

Loss of external popular support can hasten the demise of a VEO.

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General Description of the Literature:

Many political science scholars and military practitioners argue that passive and/or active popular support is vital for VEO survival (i.e., Cronin 2006 and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff 2006). Loss of external support reduces a VEO's resources and subsequently adversely impacts the group's capabilities. The VEO falls into a self-reinforcing downward spiral: former members help the government, more members leave, the VEO goes into hiding, and the remaining supporters become disenchanting and isolated. Poor decision making leads to actions that further the VEO's decline over time. The VEO then either abandons terrorism as a tactic or collapses (Ross and Gurr 1989; Crenshaw 1991). Since financial backing from a global terrorism network or a state sponsor may serve as a substitute for external popular support, weakening a VEO's support base may not always curtail activity (Siqueira 2006). Actually achieving the loss of external popular support may come from varied policies and conditions detailed by many scholars and success may depend on several factors (including Gvineria 2009; Abrahams 2008; Cronin 2006; and Siqueira 2006). Several historical examples support the hypothesis (Ross and Gurr 1989; Cronin 2006; Crenshaw 1991).

Detailed Analyses

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Summary of Relevant Empirical Evidence: Historical evidence implies that a VEO's loss of popular support can catalyze the desertion of the strategy or the group's overall termination. Several scholars detail historical examples of the role of the loss of popular support in the collapse of several organizations, including Red Brigades, Shining Path, ASALA, FLQ, Weather Underground, and the Real IRA (Ross and Gurr 1989; Crenshaw 1991; Cronin 2006). However, these scholars do not provide systematic case studies or separate the effects of losing popular support from other factors involved in the demise of VEOs.

Empirical Support Score: 1 = Anecdotal support only for the hypothesis

Applicability to Influencing VEOs: The anecdotal evidence supporting the hypothesis is direct in the context of VEOs

Applicability Score: Direct: At least some of the empirical results directly concern the context of influencing VEOs

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