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Insurgent Origins

Where do insurgent groups come from? This chapter argues that pre-existing networks provide the underpinnings for new insurgent groups. Prewar political parties, students' and veterans' groups, and religious organizations, among others, are repurposed for rebellion. Nonviolent prewar bases can create integrated and effective insurgent groups. The trust, information, and shared political beliefs embedded in these networks help organizers construct new institutions and convert old organizations to new purposes in the chaos of an escalating war. But these social bases also place constraints on insurgent leaders. Integrated, vanguard, parochial, and fragmented groups emerge from different combinations of horizontal ties between organizers and vertical ties between organizers and local communities.

This chapter first identifies which types of social bases are likely to have the political orientation necessary for potential rebellion. It then explains how the structure of these social bases shapes the organization of new insurgent groups. Ideology, resource endowments, and state policy do not straightforwardly create insurgent groups. Instead, the ability of leaders to overcome a set of shared organizational challenges hinges on the social resources that are available to them. These social roots of insurgency in turn determine how other factors, whether they be drug money or Maoist doctrine, influence armed organization. Understanding insurgent origins establishes the basis for explaining change over time: as Kathleen Thelen has observed, "knowing how institutions were constructed provides insights into how they might come apart."[1]

Social Bases and Politics

Social bases are structures of collective action and social interaction in a society.[2] They differ depending on context, from peasant associations

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to Islamist networks to political parties. Social bases can be identified independent of warfare or future revolt: the French Communist Party, the Brazilian branch of the Catholic Church, and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood are all social bases, even though none are war-fighting organizations. The vast majority of prewar social bases have nothing to do with ambushing government soldiers, smuggling guns through distant mountains, or making strategic decisions about how to overthrow a government. This means that my argument is not tautological; if it is wrong, we will see major disjunctures between prewar political life and wartime insurgency.

However, the extraordinary profusion of social ties in every society creates a different problem: How do we know what to focus on when trying to explain insurgent origins? If all social bases are equally likely to create insurgencies, then the task of measuring and assessing them ahead of time is nearly impossible.[3] To deal with this problem, I categorize social bases along two dimensions. The first is whether a social base is politicized in potential opposition to state power. Apolitical and pro-state social bases can be distinguished from politicized opposition social bases that organizers could conceivably take to war against the state. This approach takes political and ideological commitments seriously without claiming that they have deterministic effects on how groups behave or organize. The second dimension is whether the organizers of a social base are actively preparing for a violent conflict. Organizations whose members include revolutionary plotters who are waiting to launch a rebellion can be distinguished from other social bases that have not built themselves for waging war, such as opposition parties or religious associations.

Social bases can be understood in four political categories (table 2.1) that enable us to perform a social "net assessment" of a society for the purpose of identifying likely roots of rebellion.[4] Symbols, discourses, and strategies of mobilization can bring a social base into alignment with the political status quo and the regime that runs a state, orient it in opposition, or make it politically irrelevant. This is admittedly a blunt analytical device, but it helps to narrow down the universe of social bases in a society that could be sources of rebel organization. I then look for evidence of pre-insurgency planning for violence. Indicators include military training, the acquisition of weapons, or the building of institutions dedicated to rebellion.

Unpoliticized and Pro-state Social Bases

A substantial portion of any given society is not politically primed for revolt. Many social structures do not line up with major political cleavages

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Table 2.1. Political categories of prewar social bases

Politicized opposition?	Planning for violence?	
	Yes	No
Yes	Revolutionary plotters; underground movements	Politicized but nonviolent social and political structures
No	Pro-state militias and party thugs; criminals	Numerous and varied, but largely irrelevant for purposes of my theory

for or against the state; they include groups such as bowling leagues or alumni groups. Few are ever truly apolitical, but it is rare that these kinds of social bases launch insurgencies. Politicized pro-state networks are the least promising terrain for insurgency. Nonviolent ruling parties, business associations linked to a regime, and pro-government intellectual networks, for instance, are unlikely to lead a rebellion.[5] Pro-state social bases that are created for the purpose of violence include regime-backed thugs, paramilitaries, and the armed wings of ruling parties.[6] If civil war breaks out, these groups will usually serve as counterinsurgents and state-backed militias.[7]

Politicized Opposition

The social bases most likely to underpin rebellion are independent from state patronage and have political beliefs that are compatible with opposing the government. The types of social bases that are most likely to be the prewar core of a future insurgency include opposition political parties, underground revolutionary groups, anticolonial nationalist movements, autonomous religious organizations, peasant associations, and networks of dissident student activists. Such groups have the "ideational resources" to challenge the state, even if most or all of their activities before war are decidedly nonviolent.[8]

There are two types of politicized opposition: revolutionary plotters and nonviolent opposition. Revolutionary plotters who prepare for violence before a war, such as underground movements and networks of militant anti-regime activists, can be the basis for rebellion. We might expect there to be little "causal distance" between prewar networks and future conflict when insurgency is launched by revolutionary plotters. Social ties could be the outcome of carefully optimized leadership strategies in expectation of war. If revolutionary plotters seamlessly built networks appropriate for insurgency and then became the dominant insurgent forces once war broke out, my argument about the importance of historically contingent, preexisting social

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bases would have little independent force. Networks would be simply outcomes of ideas.

In reality, the social bases of revolutionary plotters often develop in unintended ways and end up poorly suited to future wars. The goals of insurrectionary movements attract the attention of state forces and are thus more likely to be destroyed or disrupted. Revolutionary plotters may also misjudge the future contours of a conflict and build the wrong networks even when they are not repressed by the state. Strategic planning by underground movements frequently involves biased misjudgments and bad information, elements that decrease flexibility and adaptability when the unexpected inevitably happens.[9] Many movements prepare for a rapid putsch, a mass uprising, or a revolutionary seizure of power and then are surprised when a protracted guerrilla war develops; others prepare for insurgency but are overtaken by mass street protests or a coup. In such cases, we can see significant disjunctures between prewar ties and wartime needs. Insurgents go to war with the networks they have, for better and worse.

Nonviolent politicized opposition networks are the other major source of resistance to state power. In these social bases, political beliefs are linked to cleavages in a society in a way that makes rebellion politically thinkable.[10] These networks do not originate or persist for the purpose of future insurgency, but they are imbued with preferences that can lead to them opposing the state when the conditions for civil war onset are present.

Why are these social bases so potentially useful for future insurgency? First, their nonviolent activities before war begins reduce the likelihood that they will be preemptively wiped out by state repression. They have autonomy from state power through social linkages that the government cannot easily penetrate or co-opt.[11] Second, this category of social base can be more adaptable to new circumstances than revolutionary plotters because they have not tried to build networks in anticipation of any particular course of war. This provides flexibility in a highly uncertain environment. These characteristics make nonviolent opposition a crucial, if often overlooked, starting point for insurgent organization. Scholars and journalists pay too much attention to publicity-seeking revolutionaries and too little to the day-to-day networks that produce reliable cooperation.

The Structures of Social Bases: Horizontal and Vertical Ties

Contingency and history shape the political orientations of social bases, leaving some more primed for rebellion than others. The next step

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is studying the structure of those social bases of politicized opposition: how are people in these groups linked together? A social base has a core of organizers who connect people. These individuals are socially and geographically mobile. Each social base is also made up of a set of local communities—villages, neighborhoods, local networks—that is geographically concentrated and has limited links to other communities.

Social bases are composed of different combinations of vertical ties between organizers and local communities and horizontal ties among organizers. Some social bases strongly link members horizontally across space but have weak vertical ties to communities; other social bases have strong vertical linkages but weak horizontal ties across organizers. Ties are embedded in formal organizations and associations and in informal relationships, and often in the overlap of the two. These connections create variation in how collective action, information, and clusters of norms and shared preferences are distributed in social bases. Social bases can be compared to one another along these dimensions.[12] The structure of a social base creates clear ex ante predictions about what kind of insurgent group will emerge if the social base is mobilized for war.

Horizontal Ties

Horizontal ties link people across space and connect different geographic and social sites. They are formed between mobile individuals drawn from beyond a single social and geographic locale. Horizontal ties can differ in the flows of information, bonds of normative obligation, and shared political preferences across a given set of organizers.[13] Strong horizontal linkages underpin collective action and interactions among geographically or socially mobile leaders who are not fixed to a particular local community.[14] These ties make possible the consolidation of shared political visions at the regional or national level. Examples of strong horizontal networks would be a group of party members who regularly meet at conventions or a group of priests who trained together. These individuals are not bound to local communities but instead operate beyond them.[15] Students, activists, business elites, clerics, politicians and political entrepreneurs, labor leaders, intellectuals, and political party cadres are most likely to be enmeshed in strong horizontal ties.

Weak horizontal ties limit communication, coordination, and cooperation across localities. They make it difficult to know the political preferences of people outside a local community. Weak ties undermine the collective social resources available in a social base. An example of weak horizontal ties are those between local village strongmen who have loose links to other leaders in their ethnic group but who rarely see, talk to, or

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interact with them. Similarly, a political party may be a diffuse umbrella of local notables who have little in common beyond shared ambition. Enough linkages exist across localities for the local leaders to be considered part of the same social base, but they have little connection above this threshold.

Vertical Ties

Vertical ties are created by relations of information, trust, and belief that link organizers to local communities. These ties can be used by organizers as they try to build or sustain political, economic, or social projects in these communities. They are the social anchors that organizers can call upon to align extralocal goals and imperatives with local action. Local communities are where peasants, members of working classes, and other mass categories are centered, in contrast to the horizontal networks of mobile activists, elites, religious organizations, and student networks. Vertical ties do not directly connect communities; horizontal ties are what do that.

Strong vertical ties connect organizers to local communities through bonds of trust, information, and preference. People in the community know or can easily learn about organizers through direct personal experience, flows of information in their networks, or shared membership in an organization or association. Such ties make them more likely to cooperate with, obey, or listen to an organizer who attempts to mobilize a local community. An example of a strong vertical tie would be a political party member who is a native of a village and has recruited local family and friends into the party. These links provide the party member with social resources for collective action in the village.

Weak vertical ties exist when there are few social relations between organizers and communities. An organizer may want to connect a local community with others, but if he does not know its people, cannot access overlapping networks with locals that would provide information, and has few or no normative claims on their cooperation it will be hard to actually achieve this goal. Organizers in this situation "float"[16] above a community or set of communities. They are social outsiders who lack links to potential group members based on information, norms, or common political worldviews.

An example of weak vertical ties is a network of students from a middle-class background who met in a university but have few connections to the urban working classes with whom they want to cooperate. They live in separate spaces, talk to different people, and use rhetoric and frames of reference that are different from those of the people they hope to mobilize. Even if they are on the same side of a political cleavage,

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the student organizers cannot easily access information and create trust in the community because of these social gaps. Weak vertical ties often undermine urban elites who are trying to mobilize peasants to build states, get votes, or impose orthodox doctrine on local folk religions.

The Social Terrain of Politics

Vertical and horizontal ties combine to create the social terrain upon which politics is conducted. Patterns of cooperation and connection are crucial to everything from electoral patronage to state infrastructural power.[17] The goals and structures of social bases vary widely. Some are political parties trying to win elections, others are religious networks trying to access the divine, while others are underground movements seeking to mobilize the proletariat for mass revolution.[18] Social ties are not locked in place or "traditional," but they are also rarely created with an eye to future insurgency. Ideological visions, state policies, the economy, and leaders' agency can all be important in creating, sustaining, and structuring social bases, but such bases are enmeshed in patterns of actual social interaction and connection (or, just as importantly, their absence). Social bases represent a complex blend of agency, structure, and contingency that determines the ideational and social resources insurgent leaders can mobilize for war.[19]

Building Rebellion

Insurgent leaders construct organizations by trying to convert their prewar social networks into a wartime organization.[20] The beginning of a war is an uncertain process that puts huge strain on nascent insurgent groups.[21] Leaders do not have the freedom to make whatever kind of organization they want. Instead, they "socially appropriate"[22] existing structures of collective action for new functions. Networks provide potent advantages over other forms of mobilization based solely on common ideology, ethnicity, or class status because they can provide reliable and rapid collective action. Tapping into prewar social ties is useful for building the "the extra-local party and army organizations that are indispensable to win[ning] national state power."[23] These linkages facilitate the secrecy, discipline, and obedience that are necessary for building rebellion.[24]

Prewar politics determine the initial organization of rebel groups. While political meanings are not locked in place, they also cannot be easily transformed, which means that many social bases are politically irrelevant to insurgency. This is why the most important building blocks of

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rebellion are politicized oppositions. Even when organizers do draw on a politically salient social base, mobilizing rebellion is enormously difficult. Underground movements must move from stealthy organizing to real war, political parties need to shift from getting votes to training and funding fighters, and clerical networks are challenged by the transition from engaging in religious activities to creating institutions for generating coercion. The ability of leaders to overcome these challenges depends on the social ties they can mobilize. Some leaders are enmeshed in strong horizontal but weak vertical ties, others have exactly the opposite set of social resources, and yet others have few resources at all.[25]

Structure and Agency in Organizing Insurgency

The historical roots of social bases limit the freedom of action of organizers trying to get a rebellion off the ground. This raises the question of why new insurgent leaders do not simply change their social ties as a war escalates. The uncertainty of the future is the key problem leaders face; it is hard for them to know what course to pursue, and social structures are not easily changed, especially in the face of government repression. As Barnard notes in a different context, "successful cooperation in or by formal organizations is the *abnormal,* not the normal, condition. . . . Most cooperation fails in the attempt, or dies in infancy, or is short-lived."[26]

Leaders embedded in social bases cannot fluidly reshape their social relations or political meanings.[27] It is very hard to readjust social linkages on the fly: "history gives no clean slates."[28] This creates inertia and mismatches between current social ties and future needs. Leaders of a clerical association that is pro-government are unlikely to persuade the association's members to launch an insurgency. A group of revolutionary plotters hoping to rapidly seize power in the capital city cannot quickly create vertical linkages to rural peasants, especially if security forces try to repress the nascent insurgency.[29] Though social bases may be the result of years of political and social work to build relationships, there is no guarantee that these ties will be most appropriate to the specific pressures of insurgency. This is "an environment where chance and contingency cannot be underestimated."[30] Many militants end up dead, marginalized, or in jail because of the uncertainty of war and the difficulty of reshaping their networks. The left-wing students who launched a Maoist uprising in India's West Bengal in the late 1960s were methodically wiped out within several years because they lacked deep ties to the peasantry. They tried to quickly create these ties when it became clear that the war would become a protracted guerrilla conflict, but they failed to do so.[31]

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This does not mean that there is no role for creativity and individual leadership. The most important opportunity for agency comes in decisions about alliances and coalitions. Leaders may decide to combine forces, enter into an umbrella agreement, or merge their structures. Such decisions can create disjunctures between the structure of a prewar social base and the organizational type of the insurgency that develops. Structure is not the same as determinism, and the empirical research in chapters 4–7 identifies cases where smart strategies overcame the limitations of social bases and, conversely, miscalculations squandered structural advantages. Nevertheless, once the underlying structure of a group is established, it cannot be easily changed.[32]

Explaining Insurgent Structures

Chapter 1 introduced a new typology of insurgent groups: integrated, vanguard, parochial, and fragmented. Prewar social bases create these different organizational starting points. Central organizational control can be built quickly when leaders have good reasons to trust one another, confidence in broadly shared goals, and access to rich shared flows of information.[33] These social resources come from prewar horizontal ties between organizers, making possible the creation of institutions for strategy, socialization, and coordination.[34] Where horizontal ties are weak or nonexistent, central control is more difficult: as Huntington has observed, "mutual distrust and truncated loyalties mean little organization."[35]

Vertical ties between organizers and local communities lay the basis for insurgent control at the local level. The leadership reaches into communities through preexisting networks to organize war. These linkages make it possible for leaders to communicate with local fighters, socialize new members, and deter and punish internal defiance. When leaders lack vertical ties, organization building on the ground is far more challenging. The embeddedness of leaders in communities helps determine whether organizations can quickly build an organizational backbone to govern, provide services, and control the population.[36] Table 1.2 shows how prewar social bases create new insurgent group structures. This linkage between prewar politics and wartime mobilization explains why insurgent groups that seem to be similar can take on fundamentally different organizational structures.

If my social-institutional theory is wrong, there will be consistent differences between social bases and wartime organizations. If ideologies matter more than the social base, Communists reading Mao should build different types of organizations than ethno-religious separatists,

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regardless of the prewar social bases of each of these types of group. If material resources are the crucial determinant of organization, leaders with access to material resources will build systematically different kinds of organizations than those without resources. If state policy is essential, leaders facing population-control counterinsurgency will construct distinct organizations than those that are dealing with indiscriminate counterinsurgency. Later in this book, I draw on empirical research that helps me assess how well these alternative explanations explain patterns of insurgency.

Even if my theory is correct, these other factors will surely be important. Yet this book should help to explain how these other influences work: counterinsurgency should be more effective against some types of groups than others, the implementation of Maoist doctrines should depend on whether leaders have the social resources to turn aspiration into reality, and the effects of resources on groups should depend on social bases and the organizations they create. Similar social building blocks will lead to similar organizations and will determine the effects of other variables.

My theory cannot explain why leaders embedded in strong social ties decide not to try to create organizations. I assume that leaders want to build integrated organizations, but this assumption is surely sometimes wrong.[37] Similarly, there will be cases where innovative or creative leaders transcend their social base or other variables overwhelm social bases as a war escalates.

Origins of Integrated Organizations

Leaders embedded in social bases with strong vertical and horizontal ties use these ties to create integrated organizations. New processes and new functions are built upon preexisting connections among leaders and on the ground in local communities. Bureaucracies are most likely to emerge when social linkages pull together both central leaders and local followers who cooperate in forging new organizational processes. Integration occurs even if the group is not highly popular, and it happens regardless of what resources a group has and across different ideologies. The Provisional IRA in Northern Ireland used family and republican networks to quickly create fighting units in Belfast in 1969, even though there had been almost no insurgent violence in Belfast for decades. McCann shows the importance of social bases: "the tiny republican movement of the time, embodied in Belfast in a few families, like the Adamses, the Hannaways, the Prices and the MacAirts, provided an organizational framework, a channel for expression and a readiness to fight that matched the sudden mood of the Catholic masses."[38]

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Horizontal networks help leaders create central processes of decision-making, command and control, strategic assessment, and ideological production. Normative obligations decrease the likelihood of betrayal, shared preferences reduce the odds of major splits, and information flows allow for in-group policing that can check (though never fully eliminate) infiltration and disobedience. Leaders of a disciplined prewar political party, for instance, are likely to have these collective social resources, which will enable them to create new institutions and repurpose existing networks. The specifics of organizational structure will obviously vary, but we see broad similarities: bureaucratic specialization, standard operating procedures, a clear leadership structure, and a reasonably coherent ideology that is disseminated consistently throughout the organization.[39]

Vertical ties connect central leaders to communities and make it possible to quickly establish institutions for local control. The fundamental challenge in many rebellions is linking leaders with local communities. Vertical ties mitigate this challenge because they provide trustworthy, information-rich channels for accessing villages, neighborhoods, and other local networks. These sites can be harnessed to the broader agenda of the organization by enabling leaders to gain the cooperation of villages and neighborhoods. The gaps that so often exist between "peasants and commissars"[40] are overcome. Vertical ties make it possible for leaders to share their ideology with people at the local level, facilitating political education and the reproduction of worldviews favorable to the insurgency. When these ties are in place, leaders can more easily monitor foot soldiers and local fighters are more likely to obey leadership commands.

Local networks become the basis for new fighting units that can train and socialize new foot soldiers while being linked to the broader organizational structure. For example, a party member who has long operated in a village but remains connected to party members in other areas uses his local branch as a site for identifying and recruiting fighters. A teacher identifies promising students to recruit and pass along to commanders. Because of such local processes, "insurgents have been spared the difficult task of inducing participation through the provision of new incentives of either a solidary or material nature."[41]

Strong horizontal and vertical ties lay the groundwork for providing incentives, governance, and services that can be used to mobilize broad civilian support. These strategies are important for maintaining and expanding insurgency, but an organizational structure needs to first be in place to implement them. Integrated groups will be the most effective at consistently enacting these policies. Hamas, for instance, was able to convert its Muslim Brotherhood base into robust insurgency with surprising

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speed and effectiveness because of its social linkages. As Mishal and Sela note, "From the beginning Hamas was organized into a small number of hard-core activists who coordinated and activated a wide network of supporters through the mosques whose preachers were often members of the movement or had close acquaintances in the Islamic students' associations and communal services."[42]

Once integrated organizations are created, they can take on greater distance from society. However, they cannot become fully autonomous as long as they need to rely on local intelligence, support, and recruits. A continued relationship to society is a great strength for integrated groups; they can use local ties to harness manpower and information without becoming captured by local interests and feuding. Although under certain circumstances the linkages that hold integrated groups together can become weakened or destroyed, thus undermining control within the organization, integration is the most promising starting point for insurgents.

Origins of Vanguard Organizations

Vanguards emerge when strong horizontal and weak vertical prewar social ties have been mobilized by rebel leaders. Networks that strongly connect activists, elites, and mobile organizers to one another are best positioned to build new central insurgent institutions. But such networks will have trouble quickly organizing local communities if they lack strong vertical ties. This trajectory is quite common, especially when urban political movements and networks attempt to reach into rural areas to organize for war, students and elites aim to mobilize socially distant communities, or exiled leaders try to control armed movements from afar.

Insurgent leaders at the top of a new organization can quickly create central institutions by mobilizing strong horizontal ties. The linkages among nascent leaders, whether they be labor organizers, clerics, or urban intellectuals, are used to construct the central command. This mixture of social relations and shared political meanings makes it easy to forge a clear party line and build central bureaucracies that can tap into resources and make decisions in difficult circumstances. The structure of leadership will be at least partially collective: there may be a key individual leader, but even if that is the case, he or she will be surrounded by a core of commanders who have connections to one another that predate the war.

Vanguard organizations are classic Leninist "combat parties." The advantage of this organizational type is the discipline and commitment of its leaders. A group's ideology is often intertwined with the prewar

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social ties through which the group is built, and that ideological focus tends to carry over into the command elite. In contexts where rapid coordinated action is essential, a vanguard group can become a decisive and dominant player. The Bolsheviks in 1917 Russia rose to power by using a strong party leadership to outmaneuver their rivals.

Despite these strengths, vanguard organizations lack reliable local roots that can establish and sustain local processes of control. Leaders and prospective followers drift past one another, lacking common understandings of politics and shared social relationships. The organization is forced to send socially alien recruiters into communities to try to mobilize supporters, and it is not surprising that these recruiters have problems establishing local control. This occurs even if the policies the insurgents are advocating would in fact benefit the community or if they are trying to emulate models of mobilization that succeeded elsewhere. This is why the Bolsheviks had to launch a long, fractious process of consolidation even after their seizure of power: they lacked extensive vertical ties and needed to build them through brutal warfare.

Two distinct, though closely related, variations of a vanguard group can arise, depending on initial expansion strategy. First, some vanguard groups may never build a local presence. Their fears of the negative effects of expansion forestall efforts to aggressively reach into communities. Local control barely exists because there is little to control in the first place. This type of vanguard group, which is typically confined to urban and elite social environments, finds it difficult to draw on social support for protracted irregular warfare. The failure to build connections with local communities undermines efforts to mobilize the citizenry through selective incentives or ideological appeals, because a structure must be in place to lay the groundwork for local organizing. In this situation, leadership decapitation becomes an extremely serious vulnerability since local replacements do not exist. The inability of Che Guevara to inspire the rural masses to revolution in the jungles of Bolivia is a clear example of the limits of vanguards.

In the second variation of a vanguard structure, a group may decide to accept a slew of local fighters without clear screening and control. Internal disagreements about obedience and control occur because channels of information and trust have not been established.[43] Organizers do not know who to trust, how to find fighters, or whether their foot soldiers are obeying them, all of which makes bureaucratization difficult. The coalition between a tight core of leaders and an array of local fighters and commanders is loose. This situation often leads to local defiance and dissent that undermines local control: units ignore leaders, actively work against their orders, or even rebel against them. The Communist Party of

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Thailand, for instance, initially could expand only by recruiting autonomous local networks and hill tribes from Thailand's periphery, leaving party leaders vulnerable to defiance from and abandonment by local units.

In vanguard groups, an ideological and disciplined leadership is vulnerable to heavily armed local forces. The patterns of internal unrest that emerge between leaders and local units should map onto prewar social structure. In protracted guerrilla warfare, weak local control is a serious liability in building and maintaining rebellion.

Origins of Parochial Organizations

Leaders who draw on vertical linkages to local communities without strong horizontal ties to one another construct parochial organizations. The weak links between organizers undermine central institutionalization and control. Localized power centers are built into the organization and de facto sub-organizations are clustered around particular leaders, even if the official organizational chart suggests otherwise. In this situation, leaders have little trust in the other leaders and cannot monitor each other's behavior. An absence of common and consistent policies across the different factions of an organization militates against coherent strategy and bureaucratization.

These organizational factions resemble prewar cleavages and blocs in the social base.[44] A group of clerics loosely connected through an ephemeral central leadership may want to cooperate and work together, but they will face basic challenges to collective action as they build new violent organizations. The local clerical networks will serve as the primary actors instead of a central command. These collections of localized networks may go to war together for numerous reasons: an alliance of convenience, a shared identity category, common political interests, miscalculation of the needs of future war, or a lack of other options. Whatever the case may be, the core underlying dynamic remains that social structure shapes organization.

Organizations that emerge from such a social base will take on one of two leadership structures: either a single leader engaged in tenuous "brokerage" across distinct factions or a fractious collective leadership of commanders.[45] In the first leadership situation, the broker has the power to play factions against one another. This central leader may have individual power through symbolic authority, access to external resources, or both.[46] But brokerage is fragile because war creates unexpected shocks and setbacks. These arrangements are prone to coups, breakdowns, and factional feuds. Moktada Al-Sadr's militia in Iraq was

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built around disparate local factions and networks. Consequently, as the International Crisis Group noted in 2006, Sadr led "a movement that is short of resources traditionally considered critical in Shiite politics, is rife with internal contradictions, and remains both unpredictable and undisciplined."[47]

In the second situation, we see a coalition of commanders of factions who act autonomously despite the existence of an ostensible collective leadership. This occurs when there is no charismatic or credible central leader who can rise above the different factions. Some degree of central coordination may exist, but without consistent policies for making and enacting decisions. Commanders will not trust one another enough to become subordinate to or obey the others.[48] In Syria in the period 2011 to 2013, the insurgency represented "a rebellion divided into little fiefdoms"[49] even though some umbrella organizations claimed to unite local units. In such a situation, each faction corresponds to a preexisting network, at least initially.

The tight strategy, bureaucratic specialization, and central unity that we see in vanguard and integrated organizations are absent in parochial groups because of the limited social resources of their leaders. Actual processes of central strategy making and implementation are not anything like processes outlined in formal organizational charts. Efforts to reform and transform the organization are unlikely to succeed as long as the underlying social linkages remain the same, because these linkages have built powerful "veto players" into the organization.[50]

The key advantage of a parochial organization is local embeddedness, drawn from prewar vertical ties that are converted into local units and factions. Vertically embedded (but horizontally isolated) organizers use their networks on the ground to quickly establish fighting forces. They become local commanders, strongmen, and power brokers with whom both counterinsurgents and other commanders in their own organization must contend. In contrast to the fragile discipline at the center of an organization, there is consistent control and obedience in each bloc, including developed norms and expectations about appropriate behavior and mechanisms for punishing disobedience.

The disorder in the broader organization obscures local factional coherence and order on the ground. This distinctive pattern of central fluidity and local stability arises from the social origins of these organizations. We can even see integrated factions nested in parochial groups. The local units of a parochial group tend to be tough fighters who know their local areas well and are able to induce cooperation from the civilian population, both through preexisting links and through the credible

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manipulation of coercion and bribery. In such a situation, counterinsurgents have a difficult time establishing local dominance and rooting out embedded factions. If the central difficulty in vanguard organizations is reaching into localities, the key challenge in parochial groups is managing conflict between the leaders of armed local factions.

Origins of Fragmented Organizations

Fragmented organizations emerge when organizers are unable to draw on any kind of strong social ties to build their new group. They desperately try to recruit from wherever they can, with disastrous consequences for their organizations. Many organizers try to mobilize insurgent groups but fail to get off the ground because they lack the capacity to generate collective action or build any kind of control. If an organization does emerge from this social base, it will be fragmented. Fragmented organizations are prone to rapid, often fratricidal, failure and decay. When facing a strong state they are likely to be quickly wiped out or pushed aside. They are somewhat more potent in the context of a weak state and can also survive in exile, without a serious presence in the war zone. These are the least common type of enduring insurgent group, even though many groups rise and quickly fall as fragmented organizations.

A few key leaders recruit other commanders outside their preexisting network to form the new command of a fragmented group. Prior ties that can facilitate this organization-building task do not exist. The commanders may not have known each other at all or well before the war, they lack shared information flows, and major differences in political goals and preferences are likely to emerge as the war evolves. As a consequence, we see little or no specialized bureaucracy, careful strategic assessment, or leadership unity at the central level in fragmented groups. A fluid coalition of leaders dropping in and out of the group characterizes the initial trajectory of a fragmented organization; opportunism and alliances of convenience dominate leadership politics. This structure is extremely vulnerable to state counterinsurgency and internal unrest.[51]

Recruitment of diverse individuals, the presence of local subgroups with nowhere else to go, and diffuse collections of fighters undermine local control. Vertical ties do not exist to shepherd and structure organization building in communities. A shambolic process of recruitment occurs based largely on local incentives: a fragmented group may provide a useful organizational cover for the pursuit of parochial criminality, for instance. Leaders may have to pay for fighters or even abduct them. These are the sorts of organizations that Jeremy Weinstein refers to as

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"opportunistic"; they are held together by personal gain and coercion at best and are prone to complete collapse at worst.[52] National and local cleavages of war will be distinct since no institutional mechanisms exist to bridge them. Formal procedures will have little bearing on actual organizational activities on the ground.

The Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) in Northern Ireland is a classic example of this process: it attracted a motley collection of recruits (including criminals and expelled members of other groups) and was forced to rapidly expand because of a brutal feud when it split from the Official IRA. The INLA rapidly spiraled into internecine killings and drug dealing. Even from its early days, "factions within the INLA openly struggled for supremacy,"[53] and by 1987 even its own internal documents argued that "we have also failed to purge our membership of unsuitable material, having in the past tolerated informers, touts, careerists, opportunists, sectarians and macho militarists."[54]

The one advantage of a fragmented organization is that it can sometimes engage in low-level violence for a protracted period precisely because its lack of organization makes it hard for the state to fully wipe it out. However, this is an unpromising starting point for an organization.

The Social Underpinning of Insurgency

The origins of insurgent organizations lie in prewar politics. The vertical and horizontal ties in which leaders are embedded and the political salience of these ties shape what kinds of organizations emerge. As conflicts begin and escalate, social and political structures are transformed, appropriated, and repurposed into militant organizations. Wars are not waged from a blank slate: instead, their early days are rife with attempts to draw upon prewar political life in order to quickly form organizations that can handle the strains of violence. The social terrain of war helps some leaders and undermines others as the weight of history, choice, and contingency shapes how organizers can mobilize. This explains why some organizations forge ahead while others fall by the wayside.

Other influences, such as ideological doctrines or material resources, are filtered through this underlying social-institutional structure. Integrated groups can handle huge inflows of resources without becoming predatory thugs, while fragmented or parochial groups are much more likely to suffer from feuds linked to resources. Creating a Marxist-Leninist organizational weapon should be much easier for leaders with strong horizontal ties, whereas leaders with weak horizontal links will find it difficult to create leadership cohesion. Vanguard groups will

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struggle more to provide local services and governance than parochial and integrated groups will. The point is not that these other variables are irrelevant but instead their effects are contingent on the ways the organization is embedded in social forces. The next chapter builds on this argument to explain when and why insurgent groups change over time during conflict.