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*External support in civil wars and its impact
on civilians*

A comparative study of the Guatemalan and Salvadoran civil wars

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1 Introduction

Even if civil wars are considered as internal affairs the international community seldom treats them as it. Instead, one can observe a stable trend of third-party actors intervening in civil wars throughout the last forty years (Sawyer, Cunningham & Reed, 2017:1175; Karlén, 2016:120). Third-party actors usually intervene by supplying one or more of the conflicting parties with external support. The act of providing external support is often aimed at influencing the course of the civil war into a favourable outcome. However, instead it seems to be making civil wars longer, more complicated and most importantly taking a higher toll on civilians (Karlén, 2016:117-118), and by so failing to live up to its intentions.

Previous literature has aimed at answering this by referring to whom is receiving the support (Sullivan & Karreth, 2015; Karlén, 2017; DeMeritt, 2014), what type of support is provided (Sawyer, Cunningham & Reed, 2017) or the capacity of resources among the conflicting parties (Salehyan et al., 2014). Yet, prior research has neglected the opportunity that the level of external support provided may contribute to the increased level of civil victimisation in civil wars. This paper aims to examine how different levels of external support in civil wars affects the level of one-sided violence. This will be done through a comparative case study on the civil wars in El Salvador (1980-1992) and Guatemala (1960-1996). The empirical findings did not entirely find support for the suggested relationship. However, the findings did produce important insight regarding the relationship between external support and one-sided violence, through which this thesis contributes to the previous literature and presents insights to be studied in future research.

The paper is presented after the following structure. The next part will provide a discussion of the phenomena under study in previous research, followed with a presentation of the research gap this paper aims to fill. Thereafter follows a section where the theoretical framework is presented, along with this study's research question and the relationship I expect to find in the analysis. Next comes a section on the research design of this paper, including the case selection and operationalisation. After follows the analysis section, where the relationship under study will be analysed and thereafter interpreted. Lastly, a conclusion with a summary of the findings of this paper will be provided, along with implications for future research.

2 Previous literature

The following section will provide an overview of the previous academic literature which can give an insight to the suggested relationship. Research topics that will be covered will include separate sections on external support and one-sided violence as well as a composite discussion on external support and one-sided violence.

2.1 External support

The phenomenon of third-party actors intervening in internal conflicts is nothing new. In fact, most civil conflicts of today experience some kind of support or influence from an external actor. Most often with the aim of influencing the outcome, external actors choose to support either the government or opposition groups. This approach has proven to be successful and previous research has established that external actors have the capability to influence the conflict dynamic on a micro level (Karlén, 2016:117-118).

There exist a range of research regarding the effects of external support. According to Sawyer, Cunningham and Reed (2017) more attention must be given to different types of external support such as indirect support including money or military equipment. They argue that when rebels receive fungible and indirect support, this will have a negative effect on conflict termination which often prolongs the conflict (2017:1195). While Regan found that no matter what type of external support is given, either indirect or direct, the conflict will increase in duration when one or more of the parties receive external support (2002:71). It is also argued that external support, especially if given to rebels, increases the likelihood of conflict recurrence. This is found by Karlén, who suggests that external support generates the belief among the rebels that remobilisation is possible. It also creates an anticipation that the support will continue once the conflict has ended, and therefore be provided during future conflicts as well (2017:499). Sullivan and Karreth argues that the outcome of the conflict depends on whom of the conflicting parties receives external support. According to their findings external support increases the likelihood for the supported side to prevail, but only under such circumstances that the biggest obstacle for victory lies in the lack of military quality (2015:270). Essentially, the existing research has aimed at explaining how external support effects the outcome of the conflict. For instance, how the type of external support, or whom is receiving the support, has influenced the duration of the conflict. And in addition, how it eventually can cause the conflict to recur.

2.2 Violence against civilians

Much research has been conducted on the different outcomes that may derive from external support in civil war. However, one consequence that has more or less been overlooked, is the effect of civil victimisation, in this paper referred to as one-sided violence.

Even if one-sided violence is seen as immoral in the international community it is frequently used in civil wars. It is mainly used as a strategy to improve the prospects for victory when all other tactics have failed, and it can be carried out by both state actors and non-state actors. According to data from Uppsala Conflict Data Program that gathered information about one-sided violence between 1989-2007, non-state actors are much more frequently found to be targeting civilians than state actors (Sundberg, 2009:16). Similar findings were presented by Eck and Hultman, who argue that non-state actors are more violent compared to state actors when it comes to one-sided violence (2007:233).

Therefore, it is no surprise why much of recent research has focused on non-state actors as perpetrators of one-sided violence in civil wars, and not state actors. For instance, Hultman focuses on why rebels turn to civil victimisation. She claims that rebels use one-sided violence as a strategy to make the war costlier for the government when they themselves are experiencing huge losses on the battlefield as a means to force the government into making concession (2007:218). On the other hand, Wood states that weak rebels strategically attack civilians in order to provide the capabilities or resources they need to continue the fighting and to prevent cooperation with the government (2010:601).

Nevertheless, data from UCDP also showed that state actors, such as governments, have contributed to higher levels of fatalities from targeting civilians compared to non-state actors (Sundberg, 2009:16). The data indicates that non-state actors might be more prone to use one-sided violence, but state actors have the capacity to create more demolition and fatalities through the use of one-sided violence. It is argued by Schwartz and Straus that state actors strategically use violence against civilians as a coercive means to control and punish the behaviour of civilians. Since civilians are often assumed to support the rebel groups, targeting them is a tactic to weaken the rebels (2018: 222). According to Downes, there are two circumstances in which governments subdue to targeting and killing of civilians. In the case of

a conflict's longevity continuing to increase, causing wide-spread attrition among participants, state side combatants may become desperate and target civilians to increase their odds of winning. Alternatively, states may turn to civilian victimisation in a conflict of territory in order to force the inhabitants of the area into submission or to push them off the land altogether (2006:190). In summation, the previous research on one-sided violence has tried to explain the incentives for both state and non-state actors to use one-sided violence as a strategy in civil conflicts.

2.3 External support and one-sided violence

Previous research has found that external support in civil wars increases the duration of the conflict, while at the same time other research states that the longer the war goes on, the higher the risk of civilians being targeted becomes (Karlén, 2015:118; Galanos, 2012:35). The connection between external support and violence against civilians is no coincidence. We can observe that conflicts that have received external support, also reports high levels of one-sided violence. For instance, in civil wars in Yemen or Syria, one can observe both higher levels of one-sided violence and the support from third-party actors (HRW, 2017; HRW, 2018).

Salehyan et al., explains this by claiming that external support generates incentives for violence against civilians, since what they refer to as “resource-poor” rebels must rely on the goodwill of the people to have the necessary resources to fight, but when the resources are gained from elsewhere the importance of treating civilians with respect decreases (2014:634). This is also stated by Hultman, who argues that the support of the civilians is crucial in conflict (2007:207). Continuing, “resource-rich” rebels on the other hand are not dependent on civilians to the same extent, especially when they receive external support – a scenario that is believed to generate violence against civilians (Salehyan et al., 2014:634).

As can be seen from this review, researchers are not in agreement whether violence against civilians is associated with external support or not. Furthermore, it is argued by DeMeritt that supportive intervention on behalf of the government decreases human slaughter, and intervention against the government reduces one-sided violence after the killings have begun (2014:428). The findings of Peksen on the other hand suggest that supportive or neutral military intervention on behalf of the government increases the likelihood of state repression, i.e. targeting civilians (2012:558). Moreover, this is just a small sample of the existing research

that lacks empirical consensus whether external support causes violence against civilians or not. One cannot resist to question why that is the case as it is highly interesting that researchers have come to such different conclusions regarding the same phenomena.

Most likely due to the focal point having been on direct external support, i.e. military interventions, much less attention has been given to the level of support that has been provided. Questions such as to what extent the supported party has been assisted, or how frequently support has been given have not been analysed. Even less, how differences in these regards might affect the warfare strategies within the conflict, such as the decision to use one-sided violence has been studied. It is still unclear if systematic transitions on the international level, such as the provision of external support in civil wars, affects the decisions made on the micro level, i.e. to increase the use of one-sided violence. This paper will aim to close this gap by asking the following research question, “Does the level of external support affect civil victimisation in civil conflict?”.

3 Theory

3.1 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework outlined below demonstrates how different levels of external support could bolster the governments use of one-sided violence during civil conflicts. The theoretical framework presented here is an elaboration of the work by Peksen (2012), Sullivan & Karreth (2014) and Wood et al. (2012). The composite theory essentially argues that a direct consequence of a government receiving external support is an increase in their capacity. This unavoidably shifts the capability balance between the conflicting parties, leading to a decline in power for the unsupported party. This will create strong incentives for the weaker party, i.e. the rebels, to opt for one-sided violence, which in turn will escalate the conflict even more. Furthermore, in order to reclaim the monopoly on coercive power and re-establish the status quo, the government will respond with targeting civilians.

To begin with, the concepts of external support and one-sided violence must be clarified in order to fully understand how the level of support from an external actor in a civil war contributes to increased use of one-sided violence. In this study external support is defined as “a unilateral intervention by a third-party government in an internal armed conflict in favour of either the government or the opposition movement involved in that conflict” (Karlén, 2016:117). This definition indicates that the external actor giving support must be a state actor and that the support must be intentionally given. Furthermore, the level of support is determined by to what extent the actors have been provided with support and will be stated as either high or low. The theoretical framework in this study will focus on the level of support given to the state actor, i.e. the government. One-sided violence on the other hand will in this paper be defined after the Uppsala Conflict Data program as “the use of armed force by the government of a state or by a formally organized group against civilians which results in at least 25 deaths in a year” (Eck & Hultman, 2007). This entails that any deliberate act of violence against civilians that results in death, with a threshold of 25 deaths in a year will be considered as one-sided violence.

If a government is receiving external support, it is usually because that the government is facing a relatively strong rebel group that poses a serious threat to the seated government. Whereas there is a higher likelihood for a government to receive external support if they are subjected to

a strong and capable opposition, this is a result of external actors usually choosing to intervene in support of the government when they are concerned about the possible outcome if the oppositions' probability to prevail increases (Gent, 2008: 714-716). The implication that the opposition is relatively strong is important for this thesis' theoretical framework since it is generally not feasible for a relatively weak opposition to pose a serious threat to the government in the first place (Sullivan & Karreth, 2014:284). Additionally, the suggestion that the provision of external support will shift the power balance between the conflicting parties is dependent on the relative capacity balance being somewhat similar, i.e. the opposition being strong, before the external support was given. Otherwise the provision of external support would not shift the balance into new dimensions.

Furthermore, when a government is provided with external support, it will lead to a natural boost in their capacity level. This will consequently cause a shift in the relative capability balance between the conflicting parties, since the conflict dynamics have suddenly changed in favour of the government (Peksen, 2012:559, Wood et al., 2012:649). The higher level of support given to the government the greater the increase of their capacity becomes. The greater increase of capacity among one of the parties, the greater the relative capability balance will shift which in turn will change the type of warfare used in the conflict.

An often-observed result of a shift in the capacity balance is a turn to tactics of terror and intimidation by the party that is now worse off. When the weaker party, in this case the rebel group, experiences a decline in power it creates incentives to advance their warfare strategy, most likely into strategies such as guerrilla or terror tactics, i.e. one-sided violence (Sullivan & Karreth, 2014:272, Wood et al., 2012:651). More explicitly, how the shift in the capability balance effects the warfare method could be further explained through the following terms: *compliance* and *deterrence*.

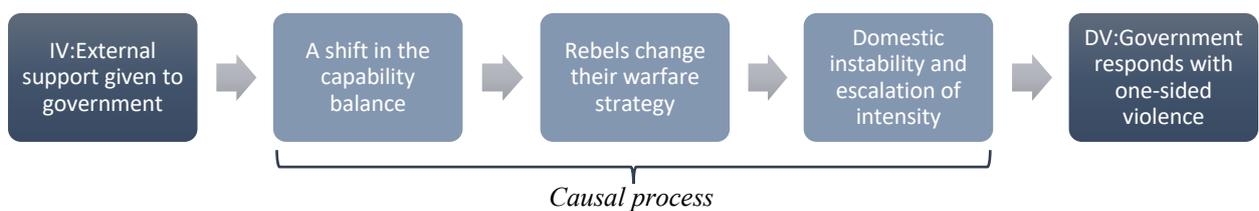
Compliance refers to civilian cooperation and is a valuable, if not vital, component in civil wars (Wood et al., 2012:650, Hultman, 2007:207). The main reason for this, is that the rebels are usually dependent on the population and their cooperation in order to obtain the required resources to be able to challenge the government. Nevertheless, when rebels experience a decrease in power they are exposed to the risk of losing civilian cooperation, since the voluntary support of civilians is dependent on the rebels' ability to provide them with resources and security. An unfavourable shift in the rebels' capability balance will generate a vacuum where

the rebels cannot provide necessary resources to the civilians in order to ensure their cooperation and support. While if civilians resist to cooperate with the rebels or appear to support the adversary, rebels are more likely to use violence in order to guarantee civilian cooperation (Wood et al., 2012:650).

Deterrence on the other hand concerns the inability to provide security and control within the population due to a decrease of capabilities. When the rebels' ability to ensure security weakens, so does the civilians perception of who will prevail. Under such circumstances when the civilians are subjected to large changes in the conflict landscape, counter-movement often start to emerge. When the rebels experience a deterioration of control and are instead faced with growing threats, they are more likely to use one-sided violence (Wood et al., 2012:651-652). Therefore, as rebels experience a decline in power due to a shift in the capability balance they will more likely employ one-sided violence.

Inevitably the change in the rebels' warfare strategy will lead to the intensity of the conflict escalating, which in turn creates additional domestic instability. During civil wars most countries experience different types of internal challenges such as humanitarian crises, political turmoil, violent clashes and riots (Peksen, 2012:559). Internal instability that challenges the authority of the state has proven to create incentives for the government to respond with repressing behaviour (Peksen, 2012:559-650). Given that the rebels advance their warfare strategy into targeting civilians, and the government is faced with rising internal challenges, the government is more likely to opt for one-sided violence as a strategy to reclaim the political and military monopoly in the society. Because when governments are subjected to emerging internal threats which they cannot control with traditional methods, they tend to turn to more unconventional measures such as one-sided violence to re-establish the status quo.

Figure 1 - Causal Mechanism



I argue that giving external support will influence the warfare strategies used by the conflicting parties in a civil war. More explicitly, I expect that higher levels of external support given to the state actor in civil conflicts will contribute to a higher likelihood of increased use of one-sided violence by the state actor. External support will affect the balance of capabilities, in turn influencing the warfare strategies employed by the parties. The higher level of external support the greater the shift in balance of capabilities becomes, ultimately increasing the probability of the state actor using one-sided violence during the war. This lead to the following hypothesis:

The higher level of external support provided to the government in civil conflict, the higher likelihood of the government to increase their use of one-sided violence.

4 Research design

The aim of this paper is to examine whether the level of external support provided to a government during a civil war has an effect on the use of one-sided violence in the conflict. This will be conducted through a structured-focused comparison where a set of standardised questions will be asked to the selected cases, i.e. the Salvadoran and Guatemalan civil wars. Thereafter, the cases will be compared in a systematically manner to examine if the hypothesis is supported or not. In the following section, a more elaborated description of the chosen method will be provided along with the case selection strategy and operationalisation of the variables. Lastly, a section on data and source criticism will be provided.

4.1 Method

As previously mentioned, the chosen method for this study is a structured focused comparison. Essentially, the method entails the researcher asking a set of general but still specific questions, that is supposed to give rich and detailed information about the studied cases. The data collected based on the set of question will display the measurement of the variable in each case (George & Bennett, 2005:67). The method is structured in that sense that the researcher creates a set of broad and precise questions that will be asked of each case as a data collection tool. The answers of these questions will indicate the values of the different variables. Furthermore, the method is focused by the study having a specific and clearly defined research focus. If the method would give attention to all interesting aspect of the phenomenon under study, it would not be possible to connect it to a theoretical framework (George & Bennett, 2005:69-70). Instead, when the focus of the study, including the set of questions, are guided by the theoretical framework one can ensure the potential for reliable findings and a solid contribution for future research.

The following questions will be posed to each case and are based on the phenomena of interest, external support and one-sided violence. These questions are also constructed based on the theoretical framework, which argues that the provision of external support to a state actor in a civil conflict will cause a shift in the parties' balance of capability, which will furthermore change the parties' warfare strategies into more unconventional tactics.

Table 1- Structured Focused Comparison Questions

Variables	Questions
<i>External support</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What type of support was provided to the state actor during the civil war? 2. How frequently was the state actor provided with external support during the civil war? 3. Did the perceived capability balance between the conflicting parties shift when one of the actor received external support? 4. What was the level of support given to the state actor during the civil war?
<i>One-sided violence</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What was the most frequent used warfare strategy during the civil war? 2. Who were the main perpetrators of one-sided violence during the civil war? 3. Did the actors' warfare strategies escalate at any time during the war? 4. Was one-sided violence reported during the civil war?
<i>One-sided violence ex ante</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Was the use of one-sided violence reported before the civil war erupted?
<i>Duration</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Over what years did the conflicts span?
<i>Third-party actor</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. From which actor(s) did the state receive external support during the civil war?
<i>Time period</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Under what time dependent circumstances did the civil war occur?
<i>Incompatibility</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What was the incompatibility of the conflict?

4.2 Case selection and scope conditions

When conducting research, it is important to select cases that are relevant to the research question and goals. As mentioned above, the aim of this paper is to study the effects of different levels of external support on the use of one-sided violence during civil wars. This requires one to select cases that provide rich information on the causal effects within civil wars. In this paper, this will be achieved through a comparative case study which entails focusing on a fewer set of cases. This paper will focus on two cases. The case selection will be done strategically on the independent variable, utilising Mill's method of difference, i.e. the most similar design. This means selecting cases that are as similar as possible on all confounding variables except on the independent variable in which I expect some variation (Bennett, 2004:30-31). The aim is to isolate the variation between the independent and dependent variable, by comparing cases that are similar on all variables except on the independent variable in which some variation is displayed where after the outcome will be observed (George & Bennett, 2005:81).

To what extent the findings of this study can be generalised to the broader population is dependent on this paper's scope conditions. Whereas by studying fewer cases one can provide deeper understanding of the research context and the causal interferences, it is harder to control for heterogeneity since no such a thing as identical cases exists. However, by choosing cases as similar as possible within a set of carefully defined conditions one can still generalise the findings to a wider set of cases (Gerring, 2006:50-53). Another important aspect of strategically selecting cases based on the most similar design is that one can control for intervening variables that could potentially influence the selected variables. Outlined below are six conditions and possible explanatory factors which the selected cases must fulfil for in order to qualify as potential cases.

First and foremost, what is of primary interest for this paper is the unit of analysis which is dyads with external support provided to the state actors during civil wars. Therefore, the state actor within the selected cases must have received external support from a third-party actor during the civil war. Second, the existence of one-sided violence must be present within the chosen civil wars before external support was provided for the first time in order to examine whether the provision of external support affects the level of one-sided violence used during the civil war. Third, in selecting which cases to study and aiming for a high degree of comparability, the third-party actor should preferably be the same for both cases. Thereby one can control for the actors receiving similar type of support. By studying conflicts in which the same third-party actor has provided assistance factors such as governmental form, foreign policy, geography and other country-specific characteristics can be controlled for.

Fourth, the scope of the paper must be limited. It is important to delimit the duration of the conflict since research has established that the longevity of the conflict has a profound effect on the level of one-sided violence, while at the same time the provision of external support in a civil conflict increases the likelihood of prolonging the conflict (Karlén, 2015:118; Galanos, 2012:35). Therefore, the observed time span of the conflict will be held constant in both cases. However, as a result of studying the conflicts under a predetermined number of years, the time periods (between what years) during which the two conflicts will be studied will most likely differ. Fifth, in order to ensure the effects of time period dependent circumstances are similar in both cases, cases from the same time era will be selected. Time dependent circumstances could entail economic or political policies employed by international organisations or major countries during a specific time era. Lastly, the incompatibility of the chosen conflicts should

be similar, which entails that the conflicts share the same originate reasons for their existence and could be either listed as concerning government or territory. By having similar incompatibilities of the conflicts, one can increase the level of similarity between the cases.

Considering the above-mentioned I have selected two cases that fulfil these conditions to a large extent, namely the Guatemalan (1975-1987) and Salvadoran (1980-1992) civil wars – two countries that do not only share the same boarder but are also ranked among the most violent countries in the world having both experienced extremely fatal civil wars (Labrador & Renwick, 2018). Both civil wars emerged out of discontent over the then existing governments, resulting in fighting between governmental forces and left-winged rebel movements (BBC, 2018) which indicates that both conflicts share the similar incompatibility concerning government. The cases are also similar in such a way that they were both provided with external support during the civil wars, namely from the United States (Allison, 2012). In addition, there has been reported use of one-sided violence in both Guatemala and El Salvador during the civil wars (CJA, Guatemala, n.d.; CJA, El Salvador, n.d.). When it comes to the duration of the conflicts, I have chosen to limit the time of observation to twelve years of each conflict, starting from the year in which external support was first provided. This means that the Guatemalan civil war will be observed between 1975-1987, while the Salvadoran war will be covered between 1980-1992. A further explanation for the chosen limitation of twelve years will be given in the research design section.

Table 2 - Case Selection

<i>Cases</i>	<i>X: External support</i>	<i>Y: One-sided violence</i>	<i>C: Existence of one-sided violence ex ante</i>	<i>C: Duration</i>	<i>C: Third-party actor</i>	<i>C: Time period</i>	<i>C: Incompatibility</i>
El Salvador	High	?	Yes	1980-1992	The U.S.	Cold War	Government
Guatemala	Low	?	Yes	1975-1987	The U.S.	Cold War	Government

4.3 Operationalisation

4.3.1 *Independent variable*

The independent variable, *external support*, is defined as “a unilateral intervention by a third-party government in an internal armed conflict in favour of either the government or the opposition movement involved in that conflict” (Karlén, 2016:117). More precisely, external support involves direct support such as military troops and air support but also, more indirect forms such as weapons, intelligence, aid, training, financing or safe havens. However, what is important to clarify is that it is not the type of external support that determines what level of support that is given, which has typically been done in previous research. Instead, it is to what extent the state actor has received external support that is of interest for this paper. That for instance entails indicators such as how frequently the support has been given, or what amount of support, or under what circumstances it has been given. In addition, the type of support can still work as an indicator of to what extent the state actor was provided. These different types of conditions will work as indicators and guidelines when measuring the level of external support, which will be referred to as *high* or *low*.

Since the measurement is based on the questions I will be asking each case, one can discuss if the measurement will guarantee that the same phenomenon will be captured if one were to operationalise external support repeatedly. The reliability could therefore be of concern, since the answers that will indicate the level of external support might differ depending on what sources are available at that time about the provision of external support within the chosen cases. Be that as it may, by asking the exact same set of precise question one can account for high validity. Since the questions are designed in such a manner that they will capture the theoretical concept and values of the variables, one can ensure operationalisation of the entire concept by asking several questions that aim to capture different aspects of the concept.

4.3.2 *Dependent variable*

The dependent variable, *the level of one-sided violence*, can be described in several different ways. However, in this study one-sided violence is referred to as “the use of armed force by the government of a state or by a formally organized group against civilians which results in at least 25 deaths in a year” (Eck & Hultman, 2007). According to this definition the use of armed force accounts for any method to exert violence which will result in the death of civilians. This could entail different types of weapons, physical violence, fires or other measures as long it is

employed by a state or organised group. The operationalisation of one-sided violence in this paper will be based on this definition, implying a threshold of 25 deaths per year, which will be used as an indicator of the level of one-sided violence used during the civil wars. The level one-sided violence will be referred to as *high* or *low*. Furthermore, the operationalisation of one-sided violence will follow the same structure as the measurement of external support, with specific questions asked to the variables designed to measure the value of the variables.

As the definition of one-sided violence is broad, by referring to any method that could exert violence, it is also narrowed enough to underline that the act of violence must lead to the deliberate death of civilians. That might be one of the reasons for why the UCDP's definition of one-sided violence is frequently used in research. It captures the concept of one-sided violence well, implying high validity. Another advantage of having a broad but still specific definition is that one can gain high reliability. Meaning that one receives the same value on the variables if one were to measure the variables repeatedly. The chosen definition of one-sided violence in this paper ensures reliability since one-sided violence is measured after any deliberate violence against civilians resulting in their death, by a certain actor and with a threshold of 25 deaths in a year, indicating of wideness, preciseness and at the same time applicability.

4.3.3 *Control variables*

In order to isolate the relationship between the independent variable, external support and the dependent variable as well as the use of one-sided violence one needs to control for other variables that could potentially affect the dependent variable. These potentially confounding variables are referred to as control variables and will be measured, just as the independent and dependent variables, by having specifically designed question asked to the control variables in order to measure their value. The chosen control variables in this paper have largely been explained in the case selection section. Nevertheless, this section entails an elaborated description on how the chosen control variables will be measured and controlled for.

The existence of one-sided violence within the conflict before the state actor was provided with external support is crucial in order to examine the relationship between the level of external support and the level of one-sided violence. Therefore, the use of one-sided violence will be held constant in both cases and will be measured after the UCDP's threshold of 25 deaths in a year from one-sided violence. This approach only controls for the use of one-sided violence as

present before external support was provided for the first time while not taking the level of one-sided violence into consideration as the level of one-sided violence is what is under study and will be examined in the analysis section. When examining the effect of different levels of external support on one-sided violence, one needs to control for the type of external actor providing the support. This is because different external actors can be assumed to possess different characteristics that determine what type of support is given and to whom. While such issues can be assumed to change somewhat over time, they can be argued to most likely be more alike for a specific country across different time periods than for different countries within the same time period. This will be controlled for by ensuring that the state actor within the chosen cases received external support from the same external actor.

Furthermore, the observed duration of the conflict must be limited. Not only does the level of one-sided violence change due to the longevity of the conflict but the level of external support has a likelihood of increasing the duration of the conflict itself. However, by observing both conflicts during the same amount of years, the duration of the conflict can be controlled for. As mentioned in the case selection, I have chosen to limit the time of observation to twelve years to hold the duration constant in both cases. The number of years has been set to twelve as this was the total length of the shortest of the two conflicts, namely El Salvador. Furthermore, I have decided to examine the civil wars from the moment external support was provided and twelve years forward, as it is during that time external support was provided to both El Salvador and Guatemala. Studying the initial or last twelve years of both conflicts would not be feasible, as the provision of external support was not present at that time. This means that the Guatemalan civil war will be observed between 1975-1987, while the entire Salvadoran war will be covered between 1980-1992.

Also, by studying the two conflicts during the same time era, I am able to control for issues such as geopolitical circumstances and the state of the global economy that could possibly affect the decision-making within the civil war. By holding the time era during which the conflict occurred constant in both cases one can control for such dependent circumstances being as similar as possible in both cases. In this case that entails controlling for both conflicts taken place during the Cold War, even if one progresses a few years beyond the Cold War the first incentives for giving support should be influenced by similar geopolitical considerations and thus have similar effects. Furthermore, the incompatibility of the conflict will be measured according to the UCDP's definition on conflict incompatibility and will be held constant for

both cases. The incompatibility could be concerning government or territory where an incompatibility concerning government for instance entails the replacement of central government, type of political system or change of its structure. Contrastingly, an incompatibility regarding territory concerns the status of a specified territory (Eck & Pettersson, 2011).

4.3.4 *Data sources*

The main empirical sources in this paper comes from peer reviewed journal articles and books. These sources have been retrieved from the Uppsala University data base, Google Scholar, or relevant bibliographies. Other important data sources have been retrieved from newspapers, governmental reports and through different organisations. All sources have been carefully examined to ensure reliability.

A great deal of the material used in the analysis has been retrieved from reports by the United Nations Truth Commissions and the U.S. General Accounting Office. These sources have contributed to much detailed information, that has been impossible to find elsewhere. Nevertheless, as will be noticed when one begins to examine the U.S. involvement in the Salvadoran and Guatemalan civil wars, the U.S. government is reluctant to present any criticism regarding their involvement during the wars. One undeniable problem is that researcher and the U.S. government are not in consensus regarding the amount of support given during the wars. Therefore, it is impossible to know for certain the level of support that has been provided, especially since some calculations differ with several billion dollars. It is understandable that the U.S. might have incentives to conceal the actual numbers, considering how the involvement by the U.S. in the Guatemalan and Salvadoran civil wars played out.¹ However, by studying to what extent the support has been given and not explicitly the amount of support one can still make reliable conclusions concerning the external support provided from the U.S.

¹ This will be explained in the analysis section.

5 Results and analysis

This section of the paper will present an analysis of the studied variables. The presentation is structured by case, meaning that the result from external support, one-sided violence and control variables will be subsequently presented first for El Salvador and then for Guatemala. First, a brief background of the cases will be presented followed by sections regarding the result for each variable. Lastly, a table of the result will be presented. First, to reiterate, the aim of this paper is to study the relationship between different levels of external support and levels of one-sided violence in civil wars. Furthermore, I expect to find evidence that higher levels of external support provided to the state actor in a civil war will lead to an increased use of one-sided violence by the government. This will be examined through a comparative case study, of the chosen cases El Salvador and Guatemala.

5.1 El Salvador

5.1.1 Background

With a history embossed in military coups, rigged elections, oppression and dictatorships, the Salvadoran government was overthrown in a coup arranged by the military in 1979. After the coup followed a time of political violence between the right-winged interim regime and the Marxist rebel group FMNL, the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front. Later on, the FMNL became an umbrella organisation consisting of five other rebel groups, but also farmers, students, workers and others ready to fight for their human rights (McKinney, 2014:4; Lindahl, 2016). What later tipped the scale into full war was the assassination of the human rights activist Archbishop Romero in 1980, and the following attack on the hundreds of thousands who had gathered outside his funeral, where 42 people were killed, and hundreds wounded (CJA, El Salvador, n.d.). Eventually the FMNL merged with the Communist party forces and fought together against the military regime in what became the Salvadoran civil war (McKinney, 2014:4).

5.1.2 External support

During the Salvadoran civil war, the government was provided with external support from the U.S. government. The type of support given varied but essentially consisted out of military, economic and humanitarian aid. Between the years of 1980 to 1989 the Salvadoran government was mainly supplied with military aid such as equipment, maintenance, ammunition, fuel and

aircraft (GAO, 1990:11-12). That consequently meant that the U.S. increased the Salvadoran forces to over 56,000 soldiers, which was three times the size prior to U.S. intervention. Along with soldiers, maintenance and ammunition the U.S. supplied the Salvadoran forces with heavier and more advanced weapons to be able to counter the insurgency (GAO, 1990:17; Ladwig III, 2016:123). Another important source of support from the U.S. was the training of Salvadoran soldiers on U.S. soil and in the School of Americas in Panama. An estimated USD 17.6 million went to the training of Salvadoran soldiers in the 1980s (GAO, 1990:13; McKinney, 2014). In total, some 4,200 soldiers from the Salvadoran army were trained at different U.S. military facilities during the war (GAO, 1991:21).

The provision of training, better strategies and more advanced equipment were seen as necessities for the Salvadoran forces. Even though the Salvadoran forces were in fact more capable than the FMNL throughout the war, a rebel victory seemed likely at several times (GAO, 1991: 13-14). In the beginning of the war 20,000 Salvadoran soldiers fought against 9,000 FMNL rebels (Ladwig III, 2016:111). However, due to Salvadoran forces being poorly organised, equipped and trained for counterinsurgency, the FMNL was continually perceived as a serious threat to the government even if they were the relatively weaker party (GAO, 1991:13-14, 23).

Besides the millions of dollars in military aid and training of Salvadoran soldiers, the U.S. provided the Salvadoran government with humanitarian aid for food, earthquakes damage, reforms and developments (McKinney, 2014:14). Furthermore, external support was given in the form as economic aid, such as cash transfers to enhance the governments payment-of-balance position. During a time period of nine years (1980 to 1989) the U.S. provided El Salvador with USD 1.5 billion in economic support funds (GAO, 1990:26-27).

Already before the war erupted the U.S. tried to influence the political direction of the Salvadoran state by financially supporting different political actors. However, it was not until the war had fully broke out and the FMNL launched an attack in 1981, in which they tried taking control over several cities that the U.S. intervened more aggressively. Following the attack and the response by the Reagan administration to send more direct forms of military aid to the Salvadoran government, the aid began to frequently pour into El Salvador (McKinney, 2014:10; CJA, El Salvador, n.d; Gomez, 2003:112-113).

Even if the U.S. at several times threatened with discontinuing the support, it continued to flow money into the Salvadoran forces. The few times the aid temporarily stopped was after the murder of four American women in 1980 which the Salvadoran forces was responsible for. However, the cut-off was made by the Carter administration and shortly after, the Reagan administration was installed, and the aid policy was recommenced (Gomez, 2003:112; CJA, El Salvador, n.d.). The second time the aid was restricted was when the American congress voted against continued aid after the murder of six Jesuits priest in 1989 (McKinney, 2014:11). Nevertheless, a couple of months later the support was once again reinstated. It was not until the end of the Cold War and the peace talk initiatives that the U.S. reduced their aid to the Salvadoran government (McKinney, 2014:15).

In summation, over a twelve year-long time the Salvadoran military and government received an estimate of USD 4.5 billion in aid from the U.S. (McKinney, 2014:12). However, some claim the number to be closer to USD 6 billion. The U.S. did not only hold the Salvadoran military up and running, the entire Salvadoran economy was depending on the economic aid from the U.S. at the time. At its peak, the aid represented ten percent of the Salvadoran GDP (Quan, 2005:280; Ladwig III, 2016:109). The support consisted of both direct support such as military training and equipment, along with more indirect support as money and humanitarian aid. Even with the enormous support to the Salvadoran forces the relatively weaker FMNL managed to subject themselves as a credible threat throughout the war.

5.1.3 *One-sided violence*

The Salvadoran civil war is estimated to have taken the lives of approximately 75,000 people, along with resulting in the disappearance of more than 8,000 people and 1 million internally displaced people (Gomez, 2003:101; Cabezas & Renteria, 2017). The brutal war saw some of its worst violence during its initial four years (El Salvador Truth Commission, 1993:37). One incident in particular was the El Mozote massacre in 1981 where the Salvadoran forces launched an anti-guerrilla operation in the village of El Mozote. A residence of civilians which were perceived to support the FMNL, therefore seen as enemies of the state (El Salvador Truth Commission, 1993:6). The operation began with the Salvadoran forces gathering everyone in the village in the square, interrogating them regarding their connection to the FMNL. Thereafter, everyone was locked in their houses during the night and on the next day the soldiers strategically took out the men and tortured them before killing them. At the same time the women were separated from their children and later raped and executed. The children who were

left were locked into houses, which the soldiers later opened fired towards. Around 1,200 people are believed to have been killed throughout the raid (El Salvador Truth Commission, 1993:107; Bonner, 2018). During the upcoming days, several neighbouring villages would be victims of similar attacks as well (El Salvador Truth Commission, 1993:112).

Various other anti-guerrilla operations against peasants took place during the 1980s. For instance, in 1980 over 300 civilians were killed by the Salvadoran forces by the Sumpul river, and similar events took place in 1982 when about 200 people were executed in the village of El Calabozo (El Salvador Truth Commission, 1993:116-117). Throughout the war, human rights abuses were conducted by both the FMNL and the Salvadoran forces. The Salvadoran population became victims of torture, mass rape, disappearance, massacres and mutilation (CJA, n.d.). During the conflict it was reported that the war produced brutal acts of violence against civilians. For instance, after the El Mozote massacre a young officer from the American Embassy in El Salvador was sent to the village and confirmed the attack by the Salvadoran forces to his commander. However, the information did not make its way to the Reagan administration. Although the New York Times and the Huffington Post reported about the killings weeks after the massacres (Bonner, 2018). Still, the extreme acts of violence against the Salvadoran population proceeded (Ladwig III, 2016:145).

One phenomena that became well-known during the war and was a frequent used method during the beginning of the war was– the so-called death squads. The use of death squad killings became the most deviant indicator of the escalation of violence against civilians during the war (El Salvador Truth Commission, 1993:20). The strategy entailed perpetrators dressed as civilians hiding their heavy weaponry and attacking civilians in a structured and organised way. Once civilians were abducted, they were tortured and eventually executed. Death squad killings became such an escalating phenomenon that it was frequently used as an instrument of terror against one's enemies, mainly utilised by the Salvadoran forces (El Salvador Truth Commission, 1993:124, 129).

In conclusion, even if both the Salvadoran army and the FMNL have been recognised as the perpetrators of one-sided violence during the war, one can observe substantial differences between the two parties' use of one-sided violence. The Truth Commission for El Salvador found that the FMNL were responsible for five percent of the acts of violence, while the Salvadoran army were responsible for 85 percent of the violence against civilians (1993:36).

Important to recognise is that these numbers only include the 22,000 complaints that the Truth Commission received during a three-month period. There is a high likelihood that the true number of violations is significantly higher. The most frequent warfare strategy during the war was the use of death squad killings, forced disappearance and mass killings. However, an exact estimate of how many civilians that were deliberately killed during the war is impossible to know for certain especially since forensic experts are still believed to be digging up bodies from the massacres in 1980s (Bonner, 1980).

5.1.4 *Control variables*

Along with the Salvadoran civil war broke out in 1980 the country experienced new levels of violence against civilians. Unfortunately, targeting civilians deliberately were nothing new once the state actor was provided with external support. On the contrary, El Salvador has a history of violent clashes between the left and rights wings of society. For instance, in 1932 an uprising (the *matanza*) against the elite-driven government resulted in the slaughter of at least 30,000 civilians. Later on, the people behind the uprising were bluntly executed by the government (McKinney, 2014:3). Furthermore, the years leading up to the outbreak of the civil war were characterised by death squad killings, kidnappings and murders between the rightist paramilitary and the leftist rebel movement (CJA, El Salvador, n.d.).

The history of political clashes between the left- and right wings of the society are of no surprise. Ever since its independence the Salvadoran government had been ruled by a small military elite of affluent families (CJA, El Salvador, n.d.; McKinney, 2014:3) which among other things contributed to the political clashes between the left- and right branches that led up the military coup in 1979, that later sparked the onset of the civil war in 1980. All of these factors are strong indicators of the incompatibility of the civil war was concerning government, since the replacement of political system is a typical characteristic of an incompatibility concerning government (Eck & Pettersson, 2018).

During the civil war the Salvadoran government was provided with external support from third-party actors. The most substantial third-party actor was the U.S. government, which provided the Salvadoran government with military, economic and humanitarian aid between the years of 1979-1992 (CAO, 1990:11-12; Högladh, Pettersson & Themnér, 2011). Besides the support from the U.S. the Salvadoran government did receive support from another third-party actor, namely Venezuela, which provided the El Salvador with training and expertise. However,

according to the UCDP dataset on external support the support was only given during the year of 1982 (Högbladh, Pettersson & Themnér, 2011).

Further, when it comes to during what time dependent circumstances the Salvadoran civil war occurred, one can clearly identify the Cold War era as one major time dependent period. Throughout nearly the entire Salvadoran war (1980-1992) the Cold War was ongoing, and it was not until the breakdown of the Soviet Union in 1989-90 that the Cold War officially ended (Britannica, 2018). However, this was two years before the Salvadoran war saw its end, which mean that it could be argued that the Cold War did not affect the Salvadoran civil war. Nevertheless, once the Cold War was over the U.S. government began push for peace talks and a termination of the Salvadoran civil war along with reducing the economic aid provided (McKinney, 2014:15). Along with, the main reason why the U.S. engaged in the Salvadoran civil war in the first place was their fear of the growing communism in Central America, as a result from the Cold War (McKinney, 2014:12-13). As such, these circumstances indicate that the Cold War did in fact contribute to the Salvadoran civil war.

To conclude, the duration of the conflict is controlled for by studying the conflicts under a predetermined and specific time period, which has already been established in the case selection part. In this case the duration of the conflict has been set to twelve years, by beginning with the onset of the conflict. This simply entails that the entire Salvadoran civil war (1980-1992) is covered in this analysis.

5.2 Guatemala

5.2.1 Background

The civil war in Guatemala has its roots in the military coup that took place in 1954 in which for the first time a democratically elected government was overthrown by Guatemalan exiles, and a right-winged dictatorship was established. The coup is claimed to have been supported and orchestrated by the CIA, with the desire to maintain their political and economic influence within the Guatemalan society, and by so constraining the expansion of communism. Following the military coup that would lead to the establishment of a 36 year-long authoritarian rule, former army officers, government members and civilians converged, and a left-winged rebel movement sparked off which later on would be referred to as FRA (Rebel Armed Forces) or

URNG (Revolutionary National Unity of Guatemala) (CJA, Guatemala, n.d.; Perrigo, 2016). In the aftermath of the military coup and the growing opposition, fighting between the left-winged rebel forces and the military rule erupted in 1960, which is said to be the beginning of the civil war (FN-förbundet, 2015).

5.2.2 *External support*

Even though the U.S. had been involved in the events that led up to the onset of the civil war in 1960 it was not until 1975 they officially began to provide the Guatemalan government with support (Högbladh, Pettersson & Themnér, 2011). The main type of support came from supporting the Guatemalan government by selling military equipment through the U.S. Department of Defence (Bracken, 2016). Such equipment could for instance entail engines, aircraft, material, explosives, vehicles, technical assistance, repair and rehabilitation (GAO, 1986:32). Other than the sale of such equipment the U.S. government provided the Guatemalan government during the war with training, funding, logistic and expertise (Högbladh, Pettersson & Themnér, 2011).

The support from the U.S. was provided sporadically to the Guatemalan government throughout the civil war. As a report of atrocities by the Guatemalan government reached the Carter administration in the late 1970s, president Carter tried to block all provision of military equipment and U.S. aid to Guatemala. However, through different loopholes, and secret funding some aid continued to make it to Guatemala. A couple of years later, after president Reagan had been inaugurated the blockade was lifted and the administration granted Guatemala's request to buy equipment for USD 6.3 million (Bracken, 2016; Perrigo, 2016; Gwertzman, 1983). Between the years of 1977-1985 the Guatemalan government purchased among others military equipment, ammunition, technical assistance and aircraft for over USD 14.9 million. Although, during these years the Guatemalan government was granted a very restricted amount of economic aid and funding from the U.S. As the sale of military equipment was approved, the Guatemalan government was given a small amount of military assistance and economic aid from the U.S. In fact, between the years of 1978-1984 no military assistance was granted at all (GAO, 1986:29-33).

In 1986 the American congress would approve a legislation stating that aid was only to be granted to the Guatemalan government if they would respect the human rights of all ethnic groups of the population and if a civilian-elected president would be in power. The Guatemalan

government could not live up the first of these requirements, but still some aid was sent to the state. Although during 1986 the aid toward Guatemala substantially increased, just in that year USD 109.5 million was given in military and economic support (Broder & Lambek, 1988:112-113). Thereafter, the U.S. government continued to provide the Guatemalan government with weapons, training, funding and logistics to some extent up until 1990 (Högbladh, Pettersson & Themnér, 2011).

As the Guatemalan government received external support, that included military training and expertise they were better equipped for war compared to the rebels. Through the course of the war the rebels were constantly perceived as the relatively weaker party. It was established that the governmental forces were well aware of the capacity balance between the rebels and themselves, knowing that the rebels did not have the capacity to pose a serious threat to the Guatemalan government (CEH, 1999:22). Altogether, the external support from the U.S. government changed throughout the years. Still, the U.S. Department of Defence sold military equipment among other things for millions of dollars to the Guatemalan forces. The provision of support to Guatemala was met with resistance within the U.S. congress, thereby limiting the amount of support sent over the years (Broder & Lambek, 1988:112-113; GAO, 1986:29-33). Nevertheless, the U.S. was seen as a political ally to the Guatemalan government during the war (CEH, 1999:19; Bracken, 2016).

5.2.3 *One-sided violence*

In the course of the 36 year-long Guatemalan civil war an estimated 200,000 lives were taken. Despite the longevity of the war, the majority of the acts of violence occurred between 1978 and 1984. According to the Commission for Historical Clarification (CEH), which was established to shed light to the violence against the Guatemalan population during the civil war, an estimated 91 % of the documented acts of violence against civilians occurred throughout these seven years (1999:33). Furthermore, it was established that the majority of the victims were not combatants on the battle-field but civilians (1999:22).

Even if the war had experienced high levels of violence before 1975 it would as previously mentioned escalate considerably during the 1980s. It began with General Lucia Garcia becoming head of state in 1978, and his strategy to wipe out any possible support of the rebels by strategically attacking villages. The strategy which is known as the scorched-earth policy, included the Guatemalan forces massacred villages who were assumed to be supporting the

rebels (Volpe, 2017; Perrigo, 2016). The brutal acts of violence peaked with General Efraín Ríos Montt gaining power in 1982. The following year would be the bloodiest in the Guatemalan history. During a period of one and a half year over 70,000 people disappeared or were slaughtered (CJA, Guatemala, n.d.).

The scorched-earth policy was one of the most frequent used warfare strategies during this time. Under the command of Ríos Montt, over 600 villages were attacked with civilians being raped and eventually executed. A majority of these villages were the residence for indigenous Mayans, which later would be recognized as some of the major victims of the violence. Since the rebels moved their movement from the cities and into the highlands, where many indigenous Mayan were living, the Guatemalan forces automatically perceived Mayans as allies with the rebels, and therefore a collective enemy to the government. Consequently, a scorched-earth campaign was launched against the Mayan population, resulting in the slaughter of 7,000 indigenous Mayans which would later be referred to as the silent genocide, or as Ríos Montt described it as “draining the sea the fish swim in” (Volpe, 2017; CJA, Guatemala, n.d.).

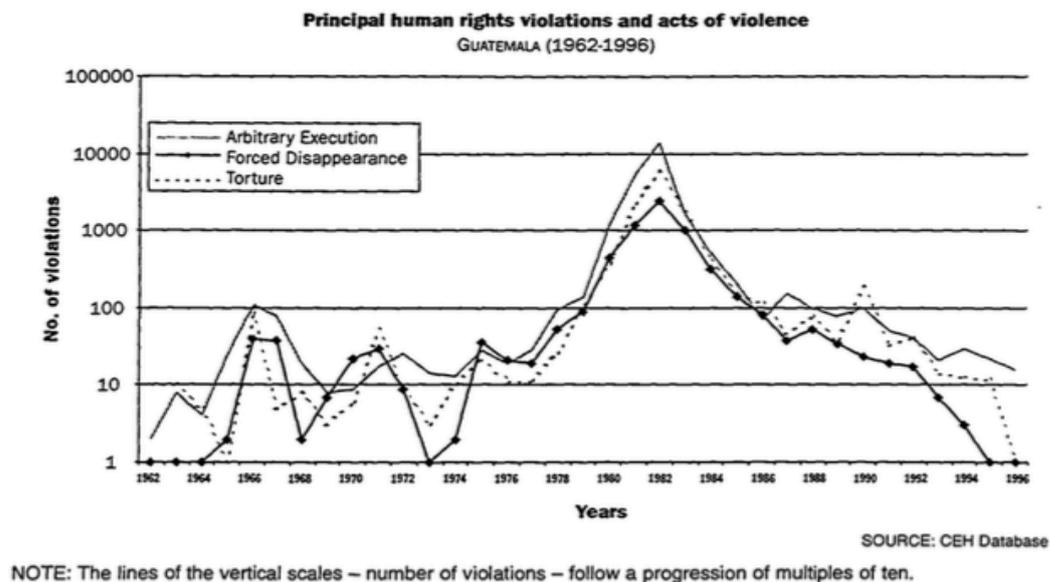


Figure 2 – Human rights violations and acts of violence during the Guatemalan civil war²

Other warfare strategies deployed under this time were forced disappearances. In fact, Guatemala would become the pioneer of dirty war tactics that later spread to other war-torn

² Retrieved from the CEH Report 1999

parts in Central America. Forced disappearance entailed capturing civilians to torture and execute them, and thereafter throwing their bodies into the Pacific Ocean (CJA, Guatemala, n.d.; CEH, 1999:35). Along with strategies such as scorched-earth killings, massacres and forced disappearances, death squad killings were also frequently used during this time (CEH, 1999:36). According to the Commission for Historical Clarification, both the Guatemalan government and the rebels were found guilty of these acts of violence against civilians. However, the commission established that the Guatemalan forces, along with paramilitary groups were accountable for 93 % of the violence while in contrast the rebels were responsible for 3 % of the one-sided violence (1999:83). Still, both parties were accountable for massacres, forced disappearance and kidnappings during the war (1999:35, 43). To conclude, in what is stated as the deadliest years in Central American history a total of 669 cases of massacres was reported with 83 % of these victims being indigenous Mayans (CEH, 1999:83-85). Additional bodies remaining from these massacres have been found as late as in 2014, meaning that 30 years after the war people were still burying victims from the war (Volpe, 2017).

5.2.4 *Control variables*

As the civil war in Guatemala reaped over 200,000 lives and count as one of the deadliest periods in Central American history, one-sided violence was frequently reported. As the observation of the Guatemalan civil war has been limited to the years 1975-1987, one need to control for the use of one-sided violence before the U.S. began to provide support to the Guatemalan government in 1975. Throughout the initial years of 1970 several operations with the aim of isolating the rebels were conducted and resulted in the death and disappearances of over 10,000 civilians. However, the upcoming years would claim the lives of even more civilians while also indicating that one-sided violence was widely used even before the Guatemalan government received external support (Perrigo, 2016).

Guatemala has been historically embossed in violence and ethnic division between indigenous Mayans and Latinos for hundreds of years and are believed by many to be the deep-root cause to the war. Nevertheless, the war was not mainly a matter of ethnicity but rather related to discontent regarding the military regime that was established after the military coup in 1954. As left-winged parties and any opposition was persecuted, the resistance against the government grew stronger and eventually a full-scale war between the government forces and left-winged rebels broke out (FN-förbundet, 2015; CJA - Guatemala, n.d.), indicating of the incompatibility of the conflict was in fact concerning government.

Furthermore, from the beginning of the war the Guatemalan government found an ally in the U.S. and was periodically provided with support from them during the war. However, as mentioned in the section on external support in Guatemala, through the years between 1977 and 1983 the U.S. blocked all aid to the Guatemalan government due to reports of human rights violations. Nevertheless, during these years the Guatemalan forces received military and economic support from other actors namely Taiwan and Israel who were not only two strong allies to the U.S., but also themselves dependent on U.S. aid. In extension, this means that the Guatemalan government was indirectly supported and influenced by the U.S. during these years as well (Perrigo, 2016; Högladh, Pettersson & Themnér, 2011). Additionally, the Guatemalan government was provided with weapons and material from Argentina throughout the same period of time, 1977-1982, and from the Dominican Republic in 1982 (Högladh, Pettersson & Themnér, 2011).

Furthermore, regarding any potential time dependent circumstances during the Guatemalan war, the Cold War era is considered as a main time dependent period. Along the observed duration of the Guatemalan war (1975-1987) the Cold War was on-going and influenced the behaviour of all conflicting parties during the civil war, in particular, the U.S. The Commission for Historical Clarification established that the Cold War played a crucial part in dictating the strategy employed by the U.S. in Guatemala (1999:19), as the fear of the expanding communism that came with the Cold War led the U.S. government to intervene in the Guatemalan civil war (Perrigo, 2016), showing that the Cold War era did influence the civil war. Lastly, as described in the case selection part, the duration of the Guatemalan civil war would be observed during a twelve-year period, with a start from when the Guatemalan government received external support for the first time. This entails that the Guatemalan civil war is observed between 1975, with the outset of external support from the U.S., and twelve years forward until 1987.

5.3 Table of Result

Cases	<i>Level of External Support</i>	<i>Level of one-sided violence</i>
El Salvador (1980-1992)	High	High
Guatemala (1975-1987)	Low	High

Table 3 – Table of Result

6 Interpretation of the results

This section will provide a summary of the results and thereafter an interpretation and discussion on the empirical findings observed in the analysis. After follows a section on alternative explanations and a discussion on the limitations of this study. The relationship I expected to observe in this study was that the higher level of external support provided to the government in civil wars, the higher the likelihood of the government increasing their use of one-sided violence would be. The empirical findings did find support that external support increases the level of one-sided violence during civil wars. However, the findings did not support the hypothesis that it is the level of support that ultimately affects the level of one-sided violence in civil wars.

Beginning with the case of El Salvador one would find a correlation between external support and use of one-sided violence. Over a period of twelve years the U.S. government poured an estimated USD 4.5 billions into the Salvadoran government as well as large amounts of humanitarian aid. However, the majority of the support was categorised as military support, such as better weapons, military supplies, vehicles and the training of Salvadoran forces in counterinsurgency tactics. At the same time, brutal human rights violations were committed against the Salvadoran population. Throughout the war thousands of civilians became victims of warfare strategies such as death squad killings, forced disappearance and mass killings. Later it was established that the Salvadoran forces were responsible for the majority of these acts of violence against the population.

Similar events unfolded during the civil war in Guatemala. Despite the longevity of the war, the majority of the one-sided violence occurred during 1978-1984. Throughout this period of seven years the Guatemalan forces systematically attacked villages as part of their scorched-earth policy. This period would later be recognised as the darkest period in Central American history, as it resulted in the massacre of over 600 villages. The Guatemalan forces were seen as the main perpetrators of the acts of violence against the population during the war, with the frequent deployment of warfare strategies such as forced disappearance, executions and kidnapping. Still, the Guatemalan forces were sporadically granted support from U.S. government during this time, in the form of economic aid and the opportunity to purchase military equipment from the U.S. Department of Defence. Furthermore, the U.S. supported the Guatemalan forces with training and expertise in counterinsurgency tactics.

Still, if one compares the U.S. support given to the Salvadoran government during the civil wars to the level of support granted to the Guatemalan government by the U.S., the support provided to the Guatemalan government would be interpreted as low. While the Salvadoran forces were continually supported by the U.S., except on a few sporadic occasions, the Guatemalan forces were frequently blocked and limited the access to support. As mentioned in the analysis section, the support given to the Guatemalan forces were often opposed and at several occasions down-voted in the congress, due to the reports on human rights violations, which is believed to be the main reason why the Guatemalan government never received the same level of support as the El Salvador did during the wars.

At times the U.S. demanded improvements of human rights in Guatemala in order to guarantee their continued support. Nevertheless, the request was rejected by the Guatemalan government (Farrah, 1999). This is in stark contrast to the support provided to the Salvadoran government. Not only did the U.S. provide the Salvadoran government with a substantially larger amount of economic and military aid compared to Guatemala during the war, one must consider the fact that El Salvador is a relatively small country in relation to the support given. With an estimated population of 5 million during the war (Worldometers, 2018) and with a GDP of USD 3,574bn (The World Bank, 2018) when the U.S. began to send support in 1980, the level of support from the U.S. would need to be considered as high. As mentioned in the analysis section, the Salvadoran economy was completely dependent on the economic aid from the U.S. throughout the war. Some argue that the U.S. government funded the entire Salvadoran war with its support (McKinney, 2014:10). At the time of the war El Salvador received more support than any other country from the U.S., if one were to exclude the aid sent to Egypt and Israel (Bonner, 2018). This provides further indications of how the level of support given to Guatemala and El Salvador differed, where level of support provided to Guatemala must be considered as low compared to the high level of support given to El Salvador.

However, what the two countries do have in common is the high levels of one-sided violence during the civil wars. Throughout the Salvadoran war the state forces intentionally conducted raids against villages with the aim of cutting of the rebels' lifeline (El Salvador Truth Commission, 1993:36). By means of death squad killings and massacres, thousands of civilians lost their lives during the twelve-year long civil war. One of the worst massacre in Central American history occurred during the Salvadoran civil war, resulting in the slaughter of 1,200

people (Bonner, 2018), provides evidence of the high levels of one-sided violence that prevailed during the war.

Furthermore, just as in El Salvador the population in Guatemala became victims of the brutal acts of violence by the state forces. In particular the indigenous Mayan, where the genocide of the Mayans is believed to have taken the lives of more than 7,000, indicating of extremely high levels of one-sided violence. Also, just as in the Salvadoran civil war, the state forces deployed policies to scorch the earth for supporters of the rebels. During a short period of time hundreds of villages in Guatemala were attacked and massacred by the state forces. To this day, Guatemala has the highest number of disappearances compared to any war in Latin America. Out of an estimated 45,000 vanished people only 6,000 have been found (Volpe, 2017). As thousands of civilians suffered from brutal acts of violence by the state forces throughout the war, it implies that both Guatemala and El Salvador experienced high levels of one-sided violence during the civil wars. Even if the level of one-sided violence during the Salvadoran civil war did not reach the same high level as in the Guatemalan civil war, the violence against civilians in El Salvador did far exceed the threshold of 25 deaths in a year. Therefore, still demonstrating of high levels of one-sided violence during the war. This tells us that El Salvador received high levels of support from the U.S. throughout the war compared to the support given to Guatemala which was provided with low levels of support from the U.S. Still, both countries experienced extremely high levels of one-sided violence throughout the wars which can be translated into external support generating higher levels of one-sided violence in civil conflicts wars of the level of external support provided.

Moreover, when it comes to the theoretical framework suggested to explain the observed relationship between level of external support and the increased use of one-sided violence it could be discussed whether the theory is supported or not. I suggested that the provision to the government in a civil conflict would lead to a shift in the capacity balance between the conflicting parties. This could be analysed from two perspectives in the Salvadoran civil war. From one perspective, even if the Salvadoran army always had the upper hand in terms of capacity, they were poorly structured, equipped and trained for counterinsurgency. In turn, this would lead to the relatively weaker FMNL being more likely to win even though they were smaller in numbers. Although, once the U.S. began to fuel the Salvadoran government, the forces transformed into a larger and more capable army. Still, the FMNL remained a legitimate threat due to their use of more efficient and crafty warfare strategies such as attacking bridges,

infrastructure, communication equipment and water supplies. (GAO, 1991:13-14). Implying that the provision of external support did shift the capacity balance between the government and rebels even if the government forces were already perceived as the stronger party. Another way to observe it is as simple as that the provision of external support from the U.S. did not change the capacity balance between the parties, that would eventually lead to an increase in the use of one-sided violence. Instead it only increased the level of fighting between the parties.

In the Guatemalan civil war, the causal mechanism might be contradicted. First, the provision of external support to the Guatemalan forces did not shift the capability balance between the conflicting parties. This was the case because the rebels were all throughout the war perceived as the weaker party. First, because the rebels were a much smaller army than the state forces. Second, after the war it became known that the Guatemalan forces had information regarding the rebels' capacity during the war including for instance their equipment, strategies and military capacity. This resulted in the Guatemalan forces knowing all along that they could overcome the rebels, and that the rebels did not really pose a serious threat to the government, if one would to compare the conflicting parties' capacities to each other (CEH, 1999:22). Still, the Guatemalan forces deliberately attacked both rebels and civilians. This means that regardless of the capacity of the conflicting parties, and the level of external support received, the state forces continued to target civilians. This implies that some other factor than external support could provide greater explanatory power for why one-sided violence is used and the theoretical framework suggested in this study is proven weak due to the findings when analysing Guatemala or El Salvador.

Ultimately, the relationship between external support and one-sided violence was supported in the empirical findings as the provision of external support from a third-party actor in a civil war will contribute to the increased use of one-sided violence as observed in both Guatemala and El Salvador. Where it was observed that no matter what level of support provided, given that it was provided, the level of one-sided violence was reported as high. However, it is not solely explained by the level of support given, as predicted in this study. Neither was the theoretical framework with its causal mechanism supported in the empirics. Still, the level of external support can definitely be one contributing factor to why we observe higher levels of one-sided violence in civil wars, but it is unfortunately not sufficient in explaining the correlation. Instead one need to consider the possibility that there is other potential explanation for why external support and one-sided violence are correlated.

6.1 Alternative explanation

This study did confirm, as according to previous research that a relationship between external support and one-sided violence exists. However, the expected relationship of the increase of one-sided violence being dependent on the level of external support received was not supported in the empirics. Still, the study found that there may be alternative explanations to the relationship between external support and one-sided violence than the one suggested by me. The empirical findings demonstrated that high level of external support is correlated with higher levels of used one-sided violence. Nevertheless, the theoretical framework presented was not supported, entailing that alternative explanations are likely to exist. One potential explanation that could explain why external support contributed to higher levels of one-sided violence is the training of both Salvadoran and Guatemalan forces by the U.S. military during the civil wars. One of the ways the U.S. supported both the Guatemalan and Salvadoran government was by training their forces in counterinsurgency tactics. For instance, following the war in El Salvador it became known that dictators of the Salvadoran government had been trained at the School of Americas. The school was later closed in 2000 amid claims of human rights violations and the training of counterinsurgency techniques, such as torture (McKinney, 2014:2526).

Furthermore, it was established that several of the commanders found guilty of massacring thousands of civilians during the war had also been trained in guerrilla tactics by the U.S. military. For instance, recall the El Mozote massacre in El Salvador that plundered the lives of over 1,000 in 1981. The battalion guilty of the massacre had just before the raid completed training in counterinsurgency tactics that would also promote respect for human rights on U.S. soil (Brigida, 2018; Bonner, 2018). Also, the brutal murder of six Jesuit priest and their housekeeper in 1989 that lead to a temporary block of aid sent from the U.S. was conducted by a Salvadoran battalion that had been created and trained by the U.S. (McKinney, 2014:10). In Guatemala on the other hand it was found that the man behind the darkest years in the Guatemalan history, Rios Montt, had been trained in counterinsurgency operations by the U.S. military (Painter, 2018). By the Commission for Historical Clarification it was later claimed that the training of Guatemalan soldiers had had a crucial impact on the human rights violations during the war (1999:19).

These alternative explanations imply that the external support given from a third-party actor did in fact contribute to the increased use of one-sided violence during both the Guatemalan and Salvadoran the civil war, but not in the way I expected. Nevertheless, these circumstances indicate that an even more detailed insight into these civil wars is required. One can for instance question the chosen research design and method for this study. Even though this paper did not find support for the suggested theoretical framework it did give insight into the relationship between external support and one-sided violence, suggesting that there remains more to study regarding this relationship. In order to uncover the detailed causality, one could instead have conducted a process tracing of the civil wars separately. In doing so, one could have traced every step of the chain, from the provision to external support to the increased use of one-sided violence thereafter identifying more in detail how they correlate with each other. By doing so, one could have established an adjusted theoretical framework for the relationship that would take into consideration the type of external support that entails the training of the Guatemalan and Salvadoran forces. Still, one of the advantages with the method of structured focused comparison is that it captures what single case studies are lacking, namely a baselined comparison. Conducting process tracing on a case study will indeed contribute to a substantial amount of detailed and specific information, nevertheless it will not have a cumulative character. With the method of structured focused comparison, one can instead ensure a systematic comparison that will generate valuable knowledge that a single case study cannot (George & Bennett, 2005:67-70).

6.2 Limitations of the study

One evident limitation with this study is the chosen duration of the conflicts. As noted in this paper the observed years of the Guatemalan and Salvadoran civil wars differ. They are both observed under the same amount of time, namely twelve years but between different years and during different periods in the conflicts. For instance, the entire Salvadoran civil war is covered, while only a third of the Guatemala civil war is observed, indicating that the cases might deviate in the comparison since I am comparing different stages of the conflicts. Also, the time before the provision of external support is then not taking into consideration. Nonetheless, the observing of the entire civil wars in both cases would not be possible, as the cases would then not be comparable in terms of number of years studied. One would then compare the level of one-sided violence during twelve-year long war to thirty-six-year long war, and as research has established that the longer the war goes on the higher probability of increased use of one-sided

violence, such a comparison would have been flawed, as other contributions to the higher levels of one-sided violence would exist. Also, one would then compare two conflicts where in one a civil conflict just broke out while in the other a civil war had been ongoing for twenty years, implying different stages of maturity of the conflicts.

One solution would then be to only observe the initial years of the wars in order to provide as similar a comparison as possible. However, in the cases of the Guatemalan and the Salvadoran civil wars that would not be feasible because the support from a third-party actor was not provided from the beginning of the war, meaning that the phenomenon under study would not be included. The same goes for if one were to only cover the last years of the conflicts, where in both El Salvador and Guatemala the support from a third-party actor began to decrease years before the conflict ended. Therefore, the predetermined time of observation of the conflicts was specified to begin with the start of the provision of external support from a third-party actor. By doing so, one would be capturing the phenomenon under study and ensure as fair comparison of the cases as possible, even though the conflicts were studied during different stages. Another limitation with this study which has already been discussed in the alternative explanation section is the chosen method. In order to more explicitly examine if the suggested theoretical framework was supported and an even deeper examination of the cases of Guatemala and El Salvador the method of process tracing might have been favourable. Still, with the method of structured-focused comparison one can be provided with valuable information by comparing cases which display variation in the variables. Something that a single case study, i.e. process tracing cannot provide for.

7 Summary and conclusion

The aim of this paper was to examine if different levels of external support given to state actors in civil war would lead to the increased use of one-sided violence. This was conducted through a comparative case study on the civil wars in El Salvador and Guatemala. The thesis established, just as stated in previous research, that external support and one-sided violence are correlated. Still, the proposed hypothesis was not entirely supported by the findings.

The empirics showed that while the level of support provided to the two countries from the U.S. differed substantially, both Guatemala and El Salvador experienced extremely high levels of one-sided violence during the wars. I expected that the higher the level of external support the higher level of one-sided violence would be. While this was observed in the case of El Salvador, the empirics exposed that low levels of external support also generated higher levels of one-sided violence, as observed in Guatemala. In conclusions, no matter what level of support was given, one-sided violence increased in both cases.

Furthermore, the suggested theoretical framework was not supported by the empirical findings, as the provision of external support toward the state actor did not shift the capacity balance between the conflicting parties, which was argued to lead to the escalation of the conflict and eventually the increased use of one-sided violence. The empirical findings provided evidence that external support did affect the use of one-sided violence. However, it was not explained by the causal mechanism suggested in this paper.

Nevertheless, the findings did give valuable insight into the relationship between the provision of external support and the level of one-sided violence within civil wars. For instance, the training of both Guatemalan and Salvadoran soldiers by the U.S. during the civil wars contributed to the increased use of one-sided violence. This indicates that a more explicit study regarding the specific type of external support provided in a civil war is needed. Also, both high and low levels of external support affected the use of one-sided violence in civil wars which implies that the relationship between external support and one-sided violence was once again established. Still, more research regarding how these phenomenon correlate is required.

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