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**ASSIGNMENT: question; in not more than three
pages discuss the stages of insurgency.**

Definition

Insurgency is a protracted political-military struggle directed toward subverting or displacing the legitimacy of a constituted government or occupying power and completely or partially controlling the resources of a territory through the use of irregular military forces and illegal political organizations.(The U.S government 2012)

Pre-insurgency Stage

A conflict in the pr-insurgency stage is difficult to detect because most activities are underground and the insurgency has yet to make its presence felt through the use of violence. Moreover, actions conducted in the open can easily be dismissed as nonviolent political activity. During this stage, an insurgent movement is beginning to organize: leadership is emerging, and the insurgents are establishing a grievance and a group identity, beginning to recruit and train members, and stockpiling arms and supplies.

Insurgent organizers can use historical, societal, political, or economic conditions that generate discontent among a segment of the population to rally support for their movement.

During the pre-insurgency stage, insurgents identify and publicize a grievance around which they can rally supporters. Insurgents seek to create a compelling narrative—the story a party to an armed struggle uses to justify its actions in order to attain legitimacy and favor among relevant populations. Most insurgencies seek to create a group identity that separates the group from the national identity or that of the ruling elite, establishing an “us versus them” dynamic to the conflict. The identity might center on ethnicity, tribal affiliation, religion, regionalism, political affiliation, or class. In this early pre-violence stage, insurgents will probably have few weapons and limited military supplies.

The government’s reaction in this and the next stage is perhaps the most important determinant of whether a movement will develop into an insurgency. During these early stages, a potential insurgent group is weak, disorganized, and vulnerable to nonviolent government countermeasures. For these reasons, however, the government is likely to err either by dismissing the problem and failing to address the grievances behind the unrest—which gives the insurgents unchallenged space to organize—or by overreacting and cracking down hard—which can alienate the population and generate support for the insurgents.

Incipient Conflict Stage

A struggle enters the incipient conflict stage when the insurgents begin to use violence. Often these initial attacks provide analysts the first alert to the potential for an insurgency. The target government, however, frequently dismisses insurgent actions as the work of bandits, criminals, or terrorists, which increases the risk that the government will employ counterproductive measures.

The incipient stage is the most dangerous phase for insurgents; they have made their presence felt through initial attacks, but they are still weak and organizing. An incipient insurgency must balance the need to conduct attacks to demonstrate its viability, publicize its cause, rally supporters, and provoke a government overreaction while limiting its exposure to government security forces. Insurgents may emphasize highly asymmetric and terrorist tactics, such as kidnappings, small bombings, assassinations, and night letters during this phase. Understanding the characteristics, capabilities, and actions of both the insurgents and the government can help analysts assess whether an incipient conflict is likely to sputter out or expand into a full-blown insurgency.

Open Insurgency Stage

At this stage, no doubt exists that the government is facing an insurgency. Politically, the insurgents are overtly challenging state authority and attempting to exert control over territory. Militarily, the insurgents are staging more frequent attacks, which have probably become more aggressive, violent, and sophisticated and involve larger numbers of fighters. As the insurgency becomes more active, external support for the belligerents probably becomes more apparent, if it exists.

Resolution Stage

Some insurgencies progress steadily through the life cycle stages; many grow in fits and starts, occasionally regressing to earlier stages; and others remain mired in one stage for decades. In theory, an insurgency will eventually reach a conclusion, either an insurgent victory, a negotiated settlement, or a government victory. At least 130 insurgent conflicts have occurred since World War

II—estimations vary widely and go as high as nearly 300 insurgent-government conflicts—and at least two dozen were ongoing as of late 2011. The average duration of these continuing insurgencies is more than 21 years. Of the insurgencies that have ended:

- About 36 percent concluded with an insurgent victory after an average duration of about 10 years.
- Almost 28 percent had mixed outcomes, generally because the belligerents reached a compromise that required all to make significant concessions. These insurgencies lasted an average of about 8 years.
- Approximately 36 percent resulted in a government victory after an average duration of almost 12 years.

An insurgent victory is the only potential outcome that is likely to be clear-cut, marked by the insurgents seizing control of the government, expelling a foreign occupier, or gaining independence for their region. Nevertheless, an insurgent victory may spark another insurgency by the ousted regime's supporters or by a subgroup excluded from the new government.

A negotiated settlement is likely to have many false starts, delays in implementation, and attempts by spoilers to undermine the agreement. Moreover, the risk of renewed violence—either by the original insurgent organization protesting perceived government duplicity or by splinter groups unsatisfied with the terms of the settlement—will probably persist for several years after fighting has officially ended.

A government victory is likely to be a protracted process marked by gradual decline in violence as the insurgents lose military capabilities, external assistance, and popular support. Low-level violence may persist for years, and, lacking a climactic final battle, the end will probably be indistinct.

conclusion

Each insurgency unfolds in a distinct manner, but most insurgencies develop along broad common stages. In general, an insurgency that survives its appearance as an armed challenger and has some degree of competence often goes through a period of growth as the counterinsurgent fails to identify the insurgent challenge and to develop an adequate response. Even given initial survival of an insurgent challenge, a swift and determined government response and insurgent errors can push a movement into an early decline.

REFERENCES

- **The US Government (2012).** A guide to the analysis of insurgency.

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