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**QUESTION:**  IN NOT MORE THAN THREE PAGES, DISCUSS THE STAGES OF INSURGENCY.

**INTRODUCTION**

Insurgency is a term that has been given various definitions as well as explanations. Some of the definitions given have been found to be contradicting in nature. Most at times, insurgency is often used in place of or replaced by the likes of revolution, guerrilla warfare, insurrection, militancy, irregular warfare and rebellion among others. Scholars have made efforts at providing comprehensible definitions and distinguishing one from the other. David Galula defines insurgency as "a protracted struggle conducted methodically, step by step, in order to attain specific intermediate objectives leading finally to the overthrow of the existing order." [[1]](#footnote-1) Different factors act as triggers for all insurgencies; however, typically insurgent groups emerge as a reaction to the status quo. Certain aspects of the status quo might invite such a reaction; for example, acts of repression, oppression, disenfranchisement or alienation. However, most insurgencies also seek to bring about change based on multiple different ideologies or demands, sometimes resulting in different insurgents being active simultaneously within a society. When insurgent groups go beyond the law, they use various tactics, such as civil disobedience, general strike, sabotage, and violence, which might include a massive indiscriminate attack, widespread terrorism, or terrorism against a specific symbolic place or target. Insurgencies do not just take place in one sitting. Insurgencies are as a result of long-term planning. This sort of strategic planning takes place for and within an extended period of time. Over time, a number of theories on the stages of insurgency have emerged. Revolutionaries and scholars, such as Mao Tse Tung and David Galula respectively, have provided frameworks of the stages of an insurgency. Galula was a military man, not a politician. His orthodox model therefore lacks the political depth attained in Mao’s writing, the profound connection between politics, violence, and the nation.

**MAO’S STRATEGIC INSURGENCY STAGES**

Mao evolved a new strategy since Lenin's strategy of urban insurrection had failed to win power in a predominantly peasant society like China. He argued that in such situations, people in the countryside could be successfully organized and led in a movement to encircle an eventually take over the cities.[[2]](#footnote-2) According to him, an insurgency will only succeed after having passed through three stages. The first stage is The Strategic Defensive. This stage is characterized by a long preparation process established certain embryonic structures to overcome physical threats. The second stage is The Strategic Stalemate. This phase consists of minor guerrilla operations spread in their scale and territory and the guerrilla war turns into a mobile war. This transitional stage involves a campaign leading to a spread of both visible and clandestine insurgent organizations. The third and last stage is The Strategic Offensive. This is the mobilization stage whereby the balance would have clearly tilted in favour of the revolutionary movement and the struggle would assume the characteristics of a people's war. In a quick run-down, the stages all have steps. The first stage consists of arousing and organizing the people, achieving internal unification politically and establishing bases. The second stage consists of equipping forces and recovering national strength. The last stage includes destroying the enemy’s national strength and regaining lost territories (Gandy, 2015).

In (Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency, 2009), there are four stages of an insurgency. The first stage is the preinsurgency stage; here, leadership emerges in response to domestic grievances or external influences. The second stage is the organizational stage. Infrastructure is being built here guerrillas are recruited and trained, supplies are acquired and domestic and international support is sought. The third stage is the Guerrilla warfare stage. Hit-and run tactics are employed against the government and extensive insurgent political activities may also take place. The last stage is the mobile conventional warfare; larger units are employed in this stage but most insurgencies never reach this stage.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency (2012) provides an extensive and in-depth life cycle of an insurgency. Here, there are four main stages of an insurgency. They are the Preinsurgency stage, Incipient Conflict stage, Open Insurgency stage and the Resolution stage respectively.

**PREINSURGENCY STAGE:** A conﬂict in the preinsurgency 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.[[4]](#footnote-4) This stage constitutes the pre-existing conditions, grievances, group identity, recruitment and training, arms and supplies and government reaction. The pre-existing conditions are conditions which had been in place prior to the insurgency and brought about discontent to the population. The insurgency organizers use this as a means to gain popular support from the people. They then rally supporters around a particular grievance. They then proceed to form a group identity, one that “separates the group from the national identity or that of the ruling elite, establishing an “us versus them” dynamic to the conﬂict”. The recruitment and training stage then takes place followed by arms and supplies acquired by criminal means of all sorts. The government reaction at this stage is very important as it will either make or break the insurgency.

**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.[[5]](#footnote-5) This is the most dangerous stage for the insurgent groups. They are still weak and still organizing a way to balance it all out.

**OPEN INSURGENCY STAGE:** The insurgency group is now completely out in the open and are challenging the government authority at every turn. This stage involves political factors, military factors and external support for both the insurgents and the government in the form of arms, finance, refuge, intelligence or food and other necessities from other states or entities.

**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. Intheory, an insurgency will eventually reach a conclusion, either an insurgent victory, a negotiated settlement, or a government victory.[[6]](#footnote-6)

The question of whether or not an insurgency is a success all depends on reaction of the government, early or late. Counter-insurgency frameworks have been developed to tackle insurgencies so it is safe to say that over time both the frameworks on insurgency and counter-insurgency will evolve. Insurgencies all over the world are diverse as well as the steps the various insurgency groups take in achieving their aim which consequently leads to differing results. In truth, even the most planned insurgencies do not have an assured success.

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1. Quoted from “Insurgency: an Analytical Framework” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. (Insurgency: an Analytical Framework) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. (Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency, 2009) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. (Homeland Security Digital Library, 2012) “Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency” [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. “ [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. (Homeland Security Digital Library, 2012) “Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency” [↑](#footnote-ref-6)