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MATRIC NO: 19/sms09/084

Discuss the stages of Insurgency

INTRODUCTION

An Insurgency can be referred to as an uprising or a revolt against an established government or authority. It is an organised movement aiming to overthrow the constituted government in place or to forcefully seize political control of a region from the right authority, as the United States military puts it. Insurgencies are regarded as rebellions and normally happen within a state or political entity –although insurgents might have external support and funding. The Cambridge dictionary defines Insurgency as an occasion when a group of people attempt to take control of their country by force. It is a struggle between non-ruling groups and ruling authorities. Nevertheless, there are stages within an insurgency. Although there are different types of insurgency pertaining to their nature, mode of operation or goals, they pass through stages before achieving their aim. An insurgency group might pass through all the stages or skip some or not make it to another stage before they die down or aim has been met. In this paper, stages of Insurgency will be discussed.

STAGES OF INSURGENCY

The pre–insurgency stage is the first stage of an insurgency. Most activities of an insurgent group at this stage is done underground and no major demonstration or display of violence has been made. This stage is where organising takes place, a head or leader is elected or imposed on the group and strategising begins. Members of this group will have already started to come to terms with their identity and grievances. Grievances are the conditions that arouse discontent among a portion of the population. For insurgents, grievances could be social, economic or physical problems in their society. For instance, the Arab uprising was due to incompetence and corrupt nature of leaders (a political problem) and unfavourable living standards (socio-economic problem). Other possible grievances could be that a certain group of people, perhaps, on the basis of religion, ethnicity, class or region are being sidelined or at a disadvantage due to government policies. During this stage, these grievances are publicised through all forms of media such as; the Internet, social media, radio and so on. Also through activities like demonstrations, these insurgents can be able to win more support from the population and also usher in new recruits. This is because insurgency is largely population oriented. The larger the support an insurgent group can pull from the crowd, the higher their chance of achieving their aim. At pre–insurgency stage, the insurgents begin to gather and purchase weapons and ammunition. They also begin to raise funds and this can be gotten from supporters both internal and external. On the other hand, Counter-insurgent at this stage may start gathering intelligence and strategize on ways to decimate this brewing insurgency. This is an important stage for Counter-insurgents, as insurgency is at its weakest.

The second stage of Insurgency is the Incipient Conflict stage. This stage is characterised by violence as the insurgents seek to provoke the government, publicize its cause and rally supporters. Demonstrations and public attacks are carried out and other asymmetric tactics are used. These tactics include acts of civil disobedience, kidnapping key government persons, the use of propaganda to reduce the popularity of the government and terrorism. The group though is still weak, as there is still a lot of planning to do. For Counterinsurgency to succeed, Counter-insurgents need to have knowledge of the leadership of the insurgents, their span of influence—that is, their level of popularity, how unified the insurgency groups are, as disunity within the group can be capitalised on by Counter-insurgents to deter the insurgency group. However, disunity within a group can create fractions of that insurgency group thereby more separate insurgent groups for Counter-insurgents to deal with. At this stage, the government can seek external support from neighbouring countries. For instance, Egypt had to seek external help to curb insurgency in the Sinai region.

On the third stage, insurgents' activities become more apparent. The insurgents are much more active than before and if there are external influences, it is obvious. This stage is called the Open Insurgency stage. The Open Insurgency stage can be analysed in two ways, the political and military factors. There are unique activities to look out for when examining the level of military growth an insurgency group has made. These are; the increase in the size and geographical spread of insurgents' attacks — an insurgency group growing, will start carrying out attacks, not in the usual places. Insurgency groups can make their way to the capital or region where the government seat is, to carry out their notorious activities such as bombings, kidnapping and so on. At a young stage, these insurgents stick to the State's outskirts or rural regions. Other ways the growth of an insurgency group can be seen is in their use of sophisticated communication equipment and weapons. Also, when there is evidence of insurgents mole in State intelligence, the military and police. Another is the growth of supporters and insurgent recruits. However, at this stage, the Counter-insurgents or established government can know if they still hold power and influence over their territory. These can be seen in the support and confidence in the government by a large portion of the population, civilians especially those from subgroups and ethnicities voluntary joining civilian self-defence groups organised by the government, when the strategy and tactics of Counter-insurgents are efficient and security forces are able to expand without effectiveness being compromised.

The last stage of an insurgency is the Resolution stage. An insurgency can end with a victory for insurgents, a negotiated settlement or government victory. Insurgents victory is when the insurgents are successful in seizing power. Before this happens, there are indicators of this happening; reports of military coup attempts, the government gradually being seen as illegitimate, more support for the insurgent group by citizens including foreign allies. As for negotiated settlements, this is hard to come by as the established authorities are unwilling to give up their power and sovereignty of the State (because this is the goal of insurgents to take power). Usually, both groups (insurgents and Counter-insurgents /government) are unsatisfied with terms of the settlement. The other outcome could be a government victory. This is achieved when insurgents lose military capability, external assistance, public support, morale or the grievance which the group's purpose is based on, is no more. Security is back to normal at this point, the police reclaim responsibility for security and military return to base.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, an insurgency can be seen as an uprising or revolt against the established government. Insurgency goes through different stages before achieving their aim, these stages are the pre–insurgency stage, the Incipient Conflict stage, the Open Insurgency stage and the Resolution stage. These insurgency groups might pass through all the stages or skip some or not make it to another stage before they die down or aim has been met. The last stage might end with the insurgents gaining victory, or come to a negotiation with the government or government victory to counter the insurgency.

REFERENCES

1. Cambridge dictionary <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/insurgency>
2. The US government, 2012. Guide to the analysis of insurgency.