

Arms Diplomacy, Bicycle Diplomacy, and Flag Money:
The Selection of an American Ally in Angola

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Abstract

Many civil wars are fuelled by the receipt, by one or more armed groups, of material support from a foreign third-party state. Such rebel patronage injects traces of international conflict and international cooperation into civil conflicts, and it often shapes their outcomes. But understanding rebel patronage strategies requires developing models to explain how state patrons select their foreign rebel clients, and such models remain at an early stage of theoretical development.

Using process-tracing and original historical research, this dissertation tests theoretical hypotheses about rebel selection by examining American support to Angolan nationalist groups during the first phase of the Angolan Civil War in 1975. In particular, it seeks to explain the transformation in the relationship between the United States and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (*União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola*; UNITA), which the White House declined to support in January 1975 but included in a multimillion-dollar support package in July 1975.

The most decisive factors in this transformation, it emerges, were political. UNITA's rise in American esteem was closely related to the group's newfound closeness with American allies in Angola's neighbouring countries, who shaped the American patronage strategy. It was also influenced by the White House's increasingly ambitious political objectives in Angola. The Angolan case study thus provides support to an emerging body of literature that suggests that rebel selection decisions may be closely conditioned on the objectives of the intervention and on the expected policy positions of other third-party states.

They are all independents. They are all for black Africa. They are all for some fuzzy kind of social system, you know, without really much articulation, but some sort of let's not be exploited by the capitalist nations.

- Bill Colby, Director of Central Intelligence, on ideological distinctions among Angolan nationalist groups in 1975.¹

¹ Quoted in the Report of the House Select Committee on Intelligence, 1976; printed in Gregory Andrade Diamond, ed., *The Unexpurgated Pike Report: Report of the House Select Committee on Intelligence, 1976* (McGraw Hill, 1992), 145.

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Chapter One: Introduction

In 1975, Angola's three largest nationalist movements concluded a fifteen-year revolutionary war against Portugal and embarked upon a civil war against each other. That summer, the *Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola* (National Front for the Liberation of Angola; FNLA) flew regular planes over besieged Luanda to drop leaflets announcing the movement's impending victory.² During the same period, 50,000 civilians and guerrillas were equipped with campaign-style lapel badges which identified their wearer as "a member of the FNLA Party".³

These ostentatious displays were enabled by covert American financial support to FNLA. During the first half of 1975, FNLA was the standard-bearer for American policy aspirations in Angola, as it had been for over a decade before then. Indeed, in January 1975, American policymakers had overtly declined to broaden their sponsorship scheme to include a rival nationalist movement, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (*União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola*; UNITA), which, like FNLA, competed with the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (*Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola*; MPLA) for political and military supremacy.

On 18 July 1975, however, the American government reversed itself and approved a plan to provide covert military assistance to UNITA as well as to FNLA.⁴ This decision marked a turning point in American strategy in Angola: UNITA soon supplanted FNLA as the country's main ally in the Angolan Civil War, and it received several hundred million dollars from the United States over the next fifteen years.⁵

Although there is substantial scholarship about the American intervention in the Angolan Civil War, there has not been any systematic attempt to explain the change in American posture towards UNITA in 1975. Similarly, although there is substantial scholarship about the broader phenomenon of patronage of rebels by third-party states, the choice that the United States faced in 1975 – the choice of a sponsor state *among* different rebel groups in the same conflict –

² Ryszard Kapuscinski, *Another Day of Life*, trans. William R. Brand and Katarzyna Mroczkowska-Brand (London: Penguin Classics, 2001), 7, 94.

³ Loch K. Johnson, *The Third Option: Covert Action and American Foreign Policy* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2022), 32.

⁴ John A. Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution, Volume II: Exile Politics and Guerrilla Warfare, 1962-1976* (M.I.T. Press, 1978), 262; Thomas J. Noer, 'International Credibility and Political Survival: The Ford Administration's Intervention in Angola', *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (1993): 775.

⁵ Quint Hoekstra, 'The Effect of Foreign State Support to UNITA During the Angolan War (1975–1991)', *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 29, no. 5–6 (2 November 2018): 981–1005; William Minter, 'The US and the War in Angola', *Review of African Political Economy* 18, no. 50 (1991): 135–44.

remains under-theorised.

This dissertation is an effort to fill both gaps. The abrupt American reversal in 1975 provides a natural experiment which can be exploited to generate and refine hypotheses about rebel patronage strategies and, in particular, about the manner in which states choose their foreign rebel allies. I argue that the American policy change was closely conditioned on the motives of the intervention, and particularly on an intention to use rebel patronage to signal the United States's alignment in the conflict – a signal that was directed not only at Angolan players but also at third parties in the region. This conclusion, I suggest, provides support to the emerging body of literature that posits a relationship between the aims of rebel patronage and the methods of rebel selection.

This introductory chapter provides a synopsis of the dissertation's research design. The structure and rationale of the dissertation is closely informed by my review of the theoretical literature on rebel selection, which is deferred to Chapter 2. In this chapter, however, I provide a preliminary argument for the significance of rebel patronage as a subject of study, set out my research design, and outline the rest of the dissertation.

1.1. The significance of rebel patronage

I use “rebel patronage” as shorthand for the phenomenon of external support to rebel groups, which occurs when a third party provides support to a foreign non-state armed group engaged in a civil conflict abroad.⁶ The literature generally focuses on material forms of support – especially money, weapons, and other military assistance – but rebels may also receive less direct forms of external support, such as political support and safe haven.⁷ I also follow the literature in focusing on rebel patronage undertaken by third-party states, though non-state actors may also become patrons.⁸

According to global data collected by Belgin San-Akca, almost 60 per cent of all armed insurgencies between 1945 and 2010 were sustained by external support – financial, military, or logistical aid – from third-party states.⁹ Over the same period, at least 95 different states

⁶ Daniel Byman et al., *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements* (RAND Corporation, 2001), 2–3.

⁷ Belgin San-Akca, *States in Disguise: Causes of State Support for Rebel Groups* (Oxford University Press, 2016), 8.

⁸ See Daniel Byman, ‘Outside Support for Insurgent Movements’, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 36, no. 12 (2013): 981–1004.

⁹ San-Akca, *States in Disguise*, 1–2.

provided such aid to at least one foreign rebel group.¹⁰ The prevalence of rebel patronage complicates understandings of twentieth-century civil conflict. To overlook rebel patronage is vastly to underestimate the extent to which civil wars involve both “transnational cooperation” – between state sponsors and their rebel clients abroad – and “interstate competition” – between state sponsors and their clients’ target states.¹¹ And rebel patronage is likely to become increasingly important to the study and practice of contemporary warfare.¹²

Moreover, rebel patronage affects the conduct, outcome, and long-term consequences of civil war. Ample evidence for these relationships emerges from the large body of conflict studies literature that has taken rebel patronage as an independent variable and sought to measure its effects. That literature finds that rebel patronage tends to make civil wars last longer,¹³ to escalate rivalries between the sponsoring state and the rebels’ target state,¹⁴ and to complicate post-conflict attempts to disarm, demobilise, and reintegrate rebels.¹⁵ And it has these effects on conflict outcomes partly because of its effects on the rebel group which receives patronage. Rebel patronage tends to improve both the political position and the military position of the rebel groups which receive it.¹⁶ It may also have significant effects on recipients’ behaviour –

¹⁰ San-Akca, 68.

¹¹ Allard Duursma and Henning Tamm, ‘Mutual Interventions in Africa’, *International Studies Quarterly* 65, no. 4 (2021): 1078; Noel Twagirumungu et al., ‘Re-Describing Transnational Conflict in Africa’, *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 57, no. 3 (2019): 377–91.

¹² See Andreas Krieg and Jean-Marc Rickli, ‘Surrogate Warfare: The Art of War in the 21st Century?’, *Defence Studies* 18, no. 2 (2018): 115; Thomas Waldman, ‘Vicarious Warfare: The Counterproductive Consequences of Modern American Military Practice’, *Contemporary Security Policy* 39, no. 2 (2018): 181–205; see also Vladimir Rauta et al., ‘A Symposium – Debating “Surrogate Warfare” and the Transformation of War’, *Defence Studies* 19 (2019): 1–21.

¹³ Katherine Sawyer, Kathleen Gallagher Cunningham, and William Reed, ‘The Role of External Support in Civil War Termination’, *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 61, no. 6 (2017): 1174–1202.

¹⁴ Zeev Maoz and Belgin San-Akca, ‘Rivalry and State Support of Non-State Armed Groups (NAGs), 1946–2001’, *International Studies Quarterly* 56, no. 4 (2012): 720–34.

¹⁵ Andrew Mumford, ‘Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) after Proxy Wars: Reconceptualising the Consequences of External Support’, *Third World Quarterly* 42, no. 12 (2021): 2956–73. These studies are supplementary to the broader literature on the effects of biased external interventions in civil war, rebel patronage being one means of such intervention. Biased external intervention in general tends to make civil wars last longer, to make peace negotiations less likely, and to make conflict recurrence more likely in the short-term; see Patrick M. Regan, ‘Third-Party Interventions and the Duration of Intrastate Conflicts’, *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 46, no. 1 (2002): 55–73; David E. Cunningham, ‘Blocking Resolution: How External States Can Prolong Civil Wars’, *Journal of Peace Research* 47, no. 2 (2010): 115–27; Niklas Karlén, ‘Escalate to De-Escalate? External State Support and Governments’ Willingness to Negotiate’, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 46, no. 8 (2020): 1–22; Niklas Karlén, ‘The Legacy of Foreign Patrons: External State Support and Conflict Recurrence’, *Journal of Peace Research* 54, no. 4 (2017): 499–512.

¹⁶ On political advantages, see Jennifer M. Hazen, *What Rebels Want: Resources and Supply Networks in Wartime* (Cornell University Press, 2013), 3; on military advantages, Jason Lyall and Isaiah Wilson, ‘Rage Against the Machines: Explaining Outcomes in Counterinsurgency Wars’, *International Organization* 63,

specifically, on rebel groups' propensity to form alliances, merge, or fight with other rebel groups;¹⁷ their level of internal cohesion and discipline;¹⁸ their propensity to use violent methods;¹⁹ their propensity to provide social services to non-combatant populations in territory they control;²⁰ and even the feasibility of their transforming into viable political parties after conflict termination.²¹

There is, therefore, an abundance of evidence for the significance of rebel patronage. However, the effect of rebel patronage on various conflict outcomes appears to turn on the details of how and why patronage is provided: those details frame the relationship between the sponsoring state and its rebel client and therefore affect the incentives faced by the client.²² For this and other reasons, there is a need for further research about the factors that shape the rebel patronage strategies of sponsoring states.

As Vladimir Rauta explains, a rebel patronage strategy consists of three inter-related "strategic decisions": the sponsoring state must decide which objectives to pursue, which clients to

no. 1 (2009): 67–106.

¹⁷ Navin A. Bapat and Kanisha D. Bond, 'Alliances between Militant Groups', *British Journal of Political Science* 42, no. 4 (2012): 793–824; Mohammed M. Hafez, Michael Gabbay, and Emily Kalah Gade, 'Consolidation of Nonstate Armed Actors in Fragmented Conflicts: Introducing an Emerging Research Program', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 47, no. 9 (2021): 1–21; Milos Popovic, 'Inter-Rebel Alliances in the Shadow of Foreign Sponsors', *International Interactions* 44, no. 4 (2018): 749–76; Arthur Stein and Marc-Olivier Cantin, 'Crowding out the Field: External Support to Insurgents and the Intensity of Inter-Rebel Fighting in Civil Wars', *International Interactions* 47, no. 4 (2021): 662–91.

¹⁸ Jeremy M. Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence*, Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

¹⁹ Marina G. Petrova, 'What Matters Is Who Supports You: Diaspora and Foreign States as External Supporters and Militants' Adoption of Nonviolence', *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 63, no. 9 (2019): 2155–79; Idean Salehyan, David Siroky, and Reed M. Wood, 'External Rebel Sponsorship and Civilian Abuse: A Principal-Agent Analysis of Wartime Atrocities', *International Organization* 68, no. 3 (2014): 633–61.

²⁰ Reyko Huang and Patricia L. Sullivan, 'Arms for Education? External Support and Rebel Social Services', *Journal of Peace Research* 58, no. 4 (2021): 794–808.

²¹ Michael C. Marshall, 'Foreign Rebel Sponsorship: A Patron–Client Analysis of Party Viability in Elections Following Negotiated Settlements', *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 63, no. 2 (2019): 555–84.

²² See, for example, Jordan Roberts, 'Targeting and Resistance: Reassessing the Effect of External Support on the Duration and Outcome of Armed Conflict', *Civil Wars* 21, no. 3 (2019): 362–84; Arthur Stein, 'Committed Sponsors: External Support Overtness and Civilian Targeting in Civil Wars', *European Journal of International Relations* 28, no. 2 (2022): 386–416; Henning Tamm, 'Rebel Leaders, Internal Rivals, and External Resources: How State Sponsors Affect Insurgent Cohesion', *International Studies Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (2016): 599–610. In a similar vein, Andrew Mumford argues that, while rebel patronage may often obstruct peace negotiations, they may also have the opposite effect, depending on the sponsor's expectations of its foreign clients; Mumford, 'DDR after Proxy Wars', 2960. These recent studies on rebel patronage were preceded by more general proposals about the significance of interveners' motives for the outcomes of external intervention; see, for example, Patrick M. Regan, 'Interventions into Civil Wars: A Retrospective Survey with Prospective Ideas', *Civil Wars* 12, no. 4 (2010): 468; Benjamin T. Jones, 'Altering Capabilities or Imposing Costs? Intervention Strategy and Civil War Outcomes', *International Studies Quarterly* 61, no. 1 (2017): 52–63..

engage, and how to structure the patron–client relationship.²³ This dissertation focuses on the second decision, the sponsor’s selection among rebel clients. As emerges in the theoretical literature review of Chapter 2, that question – the determinants of rebel selection – remains under-theorised in the literature to date.

1.2. Research design

1.2.1. Case selection and methodology

The early American intervention in the Angolan Civil War is an attractive case for the development of theories of rebel selection. Jason Seawright and John Gerring advise that case studies are most theoretically productive when a case demonstrates “useful variation on the dimensions of theoretical interest”,²⁴ and the American intervention in Angola constituted “a complex cycle of action and reaction, intervention and counterintervention”.²⁵ In particular, it features within-case variation in the dependent variable of interest – the identity of a state’s rebel clients – because there was an explicit reversal in American policy towards UNITA during a brief and identifiable period in 1975.

Because this dissertation asks what factors informed the change in the American relationship to UNITA over a particular period of time, it is well suited to a “before-after” theoretical case-study research design, in which a single longitudinal case is divided into sub-cases to create a “quasi-experiment” or natural experiment.²⁶ The advantage of this research design is that many intervening variables are naturally controlled. In this case, it is particularly helpful that the United States sponsored FNLA throughout the period of interest, implying that its early reluctance to support UNITA was not the result of a more general reluctance to intervene in Angola through rebel patronage. The decision to provide rebel patronage generally can therefore be separated from the decision to patronise UNITA in particular, so that the latter can receive focused attention.

Following the advice of Alexander George and Andrew Bennett,²⁷ I use the before-after design in

²³ Vladimir Rauta, ‘Proxy Warfare and the Future of Conflict: Take Two’, *The RUSI Journal* 165, no. 2 (2020): 42–43.

²⁴ Jason Seawright and John Gerring, ‘Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options’, *Political Research Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (2008): 294–308.

²⁵ James M. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene: The Reagan Doctrine and American Foreign Policy* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1996), 113.

²⁶ Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, Belfer Center Studies in International Security (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2005), 166–67.

²⁷ George and Bennett, 221.

tandem with the process-tracing method, in this case to ascertain whether and how the change in American policy towards UNITA – the variable of interest – is causally linked to changes in other variables during the first half of 1975. This exercise is guided by my review, in Chapter 2, of the existing literature on rebel selection: the existing literature proposes several potential causal variables, which I use to structure the analytical inquiry. As I mentioned at the outset, my aim is to contribute to theoretical development in the study of rebel selection, both by applying and refining existing theories and by identifying new theoretical directions. The utility of process-tracing is well established in both respects; David Collier labels them the deductive and inductive functions of process-tracing respectively.²⁸

1.2.2. Overview of sources

Often considered “a classic proxy war”,²⁹ the Angolan Civil War is a popular case study for many purposes, though I am not aware of any studies of the American choice among rebel clients in Angola.³⁰ Moreover, American and other third-party intervention in the Angolan Civil War is well documented, enabling thick description of events in 1975. In addition to a cache of secondary literature, I rely extensively on American primary sources and first-hand accounts, which help elucidate policymakers’ decision-making processes. Various American government documents from the period are declassified and stored in the National Security Archive, the National Archives, or the respective archives of the Ford Library, the Central Intelligence Agency, the State Department’s Office of the Historian, and the WikiLeaks Public Library of U. S. Diplomacy.³¹ Several policymakers also published informative memoirs,³² and three

²⁸ David Collier, ‘Understanding Process Tracing’, *PS: Political Science & Politics* 44, no. 4 (2011): 824.

²⁹ Stephen Ellis, ‘The Old Roots of Africa’s New Wars’, *Internationale Politik Und Gesellschaft* 2 (2003): 32.

³⁰ Case studies in the rebel patronage literature include Hoekstra, ‘The Effect of Foreign State Support to UNITA During the Angolan War (1975–1991)’; Adam Lockyer, ‘Foreign Intervention and Warfare in Civil Wars’, *Review of International Studies* 37, no. 5 (2011): 2337–64; Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion*. Hoekstra assesses the effect of South African and American patronage on UNITA’s military success between 1975 and 1991; Lockyer assesses the effect of foreign patronage on the form of warfare adopted by each of the three main nationalist movements between 1974 and 1976; and Weinstein assesses the effect of changes in funding sources on the evolution of UNITA’s organisational structure. In addition, James M. Scott’s *Deciding to Intervene* provides a chapter-length analysis of the American decision to revive patronage of UNITA in 1985, but does not consider the factors that drove the initiation of the relationship in 1975; see Scott, *Deciding to Intervene*.

³¹ In choosing to include diplomatic cables from the WikiLeaks library, I have been influenced by John O’Loughlin’s argument that, for academic purposes, there is no relevant and principled distinction between leaks to journalists – a mainstay of the secondary literature on the Angolan intervention – and leaks to WikiLeaks. See John O’Loughlin, ‘The Perils of Self-Censorship in Academic Research in a WikiLeaks World’, *Journal of Global Security Studies* 1, no. 4 (2016): 337–45. For the arguments against citing WikiLeaks, see Christopher Darnton, ‘The Provenance Problem: Research Methods and Ethics in the Age of WikiLeaks’, *American Political Science Review* 116, no. 3 (2022): 1110–25.

³² These include the memoirs of the State Department’s Nathaniel Davis; the National Security Council’s

congressional inquiries heard relevant testimony in 1975 and 1976.³³

1.2.3. Limitations

The design of this case study unavoidably limits the scope of the conclusions that can be drawn from it. Some of those limitations are inherent in all single-case studies,³⁴ while others relate to Barbara Geddes's warning that selection on the dependent variable can introduce selection bias into studies that purport to infer general causal relationships.³⁵ However, my research design is compatible with the modest aim of contributing to hypothesis-building about the causal factors and mechanisms involved in rebel selection.³⁶

A more serious difficulty arises from my extensive reliance on primary sources and first-hand accounts. This quasi-historical approach is indispensable to my process-tracing exercise, but government-affiliated sources are uniquely susceptible to bias. The use of government archives can introduce *post hoc* evidence biases that are created when public institutions selectively preserve documents or selectively declassify them.³⁷ And at an earlier stage, political and institutional incentives may influence the drafting of official documents. For example, much of the American intelligence and analysis that I use was produced by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), which has been accused of abusing its intelligence-analysis function to manufacture justifications for ongoing or proposed interventions.³⁸ Policy papers may be manipulated to serve a similar justificatory function,³⁹ and the same biases may infect

Roger Morris; Secretary of State Henry Kissinger; and intelligence operative John Stockwell, who ran the American covert aid programme in Angola in 1975. Other participants have given interviews, notably to Tor Sellström (in the case of African nationalists) and to the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training (in the case of American diplomats).

³³ These are the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on African Affairs (Clark Committee) hearings on United States involvement in Angola, held in 1976; the House Select Committee on Intelligence (Pike Committee) hearings of 1975 to 1976; and the Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities (Church Committee) hearings of 1975.

³⁴ See, for example, George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, 222–23.

³⁵ Barbara Geddes, 'How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics', *Political Analysis* 2 (1990): 131–50.

³⁶ Geddes, 149.

³⁷ Diana S. Kim, 'Taming Abundance: Doing Digital Archival Research (as Political Scientists)', *PS: Political Science & Politics* 55, no. 3 (2022): 531–32.

³⁸ Todd Stiefler, 'CIA's Leadership and Major Covert Operations: Rogue Elephants or Risk-Averse Bureaucrats?', *Intelligence and National Security* 19, no. 4 (2004): 632.

³⁹ Policy analyst Roger Morris recalls that, during this era, State Department staff were encouraged to temper criticism of prevailing policy on the grounds that, "This policy has to have good reasons or we wouldn't be doing it"; Roger Morris, *Uncertain Greatness: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy*, 1st ed (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 111.

policymakers' retrospective accounts in memoirs, interviews, or testimony.

For these reasons, I approach primary sources with caution and attempt to identify biases by triangulating evidence, which is in any case an essential feature of process-tracing.⁴⁰ When biases are recognisable, they can contribute to a balanced picture of policymakers' motives and perspectives. As Henry Trofimenko observed of American political memoirs, first-hand accounts are often informative precisely insofar as they are "instruments of continuing political struggle – warning, explanation, and self-justification".⁴¹

1.3. Chapter outline

In this introduction, I have outlined the research project that follows: a single-case study using process-tracing to explain the American selection among rebel clients in Angola in 1975. Its aim is to contribute to theory development about the selection of rebel clients, which is one crucial and understudied element of a strategy of rebel patronage. In the next chapter, I undertake a review of the existing theoretical literature on rebel selection, the purpose of which is two-fold: I identify potential causal variables to guide my process-tracing analysis, and I also provide a fuller picture of the value of this study in light of that broader literature.

The remaining chapters tackle the Angolan case itself. The third and fourth chapters provide institutional and historical context for the intervention. The third chapter provides an overview of the American foreign-policy-making machinery, with particular focus on the use of rebel patronage by the United States. The fourth chapter provides historical background to the case study, including an overview of the Angolan conflict, and American interests and involvement therein, before 1975.

The fifth and sixth chapters, the analytical meat of the case study, turn to the change in American policy towards UNITA during the first half of 1975. I attempt a comprehensive rendition of American perceptions of FNLA and UNITA during this period and, using process-tracing, test the theoretical variables of interest identified in the rebel selection literature. A final chapter concludes.

⁴⁰ See Jeffrey T. Checkel, 'Transnational Dynamics of Civil War', in *Transnational Dynamics of Civil War*, ed. Jeffrey T. Checkel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 23–24.

⁴¹ Henry Trofimenko, 'Struggle for the Turf', *World Politics* 37, no. 3 (April 1985): 404.

Chapter Two: Review of the Theoretical Literature

Understanding the phenomenon of rebel patronage – whether for theoretical purposes or for policy purposes – requires developing strong models to explain why and how states undertake it. Any such model must be able to account for the decision of sponsoring states to sponsor one rebel group but not another, even when both are engaged in the same conflict and fighting the same target. Yet that decision remains under-theorised.

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the existing theoretical literature on what is sometimes called the “supply side” of rebel patronage.⁴² That literature is dominated by discussion of state sponsors’ motivations for supplying rebel patronage, and I present a typology of those motives here. Thereafter I turn to my primary interest: the smaller but developing literature on rebel selection, which seeks to explain how states choose between potential rebel clients, given the decision to undertake a strategy of rebel patronage. The existing literature on rebel selection supplies potential causal hypotheses, identifying a handful of variables which have potential significance in determining a state sponsor’s choice among rebel clients. Those variables – including the rebels’ reliability, competence, and ideational attachments, as perceived by the sponsor – will structure my analysis of the Angolan case study in later chapters.

However, the case study is also inspired by limitations of the existing theoretical literature, which I discuss at the end of this chapter. In particular, I argue that further theory development should consider the full diversity of sponsoring states’ objectives and the effect that differences in objectives may have for rebel selection. I present the Angolan case study as a small contribution to closing this gap.

2.1. States’ motivations for supplying rebel patronage

The literature that bears on the supply side of rebel patronage is sizeable but, because it spans multiple disciplines, is conceptually crowded.⁴³ In this section, I frame that literature by distinguishing between two general categories of motives for supplying rebel patronage: those which arise from an interest in influencing the course of a foreign conflict, and those which arise from an interest in forming a relationship with a particular group of foreign rebels. I call these

⁴² The marketplace analogy appears to have originated with Idean Salehyan, Kristian Gleditsch and David Cunningham; see Idean Salehyan, Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, and David E. Cunningham, ‘Explaining External Support for Insurgent Groups’, *International Organization* 65, no. 4 (2011): 711.

⁴³ Niklas Karlén et al., ‘Forum: Conflict Delegation in Civil Wars’, *International Studies Review* 23, no. 4 (2021): 2050–51; Vladimir Rauta, ‘Framers, Founders, and Reformers: Three Generations of Proxy War Research’, *Contemporary Security Policy* 42 (2020): 17.

conflict-oriented and *rebel-oriented* motives, respectively. I am not aware of any studies that overtly distinguish between these categories of motives, but it is a helpful heuristic for my purposes, because each category has distinctive implications for rebel selection. I focus on the broad outlines of each category, bearing in mind that I am interested in state sponsors' motivations primarily insofar as they affect rebel selection.⁴⁴

2.1.1. Conflict-oriented rebel patronage: Conflict delegation

One substantial strand of supply-side literature, housed primarily in peace and conflict studies, analyses rebel patronage as one among many potential modes – an indirect and biased mode – of external intervention in civil conflict. In that literature, the motives of the patron (the intervener) are studied at a fairly high level of abstraction, because the theoretical question of interest tends to be about the motivations for third-party intervention *per se*.⁴⁵ This perspective rightly draws attention to the fact that much rebel patronage has the same objectives as war: it allows the sponsoring state to conduct “war by other means” against the foreign state whom the rebels target.⁴⁶ The aim may be, in extreme cases, to overthrow the target state's government or claim parts of its territory, or otherwise, *inter alia*, to gain leverage over the target state, to weaken and destabilise it, to appropriate its natural resources, or to retaliate against its own hostile actions.⁴⁷

“War by other means”, or the use of rebel patronage to influence the course or outcome of foreign conflicts, is perhaps the archetypal form of rebel patronage. It is closely associated with proxy warfare, which is generally defined precisely as an indirect intervention by a third-party state that supports and directs a local actor's war effort in order to influence a foreign conflict.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ For a finer-grained typology of the situations in which states resort to rebel patronage, see Byman et al., *Trends in Outside Support*.

⁴⁵ For a review of the literature on that broad question, see Regan, ‘Interventions into Civil Wars’.

⁴⁶ Byman et al., *Trends in Outside Support*, 32. The threat of such a strategy is what led Machiavelli to warn that a regime's domestic popularity is indispensable to its external defence, because “once the people have taken arms against you, there will never be lacking foreigners to assist them”; Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Luigi Ricci (New York: Penguin, 1952), 108.

⁴⁷ Byman et al., *Trends in Outside Support*, 23–40; see also Maoz and San-Akca, ‘Rivalry and State Support of Non-State Armed Groups (NAGs), 1946–2001’; Navin A. Bapat, ‘Understanding State Sponsorship of Militant Groups’, *British Journal of Political Science* 42, no. 1 (2012): 1–29.

⁴⁸ Andrew Mumford, *Proxy Warfare* (Cambridge, U. K.: Polity, 2013), 11; Tyrone L. Groh, *Proxy War: The Least Bad Option* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2019), 29; Rauta, ‘Proxy Warfare and the Future’, 41; Rauta, ‘Framers, Founders, and Reformers’, 2.

In Karl Deutsch's famous but largely obsolete definition, war by proxy involves “an international conflict between two foreign powers, fought out on the soil of a third country”; Karl W. Deutsch, ‘External Involvement in Internal War’, in *Internal War: Problems and Approaches*, ed. Harry Eckstein (New York: The Free Press, 1964), 102. What Deutsch describes is now usually described as a “competitive intervention” on the general (though not universal) understanding that some but not all competitive

More recently, beyond the proxy war paradigm, “war by other means” is often conceptualised as conflict delegation or “the delegation of war”: as in proxy warfare, the sponsoring state “delegates” the conduct of the conflict to its rebel client, which, in exchange for the sponsor’s support, pursues the sponsor’s objectives in the conflict.⁴⁹

If “war by other means” is conceptualised as a strategy of delegation, principal–agent theory can help explain the appeal of rebel patronage as a mode of intervention.⁵⁰ In the principal–agent framework, delegation is often attractive because it is less risky or less costly for the sponsor than direct intervention would be, since many of the risks and costs of conflict are borne by the rebel client rather than by the sponsor.⁵¹ In particular, rebel patronage is generally cheaper than direct military intervention, both because rebels may have their own financial resources and because they may be more efficient fighters, possessing local knowledge and popular legitimacy that foreign interveners often lack.⁵² The human costs of the war are borne entirely by the rebel client, rather than by the sponsoring state, and the rebels will suffer the preponderance of the embarrassment if they lose.⁵³ Moreover, rebel patronage is more easily conducted covertly than is direct intervention, and it can therefore shield states and political leaders from the political consequences of costly or illegal interventions – including the opprobrium of their own populations, as well as international sanction or retaliation.⁵⁴ Even when rebel patronage is overt or an “open secret”, states that undertake it are comparatively well-shielded from the need to account directly for the costs and casualties of the conflict.⁵⁵

interventions are proxy wars and vice versa; see Noel Anderson, ‘Competitive Intervention, Protracted Conflict, and the Global Prevalence of Civil War’, *International Studies Quarterly* 63, no. 3 (2019): 692–706; Duursma and Tamm, ‘Mutual Interventions in Africa’, 1078–79.

⁴⁹ Idean Salehyan, ‘The Delegation of War to Rebel Organizations’, *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 54, no. 3 (2010): 493–515. The literature on proxy warfare – previously insulated from much of the rebel patronage literature – had long considered proxy warfare to be a strategy of delegation; see, for example, Bertil Dunér, ‘Proxy Intervention in Civil Wars’, *Journal of Peace Research* 18, no. 4 (1981): 353.

⁵⁰ Salehyan, ‘Delegation of War’. See also Byman and Kreps ‘Agents of Destruction? Applying Principal-Agent Analysis to State-Sponsored Terrorism’, *International Studies Perspectives* 11, no. 1 (2010): 1–18.

⁵¹ Salehyan, ‘Delegation of War’, 503–4. Like delegation, the concept of risk avoidance was already well-established in the proxy warfare literature; see, for example, Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, ‘The Strategy of War by Proxy’, *Cooperation and Conflict* 19, no. 4 (November 1984): 263–73.

⁵² Salehyan, ‘Delegation of War’, 504; Bar-Siman-Tov, ‘The Strategy of War by Proxy’, 267.

⁵³ Mumford, *Proxy Warfare*, 41–42.

⁵⁴ Rory Cormac and Richard J. Aldrich, ‘Grey Is the New Black: Covert Action and Implausible Deniability’, *International Affairs* 94, no. 3 (2018): 477–94; Tom Stevenson, ‘In the Grey Zone’, *London Review of Books*, 22 October 2020.

⁵⁵ Cormac and Aldrich, ‘Grey Is the New Black’; Stevenson, ‘In the Grey Zone’.

The relative importance of each of these factors for a given state will differ depending on the international context, the domestic context, and the characteristics of the conflict in which the state proposes to intervene. For example, Hans Morgenthau argues that superpowers were attracted to rebel

However, principal–agent theory suggests that delegation has a distinctive drawback: the risk that the rebel client will shirk its commitment to pursue the sponsor’s objectives in the conflict, even as it accepts and consumes the sponsor’s resources.⁵⁶ As I will discuss shortly, this trade-off – between the benefits of delegation and the concomitant risk of agency slack – may factor crucially in a state’s choice among potential rebel clients.

The concept of conflict delegation and the application of principal–agent theory have become mainstays of the literature on rebel patronage, as well as the latest generation of literature on proxy warfare.⁵⁷ Indeed, principal–agent theory has arguably been *over*-applied.⁵⁸ One concern is that many state sponsors do not have sufficient influence over their rebel clients to count them as their *agents*; I return to this point when I am considering theories of rebel selection. A second concern is that some state sponsors have motives for dispensing rebel patronage that do not turn in any way on the outcome of the conflict; in those cases, the sponsor may not be engaged in conflict delegation at all. That is so with the strategies of rebel patronage which I call “rebel-oriented” and to which I turn now.

2.1.2. Rebel-oriented rebel patronage

An important feature of the conflict delegation strategy – especially in the study of rebel selection – is that the identity of the rebel client is of only secondary significance to the sponsoring state. The incentive to supply patronage arises not from the sponsor’s relationship to the rebels but from the sponsor’s relationship to the state that is targeted by the rebels, which is what gives the sponsor a stake in the conflict. In other cases, however, the situation is reversed, and the sponsor’s interest in providing rebel patronage arises directly from its relationship with a rebel group or its interest in forming a relationship with a rebel group.

For example, association with a particular rebel group may be calculated to improve the

patronage during the Cold War in large part because direct interventions incurred the risk of triggering nuclear escalation; Alex de Waal and Henning Tamm argue that contemporary African leaders resort to patronising paramilitaries because the demands of coup-proofing lead them to disable their conventional militaries; and Tom Stevenson argues that contemporary leaders of advanced democracies seek to avoid offending their war-weary populations. See Hans J. Morgenthau, ‘To Intervene or Not to Intervene’, *Foreign Affairs* 45, no. 3 (1967): 427–28; Alex de Waal, ‘Contemporary Warfare in Africa: Changing Context, Changing Strategies’, *IDS Bulletin* 27, no. 3 (1996): 6–16; Henning Tamm, ‘The Origins of Transnational Alliances: Rulers, Rebels, and Political Survival in the Congo Wars’, *International Security* 41, no. 1 (2016): 147–81; Stevenson, ‘In the Grey Zone’.

⁵⁶ Seyom Brown, ‘Purposes and Pitfalls of War by Proxy: A Systemic Analysis’, *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 27, no. 2 (2016): 243–57.

⁵⁷ Karlén et al., ‘Conflict Delegation in Civil Wars’, 2058.

⁵⁸ Karlén et al., 2053–54.

sponsoring state's regional prestige or its status in the rebels' native country. It may also be calculated to defend the popularity or security of the sponsoring *regime* if segments of the state's own population support the rebels' cause.⁵⁹ Or rebel patronage may be the result of sympathy with rebels who share the sponsoring state's religious, ethnic, or ideological affinities.⁶⁰ Many of these interventions embrace the signalling functions of rebel patronage: the provision of financial assistance is a "token" of support to the rebels, and to other observers it may likewise signal a close relationship or alliance.⁶¹

The distinction between such rebel-oriented motives and the conflict-oriented motives of conflict delegation is imperfect, and many rebel patronage interventions involve a combination of both. Indeed, a state sponsor that forms a patronage relationship for rebel-oriented reasons – such as ideological kinship or a desire to benefit by association with popular rebels – may thereafter acquire a conflict-oriented interest in the rebels' military success, perhaps because it is counterproductive and embarrassing to enter into a losing alliance.

2.2. Theories of rebel selection

The approaches outlined above remain insufficiently fine-grained to have serious explanatory power in one significant subset of conflicts: those conflicts in which, as in the Angolan Civil War, more than one rebel group targets the same regime and a third-party state supports some, but not all, of those groups.⁶² Explaining such cases requires a "selection theory" that specifies the conditions under which states elect to support some rebel groups but not others.⁶³ In principle,

⁵⁹ Byman et al., *Trends in Outside Support*, 36; see also Tamm, 'The Origins of Transnational Alliances', 160–61.

⁶⁰ Byman et al., *Trends in Outside Support*, 36–37; see also San-Akca, *States in Disguise*, 34–36. This proposition is in line with research that posits a significant role for ideational ties in motivating third-party interventions in civil conflicts more generally; see, for example Martin Austvoll Nome, 'Transnational Ethnic Ties and Military Intervention: Taking Sides in Civil Conflicts in Europe, Asia and North Africa, 1944–99', *European Journal of International Relations* 19, no. 4 (2013): 747–71; Stephen M. Saideman, 'Discrimination in International Relations: Analyzing External Support for Ethnic Groups', *Journal of Peace Research* 39, no. 1 (2002): 27–50. While San-Akca proposes that some sponsoring states are motivated by the perception of an "obligation" to support their ethnic, religious, or ideological peers, others argue that the influence of such commonalities operates through other causal mechanisms, perhaps as a pretext for intervention or through the influence of domestic constituencies; see, for example, Milos Popovic, 'States in Disguise: Causes of State Support for Rebel Groups, by Belgin San-Akca', *The Journal of Politics* 80, no. 3 (2018): 68; Byman et al., *Trends in Outside Support*, 37; Tamm, 'The Origins of Transnational Alliances', 160–61; Brandon Ives, 'Religious Institutionalism: A Domestic Explanation for External Support of Rebel Groups', *International Interactions* 45, no. 4 (2019): 693–719.

⁶¹ Gregory F. Treverton, 'Covert Action and Open Society', *Foreign Affairs* 65, no. 5 (1987): 1004, 1011–12.

⁶² Salehyan, Gleditsch, and Cunningham, 'Explaining External Support', 710–11.

⁶³ Karlén et al., 'Conflict Delegation in Civil Wars', 2057; San-Akca, *States in Disguise*, 17. In fact, a strategy of rebel patronage may also involve eschewing all established rebel groups in favour of sponsoring the establishment of an entirely new group – as in the example of Mozambique's *Resistência Nacional*

every theory of states' motives for undertaking rebel patronage provides the basis for a rudimentary theory of rebel selection, since state sponsors presumably provide patronage to the groups which they expect will best serve their motives. But there have been surprisingly few systematic attempts to extend existing theories in this way.⁶⁴

There are two prominent exceptions. Each attempts to link a proposal about why states decide to sponsor rebel groups to a new proposal about *which* rebel groups states decide to sponsor – that is, to an account of the characteristics or circumstances that make a particular rebel group appear more attractive than another as a candidate for state patronage. After outlining these two selection theories in turn, I undertake a general evaluation of opportunities to extend and augment the existing literature on rebel selection.

2.2.1. Salehyan, Gleditsch and Cunningham's selection theory

Idean Salehyan, Kristian Gleditsch and David Cunningham derive their selection theory directly from principal-agent theory, assuming that the selection of rebel clients is guided by the sponsoring state's attempt to navigate the trade-off inherent in conflict delegation. Thus the sponsor seeks to maximise the likelihood that the client is equipped to fulfil the sponsor's objectives effectively and at low cost, while, at the same time, it seeks to minimise the likelihood that the selected client will defect against the sponsor or act in otherwise undesirable ways.⁶⁵

The basic logic of this selection theory, therefore, is that states navigate the risks of conflict delegation by evaluating potential clients both for their competence – such that they are *able* to fulfil the sponsor's aims – and for their reliability – such that they are *willing* consistently to fulfil those aims.⁶⁶ Table 1 summarises the two main criteria which, on this theory, potential sponsors use to evaluate and compare potential clients, alongside the observable rebel

Moçambicana (Mozambican National Resistance; Renamo), which Minter argues would never have emerged as a coherent organisation if not for the “external initiative” of Rhodesia and South Africa; see William Minter, *Apartheid's Contras: An Inquiry Into the Roots of War in Angola and Mozambique* (London: Zed Books, 1994), 283.

⁶⁴ Similarly, while much attention has been devoted to the onset of rebel patronage relationships, there has been much less attention to the longitudinal evolution of those relationships, including when and why state sponsors decide to adjust the quantum of support to a given group or to terminate that support entirely. Two recent studies by Niklas Karlén, seeking respectively to explain the decisions to adjust support and terminate support, were largely inconclusive; Niklas Karlén, ‘Changing Commitments: Shifts in External State Support to Rebels’, *Civil Wars* 24, no. 1 (2022): 73–96; Karlén, ‘The Legacy of Foreign Patrons’.

⁶⁵ Salehyan, Gleditsch, and Cunningham, ‘Explaining External Support’.

⁶⁶ This basic logic appears elsewhere: Tyrone Groh, for example, agrees that states are interested in a potential proxy's capabilities and in its propensity to renege on their objectives. See Groh, *Proxy War*, 99–104.

attributes that sponsors may, in practice, use to establish whether a given criterion is met.⁶⁷

Table 1: Sponsors' selection criteria for Salehyan, Gleditsch and Cunningham

Perceived competence of rebels:	Military strength
	Strong, centralised leadership
Perceived preference congruence with rebels:	Shared preferences
	Shared ethnicity or culture

First, a sponsoring state wishes to support a rebel group which is capable of materially influencing the conflict to carry out the sponsor's objectives. In this respect, Salehyan, Gleditsch and Cunningham expect sponsors to prefer groups which appear to possess military strength and strong internal command-and-control.⁶⁸

However, it is probably sensible to take a broader view of the capabilities that sponsors may view as desirable: what is important is the rebels' competence to achieve a sponsor's objectives, and some sponsors' objectives are not predicated on the rebels' military victory. For example, Xiaoyan Qiu argues that many state sponsors neither expect nor intend for their rebel clients to win significant military victories, because victorious rebels may create political complications for – or blowback against – the sponsoring regime. In these circumstances, states may prefer a relatively weak rebel client, contrary to what Salehyan, Gleditsch and Cunningham's theory expects.⁶⁹ Fortunately, the basic logic of the theory can easily accommodate a broader, objective-dependent conception of rebel competence or effectiveness.

Second, in mitigation of the risk of agency slack, a sponsoring state seeks reliable clients: groups that are unlikely to divert its resources to uses that do not serve – or that directly contradict –

⁶⁷ In addition to these two criteria, Salehyan, Gleditsch and Cunningham propose that states are most likely to support rebel groups which target their rivals, especially if the rival state itself receives external assistance against which the sponsor may wish to “counterbalance”; see Salehyan, Gleditsch, and Cunningham, ‘Explaining External Support’, 720. This follows from the conflict-oriented nature of the conflict delegation strategy, as I described above. But, as I described above, the identity of the rebels' target is of no explanatory import to the outcome that interests me, in which more than one rebel group targets the same state but not all of those groups receive support.

⁶⁸ Salehyan, Gleditsch, and Cunningham, 715.

⁶⁹ Xiaoyan Qiu, ‘State Support for Rebels and Interstate Bargaining’, *American Journal of Political Science* 66, no. 4 (2022): 1000–1001. Groh and Rauta likewise emphasise that, even in cases of conflict delegation, sponsoring states are not uniformly “in it to win it” (Groh's phrase) or possessed of “maximalist, coercive goals” (Rauta's phrase); see Groh, *Proxy War*, 34–37; Rauta, ‘Proxy Warfare and the Future’, 42–43.

its interests.⁷⁰ In respect of this criterion, too, we should expect the basic logic to play out differently in different circumstances. The classic principal–agent relationship involves overt delegation and hierarchy, and the ideal rebel partner in such a relationship is amenable to its patron’s instruction and control.⁷¹ However, as Tim Heinkelmann-Wild and Marius Mehrl argue, some state sponsors influence their clients’ actions through “indirect orchestration” instead of through direct or “hands-on” control.⁷² If the client antecedently shares the sponsor’s objectives, the sponsor need only empower them to act; in other cases, the client may be highly motivated to receive the sponsor’s patronage and may therefore choose independently to act as the sponsor prefers it to.⁷³ Shared preferences are therefore an attractive feature, and a proxy for reliability, in rebel clients, because they facilitate indirect orchestration. Thus for Salehyan, Gleditsch and Cunningham, sponsoring states prefer rebels that share their ethnicity, culture, or religion, expecting such commonalities both to facilitate communication and monitoring and to imply shared preferences.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Salehyan, Gleditsch, and Cunningham, ‘Explaining External Support’, 715.

⁷¹ Karlén et al., ‘Conflict Delegation in Civil Wars’, 2053–54. For studies dedicated to identifying rebel characteristics that conduce to rebel compliance, see Milos Popovic, ‘Fragile Proxies: Explaining Rebel Defection Against Their State Sponsors’, *Terrorism and Political Violence* 29, no. 5 (2017): 922–42. and Barbara Elias, *Why Allies Rebel: Defiant Local Partners in Counterinsurgency Wars* (Cambridge University Press, 2020). These studies are subsidiary to a burgeoning literature that investigates the circumstances and methods that conduce to successful “management” of clients by state sponsors, but much of that literature is addressed to policymaking implications for states that routinely use conflict delegation – as the United States does under its counterinsurgency policy – and it therefore focuses largely on the control mechanisms used by the sponsoring state, rather than on the selection of clients. See, for example, Barbara Elias and Alex Weisiger, ‘Influence through Absence in U.S. Counterinsurgency Interventions? Coercing Local Allies through Threats to Withdraw’, *Civil Wars* 22, no. 4 (2020): 512–42; Christian Høj Hansen and Troels Burchall Henningsen, ‘Whose Proxy War? The Competition among Iranian Foreign Policy Elites in Iraq’, *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 33, no. 6 (2022): 973–98; Ora Szekely, ‘A Friend in Need: The Impact of the Syrian Civil War on Syria’s Clients (A Principal–Agent Approach)’, *Foreign Policy Analysis* 12, no. 3 (2016): 450–68; Candace Rondeaux and David Sterman, ‘Twenty-First Century Proxy Warfare: Confronting Strategic Innovation in a Multipolar World’ (New America, February 2019), 7–16.

⁷² Tim Heinkelmann-Wild and Marius Mehrl, ‘Indirect Governance at War: Delegation and Orchestration in Rebel Support’, *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 66, no. 1 (2022): 115–43. Heinkelmann-Wild and Mehrl’s argument is continuous with a general trend in recent literature towards studying rebel–sponsor relationships as relationships of cooperation rather than control, often emphasising that rebel patronage is mutually beneficial to clients and sponsors. Tamm uses the language of “transnational alliance”, San-Akca the language of “partnership”, and Abbas Farasoo that of “collaboration”; see Tamm, ‘The Origins of Transnational Alliances’, 151–52; San-Akca, *States in Disguise*, 14; Abbas Farasoo, ‘Rethinking Proxy War Theory in IR: A Critical Analysis of Principal–Agent Theory’, *International Studies Review* 23, no. 4 (2021): 1835–58. However, the aspect of hierarchy continues to feature in definitions of proxy warfare; compare Bar-Siman-Tov, ‘The Strategy of War by Proxy’, 267–68, 272; Vladimir Rauta, ‘Towards a Typology of Non-State Actors in “Hybrid Warfare”: Proxy, Auxiliary, Surrogate and Affiliated Forces’, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 33, no. 6 (2020): 878; Groh, *Proxy War*, 28–29.

⁷³ Heinkelmann-Wild and Mehrl, ‘Indirect Governance at War’, 121–22. Bertil Dunér makes a similar point about antecedent preference congruence; Dunér, ‘Proxy Intervention in Civil Wars’, 356–57.

⁷⁴ Salehyan, Gleditsch, and Cunningham, ‘Explaining External Support’, 715.

The logic of Salehyan, Gleditsch and Cunningham's selection theory, with its dual desiderata of effectiveness and reliability, features heavily in my later analysis of the Angolan case. However, that logic derives directly from the unique features and incentive structure of conflict delegation. Thus the theory is unlikely to explain rebel selection in the entire population of cases: if not all cases of rebel patronage involve delegation, it is misguided to assume that states will always choose those rebel groups which are best suited for delegation. As Henning Tamm complains,⁷⁵ Salehyan, Gleditsch and Cunningham acknowledge that "the specific goals that states hope to achieve by supporting rebels may vary" but decline to consider the theoretical implications of such strategic variation.⁷⁶ I have already suggested that their concepts of competence and reliability can be broadened to accommodate a wider variety of sponsors' conflict delegation objectives – but many rebel-oriented objectives likely dictate an entirely different logic of rebel selection, in which such rebel attributes as domestic reputation, regional reputation, and ideological or ethnic orientation are primary to, and more decisive than, the rebels' competence and reliability.

2.2.2. San-Akca's selection theory

In *States in Disguise*, Belgin San-Akca proposes a selection theory which explicitly accommodates both conflict-oriented and rebel-oriented motives for undertaking rebel patronage. On one hand, she agrees with Salehyan, Gleditsch and Cunningham that states use rebel patronage as a tool of international rivalry – that is, that rebel patronage is often a form of conflict delegation.⁷⁷ On the other hand, however, she posits that state sponsors may additionally – and independently – offer rebel patronage because of their ideational ties to the rebel client in question. I focus on this latter, rebel-oriented dimension of San-Akca's theory, because it does not appear in Salehyan, Gleditsch and Cunningham's theory.

Specifically, as summarised in Table 2, San-Akca proposes that states will be more likely to support foreign rebels who share the ethnic or religious identity of the state's majority population or who share an ideologically "leftist or socialist" orientation with the state's

⁷⁵ Tamm, 'The Origins of Transnational Alliances', 161–62.

⁷⁶ Salehyan, Gleditsch, and Cunningham, 'Explaining External Support', 712.

⁷⁷ San-Akca therefore agrees with Salehyan, Gleditsch and Cunningham that any given state is therefore most likely to support rebels who target its adversaries. San-Akca suggests that sponsoring states are particularly interested in supporting rebellions against adversarial states when those states lack the strength to retaliate, are perceived as threatening to the sponsor, or have a history of conflict with the sponsor; see San-Akca, *States in Disguise*, 30–37. As in the case of Salehyan, Gleditsch and Cunningham's theory, I omit mention of these variables because they cannot explain the outcome that interests me, in which rebel groups with the same target are assessed differently by the sponsoring state.

government.⁷⁸ As I described in the previous subsection, Salehyan, Gleditsch and Cunningham also include ethnic and ideological commonalities in their theory, but for them such commonalities play a different and less direct role: they influence rebel selection insofar as the sponsoring state takes them as proxies for a rebel client’s reliability. For San-Akca, by contrast, ethnic and ideological affinity may play an independent role in guiding rebel selection: state sponsors may regard their ethnic or ideological peers as attractive clients *because* they are ethnic or ideological peers.⁷⁹

Table 2: Sponsors’ selection criteria for San-Akca

Perceived ideational ties with rebels:	Shared ideological (socialist) orientation
	Shared (majority) ethnic or religious identity

San-Akca’s innovation is to recognise that states may undertake rebel patronage without undertaking conflict delegation, in which case it is misguided to expect rebel selection to proceed with the same distinctive principal-agent logic that attaches to conflict delegation. However, though she broadens her selection theory to consider one class of rebel-oriented motive – ideational affinity – she does not consider others, such as regional or domestic prestige. Thus San-Akca’s rebel selection theory, like Salehyan, Gleditsch and Cunningham’s, appears incomplete.

2.3. Limitations of the literature

Taken together, Salehyan, Gleditsch and Cunningham’s selection theory and San Acka’s selection theory proffer three broad variables that may be causally significant for rebel selection: the rebels’ perceived competence (including, for example, their military strength), their perceived reliability (including shared preferences), and their perceived ideational ties to the sponsoring state. To contribute to testing and refining existing selection theories, I consider all of these variables when evaluating the Angolan case study.

However, I conclude this chapter by discussing two general weaknesses of the existing selection theories, both of which create research opportunities that this dissertation exploits. One opportunity is theoretical: there is room for further theory development in respect of the effect

⁷⁸ San-Akca, 85.

⁷⁹ San-Akca, 31, 34–36. This mechanism may operate in the absence of any interest in the outcome of the given conflict, or it may operate alongside such interests: in the latter case, once a state has decided to provide rebel patronage for conflict delegation, “ideational affinity guides a state’s decision to support a particular rebel group out of many”; San-Akca, 35.

on rebel selection of certain understudied motives for sponsorship, particularly rebel-oriented objectives as opposed to conflict-oriented ones. The other is methodological: I suggest that the existing literature's reliance on large-N comparison has hindered theory development and testing.

2.3.1. Strategic diversity

As I alluded to above, while each of the two candidate selection theories aspires to generality, neither fully accounts for the diversity of different possible motivations for undertaking rebel patronage – nor for the manner in which such diversity might lead to different approaches to rebel selection. Thus both selection theories outlined above may omit variables or causal mechanisms that are sometimes potentially decisive for the decision to offer support to a particular rebel group.⁸⁰

In particular, Karlén et al. argue that existing selection theories neglect the extent to which rebel patronage interventions may be shaped by and conditioned on the actions and expected actions of a broad network of *other* third-party actors who have an interest in the conflict.⁸¹ The decision to sponsor rebel clients, and the choice among potential clients, is likely to be embedded in the sponsoring state's strategic interactions not only with the target state and the rebel groups but also with other third-party states.⁸² The broader conflict-studies literature certainly suggests that the “interrelations among interveners” can help explain patterns of external intervention in civil war – for example, states may intervene to counterbalance an opposing external intervention by a rival, or even to counterbalance an intervention by their rivals' *allies*.⁸³

Such observations may help explain certain patterns in rebel patronage, especially the phenomenon that Karlén et al. call “complex delegation”, in which more than one client accounts directly or indirectly to a single state sponsor.⁸⁴ (Likewise, many rebel clients receive patronage from more than one third-party state.) Network dynamics may help explain why, and under

⁸⁰ For an argument that existing theories of proxy warfare do not adequately account for strategic diversity among sponsoring states, see Rauta, 'Proxy Warfare and the Future', 42–43.

⁸¹ Karlén et al., 'Conflict Delegation in Civil Wars', 2074.

⁸² Vladimir Rauta, 'A Structural-Relational Analysis of Party Dynamics in Proxy Wars', *International Relations* 32, no. 4 (2018): 457.

⁸³ Michael G. Findley and Tze Kwang Teo, 'Rethinking Third-Party Interventions into Civil Wars: An Actor-Centric Approach', *Journal of Politics* 68, no. 4 (2006): 830–31.

⁸⁴ Karlén et al., 'Conflict Delegation in Civil Wars', 2058–59.

what circumstances, sponsor states undertake a strategy of complex delegation.⁸⁵ Yet there has been little attempt to theorise how such dynamics figure in state sponsors' strategies of rebel patronage and in their evaluation of different potential rebel clients. Patterns of third-party support in the Angolan Civil War were eminently complex – not only did the United States support two rebel groups simultaneously, but each of these groups had relationships with multiple sponsors – and this case study provides an opportunity to probe the attendant dynamics further.

2.3.2. Qualitative research

A second limitation of the existing literature consists in its reliance on large-N comparison. The dominance of large-N comparison has detracted from the task of establishing and probing causal mechanisms, which, however extensively theorised, tend to “vanish in the empirical testing”.⁸⁶ This is partly because certain key variables in rebel selection cannot be identified without fine-grained case knowledge that is not easily captured in large-N datasets.

The first such variable is the objectives of sponsoring states.⁸⁷ The second is sponsoring states' perceptions of potential rebel clients. When cataloguing rebel attributes like military strength and strength of command-and-control, datasets generally draw from academic estimates, many of them retrospective; those estimates can be expected to differ, in many cases, from the intelligence that was available contemporaneously to state actors, and it is the latter, not the former, that is decisive for rebel selection.⁸⁸ Finally, large-N datasets must omit the dependent variable itself: the decision to offer support to a given rebel group. No dataset purports to record all cases in which a state *offered* patronage to a rebel: there is only large-N data on cases in which patronage was both offered and accepted.⁸⁹ Testable hypotheses must therefore be

⁸⁵ Karlén et al., 2058–59.

⁸⁶ Checkel, ‘Transnational Dynamics of Civil War’, 4, 7–8.

⁸⁷ For example, Salehyan, Gleditsch and Cunningham test their selection theory against a large dataset, containing all reported cases of rebel patronage since 1945, which – because sponsor-client dynamics are difficult to observe and measure – does not disaggregate cases of conflict delegation from other cases of patronage; Salehyan, Gleditsch, and Cunningham, ‘Explaining External Support’, 720. Yet, as I suggested above, the theory's causal mechanisms seem to be uniquely applicable to conflict delegation.

⁸⁸ For example, Salehyan, Gleditsch and Cunningham test their selection theory against their own dataset, which codes FNLA as “much weaker” than MPLA during the civil war on the basis that “the group was able to accomplish little militarily and was quickly driven out of the country [by 1977]” – a retrospective, outcome-based inference that was not available to state actors in 1975. See the most recent edition of the case description notes at Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, David Cunningham, and Idean Salehyan, ‘Non-State Actor Data: Version 3.4’, 10 April 2013, 445.

⁸⁹ See, for example, Vanessa Meier et al., ‘External Support in Armed Conflicts: Introducing the UCDP External Support Dataset (ESD), 1975–2017’, *Journal of Peace Research* 60, no. 3 (2022): 545–54; San-Akca, *States in Disguise*, 43–66.

framed in terms of the *receipt* of patronage, while the underlying theoretical question pertains to states' decision to offer patronage.⁹⁰ That discrepancy is particularly harmful to theory development if certain kinds of rebel groups are systematically less likely to accept offers of patronage. Fine-grained case-study research can help address this and other deficiencies of large-N comparison.

2.4. Conclusion

Though I have outlined two formalised theories of rebel selection, I have suggested that each is built on a narrow conception of the objectives that sponsoring states seek to serve through rebel patronage. This dissertation attempts to fill that gap using a qualitative study, tracking in detail the considerations that, in a single case, the state sponsor valued when evaluating potential rebel clients against each other and against its own strategic objectives.

On the other hand, although formalised theories of rebel selection are incomplete, this literature review also shows that the rebel selection literature is replete with promising causal hypotheses, drawn both from conflict studies and from strategic studies. For my purposes, each would provide a different explanation for the outcome that interests me: the change in American policy towards UNITA in the first half of 1975. Salehyan, Gleditsch and Cunningham's selection theory implies that such a change results from changes in the rebel groups' perceived reliability or competence, while San-Akca's theory suggests that it might also arise from a change in the rebels' perceived ideational alignment; both of these hypotheses would benefit from application and elucidation in a detailed case study. Meanwhile, adjacent literature contributes at least two further causal hypotheses, both under-theorised and under-tested. First, a change in the identity of a sponsor's clients might arise from a change in the international context, if rebel patronage interventions are conditioned on the international context and the strategies of a network of other third parties. Second, more broadly, it might arise from a change in the sponsoring state's objectives, if the selection of rebel clients is closely conditioned on the objectives of the rebel patronage intervention. These hypotheses guide the process-tracing exercise I undertake with respect to the Angolan case.

⁹⁰ Existing selection theories approach this difficulty by theorising a metaphorical "marketplace" for rebel patronage in which both rebels and third-party states can approach and rebuff various potential partners; Karlén et al., 'Conflict Delegation in Civil Wars', 2056. Thus they theorise both the demand-side and the supply-side of rebel patronage as separate but "intermingled" processes; Salehyan, Gleditsch, and Cunningham, 'Explaining External Support', 711; San-Akca, *States in Disguise*, 11–12. This approach is limited insofar as large-N studies can only observe successful offers – the market equilibrium, so to speak – and therefore cannot isolate the determinants of the supply-side.

Chapter Three: Rebel Patronage as an American Policy Option

In the next two chapters, I introduce the Angolan case, complementing the theoretical background in the preceding chapter with an historical background about the formation of American rebel patronage policies in general and about the course of American foreign policy in Angola in particular. As a prelude to the historical background provided in Chapter 4, this chapter provides a contextual and institutional overview of foreign-policymaking in the United States during the relevant period, with a particular focus on the development and use of policies of rebel patronage.

3.1. Historical precedent

“Support of resistance to tyranny in foreign countries”, according to a May 1948 policy memorandum, is “an operation in the traditional American form”.⁹¹ Although the United States had a long history of undertaking similar interventions abroad,⁹² rebel patronage interventions gained special significance during the Cold War as one tool of the strategy of “political warfare” that the United States waged worldwide against the Soviet Union – defined as a strategy of pursuing national objectives abroad by “all the means at a nation’s command, short of [military] war”, and notably including “clandestine support of ‘friendly’ foreign elements... and even encouragement of underground resistance in hostile states”.⁹³

The same 1948 policy memorandum, exhorting better coordination of political warfare by the United States government, proposed that all covert political warfare operations should be directed and coordinated by a single office.⁹⁴ Thus in June 1948, President Harry Truman approved National Security Council (NSC) Directive 10/2, which created such a centralised office under the Director of Central Intelligence.⁹⁵ The new Office of Special Projects, soon renamed the Office of Policy Coordination (OPC), was authorised to plan and conduct “covert

⁹¹ ‘Policy Planning Staff Memorandum: The Inauguration of Organized Political Warfare’, 4 May 1948, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State.

⁹² Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 9–10.

⁹³ ‘Policy Planning Staff Memorandum: Organized Political Warfare’.

⁹⁴ ‘Policy Planning Staff Memorandum: Organized Political Warfare’; Scott Lucas and Kaeten Mistry, ‘Illusions of Coherence: George F. Kennan, U.S. Strategy and Political Warfare in the Early Cold War, 1946-1950’, *Diplomatic History* 33, no. 1 (2009): 51–52.

⁹⁵ ‘National Security Council Directive on Office of Special Projects: NSC 10/2’, 18 June 1948, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State. See also Anne Karalekas, ‘History of the Central Intelligence Agency’, in *Final Report, Book IV: Supplementary Detailed Staff Reports on Foreign and Military Intelligence*, by Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations With Respect to Intelligence Activities (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1976), 26–30.

operations”, including political interventions as well as paramilitary, psychological (propaganda), and economic ones.⁹⁶ The directive specifically endorsed political warfare activities involving “subversion against hostile states, including assistance to underground resistance movements, guerrillas and refugee liberation groups”.⁹⁷

The decision to subsume political warfare under the broader rubric of covert operations, or covert action, was significant. As emerged in the literature review of the prior chapter, one of the advantages of rebel patronage as a mode of intervention is that it can be conducted covertly, but rebel patronage – and other forms of political warfare – need not be covert.⁹⁸ Indeed, even many covert political action programmes during the late Cold War were in fact “overt-covert”: the United States government officially or unofficially acknowledged their existence, while concealing the details thereof.⁹⁹ But, official secrecy aside, the label of “covert action” had the effect of entrenching CIA authority over such operations and of impeding congressional scrutiny of the same, both points that I will return to in the following subsections.

NSC Directive 10/2 authorised what was ultimately a “sweeping expansion” in the use of covert political action as a foreign policy tool and a weapon of the Cold War.¹⁰⁰ Over the next five years, the OPC grew enormously during the Korean War: in 1949, it had 302 personnel, attached to seven overseas CIA stations, and a budget of \$4.7 million; in 1952 – only three years later – it had 2,812 permanent personnel at 47 stations and a budget of \$82 million.¹⁰¹

However, financial patronage of an African rebel group would have been an unlikely policy platform during this early period. Although the CIA was linked to several experiments in regime change from the mid-1950s, its early political action programmes tended to focus on bolstering centrist political parties in Europe and “strong men” leaders in the Third World.¹⁰² Importantly,

⁹⁶ Karalekas, ‘History of the CIA’, 26–28.

⁹⁷ ‘National Security Council Directive on Office of Special Projects: NSC 10/2’.

⁹⁸ Bruce D. Berkowitz and Allan E. Goodman, ‘The Logic of Covert Action’, *The National Interest*, no. 51 (1998): 39.

⁹⁹ See Carol Giacomo, ‘Angola Bill Fuels New Debate Over U.S. Covert Action’, *Reuters*, 14 May 1986, Central Intelligence Agency Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room; Treverton, ‘Covert Action and Open Society’, 995. This was a notable feature of the so-called Reagan Doctrine.

¹⁰⁰ Karalekas, ‘History of the CIA’, 29–30; Johnson, *The Third Option*, 171.

¹⁰¹ Karalekas, ‘History of the CIA’, 31–32.

¹⁰² As Scott Lucas and Kaeten Mistry observe, a geographical emphasis on the so-called Free World is implicit in both the May 1948 memorandum and NSC Directive 10/2, and Western European elections apparently attracted the OPC’s first covert political interventions abroad in 1948; see Lucas and Mistry, ‘Illusions of Coherence’, 53; Karalekas, ‘History of the CIA’, 26, 36. On American support to strong men during this period, see David F. Schmitz, *Thank God They’re on Our Side: The United States and Right-Wing Dictatorships, 1921-1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), chapter 1.

the CIA's programmes "mirrored American foreign policy priorities".¹⁰³ Africa received little high-level attention whatsoever until the Kennedy administration, when interest in the outcomes of decolonisation – beginning with Ghanaian independence in 1957 – inspired an increase in CIA activity on the continent.¹⁰⁴ The foreign-policy apparatus had to be built more or less from scratch. The CIA established a dedicated Africa Division in 1960 – the region having formerly been subsumed under the Europe and Middle East Divisions – and the number of CIA stations in African territories increased by 55 per cent between 1959 and 1963.¹⁰⁵ The State Department itself established a Bureau of African Affairs in 1957, but in 1958 there were still more American diplomats in West Germany than in all of black Africa.¹⁰⁶ In the recollection of Arthur Schlesinger Jr., Special Assistant to President John F. Kennedy:

Of all the continents this one had stayed longest on the outer fringes of the American consciousness... No traditional doctrines guided our African policies... Our very sense of the continent below the Mediterranean rim was vague and dim.¹⁰⁷

According to Michael Hunt, the first major American intervention in sub-Saharan Africa during the Cold War was a political action programme, beginning in 1960, to install a moderate, pro-Western government in the Congo.¹⁰⁸ As I will set out in Chapter 4, patronage of Angolan rebels emerged as a policy option during roughly the same period.

3.2. Decision-making institutions

Because this case study attempts to trace American decision-making in Angola, it is useful briefly to traverse the policymaking apparatus that governed American rebel patronage interventions. Shortly before Truman approved NSC Directive 10/2, the National Security Act of 1947 created the post-war national security apparatus of the executive branch, including the

¹⁰³ Karalekas, 'History of the CIA', 92.

¹⁰⁴ Karalekas, 68.

¹⁰⁵ Karalekas, 68. During this early period, CIA intelligence collection in Africa remained dependent on liaison agreements with allied foreign states, on which see Karalekas, 49–50.

¹⁰⁶ Thomas J. Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation: The United States and White Rule in Africa, 1948-1968* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1985), 49. The bureau was apparently the innovation of Eisenhower's deputy, Vice President Richard Nixon, who returned from a visit to Africa convinced that the region could be decisive in the Cold War.

¹⁰⁷ Arthur M. Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (London: Tonbridge, 1965), 480.

¹⁰⁸ Michael H. Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 167. The classic account of this programme is Stephen R. Weissman, *American Foreign Policy in the Congo, 1960-1964* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974).

NSC and the CIA in its modern, independent iteration.¹⁰⁹ After the CIA acquired responsibility for covert action in 1948, the NSC – located in the White House – undertook executive oversight of its conduct of that function.¹¹⁰

A series of NSC subcommittees reviewed and approved proposals for covert action programmes. In 1975, the relevant subcommittee was the 40 Committee, which was chaired by the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs and also included representatives of the Secretary of Defence, the Secretary of State, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the CIA.¹¹¹ The 40 Committee generally did not apply high standards of scrutiny to covert action proposals. Congress's Pike Committee concluded that 40 Committee was, in practice, often "little more than a rubber stamp".¹¹² In the description of one CIA official, the 40 Committee was:

like a bunch of schoolboys. They would listen and their eyes would bug out. I always used to say I could get \$5 million out of the 40 Committee for a covert operation faster than I could get money for a typewriter out of the ordinary bureaucracy.¹¹³

Moreover, few programmes reached the committee at all, because the NSC generally omitted to institute principled criteria for deciding which programmes required its approval.¹¹⁴ Informal criteria developed in 1963 suggested that the NSC should have oversight of risky, politically sensitive, and expensive projects; the CIA tended to report any project costing over \$25,000.¹¹⁵ In 1970, these criteria were formalised but not clarified by a rule requiring the CIA to obtain policy approval for "major and/or politically sensitive" projects.¹¹⁶ In all, of the several thousand covert action programmes undertaken by the CIA between 1961 and 1975, Congress's Church Committee estimated that only fourteen per cent were reviewed by the 40 Committee and its predecessors.¹¹⁷ Most other projects were both initiated and approved within the CIA itself, and,

¹⁰⁹ 'National Security Act', Pub. L. No. 80-253 (1947).

¹¹⁰ Melinda Haas, 'Origins of Oversight: Covert Action Amendments to the National Security Act of 1947', *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence* 36, no. 4 (2 October 2023): 1297-1318.

¹¹¹ House Select Committee on Intelligence, 'Report', in *The Unexpurgated Pike Report: Report of the House Select Committee on Intelligence, 1976*, ed. Gregory Andrade Diamond (McGraw Hill, 1992), 123.

¹¹² House Select Committee on Intelligence, 123.

¹¹³ Quoted in James Dingeman, 'Covert Operations in Central and Southern Africa', in *U.S. Military Involvement in Southern Africa*, ed. Western Massachusetts Association of Concerned African Scholars, 1st ed (Boston: South End Press, 1978), 87.

¹¹⁴ House Select Committee on Intelligence, 'Report', 123.

¹¹⁵ Karalekas, 'History of the CIA', 70.

¹¹⁶ 'National Security Decision Memorandum 40: Responsibility for the Conduct, Supervision and Coordination of Covert Action Operations', 17 February 1970, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State.

¹¹⁷ Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations With Respect to Intelligence Activities,

as the number of CIA programmes and stations multiplied in the 1960s, authority over project development and approval was increasingly delegated to lower levels in the CIA.¹¹⁸ Some proceeded without the knowledge of the State Department, if local ambassadors were not informed or “preferred to remain ignorant”.¹¹⁹

Nor was Congress empowered to conduct rigorous oversight of covert action projects. Congressional opinion generally presented little obstacle to rebel patronage and other covert action interventions. In the summation of Loch Johnson, these were thus “carried out absent rigorous internal review in the executive branch, while similarly the Congress indulged in ‘twenty-nine years of acquiescence.’”¹²⁰

However, the Angolan intervention of 1975 took place amid domestic political backlash against the CIA’s activities in Chile, in Vietnam, and inside the United States. It was thus the CIA’s first covert action project under a new congressional oversight regime, introduced by the Hughes–Ryan Amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act.¹²¹ Passed in late 1974, the amendment introduced preconditions on the use of congressional funds for covert action programmes: first, a presidential finding confirming the programme’s importance to national security, and, second, timely reporting to appropriate congressional committees.¹²² In line with Hughes–Ryan, the Director of Central Intelligence briefed multiple closed congressional meetings on the Angolan intervention, beginning on 25 July 1975, but the quality of those briefings was questionable.¹²³ The most vigorous congressional oversight of the Angolan intervention was retroactive: after *The New York Times* uncovered it in September 1975,¹²⁴ the Angolan intervention became the first ongoing covert action which Congress ever blocked.¹²⁵

Final Report, Book I: Foreign and Military Intelligence (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1976), 57.

¹¹⁸ Karalekas, ‘History of the CIA’, 33–34, 67.

¹¹⁹ ‘Minutes of the Third Meeting of the Discussion Group on Intelligence and Foreign Policy’, in *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence*, by Victor Marchetti and John D. Marks (New York, N.Y: Laurel Books, 1980), 328; Karalekas, ‘History of the CIA’, 72.

¹²⁰ Johnson, *The Third Option*, 181, quoting Karalekas, ‘History of the CIA’, 93.

¹²¹ Johnson, *The Third Option*, 117.

¹²² For a detailed discussion of the Hughes–Ryan regime, see Johnson, 181–84.

¹²³ Gerald J. Bender, ‘Angola: A Story of Stupidity’, *New York Review of Books*, 21 December 1978.

¹²⁴ Leslie H. Gelb, ‘U.S., Soviet, China Reported Aiding Portugal, Angola’, *The New York Times*, 25 September 1975.

¹²⁵ Johnson, *The Third Option*, 119. The Tunney Amendment, introduced as an amendment to the defence appropriations bill, terminated appropriations for the Angolan programme; the Clark Amendment, introduced as an amendment to the foreign aid bill, barred further appropriations for Angolan operations; see Robert David Johnson, *Congress and the Cold War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 221–22; see also Robert David Johnson, ‘The Unintended Consequences of Congressional Reform:

3.3. Ghost money and intelligence collection

One final point bears mentioning in connection with the institutional context of rebel patronage in the United States and the role of the CIA in particular. After it acquired the covert action function in 1948, the CIA retained its traditional function as the foremost agency in the collection, distribution, and analysis of national-security-related intelligence to policymakers in the executive branch.¹²⁶ To its consumers – principally the President, the NSC, and the Departments of State and Defence – the CIA supplied both routine situational intelligence estimates and contributions to policy analysis.¹²⁷ I have already alluded to concerns that this dual mandate created incentives for biased intelligence reporting, insofar as it spanned both policymaking and policy implementation: the CIA often produced the intelligence that justified its own covert action programmes.¹²⁸

A different complication arose from the compensation of foreign intelligence assets. The CIA had access to unvouchered funds, or “ghost money”,¹²⁹ to facilitate clandestine intelligence collection, including through cash payments to sources, and the same funds could be used to fund covert action projects – indeed, in 1948, the CIA was judged well-suited for the covert action function in part because the unvouchered funds system, and its lax accounting standards, facilitated secrecy.¹³⁰ During the Cold War, the CIA was prolific in distributing unvouchered payments to foreign political figures.¹³¹ Such payments often straddled the line between cultivation of high-level intelligence assets and covert political action, as those enterprises are

The Clark and Tunney Amendments and U.S. Policy toward Angola’, *Diplomatic History* 27, no. 2 (2003): 215–43.

¹²⁶ The CIA therefore conducted two categories of covert activity: covert action operations and clandestine intelligence collection, primarily espionage; see ‘Discussion Group on Intelligence and Foreign Policy’, 329.

¹²⁷ Robert M. Gates, ‘The CIA and American Foreign Policy’, *Foreign Affairs* 66, no. 2 (1987): 215–18.

¹²⁸ See Stiefler, ‘CIA’s Leadership and Major Covert Operations’. As Stiefler explains, such concerns are exacerbated by the popular suspicion that the CIA is single-mindedly pro-interventionist. In that regard, the Pike Committee found that 88 per cent of 40 Committee approvals between 1965 and 1975 emanated from proposals submitted by the CIA, but it also concluded that covert action projects “at times have been forced on a reluctant CIA by the President and his National Security Advisor”; see House Select Committee on Intelligence, ‘Report’, 122–23. Similarly, Robert Gates – an alumnus of both the CIA and the NSC – argues that policymakers manipulate the CIA more often than the opposite; see Gates, ‘The CIA and American Foreign Policy’.

¹²⁹ Jonathan Eubank, ‘Ghost Money and Its Anticorruption Consequences: A Diagnosis and Template for Governance’, *U.C. Davis Journal of International Law & Policy* 26 (2020 2019): 191.

¹³⁰ Karalekas, ‘History of the CIA’, 28–29.

¹³¹ As an ambassador told *The New York Times* in 1977, “You name ‘em and they got money”. See David Binder, ‘More Heads of State Are Reported To Have Received C.I.A. Payments’, *The New York Times*, 19 February 1977. On the phenomenon in Africa, see generally Rene Lemarchand, ‘The C.I.A. in Africa: How Central? How Intelligent?’, *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 14, no. 3 (1976): 401–26.

closely related.¹³² In the account of Richard Bissell, the former head of the Clandestine Service, beneficiaries of covert political subsidies were often useful intelligence assets, and, conversely, beneficiaries of intelligence payments were valuable political allies; in either case, payment was typically premised on gaining a mixture of access and influence.¹³³ Indeed, one important purpose of intelligence collection was precisely to “develop covert action capabilities” by “identifying potential indigenous allies... making contact with them, and establishing the fact of a community of interest”.¹³⁴

In these circumstances, “the tasks of intelligence collection and [covert] political action overlap to the point of being almost indistinguishable”.¹³⁵ In respect of rebel leaders in particular, it may be unclear whether – and when – a long-term subsidy to an intelligence asset becomes a grant intended to support his organisation, an instance of rebel patronage. Although the Angolan intervention of 1975 was unquestionably a policy of rebel patronage, sanctioned at the level of the NSC, a blurring of the distinction between intelligence collection and political patronage was certainly a feature of the American engagement in Angola in the decades before 1975.

3.4. Conclusion

As described in this chapter, the United States government’s resort to covert political action programmes, rebel patronage among them, was prolific, flexible, and largely discretionary: the CIA, the President, and the NSC had considerable latitude to pursue them. These institutional mechanisms feature prominently in Chapters 5 and 6, which analyse policymaking in 1975. The following chapter, however, surveys American policy in Angola in the years before 1975, providing an historical background about Angolan nationalism and the American engagement therewith; it emerges there that high-level attention to Angola was only sporadic before 1975.

¹³² Eubank, ‘Ghost Money’, 194–97.

¹³³ ‘Discussion Group on Intelligence and Foreign Policy’, 332–33. Bissell made these remarks in an off-the-record meeting at the Council on Foreign Relations, the transcript of which was later leaked.

¹³⁴ ‘Discussion Group on Intelligence and Foreign Policy’, 338.

¹³⁵ ‘Discussion Group on Intelligence and Foreign Policy’, 332–33. Indeed, the two functions were integrated in the CIA’s Clandestine Service from 1952 onwards, preventing “multiple recruitment of the same agents” and “dissipation of effort”. One important distinction remained: clandestine intelligence collection projects – even when they involved long-term subsidies to foreign politicians – did not qualify as covert action and were therefore entirely exempt from external authorisation and oversight. See ‘Discussion Group on Intelligence and Foreign Policy’, 329; Karalekas, ‘History of the CIA’, 38, 71.

Chapter Four: The United States and Angolan Nationalism, 1961–1974

Although this dissertation focuses on the Angolan intervention of 1975, the motivations and methods of that intervention were indelibly shaped by antecedent relationships and events. This chapter therefore provides historical context for the 1975 intervention, providing background to the Angolan case study in two main dimensions. The first half traces American policy in Angola during the War of Independence between 1961 and 1974, focusing on American relationships with Angolan nationalist groups. The second half, drawing on the first, distills and expands on the main factors that motivated American interest in the outcome of the Angolan war – a prerequisite to understanding the objectives of the 1975 rebel patronage intervention.

4.1. American relationships in Angola

In the 1960s, American diplomats were fond of joking that, having sent three Angolans to university, the Portuguese government was ready to embark on its second five-hundred-year plan for the African colonies.¹³⁶ The joke captured both the systematic underdevelopment of Portuguese Africa and the obstinacy of the Portuguese claim to its African territories. Portugal's *Estado Novo* (New State), the authoritarian regime inaugurated by António de Oliveira Salazar in 1933, regarded Portugal's colonial possessions as integral provinces of Portugal and the cornerstone of its international prestige. However, by the mid-twentieth century, only a miniscule proportion of black Angolans were granted access to the institutions of Portuguese "civilisation", citizenship among them.¹³⁷ Three centuries of transatlantic slave exports had been followed, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, by systematic colonial expansion and pacification, including the development of permanent white settlements and the institution of an unpopular system of "contract" or forced labour.¹³⁸ Black Angolans' civic and political rights were regulated – most frequently, denied – by the *indigenato* system, which awarded Portuguese citizenship to assimilated black Angolans (*assimilados*). Salazar and his colleagues

¹³⁶ Roger Hilsman, *To Move a Nation: The Politics of Foreign Policy in the Administration of John F. Kennedy* (Dell Publishing Company, 1967), 249.

¹³⁷ Gerald J. Bender, *Angola Under the Portuguese: The Myth and the Reality* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2004), 151.

¹³⁸ On the slave trade, see James Duffy, *Portugal in Africa* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1963), 28–29, 50–51. On imperial expansion and pacification respectively, see Richard J. Hammond, 'Economic Imperialism: Sidelights on a Stereotype', *The Journal of Economic History* 21, no. 4 (1961): 582–98; Douglas L. Wheeler, 'The Portuguese Army in Angola', *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 7, no. 3 (1969): 426–29. The country's white population – accounting for just over five per cent of Angola's population of 5.6 million in 1970 – were concentrated in Luanda and other major cities, with most white settlement dating only to the first half of the twentieth century; see Bender, *Angola Under the Portuguese*, 20–27, 45.

were comfortable in their expectation that widespread assimilation would take centuries.¹³⁹

In this context, Angolan nationalism became a formidable political force in the 1950s.¹⁴⁰ In John Marcum's account, there were two main strands of nationalism in that period, each with distinctive ethnic-regional roots. In Luanda and its Kimbundu-speaking surrounds emerged an urban, intellectual form of nationalism influenced by communism and Portuguese republicanism; its spokesperson was MPLA, many of whose founders were students from *assimilado* or *mestiço* (mixed-race) families.¹⁴¹ This Luanda-based tendency faced significant repression from the Portuguese secret police in the late 1950s, and from 1960 it had its headquarters in Conakry in the newly independent Republic of Guinea.¹⁴² A second dominant strand of nationalism was born north of Luanda in rural, Kikongo-speaking regions that were formerly part of the pre-colonial Kongo Kingdom. Many Bakongo had crossed the Angolan border to the lower Congo in the early twentieth century, and Léopoldville, the Congo's capital, became a centre of Bakongo Angolan nationalism and the headquarters of one of its most prominent organisational vehicles, the FNLA.¹⁴³

Although growing nationalism raised the spectre of decolonisation in Angola, an American policy statement in January 1960 concluded that, as Angola remained legally a province of Portugal, "there are sharp limitations on the ability of the United States to influence developments" there.¹⁴⁴ President Dwight Eisenhower's administration subsumed Angolan policy under Portuguese policy and cherished its doctrine of "non-involvement" in African and Asian decolonisation battles.¹⁴⁵ In 1960 – the last year of Eisenhower's presidency and the last year of relative calm in Angola – that doctrine entailed major benefits to Portugal under the United States Military Assistance Program (MAP) and American collusion with Portugal in

¹³⁹ Bender, *Angola Under the Portuguese*, 149–50. On the so-called lusotropicalist defence of colonialism, based on the ostensibly non-racial nature of the *indigenato* hierarchy, see Bender, 4–5.

¹⁴⁰ John A. Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution, Volume I: The Anatomy of an Explosion, 1950-1962* (M.I.T. Press, 1969), 8. For a discussion of nineteenth-century antecedents, see Douglas L. Wheeler, "'Angola Is Whose House?' Early Stirrings of Angolan Nationalism and Protest, 1822-1910", *African Historical Studies* 2, no. 1 (1969): 1–22.

¹⁴¹ Marcum, *Angolan Revolution, Vol. I*, 28–37.

¹⁴² Marcum, 43.

¹⁴³ Marcum, 49–50. The FNLA originated as the overtly northern *União dos Povos do Norte de Angola* (Union of the Peoples of Northern Angola; UPNA), later renamed the *União dos Povos de Angola* (Union of the Angolan Peoples; UPA). It founded the FNLA in a merger with another northern movement in 1962, and I use that label throughout because it is the most recognisable.

¹⁴⁴ 'National Security Council Report NSC 6001: Statement of U.S. Policy Toward South, Central and East Africa', 19 January 1960, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State.

¹⁴⁵ Robert J. McMahon, 'Eisenhower and Third World Nationalism: A Critique of the Revisionists', *Political Science Quarterly* 101, no. 3 (1986): 453–73.

defeating Afro-Asian censor of Portuguese colonialism at the United Nations (UN).¹⁴⁶

The events at the heart of this case study – the launch of a multimillion-dollar rebel patronage intervention in Angola in 1975 – therefore reflect a remarkable transformation of American foreign policy in the intervening fifteen years. In this section, I partly bridge that gap by providing a historical overview of American foreign policy in Angola between roughly 1961 and 1974, a period that encompasses the duration of the Angolan War of Independence and spans four presidential administrations. In the case of each administration, I outline the general policy orientation of the administration but focus on its relations with different Angolan nationalist movements, pursued in line with – or in contradiction of – those broad policies.

This historical background aids my case-study analysis by shaping my account, first, of American interests in the Angolan conflict, and, second, of American perceptions of the main nationalist groups. The discussion also provides a historical overview of the development of the main nationalist organisations – FNLA, MPLA, and UNITA – though the differences between those organisations will receive more detailed attention in Chapter 6.

4.1.1. Angola or Azores: The Kennedy administration, 1961–1963

President John Kennedy took office on 20 January 1961 in the midst of a nationalist furore in Angola, as there were uprisings in northern Angola and in Luanda during the first three months of that year.¹⁴⁷ The Portuguese military response was indiscriminate: an estimated 20,000 black Angolans were killed in the next six months.¹⁴⁸ These events marked the beginning of a low-level insurgency that persisted for thirteen years and that Portugal contained at great expense.¹⁴⁹ MPLA and FNLA, the presumptive stewards of the unfolding revolution, hastened to meet the occasion.¹⁵⁰ Both formed armed wings, and, on 5 April 1962, FNLA announced the formation of the *Govêrno Revolucionário de Angola no Exílio* (Revolutionary Government of Angola in Exile; GRAE).¹⁵¹ In competition with each other, both groups also redoubled their

¹⁴⁶ Richard D. Mahoney, *JFK: Ordeal in Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 189. In fact, the United States sponsored Portugal's nomination to the UN Security Council in 1960; Noer, *Cold War*, 59.

¹⁴⁷ For fuller accounts of these events, see Marcum, *Angolan Revolution, Vol. I*, 124–45; Basil Davidson, *In the Eye of the Storm: Angola's People* (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1972), 183–89.

¹⁴⁸ Marcum, *Angolan Revolution, Vol. I*, 143–45.

¹⁴⁹ Wheeler, 'The Portuguese Army in Angola', 431; see also John P. Cann, 'The Artful Use of National Power: Portuguese Angola (1961–1974)', *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 22, no. 1 (2011): 196–225.

¹⁵⁰ Marcum, *Angolan Revolution, Vol. I*, 159–80; see also Marcum, *Angolan Revolution, Vol. II*, chapter 1.

¹⁵¹ See Marcum, *Angolan Revolution, Vol. I*, 246–48.

efforts to solicit external support – both material and political – from foreign governments.¹⁵²

From 1961, the prospect of Angolan decolonisation gave rise to a years-long “war of memos” in Washington, D. C.¹⁵³ Salazar’s government attempted to steer this debate by investing in an expensive public relations campaign by a New York-based firm.¹⁵⁴ Indeed, the policy debate turned centrally on the competing demands of external actors: in addition to Angolans themselves, the principal audiences for Angolan policy were the Portuguese government and the newly independent governments of sub-Saharan Africa. Each had defenders in the Kennedy administration.

On one hand, defenders of self-determination were drawn from the State Department’s African Affairs Bureau and the American Mission to the United Nations (UN), which conservative advisor Dean Acheson derided as “the department of emotion”.¹⁵⁵ They tended to argue that American positioning “as a champion of self-determination in Africa” was a prerequisite to continued influence – and even to continued cordiality – with the rapidly proliferating independent states of Asia and, especially, Africa.¹⁵⁶ This, in turn, would serve the Kennedy administration’s anti-communist objectives.¹⁵⁷ Although Nikita Khrushchev had promised that Soviet support for “wars of national liberation” in the Third World would promote the spread of communism,¹⁵⁸ Kennedy was hopeful that nationalist leaders could be coaxed into moderate, non-communist political positions, if not into outright alliance with the United States. In this view, decolonisation endangered American interests only if the United States alienated itself

¹⁵² Marcum, *Angolan Revolution, Vol. II*, 14–27.

¹⁵³ Noer, *Cold War*, 65; see also Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, 490.

¹⁵⁴ See Daniel M. Friedenberg, ‘The Public Relations of Colonialism: Salazar’s Mouthpiece in the U.S.’, *Africa Today* 9, no. 3 (1962): 4–16. The findings of a 1963 congressional investigation into the campaign are summarised in Noer, *Cold War*, 74–76.

¹⁵⁵ Mahoney, *JFK*, 211.

¹⁵⁶ Samuel H. Belk, ‘Memorandum to the President’s Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy): Angola’, 29 June 1961, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State; see also Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, 490. Kennedy had been elected on a foreign-policy platform which encompassed precisely this philosophy: making unprecedented use of Africa as a campaign issue, he had argued that a policy of American “non-involvement” in decolonisation – which he labelled a “head-in-the-sand policy” – amounted to an abdication of American influence over the post-colonial governments. See Mahoney, *JFK*, 28–31; Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, 483; Noer, *Cold War*, 50.

¹⁵⁷ Noer, *Cold War*, 64–66.

¹⁵⁸ Nikita Khrushchev delivered his famous speech to that effect on 6 January 1961, and Kennedy reportedly distributed copies of it to his entire staff, as well reading it at dinner with friends, alone in the Oval Office, and aloud during the inaugural meeting of his NSC. See Philip E. Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans: John F. Kennedy’s Courting of African Nationalist Leaders* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), xi–xii. On Khrushchev’s speech and the underlying Soviet policy, see Francis M. Casey, ‘Soviet Strategy for the Third World: Wars of National Liberation’, *The Journal of East Asian Affairs* 2, no. 1 (1982): 152–69.

from the newly independent states, creating a political vacuum for the Soviet Union to exploit.¹⁵⁹

Opposition to this position was concentrated in the State Department's European Affairs Bureau, the embassy in Lisbon, and the Pentagon. Their primary concern was American relations with the Portuguese regime.¹⁶⁰ At that time, Portugal's importance to the United States arose mainly from its membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and, above all, from its control of a strategically located air base on the Azores Islands in the Atlantic,¹⁶¹ which the Department of Defence deemed essential to "our ability to execute required military missions under wartime and emergency conditions".¹⁶²

The Africanist view won early victories in the administration, but they were short-lived. In July 1961, Kennedy approved the policy recommendations of a new task force on the Portuguese African territories, which prescribed diplomatic pressure on Salazar, limitations on Portugal's use of MAP equipment against African rebels, and expanded humanitarian outreach to Angolans.¹⁶³ To reap the reputational benefits of its new stance, the administration sought to "dramatize" it in international forums,¹⁶⁴ supporting several progressive UN resolutions in the first half of 1961.¹⁶⁵ However, the administration markedly retreated thereafter.¹⁶⁶ The Europeanist argument gained force as Soviet-American relations worsened, precipitating a series of extra-African crises and appearing to validate the Pentagon's emphasis on military preparedness and access to the Azores.¹⁶⁷ Kennedy's initially ambitious Angolan policy became "increasingly diluted... from confrontation to reconciliation and accommodation" with Portugal.¹⁶⁸

¹⁵⁹ Mahoney, *JFK*, 202; Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, 444. I discuss the Cold War dimension of American policy in further detail below.

¹⁶⁰ Mahoney, *JFK*, 198.

¹⁶¹ Mahoney, 189.

¹⁶² Belk, 'Memorandum: Angola'. See also Maxwell D. Taylor, 'Memorandum from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to Secretary of Defense McNamara: US Policy Toward Portugal and Republic of South Africa', 10 July 1963, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State.

¹⁶³ Mahoney, *JFK*, 201; 'National Security Action Memorandum No. 60: U.S. Actions in Relation to Portuguese Territories in Africa', 14 July 1961, 60, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

¹⁶⁴ See Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, 448, 484, 488.

¹⁶⁵ Mahoney, *JFK*, 190, 198.

¹⁶⁶ Luís Nuno Rodrigues, "'Today's Terrorist Is Tomorrow's Statesman': The United States and Angolan Nationalism in the Early 1960s", *Portuguese Journal of Social Science* 3, no. 2 (2004): 127-36; Mahoney, *JFK*, 220-22.

¹⁶⁷ Noer, *Cold War*, 66.

¹⁶⁸ David A. Dickson, 'U.S. Foreign Policy toward Southern and Central Africa: The Kennedy and Johnson Years', *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 23, no. 2 (1993): 305.

However, American relationships with Angolan nationalists survived this moderation of policy. This is remarkable given strident objections from Salazar and from some figures inside the Kennedy administration, including Secretary of State Dean Rusk.¹⁶⁹ Those relationships centred on Holden Roberto, the FNLA leader, whom the United States identified within the first year of the insurgency as a “genuine non-Communist nationalist” and as its preferred leader of the nationalist movement.¹⁷⁰

There are several reasons that Roberto might, at this stage, have appeared a more attractive leader than Mário de Andrade or Agostinho Neto of the MPLA. FNLA gained an early military advantage over MPLA – though not a political advantage – in large part because of its unobstructed access to the Congolese border, from whence it lodged guerrilla attacks in northern Angola.¹⁷¹ MPLA was also more prone to profess intellectual Marxism and imply mistrust of the United States.¹⁷² In addition, Marcum suggests that the early American ascendance of Roberto was partly the result of the “happenstance of early contacts and associations”.¹⁷³ Roberto was well-connected not only among African politicians but also among American visitors to the region, who transmitted favourable reports to American diplomats.¹⁷⁴ He was a persistent and suave courtier of the American government during his annual visits to Washington.¹⁷⁵ Perhaps most importantly, he had had a relationship with the CIA since 1955,

¹⁶⁹ Mahoney, *JFK*, 204–6; Rodrigues, ‘Today’s Terrorist’, 127–28; Dean Rusk, ‘Memorandum to the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Johnson)’, 18 June 1961, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State.

¹⁷⁰ ‘Telegram 579 from the Department of State to the Embassy in the Republic of the Congo’, 5 October 1961, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State.

¹⁷¹ Marcum, *Angolan Revolution*, Vol. II, 42–44. It also held territory inside Angola in Fuesse.

¹⁷² See Marcum, 56–57. This point should not be overstated: both groups claimed non-alignment in the Cold War, and in the late 1950s Roberto himself faced suspicion of being a communist, in part because of his earlier associations with Patrice Lumumba; see Marcum, *Angolan Revolution*, Vol. I, 97. Moreover, in the early 1960s, American intelligence continued to indicate that MPLA’s alignment was negotiable, that it would probably prefer Western support to “a commitment to the Communist world”, and even that Neto was a champion of “the faction favoring a more genuine neutrality”; see, for example, ‘Special Report of the CIA: The Angolan Rebellion and White Unrest’, 5 April 1963, 3, CIA Reading Room. Indeed, well into the 1970s, some American officials continued to argue that MPLA could become an effective, non-communist American ally. However, the American choice between FNLA and MPLA is beyond the scope of this study.

¹⁷³ Marcum, *Angolan Revolution*, Vol. I, 201.

¹⁷⁴ Rodrigues, ‘Today’s Terrorist’, 122–23, 131–32.

¹⁷⁵ He met Kennedy at his Senate office in 1959, was received by Department of State officials in Washington in 1960, and made several visits to the American Mission to the UN in New York. According to Marcum, his annual trips to the United States continued until 1963, and according to Rodrigues, Salazar was particularly aggrieved by his appearance on a CBS television show in 1961. See Marcum, *Angolan Revolution*, Vol. II, 132; Rodrigues, ‘Today’s Terrorist’, 117–18, 120, 134–35; ‘Letter from Holden Roberto to President Kennedy’, 19 December 1962, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

presumably as an intelligence source;¹⁷⁶ the agency had been making regular payments to him since then, described as “‘subsistence’ funds”, though the State Department was not aware of this until March 1960.¹⁷⁷

The financial assistance continued through Kennedy’s presidency. After Secretary Rusk decided in 1961 that all agencies should cease providing Roberto with “assistance with arms or... funds which could purchase arms”,¹⁷⁸ the CIA proposed to replace its regular monthly payments to Roberto with intermittent payments “through a secure, non-official cutout, in return for specific information and under no circumstances in a magnitude to permit the purchase of arms or otherwise materially supporting terrorism in Angola”.¹⁷⁹ According to Noer, the cut-out was the government of the neighbouring Congo, where Cyrille Adoula was installed as prime minister with American support.¹⁸⁰ It is unclear whether the CIA provided Roberto with arms, as well as cash, during this period, as Portugal alleged that it did.¹⁸¹ It is also unclear whether support to Roberto during this period rose to the level of programmatic support for his political and military efforts – covert political action as contemplated by NSC Directive 10/2 – and, in particular, whether such support was sanctioned by the NSC. Mahoney claims, based on reports from two official sources, that the NSC’s Special Group (a predecessor of the 40 Committee)

¹⁷⁶ ‘Country Summary Prepared in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research: Angola’, 6 March 1967, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State.

¹⁷⁷ Roger Hilsman, ‘Letter to the President’s Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy)’, 23 May 1961, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State. See also ‘40 Committee Decisions and Covert Action Plans in Angola’, October 1975, National Archives Access to Archival Databases (“secret financial assistance to Holden Roberto was begun in the late 1950s”).

¹⁷⁸ Rusk, ‘Memorandum to Johnson’. This decision was part of a sequence of about-turns by the State Department: in late March 1961, after the insurgency in northern Angola began, the Léopodville embassy was instructed to increase its “overt but discreet” contacts with Roberto – both to reassure Roberto of American interest in his cause and to obtain intelligence about UPA’s “activities and thinking” and Roberto’s own “character as leader of the UPA” – but, less than two months later, that directive was abruptly reversed when embassy officials were instructed not to make unsolicited contact with Roberto. See Rodrigues, ‘Today’s Terrorist’, 118; Hilsman, ‘Letter to Bundy’.

¹⁷⁹ U. Alexis Johnson, ‘Memorandum to the Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (Hilsman): Holden Roberto’, 17 July 1961, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State.

¹⁸⁰ Noer, *Cold War*, 85. Noer also reports that the quantum of aid to Roberto in fact increased from early 1962, due to American concerns about perceived increases in MPLA’s strength and communist sympathies.

¹⁸¹ A 1975 *New York Times* report suggested, in passing, that it did, but Richard Mahoney is convinced that it did not. Compare Gelb, ‘U.S., Soviet, China Reported Aiding’; Mahoney, *JFK*, 206. The *New York Times* report is cited by Marcum as authority for his claim that arms were provided; see Marcum, *Angolan Revolution, Vol. II*, 17. The government’s account, that it did not provide military support until 1975, is consistent with the documentary record, although, as mentioned, Rusk’s memorandum obliquely recognises the possibility that government agencies (presumably the CIA) had been providing “assistance with arms” to Roberto; Rusk, ‘Memorandum to Johnson’.

authorised formal covert support, to the extent of \$6,000 per year, in late April 1961.¹⁸² But I have not found an NSC decision reflected in documentary sources.¹⁸³

Regardless of the presence or absence of a formal political action programme, it is clear that some senior policymakers saw strong political arguments for the American relationship – including the financial relationship – with Roberto. The perceived value of the relationship was twofold and common to many rebel patronage strategies: the intent was both to win influence with FNLA and to influence internal politics in Angola.

First, and likely foremost, there was the rebel-oriented question of the United States's own standing with the leaders of Angola's nationalist movement and, ultimately, of its independent government: as the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Soapy Williams, pointed out in 1962, "today's terrorist is tomorrow's statesman".¹⁸⁴ The African Affairs Bureau argued that contact with nationalist leaders provided "the opportunity to influence these leaders and to establish the basis of understanding and cooperation with eventual independent governments";¹⁸⁵ the aim was to "maintain the confidence" of key trusted leaders.¹⁸⁶ Small, primarily symbolic payments in this vein were sometimes called "flag money".¹⁸⁷ Friendships with influential Africans were particularly valued because of the Cold War: American policymakers typically feared that, in any given region, the absence of American influence was an invitation to Soviet influence. Williams wrote to Secretary Rusk:

The hopes and beliefs, attitudes and intentions of the adherents of these movements will be influenced by the contacts of their leaders during the formative period. If we cut ourselves

¹⁸² Mahoney, *JFK*, 204. Witney Schneidman agrees that Roberto began receiving a \$6,000 retainer from the CIA in April 1961, though he does not mention an NSC decision, and Noer is under the impression that the CIA began supporting the UPA more formally and more directly – rather than Roberto personally – in late 1961. See Witney W. Schneidman, *Engaging Africa: Washington and the Fall of Portugal's Colonial Empire* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2004), 25; Noer, *Cold War*, 72.

¹⁸³ For example, no such decision is mentioned in a summary of political action proposals prepared by the CIA in 1967; see 'Country Summary'. However, in January 1976, Henry Kissinger told a congressional hearing that it was in 1961 that, "Looking to the future, we sought to develop a relationship with the FNLA through providing it some financial, nonmilitary assistance"; 'Testimony of Henry A. Kissinger: Hearings on U.S. Involvement in Civil War in Angola' (Washington, D. C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 29 January 1976), 8.

¹⁸⁴ G. Mennen Williams, 'Memorandum to Secretary of State Rusk: Contact with African Nationalist Leaders', 23 October 1962, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State. By the spring of 1963, American intelligence predicted "a long war of attrition" in Angola but an eventual nationalist victory; see 'Special Report: Angolan Rebellion', 6.

¹⁸⁵ Memorandum quoted in Mahoney, *JFK*, 218.

¹⁸⁶ Chester Bowles, 'Memorandum to Secretary of State Rusk: Proposal for a Breakthrough in U.S.–Portuguese Relations in Regard to Africa', 10 January 1963, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

¹⁸⁷ See, for example, Schneidman, *Engaging Africa*, 102.

off from these leaders, the result can only be... to abandon them to anti-Western agitators and Soviet agents.¹⁸⁸

Although Williams advocated for “overt, public association” between the United States and nationalist groups, covert monetary stipends could also provide a symbol of friendship. Indeed, Philip Muehlenbeck argues that the Kennedy administration redoubled its attempts to associate privately with Angolan nationalists precisely when and because bolder policy tools were ruled out by Portuguese sensitivities.¹⁸⁹ This was the approach supported by William Brubeck of the NSC staff, who argued that, because the United States “can’t afford to ‘choose sides’”, “we should be hedging our bets” by strengthening private relationships with Angolan nationalists.¹⁹⁰

A second aim of providing cash to nationalists was to influence events inside Angola. The sums of money involved appear to have been too small to have represented any genuine effort to strengthen FNLA’s prospects against the colonial authority, but policymakers envisaged that the payments would bolster Roberto in two other respects: first, strengthening his personal authority in FNLA, and, second, strengthening FNLA in its competition with MPLA. These aims also had an anti-Soviet dimension. Presidential advisor Chester Bowles argued that “moderate leadership... must be nurtured and preserved” in order to prevent the emergence of new leaders who might be amenable to alliance with the Soviet Union.¹⁹¹ As Roberto himself told Kennedy in 1962, American support insulated him from internal pressure to “abandon [his] course of reason and moderateness”.¹⁹² Likewise, the administration feared that, were MPLA to gain the upper hand, it might “force [Roberto] to an accommodation with the MPLA and thus ease the way for the expansion of Communist influence throughout the Angolan nationalist movement”.¹⁹³

The salience of these Africanist arguments may have been strengthened in 1963 by FNLA political victories. FNLA gained a significant edge in mid-1963 when Adoula’s government extended *de jure* recognition to the GRAE and, shortly afterwards, the newly founded Organisation of African Unity (OAU) designated FNLA as the legitimate representative of the Angolan liberation movement and the proper recipient of any future African aid for the

¹⁸⁸ Williams, ‘Memorandum: Contact with African Nationalist Leaders’.

¹⁸⁹ Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans*, 119–21.

¹⁹⁰ William H. Brubeck, ‘Memorandum to the President’s Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy)’, 29 October 1963, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State.

¹⁹¹ Bowles, ‘Memorandum to Rusk: Proposal for a Breakthrough’.

¹⁹² ‘Letter from Roberto to Kennedy’.

¹⁹³ Williams, ‘Memorandum: Contact with African Nationalist Leaders’.

liberation of Angola.¹⁹⁴ In the State Department's assessment, the OAU's decision inaugurated "a new psychological and political phase" in the Angolan insurgency, marked by the GRAE's dominance and its near-inevitable inclusion in any political arrangements for a transition to independence.¹⁹⁵ By July, even the Secretary of State had come around to the merits of a "more vigorous anti-colonial stance" in Portuguese Africa,¹⁹⁶ and the State Department authorised the Léopoldville embassy to make direct contact with FNLA and other Angolan nationalists.¹⁹⁷ The Kennedy administration apparently made attempts later in 1963 to encourage talks between the FNLA, MPLA, and other African nationalists.¹⁹⁸ However, plans to support Angolan nationalism more aggressively were deferred by negotiations on the Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and, finally, by Kennedy's assassination on 22 November 1963.¹⁹⁹

4.1.2. A stooge snubbed: The Johnson administration, 1963–1969

By the time of Kennedy's death, the State Department had received several reports warning that Roberto, feeling continuously snubbed, was distancing himself from the United States,²⁰⁰ and on 4 January 1964, Roberto published a statement scorning "American hypocrisy" and announcing GRAE's pursuit of aid from China "and other communist countries".²⁰¹ The announcement caused a minor stir in the administration of the newly installed president, Lyndon Johnson. The Chinese connection alarmed Secretary Rusk, who was a longstanding Sinophobe and who feared that China would use FNLA to undermine Adoula's pro-Western government in the Congo;²⁰² these concerns were apparently shared by Adoula himself, who told a senior American diplomat that "left wing penetration" of the GRAE could promote communist penetration of the Congo.²⁰³ Seizing this internal opening, the CIA and African Affairs Bureau – over the objections of the

¹⁹⁴ Marcum, *Angolan Revolution, Vol. II*, 78–80, 96–98.

¹⁹⁵ Thomas L. Hughes, 'Research Memorandum to Secretary of State Rusk: Prospects for Angolan Nationalist Movement', 5 November 1963, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State.

¹⁹⁶ Dean Rusk, 'Memorandum to President Kennedy: U.S. Policy Re Portuguese Territories and U.S. Strategy in UN Security Council', 10 July 1963, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State.

¹⁹⁷ Mahoney, *JFK*, 236; Rodrigues, 'Today's Terrorist', 136.

¹⁹⁸ Mahoney, *JFK*, 237. During this period, the United States also exerted considerable effort trying to arrange preliminary talks between Portugal and Angolan nationalist leaders; Noer, *Cold War*, 106.

¹⁹⁹ See Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, 507; Mahoney, *JFK*, 239–40. In Mahoney's account, Kennedy planned to resume a stronger stance towards Portugal – even at the cost of losing the Azores base – after the nuclear test ban was finalised.

²⁰⁰ See Marcum, *Angolan Revolution, Vol. II*, 131; Rodrigues, 'Today's Terrorist', 137; Noer, *Cold War*, 109.

²⁰¹ 'Angolan Rebels To Take Red Aid', *The New York Times*, 4 January 1964.

²⁰² Noer, *Cold War*, 110.

²⁰³ 'Telegram 1897 from the Congo', 27 March 1964, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State.

European Affairs Bureau – developed proposals for covert direct aid to the FNLA; they envisaged providing Roberto with cash, and possibly technical support, to create a broad-based political campaign alongside the FNLA’s military efforts.²⁰⁴

However, these proposals were not implemented,²⁰⁵ and, according to Noer, they were the last major Angolan policy initiatives raised during the Johnson administration. In Noer’s account, the administration continued its “occasional prodding” of the Portuguese regime, and Roberto continued to receive modest direct aid as a retainer from the CIA.²⁰⁶ The cash payments likely proceeded without the attention of high-level policymakers.²⁰⁷ Committed to an ambitious domestic agenda, lacking Kennedy’s personal interest in Africa, and increasingly absorbed in military adventures in south-east Asia, Johnson assigned low priority to African issues (with the partial exception of the Congo).²⁰⁸ NATO interests remained the overriding determinant of the administration’s Portuguese policy, and the Johnson administration was therefore essentially, if implicitly, “pro-Portuguese”.²⁰⁹

Ironically, even with American interest at a low ebb, FNLA’s perceived ties to the United States became an important determinant of its decline in the mid-1960s. As one American diplomatic cable put it, Roberto was burdened with “the reputation of an American stooge without receiving any of the material benefits that a real stooge would expect”.²¹⁰ FNLA’s association with the United States had been a political liability since the early 1960s, harming its credibility in certain African nationalist circles.²¹¹ This debate came to a head publicly at the OAU’s July 1964 conference in Cairo, Egypt, where Jonas Savimbi, the foreign minister in Roberto’s GRAE and the informal leader of FNLA’s so-called southern nexus, announced his resignation from the GRAE, accusing Roberto of support for “American imperialism” as well as of cronyism, racism,

²⁰⁴ ‘Country Summary’.

²⁰⁵ According to interviews conducted by Schneidman, the African Affairs Bureau proposal was approved by the NSC’s Special Group but “never approach its intended level of activity”. A State Department record suggests instead that the proposal was approved by the Secretary of State but that the NSC deferred implementation indefinitely at the request of the CIA director. Compare Schneidman, *Engaging Africa*, 67; ‘Country Summary’.

²⁰⁶ Noer, *Cold War*, 73, 117. Likewise, administration officials told Gerald Bender that financial support to Roberto and the FNLA continued through the end of the Johnson administration, and an unnamed presidential advisor told Schneidman that this support continued but did not increase; see Bender’s exchange of letters with John Stockwell in John Stockwell, ‘The CIA in Angola’, *New York Review of Books*, 17 May 1979, and Bender, ‘A Story of Stupidity’.

²⁰⁷ Schneidman, *Engaging Africa*, 102.

²⁰⁸ Dickson, ‘U.S. Foreign Policy’, 306–7; Noer, *Cold War*, 106–7.

²⁰⁹ Dickson, ‘U.S. Foreign Policy’, 308–9.

²¹⁰ Quoted in Noer, *Cold War*, 109.

²¹¹ Mahoney, *JFK*, 219–20.

and corruption.²¹²

The Cairo conference had two lasting consequences. First, in the aftermath, the OAU's Liberation Committee reconsidered its policy of exclusive support for FNLA and henceforth extended recognition and material assistance to MPLA as well.²¹³ The concomitant boost in MPLA's prestige and resources both reflected and facilitated the resurgence of the group, which, in 1964 and 1965, led a burgeoning in insurgent activity in Cabinda – Angola's northern enclave, conveniently contiguous to MPLA's base in Congo-Brazzaville – as well as in political activity in Angola's urban centres.²¹⁴ Meanwhile, FNLA was severely weakened by near-mutiny at its base in Kinkuzu, Congo, and by the hostility of the Congolese government under Moïse Tshombe, who unexpectedly replaced Adoula in July 1964. The FNLA insurgency languished at a near standstill until November 1965, when General Joseph-Désiré Mobutu, Roberto's personal friend and an American client, took over the Congolese government in a bloodless coup and restored the former policy of friendliness to FNLA.²¹⁵

In addition to MPLA's recovery, another lasting consequence of the Cairo conference was Savimbi's defection from FNLA. In March 1966, in the Moxico region of western Angola, Savimbi formally launched UNITA on an overt platform of non-alignment with respect to external powers.²¹⁶ UNITA's establishment opened a new, eastern front in the revolutionary war, where MPLA also began operating in 1966, often in bitter competition with UNITA.²¹⁷ It also inaugurated a new phase of the war: in Marcum's phrase, the Angolan War of Independence was henceforth a three-party insurgency, marked by tripartite competition between FNLA, UNITA, and MPLA.²¹⁸ The competition between FNLA and UNITA is, of course, the primary subject of this case study.

4.1.3. Tar Baby: The Nixon administration, 1969–1974

Richard Nixon took office as president of the United States in 1969 amid continued military stalemate in Angola, and the Portuguese Foreign Minister claimed that Nixon took him aside at a

²¹² Marcum, *Angolan Revolution, Vol. II*, 135–40. On the origins of Savimbi's southern nexus, see Marcum, 36.; it was dominated by Ovimbundu and Chokwe Angolans, who are in fact from central Angola (though south of FNLA's traditional northern strongholds).

²¹³ Marcum, *Angolan Revolution, Vol. II*, 169–71.

²¹⁴ Marcum, 172–76.

²¹⁵ Marcum, 141–51.

²¹⁶ Marcum, 165–66.

²¹⁷ Marcum, 168–69, 177–78.

²¹⁸ Marcum, 178.

NATO event in April 1969 to promise, “I’ll never do to you what Kennedy did”.²¹⁹ Such a promise – implying further conciliation with Portuguese imperialism – would have been consistent with the unsentimental and Eurocentric *realpolitik* of Nixon and of Henry Kissinger, Nixon’s National Security Advisor and, from 1973, also his Secretary of State. Marcum accuses Nixon and Kissinger of indifference not only to moral arguments against colonialism but also to “black resentment” in Africa and inside the United States.²²⁰ Indeed, in 1974 Gabriel Garcia Márquez quoted Kissinger as professing indifference to, and ignorance of, “the southern portion of the world from the Pyrenees on down”.²²¹ Nixon and Kissinger also shared a preference for an informal and centralised style of policymaking, motivated in part by their disdain of the policymaking bureaucracy.²²² They reserved particular contempt for the State Department’s African Affairs Bureau. As Nixon put it somewhat indelicately during one conversation with Kissinger: “Screw State! State’s always on the side of the blacks.”²²³

In this vein, two days after a meeting between Nixon and Portuguese Prime Minister Marcelo Caetano in April 1969, Kissinger recommended that Nixon should commission a National Security Study to reconsider American policy in Southern Africa.²²⁴ The NSC’s Interdepartmental Group for Africa finalised the study in December 1969, following several months of familiar “bureaucratic back-biting” between the State Department – attached to the policy of encouraging reform in white-ruled states – and the Defence Department – seeking “a softer line”.²²⁵ Dean Acheson, Truman’s former Secretary of State and a long-time White House advisor, wrote to Kissinger to argue against the prevailing policy towards white regimes, which

²¹⁹ Quoted in Mahoney, *JFK*, 243.

²²⁰ John Marcum, ‘The Politics of Indifference: Portugal and Africa, a Case Study in American Foreign Policy’, *Issue: A Journal of Opinion* 2, no. 3 (1972): 9–17. Other critics have suggested that the administration’s indifference was coloured by prejudice – racial or otherwise – against black Africans; see, for example, Schneidman, *Engaging Africa*, 114.

²²¹ Gabriel Garcia Márquez, ‘The Death of Salvador Allende’, *Harper’s Magazine*, March 1974. See also Seymour M. Hersh, ‘The Price of Power’, *The Atlantic*, 1 December 1982, in which the Chilean Foreign Minister claims that in 1969 Kissinger told a group of Latin American ambassadors that “history has never been produced in the South”.

²²² John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 302–6.

²²³ ‘Conversation Between President Nixon and the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)’, 24 September 1972, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State. Kissinger agreed, describing the bureau as “anti-white in Africa” and “obsessively liberal”.

²²⁴ Henry Kissinger, ‘Memorandum to President Nixon: NSC Review of Policy toward Southern Africa’, 3 April 1969, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State.

²²⁵ Roger Morris, ‘Memorandum to the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger): Status Report on African Policy Issue’, 23 April 1969, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State. Morris, the NSC staffer assigned to the region, provides a detailed account of the process in Morris, *Uncertain Greatness*, 107–20.

he described as “designed to align this country among the adversaries of those regimes”.²²⁶ Indeed, in the formulation of the regional policy, policymakers’ overwhelming focus was the white regime in South Africa – and, to a lesser extent, Rhodesia – where American interests were judged to be greatest.²²⁷

The National Security Study developed six policy alternatives, ranging from total normalisation with the white regimes to coercive support for their reform.²²⁸ Each had different implications for American relations with nationalist groups in the region, ranging from “public discouragement” to “discreet contact” to public support and non-military assistance; as Kennedy-era policymakers had argued, one of the advantages of the latter tack was that it would put the United States on the “eventual winning side, thus undercutting communist influence on liberation effort [*sic*] and insuring long-term dominant U.S. influence”.²²⁹ Yet the option chosen by NSC was to normalise political and economic relations with the region’s white regimes, while pacifying the independent African states with increased economic aid.²³⁰ This policy was nicknamed “the Tar Baby option” by its opponents in the State Department.²³¹ It allowed substantial military assistance to Portugal and a more permissive stance regarding Portugal’s use of American MAP equipment.²³²

However, there is reason to believe that subsidiary policy guidelines for Angola, finalised in September 1970, authorised continued contact with Angolan nationalist leaders.²³³ Roberto

²²⁶ Dean Acheson, ‘U.S. Policies Toward Southern Africa Require Change’, 30 April 1969, Central Intelligence Agency Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room.

²²⁷ ‘Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting: Southern Africa’, 17 December 1969, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State.

²²⁸ ‘Paper Prepared by the National Security Council Interdepartmental Group for Africa – Study in Response to National Security Study Memorandum 39: Southern Africa’, 9 December 1969, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State. While the State Department archives contain an abbreviated version, the study is reprinted in full in *The Kissinger Study on Southern Africa* (Nottingham: Spokesman Books, 1975).

²²⁹ ‘Response to National Security Study Memorandum 39’. It is notable that, in late 1969, even the most boldly anti-colonial policy conceivable to the NSC would have involved only non-military support to liberation movements, a milder measure than that ultimately taken in 1975.

²³⁰ See ‘Option 2’ in ‘Response to National Security Study Memorandum 39’.

²³¹ Anthony Lake, *The ‘Tar Baby’ Option: American Policy toward Southern Rhodesia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 129–30. The reference was to an Uncle Remus story in which Brer Rabbit becomes affixed to a tar figurine he made.

²³² Barry Cohen and Mohamed A. El-Khawas, ‘Introduction’, in *The Kissinger Study on Southern Africa* (Nottingham: Spokesman Books, 1975), 17–18.

²³³ ‘Paper Prepared in the Department of State – Angola: Guidelines for Policy’, September 1970, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State. In the State Department’s archives, the policy document is missing pages, so not all of the recommendations are recorded. However, the set of policy guidelines developed for Mozambique at the same time contains identical policy objectives, near-identical

certainly continued to receive a small financial stipend from the CIA throughout this period. Several secondary sources report, based on conversations with American officials, that in 1969 Nixon ordered that Roberto should be “deactivated” – or, in Noer’s phrase, that the CIA’s “direct aid to Roberto’s organization” should cease – but that he continued to receive a personal retainer of \$10,000 per year from the CIA.²³⁴ A CIA official later told *The New York Times* that this was “look-in money”: a retainer to an intelligence asset, provided in exchange for regular intelligence reports.²³⁵ In other words, the payments appear to have been stripped of even the modest political significance they were viewed as having during the Kennedy administration.

The National Security Study’s indifference to black and nationalist opinion was ill-fated insofar as it was premised on the factual supposition that “the whites are here to stay” and that their cooperation was therefore indispensable to retaining political influence in Southern Africa.²³⁶ In John Gaddis’s phrase, this was “a policy reflecting all the prescience of a Marie Antoinette in 1789”.²³⁷ By the end of Nixon’s presidency, Portuguese authority in Angola had collapsed. On 25 April 1974, in the so-called Carnation Revolution, a left-wing military junta overthrew the *Estado Novo* in a largely bloodless coup in Lisbon.²³⁸ In the aftermath of the coup, and in anticipation of negotiated independence in Angola, all three Angolan nationalist groups reached *de facto* ceasefires with the Portuguese colonial authority: UNITA and MPLA by the end of July, and FNLA in October.²³⁹ Meanwhile, for several reasons, including weak intelligence capabilities in Lisbon, the United States government was caught entirely off guard by the coup; the Pike Committee later accused the White House of having been “caught napping”.²⁴⁰

analysis, and apparently identical recommendations. And the Mozambican guidelines recommended, “Continue discreet contacts with Mozambique insurgent leaders to keep abreast of possible grounds for negotiation.” “See ‘Paper Prepared in the Department of State – Mozambique: Guidelines for Policy’, September 1970, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State. It is reasonable to suppose that the same policy adhered in Angola.

²³⁴ Schneidman, *Engaging Africa*, 112; Noer, *Cold War*, 72; Gelb, ‘U.S., Soviet, China Reported Aiding’.

²³⁵ Binder, ‘More Heads of State Are Reported To Have Received C.I.A. Payments’.

²³⁶ ‘Response to National Security Study Memorandum 39’.

²³⁷ Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 330.

²³⁸ A central factor in the coup – and in popular support for it – was the growing expense of Portugal’s colonial wars in Africa. See José Javier Olivas Osuna, ‘The Deep Roots of the Carnation Revolution: 150 Years of Military Interventionism in Portugal’, *Portuguese Journal of Social Science* 13, no. 2 (2014): 224–25.

²³⁹ UNITA began a flurry of political and diplomatic activity, while MPLA was distracted by severe internal divisions – most notably between MPLA leader Agostinho Neto and pretender Daniel Chipenda’s Eastern Front – and FNLA undertook military preparations with the assistance of Zaire and China, among others. See Marcum, *Angolan Revolution, Vol. II*, 243–52.

²⁴⁰ House Select Committee on Intelligence, ‘Report’, 91–95; Noer, *Cold War*, 139–42.

4.1.4. A gift to Mobutu: The Ford administration, 1974

The long-term American response to the Carnation Revolution was entrusted to Gerald Ford, who took office as president after Nixon – long embroiled in the Watergate scandal and facing impeachment – resigned in early August 1974. Ford retained “the fundamental elements” of Nixon’s foreign-policy strategy, including its close control by Kissinger.²⁴¹

As the new Portuguese regime set about implementing a two-year transition to Angolan independence,²⁴² figures both inside and outside the Ford administration pressed for a more assertive American policy. The Africa Division of the CIA’s operations directorate argued that the CIA and State Department should approach the 40 Committee with a joint proposal for increased financial assistance to Roberto and FNLA.²⁴³

Outside the administration, strong pressure was applied by Mobutu’s regime in the Congo, newly renamed Zaire. Appeals for American support to Mobutu’s favoured nationalists had become a mainstay of American interactions with Zaire in the spring of 1974.²⁴⁴ On 12 August 1974 – halfway into Ford’s first week in the White House – the Zairean Foreign Minister, Jean-Theodore Umba di Litete, travelled to Washington to meet with Kissinger; as the embassy in Kinshasa (formerly Léopoldville) had expected,²⁴⁵ Umba di Litete’s task was to make Zaire’s case for the merits of Roberto’s leadership of the nationalist movement and ask for political and material support for FNLA.²⁴⁶ Kissinger thanked him for “attracting my attention to Angola” and

²⁴¹ Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 275.

²⁴² The two-year transition plan was announced on 10 August 1974. See Gerald J. Bender and P. Stanley Yoder, ‘Whites in Angola on the Eve of Independence: The Politics of Numbers’, *Africa Today* 21, no. 4 (1974): 23–25.

²⁴³ Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959–1976* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 280–81. This plan was stymied by the resistance of Donald Easum, the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. According to Easum, the Africa Bureau’s resistance was sufficient to ensure that the proposal was not presented to Kissinger in 1974; see his account in Donald Easum, ‘Hard Times for the Africa Bureau, 1974–1976’, *American Diplomacy*, June 2010.

²⁴⁴ In March 1974, Mobutu had raised the subject of material assistance to FNLA with American Ambassador Sheldon Vance, and, later the same day, with Maurice Templesman; Zaire’s foreign minister raised the subject with one American diplomat in a government hallway in June and with another in a meeting in July. On each occasion, the Zairean regime framed the point in identical terms, lamenting that FNLA “had to depend on Chinese in absence of assistance from Western powers”. See the cables reporting these encounters: ‘Telegram 2592 from Zaire: Arms Sales to Zaire’, 25 March 1974, Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy; ‘Telegram 65972 from Department of State: Templesman Meeting with Mobutu’, 2 April 1974, Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy; ‘Telegram 4860 from Zaire: Helping Angolan National Liberation Front (FNLA)’, 4 June 1974, Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy; ‘Telegram 6290 from Zaire: Zaire, Angola and Cabinda’, 18 July 1974, Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy.

²⁴⁵ ‘Telegram 6818 from Zaire: Umba Visit’, 6 August 1974, Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy.

²⁴⁶ ‘Memorandum of Conversation: US–Zaire Relations’, 12 August 1974, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State; see also the State Department’s précis of the meeting in ‘Telegram 177463 from Department of State: Secretary’s Meeting with Umba-Di-Lutete’, 14 August 1974, National

promised to “do something about it”.²⁴⁷ When a new American ambassador arrived in Kinshasa later the same week, he was reminded by Uamba di Litete that Mobutu looked forward to receiving “a gift” from Washington, and by Mobutu himself that he considered assistance to Roberto to be the single most important issue in current Zairean–American relations.²⁴⁸ And Zambia sent its own emissary, Foreign Minister Vernon Mwaanga, to meet with Kissinger on 16 August in another bid to draw American attention to the region.²⁴⁹

Less than a month later, the CIA increased its stipend to Roberto. In an internal memorandum to Kissinger on 19 September, CIA director Bill Colby noted that this was a direct response to – “in line with” – Zairean overtures.²⁵⁰ Colby said that the new stipend would remain “fairly low” in global terms, but that it would represent a “substantial” increase for Roberto: “high enough to assure President Mobutu that we are sympathetic to his concern about the future regime of an independent Angola”.²⁵¹

In fact, Uamba di Litete informed Ambassador Hinton that Mobutu was “disappointed” by the American response to his appeals.²⁵² Through the remainder of 1974, Zairean emissaries continued to make pointed reference to the Angolan transition as Mobutu’s top foreign-policy priority.²⁵³ Meanwhile, inside the Nixon administration, there was sustained pressure for further high-level attention to the transition: in late 1974, Nixon sacked the Assistant Secretary

Archives Access to Archival Databases.

²⁴⁷ ‘Memorandum of Conversation: US–Zaire Relations’.

²⁴⁸ ‘Telegram 7172 from Zaire: Fonmin Uamba-Di-Lutete Comments Expectantly on Zaire-Us Relations’, 20 August 1974, Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy; ‘Telegram 7223 from Zaire: Conversation with President Mobutu’, 21 August 1974, Central Foreign Policy Files, National Archives Access to Archival Databases. The State Department subsequently authorized the ambassador to meet with Roberto personally, and the following week, he boarded Mobutu’s yacht in order to do so; see ‘Telegram 7171 from Zaire: Uamba Conversation’, 20 August 1974, Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy; ‘Telegram 183033 from Department of State: Contact with Holden Roberto’, 21 August 1974, Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy; ‘Telegram 7360 from Zaire: Angola/Mozambique – FNLA and FRELIMO President Speak in Kinshasa’, 28 August 1974, National Archives Access to Archival Databases.

²⁴⁹ Andrew DeRoche, *Kenneth Kaunda, the United States and Southern Africa* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 8. See also the first-hand account in Vernon Mwaanga, ‘The View from Zambia’, *Africa Report*, 1 September 1974.

²⁵⁰ William Colby, ‘Memorandum to the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger): Mobutu’s Request for Material Support to Holden Roberto’, 19 September 1974, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State.

²⁵¹ Colby. Schneidman reports that the CIA retainer was increased to “about \$25,000”; see Schneidman, *Engaging Africa*, 202.

²⁵² ‘Telegram 8225 from Zaire: Discussion with Foreign Minister Uamba’, 26 September 1974, Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy.

²⁵³ ‘Telegram 223686 from Department of State: Zaire and Angola’, 10 October 1974, Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy; ‘Telegram 11009 from Zaire: Zaire 1974–Implications for the US in 1975’, 31 December 1974, National Archives Access to Archival Databases.

of State for African Affairs, Donald Easum, an opponent of intervention in Angola, and Easum's deputy, Edward Mulcahy, henceforth joined the CIA in pressing for intervention in Angola.²⁵⁴ The case study in Chapter 5 picks up the thread from late January 1975, when Mulcahy's proposals succeeded.

4.2. American interests in Angola

The foregoing historical overview of American policy in Angola reflects a general trend of "ambivalence and fudging", in Marcum's phrase, interspersed with decisive policy changes in 1961 and 1969 – in the first case, in favour of greater closeness with Angolan nationalists and their cause, and, in the second case, the contrary.²⁵⁵ This ambivalence arose most fundamentally due to a tension between the American desire to avoid alienating the region's white regimes, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the desire to avoid alienating Angolan nationalists and their allies. Indeed, a succession of policymakers argued – with varying degrees of success – that it served American interests to form relationships of influence with Angolan nationalists in general (and Roberto in particular).

It is worth asking why the United States sought friendships in as remote a region as Angola, because those perceived interests are likely to have shaped the American decision to intervene in 1975. The second half of this chapter draws on the foregoing historical discussion to outline the nature of American foreign-policy interests in Angola. It emerges that, though the United States's direct strategic and economic interests in Angola were limited, Angola acquired importance both through its importance to neighbouring African powers and through its construction as an arena of Soviet competition and Soviet containment.

4.2.1. Economic and strategic interests

As the State Department concluded in June 1975, direct American interests in Angola were "important but by no means vital".²⁵⁶ The geopolitical importance of Southern Africa and the south Atlantic had increased somewhat during the closure of the Suez Canal between 1967 and 1975, but the American military made only infrequent use of Angolan ports, which had only

²⁵⁴ Schneidman, *Engaging Africa*, 202–3.

²⁵⁵ Marcum, 'Politics of Indifference', 12.

²⁵⁶ 'Talking Points for Sec. Kissinger: National Security Council Meeting on Angola', 27 June 1975, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library. This in fact represented an amelioration of Angola's status from 1960, when the NSC had concluded outright that Angola was of no "direct strategic, political or economic importance" whatsoever; see 'NSC Report 6001: Statement of U.S. Policy'.

limited facilities (and were not, for example, equipped to accommodate aircraft carriers).²⁵⁷

However, Angola was economically attractive because of its agricultural and mineral resources, including diamonds, iron ore, and petroleum.²⁵⁸ In 1970, the United States foresaw “excellent” prospects for increased American investment and exports.²⁵⁹ Among the 25 American companies operating in Angola by 1970, investment was concentrated primarily in the extractive industries, particularly prospecting for oil and minerals.²⁶⁰ The pioneering American investor was Gulf Oil:²⁶¹ by mid-1975, it had invested \$300 million in Angola, approximately three quarters of total American investment in the territory at that time.²⁶²

Although the Gulf Oil investment was important, there are clear indications that the United States government did not perceive American interests in Angola as continuous with Gulf Oil’s corporate interests: most remarkably, and to the consternation of many congressmen, Gulf Oil ultimately cooperated closely with MPLA during the decades-long civil war, even while the United States was financing MPLA’s enemies.²⁶³ In general, American–Angolan economic ties were more significant to Angola than to the United States.²⁶⁴

²⁵⁷ ‘Response to National Security Study Memorandum 39’.

²⁵⁸ ‘Response to National Security Study Memorandum 39’; ‘Angola: Guidelines for Policy’.

²⁵⁹ ‘Angola: Guidelines for Policy’.

²⁶⁰ Mohamed A. El-Khawas, ‘Foreign Economic Involvement in Angola and Mozambique’, *Issue: A Journal of Opinion* 4, no. 2 (1974): 306.

²⁶¹ On Gulf Oil’s expansion in Angola, see Stephen B. Farber, ‘Gulf and Angola’, *Issue: A Journal of Opinion* 2, no. 3 (1972): 21–31; ‘Gulf Oil in Cabinda’, *Africa Today* 17, no. 4 (1970): 20–26; ‘Intelligence Memorandum: Oil in Angola’, 1 October 1970, Central Intelligence Agency Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room. Gulf Oil’s presence in Angola predated the first discovery of commercially exploitable quantities of oil in 1955: the company arrived in the northern enclave of Cabinda in 1954 and received its first concession from the colonial government in 1957. After it finally struck oil offshore in 1966, it drastically increased its investment in the Cabinda operation, which was worth \$130 million at the end of 1969.

²⁶² ‘Talking Points for Sec. Kissinger’; Marcum, ‘Politics of Indifference’, 11.

²⁶³ In the 1980s, Gulf Oil was the MPLA government’s major foreign financier, and its facilities were guarded by Cuban troops against attacks by UNITA, the American ally in the conflict. On this curious situation, see Jędrzej George Frynas and Geoffrey Wood, ‘Oil & War in Angola’, *Review of African Political Economy* 28, no. 90 (2001): 587–606; Austin Angel, ‘Cabinda and the Company: Chevron-Gulf, the CIA, and the Angolan Civil War’, *CLA Journal* 6 (2018): 75–86. Cabinda Gulf Oil, acquired by the Chevron Corporation in 1984, remains one of the largest oil producers in Angola.

²⁶⁴ In 1968, the United States became the second-largest producer of Angolan imports, outranked only by Portugal and providing 11.8 per cent of imports. By 1971, the United States was also – again outranked by Portugal – the second-largest market for Angolan exports, consuming 20.2 per cent of all Angolan exports. For these figures see El-Khawas, ‘Foreign Economic Involvement’, 307; Marcum, ‘Politics of Indifference’, 11; ‘Angola: Guidelines for Policy’. Equally important to investment and trade were the sizeable taxes and revenues paid by Gulf Oil to the Portuguese colonial authority, which represented 15 per cent of the territory’s revenue in 1972 and a significant chunk of the Portuguese military budget in Angola; see El-Khawas, ‘Foreign Economic Involvement’, 313–14; ‘Gulf Oil in Cabinda’, 21.

4.2.2. Regional political interests

If the United States lacked a significant direct stake in Angola, it had more significant interests elsewhere in the region, and some American policymakers held that those regional interests were closely implicated in the Angolan conflict. For example, as emerged clearly in the historical overview, the displeasure of the region's white regimes, especially Portugal, provided one strong disincentive for involvement with Angolan nationalists before 1974.

South Africa was also intimately interested in the Angolan conflict because of the strategic importance of the region around Angola's southern border with Namibia, then a South African territory. That long border was frequently traversed by hostile guerrillas of the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO), and the surrounding region housed hydroelectric dam projects at Calueque Dam and Ruacana – projects undertaken in partnership between South Africa and the Portuguese authority in Angola.²⁶⁵ More broadly, the apartheid regime in South Africa perceived Angola as a “vital link in the cordon sanitaire shielding it from hostile black states”, and it worried that Angolan independence would create a power vacuum to be filled by SWAPO and communist powers.²⁶⁶ For these reasons, the South Africans provided covert aid to the Portuguese effort in the liberation war for several years before 1975.²⁶⁷ The United States, in turn, had reason to be sensitive to South African interests: in June 1975, an interagency task force declared South Africa and Nigeria to be “far and away the most important countries to us in Sub-Saharan Africa”, both economically and geostrategically.²⁶⁸

However, there were also countervailing interests in independent black states. First, there was the risk that instability in Angola would spill over into neighbouring states.²⁶⁹ Second, there was the risk that American detachment from the Angolan situation would alienate the dominant bloc

²⁶⁵ Deon Geldenhuys, *The Diplomacy of Isolation: South African Foreign Policy Making* (Johannesburg: Macmillan South Africa, 1984), 75; Robin Hallett, ‘The South African Intervention in Angola, 1975-76’, *African Affairs* 77, no. 308 (1978): 350-53.

²⁶⁶ Geldenhuys, *The Diplomacy of Isolation*, 75; see also Jamie Miller, ‘Things Fall Apart: South Africa and the Collapse of the Portuguese Empire, 1973-74’, *Cold War History* 12, no. 2 (2012): 183-204.

²⁶⁷ Geldenhuys, *The Diplomacy of Isolation*, 75.

²⁶⁸ ‘Action Memorandum From Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs (Mulcahy) and Director of Policy Planning (Lord) to Secretary of State Kissinger’, 27 June 1975, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State. The study concluded that South Africa, along with the Horn of Africa, was one of “two areas in Sub-Saharan Africa of most strategic concern to us”. Moreover, economic ties with South Africa dwarfed those with Angola: when the NSC was preparing its 1969 policy study, the Department of Commerce reported that South Africa consumed approximately 84 per cent of all American exports to Southern Africa and hosted 29 per cent of all American direct investment on the broader continent. See ‘Response to National Security Study Memorandum 39’, annex 9.

²⁶⁹ ‘Talking Points for Sec. Kissinger’.

of African states which supported decolonisation.²⁷⁰ Both concerns extended to the so-called Frontline States, the grouping of independent Southern African states that bordered the region's white regimes – most importantly Tanzania and Zambia – and, further afield, to what Secretary Rusk had called the “friendly and responsible” regimes of Ivory Coast and Nigeria.²⁷¹ Of this group, the governments of Zambia and Zaire – Angola's northern and eastern neighbours – were particularly influential in the formation of American policy on Angola.

American–Zairean relations were a cornerstone of American policy in central and Southern Africa, both because of the importance of Zaire's minerals exports (notably cobalt) and because of its geopolitical importance, a result of its large size and sprawling borders. After Mobutu took office with American assistance in 1965, he skilfully propagated the “Mobutu or chaos” philosophy, which led American policymakers to regard the survival of Mobutu's regime as indispensable to the stability of the region.²⁷² Zaire, in turn, had crucial interests in Angola, many of which arose from the 2400-kilometre border between the two countries.²⁷³ The easternmost part of the border was the Lower Congo River, and navigation on it depended on cooperation between the two countries. In addition, the Benguela Railway ran from the border to the Angolan port of Lobito; it carried most Zairian copper exports and all Zairean manganese exports. Nearly one million Angolan refugees had crossed the border and now lived in Zaire, and the border region provided a potential base for Zairean dissidents to launch attacks on their homeland.²⁷⁴ Finally, Zaire had particular interest in – and possibly irredentist designs on – Cabinda, Angola's northern enclave, both due to its oil resources and due to its strategic positioning as a buffer between Zaire and Congo–Brazzaville.²⁷⁵

Similarly invested in the Angolan transition was Zambia, which became increasingly involved in

²⁷⁰ See especially the section entitled ‘Importance of Political vs. Other Tangible Interests’ in ‘Response to National Security Study Memorandum 39’.

²⁷¹ Rusk, ‘Memorandum: U.S. Policy Re Portuguese Territories’.

²⁷² Crawford Young and Thomas Edwin Turner, *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 393–95. See also Michael G. Schatzberg, *Mobutu or Chaos? The United States and Zaire, 1960-1990* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America/Foreign Policy Research Institute, 1991). In Götz Bechtolsheimer's account, Kissinger, in particular, accepted this premise uncritically and was sensitive to Mobutu's perceived security needs; see Götz Bechtolsheimer, ‘Breakfast with Mobutu: Congo, the United States and the Cold War, 1964-1981’ (PhD Thesis, London School of Economics and Political Science, 2012), 112–16.

²⁷³ Crawford Young, ‘The Portuguese Coup and Zaire's Southern Africa Policy’, in *Southern Africa Since The Portuguese Coup*, ed. John Seiler (Routledge, 1980), 201–2.

²⁷⁴ Young, 201–2. Mobutu had come to regard this risk as particularly salient because of the Portuguese habit of aiding Zairean separatists from the southern Zairean province of Katanga.

²⁷⁵ See Phyllis M. Martin, ‘The Cabinda Connection: An Historical Perspective’, *African Affairs* 76, no. 302 (1977): 47–59.

related shuttle diplomacy in 1974.²⁷⁶ Zambia's interest, like Zaire's, was geopolitical and economic as well as ideological. Landlocked Zambia depended on cross-continental railway networks for the export of minerals – primarily copper – that drove its economy.²⁷⁷ From 1973, security of access to Angola's Benguela Railway was of linchpin economic interest to Zambia.²⁷⁸ And American policymakers afforded weight to the Zambian government's assessments of the regional political situation. Notwithstanding its relatively small population and economy, the 1969 National Security Study identified Zambia as “the most important independent black state in southern Africa”.²⁷⁹

In summary, therefore, Zaire, Zambia, and South Africa had self-interested, as well as principled, reasons to help ensure that political events in Angola promoted their interests, regional stability among them. Insofar as the United States perceived an interest either in protecting those regimes or in maintaining good relations with them, the United States inherited their (conflicting) objectives.

4.2.3. Containment

During the Angolan War of Independence, the importance of Angola and of neighbouring African states was enhanced by the Cold War context and the American policy of containment. As George F. Kennan articulated this policy in a famous *Foreign Affairs* article, its purpose was “long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies”.²⁸⁰ Of concern was not only Soviet military expansion but also, and even primarily, the expansion of

²⁷⁶ Stephen Chan, *Kaunda and Southern Africa: Image and Reality in Foreign Policy* (London: British Academic Press, 1992), 78.

²⁷⁷ R. S. Doganis, ‘Zambia’s Outlet to the Sea: A Case Study in Colonial Transport Development’, *Journal of Transport Economics and Policy* 1, no. 1 (1967): 46–51.

²⁷⁸ Simon Katzenellenbogen, ‘Zambia and Rhodesia: Prisoners of the Past: A Note on the History of Railway Politics in Central Africa’, *African Affairs* 73, no. 290 (1974): 63–66; Markus Reichardt, ‘Rail Transport and the Political Economy of Southern Africa, 1965-1980’, *Africa Insight* 20, no. 2 (2010). The shortest routes from the Zambian copper belt to the sea led northwest on the Benguela line through Zaire to Lobito and south through Rhodesia to the Mozambican port of Beira, but the latter route became inaccessible after the Rhodesian–Zambian border was closed in 1973 – the result of Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda’s clashes with the Salisbury regime over his support for liberation movements.

²⁷⁹ ‘Response to National Security Study Memorandum 39’. This evaluation appears to have been determined in no small part by Kaunda’s personal stature. He had unimpeachable nationalist credibility due to Zambia’s leadership role in the Frontline States, but, importantly for American purposes, he was less “ideologically militant” than the region’s other nationalist heroes, such as Julius Nyerere. See Charles Stuart Kennedy, Interview with Edward Marks, 12 August 1996, The Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

²⁸⁰ X., ‘The Sources of Soviet Conduct’, *Foreign Affairs* 25, no. 4 (1947): 575. Gaddis argues that, although this article popularised the term “containment”, such a policy had in fact been developing since around 1941; see Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 4–13, 54–55; C. Ben Wright, ‘Mr. “X” and Containment’, *Slavic Review* 35, no. 1 (1976): 1–31.

Soviet *political* influence; as a result, the Cold War was frequently fought by unconventional or political means – including, as I mentioned at the outset of Chapter 3, rebel patronage.²⁸¹

As John Gaddis has argued, Cold War-era American foreign policy was in large part determined by variations in policymakers' understanding of the demands of containment.²⁸² On one broad school of thought, containment was compatible with responding only to Soviet encroachments on "an independently established concept of irreducible [American] interests".²⁸³ As established above, direct American economic and geopolitical interests in Angola were remote. However, on another school of thought, containment required what Gaddis calls a symmetrical response: a strategy of countering Soviet influence and Soviet advantage everywhere it loomed, even in the absence of an independent interest there.²⁸⁴ In particular, containing Soviet influence in remote arenas might be indispensable to maintaining the global balance of power, preventing the Soviet Union from gaining a global advantage that would allow it to threaten the United States's core security interests.²⁸⁵ Symmetrical containment naturally implied a more resource-intensive and more interventionist foreign policy, because of its more expansive and fluid conception of American interests.²⁸⁶ A containment-driven interventionist tendency was also encouraged by a broad conception of the Soviet threat, which often conflated the uptake of communism – even when it took on overtly nationalist forms – with the expansion of Soviet influence.²⁸⁷

As I mentioned above in respect of the Kennedy administration, various American policymakers certainly argued that African nationalist movements could become "channels for Soviet and Communist Chinese influence" and should therefore be "encourage[d], if possible... away from over-dependence on Sino-Soviet assistance".²⁸⁸ Likewise, various policymakers argued that

²⁸¹ Kenneth A. Osgood, 'Hearts and Minds: The Unconventional Cold War', *Journal of Cold War Studies* 4, no. 2 (2002): 95. Kennan's office in the State Department authored the 1948 memorandum on political warfare that I discussed in Section 3.1.

²⁸² Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*.

²⁸³ Gaddis, 98.

²⁸⁴ Gaddis, 91–98.

²⁸⁵ Whittle Johnston, 'The Containment of John Gaddis', *The National Interest*, no. 6 (1986): 89–90. Thus, as Secretary of State Rusk put it, "If you don't pay attention to the periphery, the periphery changes. And the first thing you know the periphery is the center"; quoted in Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 202.

²⁸⁶ Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 353–55.

²⁸⁷ Gaddis, 137–44. Gaddis singles out Kissinger as particularly hostile to so-called national communism: he and Nixon, because of their globalist view of foreign politics, could not accept "the possibility that Marxism could be an indigenous, popular and quite independent force in certain parts of the world"; see Gaddis, 333–34. Kissinger, by contrast, argued that he did not favour attempts "to prevent Marxist or quasi-Marxist governments from coming to power in Africa so long as their roots were indigenous"; Henry Kissinger, *Years of Renewal* (New York: Touchstone, 2000), 794, 795–96.

²⁸⁸ 'Paper Prepared in the Bureau of African Affairs – Policy Planning Memorandum No. 1: U.S. Relations with the African Liberation Movements', 23 December 1969, Office of the Historian at the United States

Soviet investment in Angolan nationalist movements had to be matched by investment in those movements' rivals, lest the unchallenged expansion of Soviet influence erode American credibility and perceived resolve.²⁸⁹ In addition to concern that the Soviet Union would benefit strategically – if only marginally – from access to logistics facilities in Angola,²⁹⁰ this argument fed centrally on the zero-sum logic of the Cold War: “The map [should be] coloured our way and not the other way”.²⁹¹ Indeed, African politicians had long sought to exploit the American commitment to containment in order to attract American attention to the decolonisation of Angola. As early as 1960, Roberto couched his appeals for American assistance in terms of a defence of his role as a bulwark against Soviet and communist influence in Angola.²⁹² Adoula and Mobutu made identical arguments, with the additional proviso that Soviet “penetration” of Angola also endangered Congo/Zaire.²⁹³

During the War of Independence, however, the force of this argument had been tempered by the fervent anti-communism of the Portuguese authority, which prohibited a Soviet presence in Angolan territory.²⁹⁴ More generally, some policymakers – Nixon’s first Secretary of State, William Rogers, among them – held that, as Rogers said in 1969, “there has been no real penetration by the Soviets” in Africa.²⁹⁵ In 1971, Rogers told the president that there was no “real danger” from Soviets in Africa and that “they’re not playing a very active role” there.²⁹⁶ Early Soviet involvement in Angolan decolonisation was indeed minimal, though not negligible. MPLA representatives were first invited to Moscow in July 1961, and MPLA received its first Soviet assistance – a payment of \$25,000 – thereafter.²⁹⁷ According to archival documents

Department of State.

²⁸⁹ See, for example, Candace Sobers, ‘Independence, Intervention, and Internationalism: Angola and the International System, 1974–1975’, *Journal of Cold War Studies* 21, no. 1 (2019): 120–21.

²⁹⁰ Charles Stuart Kennedy, Interview with Kenneth N. Rogers, 21 October 1997, The Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

²⁹¹ Kennedy, Interview with Edward Marks.

²⁹² Rodrigues, ‘Today’s Terrorist’, 117–18.

²⁹³ See, for example, ‘Telegram 1897 from the Congo’ (Adoula); ‘Memorandum of Conversation: US–Zaire Relations’ (Mobutu).

²⁹⁴ Kennedy, Interview with Edward Marks.

²⁹⁵ ‘Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting: Southern Africa’. Agreeing with Rogers, David Newsom, the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, pointed out of the Soviets, “They are just as white as we are.”

²⁹⁶ ‘Conversation Among President Nixon, Vice President Agnew, and Secretary of State Rogers’, 5 August 1971, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State.

²⁹⁷ Vladimir Shubin, *The Hot ‘Cold War’: The USSR in Southern Africa* (London: Pluto Press, 2008), 8–9. This early support to MPLA was not exclusive: the Soviet Union extended diplomatic recognition to Roberto’s GRAE the following year (though it was later rescinded), and it met with Savimbi while he was

accessed by Vladimir Shubin, Soviet assistance to MPLA increased in volume over the next decade, reaching \$145,000 in 1966 and \$220,000 in 1973, in addition to non-financial assistance in civilian goods such as clothes and food.²⁹⁸ It ebbed between 1973 and 1974 and then resumed after the Portuguese coup of April 1974.²⁹⁹

In later years, American policymakers placed a great deal of emphasis on the resumption of Soviet aid in 1974. According to these retrospective accounts, the United States learned with alarm that the Soviet Union had resumed support for MPLA in August 1974, with “extensive rearming of the MPLA” beginning in October, in an apparent “cynical move for political power”.³⁰⁰ These statements should be treated with some scepticism, because they were offered in riposte to claims that the eventual American intervention was responsible for triggering the escalation in Angola. However, it is nonetheless plausible that the policy of containment influenced American decision-making, and that the policy appeared to become more immediately applicable to Angola as the Portuguese prepared to depart Africa in 1974 and 1975.

4.3. Conclusion

From this historical overview, it emerges that Roberto received American assistance – apparently continuously – during the War of Independence, but that the political import of such assistance rarely received high-level policymaking attention. Indeed, its character and purpose was conveniently ambiguous: to the Portuguese and their American supporters, it was construed as mere CIA recompense to an intelligence asset, while others – primarily in the African Affairs Bureau – could construe it as part of a more ambitious effort to win influence with Roberto. Either way, as the State Department later put it, “Not until 1975 was the nature of our assistance significantly changed either as to scope or purpose.”³⁰¹

The central historical trigger for this change was the Carnation Revolution of 1974, which brought about a *de facto* resolution to the nationalists’ long-running war against the Portuguese authority: competition between the different nationalist groups – an underlying feature of the war since its inception – abruptly became each group’s overriding preoccupation. At the same

preparing to launch UNITA; see Vladimir Shubin and Andrei Tokarev, ‘War in Angola: A Soviet Dimension’, *Review of African Political Economy* 28, no. 90 (2001): 610–11; Shubin, *The Hot ‘Cold War’*, 15.

²⁹⁸ Shubin, *The Hot ‘Cold War’*, 15.

²⁹⁹ Shubin, 28, 32–34.

³⁰⁰ ‘Testimony of Kissinger’, 9; ‘Testimony of William E. Schaufele, Jr.: Hearings on U.S. Involvement in Civil War in Angola’ (Washington, D. C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 6 February 1976), 175, 184.

³⁰¹ ‘40 Committee Decisions and Covert Action Plans in Angola’.

time, the change of government in Portugal altered the incentives facing the United States: Portuguese appeasement need no longer determine American policy in Angola, and policymakers' attention was drawn abruptly to other American interests in Angola's political future. As I have described them, those other interests were the security and fidelity of neighbouring independent African regimes, the containment of Soviet influence in the region, and, to a much lesser extent, access to Angola's economic resources and logistics facilities. As will be shown in the next chapter, those interests became central in the formulation of the American intervention of 1975.

Chapter Five: The Rebel Patronage Decisions of 1975

In the next two chapters, I turn to the central task of this study: analysing the change in the relationship between UNITA and the United States in 1975. I launch the process-tracing exercise in this chapter by outlining the decision-making process in respect of the American rebel patronage interventions in January and July 1975.³⁰² Considering each decision in turn, I examine the institutions involved and considerations weighed, linking the objectives of the interventions to Chapter 4's discussion of American interests in Angola. The aim is to understand the inputs into the design of the interventions, to enable the inquiry into explanatory variables in rebel selection in the following chapter.

5.1. The January 1975 decision

5.1.1. Dual proposals

The 40 Committee's decision in January 1975 was made amid relative military calm, but continued political upheaval, in Angola. On 15 January 1975, at a summit in Alvor, the Portuguese government promised a peaceful transition to Angolan independence on 11 November 1975.³⁰³ The Alvor Agreement also committed the three main Angolan movements – MPLA, FNLA, and UNITA – to peaceful cooperation until then: each movement was allotted ministries in a coalition government that would command a common national army and conduct legislative elections.³⁰⁴

Shortly afterwards, a proposal for covert political action in Angola reached the 40 Committee. Compared to the later decision of July 1975, this proposal is only sparsely documented in archival sources and elsewhere. However, according to Piero Gleijeses, the proposal was the joint creation of the CIA and the African Affairs Bureau, drafted and presented during the brief interregnum after Donald Easum was fired as Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the acting Assistant Secretary during that period, Ed Mulcahy, was apparently highly supportive of intervention in Angola.³⁰⁵ At the very end of a 40

³⁰² A chronological summary of important events during this period is captured in the appendix.

³⁰³ Independence agreements had already been signed in Guinea-Bissau in August 1974, Mozambique in September 1974, and Cape Verde in December 1974. Gerald Bender and Stanley Yoder suggest two main explanations for the delay in Angola: first, the highly fragmented nature of the Angolan nationalist political landscape, and, second, the large white settler population. See Bender and Yoder, 'Whites in Angola on the Eve of Independence', 23–24.

³⁰⁴ Marcum, *Angolan Revolution, Vol. II*, 255–56.

³⁰⁵ Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 282; see also Schneidman, *Engaging Africa*, 202–3.

Committee meeting in Washington on 22 January 1975, the CIA's Bill Colby presented the case for augmenting support to FNLA and initiating support to Savimbi's UNITA.³⁰⁶ Arguing that "it was clear that Neto wasn't our man" and pointing to an impending escalation in Angola,³⁰⁷ Colby recommended extending \$300,000 to FNLA and \$100,000 to UNITA.³⁰⁸ Only the first of these proposals was adopted.

5.1.2. Support to Roberto

The 40 Committee apparently considered the proposals with little fanfare or debate.³⁰⁹ According to Bill Hyland, the head of the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, "There was very little discussion. The amount of money was so small by the standards of a covert operation."³¹⁰ The committee approved \$300,000 in support to Roberto per year, which it described modestly as the "continuation of a subsidy to Holden Roberto" – notwithstanding that the subsidy now had the high-level sanction of the NSC.³¹¹ Missing from the documentary record is any unambiguous statement of what the 40 Committee intended for this \$300,000 to achieve, but there are two main families of plausible objectives.

First, the objective stressed retrospectively by policymakers was the conflict-oriented objective of strengthening FNLA in order to counterbalance against MPLA's dominance. Policymakers also stressed that they envisaged a *political* counterbalancing to help sustain the tripartite balance of power enshrined in the Alvor Agreement: William Schauffele, who became Assistant Secretary of State at the end of the Ford administration, told Congress in February 1976 that the award was "for political purposes, reflecting our judgment that the FNLA was at a disadvantage operating in Luanda, an MPLA dominated city".³¹² Kissinger told the same congressional committee that the money would "at most... get bicycles, office equipment, and aid political efforts of the FNLA within the context of the coalition government".³¹³ This retrospective

³⁰⁶ Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 282–83; Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 795.

³⁰⁷ Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 282.

³⁰⁸ Gerald Bender, 'Kissinger in Angola: Anatomy of Failure', in *American Policy in Southern Africa: The Stakes and the Stance*, ed. René Lemarchand, 2d ed. (Washington, D.C: University Press of America, 1981), 78; Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 282.

³⁰⁹ Roger Morris, 'The Proxy War in Angola: Pathology of a Blunder', *The New Republic* (New York, 31 January 1976), 21.

³¹⁰ Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 283.

³¹¹ Rob Roy Ratliff, 'Memorandum for the Record: 40 Committee Decisions', 23 January 1975, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State. The dollar amount in the archived memorandum remains classified but has been made public in many sources, including in congressional hearings; for example, Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 795; House Select Committee on Intelligence, 'Report', 142.

³¹² 'Testimony of Schauffele', 175.

³¹³ 'Testimony of Kissinger', 26. Bender quotes Kissinger still more dismissively as having referred to

emphasis on political action should be treated with caution, because officials had strong incentives to dissimulate about the scale and significance of the January intervention: they were highly alert to accusations that the intervention had destabilised the Alvor Agreement and, in particular, that it had provoked a Soviet escalation in MPLA's favour.³¹⁴

On one hand, the political counterbalancing account is compatible with the timing of the 40 Committee decision – soon after the signing of the Alvor Agreement – and the relatively modest sum involved.³¹⁵ Among other things, FNLA used the subsidy to buy FNLA-themed merchandise – 50,000 campaign badges to distribute to supporters – and, in March, to buy the leading Angolan daily newspaper, *A Provincia de Angola*, for \$50,000.³¹⁶ On the other hand, there are indications that the CIA and African Bureau supported and developed the aid package before the Alvor Agreement was signed.³¹⁷ Critics also argue that American conduct was eminently unsuited to the stated objective of supporting the Alvor Agreement. They contend that it was predictable that covert aid to Roberto would in fact *undermine* the Alvor Agreement, because Roberto had already demonstrated a lack of interest in and aptitude for a political resolution and because American support made him less likely, rather than more likely, to make concessions to his rivals.³¹⁸ Moreover, over the next six months, the Ford administration made little effort to provide political and diplomatic support to the Alvor Agreement or to military de-escalation in Angola, despite Portuguese requests for diplomatic intervention and a public proposal by MPLA for a bilateral arms embargo.³¹⁹

A second potential set of objectives is what I have been calling rebel-oriented motives: the desire to signal friendship with the recipients, both to the recipients themselves and to third-party observers. The CIA's presentation to the 40 Committee reportedly emphasized this angle. In the paraphrase of one attendee, Colby described the subsidy as “‘a token’ which would give the United States ‘some capital in the bank’” with Angola's presumptive future leaders.³²⁰ As

“bicycles, paper clips, etc.”; Bender, ‘Kissinger in Angola: Anatomy of Failure’, 76.

³¹⁴ See, for example, Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 795; ‘Testimony of Schaufele’, 192.

³¹⁵ Bill Hyland viewed the programme as “pretty innocuous” and a “pre-electoral move”; Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 282–83.

³¹⁶ House Select Committee on Intelligence, ‘Report’, 142; Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 251n.

³¹⁷ Schneidman, *Engaging Africa*, 202–3.

³¹⁸ Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 283; Lemarchand, ‘The C.I.A. in Africa’, 417–18; John A. Marcum, ‘Lessons of Angola’, *Foreign Affairs* 54, no. 3 (1976): 414. Roger Morris argues that, indeed, the cash injection was unavoidably escalatory, especially after Roberto, in the words of an anonymous American foreign service officer, began “throwing [the cash] around”; see Morris, ‘Pathology of a Blunder’, 21.

³¹⁹ Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 283; Marcum, *Angolan Revolution, Vol. II*, 260.

³²⁰ Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 282.

detailed in Chapter 4, prior American administrations had regarded subsidies to Roberto and FNLA as “flag money” intended to shore up an alliance with an influential Angolan. Such motives would have been pertinent as Roberto’s importance grew in the run-up to Angolan independence. Likewise, the intervention could have signalling value further abroad as a concession to the black independent regimes, notably in Zaire, that supported it. As described in Chapter 4, the Frontline States and especially Zaire were deeply concerned about the Angolan conflict and had interceded with American officials in late 1974 to seek American intervention; the most recent cash injection in Angola, in September 1974, had been a direct response to Zairean overtures.³²¹ Moreover, there were indications that Kissinger, the moving personality behind the 40 Committee’s decision,³²² was reconsidering the Nixon administration’s relative indifference to the black African states. During a staff meeting in late December 1974, discussing military tensions in the Horn of Africa and West Africa, Kissinger argued:

Look, a great country that cannot give military aid in these revolutionary situations is going to become irrelevant... I don’t think it is good for the United States to be in a position where on the issues that most concern some African countries, we either tell them they have no problem or we say we cannot do anything.³²³

5.1.3. Support to Savimbi

The 40 Committee did not approve any support to Savimbi or UNITA in January.³²⁴ No official reason for Savimbi’s snub was recorded, but it appears to have been related to a general lack of interest in UNITA. One CIA officer later said that UNITA was likely rejected because “probably Kissinger had heard of Roberto before, but he had never heard of Savimbi”.³²⁵ Mulcahy recalled that aid to UNITA was not discussed in the meeting simply because “they ran out of time”.³²⁶ Even the CIA proposal, which supported aiding Savimbi, presented him to the 40 Committee as “an unknown quantity and tainted by his earlier contacts with the Chinese” – that was why the

³²¹ See Section 4.1.4.

³²² On Kissinger’s role in the 40 Committee’s decision, see Morris, ‘Pathology of a Blunder’, 21. One source told Morris of Kissinger that, “It wasn’t quite like the cartoon where the light bulb goes on over the head, but damned near it”. Yet Kissinger certainly does not take responsibility for the January 1975 decision in his memoirs; see his brief account of the decision, which he presents as a CIA initiative, in Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 795.

³²³ ‘Minutes of the Secretary of State’s Staff Meeting’, 23 December 1974, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State.

³²⁴ Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 795.

³²⁵ Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 283.

³²⁶ Gleijeses, 283.

CIA proposed to give him less than Roberto.³²⁷

A related potential factor arises from the pre-existing American relationship with FNLA. Marcum suggests that the Ford administration was “enticed... into choosing one side” because of “past connections [between FNLA and the United States], and an irrepressible habit of thinking in terms of ‘our team’ and ‘theirs’”.³²⁸ Of course, for policymakers to accord such importance to the pre-existing relationship could simply be an “irrepressible” foible, as Marcum implies.³²⁹ But it could also be a rational strategy in some circumstances. Kissinger later claimed that the 40 Committee had declined to support UNITA because it was adhering to a policy of “restraint” in service of a peaceful transition to independence.³³⁰ There is some plausibility to this logic: because the American relationship with FNLA was already well known to interested parties, an aid programme to FNLA – even at an increased scale – could more credibly be presented as merely “a continuation of an existing situation” (rather than an “active” attempt to “effect, directly, the African efforts”) and thus would be less likely to be perceived as an escalation that merited or justified a counter-escalation by MPLA and its allies.³³¹

5.2. The July 1975 decision

5.2.1. Decision-making process

If the 40 Committee’s hopes for the success of the Alvor Agreement were genuine, they were soon disappointed: serious fighting broke out between FNLA and MPLA in Luanda by March 1975.³³² By May, American policymakers regarded the breakdown of the transitional government as a live possibility.³³³ In this context, Kissinger tasked his bureaucracy with developing a response along two parallel lines: an inter-agency task force was to complete a wide-ranging National Security Study on American policy in Angola,³³⁴ and the CIA was to

³²⁷ Gleijeses, 283.

³²⁸ Marcum, ‘Lessons of Angola’, 414.

³²⁹ For an argument that Kissinger’s strategy in Angola rested on several irrational beliefs, see Tore Nyhamar, ‘Rationality Explanations: The Case of Kissinger’s Decision to Supply Arms to Angola’, *Cooperation and Conflict* 32, no. 2 (1997): 181–205.

³³⁰ ‘Testimony of Kissinger’, 9. He said that the committee authorised “only the most modest support” to FNLA for the same reason.

³³¹ ‘Testimony of Schaufele’, 192.

³³² Marcum, *Angolan Revolution, Vol. II*, 258.

³³³ Nathaniel Davis, ‘Briefing Memorandum to Secretary of State Kissinger: Meeting Angolan Contingencies’, 24 May 1975, 5–6, Central Intelligence Agency Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room.

³³⁴ Henry Kissinger, ‘National Security Study Memorandum 224: United States Policy Toward Angola’, 26 May 1975, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State.

develop a proposal for developing a covert relationship with Jonas Savimbi.³³⁵

The CIA finished its assignment first: on 5 June 1975, the 40 Committee heard a renewed proposal to extend support – money and possibly arms – to UNITA.³³⁶ While the State Department argued for concentrating all American support in a single recipient – FNLA – the CIA proposed that Savimbi should be strengthened as part of a plan “to get Roberto and Savimbi to work together”.³³⁷ The 40 Committee, however, deferred its decision pending completion of the National Security Study in mid-June. The study presented three options: neutrality, diplomatic efforts to promote a peaceful settlement, and support to FNLA and UNITA “with a view to preventing the MPLA from gaining power”.³³⁸ And in an NSC meeting on 27 June, Kissinger told Ford that he recommended pursuing the third option.³³⁹ He was again the moving personality in the intervention;³⁴⁰ the State Department, and especially the newly appointed Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Nathaniel Davis, strongly opposed the intervention.³⁴¹

As a detailed plan for covert action was submitted to the 40 Committee,³⁴² the war accelerated

³³⁵ Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 798.

³³⁶ ‘Memorandum for the Record: 40 Committee Meeting, 5 June 1975, 10:00 a.m.’, 5 June 1975, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State.

³³⁷ ‘Memorandum for the Record: 40 Committee Meeting, 5 June’. See also the CIA memorandum that followed, arguing for a “Roberto–Savimbi coalition” as the best means of “prevent[ing] Neto from taking over Angola”; ‘Memorandum: Angola’, 11 June 1975, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State.

³³⁸ ‘Paper Prepared by the National Security Council Interdepartmental Group for Africa – Response to NSSM 224: United States Policy Toward Angola’, 13 June 1975, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State.

³³⁹ ‘Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting: Angola’, 27 June 1975, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State. In fact, as early as 20 June, Kissinger declared himself to have “made a decision, and I will get the Presidential endorsement”; ‘Memorandum of Conversation: Africa’, 20 June 1975, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State.

³⁴⁰ Nathaniel Davis, ‘The Angola Decision of 1975: A Personal Memoir’, *Foreign Affairs* 57, no. 1 (1979): 123–24.

³⁴¹ Davis, ‘The Angola Decision of 1975’; see also Joe Sisco’s remarks in ‘Memorandum for the Record: 40 Committee Meeting, 14 July 1975, 10:30 AM’, 14 July 1975, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State; ‘Memorandum of Conversation: Africa’, 16 July 1975, Central Intelligence Agency Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room. Davis’s objections were strong enough that he resigned when the intervention was authorised. Kissinger, who had expected him to resign and “take some [other officials] with him”, welcomed the opportunity to “clean out the AF bureau”; see ‘Memorandum of Conversation: Frank Lindsay; Angola; Zaire; Middle East’, 17 July 1975, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State; ‘Memorandum of Conversation: Middle East; Angola; Soviet Grain; SALT; President’s Trip’, 18 July 1975, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State.

³⁴² ‘Paper Submitted to the 40 Committee: Plan for Covert Action—Angola’, Undated, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State.

in early July. A summit between Neto and Roberto, chaired by Jomo Kenyatta in Nakuru, Kenya between 16 June and 21 June, had bought a brief respite, but heavy fighting broke out on 9 July and spread quickly.³⁴³ Within a week, MPLA had driven the FNLA out of Luanda in fighting that killed more than 300 people and injured about 1,500 people.³⁴⁴

In this context, on the morning of 18 July and on Kissinger's recommendation,³⁴⁵ Ford authorised going forward with a major covert action program of support to FNLA and UNITA, initially valued at \$6 million "and more if needed".³⁴⁶ The scale of the programme, codenamed Operation IAFEATURE, ballooned in subsequent weeks. The details of the initial aid programme were developed in Kinshasa in 19 July and 20 July, in conversations between Mobutu and Kissinger's emissary, former ambassador Sheldon Vance.³⁴⁷ Vance was authorised to offer \$6 million immediately, and more if Mobutu "has some other program in mind which is realistic and offers prospect of success".³⁴⁸ After his meetings with Mobutu, Vance recommended that the United States should fund a larger programme "so that we will have a real impact on Angolan situation".³⁴⁹ Kissinger agreed.³⁵⁰ Thus the initial authorisation for \$6 million was followed by a further \$8 million on 27 July, a further \$10.7 million on 20 August, and a final \$7 million on 27 November – for a total budget of \$31.7 million in less than six months.³⁵¹ In the CIA's accounting, about half of that amount was spent on arms and equipment, and the balance was spent on shipping and cash payments.³⁵² The aid was "divided between" UNITA and

³⁴³ Marcum, *Angolan Revolution, Vol. II*, 260.

³⁴⁴ 'Angolan Faction Drives Rivals From Capital as Fight Steps Up', *The New York Times*, 15 July 1975; Charles Mohr, 'Victory by a Faction in Angola's Capital Creates a Lull', *The New York Times*, 17 July 1975.

³⁴⁵ 'Memorandum of Conversation: Frank Lindsay; Angola'; Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 807–8.

³⁴⁶ 'Memorandum of Conversation: Middle East; Angola'; Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 809–10. The \$6 million figure is not declassified in the memorandum but appears in Kissinger's memoir.

³⁴⁷ See 'Telegram 6688 from Zaire: Vance-Mobutu – First Meeting, July 19', 20 July 1975, Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy; 'Telegram 6691 from Zaire: Vance-Mobutu – Angola – Second Meeting, July 20', 20 July 1975, Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy.

³⁴⁸ 'Telegram 172996 from Department of State: Zaire Aid Package', 23 July 1975, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State.

³⁴⁹ 'Telegram 6877 from Zaire: Vance Mission – Fourth Meeting with Mobutu', 24 July 1975, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State; 'Memorandum of Conversation: Angola', 25 July 1975, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State.

³⁵⁰ 'Memorandum of Conversation [25 July 1975]'. Kissinger said of the \$6 million ceiling:

I've never thought it was enough... My view is that if something is worth doing, it's worth doing right and the amount we put in will not increase the heat we take.

³⁵¹ John Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies: A CIA Story* (Norton, 1978), 206. The Pike Committee made a similar accounting; House Select Committee on Intelligence, 'Report', 142–43.

³⁵² House Select Committee on Intelligence, 'Report', 143. However, the Pike Committee concluded that that the value of American support was likely higher than the reported \$31.7 million, because the CIA had probably undervalued the military equipment it supplied to the groups; see House Select Committee on

5.2.2. Objectives and audiences

The intervention authorised in July differed from the intervention authorised in January not only because it was larger and included UNITA but also because its objectives were conspicuously different. While the January intervention was predominantly focused on comparatively modest political objectives, and – at least officially – did not contemplate military action, the July intervention explicitly envisioned major military aid.³⁵⁴ And while the January intervention was too small to decide the course of the conflict, the July intervention aimed to do just that: as Kissinger bluntly told the 40 Committee, “Our objective is to keep the Communists out.”³⁵⁵ As formulated by Kissinger, the administration’s strategy was to help FNLA and UNITA secure a military stalemate – “so that we were not faced at independence with an undisputed claim by the Communists” – as a prelude to imposing a non-MPLA government by political and diplomatic means.³⁵⁶ Thus Senator Joe Biden, in a facetious reference to Kissinger’s testimony that the earlier subsidy had been intended to buy FNLA bicycles and office equipment, later described the July decision as embodying a “move[] from bicycle diplomacy to arms diplomacy”.³⁵⁷

In later congressional testimony, Kissinger identified two main impetuses for the decision to

Intelligence, 142–44. Anonymous officials also told journalists that shipping costs were over-reported in order artificially to deflate the proportion of the programme’s budget that was spent on weapons; see Seymour M. Hersh, ‘Early Angola Aid By U.S. Reported’, *The New York Times*, 19 December 1975.

³⁵³ House Select Committee on Intelligence, ‘Report’, 143. For example, according to Stockwell, the first \$6 million covered \$2.75 million in cash to Mobutu, who would use the money to supply arms to both groups, and \$2 million each to Roberto and Savimbi “for the general operation of their movements” (disbursed in monthly instalments of \$200,000 by the Chiefs of Station Kinshasa and Lusaka respectively); see Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 206. There is reason to believe that Mobutu’s arms deliveries primarily benefitted FNLA: though his plans fluctuated, he told Vance that he intended to disburse equipment in a four-to-one ratio to FNLA and UNITA respectively; see ‘Telegram 6877: Vance Mission’; see also ‘Telegram 6691: Vance-Mobutu’.

³⁵⁴ ‘40 Committee Decisions and Covert Action Plans in Angola’.

³⁵⁵ ‘Memorandum for the Record: 40 Committee Meeting, 8 August 1975, 11:00 a.m.’, 8 August 1975, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State.

³⁵⁶ Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 792–93, 808; Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 37, 46. Kissinger recalls that he would have preferred to pursue an outright military victory, but he expected the size of the programme to be inadequate to that purpose and doubted that Congress would approve a larger programme. Stockwell suggests that the NSC decided later in 1975 to pursue an outright military victory, which would be consistent with some of Kissinger’s bellicose remarks in the documentary record; see Stockwell, 216, and compare Kissinger’s remarks in ‘Memorandum of Conversation: Africa’, 27 June 1975, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State (“if we do it at all, we should try to win”); ‘Memorandum for the Record: 40 Committee Meeting, 8 August’ (“we want to prevail”).

³⁵⁷ ‘Testimony of Kissinger’, 32.

upgrade American involvement in this way: first, containment of “an unprecedented application of Soviet power” in Angola, and, second, the desire to “help our friends in black Africa”.³⁵⁸ Though Kissinger’s framing is simplistic and even misleading, both motivations have considerable support in the documentary record.

In the first regard, just as the MPLA took control of Luanda, the Ford administration became convinced that an MPLA-led government would be an intolerable loss for the United States in the Cold War. Decisive in this regard was the renewed vigour with which the Soviet Union was supporting MPLA.³⁵⁹ Soviet arms deliveries to MPLA – arriving by truck, rail, and, for the first time, airlift – began to increase in March 1975.³⁶⁰ Arthur Klinghoffer estimates the value of Soviet arms supplied between then and July at about \$30 million.³⁶¹ American intelligence apparently suggested that the arms were increasing not only in quantity but also in quality, with large mortars and armored vehicles arriving by May,³⁶² and MPLA fighters also received Soviet military training in the Crimea during early 1975.³⁶³ The Ford administration objected to this “projection of Soviet military power into Africa”,³⁶⁴ which it viewed as “a direct challenge to the United States” and a violation of the Cold War détente that Kissinger had staked his reputation on.³⁶⁵ For the Soviet Union’s intervention to go without “punishment” – or, worse, for it to result in a victory in Angola – was intolerable and would unsettle the global balance of power.³⁶⁶

³⁵⁸ ‘Testimony of Kissinger’, 11–13; see also House Select Committee on Intelligence, ‘Report’, 144.

³⁵⁹ That this escalation took place is largely unquestioned. More controversial is the American claim that the escalation “reflect[ed] delivery decisions taken several months earlier” – such that it predated, and could not have been a response to, the American aid package to Roberto in January 1975; see ‘Testimony of Schaufele’, 175. For the argument that Soviet escalation was a reaction to a perceived upswing in American involvement, see Morris, ‘Pathology of a Blunder’, 20–21; Marcum, *Angolan Revolution, Vol. II*, 258; Shubin and Tokarev, ‘War in Angola’, 612; House Select Committee on Intelligence, ‘Report’, 142. David Albright argues that the audience for the Soviet escalation was not the United States but the People’s Republic of China; David E. Albright, ‘Soviet Policy: The USSR and Africa’, *Problems of Communism* 27, no. 1 (1978): 33–34. The debate is, in any case, peripheral to the subject of this dissertation.

³⁶⁰ Marcum, *Angolan Revolution, Vol. II*, 259; Zaki Laïdi, *The Superpowers and Africa: The Constraints of a Rivalry, 1960-1990* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 66.

³⁶¹ Arthur J. Klinghoffer, *The Angolan War: A Study In Soviet Policy In The Third World* (Westview Press, 1980), 27–28. Similarly, according to Bender, American officials estimated that the Soviets delivered over 100 tons of arms to MPLA between March and July, at a value of between \$20 million and \$35 million; Bender, ‘Kissinger in Angola: Anatomy of Failure’, 80.

³⁶² ‘Testimony of Schaufele’, 175.

³⁶³ Shubin and Tokarev, ‘War in Angola’, 612.

³⁶⁴ Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 794. Kissinger also describes the “basic challenge” in Angola as “the intensity of Soviet intervention on a scale not seen in Africa for fifteen years”; Kissinger, 797–98.

³⁶⁵ Bender, ‘A Story of Stupidity’; Sobers, ‘Independence, Intervention, and Internationalism’, 120–21.

³⁶⁶ Sobers, ‘Independence, Intervention, and Internationalism’, 120–21.

It was a particularly sensitive time to face Soviet intransigence. Concern about American foreign policy resolve was at a high point – in the administration and for Kissinger personally – in the “credibility crisis” of the spring of 1975.³⁶⁷ The humiliation of American withdrawal from Vietnam, completed in April that year, was coupled with fears that an increasingly activist Congress would henceforth cripple the administration’s foreign-policy initiative. In this context, Kissinger and Ford dreaded further foreign-policy failures not only out of concern for “international prestige, and the reassertion of American power”, but also for domestic political reasons: Kissinger’s detractors were increasingly emboldened, and Ford was facing a difficult re-election bid in 1976.³⁶⁸

The second major current in the administration’s strategic thinking was concern about other third parties in the region around Angola who viewed MPLA’s dominance as a threat to their interests. In their congressional testimony, policymakers emphasized the effects of the war and intervention “on our relationships in Africa, and on the security of our friends there”.³⁶⁹ The Pike Committee concluded that “the paramount factor in the U.S. involvement is Dr. Kissinger’s desire to reward and protect African leaders in the area”.³⁷⁰ And there is substantial evidence that the interests of black independent regimes did shape American policymakers’ views of the stakes of the intervention. For one example, on 20 June, Kissinger suggested that, even in the absence of any independent interests in Angola and even if MPLA ultimately won the war, it might nonetheless serve American interests to intervene in Angola because “I am concerned [about] the impact on [Julius] Nyerere, and [Kenneth] Kaunda and Mobutu when they see we’ve done nothing”.³⁷¹

Particularly influential pleas for intervention came from Zambia and Zaire. First, Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda visited Washington in April 1975, a trip that drew public attention because of a critical speech he gave at a White House state dinner: while Ford’s toast gave the customary praise and invited Kaunda to a game of golf, Kaunda’s speech accused the United States of having “given psychological comfort to the forces of evil” through its policy of inaction

³⁶⁷ Jussi M. Hanhimäki, *The Flawed Architect: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 397–98; Noer, ‘International Credibility’, 771–72. Although President Ford’s memoirs give little attention to Angola, they do recall the White House’s “psychological” difficulties in the late spring: “In the wake of Vietnam, would the U.S. remain firm against Communist aggression elsewhere?” See Gerald R. Ford, *A Time to Heal: The Autobiography of Gerald R. Ford* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 285.

³⁶⁸ Noer, ‘International Credibility’, 771–72, 783.

³⁶⁹ ‘Testimony of Schaufele’, 180.

³⁷⁰ House Select Committee on Intelligence, ‘Report’, 144.

³⁷¹ ‘Memorandum of Conversation: Africa [20 June 1975]’.

against the white-minority regimes of southern Africa.³⁷² Perhaps more important was the private meeting between Ford and Kaunda in the Oval Office, at which Kaunda requested American “help” in the Angolan conflict in favour of UNITA.³⁷³ Per Kissinger, Angola was Kaunda’s “dominant concern” during the meeting,³⁷⁴ and he claimed, somewhat implausibly, to speak on behalf of several Frontline States – Zambia, Tanzania, Mozambique, and also Zaire.³⁷⁵

In his memoirs, Kissinger credits Kaunda with singlehandedly and “unexpectedly” transforming “American national policy”, persuading him and Ford “that we should oppose [the Soviet] intrusion for the sake of Angola’s neighbors”.³⁷⁶ Indeed, he claims that Kaunda’s plea was the impetus for his asking the State Department and CIA to develop proposals for a new policy.³⁷⁷ Although Kissinger’s account is probably at least partly hyperbolic, the conversation appears to have made a powerful impression on Ford: during the NSC meeting on 27 June – his first formal engagement with the proposal to intervene in Angola – Ford twice raised Kaunda’s views, describing his argument as “very forceful”.³⁷⁸

Kissinger, on the other hand, appeared to place special emphasis on Mobutu’s views.³⁷⁹ In addition to Mobutu’s usual influence over American policy in Angola, the Ford administration was making special efforts to mollify Mobutu during this period: in a somewhat bizarre episode in mid-June, Mobutu had publicly accused the CIA of plotting to assassinate him and demanded that the American ambassador be recalled from Kinshasa.³⁸⁰ The administration had responded by offering a major package of economic aid to Zaire, but American relations with Zaire were nonetheless at their nadir.³⁸¹ Kissinger’s analysis of Mobutu’s outburst was that, “We’re not helping on Angola and that’s what I figured was in his mind”.³⁸² He sent Sheldon Vance to

³⁷² The speech was excerpted by the *New York Times*; see Kenneth D. Kaunda, ‘Kaunda: “Dismayed” by America’, *The New York Times*, 25 April 1975. For a detailed narrative account of Kaunda’s April 1975 visit to Washington, see DeRoche, *Kaunda, the United States and Southern Africa*, 21–31.

³⁷³ ‘Memorandum of Conversation: Office Call on the President’, 19 April 1975, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State.

³⁷⁴ Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 794.

³⁷⁵ ‘Memorandum of Conversation: Office Call’.

³⁷⁶ Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 791–92.

³⁷⁷ Kissinger, 798.

³⁷⁸ ‘Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting: Angola’.

³⁷⁹ Sources in Washington later told Leslie Gelb that “the main purpose for the covert American effort in Angola was to underline the Administration’s support for President Mobutu”, and the Pike Committee also singled out Mobutu’s special role; Gelb, ‘U.S., Soviet, China Reported Aiding’; House Select Committee on Intelligence, ‘Report’, 144.

³⁸⁰ See the account in Young and Turner, *Zairian State*, 372–73.

³⁸¹ Young, ‘Zaire’s Southern Africa Policy’, 208; see also Young and Turner, *Zairian State*, 394.

³⁸² ‘Memorandum of Conversation: Africa’, 18 June 1975, Office of the Historian at the United States

Kinshasa to reconcile with Mobutu and obtain his “judgment of the situation and what can be done” in Angola.³⁸³ Mobutu asked for arms and money to support FNLA and UNITA,³⁸⁴ and Vance returned on 27 June with his personal recommendation that the United States should acquiesce in this request.³⁸⁵ In the following weeks, Kissinger told both the NSC and the 40 Committee that the Angolan intervention was crucial to sustaining good relations with Zaire: if the United States did nothing, “Zaire would conclude we have disinterested ourselves in that part of the world and move towards anti-Americanism”.³⁸⁶

Andrew DeRoche warns against accepting this account wholesale, viewing it as Kissinger’s way of “cleverly shift[ing] much of the blame” to African leaders for the intervention and concomitant escalation in Angola.³⁸⁷ But, as emerged in the foregoing paragraphs, the views of Mobutu and Kaunda were frequently raised in contemporaneous confidential discussions, and not merely in retrospective official justifications. Moreover, an account of African influences on the American intervention need not pretend that the intervention was benevolent, disinterested, or even much concerned with regional issues. Instead, concerns about African third parties gained their potency in combination with Cold War anxieties, because of the Kissinger’s insistence that American credibility across the globe depended on demonstrations of American resolve to restrain Soviet expansionism. The dual dangers were that African third parties would perceive non-intervention as a concession to the Soviet Union and that they would reciprocate with their own concessions to the Soviet Union. Indeed, Kissinger’s constant refrain was that non-intervention would lead moderate African leaders to write off the United States as weak or uninterested in African issues, and that this would bolster Soviet influence on the continent. On 16 July, for example, he argued:

If Angola goes Communist, it will have an effect in Angola, in Zaire, and in Zambia, etc. These

Department of State. In a meeting later the same week, Kissinger opined that, “If we’re letting Angola go, then in essence we’re letting him [Mobutu] go”; ‘Memorandum of Conversation: Africa [20 June 1975]’.

³⁸³ ‘Memorandum of Conversation: Africa [20 June 1975]’; Edward W. Mulcahy, ‘Action Memorandum From the Acting Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs (Mulcahy) to Secretary of State Kissinger – Vance Mission to Zaire: Terms of Reference’, 20 June 1975, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State.

³⁸⁴ ‘Telegram 5605 from Zaire: Breakfast with Mobutu’, 23 June 1975, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State.

³⁸⁵ ‘Memorandum of Conversation: Africa [27 June 1975]’.

³⁸⁶ ‘Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting: Angola’; ‘Memorandum for the Record: 40 Committee Meeting, 14 July’ (“it’s a question of his [Mobutu’s] perception of who is behind him”). Colby of the CIA was among those in the NSC who agreed with Kissinger, observing that aid to Roberto had twofold value: “the effect on Angola, and the effect on Mobutu himself”.

³⁸⁷ DeRoche, *Kaunda, the United States and Southern Africa*, 25–31.

countries can only conclude that the US is no longer a factor in Southern Africa. We will pay for it for decades. It will affect their orientation. They will conclude that if the Soviets can put in massive aid and we cannot, it will mean the Soviets are the power factor that they have to deal with.³⁸⁸

5.3. Conclusion

In addition to providing necessary background information, the foregoing account raises several important features of the 1975 intervention that will merit further attention in process-tracing. First, several parties had input into the decision-making process – notably the State Department, CIA, and Mobutu’s government in Zaire – though Kissinger was overwhelmingly the single most important figure in the decision-making process. Second, the January and July interventions differed not only in their beneficiaries – UNITA being included in the former, but not the latter – but also in their scale and the ambitiousness of their objectives, or the shift “from bicycle diplomacy to arms diplomacy”.³⁸⁹ Third, in including UNITA in the July intervention, the Ford administration overcame the inhibitions that had led the 40 Committee to neglect or dismiss the movement in January: its status as an “unknown quantity”,³⁹⁰ and the psychological and symbolic importance of the American government’s decade-long affiliation with the rival FNLA. In the following chapter, I turn to explaining UNITA’s newfound role in the American policy.

³⁸⁸ ‘Memorandum of Conversation: Africa [16 July 1975]’. Two days earlier he had made the same point in the 40 Committee:

If all the surrounding countries see Angola go Communist, they will assume that the U.S. has no will. Coming on top of Vietnam and Indochina their perception of what the U.S. can and will do will be negative.

His concern about Zaire was, likewise, that Mobutu would think that the United States “has written off the area. He has to be drawing his conclusions for himself”. And when Ford authorised the action on 18 July, he couched his assent in the same terms, opining, “if we do nothing, we will lose Southern Africa”. See ‘Memorandum for the Record: 40 Committee Meeting, 14 July’; ‘Memorandum of Conversation: Africa [18 June 1975]’; ‘Memorandum of Conversation: Middle East; Angola’.

³⁸⁹ ‘Testimony of Kissinger’, 32.

³⁹⁰ Quoted in Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 283.

Chapter Six: The Reassessment of UNITA

Chapter 5 described the interests and decision-making processes that underlay two American rebel patronage interventions in Angola in 1975: a \$300,000 cash subsidy to one movement, authorised in January, and a multi-million package of money and arms to two movements, authorised in July. This chapter turns to the identity of the rebel movements supported in each intervention, applying the theoretical literature on rebel selection in rebel patronage interventions to analyse the factors that led the United States to extend support to UNITA in July when it had declined to do so in January. A promising causal explanation must identify some variable satisfying two criteria: it must have changed during the relevant period, and the change must have been accorded significance by American policymakers.

It is useful to make preliminary note of one general change during this period. In the previous chapter, it emerged that the Ford administration considered UNITA an “unknown quantity” at the time that the first intervention was authorised.³⁹¹ The paucity of intelligence was understandable: the CIA’s office in Angola had been closed in 1967, in deference to the Portuguese authority.³⁹² Thus as the Ford administration selected among potential Angolan rebel clients in January 1975, the CIA’s intelligence about the candidates came from “offshore” coverage: its stations in Lusaka, Lisbon, and, primarily, Kinshasa, where the CIA’s primary sources were connected to FNLA and Mobutu.³⁹³ John Stockwell, who ran Operation IAFEATURE, is highly critical of the quality of CIA intelligence about the nationalist movements, which he says reflected “Portuguese and FNLA biases” and contained basic factual inaccuracies, including about UNITA.³⁹⁴ But the situation improved in the first half of 1975 as the United States contemplated the larger intervention ultimately authorised in July. Between January and July, UNITA liaised with American officials an unusual amount. Savimbi met thrice with the

³⁹¹ Quoted in Gleijeses, 283.

³⁹² Piero Gleijeses, Interview with Robert W. Hultslander, 1998, Wilson Center Digital Archive, National Security Archive, Electronic Briefing Book #67. According to Bender, before then, CIA coverage in Angola depended on a single case officer who was undercover in the American consulate in Luanda between 1964 and 1967; Bender, ‘A Story of Stupidity’.

³⁹³ Gleijeses, Interview with Robert W. Hultslander. Hultslander, who was the CIA station chief in Luanda during Operation IAFEATURE, reports that the CIA “had little contact with UNITA” until it “emerged as the third major power player” – presumably no earlier than the Alvor Agreement.

³⁹⁴ Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 65, 90, 146–7n. Stockwell’s example is the CIA’s biography of Savimbi, which misreported the year in which UNITA was founded and claimed that UNITA had been founded with money Savimbi stole from FNLA. However, the deficiencies of American intelligence should not be overstated: academic Piero Gleijeses was impressed by the “superior quality and objectivity” of many American reports on Angola, especially those produced by the CIA, compared to similar reports in Soviet, South African, and Cuban archives; see Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 11.

United States Ambassador to Zambia between January and June.³⁹⁵ In addition, the CIA deployed “a few officers” in Luanda on temporary duty in March 1975,³⁹⁶ and, as will be discussed in detail in Section 6.4 below, the Zairean and Zambian governments interceded during this period to provide their own impressions of UNITA and Savimbi.

In the following subsections, I use process-tracing to evaluate four main explanatory hypotheses, drawn from the theoretical literature review of Chapter 2, for the shift in American rebel selection between January and July 1975. Three pertain to rebel characteristics: UNITA’s military appeal, political appeal, and ideological alignment respectively, as perceived by American policymakers in the relevant period and especially as judged relative to FNLA. I argue that military factors were not decisive, but that UNITA’s ideology and especially political competence had major significance to American policymakers. A final hypothesis, or family of hypotheses, links rebel selection to the international context and expected actions of third parties. In that regard, I find evidence that American rebel selection was influenced by newfound Zambian and Zairean support for UNITA.

6.1. Perceived military effectiveness

Salehyan, Gleditsch and Cunningham supply the first hypothesis: that UNITA became a more attractive rebel client because of improvements in its perceived military effectiveness. As I outlined in Chapter 2, their selection theory expects a sponsoring state to prefer rebel clients who are likely to pursue and achieve the state’s military objectives, and therefore to prefer rebel clients who appear to possess military strength and successful military command-and-control.³⁹⁷ Military competence was certainly relevant to the American intervention approved in July, because, as emerged in Chapter 5, the intervention was motivated at least in part by

³⁹⁵ This seems to have been Savimbi’s first direct contact with American officials, though Marcum reports that UNITA’s foreign minister, Jorge Sangumba, had met with State Department officials as early as 1973; Marcum, *Angolan Revolution, Vol. II*, 262. Savimbi’s first meeting took place at the embassy in Lusaka on 22 January, the same day that the 40 Committee declined to approve financial support to UNITA, and Savimbi later arranged to meet twice with the ambassador over lunch, once on 24 March and again on 27 June. During the lunch in March, Savimbi “made it clear he [was] searching for outside support, principally although not necessarily exclusively from non-communist sources”, and, in the same week, he sent an envoy to the American embassy in Ottawa, Canada with a less subtle request for \$1 million in aid to support UNITA’s military and especially political development. See the ambassadors’ accounts in ‘Telegram 0538 from Zambia: Savimbi March 24 Conversation with Ambassador’, 25 March 1975, Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy; ‘Telegram 1206 from Zambia: Savimbi on Nakura Agreement, Other Angolan Matters’ (Zambia Lusaka, 27 June 1975), Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy; ‘Telegram 0147 from Zambia: Conversation with Jonas Savimbi’, 24 January 1975, Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy; ‘Telegram 1099 from Canada: UNITA Seeks U.S. Support’, 24 March 1975, Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy.

³⁹⁶ Gleijeses, Interview with Robert W. Hultslander.

³⁹⁷ Salehyan, Gleditsch, and Cunningham, ‘Explaining External Support’, 715.

military objectives. However, I find that UNITA's military strength has little explanatory import in American rebel selection, because FNLA retained an apparent military advantage over UNITA – significant and unchanged – throughout the first half of 1975.

That advantage is clear from contemporaneous estimates of the rebels' troop strength. In January 1975, at the time of the 40 Committee's first meeting, American intelligence suggested that FNLA had between 5,000 and 8,000 trained and armed troops – with a further 5,000 undergoing training in Zaire – while UNITA had "at most, 2,000".³⁹⁸ Independent estimates accorded FNLA an even greater advantage.³⁹⁹ Importantly, this imbalance in FNLA's favour did not change during the first half of 1975. In June, the CIA reported to President Ford that MPLA and FNLA each had between 8,000 and 10,000 troops inside Angola, while UNITA had only 3,000.⁴⁰⁰

Nor did American intelligence accord UNITA's forces any significant organizational or strategic advantage. American perceptions of UNITA's military weakness extended to its internal command-and-control.⁴⁰¹ And in territorial terms, UNITA was concentrated in its Ovimbundu homeland in the central highlands and, east of that, in Moxico province.⁴⁰² The densely populated highland territory was regarded as economically important for its agricultural activity and location on the Benguela Railway.⁴⁰³ But it had little relevance for the military objectives of the intervention approved in July, which aimed overwhelmingly to challenge MPLA's dominance in Luanda: Kissinger repeatedly emphasized that for the post-independence government, any feasible claim to international recognition would depend on control of the

³⁹⁸ 'Testimony of Schaufele', 183, 185–86, 191.

³⁹⁹ See Marcum's compilation of such estimates in Marcum, *Angolan Revolution*, Vol. II, 257, 257n.

⁴⁰⁰ 'The President's Daily Brief', 10 June 1975, Central Intelligence Agency Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room. FNLA was also estimated to have some 8,000 to 10,000 troops in training, while UNITA had less than half that.

⁴⁰¹ Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 155. When he arrived in Angola after Operation IAFEATURE was launched, Stockwell was pleasantly surprised to find that UNITA's army was "better led" than FNLA's. But the Americans who carried out the operation were nonetheless disappointed by the "communications, maintenance, combat leadership, and discipline" of both FNLA and UNITA, finding them insufficient "to organize an effective military effort"; they invested significant manpower in training and logistical assistance for the organizations as part of the operation, on which see Stockwell, 176–77.

⁴⁰² Marcum, *Angolan Revolution*, Vol. II, 257, 257n.

⁴⁰³ 'Angola: Jonas Savimbi and UNITA', Staff Notes: Middle East Africa South Asia (Central Intelligence Agency, 5 February 1975), Central Intelligence Agency Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room.

capital.⁴⁰⁴ And Savimbi could not “bring effective power to bear in Luanda”.⁴⁰⁵ MPLA had a “distinct advantage” in Luanda because of its irregular forces there,⁴⁰⁶ and only FNLA, with its control of territories north of Luanda and unencumbered access to the northern border, could feasibly challenge its dominance. UNITA was the only group without a reliable supply route to the capital.⁴⁰⁷

In sum, there is little support for the hypothesis that UNITA became a more attractive rebel client due to perceived improvements in its military competence. In July 1975, as in January 1975, American policymakers viewed UNITA as “militarily much weaker” than FNLA and MPLA.⁴⁰⁸ Indeed, UNITA’s strengths lay elsewhere: it did not formally enter the civil military conflict between FNLA and MPLA until 4 August 1975,⁴⁰⁹ and, before then, its leadership focused on political activities.⁴¹⁰

6.2. Perceived political effectiveness

In Chapter 2, I suggested that it may sometimes be productive to broaden Salehyan, Gleditsch and Cunningham’s principal-agent model to consider forms of rebel competence other than military effectiveness, particularly when the sponsoring state’s goals are not confined to military objectives. In the Angolan case, rebels’ ability to achieve *political* objectives is potentially relevant, because the United States was interested in the political outcome of the conflict and particularly in forestalling an MPLA government. In this section, therefore, I consider the hypothesis that American aid to UNITA was stimulated by changes in American perceptions of UNITA’s political competence. Indeed, I find evidence that, in the first half of 1975, American policymakers newly heeded what long been true: that UNITA, because of its large political base and because of Savimbi’s personal charisma, had a political advantage over FNLA.

UNITA’s first political boon was the size of its organic support base. As the CIA observed in

⁴⁰⁴ See, for example, ‘Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting: Angola’ (where Kissinger argues that “the history of Africa has shown that a nation’s only focal point is the capital”); ‘Memorandum of Conversation: Middle East; Angola’ (where the intervention is described as “pretty hopeless” unless Luanda could be seized back from MPLA); Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 797–98.

⁴⁰⁵ ‘Telegram 0157 from Angola: The Possibility of Civil War in Angola During the Transitional Period and Policy Implications’, 7 February 1975, Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy.

⁴⁰⁶ ‘The President’s Daily Brief’, A3.

⁴⁰⁷ ‘The President’s Daily Brief’, A2.

⁴⁰⁸ ‘Response to NSSM 224: United States Policy Toward Angola’.

⁴⁰⁹ Fred Bridgland, *Jonas Savimbi: A Key to Africa* (Paragon House, 1987), 127.

⁴¹⁰ Marcum, *Angolan Revolution, Vol. II*, 195.

February, Savimbi's "tribal ties" to the Ovimbundu, the most populous Angolan ethnic group, gave him "a potential political base out of proportion to the size of his organization's military forces".⁴¹¹ The *New York Times* reported in late April that, were democratic elections held soon, Savimbi was expected to win at least 45 per cent of the vote (while the MPLA would win 30 to 35 per cent, and FNLA slightly less);⁴¹² Marcum reports similar expectations among other well-informed observers.⁴¹³ Thus the CIA argued for initiating support to UNITA at least in part because "FNLA seems to rest on too narrow a tribal base (the Bakongo people) to win supremacy in Angola without a more broadly based ally such as UNITA".⁴¹⁴

UNITA's second major political advantage was the political strength and popularity of its leadership – above all, of Savimbi himself. During the first half of 1975, American attention was attracted to Savimbi's considerable personal talents. By June, when the National Security Study on Angola was completed, he was viewed favourably in comparison with his two rivals, described as "the most pragmatic and practical of the three" and "the most articulate and well-informed on current events".⁴¹⁵ The son of a station-master on the Benguela Railway, educated in Protestant missions and then in Switzerland,⁴¹⁶ Savimbi, usually dressed in military camouflage, was a commanding and articulate figure, noted for his personal "magnetism".⁴¹⁷ He often impressed his foreign interlocutors: the American ambassador to Zambia left her second meeting with Savimbi viewing him as a possible "future president".⁴¹⁸ Not only because of his personal talents but also because of his skilful political manoeuvring – especially his increasing cachet with African heads of state – American analysts began to indicate that Savimbi "could emerge as a compromise head of state" in Angola.⁴¹⁹

In his personal and political charms, Savimbi was a foil to Roberto, an aloof figure known for

⁴¹¹ 'Angola: Jonas Savimbi and UNITA'.

⁴¹² Charles Mohr, 'In Angola's Political Maneuvering, a Moderate Gains Support', *The New York Times*, 24 April 1975.

⁴¹³ Marcum, *Angolan Revolution, Vol. II*, 260, 260n.

⁴¹⁴ 'Memorandum: Angola'.

⁴¹⁵ 'Response to NSSM 224: United States Policy Toward Angola'.

⁴¹⁶ Bridgland, *Jonas Savimbi*, 23–32.

⁴¹⁷ Bridgland, 17. Bridgland, who was the Reuters correspondent to Central Africa in 1975, became Savimbi's biographer and one of his most ardent admirers, but later – after UNITA brutalities in later stages of the war – revised his opinion of Savimbi in Bridgland, *The Guerrilla and the Journalist: Exploring the Murderous Legacy of Jonas Savimbi* (Jonathan Ball, 2022), 258.

⁴¹⁸ 'Telegram 0538: Savimbi Conversation'; see also Tor Sellström, ed., 'Interview with David Wirmark', in *Liberation in Southern Africa*, 2. ed (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2002), 353.

⁴¹⁹ 'The President's Daily Brief', A6.

wearing dark glasses even indoors.⁴²⁰ Though successive American administrations had allied with Roberto and heard favourable reports about FNLA, his American interlocutors rarely found him likable or trustworthy. They described him as “corrupt, ineffective as a leader, and in Mobutu’s pocket”,⁴²¹ or, more euphemistically, as “an individual not noted for his vigor”;⁴²² he was surrounded by a clique of “corrupt, unprincipled men who represented the very worst of radical black African racism”.⁴²³ Even the South Africans did not like him: a cable to Pretoria in June 1975 described him as “exceptionally proud, jealous, dictatorial, and racist”.⁴²⁴ When he met Roberto for the first time in 1975, Stockwell – noting Roberto’s dark glasses, tailored jacket, and “expression of permanent disapproval” – quipped that the CIA would “have some difficulty producing a sympathetic propaganda photo”.⁴²⁵ Importantly, in addition to lacking Savimbi’s broad ethnic appeal, Roberto showed little inclination or ability to expand FNLA’s political base: between January and July 1975, perhaps the most common American complaint about Roberto was that he refused to leave his exile in Zaire to mobilise Angolans inside the country.⁴²⁶

UNITA’s political advantages over FNLA were significant to American policymakers. Indeed, in the weeks before they authorised aid to UNITA, policymakers appeared to view UNITA’s political advantages as its greatest strength.⁴²⁷ There is thus considerable merit in the hypothesis that American recognition of UNITA’s political potential was a key explanatory factor in inauguration of the American alliance with UNITA in July 1975.

Given that many of UNITA’s political advantages over FNLA were already apparent to informed observers in January 1975,⁴²⁸ it is instructive to consider why American policymakers did not notice – or did not accord significance to – those advantages earlier, including when considering the 40 Committee the CIA’s proposal to aid UNITA in January.⁴²⁹ One important factor may have

⁴²⁰ Easum, ‘Hard Times’.

⁴²¹ Easum.

⁴²² ‘Telegram 1093 from Zaire: Mobutu’s Opening to the Left and Portugal’, 9 February 1973, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State.

⁴²³ Gleijeses, Interview with Robert W. Hultslander.

⁴²⁴ Jamie Miller, ‘Yes, Minister: Reassessing South Africa’s Intervention in the Angolan Civil War, 1975–1976’, *Journal of Cold War Studies* 15, no. 3 (2013): 11n.

⁴²⁵ Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 114.

⁴²⁶ See, for example, ‘Response to NSSM 224: United States Policy Toward Angola’; Secretary Schlesinger’s comments in ‘Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting: Angola’; ‘The President’s Daily Brief’, A5.

⁴²⁷ See Kissinger’s summary in ‘Talking Points for Sec. Kissinger’, 2.

⁴²⁸ Marcum, ‘Lessons of Angola’, 414.

⁴²⁹ Similarly, FNLA and Roberto’s political deficiencies were apparent by that time, so I am not satisfied by Bender’s proposed explanation that the United States decided to extend aid to Savimbi because “FNLA began to look like a paper tiger” in “mid-July”; see Bender, ‘A Story of Stupidity’.

been laudatory reports of Savimbi's role in negotiating and promoting the Alvor Agreement of January 1975. This vastly improved UNITA's international public profile in the months after the agreement. A CIA note in February, announcing Savimbi's emergence as "the most active and most politically skillful" of the nationalist leaders, observed that he had been "the most articulate and best informed" Angolan negotiator during the Alvor summit.⁴³⁰ And through the spring of 1975, the *New York Times* repeatedly praised his emergent political popularity and his role as a conciliator – both in respect of the rival nationalists and in respect of the white Portuguese.⁴³¹ A second factor in alerting the United States to UNITA's political credentials might have been Savimbi's overtures to American officials during the first half of 1975, as mentioned above. The ambassador in Zambia wrote diplomatic cables effusive with praise for Savimbi after her meetings with him.⁴³² Finally, there was plausibly a third factor: intercessions by other third parties with favourable reports about UNITA's political potential. In Section 6.4, I will return to this point, arguing that other third parties played an important role in shaping American perceptions of UNITA in the first half of 1975.

6.3. Perceived ideological alignment

A third hypothesis proposes that the United States changed its stance towards UNITA because of changes in the group's perceived ideological alignment in the first half of 1975. As outlined in Chapter 2, ideational ties between sponsoring states and rebel clients feature in both main theories of rebel selection. For Salehyan, Gleditsch, and Cunningham, state sponsors are likely to favour rebel clients who share cultural or ideational ties with them because such ties, as a proxy for preference congruence and reliability, mitigate the risk of agency slack.⁴³³ For San-Akca, on the other hand, state sponsors are likely to favour rebel clients who share ideational ties with them because such affinity is regarded *per se* as an attractive feature in a rebel client.⁴³⁴ In the Angolan case, I find no evidence that the United States recognized any ideological affinity with

⁴³⁰ 'Angola: Jonas Savimbi and UNITA'. Kissinger quoted this note verbatim in the NSC in June 1975, arguing that "UNITA is the least powerful of the three movements but its leader, Jonas Savimbi, has emerged as the most active and politically skillful of Angola's nationalist leaders"; see 'Talking Points for Sec. Kissinger', 2.

⁴³¹ See, for example, 'Angola Unraveling?', *The New York Times*, 31 March 1975; Mohr, 'Angola's Political Maneuvering'. Mohr quotes a white settler as describing Savimbi as "the greatest anesthetist in Angola": "He has put all the Portuguese to sleep".

⁴³² See 'Telegram 0147: Conversation with Savimbi'; 'Telegram 0538: Savimbi Conversation'. Savimbi also took the opportunity slyly to raise questions about Roberto's political credentials, among other things commenting that Roberto's absence from Angola was "disheartening" for FNLA forces; see 'Telegram 0538: Savimbi Conversation'; 'Telegram 1206: Savimbi'.

⁴³³ Salehyan, Gleditsch, and Cunningham, 'Explaining External Support', 715.

⁴³⁴ San-Akca, *States in Disguise*, 34–36, 85.

UNITA strong enough to actively motivate American support for the group. However, I do find some evidence that American policymakers tempered their perceptions – and misperceptions – of UNITA’s putative ideological radicalism in the first half of 1975. This may have made an alliance with UNITA appear more comfortable, even if the alliance was primarily motivated by other, non-ideological factors.

It would not be surprising that American alliances in Angola were primarily non-ideological, because the ideological differences between the three main nationalist movements, and especially between FNLA and UNITA, were minimal. Although MPLA had adopted a socialist platform by 1975, the political ideologies of all three movements shared an overriding commitment to nationalism and a tendency towards fluidity on everything else.⁴³⁵ Yet, due to inattention or poor intelligence, American policymakers were not initially aware of the extent of Savimbi’s ideological flexibility. As Mulcahy later put it, “We had him down at one time as a Marxist but he apparently was never a very serious Marxist”.⁴³⁶ Robert Hultslander, the CIA’s Luanda chief, blamed diplomats in Luanda and Lusaka for critical reporting on Savimbi and his connections to communism;⁴³⁷ Stockwell, as already mentioned, blamed the CIA for uncritically accepting FNLA biases in its own reporting on Savimbi.⁴³⁸

In any case, though it is not clear exactly when the Ford administration corrected its misconceptions about Savimbi, it certainly no longer counted him as a socialist by February 1975, when CIA reporting commended him for having “avoided controversy and ideological commitments”.⁴³⁹ The June 1975 National Security Study concluded that a UNITA-led regime in

⁴³⁵ Admittedly, while Roberto and Mobutu had been burnishing FNLA’s anti-communist credentials in Washington since the 1960s as described in Chapter 4, Savimbi had flirted publicly with socialism. Savimbi’s biographer, Fred Bridgland, concluded that he was a genuine ideological Maoist, at least in his youth; Bridgland, *The Guerrilla and the Journalist*, 14. But Savimbi’s own lieutenants later said that the influence of Maoism in UNITA was confined to guerrilla strategy and was not a question of “big doctrines”, and Savimbi was certainly less an ideologue than he was a pragmatist: he was “chameleon-like” in his appeal to a patchwork of ideologies, especially with foreign audiences; Justin Pearce, ‘Global Ideologies, Local Politics: The Cold War as Seen from Central Angola’, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 43, no. 1 (2017): 21–23, 25. Pearce’s interviews with UNITA members are corroborated by interviews conducted by Tor Sellström with UNITA’s former secretary-general and secretary of information (who reported that, “in those days, we did not go in for ideology” and that the “brand of African socialism” that prevailed during this period was merely “emotional”); see his interviews with Miguel N’Zau Puna and Jorge Valentim in Sellström, *Liberation in Southern Africa*, 2. ed (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2002), 23–27, 34–36.

⁴³⁶ Charles Stuart Kennedy, Interview with Edward W. Mulcahy, 23 March 1989, The Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁴³⁷ Gleijeses, Interview with Robert W. Hultslander.

⁴³⁸ Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 146–7n.

⁴³⁹ ‘Angola: Jonas Savimbi and UNITA’. See also the April 1975 intelligence report excerpted in Gleijeses,

Angola would be virtually indistinguishable ideologically from an FNLA-led regime.⁴⁴⁰ At least one official – Mulcahy – apparently believed not only that Savimbi’s policies were acceptable but that Savimbi “leans more in our direction ideologically” than FNLA.⁴⁴¹

Thus it is plausible that American rebel selection was influenced by improvements in policymakers’ perceptions of UNITA’s ideological commitments. Although there is no indication of any positive ideological affinity strong enough to motivate the American alliance with UNITA, the movement came to be regarded as at least minimally ideologically compatible with American interests in Angola. In other words, even if UNITA’s ideological platform did not attract American support, by July it was no longer regarded as an obstacle to the same.

6.4. Perceived international context

As I outlined in Chapter 2, one understudied theoretical hypothesis is that rebel patronage interventions may be shaped by and conditioned on the actions and expected actions of a broad network of *other* third-party actors who have an interest in the conflict.⁴⁴² As applied to the Angolan case, this might imply that the American shift towards UNITA was influenced by a change in UNITA’s relationship to other third parties interested in the Angolan conflict. In particular, the shift might be linked to changes in UNITA’s relationship with Angola’s neighbouring regimes: a group of black states on one hand, led by Zambia and Zaire, and South Africa on the other.⁴⁴³

Conflicting Missions, 284. (describing Savimbi as prepared to sacrifice any ideological commitment to his political ambition, such that it is “difficult to accept without reservations any of the political convictions claimed by or attributed to him”) and Colby’s testimony quoted in House Select Committee on Intelligence, ‘Report’, 145.

⁴⁴⁰ ‘Response to NSSM 224: United States Policy Toward Angola’.

⁴⁴¹ ‘Memorandum of Conversation: Africa [18 June 1975]’. This is somewhat at odds with the discussion in the 40 Committee meeting a fortnight earlier, where all attendees had agreed that a Roberto-led government would be “best for us”; ‘Memorandum for the Record: 40 Committee Meeting, 5 June’.

⁴⁴² Karlén et al., ‘Conflict Delegation in Civil Wars’, 2074.

⁴⁴³ In theory, rebel selection might also have been affected by changes in the policy positions of rival states. However, in the Angolan case, the United States’s primary international rivals were the Soviet Union and Cuba, and process-tracing does not yield any significant changes in their attitudes towards the Angolan parties. As already mentioned, the Soviet Union was firmly invested on MPLA’s side. Cuba, likewise, entered the conflict as an ally of MPLA, with whom it had had a high-level relationship since 1965, and remained so; moreover, its main contribution – a major direct intervention – did not arrive until later in the war. As Mulcahy later said, when the United States was planning its initial operation, “Cuba didn’t even enter into our calculations”; Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 8–9, 82–83, 246–65. See also Piero Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom: Havana, Washington, Pretoria, and the Struggle for Southern Africa, 1976–1991* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 9; Piero Gleijeses, ‘Moscow’s Proxy? Cuba and Africa 1975–1988’, *Journal of Cold War Studies* 8, no. 2 (2006): 3–51.

6.4.1. Zaire and Zambia

The hypothesis that Zaire and Zambia shaped American rebel selection has facial appeal because both countries ultimately played a role in the American intervention. As already mentioned in Chapter 5, Mobutu was intimately involved in planning the intervention; after Ford authorised intervention in principle, the administration's very first act was to liaise with Mobutu to have him "come up with a program" for disbursing the patronage.⁴⁴⁴ Kaunda's government later played a much smaller role in coordinating American aid to UNITA.⁴⁴⁵ Moreover, as I argued in Chapter 5, the American intervention was partly motivated by the Ford administration's desire to signal American resolve and friendship to allied independent states in the region. In this subsection, I argue that Zambian and Zairean policies also shaped American rebel selection. In the first half of 1975, both governments became supporters of a UNITA-led government in Angola, and their newfound support for UNITA influenced American rebel selection both directly – because American signalling objectives depended on reinforcing their Angolan allies – and indirectly – because the African regimes conveyed favourable intelligence about UNITA.

While Zaire's increasing inclination toward UNITA represented a movement away from its exclusive support to FNLA, Kaunda's government in Zambia had been an important ally of MPLA for most its tenure. From the mid-1960s, it provided MPLA with "consistent, substantial and virtually exclusive moral and material support", including safe harbour and operational bases in western Zambia, diplomatic championing at the OAU, and access to Radio Zambia's External Service, which MPLA used to broadcast propaganda inside Angola.⁴⁴⁶ But Kaunda's government had also made periodic attempts to foster unity between Angolan nationalists,⁴⁴⁷ and, according to Douglas Anglin and Timothy Shaw, a peaceful transfer of power in Angola became Kaunda's priority after the Portuguese coup of 1974.⁴⁴⁸ Moreover, Zambia's warm relationship with MPLA was weakened somewhat when the government was caught in the crossfire of an internal MPLA

⁴⁴⁴ 'Memorandum of Conversation: Middle East; Angola'; Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 808–9. The unredacted version of the memorandum, quoted here, appears in Kissinger's memoir.

⁴⁴⁵ DeRoche, *Kaunda, the United States and Southern Africa*, 38–42.

⁴⁴⁶ Douglas G. Anglin and Timothy M. Shaw, *Zambia's Foreign Policy: Studies in Diplomacy and Dependence* (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1979), 314–15, 318. UNITA had a base in Zambia until 1967, when Savimbi was arrested and expelled from the country after a UNITA attack on the Benguela Railway; see John A. Marcum, 'The Politics of Survival: UNITA in Angola', *Africa Notes* 8 (1983): 2. By contrast, the Zambian government continued to support MPLA even at the cost of considerable economic pressure from Portugal.

⁴⁴⁷ Anglin and Shaw, *Zambia's Foreign Policy*, 317–18; Chan, *Kaunda and Southern Africa*, 78–80.

⁴⁴⁸ Anglin and Shaw, *Zambia's Foreign Policy*, 319–20.

factional conflict, beginning around 1972, and it may also have entered Kaunda's thinking that an MPLA-led government would have trouble operating the Benguela Railway – crucial to the Zambian economy – because it would face sustained resistance from UNITA and Zaire.⁴⁴⁹

According to DeRoche, Kaunda was won over to supporting UNITA after Savimbi visited Lusaka in November 1974 to discuss the Alvor Agreement,⁴⁵⁰ but it was in April 1975 that Kaunda took pains to make American decision-makers aware of his new policy.⁴⁵¹

Thus when Kaunda visited the Oval Office that month – the visit that Kissinger later credited with transforming the Ford administration's policy – his plea was not just for American "help" generally but for American support for his proposal that Savimbi "would be the compromise leader" of independent Angola.⁴⁵² Although there had been earlier gestures towards an FNLA–UNITA coalition,⁴⁵³ the innovation in Kaunda's proposal was the central role that would be accorded to UNITA and Savimbi, and Kaunda spent much of the meeting expounding his faith in Savimbi's leadership.⁴⁵⁴ He claimed that his proposal had the support of Tanzania, Mozambique, and Zaire,⁴⁵⁵ and American intelligence during the period indicated that Julius Nyerere's thinking, at least, was identical to Kaunda's: that, impressed by Savimbi as a "reasonable, stable leader who is truly non-aligned", Nyerere had switched his support from MPLA to UNITA.⁴⁵⁶

In Zaire's case, the American government was apprised of the new policy towards UNITA in

⁴⁴⁹ Anglin and Shaw, 315–17, 328.

⁴⁵⁰ DeRoche, *Kaunda, the United States and Southern Africa*, 16. DeRoche implies that Savimbi took the initiative here, but Kaunda told Tor Sellström that he instructed his foreign minister, Mwaanga, to intensify Zambian shuttle diplomacy between the nationalist movements after the Portuguese coup; Tor Sellström, ed., 'Interview with Kenneth Kaunda', in *Liberation in Southern Africa*, 2. ed (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2002), 240.

⁴⁵¹ Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 791–97.

⁴⁵² 'Memorandum of Conversation: Office Call'; Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 796.

⁴⁵³ For example, the United States and Zaire had been involved in one such initiative in 1974. According to Young and Turner, that short-lived unity plot was championed in Portugal by General António de Spínola, who was forced out of his position shortly afterwards; see Young and Turner, *Zairian State*, 253.

⁴⁵⁴ 'Memorandum of Conversation: Office Call'. Among other things, Kaunda reported that, though "We had ignored Savimbi while he was fighting in the bush":

He came out of Angola last year and we changed our minds... All of us in UNIP [United National Independence Party, Kaunda's political party] were impressed with Savimbi's sincerity and his honesty of purpose. This changed us overnight... Our colleagues had ignored Savimbi in the past, but this time he emerged as someone who could save the situation... All of us in southern Africa, including [Samora] Machel, are impressed with him. This is our finding.

⁴⁵⁵ 'Memorandum of Conversation: Office Call'.

⁴⁵⁶ 'Telegram 0968 from Tanzania: Another Comment on Tanzania's Switch to Savimbi' (Tanzania Dar es Salaam, 4 April 1975), Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy; 'Telegram 0921 from Tanzania: Nyerere Discusses Angola', 1 April 1975, Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy. See also 'Telegram 1054 from Tanzania: Further Support for Savimbi from Tripartite Heads of State Meeting' (Tanzania Dar es Salaam, 11 April 1975), Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy.

early June 1975. Although he was known to “flipflop” on the issue,⁴⁵⁷ Mobutu explicitly reiterated Zaire’s preference for Roberto in late April.⁴⁵⁸ But in June the CIA reported that Mobutu had met with Savimbi on 28 May and promised him a closer relationship and financial support.⁴⁵⁹ On 7 June, Mobutu announced to American emissaries in Kinshasa that he had cut off his supply of arms to FNLA as part of an agreement with the Portuguese to de-escalate in Angola and that he no longer believed FNLA could establish exclusive dominance over Angola; instead, he supported a tripartite government in Angola in which Roberto would be president, Neto vice-president, and Savimbi prime minister.⁴⁶⁰ It is not clear whether Mobutu was genuinely prepared to accept an Angolan government that included MPLA,⁴⁶¹ but the State Department grasped the underlying trend: Mobutu was no longer “backing Roberto wholeheartedly” and might be moving toward Savimbi.⁴⁶² Indeed, by the end of the month, when Sheldon Vance travelled to Kinshasa in the aftermath of Mobutu’s public outburst of anti-Americanism, Savimbi had been promoted to the presidency in Mobutu’s hypothetical Angolan government: Vance reported that, for political reasons, “Mobutu thought he might prove to be the man to back for the presidency”.⁴⁶³ As mentioned in Chapter 4, Mobutu sent Vance back to Washington with a plea for American intervention in favour of both UNITA and FNLA; he told Vance that he had recently begun to give Savimbi “some help” – \$30,000 in cash to date – but that UNITA required more financial and military support, which could be funnelled through Zaire.⁴⁶⁴ Kissinger thus went into the NSC meeting on 27 June confident that “Mobutu is moving away from Roberto and wants a [UNITA–FNLA] coalition”.⁴⁶⁵

In sum, therefore, in the first half of 1975, both Zaire and Zambia – formerly firm allies of FNLA

⁴⁵⁷ ‘Telegram 4949 from Zaire: Mobutu on Angola’, 9 June 1975, Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy.

⁴⁵⁸ ‘Telegram 101813 from Department of State: US-Zairian Relations’ (Department of State, 1 May 1975), Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy.

⁴⁵⁹ ‘Central Intelligence Agency Intelligence Information Cable: Private Meeting between UNITA President Savimbi and Zairian President Mobutu’, 9 June 1975, Office of the Historian at the United States Department of State.

⁴⁶⁰ ‘Telegram 4949: Mobutu on Angola’.

⁴⁶¹ According to Young and Turner, Mobutu’s regime outwardly supported the tripartite coalition proposal while in fact aiming toward “the exclusion of MPLA from the Luanda formula”; see Young and Turner, *Zairian State*, 376–77.

⁴⁶² ‘Memorandum of Conversation: Africa [18 June 1975]’.

⁴⁶³ ‘Telegram 5605: Breakfast with Mobutu’. See also ‘Telegram 5644 from Zaire: Second Discussion with Mobutu on Angola’, 24 June 1975, Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy (“Mobutu said that as things are going now he does not... think Holden Roberto alone can become the master of independent Angola”).

⁴⁶⁴ ‘Telegram 5605: Breakfast with Mobutu’.

⁴⁶⁵ ‘Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting: Angola’; see also ‘DCI Briefing for 27 June NSC Meeting’, 27 June 1975, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

and MPLA respectively – changed their policies in Angola, adopting UNITA as the standard-bearer of their aspirations for independent Angola, and they diligently impressed their new policies upon American policymakers. This could have affected American rebel selection both directly and indirectly.

First, as discussed in Chapter 5, American policymakers hoped to use the Angolan intervention to signal American resolve and American interest in Southern Africa, not only to Angolans but also to third-party allies in the region. The signalling function depended directly upon aligning American rebel selection with the preferences of those third-party allies. If the American intervention was indeed “a question of [Mobutu’s] perception of who is behind him”,⁴⁶⁶ it would be counterproductive to embark on an intervention which did not reinforce Mobutu’s new policy in favour of a UNITA-led government.

Second, there is some evidence that American perceptions of FNLA and UNITA were shaped by Zairean and Zambian assessments of the groups and their leaders. Given the paucity of first-hand American intelligence about UNITA, information from allies in the region would have been valuable, and, in the first half of 1975, Zaire and Zambia consistently provided favourable assessments of UNITA’s political competence. There is some evidence that policymakers gave credence to such assessments. On 20 June, when Kissinger was committed to an intervention but “not sure we should switch to Savimbi”, he said that “Mobutu’s assessment” would help him decide.⁴⁶⁷ As already mentioned, he also claimed in his memoirs that Kaunda’s intercession in April was the initial impetus for his decision to commission a CIA proposal for aid to UNITA.⁴⁶⁸ And, when arguing for UNITA’s inclusion in the intervention, American policymakers certainly recycled Zairean and Zambian assessments of the movement – above all their assessment of Savimbi’s potential as a “compromise” president.⁴⁶⁹

In particular, this Zairean and Zambian support for Savimbi probably shaped American perceptions of UNITA’s political strength. Were the war to end in a political solution imposed partly by diplomatic fiat – for example, through the Organisation of African Unity – then Mobutu and Kaunda could be extremely influential in selecting Angola’s next government, and they had

⁴⁶⁶ ‘Memorandum for the Record: 40 Committee Meeting, 14 July’.

⁴⁶⁷ ‘Memorandum of Conversation: Africa [20 June 1975]’.

⁴⁶⁸ Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 798.

⁴⁶⁹ Concern about Roberto’s unwillingness to leave exile was also a shared concern of Mobutu and the United States; see, for example, ‘Telegram 5644: Mobutu on Angola’; ‘DCI Briefing for NSC’. And Kaunda told Ford and Kissinger that Savimbi played an indispensable role in negotiating the Alvor Agreement, that he was “a very impressive leader... a man of humility and good qualities”, and that his troops were popular with the locals; see ‘Memorandum of Conversation: Office Call’.

indicated that, if given the chance, they would select Savimbi.⁴⁷⁰ (Indeed, Ford identified Kaunda so closely with Savimbi that, in the NSC, he referred to Savimbi as “[Kaunda’s] man”.⁴⁷¹) Savimbi’s improved relationship with Zaire and Zambia therefore made him a more attractive client for the purposes of carrying out American political objectives in Angola.

6.4.2. South Africa

Like Zambia and Zaire, South Africa increased its investment in the Angolan conflict, and in UNITA, between January and July 1975. Indeed, it ultimately launched a direct intervention on the same side as the United States. But the historical record regarding this connection is sparse, perhaps partly because the connection was so controversial: as the American State Department correctly anticipated in June 1975, “To enter into a closer military relationship with South Africa would be viewed by black African countries as an embrace of apartheid.”⁴⁷²

The timeline of the South African intervention is fairly clear. UNITA apparently accepted very small quantities of arms from South Africa in October and December 1974,⁴⁷³ and the South African military was in close and friendly contact with both UNITA and FNLA in the first half of 1975.⁴⁷⁴ The South African Minister of Defence, P. W. Botha, proposed intervention to Prime Minister John Vorster on 26 June 1975, presenting a military intelligence report which concluded that MPLA had a serious military advantage in the conflict and recommended that South Africa should strengthen UNITA and FNLA in order to assist them in forming “a united anti-Communist front”.⁴⁷⁵ The South African intervention took shape over the next two months: Vorster approved some R20 million in military aid to UNITA and FNLA in the first half of July, and the real escalation – outright South African invasion of southern Angola – came in August in response to continued skirmishes at the Calueque and Ruacana sites.⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷⁰ Kissinger, at least, does not seem to have bought into the possibility that Savimbi would be installed according to a peaceful consensus among the Angolan nationalists: in August, he told the 40 Committee that a coalition agreement was “a pipe dream”; see ‘Memorandum for the Record: 40 Committee Meeting, 8 August’. However, he may have given more credence to Mobutu’s plan, which was to await the collapse of the legislative elections and then “together with other African leaders... step in to press for Savimbi as a compromise”; see ‘Telegram 5644: Mobutu on Angola’. Kaunda also told Kissinger and Ford that a Savimbi-led government would be installed by the OAU “regardless of the outcome of the elections”; ‘Memorandum of Conversation: Office Call’.

⁴⁷¹ ‘Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting: Angola’.

⁴⁷² ‘Action Memorandum From Mulcahy and Lord’.

⁴⁷³ Francois Jacobus du Toit Spies, *Operasie Savannah: Angola, 1975–1976* (S.A. Weermag, 1989), 60–65.

⁴⁷⁴ Miller, ‘Things Fall Apart’, 13; see also Marcum, *Angolan Revolution, Vol. II*, 268.

⁴⁷⁵ Miller, ‘Yes, Minister’, 14–15.

⁴⁷⁶ Miller, 17, 20. Once finalised, the South African military strategy aimed unambiguously at military victory; a four-phase operational plan was to culminate in the conquest of Luanda by FNLA and UNITA;

It is also fairly clear that American and South African intelligence agencies cooperated on the ground in Angola, with or without high-level political sanction, once their parallel interventions were underway.⁴⁷⁷ But it is not clear whether the respective governments colluded in planning their interventions. The South African administration continually hinted that its intervention had been sanctioned by the United States, but the evidence remains murky.⁴⁷⁸ The American line was always that, when the South Africans arrived in Angola in August 1975, “We had nothing to do with their decision, were not consulted, and were not aware of their involvement in the fighting until after their entry.”⁴⁷⁹

Nor is it clear how much the Ford administration knew about early South African activities in Angola. While they were considering their July intervention, American policymakers were clearly aware that there was a possibility of parallel South African intervention. On 1 May 1975, Davis warned Kissinger of possible links between Savimbi and South Africa, noting that, “the South Africans have expressed interest in providing financial assistance” to UNITA.⁴⁸⁰ Briefing the NSC on 27 June, Colby reported that “South Africa would like us to join with them in an effort”, though he also suggested that “we can avoid the problems that this would create [if we] deal with the blacks” and that South Africa did “not seem to be planning any action”.⁴⁸¹ And sometime between 12 July and 16 July – the week before Ford approved the American intervention – the State Department became aware that “South Africa is reported to be giving Roberto some support”.⁴⁸²

Thus the limited available evidence does not support the hypothesis that South Africa’s relationship with UNITA influenced American rebel selection. Though it is conceivable that South African support to UNITA had a similar effect to Zambian and Zairean support, there is no clear evidence that the Ford administration accorded positive significance to the South African connection – then still its fledgling stages – when it authorised its own programme of support in

see Miller, 25.

⁴⁷⁷ Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 187–88; Nerys John, ‘South African Intervention in the Angolan Civil War, 1975-1976: Motivations and Implications’ (Master’s Dissertation, Cape Town, University of Cape Town, 2002), 52–56.

⁴⁷⁸ For speculative tallies of the evidence, see Hallett, ‘The South African Intervention’, 362–63, 380–84; Laïdi, *The Superpowers and Africa*, 71; Matthew Graham, ‘Covert Collusion? American and South African Relations in the Angolan Civil War, 1974–1976’, *African Historical Review* 43, no. 1 (2011): 28–47.

⁴⁷⁹ ‘Testimony of Schauffele’, 176.

⁴⁸⁰ Davis, ‘The Angola Decision of 1975’, 111.

⁴⁸¹ ‘Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting: Angola’. Ironically, Botha had presented the South African military’s proposal for intervention to Vorster the day before the NSC meeting.

⁴⁸² Davis, ‘The Angola Decision of 1975’, 116.

July. Moreover, the risks of public association with the South African military were large, and the benefits to bilateral relations were relatively slim, because, notwithstanding South Africa's strategic and economic importance, the Ford administration perceived no particular urgency in the relationship (of the kind that, for example, Mobutu's anti-American outburst had given Zairean relations).⁴⁸³

6.5. Conclusion

The foregoing discussion captures a transformation in American policymakers' views of UNITA in the first half of 1975. In January 1975, American policymakers were ignorant and mistrustful of UNITA: it was an unknown quality, the smallest and weakest of Angola's major nationalist movements, and vaguely tainted by its association with Maoism. By July, though American policymakers continued to recognize UNITA as only a marginal player militarily, they had also recognized Jonas Savimbi as an ascendant figure, UNITA as a major political player in both majoritarian and strategic terms, and their ideological platform – if not as actively genial to American interests – as harmless.

In broad terms, there were several different currents in this transformation of UNITA in American esteem. First, UNITA's objective situation improved somewhat – especially relative to FNLA's – between January and July. Though its military deficiencies remained, its political standing improved, partly because the Alvor Agreement won it positive publicity and partly because the leaders of neighbouring countries came to favour Savimbi's installation in government as a compromise candidate.

But, second, in many important respects, the new American perception of UNITA was due to mere changes of perception. UNITA's ideological flexibility and its political strengths predated January 1975, and some American policymakers may even have been vaguely aware of them, but they received far greater definition and attention in the formulation of the July intervention. Important factors in this regard included greater American access to and intelligence about UNITA, including through Savimbi's own outreach and second-hand reports from Zaire and Zambia.

A final strand of the explanation pertains not to objective or perceived changes in UNITA's

⁴⁸³ See 'Action Memorandum From Mulcahy and Lord'. As of June 1975:

Given South Africa's political isolation and its government's desire to strengthen its ties to the US, we believe our interests there are secure so long as the present regime is in power. Should the need arise, we would anticipate no difficulty in acquiring access to its military facilities or to a larger share of its resources.

situation but to a change in American goals. As outlined in Chapter 4, both the January and the July interventions had a signalling function, aiming in part to win influence with its allies in Angola and in neighbouring countries. The success of this signalling function depended less on the rebel client's competence than on its pre-existing associations with the United States and with third parties. But the July intervention also had uniquely ambitious objectives, as the United States became convinced both that an MPLA victory was possible and that it was intolerable to American interests. Once it became committed to preventing an MPLA victory – to altering the course of the Angolan conflict – the United States had reason to scrutinise and weigh the military and political competence of its potential clients.

Viewed from the perspective of the theoretical literature on rebel selection, the American change in rebel selection strategy in Angola in 1975 supports three interrelated causal explanations. In Angola, American rebel selection was affected most strongly by perceived changes in rebels' political competence and relationships with third parties and by changes in American objectives; the rebels' ideological commitments played a facilitative but probably not decisive role. Taken together, these factors provide a strong, if tentative, account of the American change in policy towards UNITA. In the next chapter I conclude with reflections on the theoretical significance of the case study.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

When Angola became independent on 11 November 1975, the CIA's Angolan task force celebrated independence day with a wine and cheese party at the agency's headquarters in Langley, Virginia.⁴⁸⁴ But MPLA retained control of Luanda, where Agostinho Neto declared the inauguration of the People's Republic of Angola just after midnight.⁴⁸⁵ FNLA was routed by MPLA at Quifangodo the day before independence and never fully recovered,⁴⁸⁶ and Congress blocked the Ford administration's attempts to expand its Angolan intervention in late 1975.⁴⁸⁷ But when the American intervention in Angola resumed between 1981 and 1989, the United States gave exclusive support to UNITA – which had emerged “belatedly” as “the best-led of the anti-MPLA movements”.⁴⁸⁸

The central question of this dissertation was the factors that led the United States to inaugurate its ultimately long-lived relationship with UNITA in 1975 and the factors that shaped how it judged, and misjudged, the movement. In Chapters 3 and 4, it emerged that the American rebel-patronage interventions in Angola in 1975 were neither the first American use of rebel patronage nor the first American foray into relationships with Angola's nationalist movements. Holden Roberto of the rival FNLA received American assistance, apparently continuously, during the Angolan War of Independence, but it was not until January 1975 that the United States disbursed rebel patronage in a manner that was clearly informed by the foreign-policy objectives of high-level policymakers. Before 1975, American patronage of the Angolan nationalist movement was small in scale, modest in objectives – aiming either to compensate an intelligence asset or to win the friendship of a foreign political leader – and, importantly for my purposes, exclusive to Roberto alone.

I treated this change in the relationship between UNITA and United States as a case study of the understudied process of rebel selection, the process by which state sponsors decide which foreign rebel groups, in a given military conflict, should receive their patronage. As I outlined in the literature review of Chapter 2, the development of formalised theories of rebel selection remains at an early stage, but there are several promising explanatory hypotheses at varying

⁴⁸⁴ Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 215.

⁴⁸⁵ Kapuscinski, *Another Day of Life*, 121–22.

⁴⁸⁶ Lockyer, 'Foreign Intervention', 2358–60.

⁴⁸⁷ Ford, *A Time to Heal*, 345, 359.

⁴⁸⁸ Chester A. Crocker, *High Noon in Southern Africa: Making Peace in a Rough Neighborhood* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 1993), 48–49.

degrees of formalisation and testing. The literature review identified two relatively comprehensive accounts of rebel selection: Salehyan, Gleditsch and Cunningham's selection theory implies that a change in rebel-selection decisions results from changes in the rebel groups' perceived reliability or competence, while San-Akca's theory suggests that it might also arise from a change in the rebels' perceived ideational alignment.⁴⁸⁹ The literature review also identified further, nascent causal hypotheses: that a change in the identity of a sponsor's client might arise from a change in the international context – the actions and expected actions of other third parties interested in the conflict – or from a change in the sponsoring state's objectives.⁴⁹⁰

Applying these hypotheses to the Angolan case, I found that Angolan rebel selection was strongly affected by changes in UNITA's perceived competence relative to FNLA, as Salehyan, Gleditsch, and Cunningham's theory predicts. However, perceptions of UNITA's military strength remained relatively unchanged, and the decisive change was recognition of UNITA's *political* competence – in other words, Tamm is correct it is productive to broaden Salehyan, Gleditsch, and Cunningham's selection theory to consider how sponsoring states' assessments of competence depend on "the specific goals that states hope to achieve by supporting rebels".⁴⁹¹ UNITA's perceived ideational alignment played a less important role: though a vague perception of UNITA's ideological hostility had been an obstacle to American interest in the movement, the correction of that perception – American recognition of UNITA's ideological flexibility – was not positively decisive in attracting the United States to UNITA.

In addition, there was ample opportunity to test the two under-tested hypotheses flagged by my literature review: the role of international context and the motives of sponsorship. In furtherance of the theory-development aims of the dissertation, and to suggest paths for future research, I give particular attention to those hypotheses here.

First, the Angolan case study provides support for Karlén et al.'s hypothesis that the international context of a rebel patronage intervention crucially informs the design of the intervention and, therefore, the selection of rebel clients. In the first half of 1975, UNITA acquired new third-party supporters in the region – notably the governments of Zambia and Zaire – and there is evidence that this change influenced American rebel selection. Because these third parties were among the intended audiences of the American intervention, their

⁴⁸⁹ Salehyan, Gleditsch, and Cunningham, 'Explaining External Support'; San-Akca, *States in Disguise*.

⁴⁹⁰ Karlén et al., 'Conflict Delegation in Civil Wars', 2074; Rauta, 'Proxy Warfare and the Future', 42–43.

⁴⁹¹ Tamm, 'The Origins of Transnational Alliances', 161–62.

preferences directly affected American rebel selection. But there were important indirect effects, too: UNITA's expanding base of third-party state support made the movement appear more politically powerful, and therefore more attractive as a client, and its third-party supporters also shaped American perceptions of UNITA (and its rivals) by providing American policymakers with favourable intelligence about, and assessments of, UNITA's attributes.

The role of third parties is therefore a promising avenue for further theory development. In the case of superpower rebel-patronage interventions in Africa, this exercise is consonant with the scholarly movement to revisit Cold War history with greater focus on African agency – to re-examine the role of African agents in Cold War international politics as well as the role of Cold War politics in African decolonisation.⁴⁹² Towards the end of his reign, Mobutu declared himself a “victim” of the Cold War.⁴⁹³ But, as the Angolan case study shows, he also helped make it.

Second, the Angolan case study provides support for the hypothesis that rebel selection depends integrally on the motive – or indeed the mixture of motives – behind the rebel-patronage intervention. In the Angolan case, it would be misleading to assume that the Ford administration selected its rebel clients to optimise its ability to achieve military objectives. Instead, the political objectives of the American intervention – the desire to signal American credibility and reliability, and, later, the desire to forestall an MPLA government by either military or political means – were decisive for rebel selection. Thus UNITA's superior political strength attracted American patronage in July 1975 even as FNLA remained militarily superior. This re-evaluation of UNITA hinged not only on *new* differences between UNITA and FNLA, but also, to an important extent, on American policymakers according new significance to existing differences in light of their new policy objectives. American comparisons of the relative appeal of FNLA and UNITA thus depended on the motives of the American intervention.

Relatedly, in connection with the objectives of rebel patronage, it is striking in the Angolan case that American policymakers conceived of rebel patronage partly as a means of building relationships with Angolan allies and interested third-party states in the region. The American intervention is often remembered for its detrimental signalling effects – by identifying the United States with apartheid South Africa, it “signaled an alliance with the apartheid regime in Pretoria”.⁴⁹⁴ But the intervention – and concomitant rebel selection – was designed to perform a

⁴⁹² See, for example, Christopher J. Lee, ‘Decolonization of a Special Type: Rethinking Cold War History in Southern Africa’, *Kronos*, no. 37 (2011): 6–11.

⁴⁹³ Adam Zagorin, ‘Leaving Fire in His Wake’, *TIME*, 22 February 1993.

⁴⁹⁴ Treverton, ‘Covert Action and Open Society’, 1000. These signalling effects work both ways: as discussed in Chapter 4, FNLA had long been harmed by its association with the United States, and UNITA

different, more beneficial signalling function, demonstrating American resolve and friendship to parties who sought American intervention in the conflict. It could be fruitful for future theory-building efforts to inquire into these signalling aims of rebel patronage. In that view, the phenomenon of rebel patronage could be viewed not only as a less invasive alternative to direct military intervention (that is, as war by other means), but also as a *more* invasive alternative to relationship-building through diplomatic and intelligence contacts (as friendship by other means). The historical sections of this dissertation found that the relationship between the United States and FNLA was often pecuniary before 1975, and the American interventions of 1975 were at least partly continuous with the earlier distribution of “flag money” and “look-in money” to FNLA. The phenomena of flag money and look-in money have been somewhat overlooked in the academic literature on rebel patronage.

Finally, further research could also help illuminate another factor that was salient in the Angolan case: the importance of pre-existing relationships with particular rebel groups. The Ford administration’s rebel-selection decisions in January 1975 were affected by the pre-existing American relationship with FNLA. Among other things, that relationship biased American intelligence in FNLA’s favour, and, as Marcum proposes, it may have predisposed American policymakers to “thinking in terms of ‘our team’ and ‘theirs’”.⁴⁹⁵ Although American policymakers overcame this path dependence to embark upon a new relationship with UNITA in July 1975, pre-existing relationships were highly influential for American strategy before then, and the effect of pre-existing relationships on rebel selection may call for further investigation.

was harmed by its association with South Africa, on which see Pearce, ‘Global Ideologies, Local Politics’, 23–26. René Lemarchand observes that, because public revelations of American aid tended to undermine African leaders’ credibility, this often created “a vicious circle” requiring more aid to reinforce their flagging popularity – as the Mobutu case exemplified; see Lemarchand, ‘The C.I.A. in Africa’, 417–18.

⁴⁹⁵ Marcum, ‘Lessons of Angola’, 414.

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