RESISTANCE AND ITS PROGRESSION TO INSURGENCY

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Conceptual background

The emergence of the modern sovereign State was a milestone in the history of human civilization. However, there were also opposing trends which resisted and threatened it. One of these, perhaps its worst form, is insurgency which has continued to exist since the beginning of civilization. It has, however, considerably evolved and taken different forms. Insurrection, which has been one of the oldest forms of war, along with insurgency, has continued to exist in different forms throughout history. Revolts and insurrections in recent years have taken the shape of terrorism in many cases where attempts are made to terrify a citizen or a State to gain psychological advantage for the pursuit of specific goals. The most recent form is called terrorism.

It is noteworthy that "insurgency and terrorism have become the most prevalent forms of conflict since 1945." Insurgency has become more frequent over the years. A study revealed that amongst the wars that occurred between 1900 and 1941, 80 per cent were between two or more States, while out of the total wars that took place between 1945 and 1976, 85 per cent were internal wars or insurgencies. Since World War II, State governments have been challenged more often from inside the State than from outside it. This situation reflects that nowadays, wars are occurring increasingly not between States but within States, leading to large civilian involvement.

A careful consideration of the situation shows that an insurgent is one who rises in revolt. It is derived from the Latin word insurgere meaning 'to arise'. It describes a person who uses force to attack or target the established system. Therefore, an insurgency can be defined as "an organized, armed political struggle whose goal may be the seizure of power through revolutionary takeover and replacement of the existing government. In some case, however, an insurgency's goals may be more limited.

"For example, the insurgency may intend to break away from government control and establish an autonomous State within traditional ethnic or religious territorial bounds. The insurgency may also intend to extract limited political concessions unattainable through less violent means." It can also be defined as "an armed rebellion by a section of the population against the legally constituted government, with the support or sympathy of the local population, obtained voluntarily or by coercion."

Most of the insurgencies are an outcome of a deep dissatisfaction and disappointment with the given political and social reality. Mostly, it is in opposition to a ruling party, colonial occupation, social order, religious majority, or entire government system, where people think their grievances cannot be looked into within the current arrangement; such restlessness gives impetus to leaders for action along with their supporters. Usually, insurgencies start as a small movement and avoid direct conflict with government forces. Such an action "has consistently been the choice of the weak who oppose the strong, for it enables them to avoid direct, decisive confrontations and rely on harassment and surprise."

In most cases, the insurgency is directed at changing the policies or the structure of a government, by means not usually used in or sanctioned by the existing system. Insurgency is an armed resistance against governmental authority, for purposes like resisting the imposition of legal constraints and overthrowing or weakening the government. Insurgencies are a common phenomenon and are often referred to in domestic politics. In international law, insurgency is described as an internal political revolt which the concerned State is not ready to recognize as belligerency. The concept of insurgency has recently been accepted by international law as a basis for defining the legal rights and obligations of States in public disorders more serious than mob violence and less serious than civil war.

Insurgency can also be taken as "armed revolt or insurrection aimed at overthrowing or subverting the government/regime in power, any duly constituted regime, counting elected or non-elected powers; it is nothing but any lethal kind of intimidation which can take many forms." Another detailed explanation of insurgency is given by Desai and Eckstein as a "syncretic phenomenon, one that joins diverse elements in an explosive mix. It combines three elements: first, the spirit of traditional peasant (i.e., rebellion); second, the ideology and organization of modern revolution and third, the operational doctrines of guerrilla warfare."

Insurgency can also be explained as "a strategy adjusted by groups which cannot attain their political objectives through conventional means or by quick seizure of power. It is used by those too weak to do otherwise." Insurgency is a sophisticated form of war which seeks radical order and is offensive in nature. The insurgent movements nowadays are fuelled by the resurgence of ethnicity and religion, growing movement of people across boundaries, the free flow of ideas and technologies, and saturation of arms market. "It is a protracted political-military conflict aimed at undermining government legitimacy and increasing insurgent control. Political power is the central issue in an insurgency. The goal of an insurgency is to mobilize material and human resources to establish an alternative counter-State."

Insurgency is viewed as a strategy adopted by the weaker of the two actors involved, as this actor cannot achieve its objectives through conventional means. It is usually a protracted, asymmetric, multidimensional and demanding movement. Its failure and success depends upon a strict regimentation, determination, motivation and blind loyalty from its followers and promoters. The insurgents achieve their objectives by applying techniques such as guerrilla war, psychological war, and political mobilization, etc. They use both violent and passive means, including demonstrations, blockades, rallies, meetings, bombing of important installations, shootings of important persons, propaganda warfare and guerrilla warfare tactics.

That is because they do not possess the capabilities to fight the regular armed forces of the State. All such kinds of efforts are made to discredit the government. Insurgents may have diverse objectives, e.g., seizure of power, acquiring autonomy, winning the right to self-determination or a greater political role and economic share. V.K. Anand gives the following elements of insurgency: i) charismatic leadership, ii) popular cause, iii) attainable goals, iv) consolidatory aim, v) motivating ideology, vi) mass mobilization, vii) variegated struggle, viii) unique organization, ix) indigenous resources, and x) outside patronage.

Similar terms

"Terms like insurgency, guerrilla warfare, terrorism, and revolutionary have not only been defined in various ways but have often been used interchangeably." However, they are not entirely interchangeable as they might seem, and there exists an important difference. The word 'insurgency' must not be confused with other terms, as it is quite precise and clear. This term is loosely used along with the terms 'revolution' and

'rebellion' in order to refer to an anti-government armed resistance. "In general, an uprising directed toward a radical modification of the existing political or social order throughout the whole territory of a State is referred to as revolution, while the word rebellion is more frequently confined to efforts on the part of a portion of a State to throw off the authority of the remainder."

The term 'coup d'etat' refers to a sudden and unconstitutional change of government. Coups have occurred frequently in African, Asian and Latin American countries. However, the distinction needs to be brought out: although both insurgency and coup have the common aim of overthrowing the government, a coup employs a different technique and involves different players for the overthrow of an established government. Insurgents adopt a protracted struggle that carries, in some degree, an appeal to the population, and terror tactics are mostly involved. Insurgents lack the ability to instantly stage the overthrow a government. On the other hand, in a coup there is a swift and usually clandestine takeover of the government which may lack popular support.

"Guerrilla warfare is a method utilized by small mobile units to harass, weaken, demoralize and combat larger conventional forces. Civil wars, insurgencies and independence movements often include elements of guerrilla warfare." Guerrilla warfare can also be explained as "Military and paramilitary operations conducted in enemy-held or otherwise hostile territory by irregular, predominantly indigenous forces; maybe conducted in conjunction with conventional military operations, or as an aspect of revolutionary war."

Both terrorism and insurgencies have re-emerged with a renewed relevance in the contemporary era. They are both similar yet different. "Terrorism can be the major objective of an insurgency. The insurgent groups use the fear factor to gain world attention. They disrupt the normal activities by shootings, killings or bombing in order to gain world attention, they believe in 'kill one and frighten ten thousand'." Tactics and strategies such as terrorism, guerrilla warfare, insurgency and revolutionary warfare all come under the category of 'irregular warfare'. "A variety of terms like rural insurgency, urban insurgency, militancy, subversion, sabotage, terrorism, and guerrilla and proxy wars are essentially part of a cauldron called low intensity conflict (LIC), which is an armed conflict for political purposes."

Causes and motives of insurgencies

It is noteworthy that during the mid-20th century, a large number of insurgencies left immense effects on national, regional and international affairs. This period is also considered as a "golden age of insurgency". It was marked by instabilities and crises in Asia, Africa and Latin America, due mainly to de-colonization, corrupt and weak governments, multi-ethnic societies and newly-born instable States. No doubt, present day insurgencies are mostly the successors to those insurgencies.

There exists a great deal of confusion with regard to the causes, motives and character of insurgencies. Academicians and researchers have continuously been attempting to explore the real nature of insurgencies for better understanding of this multidimensional and complex phenomenon. Insurgencies have continued to emerge all over the world since times immemorial. At times, they were crushed by governments while at others they were able to achieve their objectives. Insurgencies have also at times developed into freedom movements or revolutions and, on the other hand, terrorism or civil war. Owing to the blurred and overlapping nature of insurgency, it has also at times been termed as resistance, rebellion and terrorism.

The failure and success of insurgency depends on whether its objectives are legitimate or not. No insurgency can succeed unless it is able to win justification and legitimacy for its cause as well as support among the general populace. It is also noteworthy that the lack of understanding by the government with regard to the nature and causes of the insurgency can also sooner or later make the insurgency succeed. Governments using coercive means for counter-insurgency operations without first bringing into use the available diplomatic means can also fetch wide-based support for an insurgent movement.

An insurgency will be successful only if it is based on a cause which can garner a vast popular support base. A number of causes can lead to insurgency movements. Some of these may be "tribal affinities, demand for recognition, personal envy and petty conflicts. Generally, a weak and corrupt government, greed for power and bloodlust also became causes of insurgency. In today's time, it is often used to weaken a neighbouring country. But the most vital reason for insurgency is the scourge of ethnic conflict." In these days, such conflicts have become a major phenomenon. These are largely caused by factors arising from difference in language, religion, race, territory, and culture, etc. The conflicts involving the Kurds, Palestinians and Tamils are its examples. On a number of occasions, two or more causes may also combine to intensify the dispute.

Throughout human history, there have been any number of revolts, rebellions and insurgencies spawned by various factors such as foreign occupation, political subjugation, repression and intimidation by dictators, economic deprivation, lack of political participation, and above all the collapse of traditional socio-economic and political order. Frequently, it may be foreign powers instigating insurgencies so as to weaken or damage a State. In such cases there may not be a particular cause already existing, but that may be created and developed to initiate insurgency. External actors may also exploit dormant causes of conflict by providing insurgents with economic and military aid in order to enhance their own national interests. Its best example is the recent insurgency in Balochistan where India is actively involved to destabilize Pakistan.

The popular appeal of insurgency lies in the cause being fought for. It is then manipulated and exploited in a way that may generate hatred and discontent among the people. Developing countries are particularly vulnerable to this type of situation as several forms of contentions exist in their weak and inefficient State systems and societies. This explains why most of the insurgencies have occurred in Asia, Africa and Latin America. These are further augmented by the grave problems of economy, corruption and governance.

Categories of insurgencies

With regard to their aims, insurgencies can be categorized into two types. The first is centripetal insurgencies which seek to replace the regime with a government more conducive to the interests of the insurgents, e.g., the Maoist insurgency in Nepal. Other examples of this type of insurgency are freedom movements from colonial powers as well as revolutions. Its further examples are movements for independence in Asia after the Second World War, the revolutions in Russia and China and later in Iran. Centrifugal insurgencies, on the other hand, are those aiming at succession from the State in order to create a new State. Most of the ethnic movements may be included in this category. Bangladesh and East Timor are examples of this kind.

The next two important and popular forms of insurgencies are 'national insurgencies' and 'liberation insurgencies'. National insurgency takes place between insurgents and a national government. It usually takes place in countries with heterogeneous populations and this heterogeneity can be based on ethnicity, language, religious belief

or racial differences. Usually, these insurgencies involve relatively smaller regions which are linked together geographically and are heavily dependent on each other for their socioeconomic welfare and development. They cooperate and coordinate to form a union or federation to protect and further their political and economic interests.

The success of the federation depends upon the level of socio economic development and political participation by its constituent units. However, if any of the units feels deprived of its due share in the system, it may lead to resentment and resistance eventually turning into hatred and even violence if the federation fails to resolve their legitimate grievances politically. This evolves into an armed struggle which can become a popular insurgency if it receives support from the people. The success of a popular or national insurgency solely depends upon the support and legitimacy it may get both internally and externally. The Naxalites in India, the Tamils in Sri Lanka and the Moros in Philippines are some examples of this type.

Another form is 'liberation insurgency' which is primarily against foreign occupation. The objective of liberation insurgents is to secure liberation of their nation from alien occupation. Such insurgencies were common during the colonial era. Many of the African and Latin American States achieved their independence through liberation insurgencies against foreign occupation. Colonial masters like the British, French, Italian and Japanese were seen by native populations as aliens, occupiers, exploiters and oppressors. In the contemporary world, we have many examples of liberation insurgencies such as those taking place in Palestine and Kashmir. They are struggling and fighting for the liberation of their people.

The success of insurgencies is not merely owing to their appealing goals, effective strategies and charismatic leadership. It is also the failure of governments to quell insurgency as well as the failure of counterinsurgency operations on behalf of the governments that accounts for their success. State counter-insurgency machinery may fail to comprehend and differentiate between different types of insurgencies which by their very nature require different responses and measures. A generalized understanding of the types of insurgencies without knowing its nature and nuances can result in devastating consequences.

In addition to the aforementioned broad categories, there can be at least seven other specific types of insurgencies. They are: i) anarchist, ii) egalitarian, iii) traditionalist, iv) pluralist, v) secessionist, vi) reformist, and, vii) preservationist. Besides these, there

also exist cross-border and global insurgencies. The anarchist insurgency aims to overthrow or eliminate the existing political order or institutions. The anarchist insurgents believe that "political authority in all its forms, especially in the form of the State, is both evil and unnecessary." They consider the very existence of the modern sovereign State an infringement on their freedom and equality. However, although the anarchists reject political order, they believe in natural order and spontaneous social harmony. In Czarist Russia and Europe, near the turn of the century, a number of such groups emerged. With the demise of Communism, this type of insurgency has subsided considerably.

The normative character of the objectives of egalitarian insurgency makes it popular and hence potentially strong. The overtly stated objectives of egalitarian insurgents are usually to establish a system in which equal rights, benefits and opportunities for everybody without any discrimination can be guaranteed. The aim of egalitarian insurgents is to bring about a radical transformation of the social structure within an existing political community in favour of creating a centrally controlled structure. For example, the New People's Army (NPA) in the Philippines, the Thai National Liberation Front, the Japanese Red Army, the Fedayeen-i-Khalk in Iran. It has been noted, however, that in history most egalitarian insurgents, after coming to power, established authoritarian and repressive regimes.

Pluralist insurgents believe in diversity and multiplicity. They aspire and strive to establish a diverse political system in which individual freedom and liberty would be ensured and which in turn would promote debate, and through it, a better understanding between different segments of society. Under such a system, political power would be widely distributed in society instead of being concentrated in the hands of the elite representing a certain group or clique. However, it must be added that such an approach is idealistic in nature. In most cases, such utopian dreams end up disappointingly.

According to some, tradition is one of the key principles of conservatism. Traditionalist insurgents believe and follow values strongly embedded in their religious belief, culture or social norms. The traditionalist insurgents endeavour to preserve the accumulated wisdom of the past, institutions and time-tested practices for the benefit of mankind and its future. They strive to establish a political system under an autocratic leader supported by the nobility, army and clergy. In this rigid system, there would be a limited or guided participation and a low level of autonomy and individual liberty. Any opposition to the established political order would strongly be suppressed. Contemporary traditionalist insurgents include those who supported the return of the Imam in the

Yemen Arab Republic (North Yemen) in the 1960s, the Contra movement in Nicaragua, and the moderate Islamic groups in Afghanistan.

In the case of what may be called a 'secessionist insurgency', the consequences may be more violent and far-reaching due to the fact that the insurgents seek a complete separation or independence from the community or the country of which they are part due to a formal political arrangement. In contemporary times, secessionist insurgencies are common and pervasive, particularly in the developing and newly independent countries; for instance, Chechnya, Kashmir, the Front for the Liberation of Rio d'Oro, the South-West African People's Organization (SWAPO), the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Kurdish insurgents in Iraq, etc.

Reformist insurgency seeks goals that are largely adjustable, hence genuine. They strive to win greater economic, social and political rights for the welfare of their constituencies. Such insurgencies do not seek an overhaul of the existing political order. Instead, they aim to bring changes within the existing order. Their struggle is geared towards an equitable distribution of economic and political power. It must be understood that any insurgency which falls short of secession, separation or independence, falls within the reformist category.

Another category happens to be the 'preservationist insurgency'. These insurgents strive to maintain the existing socioeconomic and political system because it guarantees a privileged and superior status for them in the society they seek to preserve. In other words, the insurgents endeavour to maintain the status quo. The 'Afrikaner Resistance Movement' in South Africa is one example. Right-wing 'death squads' in Latin American countries and local upper caste armies of Brahmins in the Bihar state of India also fall within this category.

In cross-border insurgencies, rival State or non-State actors instigate unrest in the areas of their adversaries. This too has been a somewhat common phenomenon in human history. An example in the recent past is that of the CIA-sponsored unrest in East European countries in its proxy war against the Soviet Union. The insurgency in former East Pakistan supported by India is yet another example. This type of insurgency is different from other insurgencies in the sense that in this case the 'aggrieved party' is a foreign nation.

Global insurgency has originated recently with the emergence of globalization. It is different from cross-border insurgency in the sense that while in cross-border insurgency, a foreign power or powers indulge in mass instigation; in a global insurgency, the magnitude of the masses' revolt transcends borders and assumes international proportions. Examples of this case can be that of Pan-Arab resentment against Israeli policies in the West Bank and the trans-border armed struggle by Muslim militant groups like Al Qaeda against the hegemony of the United States.

Phases of insurgencies

There are two commonly observed stages in the development of an insurgency. As these stages are of an overlapping nature; there does not exist any visible or traceable line of demarcation between them. At times, the metamorphosis from one stage to the other is rather inconspicuous, making detection difficult. However, an imaginary, tentative division can help create an intellectual framework for a comprehensive understanding of an insurgency.

The first stage of an insurgency can be termed as fledgling or embryonic. In this stage, an insurgency simmers and smoulders but does not boil over. As this is a somewhat nascent stage, at this point the insurgency remains largely inconspicuous. At this stage, the insurgency is most vulnerable as it can effectively be crushed before it takes off. Leaders of the insurgency propagate the message and convince people as well as anti-government and anti-establishment elements about the genuineness of their cause and the legitimacy of their struggle. At this critical stage, in order to stay unnoticed, the insurgents maintain a low profile for their campaign, as they cannot as yet confront the might of the law-enforcement agencies.

The second stage is when insurgents set down to galvanize their ideas into action. They now adopt a bolder approach and begin to act against law-enforcing agencies, i.e., police and security forces. In this way, the insurgents attempt to make their presence felt and demonstrate their conviction and strength. This stage involves taking the insurgency from a low to a high profile, and it is critically important. Hence, it must be well planned because becoming conspicuous can be counterproductive. This stage is a critical threshold for the insurgency to overcome and mature. Facing harsh measures from the regime helps expose the sceptical elements. At this stage, the insurgency evolves into conspicuousness as insurgents face the police and security forces.

Countering insurgencies

As mentioned above, insurgency is a multi-dimensional and multi-faceted phenomenon encompassing socioeconomic, ideological, religious and political aspects. Dealing with it requires profound understanding of the underlying factors. A multi-dimensional and result-oriented strategy is required in order to understand and counter insurgencies. Generally, most of counter-insurgency efforts have failed to produce the desired results. That happens because governments take on the issue without attempting to dig into its causes or understanding the socio-economic, political and cultural specificities of the region where the insurgency arises. As a result, governments apply harsh measures without first exhausting political or diplomatic means fully. That reflects their lack of insight in dealing with the issue.

Applying severe counterinsurgency measures leads to negative consequences. Using the tough approach with insurgents who may have genuine concerns and objectives, may lead to unpleasant results. In fact, the tougher the means the government uses, the stronger the insurgency becomes. It does not make sense to ignore the option of negotiation and seek to create a false sense of the government's strength. Such tactics may force the insurgents to resort to violent and terrorist means to achieve their legitimate or illegitimate objectives; and at a later stage the matter can get out of control. On the other hand, a mellow or compromising stand by the government can also produce negative results. That is because insurgents may begin to take State power for granted and become emboldened and more demanding, exploiting flexible gestures by the government. That can encourage more people to join the insurgency.

The situation reflects that neither purely harsh measures nor an extremely soft stance to counter an insurgency can work. An effective response to insurgency requires a pragmatic approach. The use of both the proverbial 'carrot' and 'stick' is imperative to produce the desired results and to bring an acceptable end to the insurgency without much damage and loss. The success and failure of any counterinsurgency campaign depends upon the manner of conducting the campaign, particularly its timing. A successful campaign must take into account the socioeconomic and political conditions of the region where the insurgency takes place, as well as its people. It must be conscious of its impact and of the general perception about the legitimacy of the insurgency.

The initial response to an insurgency should be devised considering the short-, medium- and long-term objectives. It should also regard the extent to which the general population perceives the objectives to be legitimate or illegitimate and be cautious of damaging the social and political standing of the leading insurgents. Any disinformation, misinformation, misunderstanding or ignorance can lead to drastic consequences. "Governments respond to terrorism by insurgents and low intensity conflicts with a range of approaches. They usually attempt to deal with the onset of conflict by using existing measures to exert order and control, to emphasize that they are the monopolists of the legitimate use of publicly organized force. These approaches prove adequate to the situation and the problem can be managed in this way. Therefore, the threat is eliminated, or reduced to a broadly acceptable level; its sources are 'nipped in the bud'."

It is common knowledge that many wars fought by the people have been won because the government either failed or refused to look at the seriousness of the challenge, and at many times "people can be the most destructive of all military forces." "It would be wiser to devise and pursue a counterstrategy of a more subtle and far-seeing kind." To deal with insurgencies, governments should adopt a multi-dimensional strategy. To begin with, governments should develop an awareness of their own limits and powers. They should be fully aware of available resources to deal with the insurgency.

Governments should also be sensitive about their international image and must bear in mind the concerns of the international community. They should demonstrate a cognizance of and commitment to international laws. Counterinsurgency operations should not violate international laws or human rights. That is because, to a great extent, the legitimacy of counterinsurgency depends upon how the international community perceives it. For the effectiveness and success of counterinsurgency, it is imperative that it should be supported and endorsed by the international community and human rights organizations. Otherwise, it will gather international condemnation and criticism and perhaps even punitive measures or sanctions.

Moreover, governments attempting counterinsurgency should gather authentic information about the short- and long-term objectives of the insurgents, as well as their ability or capacity to achieve these objectives. Such an understanding of insurgency is always needed for an effective strategy. The government must be aware of the social, cultural and political milieu of the region where insurgents operate. Not making effort in that direction may lead to irreparable loss for the government.

For example, during the Vietnam War, the American forces suffered unprecedented loss both in men and material. Although the United States had entered the Vietnam War in order to quell the Communist insurgency, due to its a lack of thorough understanding of the geographic condition, socio-cultural and political milieu; the effort was doomed to failure. The United States neglected diplomacy in favour of militarism, and its brutal counterinsurgency measures damaged its international image as well as relations with allies and foes. That also downplayed the American principles of fair play and support for self-determination. As a result, the U.S. suffered devastating consequences in Vietnam. Similarly, the Soviet Union suffered the same fate in Afghanistan by ignoring the importance of geographical conditions, the Afghans' traditions, their unique culture and their love for freedom.

Counterinsurgency warfare poses a major challenge for all types of militaries. Counterinsurgency measures prove ineffective because the law-enforcement agencies battling the insurgents are kept in the dark regarding the political objectives of the regime waging counterinsurgency. That brings down the morale of law-enforcement agencies fighting insurgents. Morale can be boosted when they know and appreciate why they fight and for what purpose. Hence, the forces and law-enforcement agencies must be informed about the moral and political objectives of the government. Law-enforcing agencies should have complete coordination and cooperation during the campaign.

Resorting to political means or using diplomatic channels enables governments to 'buy time' for political manoeuvring. For instance, using intelligence agencies to penetrate the insurgents' stronghold and obtain a better understanding of their objectives and operations. Such time may also be used to identify the moderate and extremist elements and use them against each other in order to disunite the insurgents. Division can dilute and diminish the power of their struggle and can make insurgency dormant, ending in either compromise with the government or complete extermination.

National insurgencies are relatively easier to handle as such insurgents fight not for independence but for their economic and political rights. The wiser approach for the government is to accommodate their demands and address their grievances. On the other hand, liberation insurgency is more difficult to counter since the insurgents have a single major demand for complete sovereignty to be given to the people, nothing short of which is acceptable. Besides, these insurgencies usually enjoy popular support both within and outside of the country.

The real source of strength and success of insurgencies lies in the support that may be given by the local population. The extent of this support will make or unmake an insurgent movement. Therefore, the insurgents try to come up with causes which may have a popular appeal for the sentiments of a certain ethnic, religious, linguistic or ideological section of the people. "The insurgent thus has to grow in the course of the war from small to large, from weakness to strength, or else he fails. The counter-insurgent will decline from large to small, from strength to weakness, in direct relation to the insurgent's success."

As it is reflected by the above discussion, overcoming insurgency is a very sensitive and critical issue. It demands an in-depth understanding and carefully calculated measures to control the situation. In this process, the first and the foremost step is to identify the real cause and motive of the insurgency. Governments must necessarily take steps to resolve the issues at heart of the insurgency movement. If left to grow, insurgencies flare into civil war. Eventually, the government itself may be overthrown. Therefore, the issue must be dealt with as early as possible. Negotiations should always be open and grievances should be given serious consideration. It should be demonstrated that the government is serious in the resolution of the issue. One of its examples is a series of successful rounds of negotiations that were held between the Cambodian government and the Khmer Rouge insurgents which resulted in a dispute settlement.

The causes at the roots of the insurgency must be studied deeply. Any misperception of the threat caused by the movement can result in serious consequences. For this purpose, a correct reading of the issue and a thorough analysis of ground realities should be undertaken by government authorities. Afterward, for reconciliation, both government leaders and insurgents need to demonstrate flexibility and be prepared to give concessions to each other. A give and take policy should be adopted, and it must be remembered that only flexibility on their stances will be beneficial for an enduring solution.

In the process of negotiation between the government and the insurgents, an incorporation of a third party may also be helpful on some occasions. However, while doing so, the neutral mediator must enjoy the full confidence of both parties. The two parties should be brought to the negotiating table and any deadlocks be surmounted. The third party could be a political party, person, organization or a State. In the issue between Palestinians and Israel, the Untied States is providing third party mediation. Exerting pressure for holding useful talks with the State that sponsors insurgency can also be very beneficial in defusing the tension. The good offices and other services of a regional or international organization can also be utilized in the settling of such disputes.

After the collapse of diplomatic means, there may be some justification for the use of coercive and forcible methods to resolve the dispute. These can include crackdown on the sanctuaries of insurgents, confiscation of arms and ammunition, detention of insurgents and, as the last resort, a military crackdown or operation. This must be decisive enough to either end the insurgency or at least check the worsening situation. In this whole process, the most important element is the need for sincerity towards the resolution of an ongoing dispute.

Review and reflections

Insurgencies are a frequent occurrence in the current global arena. "As inter-State war has waned, intra-State conflict has become more frequent." Modern technology has also influenced insurgencies and, consequently, insurgents are equipped with more lethal weapons. This gives them the potency to cause greater devastation. However, in this course of action, the attitude of the government is the most important element which directly and indirectly influences the intensity and duration of an insurgency. It is also the flexibility or rigidity of the government in the way it deals with an ongoing movement that determines the results. The settlement of the issue would depend on the extent of the willingness to compromise displayed by the rebels as well as the government. Governments must carefully decide how and in what way to deal with an insurgency.

In most of the cases, the causes underlying an insurgency are oppression, discontentment, injustice, lack of participation and inequality. That is what sows the seeds of resentment. To prevent insurgent sentiments from rising, governments of heterogeneous societies must deal equally with all sections of the population. They must provide equal opportunities for employment, education and provision of facilities. Everyone must be equal before the law. To prevent the outbreak of an insurgency, the government should implement only such policies which benefit all sections of society without discrimination.

"Insurgents threaten governments only when they draw on widespread and popular discontent, confront weak political institutions and can challenge government military forces." "Entrenchment of an insurgency usually stems from the movement's capacity to maintain durability, visibility and audibility. Durability refers to the desire of the insurgents to physically exist as a group and movement. An insurgency must be visible

(to be seen) and audible (to be heard) internationally in order to attract allies and sympathies."

An insurgency can turn into a protracted struggle between insurgents and the regime as both parties believe that their cause is justified and must prevail. Hence, defeat is an unacceptable dishonour. Insurgencies may continue for years and decades and end only when one or both sides come to believe that the conflict has become too costly to carry on. Therefore, it is in the interest of the parties involved to bring an end to the conflict with some semblance of victory and an honourable compromise acceptable to both sides. In other cases, an insurgency ends with a victory for one side to the conflict, insurgents or the regime, i.e., one eliminates the other.

After the Second World War, the number of insurgencies in the world has continued to surge, particularly in the former Communist States and a large number of newly emergent states of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Decolonization in Africa and Asia was a result of the drive for self-determination among occupied peoples. This spirit of struggle for self-determination later led to insurgencies by ethnic minorities in these newly independent States.

Given all these facts, scholars today must endeavour in earnest to help separate the 'wheat' from the 'chaff'. Generalization and stereotyping is a dangerous trend which analysts and decision makers must avoid. One must not get swept by the tide of the ongoing 'War on Terror' and must identify those who oppress, occupy and illegally wrest authority and those who terrorize, maim and kill innocent civilians. To do so in the present international political environment is indeed a daunting challenge. That requires a profound understanding of the issues involved.

Insurgencies were most frequent and intense during the 1960s and 1970s. However, now they have become more threatening and more lethal owing to the advent of technology. On the other hand, the contemporary international political, economic and moral environment, with its emphasis on human rights, no more sanctions the wholesale and blatant use of force to crush such movements. Besides, insurgents now have access to sophisticated technology and posses the same force to retaliate and cause great damage.

"This impression; together with the continuing existence of political, social and economic grievances, favourable terrain, and the availability of outside support; it is like to mean that insurgency will continue to be an important feature of intra- and inter-State activity for the foreseeable future. The process of imitation which has spawned the new urban variety of insurgency would seem to suggest that for many groups, in both rich and poor, urban and rural countries, this form of military power is and is likely to remain, a potent instrument by which they can force changes in their particular societies."

A more rational and pragmatic approach demands a well-planned, realistic and effective response to crisis. It also means that the diplomatic channel must be fully resorted to, and only after it has thoroughly exhausted, force can be unleashed. However, on the other hand, governments' attempt to bring insurgencies under control through diplomatic means may also aggravate the situation and make it go beyond normal manoeuvrability. Hence, a calibrated and carefully calculated approach is needed, along with faith in the viability and success of diplomatic means. Otherwise, the wholesale slaughter and collateral damage never brings a durable solution to insurgencies. In fact, it intensifies and exacerbates the situation. Therefore, governments should in all sincerity try to redress the legitimate grievances of insurgents and do away with the deep-seated causes creating discontent and hatred among disaffected populations, motivating them to take up arms to subvert an established order.

Notes & References

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