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**Trends in
Outside Support
for Insurgent
Movements**

**Daniel L. Byman, Peter Chalk,
Bruce Hoffman, William Rosenau,
David Brannan**

**- Excerpt -
Chapter 6**

**Assessing the Impact of
External Support**

TRENDS IN OUTSIDE SUPPORT FOR INSURGENT MOVEMENTS

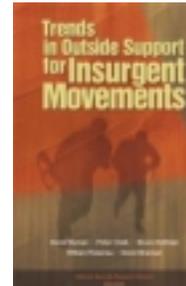
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CHAPTER 6

ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF EXTERNAL SUPPORT

Insurgents may receive many forms of support, but the impact of this assistance varies. Some forms of support allow insurgencies to survive ferocious government onslaught or to weather a decrease in popular support. Other types, while useful, contribute far less to the overall success of the movement.



Although the impact of external support must be measured against the particular needs of and conditions facing the insurgency in question, broader generalizations can be drawn about which forms of assistance are usually the most important to insurgent movements. Chapter Six provides a brief overview of guerrilla movement requirements and notes how outside powers can help meet these needs. It divides these contributions into those that, in our judgment, are critical, those that are valuable, and those that are minor. This chapter also discusses the political, organizational, and operational costs associated with a group's acceptance of outside support.

INSURGENT REQUIREMENTS

To be successful, insurgent movements have a variety of requirements, most of which can be grouped in two categories—human and material. In general, insurgents most need outside support of all kinds when they cannot obtain this support domestically. Insurgent requirements are summarized in Table 6.1. Each requirement is discussed in more detail below.

In some instances, a dependency on state sponsors can have devastating consequences. A regime's goals and priorities are likely to change over time, and in some cases, a state will abandon an insurgency to take advantage of new strategic opportunities. Iran, for example, has both supported and reined in Iraq's SAIRI, varying its backing according to its geopolitical needs. Thus, Iran pushed SAIRI to undertake often-ruinous operations during its eight-year war with Iraq but provided, at best, tepid backing in 1991 when Saddam's regime was reeling following the Gulf War. Despite Saddam's weakness, Tehran wanted to avoid even an appearance of meddling in order to deprive the U.S.-led coalition of a pretext for continued intervention in Iraq, or even in Iran itself. As important as external support can be to a guerrilla movement, it can also impose damaging and unacceptable burdens on an underground organization. In ideological, religious, and nationalist insurgencies, militants are risking their lives, and possibly those of their friends and families, to further a set of beliefs. Thus, self-reliance, dedication to the struggle, and self-denial are extremely useful qualities in rebel groups. Excessive reliance on foreign assistance can undercut these virtues and diminish the martial capabilities of a guerrilla movement, as demonstrated by the PLO's poor performance against the Israeli military after years of comfortable sanctuary in Syrian-controlled Lebanon. As insurgency analyst Gerard Chaliand (1987, p. 58) has cautioned, "every seriously organized guerrilla movement is well advised to rely mainly on its own resources." In general, dependence on refugees, diasporas, and other non-state supporters carries fewer risks for insurgencies, even though the type of support these actors can provide is limited. Diasporas and refugees tend to follow the lead of rebel movements rather than view them as temporary allies or proxies to be controlled. As a result, sudden changes in funding or political support are far less likely.

Table 6.1
Insurgent Requirements

Human	Material
Ability to mobilize local and international support	Safe haven and transit
Capable leadership, including effective command and control	Financial resources
Training	Direct military support
Intelligence concerning the adversary	Arms and materiel, including ammunition, food, and fuel
Inspiration	
Organizational aid	

CRITICAL FORMS OF SUPPORT

Safe Haven and Transit

Safe havens, whether inside the country where the insurgents operate or across international boundaries, are essential to the success of any guerrilla movement. Sanctuaries protect the group’s leadership and members; provide a place where insurgents can rest, recuperate, and plan future operations; serve as a staging area from which to mount attacks; and, in some cases, function as an additional base for recruitment, training, dissemination of propaganda, and contact with the outside world. Such sanctuary allows guerrillas and their commanders to organize, train, recruit, plan, recuperate, and otherwise conduct essential operations outside the reach of the targeted state. Without a safe haven, insurgencies are constantly vulnerable to government forces. Iraqi Shi’ites, for example, have been able to organize themselves and receive essential military training in Iran—activities that would have been impossible in Iraq given Saddam Husayn’s tight controls. Safe havens also allow insurgents to dictate the pace of operations, prevent target governments from following up tactical victories when they are denied the right of “hot pursuit,” and otherwise help rebel movements retain their initiative. Kashmiri militants, for instance, often reside in Pakistan until the weather, local political conditions, and other factors are conducive to launching cross-border initiatives and attacks.

During a number of recent conflicts, cross-border sanctuaries appear to have been a major contributor to insurgent effectiveness, particularly when counterinsurgent forces are highly capable. For example, part of the success of the ANC relative to the Pan-African Congress (PAC) can be explained because the ANC had access to safe havens in Mozambique, where militants could train, rest, and plan future operations. The PAC, on the other hand, had no external sanctuaries, and thus was forced to confront highly competent and aggressive South African security forces without being able to recuperate in the comparative safety of a frontline state. The PKK’s access to sanctuaries in Syria and the Syrian-controlled Beka’a Valley in Lebanon during the 1980s and early 1990s permitted the movement to thrive; the withdrawal of Syrian support a decade later consequently played a major role in the PKK’s collapse (Radu, 2001, p. 52). In South Asia, Nepalese Maoist insurgents routinely use India as a sanctuary, which also serves as a base for political, logistical, and financial support of the movement (*IJSS Strategic Comments*, 2000, p. 2; Santina, 2001, pp. 34–37). Relative geography, of course, is important; international safe havens are most useful when they are across contiguous borders. Sometimes neighboring states provide insurgents with a haven simply because they are incapable of ousting the rebels themselves. Thus, the IMU has a de facto haven in Tajikistan

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because Dushanbe does not control its borders. Similarly, Lebanon for many years hosted a variety of Palestinian groups that targeted Israel mostly because the central government in Beirut was too weak to defeat them militarily (Hiro, 1992, pp. 81–110).

Some insurgencies may also be able to create a safe haven within the boundaries of the state in which they are fighting. Groups that enjoyed strong support in particular regions, such as the Chinese communist guerrillas led by Mao, are often able to have tremendous freedom of action, and even create alternative government institutions, in part of a country. Geography, again, also plays a role: Sendero Luminoso, for example, took advantage of Peru's mountains and jungles, creating a liberated zone in parts of Peru. Refugee camps also function as a form of safe haven—one that usually requires the support, or at least acquiescence, of the host state. Insurgent movements use these sites to organize, train, recruit, acquire arms, and otherwise advance their cause. As noted above, this most often occurs when the host government favors the refugee cause or is otherwise too weak to control the activities of the displaced populations on its territory (or when the international community creates a sanctuary).

Refugee camps may also serve as safe havens, particularly if international organizations help create them, making it difficult politically for government forces to attack there. In such cases, refugee camps are liable to become safe places for the combatants' dependents, a base for organizing, and a source of food and shelter for fighters.

The existence of a contiguous guerrilla safe haven often leads a civil war to escalate into a larger interstate conflict. Government troops cross borders to attack insurgent camps and bases. In so doing, they often confront border forces, air defense assets, and other state security units protecting or providing insurgents with assistance. Escalation may also occur when government forces have punished the sponsoring state directly. Israel regularly held sovereign backers of Palestinian groups responsible for insurgents' cross-border attacks, using this to justify raids against a wide range of targets in the host country. The Israeli defense forces attacked targets in Egypt, Lebanon, and Jordan—and on occasion as far afield as Tunisia. This reciprocal pattern of insurgent support and Israeli response greatly contributed to overall Arab-Israeli tension and helped spark the 1956 Suez Crisis and 1967 Six-Day War (Morris, 1994, pp. 340–418, 429–431).

The right to transit relates to the possession of a safe haven. When rebels can transit neighboring states (either through the connivance of an allied government or because of its weakness) it becomes far harder for their adversaries to defeat them. In some instances, a state may also permit insurgents to transit a country or receive support from another backer indirectly. Syria has allowed Iran to send soldiers to Lebanon and funnel weapons to Hezbollah through its territory, while the Zagreb government permitted Bosnian Croats and Muslims to receive arms that were destined for insurgent forces via Croatia. Such support is often a low-cost form of assistance, allowing the transiting state to control the aid flow and even sometimes to divert it, while still maintaining some distance from the insurgent cause.

Financial Resources

Money has a powerful effect on insurgent movements: It can be used to buy weapons, bribe local officials, pay operatives, write propaganda, provide a social network that builds a popular base, and otherwise fulfill myriad purposes. Insurgents are often able to acquire some of what they need via theft or from local supporters. However, they also require cash to acquire safe houses, procure weapons and ammunition, pay bribes, meet legal expenses and, in some cases, to pay stipends to militants. As J. Bowyer Bell (1998, p. 138) has noted, "money is a real and persistent problem. The movement commanders must pay their way, pay for the prisoners' families, pay for newsprint. . . . There seldom seems enough money."

Some of these funds can be generated internally, through bank robberies, kidnappings, and in the case of Sendero Luminoso in Peru and Colombia's FARC, through "revolutionary taxes" imposed

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on drug traffickers. But given that most insurgencies take place in impoverished areas, guerrilla movements often are forced to look abroad for funds they need to support their armed struggle. States can supply money, but in the post-Cold War era, diasporas and foreign sympathizers have also proven to be important sources of cash. In some instances, insurgent movements have become self-financing, at least in part. Such financing can take the form of legitimate business enterprises abroad, such as small-scale “mom and pop” shops selling items such as T-shirts and jewelry. A number of insurgencies, such as the RUF in Sierra Leone, Cambodia’s Khmer Rouge, and the Turkish PKK, also have engaged in highly profitable illicit activities, including arms trafficking, gem smuggling, and the transportation of illegal immigrants.

States often play a critical role in funding insurgencies. Hezbollah is an excellent example. The group has used Iranian financial support, conservatively estimated at \$100 million a year, both to maintain its fighting strength and to create a vast socioeconomic network for its supporters, a combination of which has greatly enhanced its prestige and influence (Ranstorp, 1997, pp. 33–48, 78–86).

In contrast to safe havens, which are primarily offered by states, diasporas often can provide considerable financial assistance while creative insurgent groups can at times finance themselves. Funds given by diasporas, both voluntarily and through extortion, and wealthy individuals have been vital to the success of the LTTE, the PIRA, Sikh militants, and the mujahedin, to cite a few examples. Through a combination of fundraising, legitimate businesses, and illicit enterprises, the organizations have been able to generate staggering sums sufficient to bankroll their armed struggles almost indefinitely. LTTE revenues are estimated at \$48–72 million a year, while UNITA is estimated to generate \$80–150 million per year, largely from diamond smuggling and other illegal ventures.¹ These figures were dwarfed by those for the PKK, which during the height of its power in the mid-1990s was generating an estimated \$200–500 million annually (Radu, 2001, p. 55). Such sums are even more impressive considering they will be spent primarily in economically underdeveloped areas of the world, where U.S. dollars, British pounds, German deutschmarks, and other hard currencies have a powerful impact.

Political Support and Propaganda

State patrons often provide important political support for insurgent movements. Cataloguing the entire range of this type of backing is beyond the scope of this study. However, this span includes everything from giving insurgents access to the state’s diplomatic apparatus and pushing for recognition in international fora, to encouraging aid agencies to provide assistance to the group directly, to otherwise underwriting insurgent causes by portraying and lobbying for them as a legitimate voice of a particular people or ideology. Moreover, political support often involves denying assistance to the government the insurgents oppose. Diasporas at times indirectly contribute to state political support, using their electoral or financial clout to encourage their host governments to back an insurgency or oppose government counterinsurgency campaigns.

Political support often has important consequences both seen and unseen. Arab and Muslim countries have long backed the Palestinian cause, using their influence to gain aid dollars for displaced persons and refugees; to press other countries to boycott Israel; to encourage recognition of the PLO as the legitimate voice of the Palestinian people; and otherwise to place Palestinian grievances on the international agenda. In this way, the Palestinian cause engaged the superpowers during the Cold War, remaining a staple feature of regional politics even though the Palestinian movement itself was relatively weak militarily. In contrast, although the Taliban’s military successes have led it to dominate over 90 percent of Afghanistan, the combined opposition of Russia, the United States, Iran, China, and other adversaries of the movement have

¹During the mid-1990s, the LTTE reportedly was banking an estimated \$650,000 a month in Switzerland alone (Davis, 1996a).

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continually deprived it of recognition as Afghanistan's legitimate government and blunted Taliban efforts to obtain seats in international organizations.

Of course, the level of political support depends on both the state's commitment to the insurgent movement and the power it generally wields. The backing of a major power can, for example, hamstring UN attempts to contain or defeat a rebel movement. Russian support of the Serb cause in the Balkans is an especially notorious recent case. Pakistan, by contrast, has so far failed to gain wide recognition or support for either the Taliban or the various Kashmiri insurgent groups its sponsors largely because Islamabad lacks Moscow's diplomatic clout.

In our judgment, political support is particularly critical once an insurgency is established. Weak rebel groups rarely receive more than token political support. Outside governments or diaspora groups, however, may champion more successful insurgent causes. This may involve recognizing the insurgents as a legitimate government, pressuring the regime they are battling and denying them access to weapons of money, or otherwise trying to give the insurgency access to the benefits of being a legitimate political entity while denying the same to their adversary. Such support assists the insurgents in material terms (more aid, a weaker adversary) and politically, by demonstrating to their followers that resistance is succeeding while undermining support for the state.

Propaganda is a critical instrument for generating political support and fundraising for every contemporary insurgent movement, both within its theater of operations and among a broader international audience. Effective propaganda can help legitimize insurgent goals, aid in fundraising and recruitment activities, discredit opposing governments, and internationalize the armed struggle by bringing a movement's message to a broader audience.

States often assist insurgents in generating propaganda, helping rebel groups portray themselves as innocent victims who deserve assistance, as pious Muslims worthy of financial support, as devoted socialists, etc. Outside support can help make insurgent propaganda more potent in at least two ways. First, external actors can provide the technical expertise and resources that underground groups lack. States may provide insurgents with useful access to radio, television, the Internet and other media through which they can effectively spread their message. Second, and more important, sympathetic states, front groups, ideological sympathizers, and diaspora members can serve as transmission belts for insurgent propaganda. Governments battling insurgencies are likely to find it far more difficult to control the propaganda activities carried out by proxies, supporters, and state sponsors across international borders.²

Although states continue to support their proxies with propaganda, non-state actors have become much more significant sources of this type of assistance in recent years. Across the world, front groups and ideological sympathizers publish newspapers, books and magazines, and maintain web sites aimed at promoting insurgent causes.³ In some cases, as with the PKK, sympathizers

² During the Cold War, the Soviet Union and the United States frequently aided insurgencies by helping them develop and transmit propaganda. Statements by important foreign leaders expressing support for an insurgency or its goals played an important part of superpower propaganda campaigns on behalf of their guerrilla proxies, and such support was strongly associated with the success of insurgent campaigns during the Cold War (Defense Systems, Inc., 1986, p. 36). The study analyzed 132 campaigns drawn from 15 insurgencies during 1945–1981. Fourteen types of assistance, ranging from cadre training to heavy military equipment, were identified. Of these 14 forms of assistance, propaganda, international recognition, and financial aid were determined to be “very strongly associated with campaign success” (pp. 35–36).

³ Most insurgencies of any consequence, such as the FARC, the LTTE, and the Kurdish underground movements, aggressively use the Internet to promote their cause, particularly internationally. For typical examples of insurgent web sites, see www.ozgurluk.org; www.contrast.org/mirrors/farc; and www.eelam.com.

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have operated radio and television stations designed to further their respective movements. The precise impact of positive publicity and propaganda is difficult to gauge; however, it does appear that such assistance remains a vital element in the success of many of post–Cold War insurgencies, not least by legitimating a group and its cause and augmenting its general ability to fundraise abroad.

Direct Military Support

States at times provide direct military support, using their own armies to fight alongside insurgents. Not surprisingly, such direct assistance is rare, but when it occurs it usually has a tremendous impact on the fighting. The Taliban, the Bosnian Croats, the Abkhaz, the forces of Laurent Kabila, pro-CIS forces in Tajikistan, and several other insurgent movements have all gained an outright victory over their rivals—a relatively rare phenomenon in the annals of insurgency—largely because of the backing of neighboring state military forces. Without this support, it is likely that these movements would have been completely defeated or, at best, would have clung to survival in the face of superior state forces.

Outside military forces fundamentally change the nature of an insurgency's struggle. No longer is it a battle of guerrillas against armies while rival institutions compete for the loyalty and cooperation of the populace. When states step in, the confrontation becomes more comparable to interstate war than civil conflict. Armies fight directly in conventional clashes, while guerrilla conflict often assumes secondary importance. The level of weaponry increases tremendously, from small arms to advanced air and land systems. The insurgents also are far more likely to be able to conduct massive and coordinated conventional attacks, enabling them to occupy territory, outgun and outmaneuver rival forces, and otherwise conduct operations that were previously beyond their capabilities.

In general, state forces are better armed, organized, and led, and typically more able to conduct sophisticated operations. As a result, the scope and scale of insurgent capabilities can increase exponentially, allowing previous weak groups that simply sought to survive to develop into a genuine security threat. The Congo experience illustrates how potent direct intervention can be. Before Kabila obtained Rwandan and Ugandan backing, he was an obscure guerrilla leader who posed little danger to the Zairian regime. With the support of troops from Kigali and Kampala, however, Kabila quickly began to pose a direct threat to the Mobutu regime, eventually overthrowing it and installing himself as president of the newly constituted Democratic Republic of the Congo. When Kabila became less responsive to the needs of Rwanda and Uganda, the two countries acted to remove their former puppet—and would have succeeded had it not been for the timely intervention of other states, including Zimbabwe and Angola.

VALUABLE FORMS OF SUPPORT

Training

To become effective on the battlefield, militants must be given weapons training and instruction in small-unit tactics. Although this is often provided by the militants themselves, the relevant training skills are not always available in-house. On some occasions, insurgents must turn to outsiders for support. Particularly in the early days of a conflict, the group may lack a cadre of skilled, experienced fighters who can pass on their knowledge to new recruits. In addition, training is often required in the case of more-specialized techniques, such as terrorist tradecraft, small-unit tactics, and the use of more-exotic weapons—such as man-portable air defense systems or, as has been alleged in the case of training camps operated in Afghanistan, chemical weapons (Miller, 2000, p. 1). As is the case with external manpower support, such assistance can help bolster the legitimacy and credibility of an insurgent movement by demonstrating the commitment of outsiders.

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Pakistan stands out as a country particularly active in training insurgent groups. Islamabad's assistance, provided through the ISI, is rudimentary, according to public accounts, and consists primarily of training recruits in the use of explosives and small arms such as the AK-47 (Kanwal, 1999, pp. 55–83). However, Indian sources claim that supplemental training is far more advanced and includes instruction in advanced explosive skills, forced entry attacks, intelligence tradecraft, and other difficult skills. Similarly, Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps units helped transform Hezbollah from a rag-tag group of poorly armed terrorists to one of the world's most formidable insurgent movements. Tehran's forces instructed Hezbollah guerrillas on a variety of weapons systems, intelligence gathering, and conducting small-unit attacks. Given that many insurgent movements face state militaries that are often poorly equipped and unmotivated, even limited increases in armed effectiveness can have an impressive payoff vis-à-vis enemy government forces.

Non-state groups have also supplied training assistance. Hezbollah, often acting as Iran's surrogate, has trained Islamic insurgents and terrorists who are active throughout the Muslim world. Indian Maoists, for example, reportedly have provided military training to communist insurgents operating in Nepal (*IJSS Strategic Comments*, 2000, p. 2).

It appears, however, that the most effective insurgent groups are self-taught. As a movement develops, it is able to create cadres who in turn train new recruits. In certain parts of the world, such as Latin America, insurgencies in their formative stages also have included former soldiers who have been able to impart their military skills to fellow combatants. Once a group has mastered the fundamentals of waging an insurgency, it becomes a candidate for training in more-advanced tactics, techniques, and procedures. In Afghanistan, members of Usama bin Laden's Al Qaeda ("The Base") organization reportedly have trained Islamist militants in specialized techniques such as counterintelligence, kidnapping, and urban guerrilla operations.⁴

Weapons and Materiel

Small arms are any insurgency's defining technology. During the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union often helped their proxies meet logistical requirements by supplying weapons and equipment. Many smaller states also provided weapons to underground movements during the Cold War. In the mid-1980s, for example, Libya supplied hundreds of rifles and handguns and more than 2,500 kg of Semtex explosive to the PIRA, which gave the organization the ability to sustain its terrorist campaign on a virtually indefinite basis.⁵ But even in the periods of the most sustained super-power assistance, insurgents were sometimes compelled to obtain arms with little or no assistance from their patrons. In El Salvador, for example, insurgents used weapons captured from the army, bought on the black market, or obtained through sophisticated bartering with East European or African countries (Radu and Tismaneanu, 1990, p. 192).

In some respect, the end of the Cold War has created a worldwide surplus of small arms that made such weaponry both more plentiful and cheaper (see Rana, 1995). Guerrillas usually are also able to acquire some of what they need through theft; raids on police, paramilitary, and army outposts; from corrupt members of the security forces or sympathizers within their ranks; or from adversaries who simply leave their weapons behind after an attack. Materiel, including ammunition, food, and fuel, usually is readily available, either by theft, purchase, or from supporters.

Fortunately for insurgents with financial resources, international arms markets are brimming with small arms, and governments often have, at best, limited control over their borders, particularly if

⁴ Engelberg (2001), p. 13. According to one published account, 50,000 to 70,000 militants from 55 countries have been trained by Al Qaeda in Afghanistan (Miller, 2000).

⁵ Horgan and Taylor (1999), p. 5; O'Callaghan (2000). O'Callaghan was a former commanding officer in the PIRA's Southern Command.

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they are facing a strong insurgency.⁶ Gunaratna (2000a) has described one important source of weapons for Asian-Pacific militant organizations:

The economic decline in former Soviet bloc countries meant that financial rather than security considerations determined the sale of weapons. As a result, some [groups] gained access to automatic weapons and explosives at competitive prices. Similarly, access to dual technologies—GPS [global positioning systems], satellite imagery, radar, secure communication, computers, sea scooters, speed boat[s], microlights and drones—enabled terrorist groups to challenge previously formidable land and naval forces.

The illicit international market for small arms such as assault rifles, machine guns, and shoulder-fired missiles is worth \$2–10 billion a year, according to a 1998 estimate (*IISS Strategic Comments*, 1998, p. 1). This vast armaments bazaar has become an option for those insurgents whose local sources are inadequate. While some groups continue to receive weapons and equipment from state and non-state sponsors, the existence of such markets means that insurgents are not necessarily compelled to turn to outside patrons for arms and other supplies.

In some circumstances, however, external provision of arms and materiel is quite valuable. Certainly, when local dealers do not have access to the full range of hardware and equipment sought by guerrillas, outside assistance is valuable. In addition, weapons provided by outsiders free rebel groups to spend their scarce funds on other needs. Moreover, in campaigns against capable counterinsurgent forces, it may be difficult for insurgents to acquire weapons without outside support. Security services may monitor borders and local markets and closely scrutinize local military forces to avoid illicit weapons diversions. At times, the police and army may be less willing to sell their weapons. In these cases, insurgents may turn to state or non-state sponsors, or may seek to buy weapons on international markets that are beyond the reach of the adversary's security forces.

MINOR FORMS OF SUPPORT

Fighters

Skilled, dedicated, and experienced fighters are the fundamental requirement of any successful rebel movement. By definition, insurgencies are protracted political-military campaigns involving the use of irregular forces. To achieve their objectives, insurgent movements need sufficient numbers of motivated combatants capable of performing credibly against government security forces and in some cases, anti-insurgent paramilitary entities. Recruiting suitable manpower will be a concern at each stage of the insurgency. If government forces are proficient, they will inflict casualties. Counterintelligence operations, psychological operations, civic action, and other components of a well-crafted and well-executed counterinsurgency effort are also likely to deplete guerrilla ranks. Even when counterinsurgency efforts are poor, arrests, defections, simple exhaustion and, in some cases, diminished commitment to the cause will also serve to reduce the number of combatants.

Foreigners often directly aid insurgents by providing additional manpower to supplement native insurgents. Conflicts in Bosnia, Chechnya, Dagestan, Kashmir, and Kosovo, have all seen an influx of guest Islamic militants, many of whom have acted as a crucial anchor for fighting that occurs on the ground (Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 2000). The participation of foreign combatants contributes to the insurgents' goal of internationalizing their armed struggle and provides additional manpower to the native insurgents (see Engelberg, 2001, p. 1). The involvement of guest militants offers concrete evidence that these insurgencies are more than mere local conflicts, but were part of a regional or global campaign on behalf of Islam. Sometimes

⁶ For a review, see Boutwell and Klare (1999).

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personnel with particularly rare skills (e.g., computer programming, demolitions) may be lacking from the local manpower pool.

In general, rebel groups seldom rely on outsiders for manpower, and those that do risk disaster.⁷ If an insurgency cannot attract fighters, it is often a sign that the movement is poorly led or does not have a message that appeals to enough people. In addition, local combatants are often far more adept at providing intelligence, gaining access to materiel, or otherwise helping sustain the movement. Seldom are large numbers of outside fighters available to most insurgencies; they represent at best a limited manpower pool. Finally, outside volunteers may be fickle and move on to another insurgency if it suits their goals and needs. Even when the outsiders are refugees or from a diaspora, they may be out of touch with local conditions and attitudes. The PLO, for example, was long criticized for its perceived aloofness from the struggle in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

For many insurgencies, however, the costs of extensive participation from outside militants may sometimes outweigh their benefits. For example, a large influx of foreign combatants can erode the credibility of a nationalist or separatist movement. Outsiders may also bring with them attitudes and behavior that harm the insurgent cause. Indian sources claim that early mujahedin militants participating in the Kashmir conflict were undisciplined; they alienated local population through acts of extortion and other forms of abuse (Grau and Jalali, 1999, pp. 66–71). Such abuses, like any human rights violations involving insurgent forces, carry the additional possibility of undermining the movement's legitimacy in the eyes of current and potential supporters abroad. In addition, foreign combatants often have different goals than local fighters (e.g., spreading Islam versus self-determination), which can create internal dissension or dispute.

Intelligence

To be effective, it is essential for any insurgent movement to understand the nature, objectives, and capabilities of its adversaries. This understanding includes the size and composition of security forces, the strengths and weaknesses of the opposition's leadership and strategy, and the level of the population's support for the underground movement as well as the government. In some instances, insurgents may turn to outsiders to provide intelligence that is difficult or costly to acquire themselves. The RUF, for example, received intelligence from the NPFL that helped in its struggle with Freetown.

Outside provision of intelligence, however, is seldom decisive and often of only limited value.⁸ With most movements, the insurgents themselves have better information on local conditions than any outside sponsors or supporters could provide. In any clandestine movement, members are also part-time intelligence agents, operating among the population, gathering information, and conveying it to higher authorities. Insurgents typically are able to draw on a large network of informants and local sympathizers who can provide information useful to the cause. Many movements, according to Bell (1999, p. 159), have been able to rely on "a spy in the castle, a policeman with a rebel heart, a clerk with access to the needed files. . . . The facts are there for those who will invest time and take a risk. The shoeshine boy outside the presidential palace sooner or later will find out something useful."

⁷ This characterization excludes direct intervention by a state's military forces on behalf of an insurgency (e.g., Rwanda's intervention in the Congo or Russia's intervention in Tajikistan). In such cases, foreign support replaces the insurgency itself rather than augmenting it.

⁸ This generalization does not always hold. For some insurgencies, intelligence support provided by outside actors has been a contributor to the effectiveness of political-military campaigns. In Kashmir, for example, direct tactical intelligence supplied by Pakistan's ISI reportedly has given Islamist militant groups an increased capability that has helped drive the conflict with India to a near stalemate (Evans, 2000, p.78).

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In short, insurgent groups are able to acquire much of the intelligence they need on their own. Insurgents, because of their access to sources in the area of conflict, are most likely *suppliers* of information to external supporters rather than *recipients* of intelligence from outside actors.⁹

Organizational Aid

When outsiders help an insurgency organize, the group is often better able to attract recruits, sustain operations, or otherwise perform basic functions essential to long-term success. Such assistance is particularly important in the early days of an insurgency. Iran and the Lebanese Hezbollah, as previously noted, are an example of such a case. With somewhat less success though, Iran also pushed various Afghan Shi'a factors to unite into the Hezb-e Wahdat organization, increasing their overall clout and effectiveness. Islamist groups helped HAMAS organize, and various Arab states assisted in the creation of the PLO.

Governments often provide insurgent groups with organizational aid that takes many forms: attempts to broker deals among different organizational factions, assistance with recruitment, provision of financial incentives to encourage cooperation among opposition rivals, dissemination of lessons learned from previous insurgencies, and facilitation of propaganda. The United States, for example, has helped Iraqi groups unite under the banner of the Iraqi National Congress, lending at least a nominal coherence to their anti-Saddam efforts (Byman, 1999, pp. 23–37). Iran has also assisted Hezbollah in setting up a vast support network that provides recruits, intelligence, funds, and influence in Lebanese politics. Equally, the backers of various highly fractious Afghan movements helped them form the NA in 1996, solidifying and integrating opposition to the Taliban. Strong insurgencies, however, must soon organize themselves or face serious risks. The Lebanese Hezbollah, for example, retained close ties to Iran but has steadily began to manage its own affairs and operations. As a result, it has become a far more effective actor on the local political scene, able to tailor its operations—and at times rein them in—to improve the group's local popularity. Similarly, both HAMAS and the PLO became effective actors in part because they distanced themselves from the organizations that initially backed them, ensuring that local officials managed their affairs.

Inspiration

Inspiration from abroad often helps get an insurgent movement off the ground, but seldom sustains it for long. Marxism, Islamic radicalism, and other transnational credos have often inspired insurgents, encouraging them to resist government and transform society. In addition, the success of an ethnic group in advancing its cause in one country can convince other organizations in the same country or in neighboring areas that they can change their status in society and that violence can be an effective tool (Lake and Rothchild, 1998, pp. 25–27).

Sometimes a state's rhetoric or experience will inspire insurgents even when other forms of aid are limited. Such indirect support can demonstrate the viability of armed resistance, offer a particular organizing model, or illustrate the force of ideas. The Iranian revolution, for instance, inspired Muslim militants worldwide. Even though many Sunni militants opposed Iran's Shi'a government and distinct Islamic credo, the example of religion as a potent means to overthrowing a despotic authoritarian regime led a host of Sunni Muslim organizations to try to emulate Iran's revolution as a useful model.

Even when it does not materialize, the hope of outside backing can make rebellion more likely. A state's rhetorical support, for example, may inspire rebels to take a stand, believing that assistance is forthcoming. In such circumstances, potential insurgents may believe that the costs

⁹ In the northeastern Indian state of Assam, for example, the separatist United Liberation Front of Assam has reportedly provided its ISI sponsors with information on Indian troop movements from the northeast to the western and northern borders with Pakistan (Bedi, 2000, p. 32).

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of resistance will be few and the promise of success more real (Lake and Rothchild, 1998, pp. 26–27). This type of inspiration is often deadly. Although outside promises may lead insurgents to remain firm in the face of government pressure, they can also cause them to avoid compromise and engage in costly provocations, even when facing probable defeat.

Over time, insurgents must develop an ideology and message that has local appeal. A blind commitment to a transnational ideology may inspire fighters for a time, but will inhibit indigenous recruitment and prevent a movement from capitalizing on local opportunities.

Although a successful revolution or other heady success can increase the attraction of a particular ideology, its popular appeal almost invariably fades with time.¹⁰ A failure to go beyond foreign inspiration therefore equals disaster for any insurgent movement's potential longevity.

As the above review makes clear, insurgents' requirements vary tremendously. The assistance insurgents receive thus varies in value according to the needs of the particular group and its struggle. Almost all groups can benefit from a safe haven and diplomatic assistance. Some groups, however, do not need foreign assistance to buy arms because they can be obtained locally. Others may require training, while some can train themselves. In gauging the effects of outside assistance, it is critical to recognize that its value is directly related to what insurgents can and cannot acquire by themselves.

THE COSTS OF EXTERNAL SUPPORT

For insurgents, assistance from external sponsors entails costs as well as benefits. As noted above, foreign manpower, while helping to fill depleted guerrilla ranks, can also lead to a loss of nationalist credibility and, if human rights abuses occur, an erosion of local and international support. A large influx of cash to insurgents can contribute to corruption, feuding, and internal discord, as with the Afghan and Nicaraguan resistance forces during the 1980s (Bonner, 1987, p. 342). Foreign assistance in the form of international sanctuaries, while often extremely useful to guerrillas, can also have a negative impact. In moving abroad, insurgents risk cutting themselves off from their base of popular support. Resting and recuperating across a border, while providing obvious benefits, also carries the danger of operational isolation from potentially lucrative political and military targets (Laqueur, 1998, p. 393). Other forms of assistance, such as the provision of weapons, can have a distorting and negative effect on an insurgency's military tactics.¹¹

An alliance with a foreign power can also lead to more-violent government crackdowns on the insurgents or their perceived civilian supporters. The government and its domestic supporters are more likely to view the insurgents not simply as rebels, but as traitors. This is especially true if the government fighting the insurgency is also battling an international war with state supporters of the insurgents. Such associations contributed to mass killings of Kurds in Iraq, who had worked with Iran during the Iran-Iraq war. Previously in history, Turkish fear of Armenian collusion with Russia during World War I was a major impetus behind the Armenian genocide.

More broadly, external aid can lead to a decrease in an insurgency's freedom of action. Outside patrons typically seek some measure of control in exchange for their political, financial, and

¹⁰ For a discussion of this phenomenon with regard to radical Islam, perhaps the most potent transnational ideology today with the exception of liberal democracy, see Roy (1994).

¹¹ During the 1980s, for example, the Afghan resistance had ready access to foreign supplied longer-range weapons, such as 82-mm mortars and 107-mm rockets. As a result, resistance forces were able to minimize their own casualties by conducting frequent long-range barrages. However, such barrages were often ineffective against Soviet forces, and came at the expense of more potentially fruitful operations designed to take ground or defeat adversary units (Isby, 1992, p. 207).

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logistical investments (Bell, 1999, p. 166). However, insurgents—particularly those driven by strong nationalist sensibilities—generally are reluctant to allow their movement to fall under foreign domination.¹² Movements and their patrons often find themselves at odds over questions of strategy and tactics, political objectives, and the tempo and nature of political-military operations.

External support can also be fickle. Typically, second-generation members of diasporas are less enthusiastic about armed struggles than are their elders, and so fundraising by insurgents within those communities may prove to be more difficult over time. The LTTE, for example, is beginning to experience increased difficulty raising funds among younger members of the overseas Tamil community, many of whom have been absorbed into their host societies and retain little, if any, affinity for the Eelam cause (Ranetunge, n.d.).

In some instances, a dependency on state sponsors can have devastating consequences. A regime's goals and priorities are likely to change over time, and in some cases, a state will abandon an insurgency to take advantage of new strategic opportunities. Iran, for example, has both supported and reined in Iraq's SAIRI, varying its backing according to its geopolitical needs. Thus, Iran pushed SAIRI to undertake often-ruinous operations during its eight-year war with Iraq but provided, at best, tepid backing in 1991 when Saddam's regime was reeling following the Gulf War. Despite Saddam's weakness, Tehran wanted to avoid even an appearance of meddling in order to deprive the U.S.-led coalition of a pretext for continued intervention in Iraq, or even in Iran itself.

As important as external support can be to a guerrilla movement, it can also impose damaging and unacceptable burdens on an underground organization. In ideological, religious, and nationalist insurgencies, militants are risking their lives, and possibly those of their friends and families, to further a set of beliefs. Thus, self-reliance, dedication to the struggle, and self-denial are extremely useful qualities in rebel groups. Excessive reliance on foreign assistance can undercut these virtues and diminish the martial capabilities of a guerrilla movement, as demonstrated by the PLO's poor performance against the Israeli military after years of comfortable sanctuary in Syrian-controlled Lebanon. As insurgency analyst Gerard Chaliand (1987, p. 58) has cautioned, "every seriously organized guerrilla movement is well advised to rely mainly on its own resources."

In general, dependence on refugees, diasporas, and other non-state supporters carries fewer risks for insurgencies, even though the type of support these actors can provide is limited. Diasporas and refugees tend to follow the lead of rebel movements rather than view them as temporary allies or proxies to be controlled. As a result, sudden changes in funding or political support are far less likely.

¹² Rice (1988), p. 78. However, it should be noted that in some cases, such as Kashmir, the state sponsor has found it extremely difficult to exercise authority over its client (Bose, 1999, p. 163).