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**Co-opting Warlords:
A Strategy for Success?**

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1. Introduction

The notion that warlordism is a new phenomenon is a misconception. Examples of warlords can be found throughout history, ranging considerably in time and location. Similar systems of warlords can be found in settings as diverse as fifth century Europe and twentieth century China.¹ What sets apart today's warlords is the context in which they are situated. The end of the Cold War and conditions of globalization have increased the number of opportunities for warlords to both gain a foothold in states and to expand their power by taking advantage of an increasingly globalized economy. Over the past twenty years, there have been several different methods used by states in order to cope with warlords. Among these: strong-state support for weak-state rulers; the use of private security companies by weak-state rulers; interventions by strong-states or the international community; the inclusion or acceptance of warlords in legitimate governments. This paper seeks to examine the value of this last option. **Considering the sources of warlord power, is the strategy of co-option - inviting warlords to participate in a national government - an effective strategy for strengthening and rebuilding a failed state?**

In order to assess the merits and drawbacks of co-opting warlords into a national government, the roots of the warlord system must be clearly understood. Accordingly, the paper begins by examining the sources of warlord power. In particular, the conditions needed for a warlord to emerge, the methods used by warlords to expand their power and the rationale behind tolerance/support for warlords among a population are examined. This examination draws upon the limited recent academic literature concerning the current warlord phenomenon.

Upon this foundation, the paper attempts to evaluate the strategy that has been used in post-Taliban Afghanistan: including known warlords in a legitimate and internationally recognized government. The idea of a warlord-turned-politician is not unique to Afghanistan. In 1989, Charles Taylor launched a long battle against President Samuel Doe of Liberia. Through his tactics, Taylor established himself as a powerful warlord, at times controlling most of Liberia. In 1995, Taylor began to take part in the national government, holding several executive positions, including the presidency. Before being elected President, Taylor took part in the ruling Council of State, alongside other warlords and warring parties. This council, set up by the

¹ In Britain following the collapse Roman Empire (410) and in China following the collapse of the Qing Dynasty (1911). See: Jackson, Paul (2003): Warlords as Alternative Forms of Governance. In: Small Wars and Insurgencies 14, no. 2, Summer 2003, p. 135-136.

Abuja Accords of August 1995, co-opted warlords and other warring factions into a ruling council—an attempt to bring peace to Liberia. This paper uses the Liberian case to help illustrate the sources of warlord power. The experience of the Council of State is also drawn upon to supplement the main case of Afghanistan in analyzing the co-option strategy. This analysis begins by examining the merits of the co-option strategy. Then, it addresses potential and observed problems posed by the participation of warlords in national governments. An emphasis is placed upon addressing the conditions used by warlords to illegitimately accumulate power. With an eye to these conditions, solutions are offered to help solve some of the potential problems of the co-option strategy. Finally, the paper concludes with a reflection on the evidence at hand and offers an assessment of the co-option strategy.

2. Definitions and Context

2.1. Definitions

Before examining the sources of warlord power, the term warlord should be defined. “Warlord” has been widely, but inconsistently, used by politicians and news media. This may partially result from the lack of a clear consensus among scholars of what the definition of a warlord is. Antonio Giustozzi, who has conducted extensive research on warlordism in Afghanistan, lists several points upon which scholars can generally agree. According to this list, warlords are sub-state actors that control a military force. They are concerned only with themselves and try to profit from state-disorder. A warlord, who “relies on a hard core of supporters [...],” “uses violence and coercion to maintain his power.”² In addition, Giustozzi includes a few points of his own, adding that a warlord is “recognized as a legitimate and maybe even charismatic military leader,” who “displays a neopatrimonialist attitude towards the polity that he is running.”³ This definition, while more extensive and, thus, limiting, is still compatible with the oft-cited definition provided by Mark Duffield: “leader of an armed band, possibly numbering up to several thousand fighters, who can hold territory locally and at the same time act financially and politically in the international system without interference from the state in which he is based.”⁴ The actors cited in this paper appear to satisfy both

² Antonio Giustozzi (2005): The debate on warlordism: the importance of military legitimacy. Discussion Paper no. 16. Crisis States Programme Development Research Centre, October 2005. London, p. 5.

³ Antonio Giustozzi (2005): The debate on warlordism, p. 14.

⁴ Mark Duffield, *Post-Modern Conflict, Aid Policy and Humanitarian Conditionality* (Birmingham, U.K: Univ. of Birmingham 1997) cited in: Jackson, Paul (2003), p. 132.

definitions: Abdul Rashid Dostam, Ismail Khan, Mohammed Fahim and Mohammad Mohaqeq of Afghanistan and Charles Taylor of Liberia.

There are also several terms concerning the status of a state, which should be clarified. The term “failed state,” like warlord, lacks a clear definition. Here, a failed state is defined by a common understanding of the term: “states in which institutions and law and order have totally or partially collapsed under the pressure and amidst the confusion of erupting violence...” These conditions are “invariably the product of a collapse of the power structures providing political support for law and order, a process generally triggered and accompanied by ‘anarchic’ forms of internal violence.”⁵ A state on its way to failure is here referred to as a “collapsing” or “failing” state. Finally, William Reno often talks of “weak states,” a term also used in this paper. A weak-state should be understood as a state in which a ruler rules largely through his patronage system, which exists alongside normal, but ineffective state bureaucracy.⁶

2.2. Context

It is generally agreed that a collapse of state power is one of the major prerequisites for the rise of a warlord. Paul Jackson notes that, in recent years, this weakening and in some cases total collapse of state power has occurred following the disintegration of the Soviet Union. This event left former satellite states without any political, financial or military support.⁷ Thus, many governments of newly-independent states, which had previously enjoyed Soviet patronage, were left without a strong grip on power. This is evident in the April 1992 collapse of the Soviet-backed Najibullah regime in Afghanistan.

The collapse of the Soviet Union signified something greater than the disappearance of a single state. It signaled the end of the Cold War. Not only did the Soviet Union cease to exist as a state, it also ceased to exist as the major competitor of the United States. As a result of this situation, “creditors and aid donors quickly discovered that they could impose a growing list of conditions in return for cash.”⁸ In other words, western nations and institutions, especially the United States, did not need to blindly support regimes in order to offset Soviet beneficiar-

⁵ Thürer, Daniel (1999): The ‘failed State’ and international law. In: *International Review of the Red Cross*, no. 836, 31 December 1999, p. 731.

⁶ Reno, William (1998): *Warlord Politics and African States*. London, p. 731.

⁷ Jackson, Paul (2003): *Warlords as Alternative Forms of Governance*, p. 139.

⁸ Reno, William (1998): *Warlord Politics and African States*, p. 48.

ies in the region. Rulers' responses to creditors' demands and a drop-off in international aid caused major problems in several states, including Liberia.

Reno examines this case in detail. Finally, John Mackinlay notes that even before the end of the Cold War:

“during the 1970s, many newly emerged nations fell into debt. In some cases, their already fragile economies were disrupted by civil conflict, while others were weakened by the collapse of the price of their exports [...] The combination of loan repayment obligations and the diminishing value of state assets removed executive power from the governments of nation-states.”⁹

Thus, there have been several recent factors that have compounded the problems of weak state rulers. Due to conditions heavily dependent on events on the international level, some states grew weaker, failing to project power, distribute resources or exercise sovereignty. As in 410AD Britain and 1911 China, warlords filled the power vacuum. The current generation of warlords has been assisted by globalization, which has created more opportunities for warlords to expand their power and resources. The sources of this power are examined in the next section.

3. Sources of Warlord Power

According to the aforementioned definitions, a warlord must command a military force. This military force, hereafter referred to as “militia,” and its ability to exert force and collect resources either through effective military action or intimidation lies at the root of a warlord's power. Paul Jackson places the need for such a militia in the context of a collapsing state: “with the complete breakdown of moral authority and the law, let alone any means of enforcement, the only recourse is to establish rule through force.”¹⁰ Thus, a warlord's power is based upon his ability to project force in a collapsing or failed state. Without any recognizable rule of law, “the use of violence, though abhorrent, is a necessary element of establishing control and enforcing contracts and therefore maintaining stability...”¹¹ Both weak state rulers and warlords need to use violence “to control the distribution of wealth and the building of political alliances.”¹²

Antonio Giustozzi attributes much of the Afghan warlords' success to their “charisma as military leaders and their ability to wield alliance,” in addition to their “direct control over a pool

⁹ Mackinlay, John (2000): *Defining Warlords, Building stability in Africa: Challenges for the new millennium*-Mono. 46. Centre for Defence Studies, February 2000. London.

¹⁰ Jackson, Paul (2003): *Warlords as Alternative Forms of Governance*, p. 137.

¹¹ Jackson, Paul (2003): *Warlords as Alternative Forms of Governance*, p. 148.

¹² Reno, William (1998): *Warlord Politics and African States*, p. 8.

of disciplined and trained troops.”¹³ However, commanding power by force does not necessarily require that a warlord tactfully preside over a well-organized fighting machine. On the contrary, “the majority of warlord forces of sub-Saharan Africa [...] do not have the attitude or structure of effective military units. They rely instead on their frightening behaviour and appearance...”¹⁴ Indeed, Jackson refers to the “casual nature of violence” and “gang mentality” of a warlord’s forces.¹⁵ Thus, the ability of a warlord to inspire fear can be just as important as having classical military skill.

An effective and/or intimidating militia can collect resources for a warlord, adding to his wealth and ability to redistribute resources to those who support him. These resources are used to maintain the loyalty of the militia itself, to ensure the support of the populace in areas a warlord controls and to maintain a patronage system - a system of would-be rivals and those who lend a warlord support in exchange for benefits (money, access to resources). These benefactors are a warlord’s “clients.” Since a warlord relies on his militia to maintain power, tactics used to accumulate wealth and pay for arming and maintaining a militia should first be examined.

Historical cases point to several different opportunities for a would-be-warlord looking to arm a militia. One option would be to receive arms from a foreign source with a vested interest in the domestic situation. Following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the U.S. Carter Administration provided the *mujahideen* - those fighting the Soviet invaders - with arms via Pakistan to assist their battle against Soviet troops. Support, in terms of both arms and logistics for the *mujahideen*, began two weeks after the Soviet invasion and lasted through the 1980s.¹⁶ While the *mujahideen* benefited from U.S. strategic interests, not all would-be-warlords find themselves in such a pivotal geopolitical position as to attract the support of a foreign power. Instead, they are forced to be resourceful in financing weapons for themselves. One such opportunity presented itself with the collapse of the Soviet Union: several former Soviet states, desperate for a boost in revenue, sold off weapons, turning “Soviet military aid into a private arms market.” Several emerging warlords took advantage of this massive sell-off, arming their militias and posturing themselves “to directly challenge vulnerable rulers.”¹⁷ Still, an initial, if modest, source of income is needed to take advantage of the market flooded with

¹³ Giustozzi, Antonio (2003): *Respectable Warlords? The Politics of State-Building in Post-Taliban Afghanistan*. Working Paper no. 33. Development Research Centre, September 2003. London, p. 6.

¹⁴ Mackinlay, John (2000): *Defining Warlords, Building stability in Africa*, p. 7.

¹⁵ Jackson, Paul (2003): *Warlords as Alternative Forms of Governance*, p. 138.

¹⁶ Lansford, Tom (2003): *A Bitter Harvest: US Foreign Policy and Afghanistan*. Aldershot, England, p. 127-29.

¹⁷ Reno, William (1998): *Warlord Politics and African States*, p. 46.

cheap weapons. Charles Taylor began his ascent to power by looting the Bong Iron Ore Company, a German firm that had been abandoned. By selling materials he took from the Ore Company, Taylor was able to earn enough money to buy weapons from abroad.¹⁸

Once a non-state actor acquires weapons and arms a militia, his investment can begin to bring in its own revenue, helping him to achieve the financial and political resources needed to become a warlord. At the most basic level, the arms can be used to directly pay for and feed the soldiers themselves. A well-organized militia could use its weapons to attack villages and other areas in order to forcefully accumulate and redistribute resources. Shah Tarzi notes the importance of supporting the militia members and the impact of this condition on warlords' tactics. Following the collapse of the Communist government in Afghanistan, having the military power to effectively collect food was vital, as keeping militia members fed was "the prerequisite to maintaining power" in the lawless country.¹⁹ With Soviet forces gone and with it American support for the *mujahideen*, militia members could be seen scouring Kabul for food. In an attempt to support their militias, some *mujahideen* sought new ways to maintain their militias and evolve into warlord figures. Several set up posts on borders and internal roads, collecting customs and tolls.²⁰ In Liberia, Charles Taylor supported his militia in a similar fashion. He showed that an effective militia could simply help itself to pay. After arming militia members, Taylor allowed them to "loot any areas they fight over."²¹ In addition, he permitted the erection of roadblocks throughout "Taylorland," the region of Liberia under his control, in order to collect tolls. This tactic allowed "fighters to collect their 'pay' for themselves rather than providing for them from a (nonexistent) state treasury."²²

On a larger scale, militias help a non-state actor to bring more resources under his control, strengthening him financially, politically and militarily. This is when such an actor becomes a "proper" warlord. Until the withdrawal of the Soviet Union from Afghanistan, the *mujahideen* used American arms to resist Soviet forces. By continuing their battle, the *mujahideen* effectively earned themselves progressively more sophisticated American arms and support.²³ In Liberia, Taylor also sought to use foreign sources to enhance his capabilities. Rather than turning to a foreign state for support, Taylor was able to use his military strength to cut deals

¹⁸ Jackson, Paul (2003): Warlords as Alternative Forms of Governance, p. 140; Reno, William (1998): Warlord Politics and African States, p. 95.

¹⁹ Tarzi, Shah (1993): Afghanistan in 1992: A Hobbesian State of Nature. In: Asian Survey 33, no. 2, February 1993, p. 165.

²⁰ Giustozzi, Antonio (2003): Respectable Warlords, p. 6.

²¹ Jackson, Paul (2003): Warlords as Alternative Forms of Governance, p. 140.

²² Reno, William (1998): Warlord Politics and African States, p. 96.

²³ For a more detailed description of American assistance, see: Lansford, Tom (2003): A Bitter Harvest: US Foreign Policy and Afghanistan, p. 128.

and enter into partnerships with large foreign firms. In addition to his extensive cooperation with Firestone, for whom he “controlled” the workforce, Taylor provided security for (and refrained from interfering with) other companies. For instance, a consortium of European Community, American and Japanese steel companies paid Taylor \$10 million a month for ore on the Liberian-Guinea border and for Taylor’s cooperation.²⁴ Taylor realized that his “only option was to acquire resources by controlling local accumulation and regional markets to finance his own military...”²⁵ What he lacked in international aid, Taylor made up for by controlling Liberia’s resources: timber, rubber, iron ore and diamonds. By the mid-1990s, Taylor controlled up to ninety-five percent of Liberia.²⁶ Thus, he controlled enough resources to attract business partners, often using them to pay clients of his patronage system directly. Taylor also used these business links to acquire materials to improve his military capabilities: mining companies were asked to provide fuel, oil, spare parts and vehicles, while Firestone provided much of the advanced communications equipment Taylor sought (see below).²⁷ Taylor used his militia and status as strongest power in Liberia to strong-arm foreign firms into making him stronger and wealthier. However, he could only do this as long as he controlled resources. This dependency on resources, not strict territorial borders, explains Taylor’s support for rebels in Sierra Leone and subsequent occupation and inclusion of a diamond-rich section of that state in Taylorland.²⁸ As long as they continued to profit from his power, clients of Taylor’s patronage system and foreign firms continued to cooperate with him. This translated into the creation of an economy that produced over \$200 million in revenue per year.²⁹

The importance of controlling resources did not go unnoticed by Afghan warlords. Giustozzi notes instances of Afghan warlords taking over factories and gem mines. Others capitalized on the thriving Opium trade, smuggling the drug, thus gaining a foothold in what by 2002 was a \$1.2 billion industry.³⁰ In the case of Ismail Khan, a warlord allied himself with a drug lord, helping him to gain a foothold in the opium industry.³¹ However, without the vast natural re-

²⁴ Reno, William (1998): *Warlord Politics and African States*, p. 100; Jackson, Paul (2003): *Warlords as Alternative Forms of Governance*, p. 140-41.

²⁵ Reno, William (1998): *Warlord Politics and African States*, p. 93.

²⁶ Harris, David (1999): From ‘warlord’ to ‘democratic’ president: how Charles Taylor won the 1997 Liberian elections. In: *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 37, no. 3, September 1999, p. 434.

²⁷ Jackson, Paul (2003): *Warlords as Alternative Forms of Governance*, p. 140; Reno, William (1998): *Warlord Politics and African States*, p. 96-100.

²⁸ Reno, William (1998): *Warlord Politics and African States*, p. 98.

²⁹ Reno, William (1998): *Warlord Politics and African States*, p.98-99.

³⁰ Giustozzi, Antonio (2003): *Respectable Warlords*, p. 6.

³¹ Rubin, Barnett (1994): *Afghanistan in 1993: Abandoned but Surviving*. In: *Asian Survey* 34, no. 2, February 1994, p. 190.

sources afforded to Taylor, the Afghan warlords needed to find additional ways to produce revenue. One such method was to exert control over the judiciary, “forcing local businessmen and traders to conform to their wishes.”³² As in the case of warlords that control substantial natural resources, the Afghan warlords used illegitimate means to operate outside the legitimate economy of a failing state.

With arms, money and resources in hand, warlords may also seek to gain legitimacy among segments of the population or foreign actors. Taylor used advances in technology and globalization - through his links to international firms - to improve his image at home and on the international stage. He used business ties “as surrogates to conduct diplomacy with states.”³³ Using high-tech communications technology, acquired from partner firms, Taylor tried to improve his world image by coordinating with his American public relations firm and offering the BBC live updates of his progress in the field. He boosted his image at home via his media empire (radio, newspaper) and through gimmicks as simple as printing free t-shirts.³⁴ Thus, Taylor was always seeking to shore-up the support of those in Liberia and improve his image to new potential foreign partners, either firms or governments. He took advantage of the new opportunities presented by globalization to maintain and expand his empire. As Afghan warlords were not afforded such technological luxuries, they sought legitimacy through war itself. The bloody battles for Kabul have been cited as resulting from the understanding that “whoever is in control of Kabul will be better positioned to claim international recognition and receive a greater share of power in the event of a settlement,” while battles over territory sought to “maintain cohesion among one’s own ranks.”³⁵ Thus, Afghan warlords used war to position themselves for greater international respect and domestic (within base, not entire state) unity.

³² Giustozzi, Antonio (2003): *Respectable Warlords*, p. 6.

³³ Reno, William (1998): *Warlord Politics and African States*, p. 101.

³⁴ Jackson, Paul (2003): *Warlords as Alternative Forms of Governance*, p. 146, 140.

³⁵ Giustozzi, Antonio (2003): *Respectable Warlords*, p. 6-7.

4. Co-opting Warlords

The following section attempts to analyze the merits and dangers of one strategy intended to solve the problem of warlords when rebuilding a failed state. The co-option strategy for incorporating warlords into a government in an attempt to watch and weaken them does not offer a danger-free solution. The following analysis focuses on Afghanistan, where warlords were invited into the first post-Taliban government. The analysis also draws upon the Liberian Council of State to help illustrate potential dangers of the co-option strategy. First, background to the case of Afghanistan is presented. Using the cases, the benefits and dangers of the co-option strategy are considered. Finally, solutions to the potential pitfalls of the strategy are offered.

4.1. Background of Afghan Warlords

In 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, initiating what became a long, drawn-out and costly war. A collection of personalities joined the forces of their militias to fight the Soviets and resist the Soviet-backed communist regime. These fighters were known as *mujahideen*. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Soviet-backed regime in Afghanistan was destabilized. “No longer a buffer between contending empires or alliance systems, Afghanistan’s state lost the foreign financial and military aid that had enabled Pashtun ruling groups based in Kabul to exercise limited control...”³⁶ As a result, the Najibullah regime collapsed in April 1992 and fighting broke out in Kabul. However, this time fighting was not between the *mujahideen* and the Soviets, but rather between the *mujahideen* themselves. Shah Tarzi describes the situation: “a variety of hyper-armed groups, representing many and diverse *mujahideen* parties and ethnic and tribal affiliations, roamed the capital, competing for power and food.”³⁷ Thus, the same actors who were allied against the Soviets and enjoyed the backing (partially in the form of arms) of the United States began to fight each other in a power vacuum, attempting to collect resources for themselves. Several of these former *mujahideen* emerged as powerful warlords.

When the Taliban took control of Afghanistan in 1994, warlords lost significant power, but did not disappear. Afghanistan largely faded from the public view under the extremist Taliban regime only to reappear on the front page of newspapers following the terrorist attacks of

³⁶ Rubin, Barnett (1994): Afghanistan in 1993, p. 185.

³⁷ Tarzi, Shah (1993): Afghanistan in 1992, p. 165.

September 11. After the American government declared that Osama Bin Laden was behind the attacks, the world's attention quickly focused on the extremist regime. The Taliban government offered Bin Laden a safe haven, refusing to turn him over or expel him. In October, American airpower and "Northern Alliance," or "United Front" ground forces attacked the Taliban regime for control of Kabul and Afghanistan. The U.S. supplied the Northern Alliance, which was composed of the militias of several warlords of the former *mujahideen*, with weapons and equipment to run the ground war in Afghanistan.³⁸ The strength of the Northern Alliance, shown by their role in toppling the Taliban by December, worried some following the war. In fact, the U.S. feared that the warlords would consolidate power before any other group could.³⁹

The United Nations estimates that following the fall of the Taliban, up to 750,000 men were part of warlord militias.⁴⁰ As a result of this strength, warlords were either invited or tacitly accepted into the new Afghan government on the central and regional levels. Antonio Giustozzi comments on the attempts of the aristocracy and elite to strike an alliance with warlords and militia leaders:

"Short of a major coalition intervention, this was the only choice available in early 2002, when all of Afghanistan was under the control of these forces. These alliances coincided to a large extent (and not by chance) with those that Coalition forces formed with a number of warlords and factional military leaders. As a result, the rule of warlords and factional leaders over the regions was legitimized and they were brought into the state structure. The assumption appears to have been that the first stage of state re-building in Afghanistan could only be based on the cooptation of the warlords into the state administration and security forces, because of the limited resources available and the unwillingness of the Coalition to commit its troops to exercise pressure on the warlords."⁴¹

Thus, Giustozzi argues, co-option was the only available choice for the new government of Afghanistan. He points out that four of twenty-seven government ministers were warlords and militia leaders; twenty of thirty-two governors had been military commanders during the civil war between the warlords and former *mujahideen* commanders.⁴² Co-option was seen as a strategy that could solve some problems of the state-building process, but it also presented major dangers.

³⁸ Lansford, Tom (2003): *A Bitter Harvest: US Foreign Policy and Afghanistan*, p. 166-67.

³⁹ Lansford, Tom (2003): *A Bitter Harvest: US Foreign Policy and Afghanistan*, p. 170.

⁴⁰ Giustozzi, Antonio (2003): *Respectable Warlords*, p. 4.

⁴¹ Giustozzi, Antonio (2004): 'Good' State vs. 'Bad' Warlords? A Critique of State-Building in Afghanistan. Working Paper no. 51. Crisis States Programme, Development Research Centre, October 2004. London, p. 3.

⁴² Giustozzi, Antonio (2004): 'Good' State vs. 'Bad' Warlords, p. 5.

4.2. Benefits of Co-option

Changing the direction in which a failed state is headed - by introducing the rule of law and forming a new government - involves many challenges. One major problem is that a new government must fight to establish itself as the sovereign authority within a state. Without a strong police force or the ability to exercise absolute sovereignty over its territory, a rebuilding state might deem it wise to invite warlords into government. This strategy would be born out of the hope that incentives to joining a national government - in the form of a prestigious and profitable post - would give a warlord enough reason to abandon illegitimate means of increasing his personal wealth. Once in a governmental post, a warlord could more easily be watched-over and persuaded to embrace a legitimate form of profit-making.

In the absence of a strong national army, there might not be any options for forcefully disarming private militias. Without the presence of a strong foreign or international military force, warlords would likely have military power superior to that of an infant government. In cases where an international presence is provided by the United Nations, foreign states would likely be extremely reluctant, if not outright unwilling, to allow their troops to participate in an active military campaign (as opposed to a traditional peace-enforcement role). Even if it were able to enforce peace and provide security, an international force could not remain in a rebuilding state forever. If an international force failed to fully disarm warlords, militias could simply mobilize again once the force left. Larry Goodson argues that as of 2004, even the International Security Assistance Force and American Coalition forces could not expend enough resources or project enough power to control warlord militias in Afghanistan, never mind disarm them.⁴³ Thus, it could be in the best interest of a rebuilding state's new government to cooperate with, rather than confront a powerful warlord.

As seen in the Afghan case, warlords can command a formidable number of troops and influence the lives of many people who depend on them for resources.⁴⁴ As long as a warlord continues on business-as-usual, he will continue to command the allegiance, or at least dependency, of these clients. This dependency would prevent a large portion of the population from showing loyalty to any new government from the outset. The inclusion of powerful warlords in a national government could help secure the allegiance of many militia members, civilians

⁴³ Goodson, Larry (2005): Building Democracy After Conflict: Bullets, Ballots, and Poppies in Afghanistan. In: *Journal of Democracy* 16, no. 1, January 2005, p. 25.

⁴⁴ Giustozzi, Antonio (2003): *Respectable Warlords*, p. 4: "500 Afghan households have something directly at stake in the warlords armies."

and clients of a warlord's patronage system. If offered a post in the national government, the warlord might not only disarm, but also secure support for the national government by helping the government distribute resources to his former clients. In other words, rebuilding a failed state will never work as long as warlords, not the government, ensure the availability of resources to a large portion of the population. Thus, the state must remove the warlord from his role of provider and act on its own to effectively distribute resources once a warlord joins the government. Co-opting a warlord into the government could facilitate both of these conditions.

Warlords are the actors who proved to be effective military leaders and entrepreneurs under the anarchic conditions of a failed state. They are the actors who were able to take command and exert power. Many warlords have been able to provide security and distribute resources more effectively than weak state governments, bringing benefits to those who cooperate with them, even if in a coercive manner. Thus, warlords could bring the skills of strong leadership to a new and inexperienced government. Past experience in building small "political" units and an economy within a failed state offers them an understanding of previous state failures as well as potential solutions. Moreover, warlords are often charismatic military leaders, who could prove helpful in developing a strong national army. Indeed, despite his role in beginning and perpetuating the civil war in Liberia, in 1996 it could still be said of Taylor: "The myth that he is a man who can take swift and firm action has yet to be exploded..."⁴⁵

Inviting a warlord to join a new government might just be the most effective way to keep a close watch over strong potential enemy of a new government. Once in office, constant scrutiny and smart maneuvering - keeping him on a short leash - could check a warlord's power. Removing him from office could be accomplished once his position has been weakened relative to that of the state. This strategy would avoid a direct conflict between a warlord and a government while the power of the warlord is at its peak and that of the government is at its lowest point. Three largely successful examples of this strategy are evident in the Afghan case. First, Ismail Khan, "Afghanistan's foremost warlord," was forced in 2003 to choose between remaining governor, a position he held since the fall of the Taliban, and being a military commander. Since he chose to remain as governor, Khan lost his control of armed forces, a move that caused friction and fighting. However, the government of Afghanistan "bought off middle level warlords and turn[ed] them against their patron," a move that proved effec-

⁴⁵ Sesay, Max Ahmadu (1996): Politics and Society in Post-War Liberia. In: The Journal of Modern African Studies 34, no. 3, September 1996, p. 412.

tive in decreasing Khan's power.⁴⁶ Second, Abdul Rashid Dostum was given named the Deputy Minister of Defense - a position without any real power. Dostum was simply excluded from meetings as a security advisor to the president. In 2004, he was not offered any major position in the central government. Finally, Karzai stripped Mohammad Mohaqeq, who had been named Minister of Planning, of his power in 2004.⁴⁷

4.3. Dangers of Co-option

While the benefits of including a warlord in a new government are clearly relative, they become even more tentative when weighed against the problems and potential dangers posed by such a solution. First, there is no guarantee that a warlord will disarm and disband his militia. This is clearly seen by Taylor's refusal - in flagrant violation of the Abuja Accord - to disarm once on Liberia's ruling body, the Council of State.⁴⁸ Indeed, with several warring factions represented on the council, it was reported that militia leaders so adamantly opposed disarmament they threatened their own fighters in order to dissuade them from disarming.⁴⁹ Furthermore, attacks by Charles Taylor's militia on the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG),⁵⁰ the group that enforced the Abuja Accords, show that not only does a governmental post not ensure disarmament, but it does not necessarily do anything to hinder armed clashes between a warlord's militia and a peacekeeping force or national army.

If a warlord did accept a national post, the fact remains that a national army would, in its infancy, likely not be a credible enough threat to enforce the disarmament of a large militia. Furthermore, the state's weak position vis-à-vis a warlord would make it extremely difficult to pressure a warlord into disbanding his militia - he was, after all, invited into the government by the state. Too much pressure from the government could alienate a warlord, leading to his withdrawal from government. The co-option strategy is a result of a weak state needing the support of a strong warlord, not visa versa. Giustozzi suggests that while economic benefits the population receives from being in a coercive relationship with a warlord are important, "the deep roots of warlordism in Afghan society are first and foremost explained by the strong

⁴⁶ Giustozzi, Antonio (2004): 'Good' State vs. 'Bad' Warlords, p. 8-9.

⁴⁷ Giustozzi, Antonio (2004): 'Good' State vs. 'Bad' Warlords, p. 7.

⁴⁸ Sesay, Max Ahmadu (1996): Politics and Society in Post-War Liberia, p. 403.

⁴⁹ Sesay, Max Ahmadu (1996): Politics and Society in Post-War Liberia, p. 406.

⁵⁰ See, for instance: "Taylor apologies to Malu for clashes with peacekeepers," Agence France Presse, 11 December 1996.

demand for security by the population, especially in the villages.”⁵¹ Thus, it would be unlikely that a warlord would sacrifice his base of support by disarming and disbanding his militia. This would be an even more illogical move by a warlord if a national army or police force was not strong enough to guarantee security. In Afghanistan, the problem of disarming warlord militias is perhaps exacerbated by the fact that the United States supplied them with arms following September 11.⁵² Specific cases of resistance to disarmament can also be found in Afghanistan, as illustrated by the reluctance of Ismail Khan to disarm.⁵³

There are also no guarantees that a warlord will give up dubious, if not outright illegal, business practices and partnerships once he is in office. Unless a warlord disarms, the state would again find itself in a very weak position vis-à-vis the warlord. Dismissal from office might be the only leverage available to pressure a warlord-turned-official into giving up illegitimate practices, which undermine the state. Depending on the profitability of these established ventures, this threat may have very little effect. The danger also exists that a warlord could not only refuse to or only superficially cease illegitimate profit-making ventures, but that he could also use a governmental post to increase his power- using new powers to assist old ventures or to create new ones. Such a scenario could deal a severe blow to both the credibility and effectiveness of an infant government. Indeed, there are documented cases in Afghanistan in which warlords have entered office in an attempt to increase their power. “In June 2003, Fahim stood out as the most successful warlord vis-à-vis the state, controlling the ministry of defence with almost complete autonomy,” while Ismail Khan and Rashid Dostum “made concessions, but maintain substantial power bases.”⁵⁴ Larry Goodson paints an even darker picture: “Virtually all of these warlords have used their power to enrich themselves and their followers, coming to control well over half the cash economy, with access not only to the heroin trade but also to customs revenues, illegal real-estate deals, mineral wealth, timber, and road tolls.”⁵⁵ Warlords would be inclined to abuse governmental posts, if they knew the state was not strong enough to prevent them from doing so. Thus, without enough national authority to enforce the rule of law, the co-option strategy could drastically backfire, strengthening, rather than weakening a warlord. In Liberia, Charles Taylor had lost much of his territory (eleven of thirteen counties) and resources when he launched an attack - dubbed Operation Octopus- a-

⁵¹ Giustozzi, Antonio (2003): *Respectable Warlords*, p. 4.

⁵² Goodson, Larry (2005): *Building Democracy After Conflict*, p. 30; Gannon, Kathy (2004): *Afghanistan Unbound*. In: *Foreign Affairs* 83, no. 3. May/June 2004, p. 38.

⁵³ Giustozzi, Antonio (2003): *Respectable Warlords*, p. 14.

⁵⁴ Giustozzi, Antonio (2003): *Respectable Warlords*, p. 16.

⁵⁵ Goodson, Larry (2005): *Building Democracy After Conflict*, p. 25.

against ECOMOG at the end of 1992.⁵⁶ However, upon assuming a seat on the Council of State, Taylor maintained a militia and considerable wealth and resources from his years of international business partnerships. In such a scenario, a warlord's inclusion in the national government could allow him to gain a foothold in areas where he would otherwise not have access and allow him to put his substantial resources to use, subverting the state.

As noted in the third section of this paper, many warlords depend on brutality to project power. All warlords, by definition, have the ability to use force. In Afghanistan, as in other places, warlords have been involved in brutal battles against each other, killing and destroying the lives of civilians. This point is not simply forgotten when a warlord takes a post in a national government. Kathy Gannon notes, "All these men [Fahim, Dostum and Rabbani] share responsibility for the ferocious killing of the mid-1990s [...] Yet these men also now sit at the negotiating table with the United States, the UN, and other members of the Afghan government, bartering for power."⁵⁷ It would be safe to assume that warlords who have been known to commit crimes of war and atrocities would be dragged before a tribunal, were their support not so badly needed to reconstruct a state. In 1995, Charles Taylor was one of the strongest actors in Liberia and earned a spot on the Council of State.⁵⁸ Eleven years later, Liberia has a new, democratically elected president. On 20 June 2006, Taylor was placed in The Hague, where he currently awaits trial for war crimes and crimes against humanity.⁵⁹ Taylor is an example of a warlord who should have been prosecuted, but was instead included in a government because it could not compete with his strength.

Offering a national post to such a personality could severely damage the credibility of a government. It could lead to widespread resentment of a national leader on the domestic front, while creating a discomfort or unwillingness of foreign states to work with such an official. Moreover, this would set a dangerous precedent and convey a less-than-desirable message: as long as a state cannot compete with a warlord's strength, that warlord is not only able to avoid punishment for past atrocities, but could also be rewarded for the power he gained by committing them. Giustozzi warns that Hamid Karzai could face major problems by allying himself with "rotten apples" that rose to power based upon their "ruthlessness in extracting resources." As a result, "Karzai could be tied down by his spurious alliances with the warlords

⁵⁶ See: Sesay, Max Ahmadu (1996): *Politics and Society in Post-War Liberia*, p. 397.

⁵⁷ Gannon, Kathy (2004): *Afghanistan Unbound*, p. 36.

⁵⁸ For more on the formation and composition of the council, see: Sesay, Max Ahmadu (1996): *Politics and Society in Post-War Liberia*, p. 399-409.

⁵⁹ United States Department of State, "Press Statement: Bringing Charles Taylor to Justice," (Washington, D.C., 21 June 2006), <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2006/68192.htm> [10.07.06]

and lose in legitimacy what he gains in political power.”⁶⁰ Sesay notes that preceding the 1997 presidential elections, Liberians had not forgotten that warlords were responsible for the devastation in Liberia. To them, “Voting for the warlords [was] viewed widely as tantamount to creating *kakistocracy*, a government by the worst citizens of the state.”⁶¹ Any new government, which seeks to build a strong, legitimate state, would do well to avoid association with any figures that induce such strong negative perception.

Even more complicated than the issue of disarming a warlord once he joins a government is assessing intangible aspects of his power. There is no way to ensure that once a warlord takes up a position in a government, clients of his patronage system and those who benefited from his “rule” would shift their allegiances to the central government. This is especially true if a government included other warlords - former rivals. As there is no fool-proof solution to disarming a warlord or ensuring that he stops illegal profit-making ventures, a warlord could continue to employ fighters - thus providing security and resources for his old power base - despite being in a legitimate office. Should a warlord truly find it in his best interest to disarm and concentrate on his position in the new government, there is no guarantee that his former clients will automatically follow. Until the state is able to effectively provide security and distribute resources, a warlord’s former clients and militia members will simply seek out a new patron. This could strengthen a different warlord or facilitate the rise of a new one.

Allegiance takes on extra importance when placed in the context of a national military. As providing security is essential to reducing the influence of warlords, strong national security forces are important. Should a warlord, based upon his past success as a military leader, be given a military post, there is a real danger that he will be able to win the loyalty of troops at the expense of a developing government. He could use this loyalty to prevent or alter orders of the national government. Even strict rules of civilian control over the military could prove insufficient where the system is too new and unproven, lacking such an established norm. This could prove catastrophic if the military were to include a significant number of a warlord’s former militia members. If this were the case, the national army could lose legitimacy in the eyes of the population. Concerns arose when Charles Taylor recommended that a Liberian national police force - one which included 800 of his former militia members - be armed. That the police were under the control of John Tate, nominated to his position by Taylor, only increased suspicions.⁶² Conversely, an appointment to command security forces could cause

⁶⁰ Giustozzi, Antonio (2004): ‘Good’ State vs. ‘Bad’ Warlords, p. 10.

⁶¹ Sesay, Max Ahmadu (1996): Politics and Society in Post-War Liberia, p. 409-10.

⁶² Sesay, Max Ahmadu (1996): Politics and Society in Post-War Liberia, p. 407.

problems with former members of rival militias who have since joined the national army. Offering such posts to warlords in Afghanistan has not proven entirely unproblematic. Giustozzi notes that many 'vassals' of the Afghan warlords did have roles in the new army. "They have been recognized as colonels and generals, often without any technical know-how, proper military training and not necessarily having shown great military skill." He continues, stating that actual warlords resist positions in a hierarchy, demanding positions higher than the three and four star general rankings some of their former vassals have received.⁶³

Many warlords rise to power as a result of their military success, charismatic personality, or utter brutality. These are traits that do not necessarily correlate to education. While Charles Taylor attended Bentley College (near Boston, MA), many warlords did not receive such a thorough education. Growing up in the difficult conditions of a failing state, many warlords never even finished the most basic levels of education. Indeed, some high-level officials in the Afghan government "had no previous professional experience and often lacked basic educational skills [...] with just a few years of private (*madrassa*) education and barely able to read and write, if at all."⁶⁴ While putting a warlord into office is an attempt to bring him into the fold, it should not be overlooked that unqualified, uneducated government officials would likely decrease the ability of a new government to efficiently provide security and distribute resources - conditions necessary for eliminating a major basis of warlord power.

The ability of a warlord to work with others in the government is important for the ability of that government to effectively and efficiently function. If a warlord is invited to join a new government in an attempt to rebuild a failed state, there is a high likelihood that that government would also include former rivals - former weak-state government officials, warlords or other strongmen. If these parties cannot have a mutual trust for, cooperate with or at least tolerate each other, the chances of creating a truly effective government would be severely damaged. Infighting and jockeying for power on the Liberian Council of State, composed of Liberian warlords and strongmen, illustrates this danger.⁶⁵ Not only did the council's original power structure render it ineffective, as civilian members never exerted power equal to that of the warlords, but problems between members of the government became violent. After several bouts of fighting between factions, Taylor decided to strip the leader of one of those factions, Roosevelt Johnson - Minister of Rural Development - of his post and have him arrested by a police unit made up of his militiamen, a move that split allegiances on the Council of

⁶³ Giustozzi, Antonio (2003): *Respectable Warlords*, p. 15.

⁶⁴ Giustozzi, Antonio (2004): 'Good' State vs. 'Bad' Warlords, p. 5.

⁶⁵ Sesay, Max Ahmadu (1996): *Politics and Society in Post-War Liberia*, p. 400-05.

State.⁶⁶ Afghanistan also shows how problematic cooperation between former rivals can be. After being appointed governor of Afghanistan's Faryab province, Enyatollah Enoyat "soon found out he was powerless to enforce government authority without the cooperation of Junbesh," the party of warlord-turned-Deputy Minister of Defence Dostum. Enoyat partnered with another warlord (and rival of Dostum), Hashim Habibi, who helped Enoyat enforce his authority as governor. However, just one year after being appointed governor, Enoyat was forced to flee when Habibi was chased out of the province by Dostum's militia in April 2004.⁶⁷ This case shows that conflicts can occur not only between politicians on the same level of government, but also between those on the central and regional levels.

The inclusion of warlords in a new government rests upon the hope that that they can be either reformed or weakened and eventually removed from power. However, this is easier said than done. Goodson prescribes extreme caution when using this logic: "any approach that hinges on working with warlords needs to be mindful of how this may make them stronger and harder to dislodge down the road."⁶⁸ In Afghanistan, some see Karzai's initial inclusion of Fahim on his presidential ticket as an attempt to pry him away from his strong hold on the Ministry of Defense. If this is true, it was an unsuccessful attempt, which shows the danger of this strategy. Electoral law requirements simply forced Karzai to drop Fahim from the ticket, as Fahim refused to give up his position as Minister of Defence.⁶⁹ Thus, the warlord retained his powerful national post, despite an attempt by the government to remove him.

4.4. Solutions

The dangers presented by the co-option strategy for rebuilding a failed state are considerable. However, it would be irresponsible to simply say that the problems are insurmountable. The difficulty is that solutions to the aforementioned problems are more likely to be applicable in a scenario where the problem at hand is isolated. This will almost never be the case, as warlords control militias, private economies and the support of clients - all of which must be addressed. Thus, while some of the problems might have corresponding solutions, it is important to not lose sight of the greater picture. This section briefly presents possible solutions and the conditions necessary for a strategy of co-option to work.

⁶⁶ Sesay, Max Ahmadu (1996): *Politics and Society in Post-War Liberia*, p. 403-04.

⁶⁷ Giustozzi, Antonio (2004): 'Good' State vs. 'Bad' Warlords, p. 11.

⁶⁸ Goodson, Larry (2005): *Building Democracy After Conflict*, p. 27.

⁶⁹ Giustozzi, Antonio (2004): 'Good' State vs. 'Bad' Warlords, p. 2.

It is imperative that a new government addresses the conditions that lie at the roots of warlord power. Thus, success in the co-option strategy depends on a government's ability to effectively distribute resources and, in the Afghan case especially, provide security. If a warlord's services are not needed, he will quickly lose support among a population. Warlords are coercive figures. They receive support only from those parts of the population which benefit from a warlord's "rule." Once this rule is no longer needed, support will dry up, severely weakening his base of power. For this to happen, it is first imperative that a government develops security forces strong enough to provide general security. Giustozzi argues this point, stressing that only a strong, neutral army would satisfy demand for security and lessen any dependence on warlords. However, he stresses that this process takes years.⁷⁰ If there is no strong military presence - in the form of an international, foreign or other force - in the meantime, the results could be disastrous.

The second source of warlord power that must be addressed is the ability of a government to distribute resources. A government must be able to efficiently distribute resources if this condition is to be satisfied. This would, in turn, help a government gain the support of former clients of a warlord. Members of the population must be able to make a living without turning to crime or a warlord's militia. In Afghanistan, a profitable source of revenue other than opium must be found. The economy must be diversified and the government must be able to regulate and facilitate this. This would not only provide possibilities for legitimate sources of revenue for those who benefit from a warlord's patronage, but it would also provide alternate means of income for current and would-be warlords. Furthermore, a government must impose substantial penalties on any firm that cooperates with a warlord, thus cutting off a major potential source of revenue. With the development of a strong national army, a warlord might feel threatened enough to decide that a legitimate source of revenue, once the opportunity exists, would be more a profitable and viable option in the long run. Goodson notes that some warlords have turned to legitimate roles in business, but worries that "some have found the transition to organized crime to be logical, easy, and profitable."⁷¹

One condition necessary for the strategy of co-option to be successful is having the ability to offer a position with enough incentives to lure a warlord, without affording him too much power. First, the position must be profitable and/or prestigious. One potential solution would

⁷⁰ Goodson, Larry (2005): *Building Democracy After Conflict*, p. Giustozzi, Antonio (2003): *Respectable Warlords*, p. 14.

⁷¹ Goodson, Larry (2005): *Building Democracy After Conflict*, p. 34.

be to offer ambassadorial or ceremonial posts, the former of which is endorsed by Gannon.⁷² However, a warlord might take an ambassadorial post with the intention of using his new power and contact with foreign actors to help expand his wealth at home. Also, it might not be wise to make a brutal warlord the face of a new government trying to gain international acceptance. A warlord that fears that such a post would cut him off from his domestic base might simply reject the co-option strategy altogether. A similar post within the rebuilding state would have to be a ceremonial one. However, a government must choose carefully, ensuring that a ceremonial post would not put a brutal military figure in a position of moral authority.

To avoid the problem of top posts - both in the government and in the military - being awarded to uneducated and unqualified people, perhaps posts could be filled by more qualified allies of the warlords. This could alleviate a warlord's concern that the new government is trying to make him irrelevant. It would not only increase the quality of the government, but also avoid the presence of notorious warlords in prominent government positions. This tactic could also help prevent a strong, military warlord from taking a direct leadership role over the military and exerting personal influence over a developing army. However, this strategy might not satisfy demands of warlords to the extent that they would be willing to cooperate.

If a warlord is co-opted into a new government, a government must watch him carefully to ensure he uses his office properly. Considering the past of many powerful warlords, it would be dangerous to assume that a warlord could "reform," in terms of a changing his ambitions and goals. Thus, the best way to ensure that a warlord does not abuse his office would be give him a direct stake in the survival and effectiveness of a new government. This would increase the chances that former rivals in the same government would constructively work with one another - it would force them to cooperate or fail. Finding a way to link a former warlord's success to that of the government will require creativity. However, a careful analysis of what a particular warlord seeks and how he has operated to achieve that goal should provide some insight. If this strategy is not possible and it becomes obvious that a warlord remains just that, abusing his office to increase his own power, it must be assured he can be removed from the government without affecting the security situation.

⁷² Gannon, Kathy (2004): *Afghanistan Unbound*, p. 45.

5. Conclusions

A new government, in attempting to reform and reinvigorate a failed state, undertakes a task that puts it directly at odds with sometimes powerful warlords. Faced with either confronting or cooperating with these warlords, co-opting warlords into the national government appears to be one possible strategy for first securing the survival of a new government and then weakening problematic warlords. However, it would be dangerous to implement this strategy solely on the basis of problems warlords present to a new government. Rather, warlords as a phenomenon must be better understood. The specific conditions leading to the rise of a warlord and the sources of his power should be carefully examined. Any attempt to co-opt a warlord must first identify potential problems of the strategy, which may result from that warlord's base of power. Not only must solutions to these problems be implemented, but the conditions that led to a system in which warlords could thrive must also be addressed.

By definition, warlords have control over a militia. This militia must be capable of military success and/or intimidation in order to redistribute resources to clients of a patronage system, including militia members and a local populace. Force and the resources force is used to accumulate are the two major tools a warlord can use to maintain a patronage system and attract international business partnerships. The *mujahideen* capitalized on their ability to use force against the Soviet Union to establish a partnership with the United States. Some members managed to do so again as leaders of the Northern Alliance battling the Taliban. Charles Taylor offered the use of resources and security to international business partners. Once a warlord has established himself and proven himself vital for the profits of his international partners—as Taylor did in Liberia—he can manage the partnerships to obtain currency, infrastructure and a sort of legitimacy, thus increasing his power.

The merits of co-option largely center on the inability of an infant government and national army to enforce the disarmament of warlords. Thus, the carrot of governmental posts is offered in an attempt to coax warlords to disarm, cease illegitimate business practices and release their hold on clients - a portion of the population that would otherwise not support the state. This strategy rests in the hope that should warlords not embrace a new government for the sake of the nation, they could at least be observed and weakened while in office. However, these merits are clouded by uncertainties regarding the ability of a new government to enforce both disarmament and the cessation of illegitimate business practices. State legitimacy and effectiveness could be compromised by the presence of unqualified, uneducated,

rivaling and notoriously brutal warlords in major governmental posts. This problem is compounded when considered in terms of the new national army - an important requirement for increasing state power vis-à-vis the warlords.

While there are potential solutions to all of these problems, each depends on the ability of a government to distribute resources and provide security. Without this prerequisite, most of the solutions present their own list of complications and dangers. Important questions remain. Can the co-option strategy weaken warlords enough for the state to enforce eventual compliance with calls for disarmament and lawful business practice? If warlords do not comply, can the state cast them out of the government and confront them? As there are several decisive factors involved, the answer to these questions will vary from case to case. These factors include: first, the type of power that established the new government (cooperative peace agreement, imposed through a foreign invasion, etc.) and whether a strong military power will remain in that state. Second, the potential for legitimate channels of revenue once a new government takes power. Third, the ability of a new government - perhaps via international support - to immediately provide relative security and the distribution of resources. Finally, the answer will largely depend on the nature of the warlord at whom the strategy of co-option is aimed - the specific sources of his power, his financial and military strength and his personality.

The strategy of co-option seems to have had mixed results in Afghanistan. As noted, there have been several cases of warlords having loosened their grip on personal power by making concessions to the national government. The national government is being strengthened and army is growing. However, this would probably not have been the situation, had there not been a presence of international troops by the U.S. and ISAF (now NATO). This leaves one to wonder if the strategy will backfire once international troops leave. In order to prevent this scenario, the international community must ensure that Afghan security forces are stronger than any known warlord or potential alliance of warlords before withdrawing. In the meantime, President Karzai is losing his patience with and tolerance for warlords.⁷³ Perhaps this is because “too many local warlords are showing too little inclination to find new careers.”⁷⁴ Indeed, Giustozzi argues that “removing this negative influence is not going to be easy, even if it proves possible to get rid of those ministers who have a militia background.”⁷⁵ He notes that the communist regimes of the 1980s often cooperated with warlords to maintain peace,

⁷³ Goodson, Larry (2005): *Building Democracy After Conflict*, p. 34.

⁷⁴ Goodson, Larry (2005): *Building Democracy After Conflict*, p. 37.

⁷⁵ Giustozzi, Antonio (2004): ‘Good’ State vs. ‘Bad’ Warlords, p. 11.

but kept them away from central government - they were appointed to ceremonial or military posts, never as ministers or governors like following the Taliban.

The long-term effects of the co-option strategy remain to be seen. What is clear is that further work must be done to weaken warlords and remove their influence within the government. This will almost definitely depend on the state's ability to control opium production, which approached 4,200 tons—eighty-seven percent of world production - in 2004.⁷⁶ This tempting revenue-producer needs to be brought under control before warlords further take advantage of it in order to regain strength, undoing any progress that has been made by the government. Giustozzi does see an alternative form of revenue: “abundant leverage [...] in the form of funding of the state budget and help for reconstruction.” He warns of the dangers of trading more positions for political support, as it could lead to “the consolidation of an authoritarian state, but also of a very inefficient, unaccountable and non-modern one.”⁷⁷ Co-option might have been a necessary evil for the new government of Afghanistan, but now that presidential and parliamentary elections have taken place, the government should quickly wean itself off of warlord support. If this takes place, security is maintained and the economy improves, Afghanistan could be well on its way to becoming a success story. If this fails to happen, however, Afghanistan could become a clear lesson on the dangers of co-option.

There are too many factors involved to make a sweeping judgment on the logic of including warlords in a national government. However, after examining common sources of warlord power and the tactics used to increase this power, it is obvious that extreme caution should be used if attempting the co-option strategy in any situation. This strategy should not be embraced as a first choice, but rather as a necessary evil. The strategy brings with it many dangers and potential complications, which could bring down the very government that it is intended to strengthen. More importantly, the government must never lose sight of how warlords initially rose to power and must constantly work to address the conditions, which allowed for such a rise. If it fails to do so, a government could be overpowered by a successful warlord, as his power depends on controlling security and resource distribution. If a government fails to address these conditions, it will fail to change the system in which warlords thrive. It will become just another obstacle in the path of a successful warlord seeking to expand his empire. It would be easy to imagine Charles Taylor, whose Taylorland once extended across ninety percent of Liberia, establishing himself as the sovereign power in Liberia, had there been no intervention by ECOMOG. In order to prevent such a scenario and to

⁷⁶ Goodson, Larry (2005): *Building Democracy After Conflict*, p. 35.

⁷⁷ Giustozzi, Antonio (2004): ‘Good’ State vs. ‘Bad’ Warlords, p. 16-17.

overcome powerful warlords, a new government should take advantage of the same aspects of globalization - increasing international trade, spread of technology, ability to efficiently run companies abroad - from which the warlords themselves profit. A new government should use these resources to ensure that it is the most effective provider of security and distributor of resources within a rebuilding state. In effect, a new government's best option is to combine its international legitimacy with the tools used by an effective warlord in order to beat him at his own game.

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