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DEPT: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND DIPLOMACY

IRD 214: INSURGENCIES AND COUNTERINSURGENCIES

QUESTION: IN NOT MORE THAN 3 PAGES, DISCUSS THE STAGES OF INSURGENCY

INSURGENCY

Insurgency can be defined as an organized movement that seeks to control or seize control of territories for political reasons.

For the U.S military, Insurgency is defined as an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government or to seize, nullify and challenge political control of a region through the use of violence, subversion and armed conflict.

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 common denominator for most insurgent groups is their objective of gaining control of a population or a particular territory, including its resources. That aim separates insurgent groups from solely terrorist organisations. It should be noted that the characterization of a movement as an insurgency does not reflect a moral judgment about the movement's validity or its cause; the term insurgency is merely a summary of the essence of the conflict.

Features of an insurgency

1. Popular support

This means that an insurgency is best sustained by the participation of the masses, it is people oriented. In an insurgency the leader counts on wearing out the government in a protracted struggle with the support of the population.

1. Condition for change/Overthrow of government

Insurgency will employ all means that ensure the change of a regime. This will entail the creation of conditions that destroy the existing government’s will to resist and make an alternative government acceptable to the population. Acts of terrorism, propaganda, mobilization etc can be used to escalate discontent among the populace.

1. They operate from the periphery

Insurgency rarely engulfs the whole country in armed clashes, this means, they initially operate from remote areas in the hopes of destroying the government slowly. Insurgency operates by searching for soft targets to attack, targets with maximum damage at low costs.

1. Insurgents in the eye of international law are not recognised as belligerents (lawful combatants). However a long protracted and sustained insurgency could assume a status of civil war, at which point the combatants are conferred with belligerent status.
2. Undermine international support for the government and, if possible, gain international recognition or assistance for the insurgency.

STAGES OF INSURGENCY

1. PREINSURGENCY STAGE

At this stage, insurgent organizers can use preexisting conditions that could be historical, societal, political, or economic to generate discontent among a segment of the population to rally support for their movement. They identify and publicize a grievance around which they can rally supporters. This is also when a group identity different from that of the state is created, so it’s the insurgents vs the state. Recruitment and training of members, provision of arms and government reaction all take place during this stage. The government reaction during this stage and the next will determine if the movement will become an insurgency.

1. LATENT AND INCIPIENT CONFLICT STAGE

This phase ranges from situations in which insurgent activity is only a potential threat to incidents and activities which occur frequently and in an organized pattern. It involves no major outbreak of violence or unregulated insurgent activity. When the insurgents begin to use violence, a struggle enters the incipient conflict stage. These initial attacks also bring the first warning to observers about the potential for an insurgency. However, the target government also dismisses insurgent acts as the work of rebels, criminals or terrorists, which raises the likelihood of punitive measures being implemented by the government. The insurgents prepare and coordinate their campaign starting from a fairly poor position, and pick initial urban or rural target areas. They make fundamental political choices, and establish fundamental relationships of leadership. They set up transparent and clandestine organisations. If the activity of the insurgents is illegal, the organizations that they create are typically covered up; if their activity is legal, they will set up overt organizations. The incipient stage is the most dangerous period for insurgents; through initial attacks they have made their presence known but they are still weak and organizing. An incipient insurgency must balance the need for attacks to prove its legitimacy, publicize its cause, mobilize supporters, and trigger a government overreaction while restricting its access to the security forces of government. Insurgents can emphasize highly asymmetric and terrorist tactics during this process, such as kidnappings, small bombings and assassinations.

1. OPEN INSURGENCY STAGE/ GUERRILLA WARFARE STAGE

There's no question the government is facing an insurgency at this point. Politically, the rebels are openly questioning state authority and seeking to gain territorial influence. Militarily, the insurgents are perpetrating more regular assaults, which are likely to have been more violent, brutal, and sophisticated and include more fighters. As the insurgency becomes more aggressive, foreign support for the warring parties would probably become more apparent if it exists. Insurgent control over territories and the population inensifies, both politically and militarily. In insurgent-dominated areas, the insurgents establish their own government, as the military situation allows. Insurgent forces are making efforts to neutralize real or potential opposition groups in areas not yet controlled, and to expand penetration into established government agencies. Intimidation increases due to generated terror and danger of guerrilla action.

At this point an insurgency sometimes goes from weakening state power to displacing and replacing it. Insurgents may establish a "shadow government" that resembles state administrative structures and can set up "no-go" areas where members of government have been forced out and where only large security forces can function.

1. 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. The average duration of these continuing insurgencies is more than 21 years

**REFERENCE**

* Pike, J. (1996, May 24). FM 100-20 Appendix D The Mass-oriented Insurgency. Retrieved from <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/policy/army/fm/100-20/10020apd.htm>
* US Government (2012). Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency.
* IRD 214 NOTES.