

POLITICAL GAMES IN ORGANIZATIONS

(from Mintzberg, 1989:238-240)

Insurgency game: usually played to resist authority, or else to effect change in the organization; is usually played by "lower participants" (Mechanic, 1962), those who feel the greatest weight of formal authority

Counterinsurgency game: played by those in authority who fight back with political means, perhaps legitimate ones as well (such as excommunication in the church)

Sponsorship game: played to build power base, in this case by using superiors; individual attaches self to someone with more status, professing loyalty in return for power

Alliance-building game: played among peers—often line managers, sometimes experts—who negotiate implicit contracts of support for each other in order to build power bases to advance selves in the organization

Empire-building game: played by line managers, in particular, to build power bases, not cooperatively with peers but individually with subordinates

Budgeting game: played overtly and with rather clearly defined rules to build power base; similar to last game, but less divisive, since prize is resources, not positions or units per se, at least not those of rivals

Expertise game: nonsanctioned use of expertise to build power base, either by flaunting it or by feigning it; true experts play by exploiting technical skills and knowledge, emphasizing the uniqueness, criticality, and irreplaceability of the expertise, also by keeping knowledge to selves; non-experts play by attempting to have their work viewed as expert, ideally to have it declared professional so that they alone can control it

Lording game: played to build power base by "lording" legitimate power over those without it or with less of it (i.e., using legitimate power in illegitimate ways); manager can lord formal authority over subordinate or public servant over a citizen, etc.

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Line versus staff game: a game of sibling-type rivalry, played not just to enhance personal power but to defeat a rival; pits line managers with formal decision-making authority against staff advisers with specialized expertise; each side tends to exploit legitimate power in illegitimate ways

Rival camps game: again played to defeat a rival; typically occurs when alliance or empire-building games result in two major power blocs; can be most divisive game of all; conflict can be between units (e.g., between marketing and production in manufacturing firm), between rival personalities, or between two competing missions (as in prisons split by conflict between some people who favor custody and others who favor rehabilitation of the prisoners)

Strategic candidates game: played to effect change in an organization; individuals or groups seek to promote through political means their own favored changes of a strategic nature

Whistle-blowing game: a typically brief and simple game, also played to effect organizational change; privileged information is used by an insider, usually a lower participant, to "blow the whistle" to an influential outsider on questionable or illegal behavior by the organization

Young Turks game: played for highest stakes of all; a small group of "young Turks," close to but not at the center of power, seeks to reorient organization's basic strategy, displace a major body of its expertise, replace its culture, or rid it of its leadership

replace the leadership but to "change some aspect of organizational function"—some program or key decision, for example—but from outside the conventional political channels (837, 838). And mass movements, which range "from protest to rebellion," are "collective attempts to express grievances and discontent and/or to promote or resist change" (841). These are more visible and involve more people than the other two forms.