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ASSIGNMENT

STAGES OF INSURGENCY

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. This objective differentiates insurgent groups from purely terrorist organizations. It is worth noting that identifying a movement as an insurgency does not convey a normative judgment on the legitimacy of the movement or its cause; the term insurgency is simply a description of the nature of the conflict. The characteristics of an insurgency will likewise be case specifi c and fl uid. Nevertheless, some common factors will aid analysts in evaluating an insurgency through its life cycle. Factors for analysis are identifi ed for each stage, but these factors are both continuous and cumulative. As an insurgency advances through the stages, indicators from earlier stages will remain relevant, as will the ways in which the factors build on each other.

 Pre insurgency Stage

A conflict in the pre 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. Preexisting Conditions 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. These conditions, most of which are exacerbated if they affect one subgroup disproportionately, include: - A recent history of internal conflict that has left lingering grievances against the government or hostility among groups and that establishes violence as an accepted means of resolving political disputes. - Recent or ongoing conflicts in neighboring states that generate refugees who could become recruits, make weapons available, or establish ungoverned spaces in the neighboring countries that can serve as sanctuaries for insurgents. - Societal factors such as a strong warrior or conspiratorial culture or a youth bulge (a high proportion of 15- to 25-year-olds relative to the adult population), which can provide a pool of potential recruits. 6 - Inhospitable terrain—such as jungles, forests, mountains, deserts, or swamps—which allows insurgents to move, hide, train, and organize in areas that are diff cult for government forces to enter. Increasingly, dense urban areas meet this need, as do cross-border sanctuaries. - Government policies that disadvantage a segment of the population on the basis of religion, tribe, ethnicity, region, or class, reinforcing insurgent efforts to foster a group identity. - A polarized winner-takes-all political system, which generates grievances among out-groups and undermines the potential for cooperation in pursuit of common agendas. Such a system often creates government paralysis in the face of a crisis because competing parties are unable to reach consensus. Moreover, the existence of party militias can serve as recruiting pools for the insurgents or simply add to an atmosphere of insecurity. - An inability of the government to provide basic services, such as security, justice, health care, education, utilities, or transportation infrastructure. - Inept or corrupt security forces, especially the police because they interact most frequently with the people. - An economic crisis or extended period of poor economic conditions that generates discontent with the government and provides a base of unemployed or underemployed youth ripe for recruitment. - A “window of vulnerability,” created by events such as natural disasters, political assassinations, or hotly disputed elections, that causes societal or political upheaval, overstretches security forces, or disrupts government services

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. Insurgent Leadership Knowing not only the identities of the insurgent movement’s leaders but also understanding the leaders’ motivation for joining the insurgency and the experience they bring to the movement—especially military service, political experience, or participation in prior insurgencies—can provide insights into the direction and character the organization is likely to take, as well as its potential early effectiveness. An ideal insurgent leader displays charisma, the flexibility to balance ideology with the need to be inclusive and leverage local grievances, and an ability to engender loyalty and maintain group unity. Understanding the insurgents’ theory of victory answers the question: “How do they see this ending?” Insurgents may believe they will eventually defeat the government on the battlefield, spark a popular uprising that forces the government to accede to the insurgents’ demands, provoke international intervention on the insurgents’ behalf, or prolong the conflict long enough for the government to judge that it is better to negotiate a settlement. Insurgent documents, propaganda, or public statements will sometimes provide indications of how the insurgents envision achieving their goals

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. An insurgency at this stage often progresses from undermining state authority to displacing and replacing it. Insurgents may develop a “shadow government” that mirrors state administrative structures and may establish “no-go” areas where government representatives have been driven out and where only large formations of security forces can operate. Indicators of insurgent political strength include: - Reports of large-scale infi ltration of insurgents or insurgent sympathizers into government agencies, especially at the local level. - Defections of government officials to the insurgency. - Indications that the insurgents have established shadow governments or are providing social or administrative services, such as education, health care, or courts. - Evidence of no-go areas, sometimes labeled with color designations such as red or black by target nation security forces. - De facto recognition of insurgent administration, such as neighboring governments or foreign businesses dealing with insurgents.

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. Many insurgencies linger for years or decades as low-level security nuisances to the governments they oppose. Often during these stretches, the goals of the insurgency will shift or evolve. In some cases, the insurgents become more radical, in others, more moderate. Sometimes, the insurgency becomes an end unto itself for the fighters— providing a sense of meaning to their lives, status that would otherwise be unattainable for them, and income from criminal activities associated with the insurgency. In some cases, it is difficult to discern whether the group’s primary motivation remains political or has become criminal—a change that reduces the chance of resolving the conflict through negotiations or political reform. An insurgent victory is the only potential outcome that is likely to be clearcut, 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. The final 18 collapse of the government will probably appear in retrospect to have been rapid, but the signs of imminent insurgent victory may be difficult to see as they are occurring. Signs that insurgents may be on the verge of obtaining their goal include: - Withdrawal of support for the government by specific, critical segments of the domestic population, possibly even including elites aligned with the government leaving the country. - Evidence that the population increasingly views the government as illegitimate. - Insurgent co-optation, incorporation, or elimination of other major groups opposed to the government. - Withdrawal of support for the government from critical foreign allies, pressure from those allies to overhaul the government’s policy to address insurgent grievances, or increasing international support or recognition for the insurgents. - Rapid growth of insurgent forces or significant expansion of insurgent control of territory and population. - Severe weakening of the national economy, possibly including departure of multinational corporations, as a result of the insurgency. - Reports of military plots, coup attempts, or massive desertion, defection, or surrender of security forces. - Evidence of a sudden government willingness to seek a negotiated settlement with the insurgents. 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 unsatisfi ed with the terms of the settlement will probably persist for several years after fighting has officially ended.