensive in 2000, the Angolan government captured two airfields, instrumental to UNITA’s diamond smuggling (Weigert, 2011: 156-157). This was a severe hit to UNITA’s funding. According to some estimations, UNITA’s diamond revenues went from $300 million in the late 1990s, to $100 million in the year 2000 (ibid). In this sense, UNITA’s source of income was severely threatened in the time period 1999 to 2001, very much unlike the situation in the early 1990s.
In sum, there was no cases of exclusive ethnic targeting in any of the cases. Nor did any variation appear regarding the conflict’s incompatibility. However, covariation was found in the final control variable. UNITA’s resources were threatened in a completely different, more serious, way in 1999-2001, compared to 1991-1993.

4.4 Additional observations

When studying the material concerning UNITA’s one-sided violence and the civil war in Angola I found some additional observations which have implications for the theory. They regard the nature of UNITA’s killing of civilians. Some of Savimbi’s motives behind the killings also become clear.

The nature of UNITA’s violence against civilians was very cruel. Even compared to other nationalist factions in Angola, UNITA and Savimbi are the ones primarily interlinked with brutality (Figueiredo Neto, 2017: 316). According to UCDP’s description of the one-sided violence, UNITA used a large variety of means to kill the civilian population. In order to save ammunition, UNITA fighters frequently used knives and machetes in their killings of civilians (UCDP, n.d. a). Moreover, UNITA reportedly did crush people with heavy, armored vehicles as well as burn people alive at the stake (Malaqauis, 2007: 97). It is reported that Savimbi ordered the killings of his victims’ children by crushing their skulls against trees (ibid). It has been reported that these were measures by UNITA’s leader, Jonas Savimbi, to instill fear among UNITA’s ranks (ibid). Not only former government fighters or supporters were killed, but also their families (UCDP, n.d. b). It is also established that these methods were crafted by Savimbi to keep his followers in fear (UCDP, n.d. b; Malaqauis, 2007: 92; 97). Whether it was to deter desertion or coups attempts, is uncertain.

4.5 Interpretation and analysis

What can we now interpret from these results? The time period 1991 to 1993 the level of external stress on UNITA was not especially high. The government of Angola did not launch any major offensives during these years. Furthermore, the government did not receive any active support from an external actor. We can thus see that the level of external stress at this point was low.

Since the level of external stress was rather low, UNITA should have been able to cope with this external stress well. Based on the result from the variables – measuring the inability to cope with external stresses – UNITA did cope rather well with the stress applied by the government.
The time period 1991 to 1993, did not see UNITA experiencing any major military defeats. Instead, the group possessed the tactical initiative against the government.

During these years of the early 1990s, UNITA did not reorganize or change tactics. Their semi-conventional tactics, fueled by large diamond revenues was at this point successful. Finally, despite some defection from UNITA’s leadership in 1992, no major defection from the lower or middle ranks took place. Overall, a majority of the fighters in UNITA seemed to have had belief in their cause. In conclusion, UNITA’s fighters did not experience any significant deprivation of courage and discipline. The conclusion is that during 1991-1993 (Case A), there was an absence of demoralization in UNITA.

The results from 1999 to 2001 are somewhat different. As presented in Table I, these years saw a major increase in factors of external stress. During this time period, the Angolan government launched multiple comprehensive offensives against UNITA, causing the rebel group to lose much of the territory under its control. Among these losses, the defeats at Bailundo and Andulo seemed to have a strong, negative impact on UNITA’s morale.

Additionally, at this time Angola’s government received support from neighboring Namibia. Initially, this support was manifested through the Angolan government’s permission to use Namibian territory to fight UNITA. However, after a number of UNITA attacks directed towards Namibian targets, the Namibian army started their own offensives against the rebel group. Suddenly, UNITA was attacked on two fronts. The level of external stress in the years 1999 to 2001 was, compared to the time period of 1991 to 1993, high.

Also, there are signs that UNITA was unable to cope with this increased external stress. Attempted resistance towards government offensives resulted in failures for the rebels. They lost several strongholds as well as large parts of their territory. Despite small victories, the overall results were catastrophic for UNITA. As a result of this inability to cope with the government offensives, UNITA reorganized on several occasions during these years, mainly decentralizing the command. The tactics used by UNITA was also changed from semi-conventional to more guerilla-styled “hit-and-run-attacks.” This was mainly a result of the semi-conventional tactics being too costly.

The variable measuring deprivation of discipline, courage and spirit gives an interesting result as well. At this point, an increased number of UNITA fighters decided to desert from the rebel group. In 1999, the losses of Andulo and Bailundo were partly caused by large number of rebels deserting. Thus, based on the results, I argue that there was a presence of demoralization in Case B; the time period 1999 to 2001.
The two years prior 1993 saw an absence of demoralization, whereas the two years prior 2001 saw a presence of demoralization. If this variation is compared to the different levels of one-sided violence, a pattern appears. In 1993, UNITA killed 343 civilians. During this time, there was an absence of demoralization in the rebel group. In 2001, UNITA on the contrary, killed 1,029 civilians. From 1999 to 2001, the demoralization within UNITA seemed very present. There is thus covariation between a presence and an absence of demoralization, and higher and lower levels of UNITA’s one-sided violence.

I interpret this as a causal relationship. Increased demoralization seems to cause increased one-sided violence by the rebel group. When UNITA experienced higher level of external stress, and was unable to cope with this, the level of one-sided violence increased. Whether it is to deter more of the own fighters from deserting, or to motivate them by inflicting costs on the government is still uncertain. One finding speaking for the “deterrence-explanation” is the methods used to kill the civilians. The calculated cruelty and brutality are reported to have had a purpose of fear among UNITA’s fighters. Furthermore, an important aspect to stress – as done previously – is that the external stress per se is not the cause behind demoralization. In a situation of civil war, you tend to always be put under external stress. It is the inability to cope with the different forms of stress, which is central.

If my study only included these variables, I would not have had any difficulties in drawing strong conclusions. However, one of the control variables is posing a challenge to the demoralization theory.

However, let us start with a short summary and interpretation of the control variables. During both time periods, there were no exclusive ethnic targeting of civilians. There is no variation regarding the conflict’s incompatibility. The entire civil war in Angola has been about the governmental power – which organization should be in government and rule the country. Hence, the incompatibility in Case A (1991-1993) was “government” just as in Case B (1999 to 2001).

The main variation among the control variables occurs in the final one (z3) “threatened rebel source of income.” As mentioned, the diamond revenues of UNITA were significant, and these were severely hit in 1999 and 2000. The government offensives of the late 1990s and early 2000s were critical threats to UNITA’s primary source of income. This income decreased dramatically with the loss of several airfields, wherefrom UNITA smuggled diamonds. This dramatically threatened UNITA’s funding and thus its existence.
We can clearly see covariation between the independent and dependent variables. When demoralization in UNITA was present in the time period 1999 to 2001, the level of one-sided violence peaked at 1,029 civilian deaths (in 2001). If we compare this to the time period 1991 to 1993 – when demoralization among UNITA’s ranks was absent – the level of civilians killed is low (343 civilians killed in 1993). Whereas this indicates some support for the hypothesis, the isolation of the phenomenon falls short with the variation in one of the control variables, “threatened rebel source of income.”

4.6 Alternative explanations
At first glance, the variation in the final control variable (z3) is, to some extent, in line with the argument by Metelits (2009). UNITA evidently killed more civilians following the severe threat to their resources by a rival organization. Metelits argument is that a rebel group’s behavior towards civilians undergoes a metamorphosis as their control of various sources of income are threatened (Metelits, 2009: 115). The treatment of civilians goes from “contractual” – where goods and services are traded for resource extraction, and the level of one-sided violence is low – to “coercive” when the rebel group’s control over resources is threatened. The coercive behavior is manifested through resource extraction, without goods and services in return to the community (Metelits, 2009: 106). The level of violence against civilians is in turn higher (ibid: 106). In her article, she uses the cases of FARC in Colombia and SPLA in Sudan to support her argument. However, an issue with her argument in the case of UNITA is that FARC and SPLA’s rivals were non-government actors. In SPLA’s case the rivals were a splinter group within SPLA, whereas FARC’s rivals were organized paramilitaries fighting to control the illicit drug trade of Colombia (Metelits, 2009: 107-114). The question is whether a government qualifies as a “rival” in Metelits’ argument. Nowhere in the article, a government is presented as a “rival organization,” often a third actor (a rival, foreign or domestic rebel group) serves that role.

Moreover, one can argue that the threatened sources of income can be placed under the demoralization theory. If a rebel group’s funding opportunities are threatened and severely limited, the rebel fighters might be unable to cope with this additional external stress. This can in turn lead to demoralization, desertion and attempts of deterrence from the leadership. Such a conclusion becomes increasingly plausible when one discovers UNITA’s overconfidence was based on their vast diamond revenues (Malaquais, 2007: 110-111). If such a source of confidence is terminated, this could constitute a severe blow to the rebel group’s morale. I do argue that this is the case.
Naturally, Hultman’s bargaining theory remains an alternative explanation. With the battlefield failures and increase in external pressure, the rebel group is in need of signaling the strength and resolve to the government. However, it can be argued that Hultman’s independent variable – rebel battlefield losses – belongs to the demoralization theory. A high number of battlefield casualties equals higher levels of external stress, which in turn could cause demoralization.

5. SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

In this paper, I set out to answer the research question *why does the level of one-sided violence employed by rebel groups vary?* I tested the demoralization theory as an explanation of rebel groups’ varying level of violence against civilians. The theory tested in this paper focuses on the phenomenon of demoralization – i.e. the loss of spirit, courage and discipline in a rebel group. The theory claims that the inability to cope with external stresses, causes demoralization, and in turn leads rebel fighters to desert from the rebel group. In order to prevent this draining of rebel fighters, the rebel group’s leadership respond with increased violence against civilians. This is a measure to deter the rebel fighters from leaving the group. If the ways of killing civilians also are cruel and brutal one can assume that the aim with the one-sided violence must have some “deterrence-aspect.” As is reported, this was a common tactic by Savimbi to instill fear among his supporters.

Based on the data gathered and put in the structured focus comparison, we can see covariation with the multilayered operationalization of the independent variable and the dependent variable. When the level of external stress (either through government offensives, or active external support to the government) was high and the rebel group was unable to cope with this stress (operationalized through measuring rebel military failures, and rebel group reorganization), the rebel group’s level of one-sided violence was higher. In sum, when demoralization was present, the level of one-sided violence increased – compared to when demoralization was absent, and the level of one-sided violence was low.

Despite this covariation, it is difficult to draw any decisive conclusions. This is due to the fact that the isolation falls short. Apart from the independent and dependent variables, there is also covariation between one of the control variables, and the independent and dependent variables. The threat to UNITA’s main source of income occurred during the same time period
(1999 to 2001) in which the rebel group’s violence against civilians escalated. When the rebels’ sources of income were not under threat, the level of one-sided violence was low.

As mentioned in the previous, it can be argued that this alternative explanation could contribute to the demoralization effect. Actually, this argument carries some weight, and I do consider it very plausible. This is, however, a gap in my paper, and I acknowledge its existence. Moreover, Lisa Hultman’s use of bargaining theory when explaining the phenomenon remains intact; it still is an alternative explanation. One major conclusion which can be drawn from this study is the insignificance of internal stress as determinant of levels of one-sided violence. No internal stress was to be found in any of the cases, and still, the level of one-sided violence by UNITA was significantly higher in the latter case. This study may be incomplete and there is most certainly room for improvement. Some limitations, such as lack of data regarding specific numbers of deserters from the group, could be avoided in a study where the author has more time and resources. I would like to remind the reader that this study’s operationalization of demoralization, stems from observable data. The cognitive aspect is not addressed. To really establish whether demoralization played a part, one could conduct field studies in Angola and interview former rebel fighters. Moreover, I merely focus on one rebel group over time in this study. It is difficult to say whether UNITA is representative for the rest of the world’s rebel groups. In order to properly establish whether there is a correlation between higher levels of demoralization and higher levels of one-sided violence, I encourage a quantitative study on the subject. Another difficulty is to rank levels of demoralization. This is necessary in order to compare the higher and lower levels of demoralization with the level of killed civilians. Such a study needs thresholds for e.g. number of rebel fighters deserting. Then, on the other hand, we do face the problem of data shortage again.

I am not sure that these findings are especially useful regarding policy implications. If a rebel group increases its level of one-sided violence because its members have become increasingly demoralized, there is no real way of preventing one-sided violence in a civil war. We can understand it, but in a civil war, a government aims to demoralize and defeat the rebel group. If anything, this theory can serve as an indication for governments when their rebel opponents have become increasingly demoralized, and when victory is near.

In conclusion, I would claim that there is some support for my hypothesis. Rebel groups’ varying level of one-sided violence depends on demoralization. A rebel group’s level of one-sided violence varies because the state of demoralization varies. There is, as always, room for doubt and counterarguments. But I do not consider the doubt sufficient to reject the hypothesis.
With these findings, we get a better understanding of one-sided violence by rebel groups. Limited as this study may be, it is still another small step in the exploration of this puzzling phenomenon.

6. REFERENCES (MLA)

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