The course of co-option: Co-option of local power-holders as a tool for obtaining control over the population in counterinsurgency campaigns in weblike societies. With case studies on Dutch experiences during the Aceh War (1873-c. 1912) and the Uruzgan campaign (2006-2010)

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‘What he now wanted to achieve was an aim the idea of which sprang from his humanity, from the noblest part of himself. What he now wanted to achieve was an ideal, the ideal of the Westerner in the east and of the Westerner who sees the east as he wishes to see it and as he could but see it.’
Louis Couperus, The Hidden Force

‘In the end, we are just passing through.’
Dutch Special Forces captain, July 2007
Contents
## Contents

Prologue ................................................................................................................. 11

Introduction ............................................................................................................ 15

### Part I: An analytical framework for understanding co-option of local power-holders as a tool for obtaining control over the population in counterinsurgency campaigns in weblike societies

Chapter 1: The logic underlying population-centric counterinsurgency: population control through collaboration ................................................................. 33

Chapter 2: Co-option of local power-holders in weblike societies ....................... 63

Chapter 3: Co-option in counterinsurgency: a conceptual exploration in historiographical perspective ................................................................. 107

### Part II: The Aceh War

Chapter 4: Aceh and the first decades of the war, 1873-1893 ............................... 177

Chapter 5: The Teuku Uma policy ..................................................................... 217

Chapter 6: Pacification at last: the emergence of the Aceh strategy and the establishing of Dutch control ................................................................. 255

Chapter 7: The Aceh War as a case study of co-option of local power-holders in colonial warfare ................................................................. 305

### Part III: The Uruzgan campaign

Chapter 8: Afghanistan, Uruzgan, and the War from 2001 until 2006 ................. 329

Chapter 10: 2008-2010: Counterinsurgency as an underpinning for long-term stability ... 427

Chapter 11: The Uruzgan campaign as a case study of co-option of local power-holders in modern counterinsurgency warfare ................................................................. 495

Conclusion: The course of co-option in theory and reality ........................................... 525

Acronyms .................................................................................................................. 551

Glossary ................................................................................................................... 557

Bibliography .......................................................................................................... 561

Maps ......................................................................................................................... 599

Annexes ................................................................................................................... 607

Summary .................................................................................................................. 611

Samenvatting ......................................................................................................... 619

Acknowledgments ................................................................................................... 627
Prologue
Prologue

*Tirin Kot, 12 November 2008*

‘It is pretty clear that these tribes have been cooperating with the Taliban, while thwarting the government ever since 2001.’ Obaidullah, the head of Uruzgan’s Independent Election Commission (IEC) who is responsible for organizing next year’s elections, explains why he does not intend to open any polling stations in the areas of the Ghilzai sub-tribes to the north and east of the provincial capital Tirin Kot. With his carefully trimmed beard and an olive drab jacket matching the color of his eyes the heeder of Uruzgan’s incipient democracy looks more like a flashy businessman than a dweller of this backward rural province. Contrary to the tribal leaders who are welcome regulars at the Dutch camp, Obaidullah does not use the soft pillows on the ground, but prefers to sit on a chair at the table. Moreover, he not only behaves in a rather Western way, he also fully subscribes to the importance of introducing democracy in Afghanistan. Like nobody else Obaidullah knows that the elections are intended to raise popular consent for the government in Kabul. Almost continuously he stresses this point by waving a multi-colored English-language flyer of the overarching national IEC that emphasizes the importance of elections ‘according to the principles of independence, impartiality and professionalism’. Combined with his knowledge of Uruzgan’s local affairs this seemingly renders Obaidullah the perfect candidate to organize the 2009 elections and guarantee a free and fair vote. The intention not to establish any polling stations in the Ghilzai areas, however, does not fit this image, as this means that those people are effectively denied their right to vote. Some of these sub-tribes indeed keep ties with the Taliban, but this is not so much the consequence of sympathy for the insurgents as much as a ramification of years of violent repression and marginalization by former provincial governor and warlord-like local power-holder Jan Mohammed Khan. The upcoming elections provide an opportunity to realign and connect the Ghilzai sub-tribes with the government. Why would the head of Uruzgan’s IEC obstruct this?

When the Dutch diplomat, his interpreter, and I try to change Obaidullah’s mind the atmosphere turns grim quickly. Obaidullah defends his position by pointing at the lack of security in the Ghilzai areas. While there indeed is some Taliban-related activity in these areas and incidents occur regularly, the same is true for many other places in which polling stations are actually planned. Furthermore the situation in the Ghilzai areas has improved considerably over the last years since the Dutch Task Force Uruzgan (TFU) has started to draw these peoples into the camp of the government. Some local leaders have been cooperating to improve security and proved more than willing to approve development projects within their areas of influence. Even more important, the remaining insecurity can be directly linked

1 Martijn Kitzen, ‘Uruzgan Field Notes’ (Personal Record, Tirin Kot, 2008), 202-203.
to a lack of trust in the government. Augmenting opportunities for political participation by providing access to polling stations might function to repair this defunct connection between these people and the administration. In our opinion, therefore, Obaidullah’s argument of a lack of security lacks credibility. Moreover, Afghan soldiers and police officers, backed up by the TFU, will secure the elections in order to guarantee a safe balloting process in every part of the province. Despite our objections the now visibly annoyed Obaidullah sticks to his plan; there will be no polling stations in the Ghilzai areas. Although he promises to reconsider the planned locations of the polling stations one more time, the meeting now comes to an abrupt end. A quick handshake and a cold goodbye are all we are left with.

So, seemingly an important governmental official wants to deny the Ghilzai their opportunity to vote by citing security concerns. However, the depreciatory manner Obaidullah spoke about the Ghilzai as well as the fact that some other polling stations are planned in areas that suffer from similar security issues, betray that there is more to this matter than meets the eye. While his local origin leaves little doubt that the man responsible for Uruzgan’s elections is fully aware of the root causes of the troubles between the Ghilzai and the government -i.e. brutal repression under Jan Mohammed Khan’s rule-, his attitude reveals disdain and a lack of trust in these previously marginalized sub-tribes. What are the reasons for this bias? Jan Mohammed Khan still has an extensive network of associates in the province; is Obaidullah among them? Or is there another interest that urges him to aggrieve the Ghilzai? The longstanding conflict between his Barakzai sub-tribe and one of the Ghilzai sub-tribes, for example, could offer an explanation. All in all there are enough reasons we can think of. Despite his Western looks and behavior Obaidullah’s actions as a governmental official are in the first place determined by local interests. Consequently, the head of Uruzgan’s Independent Election Commission acts all but impartial and tries to exclude an important societal segment. In this way the government itself contributes to a continuation of the marginalization of the Ghilzai, and therefore pushes those tribesmen further into the arms of the Taliban instead of boosting popular consent for its own cause.

This incident provides yet another example of what Dutch soldiers have experienced here in Uruzgan for more than two years now; officially the Afghan government and her international allies are fighting the Taliban, but almost every day the TFU encounters that the reality on the ground is far more complicated than this rather linear depiction of the conflict suggests. The fog of war acts as a cloak under which warlords and tribal leaders fight for their personal interests, exploiting either the support of the Afghan government or the Taliban, depending on their needs at a specific moment. Old feuds are settled by mobilizing government troops or Taliban fighters against competitors. Although international forces strive to protect the population as thoroughly as possible, their alliance with the Afghan government has inherently rendered them an actor in this obscure dynamic of violent contention. Even before the start of the TFU mission Dutch soldiers and diplomats were struggling to get a grasp of the complexity of the local conflict in Uruzgan. This resulted in the sacking of Jan Mohammed Khan as provincial governor on 27 February 2006, just a
couple of days prior to the deployment of a Dutch quartermaster detachment that was to prepare the official start of the campaign on August 1. Although this move hints at an early awareness of the local circumstances in Uruzgan, it turned out a rather tough process to vet the local population and to obtain a precise understanding of the way in which old feuds and alliances are shaping current relationships between local power-holders that define the current political marketplace. Whereas it goes without doubt that the TFU has learned a lot since 2006 and that it is increasingly effective in maneuvering in this highly complicated societal landscape, it remains necessary to pay close attention to these matters; an unwelcome surprise or mistake is never far away. Nothing is as it seems in the murky arena in which the Afghan campaign is fought.

At the time of this particular incident I had already developed an awareness that the disposition of the Dutch soldiers among the local population in Uruzgan’s highly fragmented society dominated by local leaders resembled that of Dutch colonial troops during the Aceh War (1873-c. 1912). Yet, I was struck by the similarities in the societal dynamics of both conflicts when continuing my research back at home. In both cases local power-holders primarily seek to secure their personal aims and interact with Dutch troops or resistance fighters as serves their interest best. Moreover, I found that the work of Dr. Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, the colonial government’s advisor for indigenous affairs, contained a valuable warning as he described the way warlord Teuku Uma succeeded in misleading the Dutch colonial administration through a ‘beautiful panorama that he magically projects on the eyes of the administration and which is founded on deception’.3 Indeed, when fighting an irregular opponent among the people in a highly fragmented society, nothing is as it seems.

3 ‘Snouck Hurgronje aan Van der Wijck’, undated, ed. E. Gobée and C. Adriaanse, Ambtelijk Adviezen van C. Snouck Hurgronje, 170. This letter can be dated to end 1895 as it is probably a draft version of a more formally formulated letter included in Nationaal Archief (NA), Ministerie van Koloniën (MvK) 6235, Geheim Verbaal 31 december 1895 M19, Indisch Depêche 9 november 1895 44/c.
Introduction
Introduction

While history never repeats itself, recurring patterns can be discerned when studying the past. One such pattern observed throughout military history concerns the rise and demise of counterinsurgency as a military strategy. Western military forces are optimized for the fight against similar adversaries, and therefore have to reorient themselves whenever confronted with elusive insurgent opponents. This adaptation process, however, is hampered by the dominant Western military culture that emphasizes the defeat of an enemy through a decisive battle in which massive firepower, technology, and maneuvering by large formations are key to victory. Only when soldiers gradually start to realize that this 'conventional', enemy-centric approach is insufficient for fighting an opponent hiding among the population and cunningly combining messy 'irregular' tactics such as guerilla, terrorism, and political subversion in order to fight on its own terms, the adaptation to counterinsurgency gains momentum. At the peak of the campaign this leads to the implementation of a so-called population-centric approach that essentially seeks to defeat the insurgency through a combination of military, political, and socio-economic means designed to deprive the insurgency of popular support while simultaneously bolstering collaboration with the counterinsurgents' side. Upon completion of such a campaign, however, and regardless its outcome, armed forces quickly return to business as usual and thereby lessons from the counterinsurgency experience are often forgotten before they are properly captured and understood.

The most well-known example of this recurring cycle is provided by the United States (US) armed forces' troublesome adaptation to counterinsurgency during the Vietnam War and the neglect of those experiences in its aftermath, which left the US military ill prepared to counter the insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan. Yet, the pattern itself is much older and can even be observed during the heydays of the European colonial empires in the

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1 The term strategy as used throughout this book refers to military strategy, an operational approach for achieving a higher-level political-strategic goal. Consequently both terms strategy and operational approach are used interchangeably.


nineteenth century to which modern counterinsurgency harkens back. Despite the fact that colonial armies spent most of their time fighting irregular opponents among indigenous populations, their doctrine, training, and organization was designed for defending overseas territories against the armed forces of other nations. In the Dutch East Indies, for example, a remarkable pattern of colonial campaigning evolved, as the Dutch colonial army would typically first launch conventional operations in order to (conquer and) pacify an area and it would only adopt a more tailored approach if an escalating series of these large-scale operations failed to deliver a result. A contemporary observer strikingly commented that during the first phase of the almost forty-year Aceh War (1873-c.1912) ‘without reckoning the fact that the outcomes of European [conventional] warfare cannot be directly transferred to the fight against the indigenous enemy with his very specific character, great credit was given to the use of massive fire’. Ultimately, it took the Dutch some 25 years to adopt an effective population-centric strategy for pacifying Aceh and even then they suffered many difficulties in implementing this approach. In spite of years of valuable experience the Dutch colonial army had remained predominantly faithful to the principles of conventional warfare. Thus, it seems that Western military forces seemingly are destined to reinvent the wheel every time they are confronted with insurgencies even when they hold an extensive historical track record of operations against such ‘irregular’ enemies.

Currently, the latest counterinsurgency era has ended and Western militaries again are heading towards the downward side of the cycle. In the wake of the troubled campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan the political will to deploy boots on the ground in order to confront insur- gencies in far away countries has severely diminished, whilst armed forces are refocusing on conventional warfare. Of course the re-emergence of the Russian threat to some extent justifies this reorientation, yet the contemporary security situation is much more complicated and urges for a broader approach than mimicking Cold War strategy. In modern warfare the lines between ‘regular’, conventional and ‘irregular’ warfare are increasingly blurred. This so-called hybrid warfare is embraced by states and non-state actors alike as we have, for instance, witnessed Russia’s use of irregular tactics for destabilizing neighboring countries, while non-state actors such as the Islamic State (IS) have demonstrated their

7 See also Martijn Kitzen, ‘Between treaty and treason’, 95-96.
capability to launch conventional operations. The non-linear character of modern wars is further explained by Rupert Smith's concept of 'war amongst the people' which not only emphasizes that 'there is no secluded battlefield upon which armies engage, nor are there necessarily armies', but also clarifies the ramifications of this situation as in modern warfare 'civilians are the targets, objectives to be won, as much as an opposing force'. A farewell to counterinsurgency -even temporarily-, therefore, is far from appropriate in this security environment characterized by hybrid (non-)state threats and in which engagement of involved populations is key to success.

The nature of war, however, is not the only determinant of military thought. Other factors such as the specific strategic circumstances in relevant countries, individual experiences, and the intellectual and cultural climate of the period in question, the Zeitgeist, also play a huge role. As aforementioned, current strategic thinking tends to disregard the counterinsurgency experiences of Iraq and Afghanistan. The political will to re-embark on such a costly and uncertain adventure is absent in the Western world and today's senior military commanders, whose formative years as young officers were typically spent during the latter period of the Cold War, are increasingly looking back at the recent counterinsurgency era as a 'wrong turn', a period in which the armed forces wrongly deviated from the core business of high-end conventional warfare. Furthermore, the 2008 economic crisis has severely affected military spending in the United States and European countries, with especially the forces of the latter suffering from austerity policies. This has functioned as a catalyst since in a time of decreasing military resources preserving as much conventional strength as possible often has been the most important rationale behind budget cuts. Thus, despite the non-linear nature of modern warfare, the neglect of recent counterinsurgency knowledge seems imminent as a consequence of other factors that influence military thinking in the Western world.

Yet, the hybrid character of modern war urges to row against this tide. Military thinkers like David Kilcullen and David Ucko have repeatedly warned that counterinsurgency might not be preferred in the current strategic climate, but that this kind of warfare will be necessary

13 These words are borrowed from the title of a book by Gian P. Gentile, a retired US Army cavalry colonel and one of the most avid critics of modern counterinsurgency. See Gian P. Gentile, Wrong Turn, America’s Deadly Embrace of Counterinsurgency (New York: The New Press, 2013).
in the future as ‘any sensible enemy will choose to fight us in this manner’. Moreover, as expeditionary land forces will inevitably be deployed among the people in foreign countries (for instance the current stabilization campaign in Mali), the broader relevance of interacting with the local population in culturally different, non-Western societies is also evident. Therefore, the lessons of the recent counterinsurgency campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan should be properly captured, understood, and learned in order to optimize Western militaries for countering the hybrid threats that dominate the contemporary international security environment.

This book aims to contribute to the breaking of the cycle that leads to the neglect of counterinsurgency knowledge in Western armed forces. More specifically, it seeks to enhance the understanding of population-centric counterinsurgency in highly fragmented indigenous societies dominated by local power-holders, as was the case in Iraq and Afghanistan. As we have seen in the prologue, these societal circumstances render the seemingly straightforward fight between insurgents and government rather diffuse as the reality of the conflict at the grassroots level is shaped by shady power plays that put up a smoke screen, which sometimes makes it nearly impossible to tell who is exactly on which side. While intervening Western forces might gradually learn to understand the local dynamics of the conflict and develop an appropriate situational awareness, this provides only a first step towards a solution. The campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan have revealed that co-option of local power-holders is instrumental in stepping up the collaboration between the local population and the counterinsurgents while simultaneously diminishing support for the insurgency. Consequently, this study will focus on obtaining a profound understanding of co-option as a tool for counterinsurgency in highly fragmented indigenous societies. Before unfolding the path towards this understanding, we will now first clarify our central concept and discuss the salient issues surrounding it.

Counterinsurgency in weblike societies: the course of co-option

Counterinsurgency is generally understood as a battle between insurgents and a state’s government for control over (segments of) the population. The concept reflects the indirect approach to military strategy by outmanoeuvring the insurgent through denial of his most vital support and sanctuary: the local population. Therefore ‘the sine qua non of victory in


modern warfare is the unconditional support of a population’. In contemporary Western warfare this understanding has materialized as population-centric counterinsurgency, a doctrine that considers population control a matter of collaboration between the government and the local population. As Kilcullen puts it: ‘“control” does not mean imposing order through unquestioned dominance, so much as achieving collaboration towards a set of shared objectives’. By creating such a set of shared objectives that addresses both the interests of the government and those of the local population, counterinsurgency seeks to enhance the latter’s collaboration with the government. The more the government succeeds to effectuate collaboration, the stronger its control over the population, and, consequently, the weaker the insurgent’s position.

In Iraq and Afghanistan Western counterinsurgents found themselves operating as foreign interveners in highly politically fragmented indigenous societies in which local authorities like tribal elders, religious leaders, and warlords controlled the population at the grassroots level. Such a society that is characterized by a high degree of decentralization and a predominant position of the locale is commonly observed in developing countries around the world. Political scientist Joel Migdal has labelled this type of society a ‘weblike society’, as it is best described as a loosely knit ‘web’ of different local segments in which local strongmen play a dominant role. Since this book aims to enhance our understanding of co-option as a tool for counterinsurgency in exactly such a highly fragmented societal landscape, it has adopted Migdal’s term and we will delve deeper into it in Chapter Two. What matters here are the ramifications for conducting counterinsurgency amidst this type of society; how to effectuate the population’s collaboration in order to augment governmental control over a weblike society?

As previously mentioned, during the campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan co-option has evolved into a pivotal tool for obtaining the collaboration of the local populace. Western counterinsurgents established co-optive relationships with local leaders, dominating the high ground of the human terrain at the grassroots level and fostered the connection between those co-optees and the host-nation’s government. The emergence of this approach is epitomized by the so-called ‘Anbar awakening’ of 2006 in which US forces succeeded to establish control over the insurgent-infested population of Iraq’s infamous Anbar province.
that hitherto had been under influence of Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). The engagement of local tribal leaders was key to this success as the Sunni tribes they were representing started to collaborate with the US soldiers against AQI and even a link with the Shi’a-dominated central government in Baghdad was established. It was the synergy between the awakening and ‘the Surge’ that saw an influx of additional (counterinsurgency-trained) US troops that led to a nation-wide application of this approach which had resulted in a vast decline of violence throughout Iraq by the end of 2007. Thus, the situation in Iraq improved significantly as US counterinsurgents found common ground with local leaders at the grassroots level and established relationships between those agents and the Iraqi government. This illustrates that in a weblike society with numerous locales dominated by local power-holders co-option of these agents provides a potential path to enhanced governmental control over the population in order to end an insurgency.

Seemingly, the course of co-option offers the most straightforward approach for countering insurgencies in weblike societies. Yet, if we take a closer look a number of fundamental and practical complications come to light. To start with the most fundamental matter, co-option is a collaboration strategy adapted for establishing control over the population in a weblike society. Recently, however, the logic of control through collaboration has become subject of an academic debate as critics like Stathis Kalyvas have not only contested this logic, but also have argued that control spawns collaboration and not the other way around. This controversy has huge consequences as in the context of counterinsurgency warfare it questions the essential mechanism of Western population-centric counterinsurgency and urges for a strategy in which control is established first. Thus, while co-option has been adopted as an appropriate antidote for insurgencies in a weblike society because it offers an approach for winning the competition for control in such a society, the very logic underlying this approach is disputed.

Another fundamental issue concerns the use of local power-holders in order to gain control over societal segments. If collaboration spawns control, then does co-option of individual agents suffice for yielding control over larger groups within the population and even the target population as a whole? Of course this depends heavily on the societal landscape in which a counterinsurgency campaign takes place. Since co-option in modern counterinsurgency warfare emerged as a tailored strategy for establishing control over highly fragmented weblike societies, an exploration of this type of society is necessary in order to understand the role and position of local power-holders as well as the way such

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22 Stathis N. Kalyvas, The Logic of Violence in Civil War (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 111-145. For further discussion see Chapter One, section 1.2.
agents might be exploited to the counterinsurgents’ advantage. Currently, it seems unclear who exactly should be co-opted in order to establish control over weblet societies with their numerous locales and scores of tribal chiefs, religious leaders, predatory warlords and other sorts of strongmen, who are often competing for power at the grassroots level. The practical ramifications of this lack of clarity came to light most prominently in Iraq where readiness to reconcile and willingness to support a peaceful settlement of the conflict became the most important criteria for co-option. Of course, co-optees should preferably be selected as a result of their authority over (parts of) the local population. This logic, however, also betrays a fundamental ambiguity in the concept as counterinsurgents seek to enhance governmental control through local power-holders who remain in control at the grassroots level. Consequently, the government depends on these agents for exerting its authority, which could give local power-holders a strong position vis-à-vis the government. Whereas this dependency is a common feature of states with weblet societies, it is even more important in a counterinsurgency setting in which the government seeks to (re-)establish its authority over the population. In Iraq as well as Afghanistan locally operating counterinsurgents were successful in forging ties with local power-holders as they shared a common interest in fighting the insurgency at the grassroots level. Yet, it often proved troublesome to convert this success in enhanced governmental control and sometimes empowered local agents even openly opposed the idea of a stronger central government. This demonstrates that counterinsurgents not only should be able to establish co-optive relationships with local power-holders, but also that they should have a capability to dominate such relationships; the agents of control need to be properly controlled. Yet, the counterinsurgency should not be too dominant as it heavily depends on local power-holders and an insurgency might exploit discontent to offer co-optees a more attractive alternative for collaboration. In the end, thus, the fundamental matter of the use of local power-holders in order to gain control over (segments of) the population also reveals practical complications as counterinsurgency in a weblet society requires an arduous vetting process in order to select whom actually to co-opt and the adoption of an approach that prescribes how to co-opt these agents in such a way that they are dominated by the counterinsurgents, while preventing alienation.

The final set of complications surrounding the use of co-option for quelling insurgencies relates to the nature of contemporary counterinsurgency itself. As aforementioned, Western armed forces are optimized for conventional warfare against similar opponents and therefore

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23 David Kilcullen, ‘Counterinsurgency: the state of a controversial art’, 141. It should be mentioned that there is also an ethical aspect to this, as for instance collaboration with warlord-like strongmen might be deemed unacceptable. This will be illustrated in Part Three.

24 For a discussion of the relation between state and weblet society see Chapter Two, section 2.3.1.

typically need to go through a troublesome adaptation process when confronted with an insurgency. While this switch to population-centric warfare is hard enough in itself, it is even more challenging if a campaign takes place in a foreign society. Niccolò Machiavelli already noted that interventions in 'a country that differs in language, customs and institutions' are more difficult and require ‘great good luck and great ability’. \[26\] Since soldiers should never rely on good luck, and certainly not on ‘great good luck’, they have to obtain this ‘great ability’ in order to operate successfully in an unfamiliar environment. Intervening Western forces, consequently, not only need to adapt to population-centric counterinsurgency, but also to the specific societal circumstances in which they have to fulfill their mission. This is far off from the pitched battles such armies are organized and trained for, and which, for example -and to mention the influence of personal experience-, dominated the curriculum of my education as an officer cadet at the Royal Netherlands Military Academy during the latter part of the 1990’s.

In Iraq and Afghanistan, the adaptation process was further hampered as newly emerging counterinsurgency doctrine was ill-suited for application in these highly fragmented, weblike societies. While the 2006 US Field Manual FM 3-24, which was internationally the most widely disseminated doctrine and informed the campaigns in Iraq as well as Afghanistan, is an outstanding population-centric counterinsurgency guide, it is a poor roadmap for fighting an insurgency in a weblike society as it heavily promotes Western-oriented ideas such as modernization and liberal democracy in order to enhance governmental authority. \[27\] Although the importance of local culture is acknowledged in the manual, these underlying concepts hugely contrast the reality on the ground in countries with weblike societies where strong central governments (that characterize modern states) are absent and non-elected strongmen dominate the scene. Even worse, whereas (as aforementioned) enhanced governmental control of course is also the objective of counterinsurgency in a weblike society, too much emphasis on centralization as part of modernization will alienate local power-holders from the government’s cause. Similarly, the enforced introduction of Western-style democracy might actually trigger a loss of popular consent, as elections will inevitably come under influence of local strongmen as they provide a new tool for augmenting their position and thwarting rival factions. This is illustrated by the incident described in the prologue, which actually contributed to a very low voter turnout in Uruzgan in 2009 with especially the previously marginalized Ghilzai doubting the free and fair character of the elections. \[28\] All in all Western troops fighting insurgencies in countries with weblike societies not only face the challenge of adapting to population-centric counterinsurgency, but also have to adapt to


\[28\] The Liaison Office, *The Dutch engagement in Uruzgan: 2006-2010* (Kabul: TLO, 2010), viii. See also Chapter Ten, section 10.3.1.
foreign societal circumstances for which counterinsurgency doctrine offers little guidance. But how then does co-option as a tool for controlling the population in weblike societies fit in with modern counterinsurgency warfare?

Emile Simpson has argued that for counterinsurgency to be used as an effective operational approach ‘its doctrine must be interpreted pragmatically’. It was exactly this pragmatism that fueled a series of field innovations and adaptations, which allowed for the application of counterinsurgency in the challenging operational environments of Iraq and Afghanistan. It has to be mentioned that while such adaptation traditionally is driven by pressure from operations on the ground, contemporary constraints with regard to resources and time as a consequence of domestic politics have been hugely influential shaping factors in the emergence of a pragmatic counterinsurgency approach. The denominations ‘accelerated counterinsurgency’ and ‘counterinsurgency lite’ by which the field innovations and adaptations of modern counterinsurgency are often referred to clearly indicate the influence of limited timelines and resource constraints. Consequently, a modern counterinsurgency approach has emerged that seeks to apply the essence of counterinsurgency doctrine; namely, obtaining control over the population through collaboration, in weblike societies with use of limited resources and within a limited amount of time. In addition to targeting of insurgent networks and other measures aimed at securing the population, reconciliation (including amnesty), and political reintegration through co-option of local power-holders is this approach’s most important tool for augmenting the people’s collaboration at the grassroots level. Thus, while counterinsurgency doctrine is permeated by Western-oriented concepts, the pragmatic interpretation of this doctrine as a consequence of the specific conditions in weblike societies and restraints with regard to resources and time have led to a prominent role of co-option of local power-holders in contemporary counterinsurgency campaigns.

A last complication concerning the nature of contemporary counterinsurgency relates to the self-imposed limited timeline and constraints on resources. As these factors can be directly linked to domestic politics, they reveal a lack of political will to fully commit to the counterinsurgency effort. Whereas this influence of domestic politics is inherently connected to the conduct of expeditionary counterinsurgency warfare by Western democracies, it is further augmented by the fact that such interventions in far away countries are not perceived necessary for the intervening state’s survival. The campaigns in Iraq and

29 Emile Simpson, War From The Ground Up, 147.
Afghanistan have demonstrated that this deficient political will does not obstruct success on the short term as with use of the field innovations and adaptations an acceptable result might be obtained within a limited timeline and with limited resources only. However, due to a lack of commitment it has proved particularly hard to preserve this result and transform it into durable success. Iraq provides the strongest case in point as after the withdrawal of US troops (completed in December 2011) Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki’s Shi’a dominated administration adopted a policy that increasingly alienated large (especially Sunni) societal segments of the population and which consequently -yet again- brought the country on the brink of civil war by 2013. This facilitated the 2014 advance of IS in the Sunni-dominated parts of the country. It is most telling that Anbar province, the source of the 2006 awakening that still epitomizes the utility of co-option in modern counterinsurgency warfare, has been one of the most heavily affected areas ever since. A substantial level of US diplomatic involvement and development aid could have prevented this all as it would have brought the US leverage over the central government in Bagdad. Yet, due to a lack of commitment this did not happen and consequently the results of the US counterinsurgency campaign were largely squandered. Therefore, co-option as a tool for counterinsurgency might contribute to temporarily success on the short term, but not necessarily guarantees a consolidation of this success for the long term as a sufficient level of commitment is necessary to employ follow-up measures.

To conclude this section, co-option has recently emerged as a predominant tool for counterinsurgency in weblke societies as it seeks the target population’s collaboration through the local power-holders that dominate the various locales of such a society. While the concept was successfully implemented in both Iraq and Afghanistan and seemingly offers an obvious approach for obtaining control over such highly fragmented, weblke societies, it is surrounded by a number of fundamental and practical complications. All together these issues reveal that co-option as a tool for counterinsurgency in weblke societies is not as straightforward as it seems; at worst the concept might be fundamentally flawed and incapable of delivering long-term success, while at best it appears rather complicated to practice and only effective for obtaining an acceptable result on the short term. This controversy urges for more clarity, and therefore a profound understanding of the course of co-option in counterinsurgency warfare is necessary.

Towards an understanding of the course of co-option

Understanding the course of co-option requires us to study the challenge of co-opting local power-holders in both the theory and reality of counterinsurgency warfare in weblke societies. The former serves to provide an insight in the dynamics of control and collaboration in the specific setting of a weblke society, as well as the exact way in which

32 Michael Weiss, Hassan Hassan, ISIS, Inside the Army of Terror (New York: Regan Arts., 2015), 93-98.
these dynamics have been addressed in the conceptual framework of Western population-centric counterinsurgency campaigns. Obviously this involves scrutinizing and combining knowledge from relevant academic fields that have studied these different facets of our main subject. Therefore, this book borrows from a wide body of scholarly work representing a mix of disciplines among which political science, sociology, anthropology, and history are most prominent. Even more important, however, is that a profound understanding of co-option as a tool for counterinsurgency in weblike societies necessitates a robust analysis of the reality in the field in which Western militaries need to overcome huge adaptation challenges (with regard to both mission and societal environment) with limited resources and within a limited amount of time in order to implement co-option properly. Since this comes down to studying ‘the reactions of real people to real events in the context of real pressures that policy making and war making inevitably impose’, this book most heavily relies on historical analysis of empirical evidence for understanding the challenge of co-opting local power-holders in the reality of counterinsurgency warfare in highly fragmented, weblike societies. As this work aims to enhance our understanding of a specific strategic phenomenon in its full context rather than proving or rejecting a hypothesis, it adheres to the ‘traditional’ multi-disciplinary approach of strategic studies, which strongly emphasizes historical analysis. By unfolding this study’s path towards an understanding of the course of co-option we will now explain how this approach materializes in this book so that we can obtain a profound understanding of both the theory and reality of co-option as a tool for counterinsurgency in weblike societies.

At the heart of this book is the question of how counterinsurgents have co-opted local power-holders in order to attain control over the population in a weblike society. In the existing academic literature on counterinsurgency experiences in fragmented societies, the prevailing premise is that a strategy of collaborative relationships with local power-holders is instrumental in attaining control over the population. This provides initial guidance to our quest for a profound understanding, as the theoretical validity of this logic first needs to be assessed. Moreover, a theoretical exploration of the logic of control through collaboration and the dynamics of co-option in the specific setting of a weblike society allows us to sketch an analytical framework for understanding co-option as a tool for counterinsurgency in such a highly fragmented societal landscape. Such a framework provides further guidance to our investigation as it provides a map for exploring co-option in the grim reality of counterinsurgency warfare in the field. Thus, understanding the

34 Strategic studies has traditionally adopted a hybrid, multi-disciplinary approach intimately associated with history. See Hew Strachan, The Direction of War, 253.
theoretical issues of co-option essentially encompasses unravelling its underpinning as well as constructing a framework that enables us to analyse the application of co-option in the reality of counterinsurgency campaigns.

The next challenge concerns bridging the gap between theory and reality. This requires us to scrutinize the way co-option has been incorporated in the conceptual dimension of Western population-centric counterinsurgency campaigns. Such an analysis allows us to identify relevant experiences that can firmly contribute to our understanding of the actual application of co-option. At this point the importance of history becomes evident since there is a vast amount of counterinsurgency cases to select from and here we need to determine which are most promising -we have already seen that not all counterinsurgency ideas are necessary applicable to weblike societies. As previously mentioned Western population-centric counterinsurgency harkens back to nineteenth century colonial warfare. Although the purpose and environment of colonial pacification campaigns differs tremendously from modern counterinsurgency campaigns, they share the principle of control over the population as key to success. Even more important, colonial states faced the very same challenge of establishing control over highly fragmented societies for which they relied on co-option of local power-holders. Co-option, consequently, was an essential tool of colonial warfare and its emergence in modern counterinsurgency campaigns, thus, can be labelled an unwitting re-invention. This brings us an important opportunity to link theory and reality by studying the way co-option has been incorporated in different concepts throughout the evolution of Western population-centric counterinsurgency. A conceptual exploration in historiographical perspective through an analysis of historical literature, therefore, serves to clarify how co-option has been embedded in different counterinsurgency concepts. Subsequently, the historical variations found in this historiographical analysis can be compared with this study’s theoretical findings by use of the analytical framework for understanding co-option as a tool for counterinsurgency in weblike societies. This comparison reveals that colonial warfare and modern counterinsurgency (which has conceptually incorporated co-option as a consequence of the experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan) are best suited for practicing co-option in weblike societies; both concepts rely on the collaboration of local power-holders for establishing control over highly fragmented societies with limited resources only. Yet, there are also important differences. For example, in colonial warfare more importance was given to coercive measures and the use of force. Consequently, a profound understanding of the course of co-option requires an insight in the reality of both colonial pacification and modern counterinsurgency campaigns.

In this research two Dutch cases will be scrutinized in detailed historical narratives to fully understand the application of co-option in the specific context of each respective case. The nearly forty-year war in the northern Sumatran Sultanate of Aceh (1873-c. 1912) and the recent four-year campaign in Afghanistan’s Uruzgan province (2006-2010) have been selected for this purpose as they illustrate the utility of co-option as a tool for establishing control over a highly fragmented, weblike society in colonial warfare and modern counterinsurgency.
While the decision to focus on Dutch experiences was primarily a ramification of pragmatism, these experiences offer sufficient opportunities for studying the salient features of the topic. Moreover, they offer little-known and relatively understudied alternatives to paradigmatic case studies centering on US, British, or French experiences, which renders this work of additional value for the knowledge field. The Uruzgan case has been selected, as it represents the only modern counterinsurgency campaign conducted by Dutch forces thus far.\(^{36}\) The Aceh case, on the other hand, stands out from an abundance of colonial pacification campaigns in the Dutch East Indies due to its vastness and the protracted period of time. This latter element contradicts the limited timelines that characterize modern counterinsurgency campaigns, and to which the Uruzgan campaign has been no exception. While colonial warfare and modern counterinsurgency share constraints on resources, they differ in timelines -colonial powers were there to stay-, which enables us to study effects of co-option on the long run in order to understand how this tool can contribute to long-term stability. The two cases also properly capture the need and struggle to adapt to a new approach in an alien societal environment, and therefore they aptly illustrate all the significant elements of the subject under investigation. Generalization, however, poses a genuine challenge as this book not only focuses on Dutch experiences, but also is limited to two cases for reasons of feasibility. We address this by discussing the empirical findings of each case study in the light of the broader theoretical and historiographical conclusions of the first part as well as merging the insights from these discussions in this book’s final chapter.

In both case studies an extensive sketch of the local society and the background of the war provides a robust basis for understanding the dynamics of the conflict at the local level. Thus we circumvent the trap of ‘military orientalism’, a failure to fully comprehend the societal dynamics of the conflict caused by an inability to look beyond exotic cultural stereotypes of warfare.\(^{37}\) The Aceh case relies on conventional historical analysis of empirical evidence provided by archival material, other primary sources such as the preserved advisory work of Snouck Hurgronje (who was briefly introduced in the prologue), as well as a wide range of secondary literature on the war, Aceh itself, and the Acehnese. The Uruzgan case adopts a different approach as it could not yet benefit from complete and unclassified archival sources or an extensive body of academic work for meticulously describing the application of co-option in the Uruzgan campaign. This approach most closely resembles what Kilcullen has labeled ‘conflict ethnography’, a methodology that exploits a researcher’s access to his research object in order to gather as much empirical evidence as possible.\(^{38}\) Aspects that were successfully incorporated in this case study are field research, including a period (September-November 2008) as a staff officer with the TFU, which allowed for participant

\(^{36}\) Of course The Netherlands have contributed to other counterinsurgency campaigns or to related stabilization efforts, which are mentioned in Part III if relevant. Yet, the Uruzgan case has been the only campaign in which the Dutch held full authority and also adopted counterinsurgency as their main campaign theme.


observation and the keeping of detailed field notes. Additionally, open interviews with key TFU officials have been conducted and such officials have also provided much highly relevant material, including personal documents. Of course no classified files have been used in this study and therefore the dots are largely connected by use of open source material available on the Internet and in, for example, papers. It should be mentioned here that whereas this book contains the first extensive narrative of the TFU campaign reconstructed by use of the empirical data gathered through this approach, preliminary findings have been published in several publications. Both case studies conclude with a discussion of the findings of their detailed historical narratives in the light of the historiographical analysis’ conclusions on colonial warfare and modern counterinsurgency respectively. This provides a first step towards broader insights on recurring patterns, and towards the merging of the findings from both cases and the theoretical exploration in this book’s conclusion. Ultimately, this synthesis will allow us to formulate a final answer to our main question of how counterinsurgents have co-opted local power-holders in order to attain control over the population in a weblike society.

The structure of this work is as follows: the first part, consisting of chapters one to three, deals with the theoretical issues and the historiographical analysis that bridges the gap between theory and reality. Chapter One deals with the most fundamental issue as it addresses the logic of control through collaboration. Chapter Two expands this towards weblike societies as it discusses the assumption that local power-holders should be the centre of gravity of a collaboration strategy in such a society, and consecutively addresses the more practical issues of whom exactly to co-opt and how agents that dominate the population at the grassroots level can be co-opted by (representatives of) central state powers. The resulting analytical framework for understanding co-option as a tool for counterinsurgency in weblike society is used in Chapter Three to assess the suitability of various historical Western population-centric counterinsurgency concepts for establishing control over weblike societies.

Part Two is made up of chapters four to seven and concerns the Aceh War as a case study of co-option of local power-holders in colonial warfare. Chapter Four provides the background sketch as well as an overview of the first twenty years of the war, while Chapter Five covers the subsequent rather turbulent period in which the Dutch depended on a single warlord-like co-optee, Teuku Uma, for establishing control over Acehnese society as a whole. It should be mentioned that the key findings of this chapter have already been published as a journal

Chapter Six deals with the strategy that ultimately brought the Dutch success and provides an insight in the utility of co-option in this approach. As Acehnese society is particularly well covered in anthropological publications, we also trace the long-term effects of this co-option policy far beyond Dutch colonial rule. Chapter Seven, finally discusses the findings of this detailed historical analysis of co-option in the Aceh War in relation to the wider findings on co-option in colonial warfare.

Part Three, which consists of chapters eight to eleven, deals with the Uruzgan campaign as a case study of co-option of local power-holders in modern counterinsurgency warfare. Chapter Eight provides a basis for understanding the dynamics of the local conflict by analyzing the local society and the course of the war before the arrival of the Dutch task force. Chapter Nine covers the deployment of the TFU and its first two years of operations in which a foothold among Uruzgan’s populace was established by reaching out through previously marginalized or sidelined local power-holders. Chapter Ten deals with the way the Dutch sought to expand and preserve this foothold in the last two years of the campaign in order to establish an underpinning for long-term stability. Of course, this reconstruction also contains an analysis of the sustainability of the TFU campaign’s results after the withdrawal of Dutch troops. Chapter Eleven concludes this case study by analyzing its insights in the light of our broader findings on co-option in modern counterinsurgency.

In this book’s conclusion the key insights from all three parts are discussed separately before being merged for formulating a final answer to our central question of how counterinsurgents have co-opted local power-holders in order to attain control over the population in a weblike society. This answer, of course, encompasses both the theory and reality of co-option as a tool for counterinsurgency in such a highly fragmented societal environment and also addresses the complications that have triggered this book’s quest for understanding this particular phenomenon. Thus, the path towards a profound understanding of the course of co-option winds through various academic fields as well as the complicated war-torn societal landscapes of Aceh and Uruzgan and ends by combining the various insights resulting from this itinerary.

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Martijn Kitzen, ‘Between treaty and treason: Dutch collaboration with warlord Teuku Uma during the Aceh War, a case study on the collaboration with indigenous power-holders in colonial warfare’, Small Wars & Insurgencies 23:1 (March 2012).
Introduction
Part 1

An analytical framework for understanding co-option of local power-holders as a tool for obtaining control over the population in counterinsurgency campaigns in weblike societies
Chapter 1
Chapter 1: The logic underlying population-centric counterinsurgency: population control through collaboration

1.1 Introduction

Central to this book is the question of how counterinsurgents have co-opted local power-holders in order to attain control over the population in a weblike society. As aforementioned, the existing premise is that in counterinsurgency campaigns in weblike societies a strategy of collaborative relationships with local power-holders is instrumental in attaining control over the population. A thorough analysis of these collaborative relationships requires an exploration of the theoretic background of this premise. Therefore, two questions need to be answered. This chapter deals with the first and most fundamental question; the issue of obtaining control through collaboration. As mentioned previously, the logic of this assumption is subject to debate as Kalyvas, among others, has questioned the view that control emerges exclusively from collaboration. A critical exploration of the mechanism of collaboration therefore has to provide an answer to the question of how collaboration can be instrumental in establishing control over the population.

A second question that arises concerns the use of local power-holders in order to gain control over (segments of) the population in weblike societies. If control can be acquired through collaboration, does co-option of key individuals suffice for attaining control over the population? The answer to this question, of course, depends highly on the organization of power in such a society. Understanding the distribution of power requires an insight into the structure of weblike societies as well as a comprehension of the way relations between societal agents transform into concrete actions. This will clarify the role of local power-holders and shed light on the influence these agents exert over the population. Chapter Two deals with such an analysis and thereby explores the utility and practicability of co-option of local power-holders in weblike societies. The insights discussed in the first two chapters, thus, provide an assessment of the theoretical validity of the strategy of local-power-holder-co-option.

Ultimately, however, this book’s main question can only be appropriately answered by studying the application of co-option in the reality of counterinsurgency warfare in weblike societies. Chapter Three, therefore, aims at bridging the gap between the theoretical exploration and the reality of counterinsurgency warfare that is studied in the next parts of this book. With the use of the findings of chapters one and two we will study how counterinsurgency has conceptually accommodated co-option of local power-holders for controlling weblike societies. All together this first part sketches an analytical framework for studying and understanding co-option of local power-holders as a tool for obtaining control over the population in counterinsurgency campaigns in weblike societies. Thereby the

1 Stathis N. Kalyvas, The Logic of Violence in Civil War, 112.
first part provides directions for the study of co-option in the reality of counterinsurgency warfare in the next two parts of this book. But let us now start in this chapter with answering the first and most fundamental question: how is collaboration instrumental in establishing control over a population?

1.2 Why population-centric counterinsurgency prefers collaboration

Attaining control over a population is not a problem unique to counterinsurgency. Establishing, enhancing, and maintaining control over the population is a key characteristic of the state as organizational entity. Control is defined as the capability of one societal agent to influence the circumstances of action of others. Translated to the concept of the state, control is the capability of the government to influence its subjects: the population. Control thus is the expression of the government’s power to rule over the population. In the context of counterinsurgency the government sees its rule challenged as one or more insurgent actors try to establish control over (parts of) the population.

In his highly acclaimed work *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* Kalyvas sketches a theory of irregular war based on the elements control and collaboration. Control in irregular warfare is defined as ‘the extent to which actors are able to establish exclusive rule on a territory’, thereby Kalyvas links control over the population to control over the geographical space that population is living. The observation that the allocation of collaboration is closely linked to the distribution of control brings Kalyvas to examine the relation between collaboration and control. The conclusion of his thorough analysis is ‘that control -regardless of the “true” preferences of the population- precludes options other than collaboration by creating credible benefits for collaborators and, more importantly, sanctions for defectors’. As stressed, in this theory the role of effective sanctions is pivotal in achieving control. Such sanctions are directly linked to the use of force in order to discourage defection and support for the opponent. Opponents and their supporters can be neutralized or coerced to switch sides as a result of the use or threat of force. In this view actors (either the government or an insurgency) express their power to rule through force and therefore control has become a function of force. This view of control, however, is problematic as it urges a re-interpretation of Kalyvas’ definition of control. In the context of counterinsurgency warfare the establishment of force.

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3 This section on Kalyvas’ theory of irregular war and its meaning in the context of counterinsurgency warfare contains edit material from Martijn Kitzen, ‘Close Encounters of the Tribal Kind’, 714-715.


5 Ibid., 145, italics by author.
exclusive rule through use of force turns this rule into what Kilcullen has called *unquestioned dominance*. Consequently, control according to Kalyvas can be redefined as the extent to which actors are able to establish *unquestioned dominance* on a territory.

While this approach of unquestioned dominance is typically preferred by insurgencies in order to establish a competitive system of control capable of challenging the government’s authority, it is not the path towards control chosen by Western governments -opposed to authoritarian regimes (which we will discuss further on)- for conducting counterinsurgency. On the contrary, as aforementioned, in contemporary population-centric counterinsurgency control is rather regarded as a matter of collaboration with the government and is not necessarily linked to physical dominance over a territory. This collaboration is achieved through the creation of incentives for collaboration as well as the use of sanctions against supporters of the insurgency. Unlike Kalyvas’ theory of control, however, counterinsurgency theory emphasizes the creation of benefits for collaborators. Since the aim of this chapter is to look at the underlying premise of collaboration in counterinsurgency campaigns it is important to notice that Kalyvas considers collaboration to be endogenous to control, whereas counterinsurgency takes collaboration as facilitating control. There is little doubt that control and collaboration are mutually reinforcing. The higher the degree of control, the higher the degree of collaboration and vice versa; but what comes first? Therefore, understanding how collaboration can be instrumental in achieving control first requires a validation of the causality of control through collaboration. A critical exploration of the reasons why control through unquestioned dominance is not preferred in Western population-centric counterinsurgency warfare will subsequently serve to explain why collaboration comes first.

### 1.2.1 A problem of numbers: the inadequate availability of security forces

Although scholars like Martin Van Creveld and Edward Luttwak have argued for a counterinsurgency strategy of control through unquestioned dominance, there are -in addition to political and ethical normative as well as legal objectives- three reasons why implementing such a strategy is not very likely to succeed. The first two reasons are pragmatic and concern the requirements that Kalyvas describes as a condition for success in establishing control; the capability to deploy an effective sanction system as well as the identification of those societal agents that should be punished. The third reason is of a

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7 Based on Kalyvas’ work Kilcullen has formulated a theory of competitive control which describes the way insurgencies seek to establish and maintain control. See David Kilcullen, Out of the Mountains, 125-154. On counterinsurgency and authoritarian regimes see David H. Ucko, ‘The People are Revolting: An Anatomy of Authoritarian Counterinsurgency’, *Journal of Strategic Studies* 39:1 (2016), 29-61.
fundamental character and focuses on the specific condition of control that follows from this approach.

First, establishing effective rule by use of force requires an adequate capability to do so. The struggle for control is mainly fought in the many different places people live. Opponents blend in with the population of a locale because they are firmly rooted in the population by kinship or keep close ties with the locals by addressing their grievances. In order to dominate such a conflict, the strategy of unquestioned dominance requires the establishment of an efficient sanction structure that prevents and diminishes collaboration of the population with the insurgent actor(s) on the local level. This implies a capability to monitor the local population (as every single member of the population is a potential supporter of the insurgency) and consequently punish every act of cooperation with the insurgents. Typically the incumbent security apparatus will provide the means for such a sanction structure. In most cases, however, the security forces lack the capability to dominate the local level for what often turns out to be a protracted period of time.9

The implementation of an effective sanction structure that consolidates unquestioned dominance requires the sustainable commitment of a vast amount of security services, as can be demonstrated by some historical cases. The campaign which was conducted by the United States in the Philippines from 1899 to 1902 saw the implementation of a brutal regime of punishment against those who collaborated with insurgents. It required a ratio of one security official for every 59.5 members of the population for this system to be effective.10

The first part of the French campaign in Algeria (1954-1962) was dominated by a strategy of brutal punishment. The effective, highly repressive sanction apparatus required a force ratio of one soldier or policeman per 26.2 locals. Probably the best example of a modern campaign in which a strategy of unquestioned dominance was adopted is the Russian involvement in Chechnya -indeed a non-Western example. Although this campaign was fought with a staggering ratio of one soldier for every 6 inhabitants, Russian security forces still failed to provide an effective sanction capability and they did not even come close to establishing control over the local population.11

So what do these numbers explain? Although there is no fixed troop ratio for establishing a sanction system that is capable of achieving unquestioned dominance on the local level, it is obvious that this approach requires a sufficient number of security troops to be available for protracted periods of time. The requirement varies for each situation as local circumstances and the quality of the security forces influence the incumbent’s capability to implement sanctions effectively. In the Philippines archipelago, for example, the theatre of operations

9 An analysis of 90 counterinsurgency campaigns after 1945 has provided the insight that completing a successful counterinsurgency campaign on average takes fourteen years. Seth G. Jones, Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan (Santa Monica: RAND, 2008), xii, 10.

10 Angel Rabassa and others, Money in The Bank, Lessons Learned from Past Counterinsurgency Operations (Santa Monica: RAND, 2007), xiv, 7-15.

Chapter 1 The Course of Co-option

consisted of several clearly geographically constricted areas (i.e. islands). This environment severely constrained insurgent infrastructure and fewer incumbent forces were therefore needed to establish an effective sanction apparatus. In Algeria the French forces’ hard gained South-East Asia experience is considered to be a major factor contributing to the sanction apparatus’ effectiveness, while the lack of such an experience might also explain the failure of the Russian conscript forces in Chechnya. What the numbers do explain, however, is that, in all cases the force ratio was far better than what typically can be expected in most contemporary counterinsurgency campaigns or related stability operations.12

Today’s campaigns demonstrate that the sheer number of available security troops is unsatisfactory for establishing unquestioned dominance. The predominantly Western intervention forces which operated in Europe’s backyard in Bosnia in 1996 and Kosovo in 1999 succeeded to field an initial number of 22.6 and 23.7 soldiers per 1,000 members of the population. This comes down to one soldier for respectively every 44.2 and 42.2 people.13 These numbers, however, proved to be unsustainable and the ratios quickly dropped below an average of one security official for every 100 locals. The campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan have been characterized by a structural lack of security forces. The best force ratio produced during these campaigns has been one security official per 65.6 locals in the greater Bagdad area during the climax of the surge in 2007.14 Again, however, this also seems to be unsustainable in today’s campaigns as force numbers keep fluctuating and ratios have been as low as one to 5.380 (Afghanistan) and one to 153.8 (Iraq) for protracted periods of time.15 It is obvious that these numbers are far too low to provide a sanction system that is capable of effective punishment, as this requires close monitoring of the local population. The capability to deploy a security apparatus capable of fielding an efficient sanction capacity, therefore, is typically deficient.

1.2.2 The identification problem and indiscriminate violence

Kalyvas describes the inadequate availability of incumbent forces as a problem ‘common to foreign occupiers and native sovereigns’ and attributes this to the fact that ‘requirements for the establishment and preservation of control over the entire territory of a country are staggering’.16 Thus, pursuing control through unquestioned dominance by use of numerical superiority in most cases turns out to be a mission impossible. Therefore another path towards unquestioned dominance is preferred; the use of selective violence. This method encompasses the implementation of a sanction system by effective use of the limited

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12 Clearly the Russian example in Chechnya is an exception.
14 Linda Robinson, Tell Me How This Ends, General David Petraeus and the Search for a Way out of Iraq (New York: Public Affairs, 2008), 124.
15 Deedee Derksen, Thee met de Taliban, Oorlogsverslaggeving voor Beginners (Breda: De Geus, 2010), 200, Seth G. Jones, In the Graveyard of Empires, America’s War in Afghanistan (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009), 119.
16 Stathis N. Kalyvas, The Logic of Violence in Civil War, 139.
available capability against individuals identified as collaborating with the opponent actor. Information is the key resource in this approach. Acquiring information about defectors requires the collaboration of the local population, ‘which requires a level of control sufficient to reassure those who can supply that collaboration’. The method of selective violence thus again relies on the capability to establish local dominance by the presence of incumbent security forces. The difference, however, is that selective violence does not depend on sheer numbers as no close monitoring of the population is required and presence might vary in time and place according to demands. As long as those who provide information can be protected (this is the ‘sufficient level of control’, and the most important ‘credible benefit for collaborators’ Kalyvas is referring to), limited resources suffice to implement effective sanctions.

Acquiring high quality information is the main challenge of this approach as selective violence depends on effective use of force against identified individuals or groups. Identification requires extensive knowledge of the local environment, and needs to be gathered through local informers. As informers typically will try to exploit the incumbent’s need of knowledge in their own interest, the information-gathering process is very fragile. When insurgents manage to address the needs or grievances of the population or successfully target those who cooperate with the security forces, informers will be difficult to find. A trustful ally, therefore, might only be found in a person whose interests have been damaged by insurgents, and as long as there is sufficient protection available.

A related problem is so-called ‘false reporting’, which is all too common in irregular warfare. Intentional dissemination of false information can be used by those who support the insurgents. Local conflicts can also influence the identification process as locals might use the incumbent’s need for information to denounce their own local enemies (who not necessarily are involved in the conflict between incumbent and insurgents). Thus informers can drag security forces into their own private conflict which often is counterproductive and detrimental to the incumbent’s effort. In areas where none or little tradition of state control exists, identification is even more difficult as local interests might cause resentment to incumbent control. Another factor which heavily influences the security forces’ access to informers, as well as the evaluation of information, is the barrier provided by cultural and language differences between the local population and intervening security forces. Proper identification therefore requires not only collaboration with local informers, but also an understanding of the local circumstances by the security forces themselves.

17 Of course proper information is important for every sanction system to be effective. In the case of selective violence, however, it is crucial as the security forces don’t possess sufficient numbers to monitor the local population.

18 Stathis N. Kalyvas, The Logic of Violence in Civil War, 145.

19 Frank Kitson distinguishes two vital functions of information in irregular warfare, background and contact information. The former consists of passive knowledge of the local circumstances (including language and culture), while the latter is provided by informers or captured insurgents and contains actionable intelligence. Kitson considers background information as the basis that should be used by locally operating security forces in order to develop contact information (the actual identification). In Kitson’s words: ‘A cow can turn grass into milk but a further process is required in order to turn milk into butter.’ Frank Kitson, Low Intensity Operations, Subversion, Insurgency, and Peacekeeping (London: Faber & Faber, 1971), 96.
Insurgents are well aware of the incumbent’s identification problem and will try to exploit this by closely allying with the local population. This will severely hamper the security forces’ search for information. Mao Tse-tung put this knowledge into doctrine by describing it in his work *On Guerrilla Warfare* in which he states that the guerrilla should hide from his enemy by using the local population as a sanctuary, ‘just like a fish in the water’:

> ‘Many people think it impossible for guerrillas to exist for long in the enemy’s rear. Such a belief reveals lack of comprehension of the relationship that should exist between the people and the [guerrilla] troops. The former may be likened to water and the latter to the fish who inhabit it. How may it be said that these two cannot exist together? It is only undisciplined troops who make the people their enemies and who, like the fish out of its native element, cannot live.’

Although Mao’s analogy is important in recognizing the role of the population it turns out to be an oversimplification when applied to the reality of irregular warfare. Mao’s metaphor suggests that the population resembles clear water in which the fish swim. In these ideal circumstances of transparency a fisher can easily single out and impale the fish with his spear. In reality, however, the water is not clear but rather murky, which makes fishing very difficult. The fisher, therefore, is unable to distinguish the fish he is so desperately hunting for. This, of course, is the ‘identification problem’ that security forces have to confront.

The problem of distinguishing insurgent fighters and their sympathisers from either neutral or pro-government popular segments is a common trait of irregular warfare. If the incumbent has adopted the approach of unquestioned dominance by use of selective violence, however, the consequences of this troublesome identification process are quite disastrous. If adequate intelligence is unavailable, security forces typically abandon the strategy of selective violence and resort to methods that result in either unintentional or deliberate cases of indiscriminate violence. This effect is further augmented if the incumbent’s security apparatus is heavily depending on a military force more geared for conventional than for irregular warfare. As mentioned in this book’s introduction the organizational culture of most western military forces is such that conventional warfare is preferred over irregular warfare. This not only translates into a preference for large-scale ‘kinetic’ operations against the opponent, but also augments the identification problem as the intelligence organization is focused on the enemy directly and not on identifying the enemy with help of local informers.

History is rife with examples that stress the disastrous consequences of improper identification. A well-studied example is the massacre committed by British troops during a

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popular uprising in the Punjab in 1919. As a violent rebellion by Indian nationalists occurred in some major Indian districts (including Bombay and Delhi), British troops in Amritsar (in the Punjab) faced public unrest in the city. When a non-violent crowd of between 15,000 and 20,000 people attended a political gathering the local British commander, General Reginald Dyer, decided to open fire without warning as ‘in his view, they were rebels and he was ‘going to give them a lesson’. This ‘lesson’ resulted in the indiscriminate killing of about 400 people and another 1,200 were wounded in the process. The lack of intelligence and Dyer’s will to act provided the nationalists with another piece of evidence that British imperial rule was not in the population’s interest. Similarly, the already mentioned brutalities committed by French soldiers in the first years of the Algerian campaign can be largely attributed to the lack of available intelligence. Civilians were tortured in order to gain information and brutal killings as well as arrests of innocent people turned the campaign into what could be labelled as ‘controlled genocide’. On a superficial level the French seemed to control the population. The rebels, however, had not been eliminated and as they realized that nothing good could be expected of the French, even moderate elements of the local population turned to the insurgent’s side. Moreover, the indiscriminate violence led to a collapse of the French effort as public opinion in France and the wider world opposed further French involvement in Algeria.

Another infamous case of improper identification resulting in indiscriminate violence is provided by the performance of the United States’ military during the Vietnam War. Although as early as 1963 American advisors to the Vietnamese forces discerned the inappropriateness of available intelligence for wielding ‘any fire power larger than a rifle’, the United States military preferred the use of massive force throughout the war. Without the ability to distinguish the local population from the Viet Cong and its supporters, however, this resulted in indiscriminate killings. As American units were evaluated by their kill ratios this led to the standardization of indiscriminate force. Consequently, whole villages were wiped out in order to achieve what the Americans ‘called control’, but what essentially resulted in a stronger foothold for the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces. In one particular case an American major even defended this strategy by stating ‘We had to destroy [the village of] Ben Tre in order to save it.’ The Viet Cong reacted to this tactic by actively seeking to provoke further incidents, and by cleverly exploiting the grievance caused by these violent methods,

warning the population that ‘The Americans may lack humanity and intelligence, but they
do not lack bombs... ‘.27

Van Creveld has expressed the view that in the absence of proper identification,
counterinsurgents should turn to a strategy of unquestioned dominance through
indiscriminate violence.28 This view is based on a single case study, the crushing of the
Muslim Brothers’ rebellion around the Syrian city of Hama by Hafez Assad’s regime in 1982.
The specific conditions of this example, however, are very exceptional as the uprising was
geographically and socially confined, and the totalitarian nature of Assad’s regime allowed
for such an approach to be executed and consolidated. History, however, shows that such
an approach in most cases only results in short-term success while ultimately failing to
establish permanent control. When security forces experience problems with identification,
the pursuit of control through unquestioned dominance will inevitably result in cases of
indiscriminate violence, which endanger incumbent control. To return to the analogy of the
fish in the muddy water: the fisherman, who is frustrated as he cannot see the fish he wishes
to impale, throws away his spear and seeks another fishing method. Instead of using a fishing
rod or a net, however, the fisherman turns to more drastic measures; he drains the pond.

1.2.3 The condition of control that results from unquestioned dominance

From the previous paragraphs we might conclude that establishing control through an
approach of unquestioned dominance is quite a cumbersome undertaking. Especially in
the context of counterinsurgency warfare in alien societies the lack of sufficient security
forces and intelligence will certainly result in cases of indiscriminate violence. If -after all-
the incumbent succeeds to establish control over the population, another deficiency of this
approach reveals itself; the specific condition of control that results from this approach
is superficial and temporary at best. This is caused by the very nature of the approach of
unquestioned dominance itself. By emphasizing sanctions rather than collaboration
the incumbent establishes control through repression of (segments of) the population.
Although Kalyvas derives the proposition that ‘the higher the level of control exercised by
an actor, the higher the rate of collaboration with this actor -and, inversely, the lower the
rate of defection‘, repression often provides a well-known root cause for rebellion against
the government.29

27 Che Lan Vien, ‘Sparkling Fires in the South (Viet Cong pamphlet)’, Viet Cong, The Organization and Techniques of the National Liberation
28 Martin van Creveld, The Changing Face of War, 269-270.
29 Stathis N. Kalyvas, The Logic of Violence in Civil War, 132. On repression as a cause for rebellion see for instance: Vincent Boudreau,
University Press, 1971), T. David Mason, Caught in the Crossfire, Revolutions, Repression, and the Rational Peasant (Lanham: Rowman &
Littlefield, 2004).
Indeed, repression might work in cases of low-level contention or when the government is capable and willing to conduct and sustain a campaign of consistent repression, as often practiced by authoritarian regimes—but even in such cases consistent repression is hard to sustain as was demonstrated by the 2011 Arab Spring. In an ongoing violent contest for control over the population (as is the case in counterinsurgency), however, repression mostly provokes further resistance against the government. As repression of an uprising excludes the involved segment(s) of the population from state power or resources, it adds to existing grievances and thus provides a powerful source of increased support for the uprising among those excluded. Moreover, if repression includes indiscriminate violence, it radicalizes leaders as well as grassroots supporters, as this might lead to the belief that the response lies in (more) violent actions against the government. The condition of control that results from unquestioned dominance, therefore, is typically unstable and unsustainable by non-autoritarian regimes. On a superficial level the incumbent seems to possess control, beneath the surface, however, the rebellion is growing stronger while awaiting its chance.

The aforementioned historical examples of Algeria and Vietnam have demonstrated that while the incumbents gained nominal control by use of repressive measures, the reality was that the insurgencies grew stronger and ultimately succeeded to prevail. Robert Thompson, one of the key theorists of the classical counterinsurgency era, describes the end state resulting from an unquestioned-dominance-type campaign (especially when applied in underdeveloped countries) as ‘a country which is not politically and economically viable’. It is evident that in such a situation the government sooner or later will be balancing on the brink of collapse. So, ultimately the approach of unquestioned dominance leads to a condition of control that is, to paraphrase Thompson, not viable.

In order to acquire a further understanding of this unsatisfactory condition of control it is important to explore what exactly triggers the support for an uprising in a group subjected to government sanctions. The answer to this question seems evident, as sanctions are a potentially powerful cause for a high level of grievance and anti-government resentment among the punished segment(s) of the population. In spite of the threat of sanctions, the caused grievance can spawn underground support for the uprising as ‘the more one detests the regime, the more likely one is to accept higher risk’. Ted Gurr, among others, has argued that in such a situation, where the deprivation experienced by the people becomes stronger than their fear of punishment, this will inevitably result in collective violent action against the incumbent. The crucial matter in this process is the population’s lack of acceptance

30 Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow, Contentious Politics (Boulder: Paradigm, 2007), 138-43.
31 T. David Mason, Caught in the Crossfire, 118.
33 Daniel Byman has described how such resentments might be exploited by insurgencies to create a cause. See Daniel Byman, Understanding Proto-Insurgencies (Santa Monica: RAND, 2007), 12-15.
34 In this regard Gurr uses the term relative deprivation to describe the perceived discrepancy between expectations and capabilities of a group in society. Ted Robert Gurr, Why Men Rebel, 37.
of the authority of the state's government, or, in other words, the government’s lack of legitimacy.

In its most primordial appearance state authority is a function of physical force. Coercion by use or threat-to-use of physical force is traditionally considered the most important source of governmental power. Physical force is neither the only nor the most commonly used tool of the state, the exclusive right to wield this force within its territory, however, is the state’s most unique trait. The direct expression of the authority of a state’s government, therefore, is coercion by use of force. Force as a tool for domestic control, however, is a very limited resource of power that can be used for only a short period of time and against a limited group within society. People, who are constantly subjected to brutal force or the threat of it, will only comply and collaborate with the government out of fear of the consequences of not doing so. As was discussed afore, it is highly likely such a situation will trigger an uprising as by the government caused grievances lead to a high level of resentment. So, governments that base their authority predominantly on coercion, as is the case with the unquestioned dominance approach, risk to be sooner or later perceived as illegitimate. In the specific context of counterinsurgency, where there exists already a highly mobilized anti-government group, this tottering governmental legitimacy can be considered an accelerator for further resistance.

It is clear that the effects of the approach of unquestioned dominance are highly undesirable in contemporary Western counterinsurgency warfare. The emphasis on sanctions and use of force provide a strong ground for a decline of state legitimacy among the repressed segment(s) of the population. Moreover, the use of abundant force in overseas counterinsurgency campaigns might also affect support outside the actual theatre of operations. The French brutalities in Algeria serve as a case in point as they led to what one observer called ‘a process of self destruction’ as not only support of the Algerian population faded away, but also French (and international) public opinion turned against the war effort. With regard to the specific subject of counterinsurgency in weblike societies, it can be said that the intervention of alien forces in a non-Western society acts as a catalyst for the troubles which can be expected if the incumbent follows a strategy of unquestioned dominance. Most overseas deployments in so-called ‘small wars’ normally don’t involve a sufficient number of troops, as these wars are typically assessed as of minor importance to the national interest of the intervening states. More important, however, is that in such a case the incumbent’s legitimacy often faces immediate and extensive challenges as in the eyes of the local population the use of force against natives might be perceived as not

38 Alastair Horne, A Savage War of Peace, Algeria 1954-1962 (New York: The Viking Press, 1978), 234. Horne quotes Robert Delavignette, who was a distinguished member of the Safeguard Committee of Individual Rights and Liberties that was instituted in April 1957 in order to investigate and redress excesses as a consequence of atrocities committed during the battle of Algiers (January-March 1957).
a matter for foreign outsiders. If we also take in mind the linguistic and cultural barriers that augment the identification problem, it becomes clear why contemporary population-centric counterinsurgency is not grounded on a strategy that aims at establishing control by unquestioned dominance. The preferred alternative is a strategy that seeks to obtain control through collaboration. Therefore, let us now turn to the matter of how collaboration is instrumental in obtaining control over the population.

1.3 How collaboration facilitates control

The ramifications of the approach of unquestioned dominance reveal two key processes that are vital for obtaining control over the population. First, in an ongoing contest for control, the government’s main challenge is re-establishing its authority over (segments of) the population. Authority is an expression of the state’s power to rule over the population. Historically, three forms of authority can be distinguished; coercive, reward-based and legitimate authority. As was discussed in the previous paragraph, coercive authority will not lead to a viable condition of government control (in case of non-authoritarian regimes conducting irregular warfare). Reward-based authority might provide an adequate solution to the government’s problem, as the population’s obedience can be purchased by offering rewards for compliance. This form of authority, however, is limited and costly, as the people only feel obliged to comply as long as there is an adequate reward to do so. The third form, legitimate authority, is inherently stable, as it is based upon the people’s belief in the rightfulness of the government’s authority. This allows the government to exercise its authority with the population’s consent. In comparison to the coercive and reward-based forms, however, legitimate authority is an intangible, abstract notion as it is not a direct outcome of the input of material resources like force or rewards. In order to obtain legitimacy the government must convince the population of its right to govern. This process of legitimation, which enhances the people’s acceptance of the government’s authority, is our starting point for explaining how collaboration facilitates control. Contrary to the approach of unquestioned dominance, collaboration does not emphasize sanctions, but aims at cooperation between the government and the population. This approach offers a strong ground for legitimation, as collaboration can bring previously excluded actors (in our case supporters or members of the insurgency, or otherwise aggrieved parts of the population) under the influence of the government.

The pragmatic problems experienced as a consequence of the approach of unquestioned dominance reveal yet another process of essential importance for obtaining control over the population. The shortage of security forces and problems with identification of insurgents and their sympathizers are just two symptoms of the government’s lack of resources for obtaining control over the population in an environment of violent struggle. A solution to

this problem is provided by mobilization of resources available within the population. This process of mobilization enables identification by use of intelligence systematically acquired from members of the population. Moreover, the shortage of security forces can be solved by mobilizing local militias. Collaboration actively seeks to enhance the government’s control over the population by use of such resources derived from the population itself. Of course, in a strategy aimed at collaboration, sanctions against defectors come in second place, proper identification and a sufficient number of security troops, however, are needed in order to protect the population and actively fight defectors who threaten collaborators with the government.

Consequently, collaboration offers a path for obtaining control over the population by providing a ground for legitimation and consecutively mobilizing the population for the government’s cause. The former process enables the incumbent to address the problem of disputed acceptance of the government’s authority, while the latter enhances the government’s control over the population by provision of additional resources in the form of intelligence and manpower. The insurgency thus is fought by use of its most important sanctuary and base; the local population. To return to Mao’s analogy: instead of draining the pond, the strategy of collaboration aims at a more sophisticated way of fishing; it seeks to make the water inhospitable to the fish.

1.3.1 Legitimation

A thorough analysis of how collaboration incorporates legitimation and mobilization will provide an insight in the logic underlying counterinsurgency. In this paragraph we will first explore the process of legitimation. Legitimacy is fundamentally defined as a quality that justifies a power relationship. In the case of a violent struggle for population control it is the domination of the government (and its incumbents) over the population that needs to be (re-)justified. Max Weber’s well-known study of legitimacy has led to a typology of three primary types of legitimate authority. An authority might claim legitimacy on rational, traditional or charismatic grounds. Rational authority is based on a belief in the legality of the established system of order and the right of those who exercise authority over the system to do so. In the specific case of the state’s government Weber calls this type of legitimate authority rational-legal, stressing that the rational rules which follow from the patterns of the system are encoded in a legal framework. The second type of legitimate authority is based on traditional grounds. Rational authority is based on a belief in the legality of the established system of order and the right of those who exercise authority over the system to do so. In the specific case of the state’s government Weber calls this type of legitimate authority rational-legal, stressing that the rational rules which follow from the patterns of the system are encoded in a legal framework.
sanctity of immemorial traditions. This form of authority is often attributed to a particular office or hereditary in line.\textsuperscript{43} The last type of legitimate authority, charismatic authority, is characterized by the person embodying the authority. Charismatic authority is based on the unquestionable sanctity, heroism or exemplary behaviour of an individual and the order which was created by this person. This form of legitimate authority is fully linked to a leader who successfully develops allegiance by use of his personal, charismatic, traits.

Although in reality legitimate authority might consist of a mix of these three pure types, the typology reveals that there are different strands which can be followed to (re-)establish a government’s legitimacy in a contest for control over the population. Therefore, the process of legitimation as part of a strategy of collaboration can be explored by analyzing how the government might use these different grounds to enhance the acceptance of its authority by the population. First there is the rational-legal form of authority, which, of course, can be directly associated with the modern Western notion of a state. If the government’s authority is disputed, it might seek legitimacy by use of the existing legal framework. The government can point at the fact that its authority is legally sanctioned by the law the population is subjected to. In a violent struggle for control it is not very likely that alienated or aggrieved segments of the population will comply just because there is a law that orders them to do so. Sociologist Cor Lammers, however, has argued that this form of legitimation might be used by foreign occupiers in order to establish preliminary control over the population.\textsuperscript{44} The German occupation authority in the Netherlands, for example, was initially accepted as lawful, because international law sanctioned this authority. Based on this legal framework, prior to World War II the Dutch government had even issued instructions that called for its civil servants to comply with occupiers. Of course the brutal occupation regime soon suffered a decline in legitimacy as its practices grieved the population. The acceptance of its authority on ground of international law, however, had initially enhanced German control over the population.

The definition of control as a matter of ‘collaboration towards a set of shared objectives’ reveals the true strength of the legitimation process. The government might use the existing legal framework to formulate objectives that both enhance control over the population as well as address the needs of the population. In case the government seeks to establish or augment its control, it can use the legal framework to offer opportunities for participation in political processes. Excluded segments of the population, which are highly susceptible to insurgent claims, can be addressed by offering such opportunities. A higher degree of political participation, thus, becomes an objective shared by the government and the population. Western countries, in this regard, typically consider the organization of elections the best method for offering opportunities for political participation. The 1940 United States Marine Corps’ \textit{Small Wars Manual} already mentioned the use of elections in twelve different cases in

\textsuperscript{43} Montgomery McFate and Andrea V. Jackson, ‘The Object Beyond War: Counterinsurgency and the Four Tools of Political Competition’, 22.

\textsuperscript{44} Cor J. Lammers, \textit{Vreemde Overheersing, Bezetten en Bezetting in Sociologisch Perspectief} (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2005), 69-71.
which it proved to be an effective tool to stop sanguinary revolutions and rescue countries from a state of civil war.\textsuperscript{45} David Galula’s \textit{Counter-Insurgency Warfare, Theory and Practice}, which has heavily influenced the current United States Army and Marine Corps counterinsurgency manual, \textit{FM 3-24}, also stresses the importance of ‘absolute free elections for local provisional self-government’ in order to organize the participation of the population.\textsuperscript{46} An additional advantage of the organization of elections is that it allows the incumbent to improve his knowledge of the local population as the adjoining voter registration might be used as a census. The organization of free elections under circumstances of war requires security in order to protect the voters and candidates from retaliation. Paradoxically, the democratic process of political participation is often undermined by wartime security measures, as was the case in the counterinsurgency campaign in El Salvador during the 1980s.\textsuperscript{47} Although a series of free democratic elections ultimately generated a legitimate government with broad popular support, the first results were very limited as the government resorted to repression in order to create a secure, permissive environment for elections. So, legitimation by way of offering an opportunity for political participation through elections might provide a path towards governmental control over the population as long as there is a sufficient degree of security to guarantee the participants’ safety. In addition to the security forces, the local population can also be mobilized to enhance security. This will be discussed later in this chapter.

A last form of enhancing legitimacy by use of rational-legal methods is the use of legal powers to address the population’s grievances. If the government demonstrates its will and ability to assist excluded segments of the population it might even address root causes for an insurgency. A case in point is Ramon Magsaysay’s implementation of an ‘equal justice for all’ programme as part of the Philippine government’s campaign against the Huk rebellion (1946-1954).\textsuperscript{48} This programme was designed to counter the insurgent’s claim that peasants could not expect a fair treatment by the government and courts as they were under heavy influence of the rich landlords. Magsaysay ordered the army’s legal branch to represent poor peasants in the courts. Moreover, he personally facilitated access to judicial assistance within 24 hours. In addition to this, the abuse of the tenant-landlord system was also tackled by a special commission.\textsuperscript{49} The Philippine government also managed to effectively counter the main grievance (‘land for the landless’) the rebellion sought to address by donating land to poor peasants and helping them with a small government loan. These examples illustrate how the government can use its legal powers in order to address the very grievances its
opponent seeks to exploit. If the government successfully implements such an approach its authority will become firmly accepted.

A characteristic of the mentioned rational-legal methods (which address shared objectives) is that they enhance government acceptance by attending individual members of the population. The organization of elections as well as the use of the legal system to address the people’s grievances aim at augmenting political participation and reconciliation of individuals. As legitimate authority is considered a matter of the people’s belief in the rightfulness of the government’s authority, it becomes immediately clear that legitimacy presupposes a shared normative framework. The rational-legal form of legitimacy, therefore, might not be suited for societies in which the normative framework does not incorporate such an encoded legal framework. If the government wants to enhance its acceptance, it, therefore, should take into account the specific values of the target population. According to Weber’s typology this means that such a group must either have a traditional or charismatic notion of legitimacy. As both traditional and charismatic legitimacy are embodied by either a particular office or a single person, the government needs to collaborate with these authorities. Contrary to the rational-legal methods, this approach does not address the individual members of a societal group. It is an indirect approach, which enhances the people’s belief in the rightness of the government by use of key individuals; the local power-holders. Thus the government needs to meet the legitimation requirement by ‘specialized cultural legitimation’, which implies the emergence of additional, specialized political leaders.50

Co-option of local power-holders is a key mechanism for increasing government legitimacy, as salient societal values are taken into account.51 Moreover, in a struggle for control it provides an opportunity to address grievances by incorporating previously excluded segments of the population in governmental power.52 Marten describes the use of this mechanism as a common trait of both imperialism and contemporary foreign interventions as in order to attain control over indigenous societies ‘they [the colonial or contemporary interveners] have to pick political winners and losers according to their adherence to particular values...’.53 Indeed co-option of local power holders was a common trait of imperialism; it allowed colonial governments to obtain control over highly fragmented weblike societies without the need for expensive, large-scale military campaigns. Ronald Robinson has even argued that such collaboration was the most important mechanism of empire.54 Although there are many differences between contemporary counterinsurgency and colonial warfare,

52 Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow, Contentious Politics, 215. Tilly and Tarrow use the term co-optation for the mechanism that produces incorporation of a previously excluded actor into some center of power.
they share the challenge of attaining control over a webleike society by co-option of local power-holders. Lammers also points at the benefits of co-option of indigenous power-holders, as this overcomes the incumbent’s typical shortage of resources and knowledge of the locale. He mentions, however, that in the specific case of violent foreign occupation key collaborators will soon lose their legitimacy as the population will consider them agents of foreign repression. In a strategy of population control through collaboration this is not the case as the intervening authority seeks to support or install a stable government based on the people’s consent. Therefore, co-option of local power-holders can also be practiced by foreign interveners in order to enhance the host-nation government’s legitimacy. It should, however, be noticed that a co-opted local power-holder always finds himself caught in an interposition between the co-opting intervener and his own subjects, the consequences of which we will discuss later. Let us now turn to some examples in order to explore how this mechanism of co-option was practiced from the colonial past to contemporary counterinsurgency campaigns.

The famous French colonial officer and theorist on colonial warfare Hubert Lyautey has emphasized the importance of co-option of native elites in colonial warfare. His first experiences with this practice dated from a 1894 posting to French Indochina (also his first colonial assignment), where Governor-General Jean Marie De Lanessan explained how he managed to control the local population by co-option of local traditional authorities:

‘In every country there are existing frameworks. The great mistake for European people coming there as conquerors is to destroy these frameworks. Bereft of its armature, the country falls into anarchy. One must govern with the mandarin and not against the mandarin. The European cannot substitute himself numerically; but he can control. Therefore, don’t disturb any tradition, don’t change any custom. In every society there exists a ruling class, born to rule, without which nothing can be done. Enlist that class in our interest.’

Although this quote discusses co-option of an elite class, the mechanism might also be used for co-option of less powerful leaders. An excellent example of such a use of co-option of traditional authorities in a contest for control over a webleike society is provided by the Indonesian armed forces’ (Tentara Nasional Indonesia, TNI) campaign against the Darul Islam insurgency (1945-1962) in West-Java. When the TNI adopted new counterinsurgency tactics in 1958, collaboration with the traditional village elites became a standard operating procedure

55 Cor J. Lammers, Vreemde Overheersing, 19.
for military commanders. By the end of the campaign every village had a so-called babinsa, a military village manager (typically a non-commissioned officer), who was responsible for 'coordination' with the village's chief. This allowed the babinsa to control the population by use of the local chief. As the civilians considered both persons as equal to each other, it can be concluded that the babinsa was also accepted as a legitimate authority. It is also noteworthy to mention that some of the babinsas considered themselves the inheritors of the Dutch 19th century colonial system, as they felt they established control over the villages in a similar way.

Engaging local traditional authorities was also key to success in the contemporary campaign in Iraq. Since 2006 a strategy of tribal engagement has been used in Iraq's troublesome Anbar province. The general approach of this strategy was to 'bolster traditional authority structures of the tribes in order for them to re-establish social control over military age males in their tribes who were the ready pool of recruits for Al-Qaeda'. The 'Anbar awakening', which was the outcome of this approach, encompassed that the population massively turned against the insurgents who were now perceived as highly illegitimate. Instead they took the side of the Iraqi government and coalition forces as they managed to restore traditionally legitimate authorities. Co-option of traditional authorities thus allowed the incumbents to obtain control over a population that had been under firm control of the insurgents.

Co-option of local power-holders as a tool for legitimation turns out to be a time-honoured practice. In the afore-mentioned examples the local authorities were all traditional authorities. This leads to a question over the last type of Weberian legitimate authority; can charismatic authority be used in a similar way? Contrary to the rational-legal and traditional forms charismatic authority is not embedded in permanent societal institutions. The authority of the charismatic leader depends on his unique personal capacities, and the way these capacities are perceived by his followers. Weber, therefore, argues that charismatic authority by nature is unstable. Followers accept charismatic authority as long as its unique strengths are constantly proved. In the case of political domination the warlord can be considered the archetype of charismatic authority. The capability to wage war, of course, requires violent contention. If we apply this to the specific situation of irregular warfare within a society, this means that a warlord controls one segment of the population, while he is engaged in violent conflicts with other segments of the population. In doing so he can choose to join either the government's or insurgent's side or to remain a 'neutral' faction. The most important for the warlord in choosing his side is the remaining absence of peace. Consequently, he will collaborate or defect in order to maintain the violent conditions that require his unique capabilities. Of course this is directly opposed to the government's aim

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of (re-)establishing control as this seeks to end the violent state of society. The warlord as charismatic authority, therefore, provides the government with a collaboration challenge; how to co-opt such an opportunistic actor? Antonio Giustozzi has argued that the answer lies in institutionalization.61 By incorporating the warlord within the legal framework of the state, his authority will be formalized by rational-legal means. This requires effective political leadership as there are not only advantages, but also costs (for example a lost of independence) for the involved warlord.62 The warlord years of China’s new Republic (1911-1927) clarify this problem as the weak leaders who controlled the central government in Peking depended on ‘manipulation and pretensions of legality’ to control co-opted warlords.63 The extensive requirement of manipulation to maintain control over the warlords undermined the fragile legitimacy of the central government, and thus the different local warlords became the de facto rulers of China. Since the 2001 defeat of the Taliban government the same problem has shown itself in Afghanistan. The international coalition and the new Afghan government started collaborating with warlords without the ability to institutionalize these actors in a working political system. The absence of a strong central authority allowed the warlords to effectively remain in control of their local environment, which was ‘hardly noticed in Kabul and in the capitals of the world, but was very much felt in many Afghan villages’.64

Should co-option of charismatic local power-holders then be avoided? The problematic nature of collaboration with warlords reveals a lesson that is generally applicable to the mechanism of co-option; when co-opting either traditional or charismatic local power-holders the government should be able to dominate such agents. The government, however, depends on these local power-holders as they provide the legitimacy the government lacks. This dependency is what Anthony Giddens has called the ‘dialectic of control’; the subordinate actor can influence the superior actor, because it provides the latter with a key resource.65 All social systems are to a higher or lesser degree subjected to this logic. In our case, therefore, it is acceptable that the government depends on charismatic or traditional local power-holders as providers of legitimacy (the key resource). As power is a matter of sufficient resources, however, it should be avoided that co-opted local power-holders possess more extensive resources (beside legitimacy) than the government itself can rally. Co-opting local power-holders thus requires a capacity of the government to dominate such a collaborative relationship. Strategies of co-option domination (which deploy the government’s resources) will typically vary between constraint and consent and aim at institutionalizing local power-holders within the framework of the state. This will be further discussed in the next chapter.

62 Study of social movements suggests that charismatic authority in general is very efficient for mobilizing the population against bureaucratic institutions. This stresses the need for firm governmental leadership in order to contain charismatic claims. See Joel Andreas, ‘The Structure of Charismatic Mobilization: A Case Study of Rebellion During the Chinese Cultural Revolution’, American Sociological Review 72:3 (2007).
64 Antonio Giustozzi, Empires of Mud, 304.
For now we can conclude that collaboration seeks to enhance legitimacy by augmenting the population’s acceptance of the government’s authority through either rational-legal methods or co-option of local power-holders. The former method predominantly aims at individual members of the society, while the latter method encompasses an indirect approach through key leaders of societal groups. The organization of the target society prescribes which method is the best choice. Therefore the government and its incumbents should practice cultural legitimation. Various historical examples ranging from the colonial era to our time have demonstrated that legitimation is a strong tool, which can be used to obtain control over the population in a violent contest with irregular opponents. As governmental legitimacy increases, the population itself will gradually start to fulfil a more active role in the fight against the government’s enemy. So, the government’s attitude of collaboration (through legitimation) serves to spark the population’s collaboration. Let us now turn to the mobilization process that regulates this active participation.

### 1.3.2 Mobilization

Once the government has managed to obtain a basic level of control through legitimation, it can seek to consolidate and exploit its authority by mobilizing the population for its cause. Mobilization itself is a general term, which can be defined as an ‘increase in the resources available to a political actor for collective making of claims’. Mobilization might thus add a whole range of resources, varying from social or economic to military means, to the government’s capabilities. Here we focus on the military means, from which the term mobilization originated. The reason of this focus is the need for adequate security on the local level. If the government wants to consolidate its control and enhance the population’s collaboration, it is essential to guarantee the safety of the people. The provision of security to co-opted power-holders or aggrieved parts of the population that are served by legal means is, of course, conditional to the legitimation process. In the collaboration approach the government, therefore, has to prioritize the use of its security means to ensure the safety of its key collaborators. As a consequence of successful legitimation larger parts of the population will also consider active collaboration with the government. A rational actor, however, can only be expected to join the government’s side as long as his safety is guaranteed. Thus it becomes of pivotal importance that the government ensures the safety of the local population.

This need for security demands a vast number of security forces as the government has to secure every village in a contested area by sustained presence. A sustainable number of 20 security officials (either police or military) per thousand members of the population (a force ratio of 1:50) is traditionally recommended for this purpose. The discussion with regard to

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66 Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow, *Contentious Politics*, 217.
the number of security forces needed for effective sanctions in an approach of unquestioned dominance (paragraph 1.2.1), has already demonstrated that in modern campaigns such a number cannot be expected to be deployed for protracted periods of time. In the previous paragraph it became clear that this provides the government with a classical problem as colonial warfare was also subjected to the same problem of limited military means (because extensive military campaigning was considered too expensive). The solution of this problem of numbers can be found in mobilizing the ‘perfect counterinsurgents’ (i.e. the local population) for the provision of their own security.\(^68\) In addition to the availability of a vast number of such defenders their knowledge of the local situation and population helps to overcome the incumbent’s identification problem. Especially in case foreign forces are deployed to conduct irregular warfare in an alien society, these ‘perfect counterinsurgents’ provide hard-needed linguistic and cultural knowledge. Another advantage of the use of the local population for the provision of security is that the locals themselves can best address what they perceive as security. Only when the population feels secure it will be ready to step up its collaboration with the government. So mobilization provides not only the necessary number of security agents, it also helps to overcome the identification problem and cultural barriers.

To understand how the government can practice this mobilization process it is important to obtain an insight in what exactly encompasses military mobilization. This form of mobilization can be defined as ‘assembling and organizing by governments of men and materials for purposes of war or preparedness of war’.\(^69\) In the specific case of a violent struggle for control over the population, which is fought at grassroots level, we can adapt this definition into assembling and organizing the local population for the provision of local security. Materials such as for instance weapons are typically provided by the government. If these are already present there often also exists some kind of local self-defense initiative or even an organized militia. In such cases the task for the government is to further empower and incorporate the local defence force within its counter-rebellion organization. Typically such a self-defense force or militia is under command of local power-holders. In case the government has legitimated its authority by co-opting such local authorities it can mobilize these local fighters. The government should seize this opportunity to carefully bring these local militias under government control as this augments the government’s control over the local power-holder. This can be done by institutionalizing the militias in the structure of the state’s security forces. In order to prevent alienation of the co-opted agent and his militia members, however, this requires a careful approach, which takes susceptibility caused by the loss of independency and local resentments into account. Anthropologist Mario Fumerton clarifies this as he explains that during the Shining Path insurgency in Peru as well as in the counterinsurgency campaign in Afghanistan the police was seen as a corrupt,

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\(^{68}\) Joe Quinn and Mario A. Fumerton, *Counterinsurgency from Below: The Afghan Local Police in Theoretical and Comparative Perspective* (Kabul: ISAF CAAT, 2010), 32.

predatory force. Consequently, for most ‘perfect counterinsurgents’ it was unacceptable to be associated with the police. It is obvious that in this situation it is not a good idea to institutionalize a local militia as part of the existing police organization.

So basically there are two kinds of mobilization. The first type can be called top-down mobilization as the government assembles and organizes the local population into some form of local self-defense force as part of the counterinsurgency effort. The second type can be labelled grassroots mobilization as it encompasses the formalization of already existing local forces (under command of a local power-holder) by institutionalizing them within the government’s security forces’ structure. Thus mobilization functions as a double-edged sword. On the one hand it enhances collaboration (and therefore control) with the government on the local level as the government’s initiative brings security by mobilizing ‘perfect counterinsurgents’. On the other hand the position of the central government is strengthened as the control on the local level is formalized by institutionalizing local militias as part of the larger governmental security apparatus. In addition to legitimation, which brings an initial level of control, the mobilization process increases the government’s control over the local population and enhances the strength of the central state. Let us now return to some of the historic examples that were discussed to demonstrate the legitimation process. This allows an explanation of the interaction between legitimation and mobilization.

First there is the case of rational-legal legitimation as practiced in countering the Huk rebellion in Philippines. As a consequence of Magsaysay’s measures the population’s attitude towards the government took a radical turn. As the locals started to accept the authority of the central government in Manila, civilians began to volunteer as active participants. They acted as informers and helped to provide security for their own towns. This process was carefully managed by the government as civilians had to be volunteers and were free to decide upon the kind of contribution they wanted to make. The government also made sure the civilians were protected and rewarded for their duties. Consequently governmental control increased rapidly as the Huk rebels lost their sanctuary and had nowhere to hide. This example demonstrates spontaneous top-down mobilization as the population felt the government was seriously addressing its needs.

Co-option of local power-holders was a common practice in the colonial era. The French colonial past offers many cases of mobilization of indigenous populations through co-option of local authorities. This was for instance systematically practiced by the bureaux arabes, which the French developed in Algeria during the 1830s. Moreover, these bureaux provide an excellent example of how a strategy of collaboration through legitimation and consecutive mobilization can be executed. The bureaux were equipped with the full authority

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70 Joe Quinn and Mario A. Fumerton, *Counterinsurgency from Below*, 8-9.
71 See also Joel S. Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States*, 22-23.
to represent the French colonial authority *vis-à-vis* local indigenous authorities whom they had to ‘explain French policy and operations’. Of course this was an euphemism for co-opting the local power-holders as French colonial doctrine deemed that influence of these authorities could best be checked and minimized by making them serve the French purposes. Once such a relationship had been established the French started to educate and nurture the local authorities. Typically this also encompassed incorporating the local militia under the command of a power-holder. Moreover, doctrine also called for security measures in the form of the fortification of villages and even mobilization in its top-down form, as neutral locals were to be trained and organized for self-defense against insurgents. Militias as well as the local rulers were slowly integrated by the *bureaux* and thereby became formalized elements of the French colonial authority.

The Indonesian counterinsurgency strategy against Darul Islam was based on co-option of traditional village authorities. In addition to this the TNI equipped and organized a so-called *Organisasi Keamanan Desa* (Village Security Organization) in each village. The flaw of this approach was that this mobilization also occurred in cases the outcome of the co-option process was not yet clear. Thus militias were raised in villages which were still under influence of the insurgents. In those villages the self-defense force acted as a prime source of ammunition and intelligence for Darul Islam. Where mobilization followed successful legitimation, the *Organisasi Keamanan Desa* was efficiently deployed against the insurgents, and could be directly commanded by the main village leader with help of a single TNI advisor (most probably a *babinsa*). A tactic used by the TNI to enhance government control was the use of the local population (including women and children) in offensive actions against the insurgents. Locals were used to form a cordon in order to seal off known insurgent areas. This tactic was known as *pagar betis*, or ‘fence of calves’. Although its still not clear whether or not the civilians volunteered for this duty, it is certain that they became increasingly dependent on the TNI. For these operations the locals were subjected to TNI commanders, who seized the opportunity to press local authorities into more effective collaboration. In Indonesia the institutionalization of co-opted village leaders and their militias took the form of political integration in the system of the Indonesian republic. Fieldwork has revealed that in the mobilization of the villages the identity of the leader was the primary motivating force. The village leaders that were successfully co-opted were nominally integrated in the modern political process. At the village level, however, politics remained dominated by the traditional loyalty bond between the different authorities and their subjects. Therefore,

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74 Ibid., 752.
76 Ibid., 265.
government penetration at grassroots level remained low. The Indonesian government succeeded in co-opting most local leaders, but failed to institutionalize these authorities within the framework of the state.

The Indonesian case demonstrates the difficulties of incorporating traditional authorities in institutions of the state. It also shows that the military incorporated civilians in their operations against the insurgents. By doing so the military was able to influence the village leaders’ attitude as they became subjected to TNI command. Of course such an approach which actively exploits women and children for military operations, does not meet international judicial and ethical standards, and, therefore, should be avoided by any modern Western military. Moreover, the use of this method in order to augment governmental control also indicates that the approach lacks the necessary prudence which should be exercised when institutionalizing local power-holders in the structure of the government.

The 2006 Anbar awakening is an excellent example of the successful implementation of a collaboration strategy in contemporary campaigns. American forces that were assisting the Iraqi government succeeded to establish and consolidate control over the population in a previously insurgent-infested area. Key elements of this approach were co-option of tribal authorities, the provision of security (first to essential collaborators and later to the population as a whole), and institutionalization of tribal authorities and militias into Iraqi governmental structure. Co-option of local power-holders provided legitimacy to the Iraqi government and American forces. This legitimacy was further augmented by the effective protection offered to collaborating authorities. Members of tribal militias were also involved in this effort, as they were screened and allowed to wear weapons and uniforms as part of the ‘Provincial Auxiliary Iraqi Police’. Previous experiences had shown that incorporating tribal fighters as part of the Iraqi Police made a very competent local security force. It was, therefore, soon decided that the population should be secured by recruiting locals into the national Iraqi Police. These forces of local fighters would be paid by the Iraqi government. From June to December 2006 almost 4,000 new police officers were recruited this way, and, consequently, the security situation dramatically increased. Although it was very clear from the beginning that the militias would be integrated in the structure of the Iraqi security forces, the government in Bagdad considered the increasing power of the local tribal leaders as a threat. Therefore in October 2008 a special committee was raised to oversee funding, training, and arming of such forces. In the meantime the local power-holders of whom some indeed challenged the central government started to seek more influence in that government by regular political participation. Although the government was not completely accepted, as a loss of independence was feared, the awakening had convinced local power-holders and their subjects that collaboration with the government provided a path to a previously unknown level of stability and security. Thus it was decided that political

participation should be sought and the leader of the Awakening movement started to formalize the movement as a political party.

This last example demonstrates that collaboration through legitimation and consecutive mobilization is a strong tool which can be used by a host-nation government and foreign assisting forces alike. Instrumental to the success of the Anbar awakening case is that the approach was designed to institutionalize local actors within the framework of the Iraqi state as soon as a sufficient level of local control was obtained. The most important insight provided by this case, therefore, is that any collaboration strategy should seek to consolidate and exploit the initial level of control by incorporating institutionalizing as one of its key elements.

Mobilization thus is a powerful mechanism if fitted in a well considered collaboration strategy. Whereas legitimation aims at obtaining the will of the population or its key leaders to collaborate with the government and its incumbents, mobilization consolidates and exploits this will by triggering and guiding the population's active participation; therefore mobilization is rather a political than a military process. In a violent struggle for control over the population the primary objective of mobilization should be to secure the populace. This is a prerequisite for augmenting governmental legitimacy and control, and it also helps to overcome the shortage of security forces and the identification problem. Grassroots mobilization through use of existing local militias has demonstrated the importance of formalization. This form of mobilization is typically practiced in addition to a process of legitimation through co-option of local power-holders as was illustrated by the historical examples in this paragraph. The causal relationship between legitimation and mobilization requires the former to initiate the will for collaboration. After this initial step, however, legitimation and mobilization can be considered as mutually reinforcing mechanisms. In case mobilization prompts a too abrupt process of institutionalization of local resources, this will damage the will to collaborate. Therefore adequate legitimation takes the government's continuous efforts and attention, especially in case the government uses the technique of co-option of local power-holders. Moreover, in order to guarantee the continuation of legitimation beyond the initial step, any collaboration strategy that is based on co-option should -from the outset- include an approach of careful institutionalization.

1.3.3 Some critical reflections on control through collaboration

Thus far we have discovered that collaboration, contrary to the approach of unquestioned dominance, aims at establishing a condition of control based on the government's legitimacy. In the case of rational-legal legitimation such a consent-based approach will lead to a stable condition of control, at least, if there exists a rational-legal framework

81 See in this regard also Kalyvas, who considers militias primarily a political instrument. Stathis N. Kalyvas, The Logic of Violence in Civil War, 107.
that regulates the relationship between state and society. In case such a framework does not exist, collaboration should be sought through co-option of those in control of societal groups. The condition of control that results from this approach, however, is not inherently stable. Initial legitimation will spawn an acceptable level of control that might be sufficient for the purpose of neutralizing an insurgency. Thompson has pointed at the danger of such limited condition of control as it is not a guarantee for long-term stability. Especially in underdeveloped countries it is of pivotal importance to augment governmental control in order to address political and economical needs. If the government fails to do so a resurgence of the insurgency or even new uprisings may occur as a consequence of grievances caused by the lack of development. In order to secure long-term stability and coordinate further development the government needs to accommodate co-opted power-holders within the structure of the state. As was discussed afore this formalization should be executed by careful institutionalization.

The collaboration approach aims at rendering the insurgents irrelevant; the insurgency itself, however, is a very relevant factor in the dynamics surrounding collaboration. Therefore, the exact role of the insurgent in this process should also be considered. Of course the prerequisite of security for collaborators is directly related to insurgent violence that seeks to prevent collaboration with the government. In addition to the use of force the insurgent has many more options to discourage collaboration with the government. Such counter-collaboration measures might vary from more subtle forms of coercions to persuasion. Moreover, the insurgent himself might also use a strategy of collaboration in order to establish control over the population. The population, consequently, becomes the subject of competing collaboration strategies. The people’s choice for compliance with one of the contenders is according to Nathan Leites and Charles Wolf Jr. primarily inspired by the desire ‘to limit damage’. This means that the side that imposes lesser costs for collaboration will be most successful. In order to dominate the competition for collaboration the government thus should offer a less costly prospectus than the insurgents do.

Although the conceptual analysis of the background and working of collaboration has revealed that it provides a path to population control, the actual practical application of this strategy is quite demanding. Especially in case collaboration is sought through co-option, the government has to balance between dominating the collaborative relationship on one hand, while on the other it has to provide the most attractive -or less expensive- alternative for collaboration. In order to solve this paradox the individual key collaborators have to be subjected to a strategy that aims at constraint as well as consent and therefore includes both coercion and persuasion. While the strategy of collaboration ultimately aims at attaining control over the population through non-violent means, co-option thus might also necessitate the use or threat of use of force in order to dominate individual power-holders.

82 Robert Thompson, Defeating Communist Insurgency, 51
As the government cannot afford to alienate these agents and their supporters, coercion should be used restrictively and in a subtle manner that also guarantees the government’s position as most attractive alternative to collaborate with. Operationalizing collaboration through co-option consequently requires the government to solve this puzzle of being the dominant as well as the more preferable agent.

Another aspect that is of key importance for designing and implementing a successful collaboration strategy is the availability of sufficient intelligence. The question that matters here is that of with whom to collaborate. This is not another identification problem, as typically information on the population, its leaders, and political structures is not veiled by secrecy. In the case of foreign intervention in an alien society, however, cultural barriers might thwart the incumbent’s comprehension of local society. Therefore specialized ethnographic intelligence is needed to describe who is who in a specific locale. This knowledge is also needed to identify the legitimate leaders, as well as the availability of resources to those leaders and society in general. In order to create long-term stability and guarantee governmental control, any collaboration strategy thus should be based on adequate knowledge about local society. This allows the construction of a flexible approach that enables the government both to dominate as well as to be the preferable ally.

1.4 Conclusion: control in population-centric counterinsurgency, a matter of collaboration

In this chapter we have sought an answer to the question of how collaboration is instrumental in establishing control over a population. As there is an ongoing academic debate over the relationship between control and collaboration, answering this question implied a validation of the logic of population control through collaboration. The alternative approach, which first seeks physical control over a territory in order to spawn the collaboration of its inhabitants, is not preferable for contemporary population-centric counterinsurgency warfare as its practical difficulties are too cumbersome and it typically leads to what Kilcullen has labelled unquestioned dominance. The requirement of a vast number of security forces and the identification problem are highly likely to cause the counterinsurgent to commit atrocities through the use of indiscriminate violence. Consequently governmental control that results from this approach is based on repression of the population. This condition of control can only be maintained if the government is willing and capable to practice consistent repression. In countries ruled by authoritarian regimes this might be the case, but for most modern Western countries such an approach is unthinkable. Especially in case of a violent struggle for control the approach of unquestioned dominance will alienate the people from the government and might cause grievance and anti-government resentment. The government’s acceptance by the population, therefore, will inevitably suffer from this approach. As a consequence government control will diminish as soon as it loses its grip and government-inflicted grievances lead to a (renewed) uprising.
For answering the question of how collaboration is instrumental in establishing control over the population the flaws of the approach of unquestioned dominance offer an excellent starting point. We have seen that collaboration seeks to establish control by enhancing the government’s acceptance by the population. An increase of governmental legitimacy sparks the population’s collaboration. The government can consecutively exploit this will to collaborate by mobilizing resources, such as self-defense militias and intelligence, from within the population. Once this mobilization is initiated it also reinforces legitimation and consequently leads to an increase of governmental control. Collaboration, thus, is instrumental in establishing control by use of legitimation and consecutive mobilization.

Collaboration in general offers the preferable path to control in counterinsurgency warfare as was demonstrated by historical examples ranging from the colonial era to contemporary campaigns. Collaboration strengthens the legitimacy and resources of the government, and it therefore leads to a stable condition of control. There are, however, different forms of collaboration that can lead to this objective. Legitimation can be obtained by use of the state’s rational-legal means or by co-opting those agents that possess traditional or charismatic authority. Where the former addresses individual members of the populace, the latter constitutes an indirect approach that seeks to obtain control over segments of the population by use of their key leaders. Both approaches share the prerequisite that collaborators should be effectively secured from insurgent retaliation. So, for successful collaboration, the government should possess at least enough means to guarantee the safety of its initial collaborators. Which form of legitimation the government should use depends on the structure of the target society. Therefore counterinsurgents should practice so-called cultural legitimation, which emphasizes the use of those structures that are perceived as legitimate by the local population. This conclusion already provides us with a clue to the answer of the additional question whether co-optation of local power-holders is a valid strategy for obtaining control over the population in weblike societies. In case local society considers such power-holders as legitimate authorities, co-option of these agents can certainly increase governmental control.

If the government follows a strategy of collaboration through co-option it might find itself confronted with a local power-holder who has considerably more resources at the local level than the government itself. In order to guarantee governmental dominance -and control- in this collaborative relationship, the government has to ensure a capability to rally more resources than its collaborator if necessary. To avoid alienation of a power-holder and assure itself of further compliance, the government should seek to carefully formalize co-opted agents as part of its governmental structure. This need for governmental domination through accommodation of local power-holders is also obvious in the mobilization process. Although there are two types of mobilization, top-down mobilization and grassroots by use of existing local militias and fighters, a strategy of co-option typically includes the latter. This implies the need for formalization of local militias as part of the governmental security structures. If the government wants to establish long-term control and stability, it should
institutionalize local power-holders as well as their militias. Any strategy of co-option, consequently, has to include careful institutionalization.

In addition to the need to control the co-opted agents, the government should also counter insurgent collaboration measures by being the most attractive partner for collaboration. Operationalizing collaboration through co-option consequently requires the government to solve this puzzle of being the dominant as well as the more preferable agent. The pivotal issue which of course underlies all choices of collaboration is the structure of the target society. Any collaboration strategy should be informed by ethnographical information on the local population and its leaders. Here we touch again upon the second fundamental question raised in this chapter’s introduction. Can local power-holders be used in order to gain control over (segments of) the population in weblike societies? As already has been demonstrated that co-option is a valid strategy for obtaining control over the population, the next chapter will analyze if this can be practiced in weblike societies. This requires us to solve the two main puzzles of co-option. First it is necessary to identify who exactly should be co-opted to obtain control over the population in such a society. Thus we need to analyze the structure of weblike societies. Next we also have to face the puzzle of the flexible strategy that allows the government both to dominate and to be the preferable partner for collaboration. The next chapter therefore will discuss the conceptual background of this thesis’ problem; who need to be co-opted to attain control over the population in a weblike society and how can this be done?
Chapter 2
Chapter 2: Co-option of local power-holders in weblike societies

2.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapter we have concentrated on the concept of population control through collaboration with the local population. As was concluded that the actual application of such a strategy requires its adaptation to the characteristics of the target society, this chapter explores how a strategy of collaboration through co-option can be implemented in the specific type of society this book aims to study; a weblike society. Therefore, two questions need to be answered in this chapter. The first deals with the validity of the assumption that local power-holders should be the centre of gravity of an approach for obtaining population control in a weblike society. An analysis of the structure of weblike societies and especially the organization of power in such a society will reveal which agents are considered legitimate authorities. As the need for cultural legitimation directly informs the choice of collaboration strategy, we consequently can conclude whether co-option of local power-holders is a valid collaboration strategy for obtaining population control in weblike societies.

The second question this chapter seeks to answer concerns the implementation of a strategy of co-option of local power-holders. Although this book’s central problem of how counterinsurgents have practiced this strategy will not yet be explicitly discussed, answering the question on the implementation of co-option in weblike societies requires us to take the specific perspective of a counterinsurgency campaign into account. First it should be noted that counterinsurgency is considered an activity of a state’s government and its incumbents. This implies the notion of some form of centralised state power, and therefore we should explore the relationship between weblike societies and central state powers that seek to control those societies. Second, and last, we should not forget that counterinsurgents not only have to seize control over the population, but also have to prevent the insurgents from doing so. As was already mentioned in the previous chapter, this requires the government and its incumbents both to dominate local power-holders as well as to be the preferable partner for those agents to collaborate with. Thus the answer to the question of how co-option of local power-holders can be implemented in order to establish control over the population in a weblike society will clarify how a centralized government can attain control by use of a flexible strategy that encompasses methods to dominate as well as to persuade these power-holders.

By answering these two questions this chapter provides a conceptual background for studying co-option as part of a counterinsurgency campaign as it sketches a theoretical review of the mechanism of co-option in a weblike society. It identifies who in such a society should be the subject of a co-option strategy and consecutively explains how such an agent can be effectively co-opted by a central state power. Ultimately, the integration of these issues of who and how allows us to construct a framework for understanding the applicability
of counterinsurgency concepts in the specific societal circumstances of weblike societies. Let us now turn to the first and foremost step that informs any strategy of co-option; whom to co-opt in order to establish control over a weblike society?

2.2 Whom to co-opt? The applicability of co-option in weblike societies

The elementary choice when deciding which collaboration strategy to follow is the choice between the use of rational-legal methods of collaboration or co-option of traditional and charismatic local power-holders. As such a strategy seeks to augment governmental legitimacy by use of existing societal patterns of legitimacy, this pattern should be the key determinant for deciding which strategy to follow. The strategy of collaboration through co-option, therefore, implies that legitimacy in the target society predominantly rests with local power-holders. As pointed out previously this research’s central question assumes that this is the case in weblike societies. This section analyses whether or not this assumption is correct. Therefore we should understand the pattern of legitimacy in a weblike society and identify the different legitimate agents and their roles as well as the interaction between those agents. This allows us not only to answer the question whether co-option is a valid strategy in such a society, but also reveals -if applicable- who exactly should be co-opted.

The key issue, thus, is the understanding of the pattern of legitimacy in the target society as this allows for an approach of cultural legitimation. This forces us to define first -beforeimmerging in the specifics of weblike societies- what exactly is a society and to analyze which structures constitute the pattern of legitimate authority. Although the term ‘society’ might also refer to social association as a universal aspect of the human condition, this book adopts the idea of ‘a ‘society” as a specific human group which differs from other societies. The notion of cultural legitimation suggests that culture is the predominant factor that distinguishes a specific society. Clifford Geertz has defined culture as ‘the fabric of meaning in terms of which human beings interpret their experience and guide their action’. Culture is transformed in concrete action in the form of social structure, the actual pattern of persisting social interaction. This pattern is also described as a society’s institutional system; the total of interrelated institutions that order social interaction. Understanding this institutional system traditionally requires the study of the relations between the four most important societal institutions; economics, politics, religion, and kinship. To understand a particular (type of) society these four aspects and their relations should be thoroughly analyzed. In this study we focus on the specific concept of legitimacy that persists in a society. As legitimacy


Chapter 2 The Course of Co-option

is fundamentally defined as a quality that justifies a power relationship, it is a society's pattern of justified domination that is of particular interest to us. Therefore we concentrate on a society's political system as it includes the existing structure of legitimate authority. This emphasis on the political aspect, however, does not exclude economy, kinship or religion from our analysis, as 'the polity is dependent on other institutional spheres for the continuous inflow of resources, services and support'.  

Understanding the pattern of legitimacy in a society, consequently, requires us to analyze the political system as well as taking into account the influences of other institutional systems on the polity.

Although the concept of 'a society' as a cultural distinctive entity seems clearly defined, real life societal boundaries are often blurred. Complex societies, for example, tolerate cultural differences as ethnic diversity might exist within such a society. In these cases the overall dominant culture is considered the specific culture of that society. Likewise, societies typically have a territorial dimension. These geographical confines, however, might not always be strictly adhered as a society is primarily bound by its institutions as perceived by its members. Consequently, cultural differences may occur within clearly defined geographical borders. Moreover, it should be noted that an individual may be aware of belonging to a society, but might not necessarily agree that this is 'right and proper'. The 'distinctive entity' that constitutes a society, therefore, might be less unambiguous than this term suggests. The concept of 'a society', however, remains a useful tool for analysis as it not only allows us to sketch the macro-level social structure of a particular society, but also permits a more universal comparison of societies. Societies with more or less the same structural properties can be categorized as belonging to a particular type. Let us now to turn to the specific type of society that lies at the heart of this book; the weblike society.

2.2.1 Weblike societies and their political system

This study has adopted Migdal's concept of a weblike society. A weblike society is 'a mélange of fairly autonomous social organizations' in which control is 'fragmented and heterogeneous'. This type of society is typically found in the Third World and characterized by a high degree of decentralization and strong control on the local level. Thus such a society is a loosely knit 'web' of different local segments and its social structure can best be described as fractionalized. Before turning to this social structure, and especially to the

8 Joel S. Migdal, Strong Societies and Weak States, 37-39. Like Wrong (see 1.2), Migdal uses the term 'social control', which I have replaced by 'control' as used throughout this book. Both the terms 'control' and 'social control' refer to the power to rule over (segments) of a society.
political system of weblike societies, it first has to be explained why this study has adopted this particular concept.

Traditionally, the typology of societies rests on the dichotomy which draws on the ‘primitive/civilized’ or ‘traditional/modern’ oppositions. Ferdinand Tönnies’ distinction between Gemeinschaft (community) and Gesellschaft (association), or Herbert Spencer’s notion of simple versus complex societies are just two examples of this dichotomy. As was mentioned in the introduction of this book this research was triggered by empirical observations from contemporary counterinsurgency campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, in which counterinsurgents are confronted with local power-holders such as tribal elders and warlords. The societal concept we use in this research, therefore, should match the general structure of those societies. Although both Iraqi and Afghan society contain strong ‘primitive’ or ‘traditional’ elements such as for instance the existence of tribal association, both societies have also encountered modernity. In Iraq this led to an industrialized, modern state dominated by Saddam Hussein’s Takriti clan, while in Afghanistan attempts to ‘consolidate a strong, independent, central state’ were undertaken. In the latter case ‘fragmentation into local communities remained the norm’ during these attempts to form a modern state, and when the concept utterly failed, Afghan society reacted by grasping back to local structures. Thus the current ‘localism’ and ‘traditionalism’ of Afghanistan do not result from tradition, but stem from an encounter with modernity (see also Chapter Eight, section 8.2.1). In a similar way Iraqi society reacted to the collapse of the central state after the demise of Saddam’s regime in 2003. This fragmentation led to the well-known ethno-sectarian and political violence as local power-holders struggled for control, which now was obtained on the local level. As Iraqi and Afghan society both have encountered modernity, but also hold traditional features, the classical dichotomy is not suitable for characterizing this type of society. The main trait both societies share is the high degree of fragmentation and the predominant position of the locale. Therefore we can conclude that Migdal’s concept of the ‘weblike society’ with its emphasis on decentralization and local segments can best be used to label the type of society this book seeks to study.

The fractionalized social structure of weblike societies dictates the shape of the political system associated with this type of society. As control is distributed over the various locales which make up such a society, the local level is the predominant political marketplace. In weblike societies, therefore, people are being locally governed, the allocation of values -such

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12 Antonio Giustozzi, Empires of Mud, 33.
as the notion of legitimacy is not centralized.\textsuperscript{15} The champions of this political system are local power-holders, or ‘local strongmen’ as Migdal calls them. These agents ‘enjoy legitimacy and support among the local populace’ as they provide the population with the components required for various strategies of survival.\textsuperscript{16} It is this ‘ability to impose themselves between segments of the population and critical resources’, which characterizes the relationship between local power-holders and local people as a patron-client relation.\textsuperscript{17} Thus legitimate authority in weblike societies rests with local power-holders who exert control over the population of a locale through their unique access to critical resources. This identifies weblike societies -with their predominant role of local power-holders- as potentially very susceptible to a strategy of collaboration through co-option. If we want to know who exactly should be co-opted, a more profound analysis of the role and the legitimacy of local power-holders is required. The leading puzzle that should be solved in this regard, is the matter of local power holders’ unique ability to provide critical resources; how have these agents obtained this position? This question can be answered by exploring the influences of kinship, economics, and religion on the political system of weblike societies. As a starting point for this analysis, however, we first need to clarify what exactly this position as broker of critical resources encompasses.

The ability to obtain control over a population is essentially the ability to influence personal survival of the members of that population:

\begin{quote}
‘All people combine available symbols with opportunities to solve mundane needs for food, housing, and the like to create their strategies of survival-blueprints for action and belief in a world that hovers on the brink of a Hobbesian state of nature.’\textsuperscript{18}
\end{quote}

People will formulate survival strategies by weighing sanctions and incentives which are prescribed by various institutions dominated by powerful persons who possess the means ‘to deny others a livelihood’.\textsuperscript{19} In weblike societies local power-holders constitute the nexus of this mechanism as they are the agents who provide the critical resources on which members of the population base their survival strategies. Traditionally these resources have been both material and immaterial goods and services such as access to agricultural land and water as well as protection and bullying of competitors (this all goes back to traditional agrarian

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[17] Joel S. Migdal, \textit{Strong Societies and Weak States}, 257.
\item[18] Ibid., 27, italics in original.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
societies). In more advanced weblike societies they might also encompass money, jobs, and numerous other means which we will illustrate with some examples later in this chapter.

The political marketplace of a specific locale is dominated by the local power-holder who holds the most extensive amount of such resources. Although the particular circumstances of individual locales might vary considerably, the sources that allow local power-holders to fulfill this role rest with the institutions that shape the overall society. Therefore we will now study the influence of in the Third World common patterns of kinship, economy, and religion on the political system of this type of society. The question we seek to answer here is how each institution legitimates the dominant position of local power-holders.

2.2.2 The legitimacy of local power-holders

We will start this analysis by looking at kinship as in weblike societies kinship groups are the predominant social organizations, which are strong enough to persist in the wake of increased urbanization and industrialization. Kinship commonly involves the establishment of publicly recognized ties through combinations of cohabitation and procreation. A further distinction can be made into formal genealogies and social kinship which does not necessitate a biological relationship as binding ties are also constructed through adoption or fictive kinship. The essential issue for us is the transmission of membership as this forms the basis of a shared identity that leads a group to construct a sense of and commitment to collective action, especially when responding to outsiders. Kinship groups are strongly connected to cooperate in order to obtain scarce critical resources, and thus kinship and economy are intertwined, as we will discuss later. What matters here is how these groups organize themselves against external threats, as this shapes political authority in kinship groups. Although the notion of kinship suggests a more or less egalitarian entity with an informal, genealogy-based hierarchy, external threats necessitate the emergence of leaders who are capable to protect a group’s interests either by use of force or by political means. By providing protection against threats or mitigating external influences these leaders are of pivotal importance for the personal survival of group members and thus they ‘enjoy legitimacy and support’. Albeit kinship groups are often considered egalitarian constructs, they influence the political system of a society as they are the platform for emergence of leaders who are capable of protecting the interests of such a group versus external actors.

20 Joel S. Migdal, Strong Societies and Weak States, 262.
22 Charles Tilly, Trust and Rule (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 45. See also Roger M. Keesing, and Andrew J. Strathern, Cultural Anthropology, 179-181.
order to understand how this exactly influences the political system of weblike societies we now will turn to the kinship organization most commonly met in these societies; the tribe.

A tribe can be defined as ‘a bounded network of communities united by social and political ties and generally sharing the same language, ideology, and material culture’. Tribes usually consist of various segments or clans that are united by lineage-ancestry and are organized in autonomous local communities. The tribe as a whole is characterized by an absence of a strong central political hierarchy. Although authority is limited, there are different kinds of regulatory officials like ‘village heads, “big men,” descent-group leaders, village councils, and leaders of pan-tribal associations’. Thus, by its very nature a tribe essentially is a highly fragmented form of social organization. While a tribe might unify against external threats, the normal pattern of life is dominated by a continuous rivalry between different kin-groups within the tribe, which are all competing for local resources. The situation that results from this rivalry indeed can best be described as what Migdal calls ‘a world that hovers on the brink of a Hobbesian state of nature’. This struggle between various local kinship groups might even lead to protracted feuds which easily can divide a village, as is described by Louis Dupree when observing Pashtun society:

‘When no external invasions (i.e. Persian, Moghul, British, Russian) threatened, the blood feud continues unabated among smaller kin-units, usually sublineage and below, because, in spite of the residual rights and obligations functioning at the lineage level and above, tensions can and do build up between individuals, families, and sublineages. In south-central Afghanistan, most villages consist of several sublineages.’

Unsurprisingly, personal survival in tribal societies heavily involves local power-holders who are able to protect the members of their kinship group. The more affected by intra-tribal feuds, the more village heads, big men, descent-group leaders, and village councils grow in importance as institutions of authority capable of mitigating such conflicts and maintaining the overall tribal balance. The afore mentioned restriction of authority as a typical trait of tribal organization, therefore, mainly concerns the absence of strong central authority. Exemplary in this matter is Philip Salzman’s study of Yarahmadzai (a Baluch tribe in Iran) political structure in which the role of the tribal chief is described as a symbolic ‘animateur’, who ‘depends on the decisions and actions of his tribesmen, for without them

voluntary behind him, he is little more than a figure-head, an empty symbol’. 29 This is further illustrated by the typical reaction to external threats which might temporarily unify the tribe and allocate a mandate for military action or mediation to a central authority. Such a mandate is neither absolute nor persistent as political authority remains with those tribal segments capable of self-defense. 30 Within the organization of the tribe, therefore, the regulatory officials who represent the various tribal segments can be considered the legitimate authorities which facilitate the survival strategies of the their kinship groups.

In webleik societies kinship is an important determinant for political authority as political functions are firmly rooted in kinship groups, which rely on leadership for protection against external threats -which might encompass both defensive and offensive actions. This is a traditional trait of tribal organization -the most common form of social organization found in webleik societies- as is illustrated by the 14th century Islamic scholar Ibn Khaldun when describing the distribution of cohesion and solidarity in tribes. Khaldun uses the term Asabiyya, which is translated as ‘spirit of kinship’ or ‘group feeling’ and literally ‘refers to male relations in the male line of the family or tribe, and designates the sense of solidarity which binds them to each other and promotes mutual cooperation against external forces’. 31

As we have seen in the description of the tribal structure, the external threats to a specific kinship group can be of an internal as well as of an external nature as other groups which fit in the larger kinship structure of the tribe, as well as actors which are truly foreign to this structure might threaten a kinship group. Albeit the tribe is almost in a continuous condition of conflict because of the internal feuds, external threats usually effectuate a temporarily unification. The various kinship groups -usually segmentary lineages- that constitute the tribe, however, remain the elementary units of political organization.

An exception to this basic organization occurs when a society is subjected to a persistent condition of violent contention which leads to a breakdown of local order. As kinship groups cannot longer guarantee their own protection or are totally occupied with fighting each other, other cultural conventions are formed in an attempt to re-establish stability. 32 This usually encompasses the emergence of a charismatic leader, a warlord, who yields ‘a military force capable of achieving/maintaining a monopoly of large scale violence over a sizeable territory’. 33 The warlord, therefore, is a legitimate authority who contributes to the people’s personal survival strategies by re-imposing social order on the locale under his influence as is the case with Afghan warlords.

The most important insight we can derive from this analysis, however, is that the influence of kinship on the political structure of webleik societies is such that the total political

33 Antonio Giustozzi, Empires of Mud, 5.
structure in fact is a network of various local power-holders predominantly shaped by what Barnes calls a ‘partial network’ of various kinship groups in the society.\(^{34}\) This implies that the overall political network consists of local power-holders who are capable of defending the interests of their kinship group versus external threats. Moreover, this form of political organization has become deeply rooted in weblike societies as the notion of authority as an office of representation for kinship groups is passed from one generation of kins to the next and thus transcends time.\(^ {35}\) Kinship-based local power-holders thereby bind leaders and followers to former generations and have become what Weber has called an immemorial tradition (see 1.3.1). Thus traditional authority passed within a kinship group constitutes a primal source of legitimacy for local power-holders in a weblike society.

Migdal has characterized the relationship between local power-holders and their subjects as a patron-client relation. This seems a well-chosen qualification as ‘patronage relations provide discriminatory access to desired goods’ and ‘patron-clientele networks may be seen as strategies for the maintenance or aggrandizement of power on the part of the patrons, and of coping and survival on part of the clients’.\(^ {36}\) Ernest Gellner, however, points at the fact that the idea of a ‘genuine kinship society’ opposes patronage as reliance on kin is more important than the bond between patron and client.\(^ {37}\) In weblike societies kinship structures are of major influence on the societal and political structure, as they determine the fragmented, localized nature of these societies. Yet it is the mix of this particular structure with economic and religious affairs that truly defines the political structure. We will now focus on the role of economy as a source of legitimate authority for local power-holders as unique access to scarce material resources needed for survival allows for a system of patronage which not only confirms and augments the position of kinship-based power-holders, but also might lead to the emergence of new powerful agents capable of fulfilling political roles. Let us now first study how the combination of economy and kinship facilitates the dominant position of local power-holders in a weblike society.

A patron-client relation is more stable when patrons exert an emotional or moral hold over their clients.\(^ {38}\) This is the case when the bond between patron and client is not only a matter of access to resources, but also part of the immemorial traditions of a society. Traditional authorities – especially those in egalitarian societies – will typically strengthen their position by economic means.\(^ {39}\) In addition to the protection of their kinship group, local power-holders pursue the consolidation of their powerbase by control over material resources


\(^{35}\) Karl D. Jackson, Traditional Authority, Islam, and Rebellion, 188.


\(^{38}\) John Waterbury, ‘An attempt to put patrons and clients in their place’, 331.

\(^{39}\) Max Weber, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft, 137.
such as lands, goods, and money. While patron-client relations are dyadic, face-to-face personal relations which directly guide the daily practice of social actions, the combination with traditional authority allows these relations to transcend the boundary of time and to become firmly embedded in the political structure of a society. James Scott has pointed out that this positively effectuates ‘greater legitimacy’ because it is not only the antiquity of a traditional patron-client relationship that spawns its legitimacy, but also the fact that its age is considered a guarantee for the continuous flow of resources. In weblike societies, where personal survival urges the local population to acquire access to essential resources and patron-client relations consequently function as a personal security mechanism, this guarantee is of pivotal importance. Local power-holders who hold such positions as traditional patrons thus combine their access to economic resources and traditional kinship group leadership into a single office with ‘greater legitimacy’.

Traditional patronage as a source of a local power-holder’s legitimate political power is commonly observed in weblike societies. Samuel Popkin describes the ‘multi-stranded relationships’ which traditional landlords in Vietnam kept with their tenants as this strengthened their position vis-à-vis competitors as well as that it increased the dependency on their patronage exclusively. Tenants were not merely clients, they were traditionally part of the extended family of the landlord, and therefore the landlord as a patron not only provided vital economic resources, but also offered protection and support to his clients. In a similar fashion chiefs in Pashtun society also enjoy ‘greater legitimacy’ as is portrayed by Frederick Barth in his renowned study on political leadership among Swat Pathans. A Pashtun chief, most commonly known by the title khan, claims his authority as a result of his descent and lineal inheritance of the title as well as by virtue of his prominence as a landlord. Possession of land is the most direct source of political influence, as this allows a khan to bind tenants who depend on him for their livelihood. Although land might be acquired as a result of political merit, purchase or seized by force, the main source for landownership is inheritance. A khan further augments his authority by offering gifts and hospitality to his followers, by which he creates additional dependency connections that strengthen the multi-stranded relationship between patron and client. For this purpose even a special place, known as the men’s house or hujra is created in which a chief can publicly demonstrate his capability as a benefactor. The ties that are created by this form of patronage are such that followers even become dependent of a khan as a supplier of food as they regularly join the

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44 Frederik Barth, Political Leadership Among Swat Pathans (Oxford: Berg, 2004), 72-81.
45 Ibid., 52.
free meals offered in the men’s house. The relationship between the khan and the members of his men’s house is a transaction. The khan assumes the role of protector of his followers by offering a guaranteed supply of resources needed for personal survival (including physical protection). The client, for his part, is obliged to serve the khan and attributes legitimate authority to his patron as he depends on the chief’s continuous protection for his personal survival.

These examples have illustrated the ‘greater legitimacy’ of local power-holders as traditional patrons, which combines a kinship-based traditional authority position with the role of provider of (multiple) economic resources. In weblike societies kinship is the predominant factor which shapes the fractionalized structure that characterizes this type of society. Power in such a society is acquired on the local level, where people struggle for their personal survival. This ‘localization of power’ brings about a decisive role for patron-client relations. Although kinship bonds might produce a system of patronage which adequately guarantees the provision of resources for survival to its members, the need for resources might be such that also non-kin patron-client ties might develop. Persons who hold access to scarce resources, therefore, can become patrons and exercise influence over people in need of those resources. Consequently such patrons gain political power through the influence over their clients. This position is legitimized only to ‘the extent that their resources are employed in ways which meet the broadly defined welfare needs’ of the population. Although this form of authority lacks the traditional dimension, the economical interdependency link can be strong enough for the emergence of kinlike solidarity. Thus a local power-holder who has obtained political authority through his economic charisma might posses a solid power base in the form of a solidarity network of clients.

The coronelismo system of Brazil’s Old Republic (1889-1930), ‘which flourished under the same local economic conditions of a traditional agrarian society that generally sustain traditional political clientelism’, provides an example of primarily economically based local power-holders, the coronéis. These coronéis successfully established a system of economic dependence, as they usually were the largest landowners in a specific locale. When such local power-holders gain political importance they sooner or later assume other tasks than merely the provision of economical goods. Most notable is that economy based power-holders might take over physical protection as they become dominant agents on the political marketplace of a specific locale. Consequently such agents also develop ‘greater legitimacy’ as they combine economic patronage with other dependency relationships and thus develop multi-stranded ties with their clients. It should also be noted that the legitimacy of these

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48 Ibid., 103.
49 James Scott, ‘Patronage or Exploitation?’, 27.
50 Charles Tilly, Trust and Rule, 9.
power-holders is charismatic as it strongly depends on the unique characteristics of a person. The idea of economically based local power-holders, however, might become embedded in the traditions of a society and thus become an accepted feature of its political structure.

Here we also encounter the limits of legitimate local power-holder authority, as dominant economically driven power-holders might become predatory leaders who seek to maximize their own profit without conscientiousness. Albeit being perceived as legitimate such local power-holders might balance between coercive and legitimate authority. The ‘dark side’ of such an agent involves the employment of mafia-style criminal patronage methods and the marginalization of groups within the specific locale dominated by this power-holder. Examples are provided by predatory Philippine bosses, who control both coercive and economic resources within a specific locale, as well as the malignant self-interested behavior which is known to be a common trait of warlordism. The grievances caused by local power-holders who employ this modus operandi can easily inflict a decline of legitimacy and cause a rebellion. James Scott and Benedict Kerkvliet even identify this kind of discontent as the main reason for rebellion -despite nationalist or religious themes- in Southeast Asia during the 20th century.

Economy as a societal institution constitutes yet another partial network which shapes the overall political structure of a society. On one side it might provide traditional leaders with tools to augment their authority by creation of multi-stranded patron-client relationships which spawn ‘greater legitimacy’. On the other side economy allows for the emergence of charismatic power-holders who gain political influence as a result of their access to scarce resources and even proof capable of providing physical protection. Thus, in addition to kinship, the economical system is an important source determining the political structure of a weblike society. Let us now turn to the final institution that influences the political structure; religion.

Religion is a particularly strong source of legitimate political authority as it encompasses the fundamental issues of human life and death and therefore holds extensive influence over people who believe in it. Abner Cohen has studied the influence of religion on the polity in West-African local communities and illustrates the importance of religion by describing political authority in West-Nigeria’s Sabo community:

'Today, political authority in Sabo is legitimized by a system of beliefs and practices which are rooted in men’s ideas about the ultimate order of the universe and the meaning of life in it. It

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is rooted in the anxieties of men in their day-to-day afflictions and in men’s ritual activities associated with these ideas and anxieties.54

A local power-holder who possesses religious charisma enjoys almost uncontested legitimacy among the people and it comes as no surprise that rival local power-holders often claim religious legitimation. Religious legitimacy, however, is mostly passed through either spiritual or physical succession. In weblike societies with their emphasis on kinship structures religious legitimation is typically a hereditary trait of a lineage within this society. With regard to the specific issue of Islam in tribal societies Gellner has pointed at the existence of tribal holy lineages that incarnate the Word in their society.55 Thus religious charisma is routinized as part of the traditional political pattern of a weblike society.

Traditionally religious leaders fulfill the role of mediator, arbitrator, or adviser.56 They advise local power-holders and commoners alike and in cases of contention their decisions are usually universally respected. Therefore religious leaders are important actors for maintaining stability and balance within a specific local society. Over time, however, religious leaders have assumed political authority as they have become increasingly powerful through the substantial merits they were awarded for their services. In this regard Barth explains that Pashtun Saints became political authorities due to their control over land which they received as gift for their services as mediator.57 Especially the settlement of conflicts between prominent chiefs involves the transfer of landed property to the peacemaker. Although the Saints continue to fulfill their classical role, the ownership of land has also turned them into autonomous political authorities as they now are binding clients as landlords. Thus religious authorities can become patrons who keep multi-stranded relationships with their clients.

A religious leader might not only provide goods or land, he can also provide protection due to his influence as respected traditional mediator. Such patron-client relationships can be all-pervasive as is illustrated by traditional Mufti-Shabak relationships in northern Iraq.58 The Mufti family, wealthy landlords with religious and political authority, became patrons of the Shabak, a Kurdish-speaking, extremist Shi’a marginal group. The Mufti provided nearly all resources needed for survival of the Shabak. In addition to the lease of land, the former successfully provided protection against the dominant Arab and Kurdish tribes of the area. The Mufti landlord would further help his protégées in medical affairs and trade, which even included protection against cheating shopkeepers. This illustrates that the multi-stranded

57 Frederik Barth, Political Leadership Among Swat Pathans, 92-93.
relationships kept by religious patrons might be among the most extensive encountered in weblike societies.

The influence of religion on the political structure of a weblike society is such that it provides a mechanism for balance between the different power-holders who dominate the political landscape of a locale. Moreover, religious authorities might also exercise political power due to their ability to provide protection and the provision of other goods needed for survival. The traditional, and most important role of religious leaders, however, is that of agents of stability in the relative anarchy of a weblike society. Thus the partial network of religious power-holders is a distinctive part of the overall network of the political structure of such a society.

The interlocking total of the partial networks of kinship, economy and religion constitutes the political network of a weblike society. In this political structure the pattern of legitimacy flows from the partial networks as they accommodate the local population’s need for resources for personal survival. Local power-holders who hold leading positions in these networks and thus control access to vital material and immaterial goods are perceived as legitimate authorities. It is not uncommon for a local power-holder to occupy a leading role in different partial networks that augments legitimacy through multi-stranded relationships with their followers. This political structure takes the form of patron-client relations, which go beyond single-interest and even might be all-pervasive. The better local power-holders are capable of providing multiple resources for personal survival, the more important their position as a legitimate authority in the political meshwork. Although many of the examples we have discussed are taken from more or less traditional rural settings, this patronage role is deeply rooted in weblike societies and capable of surviving ‘structural and ecological changes’.59 This pattern of legitimacy, therefore, is also commonly observed in more modernized and urban segments of weblike societies in which local power-holders control access to jobs, study, money, etcetera.

The limits of this pattern of legitimacy are encountered when local power-holders predominantly use their authority in pursuit of self-interest. Elements of the population might be alienated by the use of coercive methods and economic repression. The grievance caused by such self-interested power-holders might lead to a rebellion or provide an already existing insurgency with additional supporters. Although we certainly have to take this ‘dark side’ into account when studying problems of counterinsurgency in weblike societies, the pivotal role of local power-holders as the agents of legitimacy in weblike societies remains unchallenged. Thus we can conclude that if we seek to obtain control over the population of a weblike society by practicing cultural legitimation, co-option of local power-holders is a valid approach. The question that remains unanswered, however, is whom exactly to co-opt in this landscape of many different local power-holders. Although we cannot provide an unambiguous answer to this question as the specifics of each locale might vary indefinitely,
we can use this account on the legitimacy of local power-holders to identify a spectrum of agents of particular interest to a counterinsurgent seeking to implement a strategy of co-option in a weblike society.

2.2.3 The spectrum of co-option in weblike societies

When control over a population has to be obtained in a society with a political system that is dominated by a strong central legitimate authority, co-option of this authority is the objectively preferred method as effective control can be obtained with minimal costs to the agent seeking control.⁶⁰ If we now imagine a society in which legitimate authority is so fragmented that it has become a function of every single individual in this society, we can conclude that exactly the opposite approach is needed. In order to obtain control over the population all individuals should be subjected to co-option efforts, a task requiring Herculean efforts and almost indefinite resources. These two extremes are highly hypothetical, but nevertheless can be used to constitute the ends of a spectrum which defines who exactly should be subjected to co-option in weblike societies.

The previous paragraph has demonstrated that legitimate authority in weblike societies rests with various kinds of local power-holders. In addition to identifying the sources of this type of legitimate authority we can also deduct some conclusions on the actual power of these agents. We might distinguish between the type of services and goods power-holders are capable to deliver. In an environment of violent contention, as is the case in counterinsurgency campaigns, security will be more important than material goods. Moreover, those who exert authority on the basis of a leading position in a single institution mostly are less powerful than power-holders capable of constructing multi-stranded relationships with the local population. Since life in a weblike society is characterized by scarcity of vital resources, the competition for political power can be regarded as a zero-sum contest in which one actor’s losses are another’s gains and vice-versa.⁶¹ The political marketplace of a locale, consequently, is dominated by those local power-holders who succeed best in controlling the access to resources needed for survival. These dominant local power-holders provide the counterinsurgent with an excellent opportunity for co-option as they not only are the legitimate agents in control of a locale, but limiting the co-option effort to the dominant power-holders also requires less means than co-option of all local power-holders.

The question counterinsurgents should answer when seeking control through co-option in a weblike society, is the question about the dominant local-power holders in the various locales which make up this type of society. Answering this question requires a profound insight in the political structure of a weblike society and therefore demands knowledge on

⁶⁰ Cor J. Lammers, Vreemde Overheersing, 139.
the institutions of kinship, economy, and religion. Such an analysis of the target society not only serves to identify the dominant local power-holders, but also should reveal what we have labeled the ‘dark side’ of these agents. A local power-holder might enjoy legitimacy as a result of its attribution by the better part of the population, but especially in the setting of a counterinsurgency campaign it are also the-as a consequence of a local power-holder’s malignant self-interested behavior- marginalized parts of the population that matter as they provide potentially fertile soil for the insurgency. What a counterinsurgent, thus, needs to know when formulating and implementing a strategy of co-option in a weblike society is which persons represent the accumulation of power in the different autonomous locales and whether or not these persons have marginalized societal groups. Although we will discuss the methods of co-option in the next paragraph of this chapter, this conclusion provides the insight that these methods not only include constraining the ‘dark-side’ of dominant local power-holders, but also empowering the leaders of marginalized groups. This further complicates the puzzle of co-option as it adds to the counterinsurgent’s challenge of being the preferable as well as the dominant actor for local power-holders to collaborate with.

Most important for now is that we can use this conclusion to construct a spectrum of co-option in weblike societies. Co-option in such a society is neither an issue of co-opting a central authority nor of separate individuals. Any counterinsurgency strategy of co-option in a weblike society involves those local power-holders who are perceived as the dominant legitimate authorities by the majority of the population in a specific locale. Additionally such a strategy requires the co-option of power-holders who exert legitimate authority over marginalized groups. Consequently one side of the co-option spectrum is dominated by power-holders who have accumulated control over a larger fragment of society, while agents who only possess limited control dominate the other side. The notion of dominant and marginalized local power-holders will vary in every society and is a function of the degree of societal fragmentation. In some societies dominant local power-holders can be found on the village level as the village heads of so-called cooperative villages are considered the dominant legitimate authorities. In other societies effective tribal leaders are considered the dominant legitimate authorities who might rule over several communities -in such a society co-option indeed would encompass Thomas Edward Lawrence’s (‘Lawrence of Arabia’) idea of setting up a ‘ladder of tribes’. Yet another society is dominated by local power-holders whose span of control includes one or more autonomous locales. This is for instance the case with warlords and bosses who legitimately exert control over large territories or warlord-like paramount chiefs who hold authority over several tribes. A similar variation applies to the local power-holders representing marginalized groups. These agents might be village heads in one society, tribal clan leaders or Saints in another, and so on. It should be noted, however, that this variation always represents a marginalized minority, and therefore does

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63 For paramount chiefdoms see Ger Teitler, Toepassing van geweld, sociologische essays over geweld, verzet en militaire organisatie (Meppel: Boom, 1972), 129.
not include local power-holders who exert control over a large part of territory including various autonomous locales.

What can we do to conceptualize this wide variety of local power-holders? First we have to determine the boundaries of the spectrum of co-option in weblike societies. The most powerful authorities which might be encountered by counterinsurgents in weblike societies are those local power-holders whose multi-stranded relationships with their followers has brought them control over one or more complete societal fragments. This type of local power-holder with extensive authority typically is a charismatic leader who has monopolized the use of force within the territory under his control. As Weber has pointed out the warlord is the archetype of this type of local power-holder and such a charismatic leader flourishes well in an environment of protracted violent contention.64 Therefore the spectrum of co-option is limited on one side by warlord-like local power-holders, whose co-option can provide the counterinsurgent with control over the largest societal unit possible. The other side of the spectrum is limited by local power-holders who exercise authority over the smallest societal groups capable of self-defense. This boundary is not only chosen as these groups are the elementary societal factions capable to compete for survival in a highly fragmented weblike society, these groups are also the smallest units which are able to withstand the effects of marginalization by majority leaders. Consequently the lower end of the spectrum is occupied by power-holders who keep single-stranded security-focused relationships with their followers. As the kinship group is the most basic unit of security organization, the traditional leaders of these kin-groups mark the boundary. Thus we have created a spectrum of co-option in weblike societies with the powerful warlord at the upper and the limited authority of kinship group leaders at the lower end. Every legitimate local power-holder encountered in a weblike society will fit somewhere in between those two extremes. As already mentioned, the question which agents should be the prime objects for co-option depends on the structure of the specific target society and might even vary for the various autonomous locales. What we can conclude, however, is that the higher the degree of fragmentation in a weblike society, the lower the position of potentially co-optable local power-holders in the spectrum.

![Figure 1: The spectrum of co-option in weblike societies](image)

Any counterinsurgency strategy which aims at obtaining control over the population in weblike societies should be focused on co-option of the legitimate agents which are part of this spectrum of co-option. The spectrum, therefore, can be used to determine whether

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or not a specific strategy or counterinsurgency concept is applicable in weblike societies. Moreover, the spectrum shows us that understanding the fragmented structure of a society is pivotal for assessing whom to co-opt. This, of course, requires a profound knowledge of the local political structure; the interlocking mesh of kinship, economy, and religion. In the conclusion of this chapter we will combine the spectrum with the methods of co-option to construct a framework for assessing the applicability of counterinsurgency concepts in the specific setting of a weblike society.

### 2.3 How to co-opt? The methods of co-option in weblike societies

Thus far it has become clear that legitimacy in weblike societies rests with different types of local power-holders exerting control over the various societal fragments. Obtaining control over the population in a specific locale consequently requires counterinsurgents to identify and co-opt the dominant local power-holder(s) as well as the leaders of marginalized groups; but how to actually co-opt these actors? As mentioned in this chapter’s introduction the problem of co-option as part of a counterinsurgency campaign will not yet be explicitly discussed here. At this point we must first seek to sketch the conceptual background of co-option in weblike societies and explore the actual methods of co-option applicable in those societies.

Studying this matter, however, requires us to take into account this book’s specific theme of a counterinsurgency campaign designed to obtain control over the population in a weblike society. As counterinsurgency is considered an activity of a *state’s government* -either with or without external assistance-, we should first study the relation between state and weblike society. The underlying question, therefore, is how centralized state powers can gain control over weblike societies with their high degree of decentralization and dominant position of local power-holders. Moreover, since the strategy of collaboration requires the state to practice cultural legitimation and consecutive mobilization by exploiting the existing pattern of legitimacy, we should focus on the specific issue of how states can incorporate local power-holders in order to exploit the legitimate authority and resources of such agents. Thereby, this research follows the scope of the ‘state-in-society approach’ that studies the problem of governmental control not only from the perspective of the state, but also from the point of view of ‘those acted upon, the objects of control’.65 This approach characterizes the relation between state and weblike society as a highly interactive dynamic of ongoing and overlapping struggles in which both local power-holders and the state’s government seek to maintain or augment their mutual authority. A thorough insight in this nexus of state and weblike society is pivotal as it reveals the positions and roles of the government and local power-holders in states that seek to exert legitimate rule over the population in weblike

Chapter 2 The Course of Co-option

societies. This is a prerequisite for understanding how the government’s incumbents—in our case the counterinsurgents—can actually impose state control by practicing co-option.

Ultimately, the challenge for the government’s incumbents in weblike societies is to connect the legitimate local power-holders of the various societal fragments with the state’s central government in order to increase the latter’s control over the population. As the locale is the primary political marketplace in weblike societies, it is also the locus where government officials should face local power-holders in order to engage in a dynamic struggle for authority over these agents. As mentioned previously, the state’s government strives to establish or regain its legitimate authority over the population. In both cases the government cannot use its claim of legitimacy as a method for co-opting local power-holders as it is exactly this legitimate authority that is lacking. Although in the case of regaining legitimate authority the government might refer to its legitimacy in the past, the fragmented nature of weblike societies and the resulting independence of local power-holders will render such a claim ineffective as well. Thus, in order to spawn legitimacy, the government paradoxically has to resort to other methods for establishing and consolidating its authority vis-à-vis local power-holders.

This brings us back to the two other forms of authority that were discussed in the previous chapter (section 1.3); reward-based and coercive authority. As the government does not want to alienate or exclude legitimate local power-holders and—of course—their followers, it cannot rely on the use of coercion alone. On the other side, command of the highly decentralized political and economical resources allows local power-holders to obtain considerable benefits in power, capital, and many other forms. Rewards alone, therefore, will also be insufficient to obtain control over agents capable of seizing vast means themselves. Consequently the government has to vary between coercive and reward-based authority in order to get a grip on local power-holders.

The actual methods of co-option to be used by incumbents who have to establish and maintain a co-optive relationship with local power-holders, therefore, will typically take the form of a continuum, a dynamic combination of coercion and (reward-based) persuasion, and might also include manipulation of the local political marketplace.66 This mix of methods allows for the accommodation of local power-holders, but also offers a tool to constrain the dark side of such agents. Moreover, such a dynamic mix is exactly what is needed in a counterinsurgency setting where the counterinsurgents have to compete for control with the insurgents. The flexible use of coercion and persuasion permits the counterinsurgents to be the preferred as well as the dominant actor for collaboration on the local level. Before exploring this continuum of methods, however, we first need to address the relation between state and weblike society. This will reveal the framework for the continuum of methods as

not only the roles and positions of the various actors but also the nature of governmental control in weblike societies will be discussed.

2.3.1 The relation of state and weblike society

In the first part of this chapter we have studied the structure of weblike societies. As we will now turn to the relationship between the state and such a society, we must first briefly discuss the concept of the state. The modern state in its current form became established in the developed world during the twentieth century and is seen as a unified, purposeful, bounded and hierarchical entity whose authority prospered under the development of bureaucracy.\(^67\) The main characteristics of the modern state are defined by Weber and encompass the ‘monopoly of violence, legitimacy and bureaucracy combined with control of territory based on external and internal sovereignty’.\(^68\) Due to these capacities the modern state is capable of achieving a high degree of efficiency and societal penetration. This allowed modern states to gradually expand their power as they sought ‘to submerge all competing power centers and establish a monopoly over making of rules’.\(^69\) Modern states, thus, are characterized by strong, efficient, and legitimate central authority -i.e. the government-, and capable of achieving societal penetration throughout their territories. Consequently, the nexus of state and society in such states is heavily dominated by the state. What we should bear in mind, however, is that such states emerged in \textit{developed countries} during the twentieth century. The states and societies we seek to study typically are part of the \textit{developing countries} of the Third World. Moreover, the political structure of weblike societies with its emphasis on traditional or charismatic local power-holders contradicts the notion of a strong legitimate central authority capable of achieving societal penetration down to the lowest level of the various locales. Therefore we should abandon the notion of the modern state when studying state-society relations in weblike societies. As the modern state was the result of a development that culminated during the twentieth century, an insight in the historic evolution of the state might offer a concept of better use when studying the relation between state and weblike society.

The origins of the modern state harken back to sixteenth century Europe where a distinct type of state emerged which gradually has become the dominant state form in the world. Charles Tilly describes this type of state as the ‘national state’, which is characterized by its capacity to govern ‘multiple contiguous regions and their cities by means of centralized, differentiated, and autonomous structures’.\(^70\) These national states distinguished

\(^{67}\) Martin J. Smith, \textit{Power and the State}, 90.
\(^{68}\) Ibid., 91, see also Max Weber, \textit{Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft}, 821-837.
themselves from other state forms such as city-states, city leagues, and empires by their unique capability to mobilize economic and societal resources. More specifically it was the accumulation of capital and coercion in the political centre that gave the national states a huge advantage over its competitors. Thus a process of centralization was initiated in early modern Europe; the authority of the central government was gradually augmented at the expense of the situation during the Ancien Régime in which cities, villages, and provinces were local autonomous organizations. This impetus of centralization was ultimately imperative to the rise of the modern state; this evolution, however, proved to be a rather tough and contentious process:

'It was a period of primitive central state power accumulation which continued well into the twentieth century. The entire historical process of creating a national state was a long and violent struggle pitting the agents of state centralization against myriad local and regional opponents. Monarchs, princes, lords, bishops, municipal oligarchs, and regional parliaments recurrently and violently confronted one another in a struggle for control over the means of administration and coercion.'

Like the various autonomous local actors that dominated Europe prior to the rise of the national state, local power-holders still are the most important and legitimate political agents in contemporary weblike societies. In order to compete in an international system dominated by centralized modern states, countries with weblike societies need to replicate the process of central state formation. Unfortunately countries in the less developed part of the world ‘cannot afford the luxury of prolonging the traumatic and costly experience of state making over hundreds of years à la Europe’.

Where states have engaged in a competition for resources at the expense of preexisting autonomous subnational collectivities/or “polities”, protracted violence often has been the result. Moreover, violent centralization might be a root cause for an insurgency and therefore a continuing drive for enhanced centralization might hamper any counterinsurgency effort. It is not surprising that local populations and the contemporary international community alike prefer stability rather than such a process of violent political change, or to paraphrase Migdal, a world that hovers on the brink of a Hobessian state of nature is more acceptable

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71 See, for instance, Tilly, ibid., 190, Hendrik Spruyt, The Sovereign State and Its Competitors (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 185-186,
than a world that actually exists in such an anarchical condition. Consequently, states seeking control over weblike societies are confronted with a paradox; these states have to possess a certain degree of centralization in order to survive in the international system, while simultaneously they have to maintain internal order by giving fiat to the autonomous position of local power-holders who control the various societal fragments. To return to history, they are confronted with similar challenges like the proto-national states of early modern Europe, but also have to respect the preexisting structures of the Ancien Régime. Let us, therefore, turn to the organization of the state in the latter period in order to shed a light on how various local autonomous actors can be incorporated within the framework of the state.

Michael Mann states that societies with states had superior survival benefits over those without them as ‘there are no complex, civilized societies without any centre of binding rule-making authority, however limited in its scope’, and ‘the only stateless societies have been primitive’. The state, consequently, has been a feature of societal organization since earliest history. The forms these powerful organizations took over the course of history were predominantly non-national; they were empires, city-states, city leagues or something else. The pre-modern organization form that matters to this analysis is the empire, as imperial states consisted of various autonomous locales and a centralized administrative authority. This central authority had only limited capacity to penetrate and coordinate society, and certainly did not match the modern national state in accumulating societal resources in the political centre. The government in the imperial centre, however, possessed the unique administrative means to wield coercion and coordinate the maintaining of external and internal order. Imperial governments typically ruled by co-opting ‘local and regional power-holders [sic] without utterly transforming their bases of power’ as well as creating a distinctive corps of servants dependent on the government. Thus the imperial state relied on local power-holders and its own autonomous apparatus for establishing and maintaining control over its territory and population. Although professionalization of the administrative apparatus led to the emergence of bureaucratic polities which ‘strongly emphasized the rulers’ pursuit of definite, autonomous political goals’, imperial states never managed to mobilize the resources for generalizing political power. Consequently, the degree of control exercised by the imperial state was only moderate. Theda Skocpol illustrates this as

78 Charles Tilly, Coercion, Capital, and European States, 1-2.
80 Charles Tilly, Coercion, Capital, and European States, 24.
she discusses the ability of the relatively developed imperial states of Ancien Régime France, Russia, and China to exert influence over socioeconomic relationships at the local level:

‘Rather they [the imperial states] were limited to variations of the function they had, so to speak, been built up to perform: waging war abroad; supervising society at home to maintain some semblance of general order; and appropriating socioeconomic resources through military recruitment and through taxes on land, population, or trade (but not on anything so difficult to assess as individual income).’

Thus, imperial states essentially remained organizations for wielding coercion, and in doing so they were attributed a certain priority in accessing a limited number of resources. Overall societal penetration and population control remained low, despite the emergence of bureaucratic administration and rulers’ attempts to expand their authority. Shmuel Eisenstadt considers the pattern of legitimation in imperial states a huge factor contributing to the limited influence of the central government. As rulers relied on traditional bases and orientations of legitimacy the access to social and economical resources rested primarily with those legitimate agents who controlled the various autonomous locales within the imperial state. The amount of ‘free resources’, which were directly available to the imperial government, therefore, was limited. In case free resources were available, rulers limited the further development of these means, as they did not want them to grow beyond control and endanger imperial rule. Therefore, free resources remained only limited available in imperial states, and were often depleted continually in order to support the coercive capability of the state.

Although limited in its ability to establish centralized control over the population, the concept of the imperial state offers some points for studying the nexus of state and weblike society. Notably is the central government’s reliance on legitimation by use of traditional authority which moulded co-option of local power-holders. This matches the political structure and pattern of legitimation in weblike societies as such a strategy of co-option can also be applied vis-à-vis a combination of traditional and charismatic local power-holders that typically might be encountered in such societies. An illustration of the benefits that flow from this strategy is that rulers seeking control over today’s weblike societies have opted not to pursue direct control, but rather have implemented a ‘hands-off policy’ which has allowed local power-holders to build ‘enclaves of social control for the social stability’ these actors can guarantee in a specific locale.

82 Theda Skocpol, States & Social Revolutions, 48.
84 Joel S. Migdal, Strong Societies and Weak States, 247.
Another point of interest is the imperial state’s ability to provide internal and external order by accumulating coercive means. Seemingly this provides weblike societies the capability to survive in the international system. Migdal, however, points at the fact that the main competitors in this system are the modern national states that not only have a ‘fantastic comparative advantage’ in accumulating resources for war, but also are capable of mobilizing their population for many other purposes. Therefore states in the developing world need an increasing level of control over the population and cannot adopt the concept of the imperial state. Although this concept matches the pattern of legitimacy within society, state rulers also need to confront this pattern of kinship systems, economic patron-client-dyads and religious authorities -as happens in many countries- in order to increase their control over the population and obtain leverage over its resources.

Here we once again encounter the dilemma of states in the contemporary Third World; they have to augment central authority, while at the same time international and internal pressures do not permit these states of going through the violent process of state formation as experienced in Europe. Compared to modern national states, these states are characterized by a weak central authority not capable of achieving deep social penetration throughout their territories. Compared to the imperial states of the past they face a similar pattern of legitimacy that they must seek to exploit in order to maintain societal order and provide legitimation for state rule. Compared to the proto-national states of early modern Europe they are confronted with the same challenge of accumulating resources in the political centre at the expense of local power-holders. The difference, however, is that states seeking enhanced control over weblike societies not only need to engage in a struggle with these agents, they also need local power-holders for legitimation and maintaining stability. In other words, they need to be centralized, but not too centralized. Therefore, the state that seeks control over a weblike society, typically, is a hybrid of the imperial state with its limited central authority and reliance on local power-holders, and the proto-national state which is characterized by its struggle for enhanced centralization. The question that rises from this conclusion is how such a hybrid entity can exist in reality as it relies on contradicting centripetal and centrifugal forces. In other words, the state aims at simultaneously changing and conserving societal order. The relation of state and weblike society, thus, is dictated by a duality that only can be addressed if the state adopts a policy of cultural legitimation which respects the authority of local power-holders, and concurrently manages to extract resources from these agents. The local power-holders, the dominant and legitimate political actors in weblike societies, therefore, are the key to enhanced state control over those societies.

Although the gap between respecting the authority of local power-holders and extracting resources from these agents seems to be unbridgeable, such conflicts are a common trait of power relations in sustainable social systems. Giddens’ concept of the dialectic of control explains the consequences of these conflicts as the dependency between the agent seeking domination and the subordinate actor is such that the latter’s access to resources guarantees

influence in the activities of the dominant actor. In its struggle for enhanced control over a weblike society the state depends on local power-holders for legitimacy, but also for access to other material and immaterial resources as the local power-holders are capable of mobilizing the population in the various autonomous locales of this type of society. The lack of the state’s capability to penetrate at the local level thus is compensated by co-option of local power-holders. This makes the state heavily dependent on these agents, and the balance in the state-society relation puts the local power-holders in a highly influential, seemingly dominant position vis-à-vis the state. The question we should address, therefore, is how the state can tip the balance in its favor, or how can the state make local power-holders depend on its capabilities? Achieving mutual dependency, thus, is crucial for strengthening the position and role of the state in weblike societies. This can only be achieved if the state has something to offer; in order to gain resources from society the state has also to provide access to its own resources for the societal agents it seeks to co-opt.

The imperial and proto-national state already relied on compliance as well as participation of autonomous local rulers in order to strengthen its capacity. In the empires, collaboration with the central government offered vast benefits to local power-holders in the form of the organization of coercion on a more massive scale. The protection against internal and external threats became the key capability of the state, and as long as they were granted the right to rule over their own locale, this capability was enough for local power-holders to engage in a co-optive relationship with the state and acknowledge the government’s dominance in maintaining order within its territory. Although the imperial state’s administrative apparatus gradually evolved, this type of state never succeeded in accumulating other resources in the governmental centre. For the national states it was a necessity to strengthen the centre, and although the completion of this process took centuries of protracted violent struggle, the proto-national states started this process by using their administrative apparatus in order to incorporate local power-holders. An example is provided by early modern Brandenburg-Prussia where the central government respected the authority of local landholding Junkers, but ‘tied them closely to the crown by means of offices, tax exemptions, and military service’. Thus the state managed to enhance its position and access to resources by offering local power-holders positions within the administrative apparatus which brought these agents benefits in the form of certain advantages and access to state resources. Giustozzi argues that this process of institutionalization still is a valuable concept for enhancing the state’s control over the population in contemporary societies dominated by local power-holders. Institutionalization allows the state to carefully manage influential local actors, as it creates dependency from the state. Clearly, for local power-holders institutionalization offers benefits in the form of access to state resources, but also costs as their power will be subjected to the hierarchical structure of the state’s apparatus. As long as the state manages

87 Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States*, 24-25.
to create a situation in which the local power-holders’ need of the state is stronger than vice versa, local power-holders will be willing to engage in co-optive relationships with a state’s government, or as Giustozzi illustrates:

‘Much of the work of building local government is about the co-option of local notables to cooperate with the government and control the population; indeed the measure of success of such an operation is the degree of dependency from the state which is created among the notables. As one author [Dadi] pointed out for Chad, although this was not the most successful example of state, ‘the traditional chief needs the administration more than the administration needs him and suffers from the crisis of state like any other official’. The legacy of colonial experience is evident here.' 89

As Giustozzi remarks the problem of obtaining control over a weblike society is commonly traced back to the colonial époque of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in which western powers sought to establish colonial states capable of controlling the population of vast overseas territories.90 Typically the colonial state had relatively limited means at its disposal, but in order to maintain order and maximize trade it had to establish a sufficient degree of governmental control. The colonial state was entangled in a struggle to centralize control, while at the meantime it had to guarantee stability. Therefore, indeed, collaboration with local power-holders was paramount for establishing colonial rule. Any system of colonial rule, whether direct or indirect, adopted co-option of local power-holders as an essential feature. The colonial states that emerged in Asia and Africa during the second half of the nineteenth century, thus, can be considered the first hybrid entities that actually sought to put the duality of conserving as well as changing societal order into practice by co-opting local power-holders.

A key characteristic of colonial states was their ability to create relations of mutual dependency with local power-holders in which the various specific actors were more dependent on the state than vice versa; the colonial states managed to achieve dominance in their collaborative relationships with local power-holders. The ‘collaborative equation’ was solved in favor of the government by institutionalizing local power-holders in return for the distribution of governmental resources ‘with the object of keeping the weightier part of the dependency’s political elements on the government side’.91 The duality of the

hybrid state which is needed to achieve control over weblike societies is reflected in the role assumed by local power-holders in this colonial system of state-society relations. Local power-holders occupied what Max Gluckman has labeled ‘inter-hierarchical roles’, as they were part of both the local societal hierarchy as well as embedded in the hierarchy of the government’s administrative structure. As part of the latter structure, local rulers were entangled in a system of state patronage that provided them with privileged access to state-resources, while simultaneously they were allowed to remain at the apex of the political hierarchy of their specific societal fragment. Local power-holders, therefore, were willing to collaborate with the colonial administration as this meant access to governmental resources that provided them with a competitive advantage on the local political marketplace, as they were able to provide new resources to address the population’s strategies of survival. This pattern of state formation was highly successful as exemplified throughout many Afro-Asian societies. In the Philippines, for example, institutionalization of local power-holders led to a strong dependency on the state at the end of the nineteenth century as ‘resources drawn from the colonial state and private capital’ had replaced traditional resources as basis of their authority. The strengthening of the position of collaborating local power-holders is illustrated by the Limba chiefs of northern Sierra Leone who transformed from informal to formal rulers as a result of their access to British resources.

For enhancing its central power the colonial state system relied on establishing co-optive relationships with local power-holders. As colonial officials were mainly concerned with central politics, local politics were often left to the local power-holders which resulted in collaborative bargains that ‘took the form of tacit agreements for mutual non-interference and mutual support between colonial government and indigenous society’. The dialectic of control in this system of state-society relations provided local power-holders with almost absolute power to rule over their specific societal fragment and permitted the use of governmental resources at the local level according to their own insights. As collaborating power-holders were concerned with increasing their own power, there was always a risk that co-opted agents would become too powerful and threaten the order within the colonial state. Therefore, colonial officials had to redistribute the state’s patronage if necessary and limit the influence of too powerful agents with all available means. The role of the colonial state in this system of state-society relations, thus, was not only to provide resources to local power-holders, but also to deny access to these means and limit the influence of co-opted agents who had become too influential. Although there was always a risk that the collaboration equation would shift to the wrong side, the colonial state system established

93 Joel S. Migdal, Strong Societies and Weak States, 105.
95 Joel S. Migdal, Strong Societies and Weak States, 10.
since mid-nineteenth century provided the government with a sufficient degree of control over the population as it indeed managed to establish order and a certain degree of rest.\(^{97}\) Let us now turn to the inheritors of these colonial states, today’s developing countries in which states are struggling for control over weblike societies.

Over time the fragmented nature of control in the colonial states became deeply rooted in the societies subjected to colonial rule. Of course, these societies had already been socially divided and could not unite before the emergence of the colonial state; the institutionalization of colonial authority by use of local power-holders who ruled over an autonomous locale, however, prevented integration and enhanced societal fragmentation.\(^{98}\) It is not surprising, therefore, that today’s weblike societies with their strong emphasis on local power-holders and highly fragmented structure are typically found in former colonial states as they are the direct descendants of the colonial system. Although the states that seek control over weblike societies possess vast resources -which were mostly obtained upon independence, or later through international assistance and development aid-, the role of local power-holders has become so strongly embedded in the societal structure that the state-society relation still hinges on these agents. The state, thus, remains dependent upon the collaboration of local power-holders for obtaining control over the population. Moreover, the collaboration equation seems to have shifted in favor of the local power-holders, which confronts the state with a challenging paradox:

> ‘While the strongmen have become evermore dependent on state resources to shore up their social control, state leaders have become dependent on strongmen, who employ those resources in a manner inimical to state rule and laws.'\(^{99}\)

At the local level this paradox has led to a capture of the state. On one side the massive availability of new state resources has increased the influence of the state even in remote parts of countries as ‘state-financed police, roads, potable water, state tax collectors, credit, marketing cooperatives, schools, subsidized contraceptives, electricity, healthy care, and more’ has brought a more advanced level of development to the population.\(^{100}\) On the other side the distribution of these state resources (including the application of force by the local police) as well as the extraction of local resources are controlled by local power-holders who not necessarily act in concurrence with state policy, but conduct themselves in accordance with the norms and rules set by the local society. Nepotism -though regarded as corruption


\(^{99}\) Joel S. Migdal, Strong Societies and Weak States, 141.

\(^{100}\) Joel S. Migdal, State in Society, 55.
by the state, and certainly in the eyes of Western observers- as an expression of the kinship, patronage, or religious ties that shape the political structure of a locale, for example, is a common trait of this situation.\footnote{Ibid., 54.}

The privileged access to new resources to address the population’s strategies of survival has strengthened the position of local power-holders \textit{vis-à-vis} the state. The state has developed its own strategies for survival in this system. First, the state seeks to build strong institutions in order to provide security and mobilize resources from the population.\footnote{Joel S. Migdal, \textit{Strong Societies and Weak States}, 206-207.} Here, however, the state again is unable to circumvent local power-holders as mobilization can only be initiated by use of these agents’ authority over the population. Recruitment of people into these institutions is an important indicator for the balance of power between the central government and local power-holders. Typically local power-holders will claim positions for themselves and their \textit{protégées}. In order to prevent local power-holders from becoming too powerful by taking-over the state’s institutions this way, the state has adopted a set of measures (such as a frequent shuffle of key officials) to prevent the development of loyalties within these institutions. Although this process limits the effective mobilization of societal resources, it mitigates the influence of local power-holders on the national level by institutionalization of these agents within the structures of the state.

The second strategy the state has adopted is the accommodation of local power-holders at the local level.\footnote{Ibid., 247-256.} As the state needs the legitimate authority and mobilization capacity of local power-holders, whereas the latter agents have become highly dependent on state resources, a set of accommodations has occurred at the local level. The state’s incumbents (or in Migdal’s terms implementors) and local politicians are involved in a system of bargaining with local power-holders for the final allocation of state resources in a specific locale. None of the parties monopolizes power in this relation of mutual dependency. The state accepts the authority of local power-holders, and the tacit agreement is that the local power-holders are allowed to employ the state’s resources according to their own pattern of societal rules. The local rulers’ dependency on state resources, however, gives the state’s officials an opportunity to seize a dominant position in the co-optive relationship. Thus state officials at the local level might tip the balance of the collaboration equitation in favor of the state’s government; the price to be paid in all cases, however, is that local power-holders remain in control of the actual distribution of governmental resources and therefore heavily influence the disposition of development in weblike societies. Moreover, local power-holders often counter the government’s attempts to obtain dominance by becoming incumbents or politicians themselves or have their kins placed in such positions. Consequently, in the contemporary relation of state and weblike society there is always the risk that local power-holders assume control over the population as well as the state’s apparatus at the local
level. The true challenge for the state is to control local power-holders by establishing and consolidating a dominant role in the bargaining process at the local level.

For Migdal the strong position of local power-holders in contemporary states seeking control over weblike societies inevitably means that these states are weak states. Nevertheless, these states are capable of surviving in the international system, and more important to this study, the states’ governments enjoy stability.104 Certainly, in comparison with modern national states, the states of the developing world are not as strong, but they are also limited in their capability to enhance the position of the central government. As Mohammed Ayoob has pointed out, international norms do not tolerate post-colonial states to entangle in a violent and protracted battle for centralization.105 Accommodating the various local political structures that exist within weblike societies at least offers a path, a probably effective means 'for preserving stability, enhancing state performance, and ensuring representative government'.106 Just like their colonial predecessors today's states have achieved enhanced centralization by co-option and institutionalization of local power-holders. The state has achieved an enhanced -albeit limited- capacity to accumulate resources in the centre by creating its own institutions for this purpose, while the state also relies on co-option of local power-holders for maintaining control at the local level. Thereby the state combines the features of the historical imperial states and proto-national states and can best be characterized as a hybrid that combines decentralized control with enhanced centralization.

The dialectic of control in this state-society system is such that local power-holders are capable of influencing state institutions as well as that authority over the various autonomous locales rests with these agents. While the former influence is mitigated by state measures that prevent local power-holders from becoming too influential within state institutions, the latter position puts local power-holders in a strong position vis-à-vis the state’s incumbents in the bargaining process over the distribution of state resources. As local power-holders have become increasingly dependent on the state's resources, however, this process offers the state an excellent opportunity to achieve dominance in the collaboration equation that determines the nature of the co-optive relationship.107 Strengthening the position of the state in the bargaining process at local level, therefore, is imperative to enhance the state's overall control as this process should be used to control the state's agents of control -the local power-holders. Moreover, in the particular case of counterinsurgency warfare the insurgent opponent will initiate a similar, competitive bargaining process with local power-holders. As was pointed out before, the counterinsurgent should be the preferable as well as the dominant agent for local power-holders to collaborate with. The bargaining process at the local level offers the government the possibility to win this superiority as it is the primary

104 Ibid., 254.
107 Michael Hechter, Nika Kabiri, 'Attaining social order in Iraq', Order, Conflict, and Violence, 67-68.
locus of interaction between the state and local power-holders. Tipping the collaborative equation of mutual dependency that results from this interaction in favor of the state is the key to constructing co-optive relationships in which the government controls its co-optees; but how can this be achieved?

2.3.2 The methods of co-option: the co-option continuum

State dominance in the relationship with co-opted local power-holders not only encompasses a capability to bind these agents, but also to constrain them if necessary. Although it is inherent to a strategy of co-option that local power-holders will remain in control of their followers, the state should sometimes interfere in the local political marketplace in order to prevent a specific agent from becoming too dominant or to limit the dark side of a power-holder. Especially in case of a counterinsurgency campaign it is important that the state is capable of such an intervention in order to reach out to alienated or marginalized groups. Whereas today’s states with weblike societies are often suffering from a capture at the local level, as they are unable to influence the further distribution of state resources, their colonial predecessors did actively interfere -when necessary- in local politics in order to redistribute resources or limit the influence of co-opted agents. Instrumental in this capacity were the ‘European administrators which were up to their eyes in the politics of their so-called subjects’.108 The colonial states fielded an apparatus for control consisting of incumbents who were closely monitoring local politics, and although local power-holders were basically allowed to exercise their authority without interference, the incumbents intervened if deemed necessary.

In contemporary states with weblike societies local power-holders have obtained such an important position that they are capable of influencing or infiltrating the state’s apparatus for control at the local level. This often results in a loss of ‘independence’ of this apparatus, as incumbents will be related to local power-holders in one way or another. It is obvious that this weakens the government’s capability to bargain with local rulers. Consequently, Migdal identifies an independent bureaucracy as instrumental in enhancing governmental control.109 Institutionalization of local power-holders means allying those agents to the local administration and not allowing those agents to seize control of the state’s apparatus at the local level. A first prerequisite for achieving dominance in the co-optive relationships with local power-holders, therefore, is the state’s ability to deploy a credible, independent apparatus for bargaining at the local level. Although we will elaborate on the specifics of counterinsurgency in the next chapter, we should note here that one of the pillars of any population-centric counterinsurgency campaign is a professional administrative structure capable of controlling the local level without pressures and influences which might affect

the independence of this structure.\textsuperscript{110} In case of foreign intervention or expeditionary counterinsurgency in which the host-nation is not capable to field such an administrative apparatus, the intervening military forces are expected to bridge this gap while assisting the host-nation in building an adequate structure for controlling the local level independently. As such an apparatus is a prerequisite for the conduct of counterinsurgency operations at the local level, this section assumes the state’s ability to deploy an administrative structure capable of closely monitoring and assessing the political marketplace of a locale. Consequently, the focus here lies on the actual methods that can be employed by the state’s incumbents to establish collaborative relationships in which the government holds the dominant position.

Achieving dominance in such relationships requires local power-holders to accept the authority of the (local) administration. As aforementioned the state cannot claim legitimate authority. Typically the state’s legitimacy is lacking and the state is seeking legitimation by exploiting the role of local power-holders. Therefore the state has to utilize the two other forms of authority; reward-based and coercive authority. As the bargaining process between state officials and local power-holders is about the attribution of resources in return for control, reward-based authority seems to suffice. The capture of the state at the local level that characterizes many of today’s countries with weblike societies, however, demonstrates that reward-based methods alone do not suffice to establish control over local power-holders. True control also necessitates a capability to limit the influence of local power-holders. Therefore, it is pivotal that the local administration can also resort to coercion in order to enforce a dominant position \textit{vis-à-vis} local power-holders. The use of coercion alone, however, leads to alienation of local power-holders and their followers, and should therefore be avoided. Consequently, the methods employed by incumbents seeking to establish and maintain co-optive relationships with local power-holders should encompass a mix of (reward-based) persuasion and coercion. Moreover, dominating co-optive relationships might require the intermittent use of coercive and persuasive methods depending on the behavior of local power-holders. Thus, the incumbents who seek to control their co-optees should be able to apply a flexible mix of methods. Rather than choosing between either coercion or persuasion the government’s officials have to employ a continuum, a dynamic combination of methods for rewarding and punishing local power-holders. This co-option continuum also matches the government’s requirement (in a counterinsurgency campaign) to be the preferable as well as the dominant partner for local power-holders to collaborate with. Let us now take a closer look at the actual methods that constitute the co-option continuum.

The two concepts that make up the co-option continuum -coercion and persuasion- offer a good starting point for exploring the range of methods that can be applied to co-opt local

power-holders. Achieving government dominance in the collaborative relationship with co-optees typically results in a dynamic contest of moves and countermoves in which the involved actors seek to influence the costs and benefits that result from each other’s actions. The purpose of coercive measures - to start with - in this process is to enforce the compliance of the co-opted actor with the government’s incumbents by imposing costs for non-compliance. Coercion, therefore, includes all concerted means of action that cause loss or damage to local power-holders, their possession or social relations.\footnote{Charles Tilly, Trust and Rule, 30.} The prerequisites for the successful application of coercion are the identification of a local power-holder’s weak points, the so-called pressure points, and the state’s ability to achieve escalation domination - i.e. the ability to increase the threatened costs while denying local power-holders the ability to neutralize or counter those costs.\footnote{Although Byman and Waxman discuss the use of coercion as a tool for international politics, the theory of coercion as sketched in their work The Dynamics of Coercion provides an insight in the conceptual basics of coercion. I here have adapted these basics for use in the co-option process. See Daniel Byman, Matthew Waxman, The Dynamics of Coercion, American Foreign Policy and the Limits of Military Might (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 30-47.} The logic of escalation domination reveals the strength of coercion as part of the co-option continuum; effective application of coercive methods provides the government with a tool for achieving what we might call co-option domination as this comprises a credible capability for inflicting damage on even the most powerful local power-holders. Thus coercion can be used to constrain too influential local power-holders or to limit the ‘dark-side’ of co-opted agents despite attempts of those local power-holders to withstand governmental interference. Let us, before elaborating on the persuasive side of the co-option continuum, now first further explore the coercive methods.

Although traditionally coercion is considered a matter of the use or threat of physical force, all methods of imposing sanctions on local power-holders are part of the coercive side of the co-option continuum. Of all these methods the actual application of force is the ultimate coercive path to dominance in co-optive relationships. The use of force is an effective means for preventing or restricting local power-holders, but ultimately force is ineffective for causing local power-holders to structurally act in accordance with the state’s interest.\footnote{Dennis H. Wrong, Power, Its Forms, Bases, and Uses, 27.} Force, therefore, should be a measure of last resort, only to be applied in order to control local power-holders who cannot be controlled with other means. The capability to apply force if necessary, however, is essential for the state’s incumbents at the local level as this guarantees co-option domination in all circumstances. This lesson was already learned by the colonial states. The actual application of force was considered a sign of the local colonial administration’s incompetence and known to be ‘expensive and counterproductive except in emergency, and everybody knew that no amount of force could hold down indigenous politics for long’.\footnote{See Ronald Robinson, ‘Non-European foundations of European Imperialism: sketch for a theory of collaboration’, 133. Kimberly Zisk Marten, Enforcing the Peace, 72.} The credible threat of force, however, never was far away as is demonstrated by the many -often brutal- colonial campaigns that were fought to (re-)establish colonial state control over populations and their territories throughout Africa.
and Asia. Lammers explains this for the colonial state in the Dutch East Indies, on which we will elaborate in the next part of this book. Although punitive campaigns and violent conquests were part of Dutch colonialism, the colonial state preferred so-called *perintah alus*, or soft coercion of local rulers for establishing and maintaining control. Of course today’s states seeking control over weblike societies cannot -nor should they- refer to the brutal methods of the colonial époque in order to field a credible threat of force *vis-à-vis* local power-holders. Like their colonial predecessors, however, local administrators need this capability as it provides them with a tool that guarantees co-option dominance. Thus, adopting a credible threat of force is an essential part of the co-option tool kit.

The non-violent methods of soft coercion (and of course the persuasive methods we will discuss below) offer a path for constructing structural co-optive relationships that spawn a stable level of compliance. In order to understand the mechanism of soft coercion we should grasp back to what Daniel Byman and Matthew Waxman call pressure points. These points are not only sensitive points of local power-holders, they are also points which cannot be impenetrably guarded and are therefore susceptible to coercive methods. Identification of those points is a vital part of the co-option process, and even the use or threat of force should be tailored for exploiting these weak spots of local power-holders. Albeit local power-holders have a particular strong position on the local level, the political structure of weblike societies which was discussed in the first part of this chapter reveals a potential area for applying soft coercion. As we have seen a local power holder’s power base is dependent on his unique access to resources for the population’s strategies of survival. The distribution of these resources through the mesh of kinship, economy, and religious networks provides the local power-holder with the legitimate authority over a societal element. This political structure offers the state and its incumbents two opportunities for applying coercive methods by influencing a local power-holder’s position as provider of scarce resources. The first method is directly aimed at a local power-holder’s access to these resources and concerns diminishing or denying this access. Where local power-holders have become increasingly dependent on state resources the government can enforce compliance by cutting or limiting the supply of resources to a co-optee. If a local power-holder is capable of acquiring resources independent from the state, the incumbents should focus on denying or limiting this capability by institutionalization within the hierarchical structure of the state. Backed up by co-option domination the local administration might, for example, incorporate a local power-holder’s militia as part of the police or impose a policy for local land use.

A second method of soft coercion focuses at a local power-holder’s capability to exploit his unique access to resources through the attached distribution networks. As the ties between a local power-holder and his followers can be particularly strong and the state seeks

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to exploit the legitimacy that results from those ties, the government cannot simply take over the distribution of resources by providing goods to the people directly. Influencing the distribution process necessitates a rather sly, more indirect approach. Such an approach can be found in manipulation of the political marketplace in a locale through empowerment of a local power-holder’s rivals who seek to gain influence over these distributive networks. The provision of state resources to competitors within the mesh of kinship, economic, and religious networks augments the position of those rivals, while it cancels a local power-holder’s unique advantage. Of course such an approach requires a profound insight in the local political structure and local administrators should be careful not to create new ‘Frankensteins’ that can grow out of control this way. Likewise empowerment of rivals might be a cause for new contention and ultimately result in violence. Moreover, the goal of this method is not the empowerment of rivals per se, but achieving compliance of the local power-holder who legitimately dominates a specific societal segment. Therefore, limiting a local ruler’s influence by manipulating supportive networks through empowerment of rival actors might affect a local power-holder’s authority, but must certainly not undermine it. Although this method can easily be labeled divide-and-rule, it merely exploits the political structure of weblike societies. The political marketplace in a locale might be dominated by a specific agent; the kinship, economic, and religious networks guarantee the presence of other local power-holders who occupy crucial positions within those networks. Robinson points at this abundance of potential collaborators as pivotal to European colonial state control in India and Africa up to 1947. Clever exploitation of this diversity through appointment or withdrawal of state resources allowed local administrators to dominate the collaboration equation. Therefore it can be concluded that careful manipulation of the local distribution network provides the state with another coercive tool for controlling co-opted local power-holders.

The coercive methods of the co-option continuum thus range from the use of force against local power-holders to manipulation of the local political marketplace. It is important to notice that it is either the use or the threat of these methods that can make local power-holders comply. For an efficient threat of coercive methods, however, this threat needs to be credible. The logic of co-option domination stresses this as it is imperative that incumbents possess a credible capability for inflicting damage on even the most powerful local power-holders. In order to obtain this capacity the local administration should first gain a profound insight in the target society and especially the roles and positions of the various local power-holders within a locale. This allows for the identification of pressure points. Additionally the incumbents need the mandate and means to actually use coercive methods if necessary. As the coercive methods essentially encompass force and (re)distribution of state resources, the local government should be capable to rally force and control the distribution process at the local level. Even if the application of coercion is not needed to obtain and maintain dominance over co-opted local power-holders, these capabilities are pivotal as they are the

materialization of the principle of co-option domination; they guarantee compliance with
the government in the bargaining process at the local level, or in other words, ‘offering a
carrot with the coercive stick makes yielding more palatable’ to local power-holders.119

This brings us to the ‘carrot’, the methods of persuasion that seek compliance through
attribution of rewards for co-option with the government. These rewards take the form
of material and immaterial goods and typically concern access to the state’s resources,
official positions or governmental permits. The logic underlying reward-based persuasion
is that local power-holders receive an incentive for compliance. This immediately reveals a
close relationship with coercive methods as incentives can be withdrawn in cases of non-
compliance or can be maintained and enhanced when local power-holders respect the
government’s dominance in the co-optive relationship.

In contemporary developing countries co-option of local power-holders often is a matter
of the attribution of rewards without the presence of a coercive stick -either in the form of
withdrawal of incentives or force. This has led to the capture of the state at the local level which
we seek to overcome by use of the co-option continuum. The line between the non-violent
coercive and persuasive methods of this continuum is rather thin as the methods share the
use of state resources in order to achieve compliance. Moreover, sometimes the difference
seems blurred as the method that seeks to coerce dominant local power-holders through
manipulation of their distributive networks illustrates. This method clearly contains an
element of reward-based persuasion as it provides other agents with an incentive for helping
the state to reach its goal -though these agents might not be aware of this. The main intent of
this approach, however, is to exert coercive pressure on the local power-holder dominating
the networks. If we flip the soft coercive methods that encompass denial of state resources
and manipulation of the local political landscape to the persuasive side of the continuum we
can distinguish two persuasive methods that share the logic of achieving incentive-driven
compliance.

The first of the reward-based persuasive methods mirrors the manipulative coercive
method as it shares the idea of manipulating the political marketplace in a locale by
empowerment of non-dominant actors. The difference however, is that the main objective
of this method is not affecting the distributive network of a dominant local power-holder,
but shaping social order by empowerment of agents who control a minority or an alienated
group. Allocation of predominantly material state resources to such an actor provides him
with the means to accommodate his followers’ strategies of survival and enhances his
position vis-à-vis the locale’s dominant local power-holder(s) thus restoring the balance
between different factions in a locale. Albeit this approach aims at a direct effect, co-option
of an alienated local power-holder through allocation of material resources, the indirect
-but not less intended-effect is the diminishing of the authority of a dominant local power-
holder and thus we can speak of manipulation of the local political structure. Even groups
that traditionally defy state control are susceptible to this method as it vastly increases their

119 Daniel Byman, Matthew Waxman, The Dynamics of Coercion, 10.
influence in local politics. Michael Hechter identifies the proper use of this method as the key to the successful implementation of Ottoman indirect rule over Iraq’s culturally and ethnically fragmented society.\textsuperscript{120} None particular tribe or faction was persistently favored in the allocation of state resources such as land rights (which materialized in the actual allocation of land). The Ottomans equally distributed resources over the various local power-holders, and additionally rescinded too influential agents. Unlike the British, who took over the country during the First World War and relied on co-option of dominant Sunni rulers, the Ottomans succeeded in establishing a sufficient degree of control to guarantee stability in Iraq.

The second method of reward-based persuasion aims at consolidating or strengthening a local power-holder’s access to resources. The main purpose of this method is constructing and exploiting a stable co-optive relationship in which the government is the dominant agent. The essence of this approach lies in obtaining and maintaining dominance in the relationship with individual local power-holders. Allocation of material as well as immaterial resources provides a co-optee with incentives for compliance and especially in case a local power-holder is dependent on state resources this method is a powerful tool for obtaining government dominance in a co-optive relationship. Escalation of this allocation process by provision of additional material and immaterial resources as a reward for further compliance enhances governmental control and culminates in the institutionalization of a local power-holder as an agent of the central government. Like the identification of pressure points for the application of coercive methods, this approach benefits from a thorough analysis of a local power-holder’s background. This allows the allocation of resources to be tailored to a specific agent’s needs which increases compliance. Although the first persuasive method shares the same logic of allocation of resources, the differentiation lies in the intended effect of the method and the combined use of material and immaterial resources. Whereas the former method uses predominantly material resources to enhance governmental control through manipulation of the local political structure, the latter focuses on exploiting, and ultimately institutionalizing this political structure. Consolidating governmental control over either a manipulated or an existing pattern of political relations is the main goal of this method. The renowned Afghanistan scholar Bernt Glatzer illustrates the application of this method by British colonial administrators and the early twentieth century Afghan state.\textsuperscript{121}

After manipulation of the political structure of Pashtun nomads, the local power-holders, the \textit{maliks}, were subjected to a co-optive relationship with the government that culminated in the institutionalization of these agents as the official representatives of the government to their followers in the 1930s. The authority of the \textit{maliks} transformed from informal to formal as they were provided with additional material and immaterial state resources such as an allowance, the right to bear private arms, the means to enforce laws, and permits for

\begin{itemize}
\item Michael Hechter, Nika Kabiri, ‘Attaining social order in Iraq’, 50-61.
\end{itemize}
nomadic activities such as camping and seasonal migration. Thus the British administrators and the Afghan state established control over nomadic people by constructing stable co-optive relationships with their key leaders.

The final persuasive method differs from the afore mentioned methods as it is not about the attribution of resources for compliance, but aims at convincing a local power-holder to comply with the government. This method can be called ‘pure persuasion’ as it encompasses achieving an intended effect by the communication of arguments. Pure persuasion, however, is of limited use as it depends on a local power-holder’s acceptance of the government’s communication.\(^{122}\) Consequently, persuasion can best be used in addition to co-optive methods that already have established a sufficient level of governmental dominance. Pure persuasion as such is not a method for constructing co-optive relationships, but might be used to enhance these relationships. Tilly describes this as he explains that for a non-coercive or non-reward-based method to be effective there should exist at least some sense of commitment among social actors.\(^{123}\) The particularistic ties of an advanced co-optive relationship are a form of such a commitment.

To sum up, the methods of co-option can be conceptualized in a continuum which differentiates between coercive and persuasive methods. The ultimate coercive method is the use of force. As such force marks the boundary of the coercive side of the continuum. Pure persuasion constitutes the extreme on the persuasive side as it tries to obtain compliance on basis of communication of arguments only. In between those extremes the continuum comprises of methods that aim at constructing and controlling co-optive relationships through denial or allocation of material and immaterial state resources. In addition to a focus on individual co-optees, these methods also encompass the ability to manipulate the local political structure. This allows local administrators to exert pressure on a dominant local power-holder, or to empower marginalized agents. Ultimately the state aims at binding local power-holders in stable, government-controlled co-optive arrangements that are maintained through reward-based persuasion. It seems logical that coercive methods or methods that manipulate the local political structure are not needed any longer once the state succeeds to maintain such co-optive relationships. The lessons of colonial government and the capture of the state at the local level in contemporary developing countries, however, illustrate the necessity to grasp back to these methods if required. Therefore, the state and its incumbents should always possess what we have labeled co-option domination; the credible capability to impose sanctions on even the most powerful co-optee. These methods thus constitute a continuum. The government might emphasis a certain method at one moment, but should be capable of shifting to other methods of co-option as the situation demands this necessary.


It can be concluded that the local administration should always be capable of employing force *vis-à-vis* local power-holders as this is the ultimate form of the coercive methods and therefore guarantees co-option domination in all circumstances. Additionally, maintaining state dominance over co-opted local power-holders also requires the local administrators to control the distribution of state resources and to continuously monitor these agents in order to assess whether or not a change of methods is necessary. Therefore it is not only imperative that the government critically maps the interests of local power-holders as well as the local political structure, but also considers the costs and dangers of those agents’ compliance with the state. Thus local administrators can implement the required flexibility that allows them to be the preferred as well as the dominant partner for local power-holders to co-opt with.

### 2.4 Conclusion: the application of co-option in weblike societies

In this chapter we have studied the application of co-option in weblike societies. In order to implement a strategy that seeks collaboration with the local population it is pivotal that such a strategy is adapted to the specifics of the target society. Putting this principle of cultural legitimation into practice in weblike societies consequently requires a profound understanding of this type of society. Weblike societies are highly fragmented and characterized by fairly autonomous local fragments. The political structure of such a society follows this fragmentation as control is obtained at the local level. Consequently, local power-holders, who compete for control within the various locales, dominate the political structure of weblike societies and therefore co-option of these agents is pivotal for obtaining population control. This chapter, thus, has revealed the validity of this study’s assumption that control in weblike societies can be obtained through co-option of local power-holders.

Understanding this structure, however, is not enough if we want to study the actual application of co-option in weblike societies. The first question of any co-option strategy is whom exactly to co-opt. The further analysis of the political structure of weblike societies has provided the insight that the legitimate authority of a local power-holder is derived from such
an agent’s access to resources that accommodate the population’s strategies for survival. The political structure of weblike societies is a mesh of kinship, economic, and religious networks that facilitate the distribution of these resources. Typically local power-holders capable of maintaining multi-stranded patron-client relationships through these intertwined networks dominate the political marketplace at the local level. In some cases such local power-holders might even rule over one or more autonomous societal fragments as is the case with Afghan warlords or Philippine bosses. Although the local political marketplace is dominated by such agents capable of maintaining multi-stranded relationships, power-holders who underkeep single-stranded security-focused relationships with their followers are also commonly met at the local level. These power-holders -typically kin-group authorities- are capable of defending the interests of their followers and therefore can defy marginalization by more powerful agents. This dark side of dominant local power-holders, which encompasses the pursuit of self-interest through predatory behavior involving the deployment of coercion and economic repression, typically leads to alienation of societal groups -which is a root cause for an insurgency. Co-option in weblike societies, consequently, not only involves dominant local power-holders, but also marginalized agents who underkeep security focused single-stranded relations with their followers. Moreover, the notion of dominant and marginalized local power-holders might vary for every specific locale of a weblike society and thus there is no standard answer to the question of whom to co-opt. Therefore, we have identified a spectrum of co-option which varies from dominant warlord-like local power-holders on the upper side and security providing kin-group authorities on the lower side. Any co-option strategy that seeks control over the population of a weblike society should aim at those local power-holders that are part of this spectrum of co-option.

The second question we have sought to answer concerns the actual application of co-option in weblike societies. Answering this question of how to co-opt required us to first explore the relation between the state and weblike society. Whereas the state seeks to accumulate power and resources in the centre, weblike societies with their pivotal role of local power-holders are notoriously decentralized. This opposition of centripetal and centrifugal forces characterizes states that control weblike societies as hybrids that have implemented a policy of cultural legitimation which respects the autonomous authority of local power-holders while simultaneously seeking an enhanced degree of centralization. The dialectic of control in this state-society system is such that local power-holders remain in control at the local level. Co-option of these agents provides the state with legitimacy and overall control, but obtaining dominance in this co-optive relationship is a major challenge for the state’s government due to the powerful position of local power-holders. The colonial states that emerged since mid-nineteenth century were the first states that successfully addressed this challenge by creating relationships of mutual dependency between the government and local power-holders. The government dominated these relationships through either allocation or withdrawal of resources. Although the colonial state was mainly concerned with central politics, colonial administrators actively interfered with local politics if necessary to
maintain state dominance in co-optive relationships. In a similar fashion the inheritors of
the colonial states, today’s states with weblike societies in the developing world, seek to tip
the balance of the collaboration equation in their favor by engaging in a bargaining process
at the local level. Although local power-holders have become increasingly dependent on
state resources, contemporary states mostly suffer a capture at the local level as they are
unable to interfere in local politics. Strengthening the position of the state in the bargaining
process, therefore, is pivotal for obtaining dominance in co-optive relationships with local
power-holders. But how can this be achieved? This brings us to the actual methods of co-
option in weblike societies.

First the successful implementation of co-option requires the state to deploy an
independent local administration capable of interfering with local politics and conducting
the bargaining process with individual local power-holders at the local level. In the colonial
states this capacity consisted of mostly European administrators with a profound knowledge
on the specifics of a locale and this apparatus was essential to state control. In contemporary
states with weblike societies local power-holders often are capable of infiltrating and
influencing the local administration which consequently loses its independency and
capability to dominate the bargaining process at the local level. Therefore a prerequisite
for establishing effective co-optive relationships is the deployment of an independent
administrative apparatus -which in counterinsurgency campaigns is also considered as
essential to success. The actual methods that can be used by the members of such an
apparatus to construct and maintain co-optive relationships vary from the use of force to
(pure) persuasion. Most commonly, however, the methods of co-option encompass coercive
and persuasive measures that seek to punish or reward local power-holders through the
withdrawal or allocation of state resources. The clever use of this mechanism also allows
the state’s incumbents to manipulate the local political landscape through empowerment of
marginalized or competing actors. The key insight obtained from the colonial states as well
as the capture of which contemporary states suffer is that the local administration should
possess what we have labeled co-option domination; the guarantee to enforce compliance of
even the most powerful local power-holder. This capacity requires the local administrators
not only to control the process of the allocation of state resources, but also to deploy force if
deemed necessary. Force is the ultimate coercive weapon as the credible threat or actual use
of force guarantees compliance under all circumstances. It should be noted, however, that
too much emphasis on force alienates local power-holders, and consequently force should
be carefully used. Constructing and maintaining co-optive relationships in which the state
dominate thus requires the local administrators to shift between different persuasive and
coercive methods as necessary. The actual application of co-option is not a matter of one
method; effective co-option demands a flexible approach that allows the local administrators
to dynamically shift between methods. Therefore the methods for effective application of
co-option constitute a continuum varying between force and (pure) persuasion.
The next step of this research concerns studying the embedment of co-option in Western population-centric counter-insurgency concepts. In order to assess how these concepts address the requirements for implementing an effective co-option strategy in a weblike society we can construct an analytical framework on the basis of the spectrum of co-option and the co-option continuum. The vertical axis of figure 3 contains the spectrum of co-option. Population-centric counterinsurgency concepts that effectively seek control over the population of weblike societies should address local power-holders that are part of this spectrum. Moreover, we might use this axis to mark a preference for more or less powerful local power-holders in case such a preference exists. The horizontal axis of the framework represents the co-option continuum and albeit effective co-option comprises the capability to shift between the methods that make up this continuum, we also can use this axis to list a concept’s emphasis on a specific method. Thus we have constructed an analytical framework that can be used to depict graphically how a certain counterinsurgency concept addresses the requirements for successful implementation of co-option in weblike societies.

![Diagram of co-option continuum](image_url)

*Figure 3: An analytical framework of co-option in weblike societies*
Although this analytical framework offers an opportunity for further exploration of the theoretical background of co-option, it is not this study's intent to do so. The correlation between the vertical and horizontal axis, for example, might offer some interesting hypotheses about the association of the place of a local power-holder in the spectrum with an emphasis on a certain method of the continuum. An illustration of a hypothesis that follows this logic is the more powerful a local power-holder, the more the emphasis in the continuum might be on coercive methods. Albeit very interesting for further study, this research is not about formulating and testing such hypotheses (as mentioned in this book’s introduction). What we seek to address is the question of how counterinsurgents have co-opted local power-holders in order to attain control over the population in weblike societies. As we have demonstrated that co-option of local power-holders is a valid approach for obtaining population control in such a society and we also have identified the specifics of who and how, it is now time to study co-option as part of a counterinsurgency campaign.
Chapter 3
Chapter 3: Co-option in counterinsurgency: a conceptual exploration in historiographical perspective

3.1 Introduction

Thus far we have dealt with two fundamental assumptions underlying this study’s central question of how counterinsurgents have co-opted local power-holders in order to attain control over the population in a weblike society. First we have demonstrated that control indeed can be obtained through collaboration with the local population. A prerequisite for the successful implementation of such a strategy is the adoption of cultural legitimation; the exploitation of the existing pattern of legitimacy in a society. Following this pattern will enhance the state’s legitimacy and consequently opens a path for the mobilization of societal resources. A strategy that seeks the population’s collaboration by co-opting local power-holders can only be applied if the target society’s organization is such that these agents are the legitimate authorities exerting control over the population. This brings us to the second assumption underlying our main question; the validity of a strategy of co-option of local power-holders for obtaining control over the population in a weblike society. The pattern of legitimacy in this type of society is highly fragmented and control is exerted by local power-holders who operate within the various societal fragments that make up such a society. A strategy of co-option of local power-holders, therefore, is not only a valid, but also a necessary approach for obtaining control over the population in a weblike society.

Testing the assumption on co-option as a strategy for population control in weblike societies not only has revealed the validity of this approach, but also provided an insight in the actual application of this strategy by a state’s government and its incumbents. We have identified a spectrum of local power-holders relevant to a co-option strategy and additionally we concluded that the successful implementation of cultural legitimation requires a hybrid kind of state that is willing to accept the autonomous authority of local power-holders, while simultaneously seeking to enhance centralized control. The actual application of co-option requires such a state to deploy an independent administrative apparatus capable of bargaining at the local level. The purpose of the bargaining process is to construct and maintain co-optive relationships with local power-holders in which the state dominates. The continuum of methods to be used in this bargaining process encompasses coercive and persuasive methods and should include the capability for what we have labeled co-option domination.

Ultimately this research’s main question can only be appropriately answered by studying the application of co-option in the reality of counterinsurgency warfare in weblike societies. Therefore we first need to study how co-option is incorporated in the conceptual framework that underlies Western population-centric counterinsurgency campaigns. In doing so this chapter aims at bridging the gap between the theoretical insights obtained thus far and the
Chapter 3

The evolution of counterinsurgency

Understanding contemporary Western population-centric counterinsurgency requires us to scrutinize its genesis and further development. The roots of counterinsurgency are commonly traced back to the colonial empires of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Establishing and maintaining a stable colonial state required not only a purely military approach which focused on defeating the enemy, but also had to take the civilians...
into account as not only the country should be conquered, but also its people.¹ In order to establish colonial rule, colonial warfare ultimately sought control over the population. During the nineteenth century the various colonial powers gradually adopted this insight and by the end of that century ‘it is possible to see certain principles of counter-insurgency becoming applied with sufficient universality ... to suggest the beginnings of commonly shared doctrine’. ² Military practitioners-writers encoded these principles and thereby colonial warfare became established as a distinct type of warfare. Most notably were the British officer Charles Callwell’s book *Small Wars* (1896), and the Frenchmen Joseph Gallieni and Hubert Lyautey in various writings (end nineteenth and early twentieth century) on their own experiences and concepts of colonial warfare.

The art of colonial warfare was further developed during the early twentieth century and reflected upon in publications such as Charles Gwynn’s *Imperial Policing* (1934), and the United States Marine Corps *Small Wars Manual* (1935). While the latter publication is a detailed guide for conducting a population-centric campaign from the disembarkment of troops to the supervision of democratic elections and the subsequent withdrawal, the former work encapsulates four universal principles for restoring and maintaining control over colonial societies.³ The first principle concerns the primacy of civil power as the government—and not the military—should determine which policy to adopt in matters of population control. Second, Gwynn warns for the unrestricted use of punitive measures as this endangers control and acceptance of the government in the long run. In order to prevent popular discontent the use of force must be restricted to ‘the minimum the situation demands’.⁴ The third principle also concerns the use of force. If necessary the government must apply force without hesitance. Firm and timely action are considered prerequisites for the government’s credibility vis-à-vis the population. Last comes the principle of cooperation. Obtaining and maintaining control requires close coordination of the activities of military forces and civil powers. Any population-centric campaign should be a concerted undertaking of all the government’s agencies. These principles mark the ultimate form of colonial warfare as described during the latter days of imperialism.

The evolution of colonial warfare halted following the outbreak of the Second World War, which also ushered the end of the colonial empires. The post 1945 period of decolonization, however, would witness a return of the ideas on colonial warfare for countering politically motivated insurgencies. As wars of decolonization sparked nationalist, separatist, and communist insurgencies in former colonies, Western governments developed a response based on the insights provided by colonial warfare. Today this response is termed ‘classical counterinsurgency’ as it provides the basis for contemporary counterinsurgency by placing
the views of colonial warfare in a modern perspective. This modern perspective responded to the Maoist concept of people’s war which provided an off-the-shelf formula for insurgencies that could be adapted to local circumstances. The essence of Mao’s model is the realization of a political goal - in his case the complete emancipation of the Chinese people - by gaining the people’s ‘sympathy, cooperation, and assistance’. In this view insurgency is not merely a military activity; it is ‘a hybrid form of conflict that combines subversion, guerrilla warfare and terrorism’ that seeks to confront the government by gaining control over (substantial parts of) the population. Countering these post-colonial Maoist insurgencies of the 1950s and 1960s triggered the various Western states to develop a response for re-establishing and consolidating the local government’s control over the population and establish a modern state. The strategy for this approach, however, was based on the insights of colonial warfare. Especially the British experiences in quelling rebellions in places such as Cyprus, Kenya, and Malaya led to the formulation of universal principles for counterinsurgency which were captured by practitioners-writers such as Robert Thompson and Frank Kitson. As the underpinning of these new developments was drawn from, above all, Gwynn’s principles, the colonial lineage of classical counterinsurgency is obvious.

Thompson discerns five basic principles of counterinsurgency to be followed by the government and its incumbents. First, there must be a clear political goal, which serves to regain control over the population and win the support of the people. Second, the government must act in accordance with the law. Adhering the law serves as a demonstration of the government’s contractual obligation to the people and provides a check for the use of force by the security forces. As a third principle counterinsurgency requires the government to have an overall plan. Although this principle seems very obvious, the complexity of counterinsurgency requires the government to generate unity of efforts of all involved assets. Political, administrative, socio-economic, military, and police measures must all be coordinated in a concerted approach to tackle the insurgency. Moreover, the availability of resources forces the government to lay down its priorities in a clear strategy. Fourth, the emphasis in counterinsurgency lies on defeating the political subversion and not fighting the guerrillas. Breaking the support for the insurgents permits their isolation from the population and thus allows the ‘little fishes’ to be removed from ‘the water’. Thompson’s fifth and last principle urges the government to secure its base areas first when confronted with a full-blown insurgency. Those parts of the country of vital importance to the

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7 Mao Tse-tung, On Guerrilla Warfare, 42-43.
9 Ian Beckett, Modern Insurgencies and Counter-Insurgencies, Guerrillas and their Opponents since 1750 (London: Routledge, 2005), 44.
10 Robert Thompson, Defeating Communist Insurgency, 50-58.
11 Ibid., 56.
government should be secured first in order to prevent insurgent infiltration and construct a firm basis for methodically and patiently working outwards to the more peripheral areas.

Although enshrined by Thompson, these principles of counterinsurgency can also be found in other counterinsurgency classics such as Galula’s *Counter-Insurgency Warfare*, Kitson’s *Low Intensity Operations, Subversion, Insurgency, and Peacekeeping*, and John McCuen’s *The Art of Counter-Revolutionary War*. Moreover, these works also reveal a sixth principle as they all emphasize the central role of intelligence in counterinsurgency. Obtaining population control in order to weaken and deny further insurgent interaction with the populace requires fine-grained information on that population and its connections with the insurgency at the grassroots level. Consequently, conducting a population-centric counterinsurgency campaign requires the counterinsurgents to gather, process, and explore population-centric intelligence. Thus the sixth principle of classical counterinsurgency concerns the governmental capacity to deploy an apparatus capable of obtaining and using population-centric intelligence.

The heydays of classical counterinsurgency were the post-colonial conflicts of the 1950s and 1960s. In total, however, the classical era would last until the first years of the 1980s when the Rhodesian war, the last war associated with the process of decolonization, ended. Interest in counterinsurgency slowly re-emerged during the 1990s when the end of the Cold War led to a re-orientation of Western military forces. The increasing number of civil wars and violent non-state actors required non-conventional military interventions such as peacekeeping, peace enforcement and humanitarian relief operations. Soldiers found themselves predominantly deployed in what Rupert Smith has labelled wars amongst the people (as mentioned in this book’s introduction); conflicts in which ‘civilians are the targets, objectives to be won, as much as an opposing force’. The nature of these conflicts required Western military forces to adopt a population-centric approach and thus sparked a gradual embracement of classical counterinsurgency ideas in the latter 1990s. The aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and especially the failure to stabilize Iraq after the 2003 invasion acted as a catalyst for the re-invention and adoption of counterinsurgency.

The renewed application of counterinsurgency ideas has led to the emergence of two complementary schools of contemporary counterinsurgency. The first school adopts counterinsurgency as a strategic concept for understanding and fighting the War on Terror,
which is considered a campaign against a post-Maoist, globalizationist Islamist insurgency. The essence of this ‘global counterinsurgency’ school is the notion of insurgency as a globalized threat that needs an international answer and cannot be fought in just one country - as is typical in classical counterinsurgency. This answer comes in the form of a strategy of disaggregation that comprises the coordinated effort to tackle the various localized roots of the global insurgency. These local conflicts can best be fought by a re-designed classical counterinsurgency approach and thus global counterinsurgency can be ‘understood as the use of classic counterinsurgency, originally developed in a different global political context, to address a dangerous new threat to international security’.

The second school of contemporary counterinsurgency is the school that actually re-designs classical counterinsurgency for use in contemporary campaigns and consequently is labelled the ‘neo-classical counterinsurgency’ school. As this book seeks to study co-option in counterinsurgency campaigns we will focus on the neo-classical school as an analytical reference for studying co-option in contemporary counterinsurgency. Although neo-classical counterinsurgency is often criticized for embracing principles based on countering post-colonial Maoist insurgencies - according to the critics this does not suffice for fighting global insurgency - , even those critics recognize its value as a method for conducting population-centric counterinsurgency campaigns in countries such as Afghanistan and Iraq - which both have weblike societies.

In the wake of the 2003 Iraq invasion a vivid debate has emerged between scholars and practitioners on the application of classical counterinsurgency methods in the contemporary environment. This dialectic process has triggered the development of new doctrines, practical publications, and scholarly works alike. Most notable among these works is the United States' Army and Marine Corps Field Manual 3-24 Counterinsurgency, which was the epitome of an academic process leading to the standardized adoption of counterinsurgency methods by the Department of Defense. This new doctrine was one of the key instruments of the transformation of the operational approach of the United States’ military in Iraq in early 2007. The neo-classical counterinsurgency ideas became firmly accepted by a growing international community as the surge in Iraq demonstrated the effective application of these ideas and consequently neo-classical counterinsurgency was also implemented by the international coalition in the Afghan campaign.

Chapter 3 The Course of Co-option

FM 3-24 pays tribute to the historical lineage of neo-classical counterinsurgency as the manual discerns eight historical principles of counterinsurgency and additionally discusses five imperatives for the effective application of these principles in the contemporary operational environment. The principles concern the emphasis on legitimacy as the main objective, unity of effort between the various actors and levels in a counterinsurgency campaign, the primacy of political factors in counterinsurgency, the prerequisite of understanding the environment, intelligence as the main driver for operations, the necessity of isolating insurgents from their cause and support, the provision of security under the rule of law, and last long-term-commitment. The imperatives for contemporary campaigns are derived from recent experiences and offer a mindset for successfully implementing counterinsurgency in the murky reality of today’s counterinsurgency campaigns. The first imperative is the management of information and expectations as this is of growing importance in the light of the global information capabilities. The second imperative concerns the use of the appropriate level of force and calls upon soldiers to use the overwhelming firepower at their disposal wisely by avoiding collateral damage. Third comes the adage ‘learn and adapt’. Effective counterinsurgents need to learn and adapt to counterinsurgency methods, continuously changing local circumstances, and enemies in order to become and remain an effective counterinsurgency force. Fourth is the imperative of empowerment of the lowest level. Counterinsurgency is fought in the various locales that constitute a society. Therefore, mission command is essential as it allows the local commanders to act according their understanding of the specific local environment. Fifth and last imperative is the support to the host-nation. The ultimate goal of modern counterinsurgency campaigns is to create a stable government in the host-nation and thus counterinsurgents are not waging their own war, but should always act in support of the host-nation’s government.

The counterinsurgency field manual further clarifies the difficulties of putting counterinsurgency into practice by discussing paradoxes and (un)succesful practices in counterinsurgency. We will not deal with those here as the principles and imperatives form the conceptual nucleus of neo-classical counterinsurgency. It is easy to relate the neo-classical principles to their classical predecessors - albeit only six- as they cover the same subjects. The formulation of the imperatives also suggests some historical, universal wisdom, but we have to keep in mind that they are brought forward by experiences with contemporary counterinsurgency. The massive fire power available to today’s counterinsurgents, the highly globalized information environment, and the conduct of counterinsurgency warfare in support of a host-nation’s government not directly related to the own country are unique common traits of contemporary campaigns. The imperatives, therefore, are crucial amendments to the principles of neo-classical counterinsurgency, which have a clear historical lineage. Thus we can conclude that counterinsurgency has incrementally evolved.

23 Department of the Army, FM 3-24, Counterinsurgency (Washington: Department of the Army, 2006), 1-20-1-26, these principles and imperatives were first published in Military Review in spring 2006; Eliot Cohen and others, ‘Principles, Imperatives, and Paradoxes of Counterinsurgency’, Military Review (March-April 2006).

24 Department of the Army, FM 3-24, Counterinsurgency, 1-26-1-29.
The Course of Co-option

Chapter 3

in three historical stages; colonial warfare, classical counterinsurgency, and neo-classical counterinsurgency.

This chapter will further study co-option as a counterinsurgency mechanism throughout this evolutionary process. Some authors, however, have warned against the abuse of counterinsurgency’s historical lineage for contemporary counterinsurgency purposes. In the light of democratic peace theory counterinsurgency often is considered an activity that seeks population control through benevolent ‘hearts and minds’ activities such as democratization and the improvement of economic development. This vision of counterinsurgency is commonly justified by mythologizing and romanticizing the experiences of the colonial and classical counterinsurgency eras. Our historical analysis seeks to circumvent this trap by following the conceptual understanding of co-option we have acquired thus far. An analysis of the requirements for population control in weblike societies serves to guarantee a factual and objective study of past experiences without adoption of a contemporary normative framework.

The analysis provided in this chapter, thus, systematically explores co-option throughout the evolution of counterinsurgency by studying the embedment of co-option in colonial warfare, classical, and neo-classical counterinsurgency. The first two of the four guiding questions we seek to answer for each era concern the fundamental issues of population control. First the idea of cultural legitimation and the related nature of the state seeking control over a target society are studied. The mobilization of counterinsurgency resources with use of co-opted agents is the second question of interest to our analysis. The next two questions concern the issues of the actual application of a co-option strategy. The third question addresses who exactly are subjected to co-option and how these agents are identified. Last we seek to answer the question how co-option is applied as part of a counterinsurgency campaign. This not only includes the actual methods used to establish and maintain co-optive relationships in which the state holds the dominate position, but also the state’s capacity to deploy an independent local administration. This analysis, consequently, will shed a light on the utility of co-option in the three different historical counterinsurgency concepts.

3.3 Co-option in colonial warfare

In the previous chapter we have seen that co-option of local power-holders was a common trait of the colonial states that emerged from mid-nineteenth century. The question here is how this mechanism was embedded in colonial warfare. Thus far we have discussed some general aspects of colonial warfare. The most essential of these aspects is the concept that colonial warfare was not only about conquering a territory, but also about controlling its

25 See, for example, Alex Marshall, ‘Imperial nostalgia, the liberal lie, and the perils of postmodern counterinsurgency’, and Douglas Porch, ‘The dangerous myths and dubious promise of COIN’.
population. Of course there were differences between colonial powers in putting this idea of population-centric warfare into practice. The British and the French were the most notable of these idiosyncratic approaches, and they are often considered the dominant theoretical schools of colonial warfare. While the latter school stressed the ‘conquête des âmes’, the British gave intimidation of the population a prominent role. For the people subjected to colonial warfare, however, this conceptual distinction remained highly theoretical. Even the French school with its socially and economically focused tache d’huile approach relied on brute force when confronted with the reality of colonial warfare. Douglas Porch has illustrated this for French colonialism in Africa which ‘was won by French bayonets rather than by “hearts and minds”’. Therefore, the principle of minimal force (as captured by Gwynn) must be regarded in the light of its contemporary colonial interpretation that allowed great latitude and permitted the use of every level of force deemed necessary. In Chapter One we have seen that the unrestricted use of violence might lead to repressive state control which is only sustainable if the government is willing and capable to conduct a campaign of consistent repression. The colonial state typically had only limited means at its disposal, which did not suffice for the use of consistent repressive violence. Moreover, domestic politics in the mother country fulfilled a crucial role as politicians were usually reluctant to engage in costly colonial adventures, and even in the nineteenth century the commitment of atrocities in the overseas territories spawned public resentment. So, if the colonial state lacked the will and means to rule through consistent campaigns of repressive violence, how then did it obtain control over the population? The answer lies in the nature of colonial warfare itself; the use of force in colonial warfare was never far away, but winning colonial wars was not only a matter of fighting, it was also a matter of winning without fighting.

Henk Wesseling describes colonial wars as protracted conflicts in which ‘the shift from less to more violence -and contrawise- was fluid, not a dramatic break’. The conquest of a territory was usually followed by a pacification campaign, which Callwell characterized as ‘the war of ambushes and surprises, of murdered stragglers and of stern reprisals’. The pacification campaigns had to secure the submission of the local population and consolidate the rule of the colonial state through the intermittent use of violent and non-violent methods. An illustration is given by the French who adopted the permanent accompaniment of both methods in the form of the intertwined use of brutal punitive raids, the razzias, and socio-economic incentives delivered by indigenous affairs offices such as the bureaux arabes.

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28 Huw Bennett, ‘Minimum force in British counterinsurgency’, Small Wars & Insurgencies 21:3 (September 2010), 466.
Although Gwynn warned against the risks of unrestricted use of punitive measures, he too acknowledged reprisals as a useful tactic for imperial policing. When punctually authorized, publicly announced and explained, and executed under ‘the good sense of officers and a sense of discipline’ the use of reprisals was a valuable supplement to non-violent methods. The non-violent methods of colonial warfare, however, were generally considered the preferable methods, as the use of violence was costly and seen as a guarantee in case other methods failed. But what exactly were these non-violent methods?

3.3.1 Winning without too much fighting: cultural legitimation in colonial warfare

The ideal mechanism for winning colonial wars without too much fighting was establishing a connection of dependence between the local population and the colonial state. Collaboration with the colonial government was to be rewarded through the attribution of resources and the socio-economic development of the population. The focal points for this strategy were the various local power-holders who legitimately ruled the populations the colonial state sought to control. Co-option of local power-holders, therefore, was as much embedded in colonial warfare as it was part of the daily practice of the colonial state - whether controlled by direct or indirect rule or a mix of both. Both the British and the French school acknowledged the importance of co-option of local power-holders. Globally, the British (and also the Dutch) maintained the existing societal structure, while the French (and the Americans) conducted a policy of cultural assimilation that invoked a preference for co-option of those local power-holders who were deemed most suitable for such ‘benevolent assimilation’. Despite this preferential difference, co-option in the reality of colonial warfare mostly followed the immediate needs of the colonial state; the creation of a stable environment by obtaining and consolidating control over the target population of a pacification campaign.

A case in point is the French pacification of Tonkin-Annam (1882-1896). At first a pure military approach was used to fight and destroy the Annamite rebels. The Court and its mandarins were seen as the predominant source of difficulties as the most important rebel groups wanted to resist the French and maintain the traditional society and state of Vietnam. As a result of a worsening of the situation the violent approach was abandoned in 1891 in favor of a more balanced strategy that incorporated the mixed use of violent and non-violent methods. At the heart of this new policy was a reverse of the old situation.

mandarins and the Court of Annam were now given a pivotal role in the pacification process as the French decided to respect their authority and gave them shared responsibility for the pacification. After nine years of unsuccessful pacification efforts the French preferred stability through co-option of traditional authorities over a continuous state of violent contention. Governor-General De Lanessan, who implemented the new policy (and whom we briefly encountered in Chapter One), therefore emphasized the importance of co-opting the traditional rulers of a country; ‘associons-les au gouvernement et toute leur influence nous vient’.

The idea of cultural legitimation, the exploitation of existing patterns of legitimacy in the target society, was firmly embedded in colonial warfare. All colonial powers used this mechanism to a greater or lesser extent in order to pacify -i.e. submit and control- the various populations throughout their empires. Although Callwell’s Small Wars focuses on the methods to deploy force in colonial campaigns it acknowledges the importance of the target population’s pattern of societal order, or what is referred to as ‘the class of enemy to be dealt with’. Callwell discusses the military consequences (for example the importance of seizing a capital) of dealing with various kinds of societal order such as more or less centralized authority, and illustrates this with experiences of the British, French, Russians, and Americans. With regard to the United States’ experience we have seen that the Small Wars Manual also deals with democratic elections and thus follows the rational-legal method of legitimation. This, however, is an exception based on United States Marine Corps’ experiences during the so-called ‘Banana Wars’ in Central America (c. 1898-1934). These interventions cannot be regarded in the same light as the bulk of the colonial warfare experiences in Africa and Asia as their purposes were rather limited and they were certainly not ‘conducted with a view to a permanent acquisition of any foreign territory’. Therefore, we can conclude that co-option of local power-holders was the dominant collaboration strategy in colonial warfare. The importance of cultural legitimation was not only understood, but also practiced by all colonial powers seeking control over the fragmented societies that dominated Africa and Asia.

### 3.3.2 Mobilization in colonial warfare

The mobilization of resources for providing security and fighting rebels in colonial warfare is the next aspect of co-option to be studied here. Although most colonial states maintained a regular, standing army and police in which indigenous recruits were employed in addition to Western soldiers, policemen, and under command of Western officers, the colonial state’s
security apparatus also typically included what Karl Hack and Tobias Retig call ‘indirect’ colonial forces. Moreover, grassroots mobilization of local militias was of vital importance to the colonial states who were always short of means; ‘if forces which knew the affected area, had contacts among the local people and spoke the local languages could be made available, it was clearly foolish to neglect their potential’. Bearing this in mind, even the British who in India had succeeded in constructing a large army through top-down mobilization of local recruits as sepoys under command of British officers, relied on mobilization of local forces throughout their empire. In nineteenth-century Malaya and Singapore, for example, the British colonial authorities co-opted Chinese community leaders known as Kapitan China, in order to rally their militias. Although the Arab revolt during the First World War cannot be considered colonial warfare, Lawrence used the same mechanism of co-option and mobilization in order to deploy Hejaz Arab tribal armies with their ‘initiative, great knowledge of the country, and mobility’ against the Turks.

The raising of native levies through local power-holders was an essential feature of imperialism and practiced by all colonial powers, including the Americans. The overstretched colonial security apparatus was augmented by local militias which provided the colonial state with cheap additional means to underpin control. Such local defense forces remained under the command of local power-holders and institutionalization within the larger governmental structure was regulated through the co-optive agreement which formalized the collaborative relationship between a specific power-holder and the local governmental authorities -either civilian or military- in command of the pacification effort. An example is provided by the grassroots mobilization of Powindah (western Afghan Pashtun nomads) militias which was regulated in a 1926 treaty between the British deputy-commissioner lieutenant-colonel C.E. Bruce and 37 maliks and amended in an additional 1930-1931 official announcement. These agreements gave the maliks formal power as representatives of the British colonial government and attributed to them the task of enforcing the laws of the colonial state through -among others- their own men and weapons, while denying others the means to interfere in this process. Thus militias under command of the maliks became an institutionalized part of the colonial state’s security apparatus and the maliks were personally accountable for the effective performance of their militia. Negligence of the official tasks was heavily sanctioned through punishments such as imprisonment and fines. In a similar fashion the Dutch used local militias for consolidating their control over Java after the Java War of 1825-1830. Although the island was considered safe after this war,
there were still many pacification problems to be dealt with. Therefore the Dutch used top-down as well as grassroots mobilization of different kinds of militias such as municipal and auxiliary militias led by local power-holders and more extensive legions under the command of Javanese princes.48 These forces were institutionalized under either civil or military jurisdiction as the smaller forces were linked to the local Dutch colonial administrators, the Residents, and the larger bodies of men were under higher command or supervision of European military officers and non-commissioned officers.

Mobilization of local militia through co-opted local power-holders, thus, was vital in colonial warfare. It provided the much-needed additional resources for the protracted pacification campaigns that were endemic to this particular form of warfare. Institutionalization of such units was arranged in the co-optive agreements between local administrators and the indigenous power-holders, and these units could also be tied more directly to the overall colonial security institutions. Although institutionalized, the militias essentially remained a localized tool. For the colonial states, which accepted the duality of being centralized as well as decentralized entities, this was not a problem. Moreover, many of these states featured the use of local militia even after the pacification of their territories was completed. In some cases such forces became firmly rooted societal institutions themselves that survived the colonial states that accommodated their position. It has been argued that this colonial legacy is a root cause for (violent) contention in countries like the Philippines, Indonesia, and Pakistan, where states driven by a desire for enhanced centralization have to confront such localized forces.49 But to return to colonial warfare, we can conclude that cultural legitimation as well as mobilization were structural features of colonial campaigns. It is now time to submerge in the details of who were co-opted and how co-option was practiced in colonial warfare.

3.3.3 Whom to co-opt?

The identification of local power-holders as potential agents for co-option in a specific target society was firmly embedded in colonial warfare and typically military officers were heavily involved in this process.50 Establishing intelligence networks which could gather information on the local population was considered essential by the colonial military, not only for the sake of understanding societal patterns in order to establish control, but also because of the military tactical intelligence that could be acquired through such networks.51 The French bureau des affaires indigènes -indeed the successor of the bureaux arabes- clearly illustrates this

50 Kimberly Zisk Marten, Enforcing the Peace, 72.
51 See Douglas Porch, Wars of Empire, 131-132, C.E. Callwell, Small Wars, 49.
method as its officers were tasked to pave the way for the colonial armed forces by establishing alliances with various local power-holders. This not only enhanced French control, it also provided the military with intelligence on the strength and disposition of defiant elements. To allow for such an approach colonial military officers were commonly not only trained as soldiers, but also received instruction in topics such as ethnography and local languages. The colonial officers, thus, were educated to understand local societies, and were aware of the importance of information on aspects of societal organization such as kinship, local economy, religious and moral codes, and customs. The intelligence gathered by the colonial military was typically presented in meticulous reports that unraveled the details of the target society. When establishing control over the Middle East mandates after the First World War, both the French and the British military officers, who typically fulfilled the role of colonial administrators, for example, relied on reports that contained detailed information on feuds (which often took the form of livestock raiding), factionalism, and grievances among clans and tribes, as well as on livestock and grazing rights, migration routes and water supplies.

Although intelligence officials often scrutinized local societies and reports contained detailed information about even the lowest level of societal organization, the study of co-option in colonial warfare reveals a general tendency to focus on dominant local power-holders as the preferred agents for co-option. In the practice of colonial pacification the answer to the question of whom actually to co-opt in order to control the target population was not only answered by use of intelligence reports, it was even more informed by the colonial state’s ubiquitous shortage of means. The always over-stretched colonial forces needed to be reinforced and at least partially relieved by local militias as soon as possible. Typically the most powerful local power-holders were capable of providing this capacity. Moreover, as will be discussed below, the methods of co-option involved colonial security forces. It was easier to focus these scarce means on a limited number of local power-holders rather than co-opting agents down to individual village leaders or the heads of basic kinship groups. An example is provided by Cecil Rhodes’ pacification of what was to become southern Rhodesia. During the six years of pacification that followed the 1893 conquest of the territory, the different tribes of the area took up arms against Rhodes, and although he managed to defeat the most aggressive tribe, the Matabele, twice, he felt compelled to accommodate co-optive agreements with their dominant power-holders, the chiefs. Rhodes simply needed his forces to put down the other rebelling tribes, and although he managed to defeat the most aggressive tribe, the Matabele, twice, he felt compelled to accommodate co-optive agreements with their dominant power-holders, the chiefs. Rhodes simply needed his forces to put down the other rebelling tribes, and although he managed to defeat the most aggressive tribe, the Matabele, twice, he felt compelled to accommodate co-optive agreements with their dominant power-holders, the chiefs.

the limited means of the French colonial state for fighting the Rif War in Northern Morocco, French pacification efforts in the south were limited to co-option of the so-called grand caïds, local Arab overlords who were the dominant feudal power-holders of the region. Although these co-optees brought the French some degree of control, their mutual struggles were a concern for long-term stabilization. The limited available means, however, did not allow the local French administrators to adopt another approach than co-option without too much interference as at that moment the French colonial forces were heavily engaged in the Rif War. Therefore co-option of the powerful overlords was accepted as a solution that suited the French colonial state's immediate needs best.

How does colonial warfare’s ‘preference’ for co-option of local power-holders positioned at the upper end of the co-option spectrum relate to the principle of cultural legitimation and the colonial state’s struggle for enhanced central control? The answer to this question is that co-option in colonial warfare was first and foremost a matter of establishing control. Once an acceptable level of control was obtained through a pacification campaign the colonial state and its administrative apparatus gradually moved to more direct methods of control that still relied on co-option of local power-holders, but now also focused on lower levels of societal organization down to the village level. The legitimate lower-level power-holders, whom were first approached more indirectly through their dominant chiefs during the phase of establishing control, were now approached directly by the colonial administrators seeking to consolidate and increase the state’s control. Co-option in colonial warfare, therefore, represented a first stage in a pattern of establishing, consolidating, and augmenting state control that characterizes the development of the colonial states. To some extent we have discussed this process in the previous chapter. This study, however, will not elaborate further on the specifics of the evolution of the colonial states, as we will focus on colonial warfare in which modern counterinsurgency has its roots.

Albeit dominant local power-holders were the preferred candidates for co-option in colonial warfare, the protracted pacification campaigns sometimes necessitated a shift between different agents and levels. Robinson discusses this for the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan which was successfully pacified in 1898 and controlled undisturbed until 1924. The basis of British control was the prevention of a revival of the Mahdists (the former rulers who were defeated in 1898) through co-option of anti-Mahdist Muslim clergy, sheiks and the more important chiefs of the rural areas. After 1924, however, the British were not only confronted with a threat of a neo-Mahdist rebellion, but they also faced the so-called ‘White Flag’ mutiny of the Sudanese modern elite. Renewed pacification efforts were needed and in 1927 the British started to shift the focus of their co-option strategy radically. In order to prevent mobilization of the population by either urban radicals or neo-Mahdists the colonial administration decided also to co-opt grassroots leaders such as traditional chiefs, village

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56 See, for example, Karl Hack, Tobias Retig, 'Imperial systems of power, colonial forces and the making of modern Southeast Asia', 7. G. Teitler, 'The Dutch Colonial Army in transition, The militia debate 1900-1921', 5-6.

57 Ronald Robinson, 'Non-European foundations of European Imperialism: sketch for a theory of collaboration', 135-137.
headmen, and tribal elders. This minimized the contact between the rebels and the local rural living societies and therefore prevented the spread of the uprising outside the cities. Although the British colonial state succeeded to augment its control over the population on the local level, the new co-option strategy would require a couple of amendments and rearrangements as the various rebel movements evolved and demanded continuous attention of the colonial administration up until the moment the British left the Sudan in 1956. This example clearly illustrates that co-option of dominant local power-holders not always sufficed to maintain an acceptable level of control and that therefore co-option of other, lower-level, societal leaders was needed as part of a pacification campaign. The colonial officers’ preference for co-option of dominant local power-holders, therefore, does not exclude the co-option of lower-level local power-holders.

3.3.4 The methods of co-option in colonial warfare

The last question we have to answer with regard to co-option in colonial warfare is how co-option was actually practiced. As we have already seen in the previous chapter the deployment of an independent local administration, which is a prerequisite for bargaining co-optive deals with local power-holders, was a common feature of the colonial state. In the case of colonial warfare this role was typically fulfilled by military commanders -often assisted by civilian officials- responsible for the pacification of a specific territory and its population. This guaranteed independency from local influences and prevented penetration of local politics in the administration. Thus the military commanders could determine their co-option policy vis-à-vis local power-holders free from local manipulations. The methods that were actually employed to co-opt local authorities in the colonial states encompassed a continuum of coercion and persuasion, with the colonial security forces acting as a guarantee to enforce compliance as they provided the means for co-option domination. The question that matters here is how this co-option continuum was implemented in colonial warfare and how the various methods were deployed in a complementary way in order to control co-optees in a contentious environment. We will now first discuss the individual methods and next illustrate the complementary use of these methods with the example of the French pacification of Madagascar.

Let us start with the coercive end of the continuum and first study the coercive methods used to co-opt local power-holders in colonial warfare. Lord Salisbury, Secretary of State for India, once argued that British control in India depended on adequate force as he stated in 1876 that it was 'the nakedness of the sword on which we [the British] really rely'. As was mentioned in the previous chapter colonial administrators typically considered the actual use of force a measure of last resort. A credible threat of force, however, was always present

In colonial warfare, the colonial state’s scarce means of violence were to be used for (re-)establishing control. The pacification campaigns, which were meant to establish control following the occupation of a territory through either a campaign of conquest or the deployment of security forces to a rebellious area, often relied on military presence as a demonstration of the dominance of the colonial state. Although these forces usually did not suffice to establish control over the local population themselves, they brought the colonial administrators crucial leverage for establishing co-optive relationships with local power-holders. The presence of the colonial security forces provided a capability for co-option domination, and therefore they were instrumental in enforcing co-optive agreements if the bargaining process with local power-holders required such measures.59

The use of force against a local power-holder, his subjects, and possessions served not only the co-option policy towards that specific agent, it often was also meant to set an example for other power-holders within that locale, and even for co-optees in adjacent territories. This exemplary utility of punitive measures was acknowledged by both schools of colonial warfare as witnessed by the French concept of the *razzia*, and the British approach to counter rebellions by ‘overawing the enemy’ through reprisals which were to be communicated thoroughly among the population.60 Thus the limited means of the colonial state were effectively used to generate a credible threat of force through examples that provided the background for the co-option process in colonial warfare.

In addition to this threat the methods of soft coercion could also be used to establish and maintain stable co-optive relationships. In order to establish and consolidate the rule of the colonial state pacification campaigns also involved socio-economic measures designed to enhance the state’s influence over the local population. The policies implemented as part of these measures were used to inflict damage to a local power-holder’s ability to provide his followers with the resources necessary for survival. As discussed in the previous chapter colonial administrators could either target an agent’s access to resources or manipulate the local distribution network. Although denial of the use of a local power-holder’s own resources was part of such measures, the allocation or withdrawal of state resources was the most pivotal socio-economic instrument for co-option in pacification campaigns. Collaboration with the colonial administration offered local power-holders access to state resources which could be exploited in order to increase their wealth, prestige, influence, and following.61 Non-collaboration, consequently, meant denial of these benefits brought by state resources. Moreover, as the colonial administrators were always looking to co-opt agents that exerted some degree of control over local societies, non-collaboration by a local power-holder was certainly followed by co-option of other agents within the political marketplace of a locale. The efficiency of this method was greatly enhanced by the rivalries that were endemic to

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societies throughout Asia and Africa. Therefore co-option or compliance to the demands of the colonial administration could be enforced through the denial of resources as well as the altering of local distributive networks through the allocation of resources to rival local power-holders.

The allocation of resources was not only the key instrument of the soft coercive methods, it was also the most important method to be used as part of the reward-based side of the co-option continuum employed in colonial pacification campaigns. Resources were used to increase the influence of local power-holders who were deemed essential for co-option and they provided the incentives for maintaining stable co-optive relationships in which the colonial state was the dominant actor. The line between the coercive and persuasive use of resources was rather thin as both methods were used in mutual support. Moreover, empowerment of a specific local power-holder inherently damaged another’s interest. This again stresses the necessity of sufficient knowledge about the target society in order to prevent unintended effects of co-option such as aggrieving other local power-holders. The afore mentioned politque des grands caïds is a case in point as the French deployed their patronage in order to increase the power of the Pacha of Marrakech (an early supporter of the French protectorate) and contain the influence of his three main rival caïds. These rivals, however, were crucial agents of control and therefore also had to be co-opted. They were allowed to retain their feudal powers as long as they accepted the French policy.

Pure persuasion, the last of the methods of the co-option continuum, concerns compliance with the government on basis of the communication of arguments. As mentioned in the previous chapter this method, which does not involve any resources, is most effectively employed if there is already a sufficient degree of governmental control over co-opted local power-holders. In colonial warfare, however, this control had to be (re-)established and therefore pure persuasion was of subordinate importance. The method was mostly used to augment control over co-opted agents in protracted pacification campaigns and was typically deployed in addition to other methods. An example is provided by the British announcement of ‘Rules for Powindah Migration’ in 1930-1931. This announcement followed the initially enforced co-option of Pashtun nomad maliks who received considerable favors in return for their collaboration. On basis of this relationship the maliks accepted the British local administration’s additional prescriptive rules when the latter deemed it necessary in to augment its control over western Afghanistan. Furthermore, if necessary, the maliks received extra resources to meet the British requirements. The already stable co-optive relationships with the maliks were instrumental to the acceptance of the announcements by the local colonial administrators and appropriate compliance was further enabled by the attribution of additional resources.


63 Martin Thomas, ‘Crisis management in colonial states: Intelligence and counter-insurgency in Morocco and Syria after the First World War’, 700-701.

64 Bernt Glatzer, ‘Political Organisation of Pashtun Nomads and the State’, 228-229.
Chapter 3 The Course of Co-option

The thus far mentioned examples illustrate that the methods of the co-option continuum are often deployed in a complementary way in colonial warfare. In order to obtain a more profound insight in the flexible use of coercive and persuasive methods throughout a colonial pacification campaign we will study how the methods of the co-option continuum were intermittently practiced during the French pacification of Madagascar. This campaign contains some excellent examples of the use of coercive as well as persuasive methods in order to implement a co-option policy designed to enhance the colonial administration’s control. From 1883 to 1895 the French had already struggled to include the vast island in their colonial empire. Years of protracted violence culminated in 1895, when a large French expedition against the political centre succeeded to enforce a treaty between Queen Ranavalona III of Madagascar and the French colonial administration.65 The settlement established Madagascar as a French protectorate under the sovereign rule of the Hovas; the Queen and traditional leaders of the dominant Merina tribe. Thus the French managed to establish control over Madagascar by forcing the Hovas in a co-optive relationship with the colonial administration.

After the settlement of the conflict the French quickly reduced their military presence on the island from about 18,000 to 2,600 soldiers at the beginning of 1896.66 At that time, however, an uprising had already begun, and with only limited French forces to counter the rebellion, it rapidly increased in a total revolt under command of the Hovas who were even joined by some of their traditional enemies.67 The French co-option strategy had failed as a result of a too premature embarkment of the better part of the French forces, which were the pivotal means for achieving co-option domination after years of conflict. As a result of this failure it was decided in August 1896 that Madagascar no longer would be a protectorate, but that it would become a French colony under command of general Gallieni who were attributed the full civil and military powers to re-establish and consolidate French control over the 600,000 population.68 Gallieni’s military government immediately implemented the tache d’huile concept which he had pioneered in Tonkin. This time the combination of military and political action was designed to break Hova domination (Gallieni felt compelled to do so in order to punish the Hovas) as well as a politique des races which encompassed a policy of respecting and working together with the various tribes of the island.69 Consequently the French co-option strategy now not only focused on the Hovas, but also sought the collaboration of other tribes’ leaders. This approach proved successful as French control increased gradually and nearly all of Madagascar was pacified a couple of years before Gallieni left his office in 1905. But how exactly were the methods of the co-option spectrum employed in order to achieve this success?

66 Ibid., 183,188.
67 See also Francis Toase, ‘The French Experience’, 54.
Gallieni not only brought his ideas from Tonkin, he also summoned his former chief of staff Lyautey to his assist. Lyautey was assigned the task of pacifying an area of northwestern Madagascar ruled by rebel leader and notable Hova Rabezavana (a former royal governor). In order to accomplish this mission Lyautey needed to defeat Rabezavana, but simultaneously he realized that effective control over the Merina population in that locale could only be established if the French colonial state succeeded to co-opt Rabezavana. Lyautey, therefore aimed at establishing a co-optive relationship with Rabezavana in which French dominance was unquestioned. This effect was attained by the complementary use of a mix of the methods that make up the co-option continuum as discussed in this research. First Lyautey used razzia type mobile converging columns to attack rebel livestock and other supplies of food. This tactic successfully denied Rabezavana access to the primary resources needed for survival by himself and his followers. Concurrently French forces cleared parts of the territory from the rebels and in doing so they isolated segments of the population from rebel influence. Following the tradition of marshal Thomas-Robert Bugeaud the French colonial state began to address the needs of the population by providing goods such as sowing-seed. This clearly demonstrated the advantage of working together with the French and further weakened Rabezavana’s position as the French successfully took over the role as provider of resources for survival for those segments of the population under their influence. Within a month rebel support had decreased dramatically and Rabezavan felt compelled to surrender to the French colonial administration. Thus the clever use of force and resources had successfully submitted one of Madagascar’s most powerful Hova authorities.

Although Gallieni acknowledged the need to contain Hova influence vis-à-vis the other tribes of the island, he knew Rabezavana’s collaboration was pivotal for controlling the Hova heartland. Therefore Gallieni gave Lyautey a ‘carte blanche’ to secure Rabezavana’s conversion to the French side. Upon his surrender Rabezavana as well as his followers received clemency, and after he had given written evidence of his good intentions and it was clear that he would obtain the submission of his allies, he was installed as the local authority in charge of the territory under French control. The French thus converted their former enemy by first coercing him to accept French dominance and rewarding Rabezavana by attributing him authority and other resources. Moreover, with Rabezavana as his ‘ad latus’ the uprising in northwestern Madagascar was rapidly quelled. In the end Lyautey managed to establish control over a vast area with use of 1700 French colonial soldiers and additional state resources which allowed the methods of coercion and persuasion to be successfully employed to co-opt a key collaborator.

Contrary to what is suggested in some of the modern literature the co-optive relationship did not last long after Lyautey left the scene. Reportedly as a result of a misunderstanding with a subaltern officer Rabezavana was exiled to Réunion. A better explanation for this move is offered by the fact that a growing difference in insight had evolved between the French colonial administration and their co-optee on the extent of the allocation of resources for the further development of the northwest. Moreover, it was felt that the Hova notables still held too much influence, and therefore it was deemed necessary to expel the most important of those notables, among whom the Queen and Rabezavana. The French now relied on co-option of Merina tribal authorities less influential than the traditional Hova elite for establishing control over the heartland of the Merina tribe and consequently succeeded in quelling the Hova rebellion in 1898. From that moment it was essential to consolidate control over the various social groups of Madagascar who were formerly ruled by the Hovas. This policy enhanced a process that was already ongoing; these societal groups had been looking for opportunities to relief themselves from Hova dominance for some time. The politique des races was implemented by acknowledgement of the unique entity of each different social group and the attribution of administrative powers and material resources to its authorities. Or as Gallieni wrote:

‘Outside Imerina [the heartland of the Merina tribe], we must get rid of Merina authorities and form amongst the population separate, autonomous groups of indigenous people from the same clan, administered by chiefs of THEIR OWN RACE and take into account the morals, customs, and character of every people.’

It was this policy of co-option and empowerment of groups formerly subjugated to the Hovas that ultimately secured French control over Madagascar. This example illustrates not only the complementary use of the methods of the co-option continuum; it also demonstrates how the French -after initially failing to maintain co-option domination- re-obtained a dominant position in the relationship with co-optees. It was the combination of coercive and persuasive methods that allowed the French first to effectively exploit Hova authorities, and the consecutive removal of key Hova leaders such as the Queen and Rabezavana proved the dominant position of the French colonial state in the co-optive agreement with those power-holders. This domination facilitated also the exploitation of the decline of Hova rule through the politique des races, which mainly was implemented through the allocation

74 See, for example, Robert B. Asprey, War in the Shadows, 153. Francis Toase, ‘The French Experience’, 47.
75 Louis H.G. Lyautey, Lettres du Tonkin et de Madagascar, 204.
77 Jacques Bernhard, Gallieni, Le dessein inachevé, 78, capitals in original.
of state resources in order to formalize lower-level local power-holders of various different clans as the primary co-optees of the French colonial state. The flexible use of the co-option continuum’s methods backed up by a sufficient capability for co-option domination, therefore, allowed the colonial officials to create relationships in which the state was the dominant party and could act according to its interests.

In sum we can conclude that this exploration on co-option in colonial warfare has brought the insight that co-option of local power-holders was firmly embedded in the daily practice of colonial wars and especially in colonial pacification campaigns. The colonial state’s typical lack of means necessitated an approach that obtained control by exploiting existing patterns of legitimacy and mobilizing resources from within the population. The scarce of means also led to a preference for co-option of local power-holders on the higher end of the spectrum of societal leaders. Obtaining the collaboration of dominant local power-holders brought the state an acceptable degree of control that could be further augmented and formalized as part of the normal administrative practice in the colonial empires. Pacification, thus, was primarily about establishing an acceptable degree of control. As we have seen in the examples, however, this possibly also necessitated the colonial officials to co-opt lower-level local power-holders. The military officers and their civil assistants who commanded the pacification efforts embodied the state’s administrative apparatus in colonial warfare. Typically these officials could employ force or other coercive methods if they deemed necessary to do so. Additionally the allocation of state resources was also in their hands. This allowed the balanced application of coercive and persuasive methods of the co-option continuum. As aforementioned, winning colonial wars was considered a matter of winning without too much fighting. Most times the colonial officers established dominance through the use of soft coercive methods and the allocation of resources. Force was effectively used in an exemplary manner, or when there was no other solution available. A credible threat of force—which was typically established sooner or later during a pacification campaign—however, guaranteed domination of the colonial state in any co-optive relationship.

3.4 Co-option in classical counterinsurgency

The end of the Second World War not only marked the start of a period of decolonization, it also ushered the beginning of the Cold War. It is this combination of the decline of colonial states and the growing influence of communism that forms the backdrop for the emergence of classical counterinsurgency. Where the colonial administrators had succeeded in quelling relatively small rebellions throughout their empires, they now were confronted with larger movements that sought to unify and mobilize the masses in pursuit of national liberation. Communist ideology and especially Mao’s concept of insurgency provided the underpinning for most of those movements, which exploited the ‘people’s desires for independence and

economic improvement’. 79 Scholars and practitioners alike realized that understanding these desires was the key to formulating an effective counterinsurgency approach. Why had colonial subjects who were formerly so effectively controlled through co-option of their legitimate authorities become susceptible to communist movements claiming independence and more development?

The answer to this question was found in the state of late colonial societies. Imperialism had introduced a level of development and education significant enough to sow the seeds of modernity in the fragmented traditional societies of the colonial states. This had brought forward a well educated elite that sought to break with tradition and transform society according to the ideas and institutions of modernity. In other words, the post-1945 problems in the colonies were caused by what was labeled the ‘transitional’ state of society. 80 Communism provided a path away from the uncertainty of this situation as it offered a roadmap for modernization through the substitution of decayed or vanishing traditional institutions. This analysis was supported by studies of the Malayan emergency which confirmed a lack of prospects in the existing society to be a core grievance of the ethnic Chinese who supported the communists. 81 The challenge for counterinsurgents, consequently, was to overcome the instability caused by the transitional character of the late colonial societies. Classical counterinsurgency, therefore, came up with a non-communist alternative for modernization in order to manage a transition from the ‘no-man’s land of change’ to ‘Western culture’. 82 More specifically, the way to defeat the insurgents was ‘to establish governing institutions that were more effective, more appealing, and more modern than those provided by the communists’. 83 This alternative essentially concerned a transformation of the hybrid colonial state to a sovereign modern state according to the Western democratic model. Although this approach implied the definite end of the colonial empires, the strategic context of the Cold War was such that the former colonial powers preferred this solution as it contained communist influence in the developing countries.

Classical counterinsurgency, thus, practices legitimation by addressing the people’s need for a more modern pattern of legitimate authority embodied by the rational/legal framework of the modern state and its institutions. Contrary to colonial warfare counterinsurgents now were providing assistance to an (emerging) host-nation and the main goal was not only to obtain control over the population, but also to transfer this control to the host-nation’s

79 Peter Paret, John W. Shy, Guerrillas in the 1960’s (New York: Praeger, 1962), 18, see also John Mackinlay, The Insurgent Archipelago, 49.


81 See, for example, Lucian W. Pye, Guerrilla Communism in Malay; Its social and political meaning, Robert Thompson, Defeating Communist Insurgency, 35.

82 D. Michael Shafer, Deadly Paradigms, 54.

government. Moreover, the role of the counterinsurgents was to transform the administrative system into a modern administrative network, and assist these developing state institutions in delivering security and socio-economic development to the population in order to establish a modern non-communist state. This concept clearly abandons the strategy of obtaining control through co-option of local power-holders. Classical counterinsurgency adopted a Western style rational/legal underpinning for establishing control; but did this exclude co-option as a counterinsurgency method?

### 3.4.1 The role of co-option in classical counterinsurgency

Unlike the state building efforts in post-war Germany and Japan, counterinsurgents in the developing states could not rely on existing extensive administrative networks capable of societal penetration from the capital down to the lowest level.\(^8^4\) Even in the most evolved colonial states the bureaucratic network ended at the district level, with villages being run by co-opted local power-holders. In the transitional societies these local headmen were still important traditional authorities who acted as ‘buffers between villagers and the national administration, and their ability and willingness to enforce government edicts is low when these edicts conflict with local, short-run interests’.\(^8^5\) As an extensive administrative network cannot be built overnight, co-option of these local power-holders below the district level was pivotal for obtaining population control. Thus we face the situation that despite the choice of a strategy of rational/legal collaboration, co-option of lower-level local power-holders remained of importance to the classical counterinsurgents in order to bridge the gap in administrative capacity. This insight not only reveals the conflicting nature of co-option in classical counterinsurgency, it also learns who were co-opted as the emphasis was on the village level. In order to obtain an understanding in how this affected mobilization and which co-option methods were used let us turn to the actual conduct of classical counterinsurgency campaigns.

Classical counterinsurgency holds the reputation of a benevolent concept that aims at winning the hearts and minds of the population through a threefold approach which seeks to address the population’s needs by enhancing security, bringing socio-economic development, and political development. This ‘constructive counterinsurgency’ approach, however, did not exclude less subtle methods such as resettlement and violent large area sweeps as ‘those elements within colonial society that were opposed to Western, democratic principles had to be separated and ruthlessly purged lest their own anti-Western

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ideologies spread’. Whether or not intentionally, such actions shaped the conditions for establishing control through more benevolent methods. Thompson’s operational concept for counterinsurgency in the four consecutive stages of clearing, holding, winning, and won illustrates this as clearing an area of insurgent elements is the elementary step that allows the population to be won by constructive methods during the next stages. It is clear that the implementation of such a method requires substantive resources, as cleared areas need continuous attention of the counterinsurgent in order to prevent an area to become re-infested by the insurgency. Classical counterinsurgency campaigns, therefore, were characterized by a massive deployment of Western soldiers and civilian administrators. As mentioned in Chapter One, classical counterinsurgency campaigns were characterized by a tremendous force ratio of 20 (or more) security officials per thousand members of the population (a force ratio of 1:50). Such a ratio, however, could only be realized thanks to additional mobilization of local auxiliaries in the form of village self-defense and militia forces.

The working of the mobilization mechanism in classical counterinsurgency is further discussed by McCuen, who explains that local defense forces not only free regular forces for other tasks, but, more important, ‘commit the population to oppose the revolutionaries’, and ‘give the people confidence in the stability of the security’. Once an area has been cleared by the incumbent’s security forces -which might include ‘distasteful duties’, such as resettlement, imposing curfews and martial law, ‘carried out with compassion’-, the crucial, ‘overlapping step’ in mobilization is to guarantee the populace’s security permanently. First this task will remain in the hands of the government’s forces, but gradually the people themselves will take up this task under supervision of the local administration. By making the people responsible for their own security, the governmental authorities demonstrate their confidence in the local leaders and the population. Thus not only the feeling of security is augmented; the government also ‘earns respect and cooperation’ without compelling the population to do so. The mobilization of local militias, therefore, gives the counterinsurgents the necessary leverage for enhancing control over the population through ‘benevolent’ political and socio-economic development activities. Raising local militias is a first step that shapes the local population’s receptiveness to the persuasive hearts and minds methods that according to classical counterinsurgency will spawn a ‘lasting guarantee of popular support for the governing power’. As the battle for control between government

87 Robert Thompson, Defeating Communist Insurgency, 111-115.
90 Ibid.
91 Robert Thompson, Defeating Communist Insurgency, 80.
and insurgents was fought at the village level, the local power-holders were pivotal pawns in this process. As aforementioned, however, classical counterinsurgency ultimately aims at modernization and its corresponding rational/legal pattern of legitimacy. This contrast of modernization versus the necessity to exploit the pattern of legitimacy of the target society would lead to different notions of classical counterinsurgency that sought equally contrasting solutions to this problem. Let us now first start exploring how co-option actually was included and practiced as a tool for obtaining population control by studying the use of co-option in the notable classical counterinsurgency campaign conducted in Malaya.

3.4.2 Malaya: the application of co-option in classical counterinsurgency

The Malayan Emergency of 1948-1960 is often presented as the prime example, or even the ‘paradigm’ of classical counterinsurgency. Although the campaign started with conventional military actions against what was perceived a small conspiracy, it gradually evolved into a successful counterinsurgency campaign that led to the establishment of an independent modern state in Malaya. What must be noted, however, is that if one could ever speak of the perfect conditions for counterinsurgency, the circumstances in Malaya would probably come closest. First, as mentioned before, the late colonial society was indeed a transitional society in which communism was appealing to ‘people who had lost their ‘traditional way of life”, and who were striving to ‘achieve a ‘modern’ existence’. Second, the support base for the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) was largely confined to the Chinese segment of Malayan society. The Chinese represented a minority –albeit a large one– of less than 40 percent of the population, which equaled 2 million people. This allowed the government to concentrate the bulk of the less subtle clearing methods on this specific segment of the population. Third, the administrative structure of colonial Malaya was not only well evolved down to the district level, since the 1920’s the British had also started to replace British District Officers with a growing number of Malayan administrators. This unique system under command of a British High Commissioner gave the British full authority over the counterinsurgency campaign and allowed them to expand the Malayan nucleus within the administration in order to build a modern administrative network for the future independent state. These three beneficial conditions were unique to Malaya and there is no doubt that they moderated the implementation of counterinsurgency ideas during the Emergency.

97 John J. McCuen, The Art of Counter-Revolutionary War, 87, See also Robert Thompson, Defeating Communist Insurgency, 18-19.
As typical for colonial states co-optation of local power-holders had facilitated British control of Malaya from the early 1800’s. The colonial administration codified the *adat* (customary law) and incorporated different types of local power-holders from sultans to *penghulus* (sub-district headmen representing several villages).\(^{98}\) The system was reformed after the Japanese occupation which resulted in enhanced control of the central government. Although the sultans nominally ruled the nine states that made up Malaya, they were ‘little more than pensioned figureheads’.\(^{99}\) True power rested with their British advisors, who of course fell under the direct authority of the British central administration. As mentioned before these advisors were governing the country down to the district level. The level below was the domain of traditional authorities such as sub-district and village headmen who were supervised by (assistant) district officers, but could exert their power fairly autonomously.\(^{100}\) In this system the district officers were the governmental agents most closely connected to the population through the mediation of these traditional authorities. It is not surprising, therefore, that the district officers were the ‘central and binding force’ of the counterinsurgency effort as they chaired the district committees which coordinated all security efforts, as well as the administrative and socio-economic development attributed to the various villages in the district.\(^{101}\) The district officers, thus, were in a powerful position to bargain co-optive deals with traditional leaders.

Whereas this administrative system effectively reached the largest part of the Malayan population -including the most Chinese-, it did not connect to the segment most susceptible to communist appeals; some 500,000 Chinese who during the Japanese occupation had left towns and plantations to become squatters in the jungle, where they took up a rural livelihood out of ‘truck gardening and subsistence farming’.\(^{102}\) Their move to the jungle had placed them outside the reach of the administrative structure and left a void that was exploited by the MCP. In order to understand the background of the co-option process of the traditional Malayan authorities, we first briefly need to discuss the measures that were taken to augment the government’s grip over these squatters.

The government began to tackle the squatter problem in 1948 with compulsory registration and the forced resettlement of 10,000 squatters from the most troublesome areas.\(^{103}\) This initial approach resulted in limited success, and in 1950 it was decided to adopt a large-scale approach that called for all squatters to be resettled in so-called ‘new villages’.


100 Ibid.


These guarded and fenced settlements would accommodate communities of 1,000 and could provide a full range of amenities and services such as electric light, schools, and clinics -which were all lacking in typical Malayan gampons. Moreover, the inhabitants of such villages were entitled to ownership of the adjacent agricultural land. The squatters, thus, were compensated for the price of forced resettlement and living behind barbed wire under close control of the incumbent’s security forces. Such compensation, however, was just enough to prevent short-term alienation; to bring the squatters back under full control of the Malayan administration was another thing. This called for a program of ‘aftercare’ -later labeled ‘development’- under command of specialized district officers, the resettlement officers, British administrators who preferably commanded Mandarin. In addition to material compensation, the inhabitants of the new villages gradually became responsible for their own security as a compulsory Home Guard was mobilized in every settlement. Moreover, self-government was stimulated by the formation of elected village committees in 1952. In a later stage these committees were formalized as Local Councils with administrative powers under supervision of the resettlement officers. In the end, however, this ‘control-first’ approach -which roughly follows Kalyvas’ theory- of physical control through resettlement followed by socio-economic and political development did not succeed in winning the support of the Chinese squatters. The attitude of the new villages’ inhabitants towards the government was one of ‘benevolent neutrality’ at best. Nevertheless, this sufficed for isolating the insurgents from their popular heartland. Moreover, the new villages program did not affect the major part of the population, whose collaboration was pivotal for defeating the insurgency definitely.

With the brunt of the coercive measures necessary for clearing insurgent influence being born by the Chinese squatters, co-option of the traditional Malayan authorities focused on other methods for containing the insurgency. In the first years of the emergency, the insurgents succeeded in intimidating the overall population and harassing the economy. Therefore the government made clear to local authorities that if a gampong chose the path of collaboration it would reap the benefits in the form of improved security and development. Additionally, most Malayans did oppose the idea of Chinese domination, thus the choice for the government was rather obvious. In case of insurgent intimidation or if internal contradictions within a sub-district or village prevented collaboration, the provision of persuasive means such as security and political accommodations between the various communities sufficed to ‘create conditions in which particular local leaders

104 Ibid., 28, 36.
106 Robert Thompson, Defeating Communist Insurgency, 68, 76-77.
107 John J. McCuen, The Art of Counter-Revolutionary War, 164.
109 Benjamin Grob-Fitzgibbon, Imperial Endgame, 205.
and communities are willing to risk their live in order to organise resistance’.\footnote{110} As a result the co-optive relationships with traditional local authorities were mostly of a persuasive nature. Illustrative for this position is that most villages spontaneously formed \textit{gampong} guards in order to prevent insurgent attacks and infiltration.\footnote{111} The district officers took up the task of institutionalizing these militias as a nation-wide Home Guard. The first step was persuading the local leaders to join the initiative as their confidence and support was of pivotal importance for incorporating local militias in the incumbent’s counter-revolutionary organization. The leaders and their followers clearly benefitted from this initiative as local recruits were equipped and trained by the government (typically a two week basic course followed by periodic refreshers), which enhanced their capability to provide security to their village.\footnote{112} The government also benefited from this as the self-defense militias were integrated with the security forces. This highly efficient organization eventually mobilized a tremendous 250,000 (including 50,000 Chinese conscripts) additional counterinsurgents who were capable of conducting operations in coordination with the government’s security forces.

The emphasis on persuasion for obtaining-or better enhancing- collaboration, however, did not except villagers from coercive measures if the situation demanded so. When, for instance, the town of Tanjong Malim was harassed by a series of insurgent ambushes and attacks in early 1952, general Sir Gerald Templer, the British High Commissioner, personally intervened by convening the town’s community leaders.\footnote{113} Templer told those leaders that the communist actions could not have occurred without some of the locals having knowledge about the plans. When the leaders failed to produce a list of names the town was collectively punished by imposing a strict curfew and reducing the food rations. This sentence was a clear signal to all Malayan towns; although the government emphasized persuasive methods, it would not hesitate to punish non-cooperation.\footnote{114}

The Tanjong Malim incidence was solved within two weeks as the local administration introduced a system that enabled the locals to file anonymous reports. The six most important headmen of the town fulfilled a pivotal role in this system as they oversaw the process and thereby guaranteed that all reports were treated correctly without reference to individuals.\footnote{115} Thus the British exploited the trust these community leaders enjoyed among their followers. The information gathered this way allowed for the swift arrest of 38 insurgent collaborators after which all restrictions were lifted. Apparently this action had done enough to stop insurgent intimidation in the town as within a couple of months some 3,500 inhabitants

\footnote{110} Karl Hack, ‘The Malayan Emergency as Counter-Insurgency Paradigm’, 412.
\footnote{113} See, for example, John J. McCuen, \textit{The Art of Counter-Revolutionary War}, 164-165, Benjamin Grob-Fitzgibbon, \textit{Imperial Endgame}, 195-196.
\footnote{115} Benjamin Grob-Fitzgibbon, \textit{Imperial Endgame}, 196.
volunteered for the local Home Guard and Tanjong Malim remained peaceful for the rest of the Emergency.

An observation obtained from these examples is that albeit traditional authorities were clearly of importance for controlling the population below the district level, the methods used to guarantee their co-option were of a rather impersonal nature. Both persuasive as coercive measures were directed to the community, whereas there is no evidence for extensive personal gain as a result of compliance with the local administration. This can be explained by the traditional Malayan concept of *pengaruh* (authority and influence).¹¹⁶ Within this system the people remained relatively powerful *vis-à-vis* their leaders as for example the community could mitigate the coercive aspect of power by imposing negative sanctions on leaders using physical or economic coercion. Moreover, the sources of a local leader’s prestige were directly derived from the relatively small local community as their roles of patron, mediator, and kinsman heavily depended on the people’s support or at least acquiescence. Thus Malayan local communities remained relatively powerful as even a patron’s wealth was only considered a source of authority when applied according to the expectations of the people. It has to be mentioned that, of course, the position of community leader brought benefits and opportunities for enrichment to individuals occupying this role. For the local population those leaders traditionally functioned as brokers between the vertically separated strata of their relatively small communities and the district administration. This explains why the government’s district officers, who possessed overwhelming means that made it possible to serve or punish the local population directly, directed those means to the population, but also needed to incorporate the local power-holders in their approach. In order to establish a durable connection with the people the counterinsurgents needed to co-opt the traditionally respected and trusted leaders who were very close to their followers.

Although both local leaders and the government’s administrators had to underkeep a relationship of mutual respect, it was clear that the government with its vast means dominated such a relationship. It is not surprising, therefore, that the British chose to respect the tradition of the sub-district as an autonomous administrative unit with self-government even in the light of enhanced central control and modernization. In order to preserve this tradition political development began with introduction of local (sub-district) elections from 1951 onwards.¹¹⁷ This was not only a step in the introduction of modern Western democratic values, more important for that moment, it constructed a modern connection between the district level administration and the people in the villages in a manner familiar to the population. The elected leaders reflected the traditional system and fulfilled the role of middlemen between state and local society, which fitted the government’s ultimate goal of winning permanent and durable control over the population. Ultimately, the position of sub-district headman was institutionalized within the administrative bureaucratic

apparatus. This, however, came at cost of local democracy as popular election of penghulu was abandoned in 1956.\textsuperscript{118} Yet the institutionalization of the sub-district was successful as even in contemporary Malaysia penghulu play a key role in the administration at the sub-district level.\textsuperscript{119}

In terms of the co-option continuum the emphasis definitely was on the use of resource-based persuasion. The government provided incentives for compliance in the form of resources for enhancing security, as well as economic and political development which directly benefitted the village community as a whole. The introduction of elections at the village level facilitated institutionalization of the traditional authorities within the modern state as those elections attributed a rational/legal ground to the sub-district and village headmen. Although election of the former officials was quickly dropped, their position and role was successfully institutionalized within the administrative system. Overall it can be said that with regard to the Malayan gampongs the government’s object was not so much obtaining control, but enhancing its control. Moreover, the state possessed extensive means that allowed its incumbents even to dominate the local level. Therefore the focus could be on co-option of traditional authorizes by use of persuasive methods. This corresponds with the image of classical counterinsurgency as a concept of benevolent development at the grassroots level. What we should not forget, however, is that the Chinese squatters were subjected to severe coercive measures that incidentally would also be used against Malayan towns and villages if the situation deemed it necessary to do so.

3.4.3 Shifting views on modernization: from careful implementation towards enforcement

Galula, the French classical counterinsurgency theorist whose work Counterinsurgency Warfare has heavily influenced today’s American FM 3-24 advocates an approach similar to the one practiced in Malaya, but even goes further in modernization. Once the insurgency is purged from a village, the counterinsurgent should directly formalize local leadership by facilitating elections. Subsequently the incumbents should establish a profound relationship with the local leaders in order to test the latter’s dedication to the counterinsurgency and their ability to mobilize the local population. This all serves the purpose of winning the population, and accommodating a rapid transformation to a modern state capable of extinguishing any revolutionary sparks. Galula stresses the use of resource-based persuasive methods to exploit the co-optive relationship between newly elected local leaders and the counterinsurgents as he points at the manipulation of ‘logistical support in the form of funds, equipment and qualified personnel’ in favor of those leaders complying with the counterinsurgent.\textsuperscript{120} In

\textsuperscript{118} Conner Bailey, ‘Broker, Mediator, Patron, and Kinsman’, 63.

\textsuperscript{119} Tsuboi Yuji, ‘The formation of the framework of ‘Malays’ in British Malaya: An analysis on Penghulus in Selangor’ (paper presented at 4th International Malaysian Studies Conference, National University of Malaysia, Bangi, Malaysia, 3-5 August 2004), 1.

\textsuperscript{120} David Galula, Counter-Insurgency Warfare, 130-131.
addition to this Galula also calls upon the incumbents not to adopt a too paternalistic attitude towards their co-optees while such an attitude is needed for nurturing local leaders, it might also be a potential obstruction for creating independent leaders capable of functioning in a modern state.

Galula’s approach was not only the result of scholarship; it was heavily influenced by his experience in the Algerian war. From August 1956 until April 1958 he served as a company commander and deputy battalion commander in the mountainous Kabylia region east of Algiers (the first appointment was the formative experience that would determine his conception of counterinsurgency). The relatively well-informed and French-speaking Berber population of this area was known to be susceptible to communism and its notion of modernization long before the outbreak of the 1954 rebellion. The French administration in the region was seriously understaffed and before 1954 most villages had no contact with the French ‘except through the tax collector’. The rebels of the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) cleverly exploited this weakness by installing three-man village committees which controlled the villages and connected the villagers to the insurgency and its goals of independency and a socialist state. This placed the French beyond the insurgents in the struggle for control of the population at the local level. The French responded with a strategy of radical modernization that emphasized municipal reform and Algerian self-government below the district level. Although this approach worked for the area of Galula’s company, where the security conditions were sufficient for implementing these ideas, he is critical of the process of enforced modernization itself. The new district boundaries often conflicted with existing traditional divides and elections were organized without first clearing insurgent influence and establishing an acceptable degree of local security. This resulted in FLN infiltration of the self-government which only came to light after new extensive and violent clearing operations.

Thus, the insight we can obtain here is that classical counterinsurgency’s idea of modernization only provides an answer to insurgency as long as it is carefully implemented and control of the population is sufficient to deny insurgent intimidation or infiltration of the population -as was the case in Galula’s area. The French included this hard-learned lesson in their doctrine of Guerre Révolutionnaire where they even took it a step further as addressing the people’s need for change was considered essential, but not sufficient for defeating an insurgency. On the other side of the Atlantic, however, the debate on counterinsurgency -fueled by the quest for a suitable approach in Vietnam- took an opposite direction. In the United States politicians, scientists, and practitioners concluded that modernization

122 Alastair Horne, A Savage War of Peace, 336.
124 David Galula, Pacification in Algeria, 244-247.
offered the best solution to insurgency, and that the creation of a modern state should be enforced if necessary. This concept of ‘coercive counterinsurgency’ turned modernization into an imperative underlying any successful counterinsurgency approach. Whereas modernization had entered classical counterinsurgency as a concept for addressing the specific problem of transitional societies, it now had evolved into a dogma for fighting insurgencies in the less developed countries of the Third World.

The United States fully embraced modernization doctrine in fighting the rural communist insurgency in South Vietnam. The silver bullet was to ‘create at forced-draft the bone structure of a modern nation’. Samuel Huntington has pointed at the fact that indeed ‘forced-draft urbanization and modernization’ were very effective as they brought ‘the country in question [South Vietnam] out of the phase in which a rural revolutionary movement can hope to generate sufficient strength to come to power’. Although Huntington advocated this approach, as he believed in its effectiveness in the long run, he also identified its crucial flaw to address the immediate need for controlling the half of the population living in the countryside. The solution suggested with help of a thorough analysis of Vietnamese society, consisted of accommodations and co-option at the local level, and a restraint on the centralization of political authority in favor of a more hybrid state with strong authority based on decentralization. Thereby Huntington not only stressed the fragmented nature of Vietnamese society, he also called for a more careful implementation of modernization, and especially centralization. Reality, however, was completely different.

Vietnam’s society was indeed fragmented and especially for the various rural segments traditional life was still important, with the village as the ‘natural source of traditional values’. In Vietnam, thus, the dogmatic notion of modernization prescribed an approach suited for transitional societies, but unfitting for the actual societal condition in that country. Thompson, who became an advisor to the United States’ counterinsurgency campaign in Vietnam, recognized the village as the traditional administrative unit, but the efforts to incorporate the village level in the counterinsurgency organization generally failed. The government, which was dominated by the United States, failed to establish a connection with the rural population as the emphasis was not on empowering its lowest (district) level, but on building a strong central authority. Moreover, the administrative body was permeated by corruption. Consequently, ‘critical decisions affecting people’s lives’ were usually made at higher governmental levels by corrupt officials with use of inflexible laws and regulations that only widened the gap between the state’s administration and the population in the villages. The communists, on the contrary, subscribed to a mix of traditional and modern

129 Ibid., 653-656.
130 Karl D. Jackson, Traditional Authority, Islam, and Rebellion, 308.
131 Robert Thompson, Defeating Communist Insurgency, 76.
132 Jeffrey Race, War Comes to Long An, Revolutionary Conflict in a Vietnamese Province (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 163.
methods for obtaining population control 'beginning from the village and extending upward'.

The Viet Cong, thus, dominated the battle for collaboration at the grassroots level. The insurgents' method for co-opting village authorities was usually coercion, followed by persuasion. By 1961 the communists had obtained control of the countryside by killing 10,000 out of 14,000 village chiefs and co-opting their replacements, whose compliance was rewarded with the authority to take decisions on local matters directly affecting their community. Bernard Fall, a well-informed observer of the conflict, in this regard concluded that the Vietcong effectively controlled the countryside of South Vietnam as 'Saigon was deliberately encircled and cut off from the hinterland with a “wall” of dead village chiefs'.

Despite huge efforts, the Americans never succeeded in winning the fight for control over the rural population at the local level. Huntington even argues that the only 'positive' effect of the large-scale military operations was the unintentional stimulation of urbanization as many rural Vietnamese opted to seek refuge in the cities. Yet, as aforementioned, this was insufficient to address the immediate need for enhanced control of the countryside where still half of the population was living.

### 3.4.4 The lesson of classical counterinsurgency: co-option in support of modernization

The dogmatic adoption of modernization as the underpinning of counterinsurgency, thus, proved to be disastrous as the enforced centralization process failed to reach the various local fragments of rural Vietnamese society. Designed to address the need for change in post-colonial transitional societies -as was the case in Malaya- modernization should only be practiced if the societal situation allows so. The introduction of modernization in post-colonial Southeast Asia mostly ended in either revolution or re-traditionalization as in most countries the need for transition was not broadly supported throughout local society, but only advocated by a small elite.

This leaves us with the question how to assess classical counterinsurgency and the role of co-option in this concept. Although there are many other conflicts in which classical counterinsurgency was brought into practice, the examples of Malaya and Vietnam illustrate the best and worst the concept has to offer. Moreover, the withdrawal of the United States from Vietnam marked the end of the development of classical counterinsurgency theory as it ushered a temporary lull in counterinsurgency warfare as a predominant campaign theme.

In Malaya classical counterinsurgency encompassed the introduction of an independent modern state with political integration of traditional authorities. The government succeeded in connecting with the people at the grassroots

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134 Bernard B. Fall, "The Theory And Practice Of Insurgency And Counterinsurgency", *Naval War College Review* 17:8 (April 1965), 33.
level and enhanced its control as the *gampongs* and towns collaborated and mobilized their inhabitants for supporting the counterinsurgency effort. The vast means available to the government were instrumental in obtaining this success. Local administrators could employ security forces to protect the population and sever insurgent intimidation. Moreover, the extensive means clearly indicated the state’s dominance and therefore persuasion mostly sufficed for co-opting local authorities. In Vietnam, modernization was enforced on a fragmented society without accommodating the various rural segments. The emphasis on modernization and its associated centralization led to a neglect of the local administration. Where the insurgents built their organization from the village level upwards by co-opting village authorities, the incumbents disregarded such local power-holders. Despite vast means in the sense of both security forces and socio-economic development the counterinsurgency campaign in Vietnam failed to establish control over the countryside.

Fall once stated that ‘the only thing that Vietnam has which resembles Malaya, is the climate’. The conditions in both cases varied indefinitely with important differences in the fields of society, and an enforced versus a constructive modernization approach. Yet, it are those variables that allow us to draw some general conclusion about co-option in classical counterinsurgency. First and foremost classical counterinsurgency was designed to address the need for modernization in transitional societies. Consequently the concept strives to implement legal/rational legitimation. What can be observed from the afore mentioned cases is that in order to connect to the target society, modernization should strive to build a state that suites that specific society; it should be carefully implemented with respect for traditional societal elements and certainly not enforced. As Jan Heesterman once remarked; modernity should be traditionalized and equally traditional order should be ‘modernized by its linkage with the national polity’. In this regard co-option of local power-holders at the grassroots level is classical counterinsurgency’s best practice as was demonstrated in Malaya and has also been recommended by Galula. Co-opting local authorities not only spawned control as it brought the local populace under the grip of the administration, it also served to mobilize the population for the counterinsurgency in the form of, for example, self-defense militias. The overwhelming means available to the government in classical counterinsurgency permitted the successful implementation of co-option at the lowest level as security forces and socio-economic resources brought district officials the capacity to ‘put either the carrot or the stick to good use’. Consequently those administrators obtained a dominant position *vis-à-vis* local power-holders below the district level and persuasion mostly sufficed for achieving compliance in co-optive relationships. If necessary, however, coercive methods were used without reluctance as Templer did in Tanjong Malim. Thus, we can end this part of our analysis with the conclusion that classical counterinsurgency acknowledges

138 Bernard B. Fall, ‘The Theory And Practice Of Insurgency And Counterinsurgency’, 34.
the importance of co-option of grassroots level local power-holders, and facilitates this process with extensive resources, as long as it supports the ultimate goal of modernization.

3.5 Co-option in neo-classical counterinsurgency

The post 9/11 revival of counterinsurgency not only has led to the adoption of the practical tactics, techniques, and procedures of the classical counterinsurgency era, it also embraced the classical spirit of modernization. This is further enhanced by the political context of contemporary counterinsurgency campaigns which assumes the creation of modern Western-style democratic states as the preferred outcome of any intervention in foreign societies. Isabelle Duyvesteyn has pointed at the fact that this political ambition is mirrored in the concepts underlying today’s military operations, i.e. the ‘comprehensive approach, effects-based operations, a 3D approach (Defense, Diplomacy and Development) and full spectrum operations’. In the light of counterinsurgency campaigns these terms are best understood as commonalities that stand for the renewed application of classical counterinsurgency’s imperative of modernization through the provision of security, political and socio-economic development. FM 3-24 clearly echoes this emphasis on modernization and democracy, despite its recognition of legitimacy as a cultural variable which is defined by the target society.

Porch explains that the adoption of modernization and liberal democracy as guiding principles for contemporary counterinsurgency heavily contrasts with the reality on the ground in countries with weblike societies such as Iraq and Afghanistan where counterinsurgency ‘projects quintessentially Western values onto non-Western societies’. Moreover, where classical counterinsurgency aimed at strengthening a host-nation government through modernization, contemporary campaigns face the challenge of (re-)building government in ‘collapsed and collapsing’ states. Thus in neo-classical counterinsurgency campaigns the host-nation government and its security forces are less capable partners than their classical counterparts. This lack of host-nation capabilities adds to the overall lack of resources -especially troops (as discussed in Chapter One)- available in

today's campaigns.\textsuperscript{146} Even when troop levels were dramatically increased as happened during both the Iraq (2007) and Afghanistan (2010) surge, this was only a temporarily maintainable measure and the force ratio was still far below that of classical campaigns.

As a result of all these factors the contemporary operational environment is a high-pressure chamber in which foreign counterinsurgents are expected to establish control over the population of a target society, consolidate and transfer this control to a preferably democratic host-nation government (re-)constructed by the intervening counterinsurgents themselves, and achieve all this with limited resources in limited time. Not surprisingly, these circumstances have triggered field innovations as well as conceptual changes. In order to generate traditional counterinsurgency effects more rapidly counterinsurgents on the ground developed an ‘accelerated counterinsurgency’ approach through a combination of security measures, reconciliation and political integration, and counter-network targeting.\textsuperscript{147} The elements of this approach gradually emerged from campaigning in Iraq and Afghanistan and were first integrated in Iraq as part of the surge when population-centric security operations were used to shape the conditions for reconciliation and political integration as well as for kinetic targeting of irreconcilable elements. In 2010 accelerated counterinsurgency was also introduced during the Afghanistan surge where it has been described as ‘counterinsurgency lite’.\textsuperscript{148}

Although Kilcullen sees accelerated counterinsurgency as significantly different from neo-classical counterinsurgency, the neo-classical principles and directives have provided the guidelines and principles for the troops conducting these campaigns as they cover pivotal elements such as the political nature of the struggle, the role of the population, the utility of force, targeting, the use of non-kinetic methods, understanding the non-Western operating environment (including intelligence), etcetera. Furthermore, neo-classical counterinsurgency urges troops in the field to constantly learn and adapt, and thus it has stimulated the field innovations that were instrumental in the development of accelerated counterinsurgency.\textsuperscript{149} The state of the art Afghan campaign, which included the field innovations of accelerated counterinsurgency, was designed by use of neo-classical counterinsurgency principles.\textsuperscript{150} The pivotal importance of neo-classical counterinsurgency for today’s campaigns is also emphasized in contemporary doctrines. Even the British Army Field Manual Volume 1 Part 10 Countering Insurgency, which encapsulates a lot of the new field innovations, discusses neo-classical principles and approaches and goes as far as adopting text from the ‘pure’ neo-

\textsuperscript{147} David Kilcullen, ‘Counterinsurgency: the state of a controversial art’, 141-143.
\textsuperscript{148} See, for example, David H. Ucko, ‘Whither counterinsurgency, the state and fall of a divisive concept’, 70.
classical FM 3-24. Perhaps the significance of this latter doctrine is the best testimony of the remaining relevance of neo-classical counterinsurgency as FM 3-24 even 'holds such stature that in practice it overrides NATO counterinsurgency doctrine which should inform the NATO operations in Afghanistan'.

Contemporary counterinsurgency campaigns thus can be characterized as neo-classical counterinsurgency adapted to the operational environment. These adaptations function to establish and consolidate control over the target population with limited resources and time, but pay only modest attention to the development of a -preferably democratic-modern state. Although the building of institutions and an administrative structure is certainly part of neo-classical counterinsurgency, the challenge of wider state building in collapsed or collapsing states cannot be addressed from within the boundaries of contemporary counterinsurgency campaigns. In order to realize what Astri Suhrke has called ‘the liberal project’, i.e. ‘democratization, good governance according to principles of accountability and transparency, human rights, the rule of law, security sector reform and a market-based economy’, additional efforts are needed. These efforts are captured under the label ‘stabilization’ or ‘stabilization and reconstruction’ and on the short-term aim at the creation of a self-sustainable host-nation which -at least- is capable of providing basic security and services to the local populace. Thus the conditions for a transfer of control over the population from the intervening counterinsurgent to the host-nation are created which allows the withdrawal of the former’s forces. To realize the liberal project on the long term stabilization prescribes the creation of a host-nation capability for sustainable social and economic development. This, however, does not constitute the commitment of vast international resources for an extensive period, but comes down to an in time decreasing residual presence and nurturing of host-nation institutions.

Despite the conceptual bifurcation of counterinsurgency and stabilization, contemporary campaigns combine both themes as those campaigns are not only designed to counter insurgencies, but also to provide long-term stability in collapsed states such as Iraq and Afghanistan. In campaign plans counterinsurgency is the underpinning on which the wider stabilization and reconstruction effort is based. Whereas counterinsurgency serves to


obtain control over the population, stabilization and reconstruction functions to transfer this control to the host-nation and augment the government’s control over time. Therefore, contemporary counterinsurgency does focus on establishing control at the grassroots level, and the legitimacy of the host-nation government is of secondary importance as this is further addressed by the stabilization efforts that follow. Although this 'makes for a difficult balancing act and may create inherent contradictions' with the liberal project of democratization and modernization, it is pivotal for creating a permissive environment for this process. This approach has led to a remarkable rise of the role of co-option in neo-classical counterinsurgency as is illustrated by one of the field innovations in Iraq that encompassed 'co-opting anyone, from any political orientation whatsoever, who proved ready to reconcile, support a peaceful settlement and cease fighting'. We will now further study co-option in neo-classical counterinsurgency and although the emphasis in this study is on counterinsurgency, we will also touch upon the relationship and contradictions with wider stabilization and reconstruction efforts.

3.5.1 Legitimation in neo-classical counterinsurgency: from imposing democracy to co-option

The imperative of modernization and democratization initially led to an emphasis on rational/legal legitimacy for obtaining control over the population in neo-classical counterinsurgency. This was further augmented by false assumptions of social organization (in Iraq, for example, it was wrongly assumed that strong central state institutions were firmly rooted in society) and an oversimplified image of the target population as a passive monolithic entity whose support should be won in order to secure victory for the counterinsurgents. The situation on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan, however, was far more complex as the population consisted of various local tribal groups and organizations, which were made up of dynamic networks of competing sub-factions. Imposing a centralized modern state and democracy on such a society heavily contrasted with its fragmented organization and cultural values, and consequently the results of this approach were disastrous.

This was first encountered in Iraq where ‘tribes were viewed as an anachronism that could only hinder the development of democracy in Iraq’. Although at the tactical level some military intelligence officers quickly learned to understand their environment and even tried...
to cut co-optive deals, this approach was rudimentary and in most cases collaboration of the tribes was limited. The United States preferred to ignore legitimate tribal authorities. Thereby they lost the opportunity to win control over the local population, and instead created an additional driver for rebellion. Similarly, the British forces that were operating in southern Iraq, saw themselves increasingly becoming ‘an agent of re-centralisation in Iraq… which often meant displacing locally legitimate leaders’. The limited potential of this approach was obvious as the situation in Iraq worsened and large parts of the population did not consider the elected Iraqi democratic government to be legitimate. Consequently, in 2006 the country balanced on the brink of civil war; a change of the counterinsurgency approach was urgently needed.

One of the most important field innovations that addressed the need for a more effective counterinsurgency approach was the adoption of co-option of local power-holders as a tool for establishing control over the population at the grassroots level. This method was first used in contemporary military operations in Afghanistan as part of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), which, contrary to the mission in Iraq, did not aim at establishing a modern democratic state, but rather focused on hunting Al-Qaeda and Taliban leadership and fighters with a light military footprint. OEF had shown that collaboration with tribesmen could bring benefits in the fields of security. Moreover, the approach even created a stable, permissive environment for organizing and facilitating elections in Afghanistan in 2004. Thus, it seemed a strategy of tribal engagement could address the need for a new counterinsurgency approach as it was not only capable of enhancing security, but also provided a building block for democratization and modernization. The consequences of incorporating this approach would mean a shift from rational/legal legitimation to cultural legitimation on charismatic and traditional grounds -at least for the short term- as collaboration of tribesmen was obtained through co-option of their leader(s).

Despite these insights on the benefits of tribal engagement the actual introduction of this strategy in Iraq was more driven by coincidence than by strategic vision. In the rebellious western Al Anbar province American soldiers and marines faced violent resistance from Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) insurgents and local tribes. AQI, however, also started to turn its attention to the local tribes through violent action, bribes, and targeting of sheiks. AQI’s fundamentalist goals did not match the interest of the local tribesmen and their sheiks. When the insurgents started to compete with the sheiks for control over the political and economic resources (including smuggling and banditry) that secured the tribal leaders’ multi-stranded relationships with their followers, the tribes definitely turned against...
AQI.\textsuperscript{167} This change of attitude gradually spread over whole Al Anbar province and became known as ‘the Anbar awakening’ or in Arabic ‘As-Sahawa Al Anbar’. The insurgents proved to be formidable opponents and therefore by mid 2005 tribes in western Al Anbar sought the support of coalition forces. It should be noted that self-interest of the tribal authorities was the main driver for this rapprochement. Although the United States initially remained reluctant about fully engaging in a tribal strategy, military forces started to co-operate with the tribes which greatly enhanced security in the west of the province. AQI was quick to react to this new development and started an effective counter-collaboration campaign of brutalities and intimidation.\textsuperscript{168} Within, the United States military, however, the awareness of the benefits of tribal engagement for enhancing control over Al Anbar had become firmly rooted by now.\textsuperscript{169} In 2006 the soldiers in Al Anbar fully embraced a strategy that sought to co-opt sheiks while also providing protection and security to these co-optees and their followers. This strategy was successfully applied in the whole province and led to the formation of a tribal movement that started a concerted campaign against AQI.\textsuperscript{170} Politically, the adoption of this approach encompassed a tremendous change as tribal leaders were empowered and the newly formed democratic Iraqi government delegated significant authority to these non-elected local power-holders. Although the sheiks carefully started to seek participation in the new national Iraqi political system (as mentioned in Chapter One), the emphasis was on traditional local factional politics and the consolidation of their newly acquired position as key co-optees. This meant ‘an end to democracy in the province’ for the time being.\textsuperscript{171} However, this was considered a small prize to be paid for the huge amelioration of the security situation and by 2007 the coalition forces effectively controlled the previously highly violent province. Consequently, the Anbar model was duplicated across Iraq under the initial euphemism ‘Concerned Local Citizens’ in order to avoid the still unpalatable term of tribal engagement.\textsuperscript{172}

Co-option of local power-holders as embodied by the field innovations in Al Anbar definitely became a hallmark of neo-classical counterinsurgency when general David Petraeus adopted it as one of the key methods of the 2007 surge.\textsuperscript{173} In the years to follow it was not only successfully applied in Iraq, but also used in Afghanistan. Although engagement of local power-holders was first practiced as part of OEF in Afghanistan, the International


\textsuperscript{169} An excellent example of the development of this awareness on the grassroots level is late captain Travis Patriquin’s presentation How To Win In Al Anbar, available at http://usacac.army.mil/caca/coin/repository/How To Win In Anbar-Patriquin(o6Dec06).ppt.


\textsuperscript{172} Austin Long, ‘The Anbar Awakening’, 81.

Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission, which aimed at defeating the Taliban, and building a viable, modern Afghan state, again focused on the ‘liberal project’. The 2006 extension of ISAF to the south and east of Afghanistan revealed the need to adapt to counterinsurgency in a highly fragmented societal environment, and from 2008 the United States and the Afghan government started to engage local social structures.\(^{174}\) Despite all differences with Iraq it was clear that also in Afghanistan ‘a strategy in which the central government is the centerpiece of our counterinsurgency plan is destined to fail’.\(^{175}\) Consequently co-option of local power-holders became a pivotal pillar of the ISAF campaign when it was revised as part of the Afghanistan surge. Collaboration and cooperation with tribal, community, and religious leaders was deemed essential for establishing control over the population at the grassroots level and this was communicated broadly.\(^{176}\)

Thus legitimation in neo-classical counterinsurgency has shifted from a rational/legal framework that sought to impose democracy and centralized government to an approach that first focused on exploiting local patterns of legitimacy. Whereas FM 3-24 correctly emphasizes the legitimacy of local power-holders and even discusses the notion of multi-stranded relationships with their followers, these key leaders are considered ‘to operate outside the political structure [of the modern democratic state]’.\(^{177}\) Therefore co-option as a viable strategy is only marginally discussed -\emph{nota bene} as part of the dynamics of an insurgency-, and regarded as a strategy with limited applicability.\(^{178}\) The successful application of co-option in the reality of contemporary counterinsurgency warfare has changed this view, and new doctrines such as \emph{British Army Field Manual Volume 1 Part 10 Countering Insurgency} provide better guidelines for understanding the dynamics in an indigenous environment, including the contrast with imposed government and the political processes and distribution of power in fragmented societies.\(^{179}\) Moreover, the actual engagement of local power-holders, or Key Leader Engagement (KLE) is discussed extensively.\(^{180}\) We will elaborate on this later, as we now will focus first on how co-option of local power-holders affected the mobilization process in neo-classical counterinsurgency.


\(^{175}\) Joe Grant, \emph{One Tribe at a Time, A Strategy for Success in Afghanistan} (Los Angeles: Nine Sisters Import, 2009), 11, see also Carter Malkasian, Jerry Meyerle, \emph{How is Afghanistan Different from AlAnbar?} (Alexandria: Centre for Naval Analysis, 2009), 5.

\(^{176}\) Stanley A. McChrystal, \emph{ISAF Commander's Counterinsurgency Guidance} (Kabul: ISAF, 2009), 5.

\(^{177}\) Department of the Army, \emph{FM 3-24, Counterinsurgency}, 2-4,2-7-2-8.

\(^{178}\) Ibid., 1-14.

\(^{179}\) Ministry of Defence, \emph{British Army Field Manual Volume 1 Part 10 Countering Insurgency}, 2-A-3, 3-6-3-7.

\(^{180}\) Ibid., 8-A-1-8-A-5.
3.5.2 Mobilization in neo-classical counterinsurgency

The limited availability of resources to intervening counterinsurgents as well as the lack of competent host-nation security forces increase the necessity to mobilize means from within the target society in contemporary counterinsurgency campaigns. The adoption of co-option as the primary mechanism of legitimization opened an opportunity to rally resources available to local power-holders at the grassroots level. The early years of the Afghan campaign demonstrated that this technique could successfully enhance security as local militia forces started to co-operate with predominantly U.S. soldiers. This approach first revealed a Western dilemma with regard to the nature of the co-opted agents. Most of the co-opted local power-holders were warlords, who opposed many ideas of the 'liberal project' of the new Afghan State. Moreover, the 'dark side' of these warlords affected their legitimacy vis-à-vis local people who were victims of predatory behavior. Despite all this, co-option with warlords was the only option to augment the military footprint and increase control at the grassroots level. An increase of international forces was not politically feasible in those early years, and the Afghan government’s security apparatus was not yet developed.181 Lieutenant general John Vines, the 2003 commander of OEF’s Combined Joint Task Force 180, explained the dilemma as well as the necessity of collaboration with warlord militias:

‘Militias are part of the existing reality, some are legitimate, and some are predators. We need to work aggressively to disestablish militias who are not legitimate, but the challenge is, if you disestablish a militia, who provides security? The vacuum can be filled by anarchy.'182

In this stage Washington’s key interest in Afghanistan was short-term stability –in order to defeat Al-Qaeda remnants and Taliban insurgents- and the warlords with their militias were instrumental in obtaining this effect. Giustozzi even argues that the U.S. willingly accepted the notion of the new Afghan State as an initially hybrid entity which for the time being accommodated local power-holders such as warlords, while a strong centre was being constructed.183 As a result warlords and their militias were co-opted within the state structure, or started to ally themselves with the government (so-called self-co-optation) in order to institutionalize their position. At least twenty of the first group of thirty-two provincial governors were warlord-like regional power-holders.184 When the international community -keen on realizing the ‘liberal project’- urged Hamid Karzai’s administration to

181 Seth G. Jones, In the Graveyard of Empires, 130.
183 Antonio Giustozzi, Empires of Mud, 90.
184 Ibid., 91.
limit the influence of these agents in favor of the central government and its institutions, the warlords already had established extensive patronage networks within the state. Moreover, as ‘Karzai’s tendency was to move warlords, not to remove them’ -as mentioned in the previous chapter a typical move of a central government controlling a weblike society to prevent power-holders from becoming too influential in a single field/institution-, these agents and their networks have remained influential within the Afghan state and continue to frustrate wider state building efforts.\textsuperscript{185}

The lesson derived from the collaboration with Afghan warlord militias was that of proper institutionalization in order to secure long-term stability and reconstruction efforts. Although co-option in Afghanistan was practiced before the full-fledged emergence of neo-classical counterinsurgency in Iraq, it shared the contradiction between short-term and long-term goals. For the short term co-option with warlords brought the necessary stability. The formalization of these agents and their position as part of the Afghan state structure, however, turned counter-productive for the long-term goal of building a modern Afghan state. For contemporary counterinsurgency it is pivotal to establish control over the population through cultural legitimation and mobilization of resources for the provision of local security; it is also pivotal that the counterinsurgency efforts provide the basis for the wider stabilization and reconstruction efforts that follow. Therefore indigenous militias and their commanders should be thoroughly integrated in the counterinsurgency campaign and institutionalized within the host-nation’s administrative structure, either as ‘auxiliaries, pseudo-gangs, or integrated troops’.\textsuperscript{186}

As mentioned in Chapter One the successful mobilization effort as part of the Anbar awakening featured institutionalization of local power-holders and their militias from its onset. Members of tribal militias were screened and allowed to wear weapons and uniforms as part of the ‘Provincial Auxiliary Iraqi Police’.\textsuperscript{187} Later these auxiliaries were integrated in the national Iraqi Police, and thus the population was effectively secured by institutionalizing local militias within the state’s security apparatus. Despite this construct, the government in Baghdad considered the increasing power of the local power-holders at the grassroots level a threat. Therefore in October 2008 a special committee was raised to oversee funding, training, and arming of local defense forces.\textsuperscript{188} In the meantime the local power-holders -of whom some indeed challenged the central government- started to seek more influence in that government by regular political participation. Although the government was not completely accepted, as a loss of independence was feared, the previously unknown level of stability and security convinced local power-holders that further collaboration with the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[185] Seth G. Jones, \textit{In the Graveyard of Empires}, 130, italics in original. For an excellent overview of the spoiling effects of Afghanistan’s warlords on the establishment of a modern state in the early years of the Afghan campaign see Danielle D. van Grieken, ‘Collaborating Warlords in Afghanistan’s Political Reconstruction Process’ (Thesis, Utrecht University, 2005).
\end{footnotes}
government was the best way forward. Thus the mobilization of local militias not only served the immediate needs of the counterinsurgency campaign as it brought effective security to the population, by institutionalizing the militias it also provided an underpinning for wider stabilization and reconstruction efforts.

The nation-wide implementation of this approach culminated in the so-called Sons of Iraq (SOI) program that eventually grew to 100,000 members. SOI boosted local security by contracting local power-holders and their militias as agents of the Iraqi government. Coalition forces on the ground were responsible for recruiting influential local leaders and their followers, and supervised the establishment of connections between the government, its security forces, and new SOI militias. The program not only enhanced local security, it also served as a tool to reintegrate former insurgents and mobilize them for the government’s cause. Moreover, the salaries paid to SOI members gave an economic impulse to the local markets, which once again started trading when the security situation improved. Throughout Iraq this mobilization program thus not only brought security at the grassroots level, it also allied local power-holders to the Iraqi government and enhanced collaboration. Additionally the people from various locales coalesced around SOI; this dynamic offered the potential to connect Iraq’s fragmented, weblike society to the central government and its institutions. Despite the successful exploitation and institutionalization of local militias as part of the counterinsurgency effort and its potential for state building, the long-term consequences of this approach remain far from certain. Iraq’s weblike society is characterized by huge differences between and within communities and empowerment of local militias emphasizes this fragmentation as well as that it gives individual societal segments coercive means to protect their interests vis-à-vis others and the state. Therefore, the Iraqi government does not possess a monopoly on the use of force within its territory; it currently resembles the typical weak state that comes with a strong weblike society as described by Migdal. Nevertheless, this approach has brought success in counterinsurgency and has offered perspective to wider stability efforts as well as a plausible exit strategy to the United States. In order to accomplish the long-term goal of a modern Iraqi state the government and its international supporters have to facilitate further political integration -which might take the form of federalism- of the various local societal segments that were instrumental in fighting the insurgency at the grassroots level. Unfortunately, after the withdrawal of the American military Prime Minister al-Maliki’s (Shi’a-dominated) administration adopted a course that increasingly marginalized large (especially Sunni) segments of the population and in 2013...
the country was again balancing on the brink of civil war.\textsuperscript{193} As mentioned in this book’s introduction, this facilitated the 2014 advance of the Islamic State (IS) in Sunni-dominated parts of Iraq. Currently the Iraqi government once again is seeking to re-engage in a process of reconciliation and political integration in order to establish long-term stability.

In Afghanistan different attempts to replace the warlord militias by top-down mobilization failed and attempts to initiate bottom-up mobilization stalled due to a lack of international and Afghan political support.\textsuperscript{194} By 2010 this had led to an alarming shortage of counterinsurgency forces. In order to augment Afghan counterinsurgency capabilities -also in the light of the 2014 transition to Afghan-led security- it was pivotal to change this situation and mobilize the population. Therefore, the Afghan government and ISAF initiated two bottom-up mobilization programs called Village Stability Operations (VSO) and Afghan Local Police (ALP). These programs were partly inspired by the experiences from Iraq and partly based on a (south)eastern Afghan tradition of tribal militias, \textit{arkabai}, under command of village elders.\textsuperscript{195} The merged VSO/ALP program aimed at mobilizing the population at the local level, preferably the village, and concentrated ‘on areas where the government cannot assert its sovereignty and coalition forces cannot provide consistent security’.\textsuperscript{196}

Through supporting the council of village leaders, the \textit{shura}, the program enhanced a local community’s capability for self-defense. The well-equipped and trained village militias which resulted from this approach were subordinated to the district’s police chief, and ultimately institutionalized as part of the Afghan Ministry of Interior (MoI). Under auspices of US Special Forces the VSO/ALP program successfully enhanced security in involved villages and managed to establish a connection between remote locales and the central Afghan government. VSO/ALP therefore augmented the counterinsurgency effort in Afghanistan, and it provides stability which might function as a basis for wider stabilization. The focus on the village level -in contrary to larger tribal militias- might even ease the future integration of these communities in a modern Afghan state.\textsuperscript{197} Given Afghanistan’s highly fragmented and complicated weblike society and the still vivid Taliban insurgency, however, such a modern state as the long-term result of Western intervention remains far away. Current views on this matter even plead for abandoning the ‘liberal project’ in favor of a more decentralized, locally driven long-term state building project, which might be considered a form of ‘ordered anarchy’ in Western eyes.\textsuperscript{198}

\textsuperscript{193} Michael Weiss, Hassan Hassan, \textit{ISIS, Inside the Army of Terror}, 93-98.


\textsuperscript{196} Robert Hulslander and Jake Spivey, ‘Village Stability Operations and Afghan Local Police’, 130.

\textsuperscript{197} For the risks of collaboration with larger tribal militias in Afghanistan see Kimberly Marten, ‘The Danger of Tribal Militias In Afghanistan: Learning From the British Empire’.

The limited resources for counterinsurgency in contemporary campaigns make mobilization of pivotal importance for establishing control over the population. As host-nation security institutions typically lack the capability for top-down mobilization, mobilization in neo-classical counterinsurgency is a bottom-up process that depends on militias within the local population. Western reluctance to work with such militias has been largely abandoned as a result of this necessity. In neo-classical counterinsurgency the short-term goal of winning the fight for control over the population prevails over the long-term objective of building a modern state. The counterinsurgency efforts, however, are also designed to provide the underpinning for wider stabilization and reconstruction and therefore proper institutionalization of mobilized armed groups within the framework of the host-nation is essential. The pattern that can be observed in the development of mobilization in neo-classical campaigns is that of local institutionalization of militias from increasing lower societal levels. Whereas warlord militias proved to be uncontrollable through institutionalization, lower-level armed groups are more susceptible to state control, which is exerted by the local administration. The last phase of the campaign in Afghanistan emphasized the village level as the primary level for grassroots mobilization. Such a shift, of course, also has consequences for the overall co-option strategy as it hugely affects the choice of co-optees. Therefore, it is time to focus on this latter aspect of co-option in neo-classical counterinsurgency.

3.5.3 Whom to co-opt?

The afore mentioned reveals a preference in neo-classical counterinsurgency for co-option of local power-holders at the lowest societal level. Such a preference not only enhances the state’s ability to control its co-optees, it also allows for co-option of leaders of marginalized societal segments. In Afghanistan the focus on co-option of warlord-like strongmen who dominated the political marketplace at the provincial level excluded and alienated many local power-holders representing marginalized segments at lower societal levels. It is not surprising that these leaders and their communities became prime sources of Taliban recruitment. This not only illustrates that engagement of lower-level local power-holders is essential to reach out to alienated groups, it also clarifies that such a strategy is impossible without also addressing the more powerful agents in society who cause the grievances of their marginalized societal opponents. In Afghanistan, for example, village elders generally have limited power and small clienteles of 5-70 men while the dominant local power-holders of a locale -the khans- have significant larger followings and possess vast resources for addressing

199 Antonio Giustozzi, Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop, 46-69.
the people’s strategies of survival.\footnote{200 Antonio Giustozzi and Noor Ullah, “‘Tribes’ and Warlords in Southern Afghanistan, 1980-2005”, Crisis States Research Centre Working Papers 2:7 (2006), 2-3.} Co-opting village authorities without paying attention to the k\(\text{hans}\) simply is impossible. But how are such dominant local power-holders included in contemporary co-option strategies which prefer collaboration with the lower leaders?

In weblink societies dominant local power-holders are legitimate leaders who control the most powerful -but not necessarily the largest- community in the local societal landscape. Consequently addressing dominant local power-holders is not only instrumental in facilitating co-option of lower local power-holders, their collaboration is also necessary for obtaining control over the societal segment they represent. Therefore dominant local power-holders are also subjected to co-option in contemporary counterinsurgency campaigns. A key facet of co-option of dominant local power-holders in contemporary counterinsurgency is limiting the ’dark side’ effects of these agents \textit{vis-à-vis} other societal groups in order to take away root causes of the insurgency within the societal landscape of a specific locale. This method is designed to support a political settlement of the conflict which accommodates and reconciles opposing societal groups under the wings of the government.\footnote{201 Jeanne F. Hull, \textit{Iraq: Strategic Reconciliation, Targeting and Key Leader Engagement} (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2009), 1-2.} Thus co-option of a mix of dominant and lower local power-holders not only serves to obtain control over the population of various societal segments, it also aims at repairing the ties of the social fabric which creates a societal foundation for long-term stability efforts.

The adoption of this approach in Iraq led to what Kilcullen has described as a strategy of ’co-opting anyone, from any political orientation whatsoever, who proved ready to reconcile, support a peaceful settlement and cease fighting’.\footnote{202 David Kilcullen, ‘Counterinsurgency: the state of a controversial art’, 141.} In Bagdad the sectarian divide between the Sunni minority (under Saddam the most powerful faction) and a Shi’a majority was a catalyst for grievance and violence. The new democratic Iraqi government heavily relied upon the latter group and consequently the Shi’a dominated political positions as well as the state’s security apparatus. Exemplary in this regard is that American soldiers found themselves cooperating with Iraqi units which were led by Shi’a power-holders, and in one case it was even reported that a battalion was commanded by a Sheik with his son as the executive officer.\footnote{203 Ross A. Brown, ‘Commander’s Assessment: South Bagdad’, \textit{Military Review} (January-February 2007), 30.} Such units tended to use excessive force and indiscriminately detain Sunni men. Unsurprisingly the Sunni minority in Bagdad regarded these security forces as ’occupiers even though they were also Iraqis’.\footnote{204 Dale Kuehl, ‘Testing Galula in Ameriyah, The People Are the Key’, \textit{Military Review} (March-April 2009), 77.} The Sunni community in Bagdad was further marginalized by Shi’a extremists of Muqtada Al-Sadr’s \textit{Jaysh al-Mahdi} (JAM, the Mahdi Army) and Shi’a government officials whom withheld them health, electricity, sewage, and other essential services.\footnote{205 David Kilcullen, \textit{The Accidental Guerrilla}, 126-127.}

Although the collaboration with the Shi’a majority had increased control over that community, it also had driven Bagdad’s Sunni minority into the hands of insurgents and
AQI extremists. The 2007 surge acknowledged this sectarian divide as the main reason for the deterioration of the situation in Bagdad and sought to reach out to the alienated Sunni leaders in order to enhance control and achieve reconciliation between the opposing communities.\textsuperscript{206} Such reconciliation, however, could not have been achieved without mitigating the negative influence of the Shi’a. The American counterinsurgents accomplished this first in Bagdad’s Ameriyah district, a Sunni neighborhood.\textsuperscript{207} Co-option of local power-holders and their militia fighters who previously operated as insurgents led to an increase of self-defense capacity which was later formalized under the SOI program. Thus Sunni leaders became connected with the government and were allowed to guard their community’s security.

Instrumental in achieving this co-optive relationship were the American counterinsurgents’ efforts to prevent Iraqi security forces from harassing the Sunni community, and foster mutual trust between the self-defense militia and security forces in order to pave the way for future cooperation. Moreover, the Americans deployed a time-honored counterinsurgency tactic by delivering essential services (water, energy, medical care etc.) to the Sunni community. Simultaneously they sought to convince the Iraqi government to take over these services. The Shi’a dominated Iraqi government gave in to American pressure and began to collaborate with Ameriyah’s Sunni community. This all facilitated political reconciliation as Bagdad’s Shi’a majority started to acknowledge the Sunni’s position in the new post-Saddam Iraq and the latter community enhanced its collaboration with the government. Although the situation was still fragile, this approach brought the local Iraqi government a level of control sufficient enough to provide an underpinning for further stabilization. Yet, as aforementioned, the renewed marginalization of the Sunni by Prime Minister al-Maliki’s Shi’a-dominated administration after the US withdrawal again brought Iraq on the brink of civil war, which provided fertile ground for the advance of IS in Iraq. This demonstrates that even after a successful counterinsurgency campaign, foreign interveners need to maintain a sufficient level of diplomatic and development efforts in order to foster long-term stability.

In Afghanistan a similar pattern evolved as the Karzai government and the Americans had co-opted a vast amount of dominant local power-holders who had affiliated themselves with the new Afghan government or the American forces.\textsuperscript{208} This brought these dominant power-holders in a favorable position vis-à-vis societal rivals as they were incorporated in the state structure and came to dominate the local government and even obtained influence at the national level. As the international community came to realize that this distribution of power was a key reason for grievance and violent contention at the local level the Karzai

\textsuperscript{206} Ibid., 143, 151.
\textsuperscript{208} Antonio Giustozzi, Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop, 16-17.
administration was forced to start removing its most controversial co-optees from their positions as local administrators. Moreover, when the counterinsurgency effort was stepped up in 2006 ISAF forces (notably the British and Dutch) came to realize that they needed an independent local administration capable of mediating in conflicts between local communities and binding lower-level power-holders of every societal segment. This resulted in the sacking of several of Karzai’s trustees whom functioned either as governors, chief-of-police or in other important functions at the provincial level. As these agents retained their ties with Karzai, however, they remained influential either at the national level or behind the scenes at the local level.

Counterinsurgents in Afghanistan thus have been involved in mitigating the influence of those power-holders as well as supporting the newly appointed independent government officials and facilitating reconciliation with alienated communities. Consequently these counterinsurgents found themselves caught in a balancing act at the local level in which they were brokering consensus agreements between local power-holders representing various influence networks and communities. Although this approach has been sufficient for enhancing the provincial government’s control over local populations, it has not strengthened the position of Afghanistan’s central government. As stated previously, the current outlook for the ‘liberal project’ in Afghanistan is grim. However, it seems that the progress and relative stability at the local level suggests a new way forward for wider stabilization and reconstruction. Giustozzi in this regard explains that coalition building with local communities in large states cannot be done from the centre directly and consequently stresses the importance of local administration. A network of local administrations serves to control the population at the local level and is a prerequisite for building a system of central state control. Implementing this idea requires the abandonment of the notion of a modern state in favor of a more fragmented hybrid entity built upon local administrations which co-opt local power-holders representing the different communities within a locale. Or as one contributor to the debate commented:

‘Undoubtedly an imperfect solution, it is nevertheless a needed departure from the obsession with creating a modern, unified sovereign state which makes little practical sense as an objective of international interventions.’

In sum, the answer to the question whom to co-opt in neo-classical heavily depends on

209 Ibid., 203-205.
211 Antonio Giustozzi, The Art of Coercion, 133-134.
Chapter 3 The Course of Co-option

the local societal landscape. Although lower-level local power-holders are the preferred agents of co-option as they are directly connected to (marginalized) communities at the grassroots level, such an approach is impossible without also addressing dominant local power-holders. Moreover, both in Iraq and Afghanistan co-option of dominant agents has affected the government’s ability to deploy an independent local administration capable of reconciling various communities. Therefore contemporary counterinsurgents find themselves co-opting and mitigating spoiler effects of dominant local power-holders, collaborating with local government officials in order to guarantee impartiality, and reaching out to lower-level power-holders for appeasing alienated societal segments. Such an approach is unthinkable without proper intelligence on the local societal landscape and neo-classical counterinsurgency therefore emphasizes the importance of gathering population-centric intelligence at the grassroots level. This even has led to the creation of specialized capabilities to support engagement of the local population such as the US Army’s human terrain teams, which embed academic knowledge of the target society within the military organization. The knowledge produced this way also allows for a broad interpretation of Kilcullen’s remark that everybody who proofs ready to reconcile should be co-opted in contemporary counterinsurgency. If counterinsurgents grasp a thorough insight of the local societal landscape, they will understand the interests and motives of local power-holders as well as the relationships between various opposing societal groups. Combined with proper actions such information can also make local power-holders prove their readiness to reconcile.

In the next paragraph we will discuss the methods of co-option in neo-classical counterinsurgency. To answer the question whom exactly to co-opt in neo-classical counterinsurgency we can conclude that this is a matter of the specific locale counterinsurgents are operating in. Typically, however, the answer contains a mix of dominant and lower-level local power-holders which enhances the local government’s control over the various communities within that locale. In terms of the spectrum of co-option this covers the complete range, but tries to focus as low as possible.

3.5.4 The methods of co-option in neo-classical counterinsurgency

A key challenge in contemporary counterinsurgency campaigns concerns the role of the host-nation government. In order to dominate the bargaining process with local power-holders at the grassroots level an independent local administration is of pivotal importance. As we have seen in the previous section reality in Iraq as well as Afghanistan demonstrates that local administration is often permeated with influence of local power-holders. Although participation of these agents in the local administration is essential for generating legitimacy
and institutionalization of local actors, such participation should be carefully administered in order to prevent dominant local power-holders from becoming too influential or even capturing the grassroots level government. What is needed is the creation of an administration as ‘inclusive and well balanced ... as possible’ which is capable of accommodating the leaders representing the various communities -also those marginalized- within a specific locale.²¹⁴ Neo-classical counterinsurgency, therefore, prescribes that counterinsurgents should (re-) establish basic governance.²¹⁵ Today’s intervening counterinsurgents thus not only support a host-nation government; they also act as external actors who ‘help to create an indigenous government that it [sic] is considered legitimate by the populace’.²¹⁶

Development of governance in neo-classical counterinsurgency is essentially focused on enhancing grassroots level governance on the shorter term.²¹⁷ This means that counterinsurgents seize control over the population of a specific locale and foster the development of a local government -which of course is linked to the overall host-nation government. Once the local conditions have improved sufficiently the external actor -the counterinsurgent- transfers his control to the local administration. The wider stabilization and reconstruction efforts than take over in order to strengthen and further develop the overall national governmental structure for the long term. In contemporary counterinsurgency campaigns this approach materialized as the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) concept. Although this concept harkens back to the early years of the Afghan campaign, it became solidly accepted in neo-classical counterinsurgency when PRTs were embedded with regular combat units as part of the Iraqi surge and the 2006 extension of the ISAF mission.²¹⁸ PRTs are specially designed teams consisting of soldiers and civilian diplomats and development aid workers who assist military counterinsurgency task forces in overcoming ‘the vacuum caused by a weak government presence’ and consequently they provide a capacity for (among other) ‘the establishment and improvement of the local government, including its connection to the central government and local populace, by advising and empowering stakeholders, legitimate governing bodies, and tribal leadership’.²¹⁹ The latest edition of the ISAF PRT Handbook emphasizes that this capacity should focus on governance development at the district and provincial level with co-option of local power-holders as a valid strategy for enhancing governmental legitimacy.²²⁰ Moreover, this

²¹⁴ Isaiah Wilson III, Thinking Beyond War, Civil-Military Relations and Why America Fails to Win the Peace (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 138. Wilson specifically discusses this for the northern Iraqi city of Mosul and Ninevah province where American counterinsurgents faced the challenge of establishing control over a fragmented and highly heterogeneous local society.

²¹⁵ See, among others, Department of the Army, FM 3-24, Counterinsurgency, 5-15-5-16, Ministry of Defence, British Army Field Manual Volume 1 Part 10 Countering Insurgency, 4-17-4-20.


²¹⁷ Ibid., 184-185.


²¹⁹ Center for Army Lessons Learned, Handbook Afghanistan Provincial Reconstruction Team (Leavenworth: CALL, 2011), 5.

underpinning for governance development as part of the counterinsurgency efforts in the Afghan campaign prudently echoes the idea of a decentralized state as the ultimate outcome of Western military intervention.

Thus, contemporary counterinsurgents explicitly concern themselves with the local government within their specific area of operations. This involvement seeks to guarantee the governmental independency as representatives of all communities -also those aggrieved- within the societal landscape need to be included. Co-option of local power-holders is of crucial importance in this approach as these agents enhance governmental legitimacy and thus become institutionalized agents of the state. Consequently, the challenge today’s counterinsurgents face is to co-opt dominant and marginalized local power-holders in the grassroots administration without allowing the former to become too dominant. In today’s counterinsurgency campaigns the activities employed to establish, maintain and control such co-optive relationships with local power-holders are commonly known as Key Leader Engagement (abbreviated as KLE, like aforementioned). KLE is primarily intended to influence a local power-holder’s behavior and additionally can be used to gain detailed intelligence on the local societal landscape and the political situation. *British Army Field Manual Volume 1 Part 10 Countering Insurgency* clearly explains the main purpose of KLE:

‘... we [the counterinsurgents] seek to maintain the support of those who are sympathetic or neutral, persuade those who are not to adopt a more favourable view and position and isolate those who are irreconcilable or actively hostile ...’

This clarification hints at a preference for the use of persuasive methods of co-option; non-sympathetic local power-holders should be persuaded to accept a co-optive tie, and those who cannot be persuaded, the irreconcilables or actively hostiles, have to be isolated and thereby are deemed unsuitable for co-option. The latter typically concerns extremists and hard-core insurgents whose isolation of the further population is mostly achieved by use of lethal force, i.e. capturing or killing that specific individual. Although KLE and so-called lethal targeting are two distinct activities, they are linked together in the counterinsurgents’ targeting process. This process potentially offers a great opportunity to implement the co-option continuum in contemporary counterinsurgency campaigns as it aims at identifying ‘the targeting options, both lethal and non-lethal’ for achieving the desired effect.

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223 Department of the Army, *FM 3-24, Counterinsurgency*, 5-29, italics by author.
targeting combines both coercive and persuasive methods for achieving co-option and provides a capability for co-option domination as the counterinsurgent might shift to lethal methods if necessary. In the reality of counterinsurgency campaigning, however, lethal and non-lethal targeting remain two distinctive processes, despite efforts for further integration (which focus at allowing a shift between lethal and non-lethal methods for application against insurgents). This was illustrated in Afghanistan where ISAF started using a Joint Prioritized Effects List (JPEL) with all targets, but -even after the revision of its campaign- maintained a rigid distinction between those determined for lethal and non-lethal targeting. As a result local power-holders who are identified as (potential) co-optees are strictly subjected to KLE with use of non-violent methods.

Indeed KLE emphasizes persuasive methods as it subscribes to the philosophy of creating a ‘win-win situation’ for both counterinsurgents and local power-holders in order to establish and maintain a stable co-optive relationship. Thus KLE clearly fits contemporary counterinsurgency’s premise of control as a matter of collaboration that is to be achieved through predominantly the creation of benefits for collaborators (as was discussed in Chapter One). What we have seen, however, is that dominating the bargaining process with local power-holders requires the counterinsurgent to retain a certain capability for co-option domination. Moreover, to address the challenge of co-opting both marginalized and dominant local power-holders a coercive stick for use against the latter agents seems essential; but how does KLE with its emphasis on persuasive methods guarantee such capability? Of course, when a local power-holder decides to openly side with the insurgents a shift from non-lethal to lethal targeting is an option. The efficiency of lethal targeting in contemporary counterinsurgency campaigns, however, makes such a move by a local power-holder improbable. Additionally, given the strict distinction between non-lethal and lethal targeting, even the threat of lethal targeting is not part of the co-option process.

The most powerful coercive method to be employed in KLE is removal of a local power-holder from his powerbase. This method is typically applied against too dominant local power-holders whose removal opens up the local political marketplace for leaders of marginalized and aggrieved societal segments, and facilitates balanced representation within the local government. Removal of local power-holdersmostly encompasses appointment to a senior function in the national government -giving such a move at least the suggestion of a win-win situation- which enhances institutionalization and thus control over that specific agent. Probably the best example of this method is the removal of warlord Ismail Khan, who effectively ruled his own emirate in western Afghanistan. Although he was

227 See, for instance, Department of the Army, FM 3-24, Counterinsurgency, 5-30, Headquarters Land Warfare Centre, ‘The Coordination of Key Leader Engagement’, Doctrinal Note 07/08 (2008), 85.
Chapter 3 The Course of Co-option

among the group of warlord-governors appointed in 2002 (as governor of Herat province), he ignored the establishment of a local administration as part of the new Afghan state; Ismail Khan himself controlled the local administration in Herat and he personally appointed the district level officials. Consequently large societal segments, predominantly Pashtun tribes, were marginalized and called upon the international coalition and the Kabul government for help. Subsequently Ismail Khan was removed from his governorship by the Kabul administration and American forces to be appointed as minister of water and energy in Karzai’s cabinet -not a promotion in his own eyes. Although Ismail Khan was permitted to maintain his large militia in Herat province, his removal allowed his rivals (who represented the major part of the population) to operate on the local political market along Ismail Khan’s protégées and participate in the new local administration.

Another example of this method comes from the start of the ISAF counterinsurgency campaign in the South in 2006. As aforementioned, the British and Dutch realized they had to remove too influential local power-holders in their area of operations in order to create an independent local government that could reach out to alienated communities. This resulted in the removal of Sher Mohammed Akhundzada and Jan Mohammed as governors of respectively Helmand and Uruzgan province. Both strongmen were appointed to senior positions in the Kabul administration leaving a political vacuum at the local level to be filled under supervision of the British and Dutch counterinsurgency task forces. We will come back to the latter case extensively in the third part of this book when we deal with the Dutch effort in Uruzgan province.

 Whereas removal relies upon separating a local power-holder from his powerbase and thus from his distributive network, KLE also includes coercive measures that aim at affecting an agent’s capability to provide resources through this network. Those measures focus at deprivation of resources provided by the state or the counterinsurgents themselves. In a modern counterinsurgency campaign the state’s and counterinsurgent’s capacity to provide resources for economic and social development at the grassroots level will be boosted by international aid. As discussed in Chapter Two local power-holders in weblike societies typically will seek to exploit those resources in order to strengthen their position as providers of resources for addressing the population’s strategies of survival. As this leads to an increasing dependency on those resources, deprivation can be used to influence a local power-holders behavior and therefore function as a coercive stick to control a co-optee.

229 Antonio Giustozzi, Empires of Mud, 276-278.
231 Antonio Giustozzi, Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop, The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan, 204-205.
232 See also Joel S. Migdal, Strong Societies and Weak States, 141.
KLE does primarily emphasize the persuasive side of this method as attribution of resources can be used to stimulate or reward a local power-holder for his co-option. However, there are many examples from the reality of contemporary counterinsurgency warfare that demonstrate the use of deprivation as a coercive lever for establishing or underkeeping co-optive relationships. In Iraq, for instance, the contracts with local power-holders which formalized their militias as part of the SOI program were based on three month terms which gave local coalition forces’ commanders leverage to sanction malevolent behavior. An example from Afghanistan demonstrates the use of deliberate deprivation for shaping local power-holders’ willingness to engage in co-optive relationships. In the Korengal valley leaders in the south were allied to the insurgency, while the north opted to collaborate with American counterinsurgents and the Afghan government. Community leaders in the north were rewarded through allocation of development projects. Southern leaders where ignored in this attribution process, and restricted with regard to the influx of external resources. It was made clear to the southern communities that these measures would be lifted as soon as their leaders would start negotiating with the local government. This approach facilitated the establishment of co-optive relationships with previously hostile local power-holders as well as the reconciliation between the different communities within the valley.

The persuasive methods that form the backbone of KLE are empowerment and attribution of resources, which basically mirror the two coercive methods of replacement and deprivation of resources. The basic proposition shared by all these methods is KLE’s acknowledgement of the local political marketplace as an arena for competition over limited resources between local power-holders. Allocation of resources to a local-power holder positively affects such an agent’s ability to maintain his position vis-à-vis his rivals in this highly competitive environment. Moreover, as local power-holders will typically become more and more dependent on these resources this is a strong method for controlling co-optees. Empowerment is a specialized form of this method which aims at augmenting specific agent’s societal status and influence within a locale. Marginalized local power-holders can be effectively addressed by this approach as it enhances their position and makes them more capable of dealing with dominant agents. Typically empowerment will take the form of appointment to official positions within the local government which enhances access to governmental resources and simultaneously creates a more balanced mix of representatives in that local administration. An example of empowerment can be found in the Iraqi city of Al Qa’im that came under governmental control in 2006 as a consequence of among other things the empowerment of the marginalized (in this case as a result of AQI influence) Albu

233 For example, Asymmetric Warfare Group, Tactical Pocket Reference Afghan Key Leader Engagement (Fort Meade, MD: Asymmetric Warfare Group, 2009), Department of the Army, FM 3-24, Counterinsurgency, 5-29.
234 Joe Quinn and Mario A. Fumerton, Counterinsurgency from Below, 16.
Mahal tribe. The Iraqi government gave military positions and economic incentives to the tribe’s sheiks, which led to balanced representation of all communities in local security forces that connected the local population with the government.

The allocation of resources in order to co-opt local power-holders at the grassroots level has become deeply rooted in neo-classical counterinsurgency. Commanders down to the tactical level typically can rely upon specialized tools for augmenting their influence over local power-holders. Most mentionable are the joint civil-military efforts as embodied by the PRTs’ specialized capacity to provide economic, social, and political resources -which might be provided through local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)-, and programs such as the Commander’s Emergency Response Program (CERP) which give counterinsurgents direct access to money for financial leverage. While such tools are the most commonly used means for establishing and maintaining co-optive relationships in neo-classical counterinsurgency, KLE also points at pure persuasion techniques for use in face-to-face meetings which are considered the most important occasion to influence a local power-holder’s behavior. These meetings -which also might be conducted with protégés who represent a local power-holder- are the stage of the actual negotiations between counterinsurgents and local power-holders, and therefore the choice for a specific method of co-option is a direct result of the meetings outcome. In order to guarantee continuity and if necessary refer to another method for maintaining dominance in the co-optive relationship, KLE is designed and executed as a cyclic process. Therefore co-optees are monitored with regard to the by the counterinsurgent’s desired effect and re-engaged if necessary.

The cyclic design of KLE allows a shift between the different methods of co-option. Therefore we can conclude that KLE indeed incorporates the principles of the co-option continuum as it includes both coercive and persuasive methods and allows for a shift between those methods. However, it should be noted that the capability for co-option domination is severely limited as KLE only relies upon soft coercion; the use of force is restricted to societal agents marked as unsuitable for co-option. Although replacement and deprivation of resources can certainly harm a local power-holder’s interest they are not an ultimate guarantee for compliance as is the case with the use (or threat of) force. Today’s insurgents, on the contrary, are capable of formulating effective counter-collaboration strategies as they reluctantly rely on intimidation and lethal force.

237 Ministry of Defence, British Army Field Manual Volume 1 Part 10 Countering Insurgency, 1-14. This example is considered the start of ‘collective efforts of engaging local tribes’ as part of neo-classical counterinsurgency in Iraq. Daniel R. Green, ‘The Fallujah awakening: a case study in counter-insurgency’, 595.


240 Asymmetric Warfare Group, Tactical Pocket Reference Afghan Key Leader Engagement (Fort Meade, MD: Asymmetric Warfare Group, 2009), Douglas M. Thomas, Jeffrey L. Ferguson, ‘Sphere of Influence Leader Engagements’, Fires (January-February 2009), 15.

way in Iraq as well as Afghanistan, and consequently counterinsurgents have learned that protection of co-optees - either by the counterinsurgents or their own militias - is a key facet of KLE. Thus, in neo-classical counterinsurgency the provision of security to local power-holders shapes the conditions for establishing durable co-optive relationships that are controlled with use of replacement, deprivation of resources, empowerment, and allocation of resources.

Overall it can be said that co-option has become an essential tool for obtaining control over the population in neo-classical counterinsurgency. Whereas the campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq initially aimed at establishing a modern democratic state in those countries, this goal has been abandoned for the short term as the combination of lack of resources, limited time, and the complexity of the operational environment make it unattainable. Instead neo-classical counterinsurgency focuses on delivering a stable underpinning for wider stabilization and reconstruction efforts once the insurgency is defeated. Even in this approach the long-term goal of building modern states in Iraq and Afghanistan currently seems unreachable as the weblike structure of those societies calls for a more decentralized, hybrid state. Yet this is still subject of debate, and we will leave it here as it is outside the scope of this study. The focus on stability first has urged counterinsurgents to shift their legitimation strategy from imposing democracy to co-option of local power-holders, which provides legitimacy and mobilizes resources from the multiple locales that make up the weblike societies that are the domain of contemporary counterinsurgency campaigns. Due to a lack of resources - especially security forces - this latter aspect is crucial and grassroots mobilization of local self-defense militias is a key element of co-option today. Institutionalization of such auxiliaries and their leaders is necessary in order to provide a ground for the long-term goal of building a stronger state. This need for institutionalization combined with the need to reach out to marginalized communities make that modern counterinsurgents prefer local power-holders of the lowest level as agents for co-option. As the political marketplace in a local is dominated by more powerful agents, however, co-option of lower-level power-holders cannot succeed without also addressing the dominant power-holder(s). Consequently neo-classical counterinsurgents aim to co-opt a mix of local power-holders who represent all societal segments in a specific locale. The actual form of co-option in the practice of contemporary campaigns is KLE. This approach implements the full range of the co-option continuum, but lacks use of force for co-option domination and emphasizes the use of persuasive methods. Therefore the capability for co-option domination is weak.

In the end we can conclude that neo-classical counterinsurgency embraces co-option as a key method for obtaining control over the population. Some authors have labeled this a neo-colonial approach. Indeed counterinsurgents once more are relying on co-opted


local power-holders for obtaining an acceptable condition of control in the various locales of highly fragmented societies with only limited resources at their disposal. In order to draw such a comparison among different historical counterinsurgency concepts a thorough analysis of the historical variations found thus far is needed.

3.6 Analysis and conclusion: towards an understanding of co-option as tool for counterinsurgency in weblike societies

The previous chapters of this book have demonstrated that co-option is a suitable strategy for obtaining control over the population of weblike societies as it follows the pattern of legitimacy and mobilizes resources at the grassroots level. Moreover, the analysis of co-option as a tool for population control in weblike societies also revealed that a spectrum of various types of local power-holders is susceptible to co-option and that co-optive relationships can be established and controlled by use of a continuum of coercive and persuasive methods. In this chapter we have combined these findings and studied their embedment throughout the different evolutilional stages of counterinsurgency. Here we will discuss historical variations in the fundamental issues of legitimation and mobilization, and the practical issues of whom and how to co-opt. This analysis not only provides us with a preliminary answer to the central question of how counterinsurgents have co-opted local power-holders in order to attain control over the population in a weblike society; it also identifies an avenue for the study of co-option in the reality of counterinsurgency warfare in the next parts of this book. Let us start with the most fundamental issue, that of legitimation.

Following the pattern of legitimacy within the target society is a first prerequisite for the successful application of co-option. Exploitation of existing patterns of legitimacy through co-option of local power-holders was firmly embedded in colonial warfare as this approach allowed the colonial state to seize control over vast populations of highly fragmented societies without too much costs. The colonial state’s typical lack of means necessitated this approach, and focused on establishing an acceptable level of control, which was augmented during the further development of the colonial state. Classical counterinsurgency was designed to address the need for modernization in transitional societies and therefore focused on rational/legal legitimation. Co-option, however, was also included as a legitimation ground as it was instrumental in connecting the population at the grassroots level to the state’s administration. Classical counterinsurgency facilitated this process with extensive resources, as long as it supported the ultimate goal of modernization. Moreover, this combination of massive resources and modernization also led to the development of approaches that completely ignored existing patterns of legitimacy and consequently did not include co-option. The most successful cases, however, did practice co-option in one form or another. Neo-classical counterinsurgency embraced co-option as rational-legal approaches to legitimation failed to deliver. A lack of resources, limited time,
The historical variations in legitimation demonstrate that colonial warfare and neo-classical counterinsurgency share a similar view on this matter as both concepts accept cultural legitimation as the fundament for gaining control over the population of highly fragmented societies. Moreover, both concepts aim at establishing an acceptable level of control -with limited resources- which functions as a basis for further development. Classical counterinsurgency, on the other hand, only accepts co-option as a tool in support of modernization in order to address the need for change in transitional societies. Such a society is to be offered a modern rational/legal system of legitimacy through the counterinsurgency effort as soon as possible. Consequently, colonial warfare and neo-classical counterinsurgency address the problem of establishing control over highly fragmented societies, while classical counterinsurgency focused on another type of society. Therefore, the choice for cultural legitimation through co-option as embraced by colonial warfare and neo-classical counterinsurgency offers the most promising path to population control in counterinsurgency campaigns in webleike societies.

Mobilization of additional resources at the grassroots level has been an honored practice throughout the evolution of counterinsurgency. Mobilization functioned as a source for auxiliary security forces who were institutionalized within the framework of the government. This greatly enhanced the government's legitimacy as security at the grassroots level was provided by local governmental agents. In colonial warfare co-optive agreements with preferably dominant local power-holders formalized these agents and their militias as part of the local administrative structure. In neo-classical counterinsurgency the emphasis was on village leaders and their self-defense forces, who were recruited into larger governmental programs. Overall governmental legitimacy increased as such auxiliary forces became accepted partners within the structure of the national security forces. Neo-classical counterinsurgency has also embraced mobilization of village self-defense militias in order to provide security at the grassroots level. Although such forces are institutionalized within the national security apparatus, they remain a highly localized tool under command of the local administration.

The historical variations in mobilization do not concern the concept itself; all three different notions of counterinsurgency embrace mobilization for enhancing their resources and legitimacy. The difference is in the preference for local partners as colonial warfare preferred incorporation of militias from dominant local power-holders, while classical and neo-classical counterinsurgency focus at the lowest societal level. There are also differences in the field of institutionalization; colonial warfare arranges this at the local level, classical as part of the national security apparatus, and neo-classical opts for a consensus between
those options. Overall, all three counterinsurgency concepts offer interesting insights with regard to the dynamics of mobilization. For the specific case of counterinsurgency in weblike societies, however, colonial warfare and neo-classical warfare offer the most logical solutions as they seek (partly) local institutionalization, which -given the weak national institutions- offers the best possibility to control such forces.

This brings us to the practical side of co-option in counterinsurgency. The crucial question of whom exactly to co-opt is answered differently by all three counterinsurgency concepts. Colonial warfare aimed at co-option of dominant local power-holders as the limited resources of the colonial state were regarded insufficient for more extended programs. In case this failed to establish control in a locale, however, (additional) co-option of lower-level local power-holders became an option as this required fewer resources than an extended military occupation. In classical counterinsurgency the need for modernization as well as the availability of extensive resources made it possible to bypass dominant local power-holders and adopt an approach of co-opting power-holders from the lowest societal levels. In spite of a lack of resources neo-classical counterinsurgency also prefers this method, but it has been accepted that dominant local power-holders should be co-opted in order to gain access to lower-level agents. Consequently neo-classical counterinsurgency aims at co-opting a mix of different local power-holders who represent all communities within a locale. This raises a question about the availability of resources at the local level in neo-classical counterinsurgency; are they sufficient for such an approach? In order to gain control over the population of a weblike society harassed by an insurgency, however, this approach offers the best solution for co-opting and reconciling dominant as well as marginalized local power-holders and their followers. The fact that colonial warfare incorporated a similar approach in case of protracted violence gives further support to this argument.

All three stages in the evolution of counterinsurgency adhere to a mix of intermittently used coercive and persuasive methods to establish and control co-optive relationships. Additionally co-optees are either secured by security forces or permitted to maintain their own resources for this purpose. There are, however, important nuances between the various notions of counterinsurgency. First colonial warfare strived to win without too much fighting. Consequently colonial administrators dominated the bargaining process at grassroots level primarily by use of soft coercive and persuasive methods. Typically the use of force was never far away in colonial warfare; administrators consequently possessed a credible stick to enforce compliance of local power-holders if necessary. Colonial warfare thus adopted a co-option continuum that included an effective mechanism of co-option domination. In classical counterinsurgency the tremendous availability of resources brought district officials -who embodied the state- such an amount of leverage that they could mostly refer to persuasive methods for co-option of lower-level power-holders. Yet, if necessary coercive methods were applied without reluctance. Despite the emphasis on persuasive methods a credible capability for co-option domination was thus included in classical counterinsurgency. Neo-classical counterinsurgency seeks to connect representatives of
all societal elements to a local administration under supervision of the counterinsurgents. The emphasis in this approach, again, is on persuasive methods. The coercive side of the continuum is limited to methods of soft coercion and does not include the (threat of) force. This weakly developed coercive capacity makes the mechanism of co-option domination less powerful in neo-classical counterinsurgency.

Given the answer to the question of whom to co-opt, it is pivotal that counterinsurgents possess a robust capability to dominate and enhance reconciliation between different kinds of local power-holders as this spawns control and stability in a locale. Therefore a credible capability for co-option domination is vital. Both colonial warfare and neo-classical warfare included such a safeguard. As colonial warfare did so without extensive resources and with the ability to control dominant local power-holders the colonial variant of the co-option continuum is most powerful for establishing and controlling co-optive relationships in weblike societies.

Overall, the historical variations highlighted in this analysis clearly reveal that of all three counterinsurgency concepts, colonial warfare and neo-classical counterinsurgency are best suited for establishing control over weblike societies (see table 1). Both concepts acknowledge the importance of cultural legitimation and mobilization through co-option of local power-holders as the basis for establishing control over highly fragmented societies. Moreover, the importance of the locale as the primary target for establishing governmental control -as opposed to centralized state control- features in both colonial warfare and neo-classical counterinsurgency. Scarcity of resources -especially security forces- available for the conduct of the counterinsurgency campaign is also shared by both notions of counterinsurgency warfare. Classical counterinsurgency, on the contrary, emphasizes the establishment of a strong modern state as the outcome of the counterinsurgency effort. This approach is based on the availability of extensive resources and co-option is only practiced if necessary in support of modernization. Additionally this strategy was formulated specifically for application in transitional societies. Classical counterinsurgency, therefore, was not designed to counter insurgencies in highly fragmented societies and consequently the concept lacks the underpinning necessary for obtaining control over a weblike society.
Table 1: The historical variations in the fundamental and practical issues of co-option throughout the evolution of counterinsurgency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method of Co-option</th>
<th>Cultural legitimation</th>
<th>Mobilization</th>
<th>Preferred co-optees</th>
<th>Methods of co-option</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colonial warfare</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes local institutionalization</td>
<td>Dominant lower-level if necessary</td>
<td>Balanced (exemplary) force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classical counter-insurgency</td>
<td>No modernization</td>
<td>Yes national security apparatus</td>
<td>Lower-level only in support of modernization</td>
<td>Balanced force and extensive resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neo-classical counterinsurgency</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes blended institutionalization</td>
<td>Lower-level also dominant because necessary</td>
<td>Mainly persuasive soft coercion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This implies that classical counterinsurgency is less relevant for studying this study’s central problem of counterinsurgency in weblike societies. Whereas colonial warfare and neo-classical counterinsurgency accept that the fragmented nature of those societies calls for a decentralized approach for obtaining control, classical counterinsurgency offers a centralized approach with a strong modernization agenda. The comparison between neo-classical counterinsurgency and colonial warfare that is drawn by contemporary authors is indeed supported by the similarities found in the underpinnings of both concepts. The study of the practical elements of co-option gives further testimony to this argument as classical counterinsurgency aims at co-opting local power-holders of the lowest societal level by use of extensive resources. Such an approach is unsuitable for application in weblike societies as dominant local power-holders are the key actors in the pattern of legitimacy of such societies. Both colonial warfare and neo-classical counterinsurgency acknowledge this feature of the societal landscape, albeit that neo-classical counterinsurgency prefers co-option of the lowest societal agents possible in a specific locale. Additionally both concepts of counterinsurgency warfare share that they seek to obtain control over the population with limited resources only, whereas classical counterinsurgency relied on extensive resources. As a consequence of all these findings we will leave classical counterinsurgency behind us.

The Course of Co-option

Chapter 3

and focus on colonial warfare and neo-classical warfare for answering this research’s central question.

Thus far the analysis of co-option throughout the three evolutionary stages of counterinsurgency has brought some insights which allow us to formulate a preliminary answer to this research’s central question of how counterinsurgents have co-opted local power-holders in order to attain control over the population in a weblike society. With regard to the fundamental issue of the role of co-option for obtaining control in weblike societies colonial warfare and neo-classical counterinsurgency are almost unanimous. Co-option has to be embedded in a strategy aimed at establishing an acceptable level of control - as opposed to total governmental control - in order to provide stability on the short term. This approach acts as an underpinning for long-term development and stability. As such a strategy seeks to exploit the pattern of legitimacy and mobilize additional resources in highly fragmented societies, it emphasizes the local level which is the dominant political marketplace in such societies; thus it is a ‘local-first’ strategy in which control is obtained and consolidated at the grassroots level with only a secondary role for the state’s centre. This materializes in accommodations between local power-holders and the local administration which are the results of a bargaining process that seeks to establish and consolidate co-optive relationships and encapsulate local power-holders and their resources within the localized framework of the state.

An answer concerning the practical implementation of this strategy, however, is less unanimous as we have found historical variations among colonial warfare and neo-classical counterinsurgency. Although both concepts emphasize the importance of fine-grained intelligence on local societal organization, they hold different views on whom exactly to co-opt. Colonial warfare prefers co-option of the dominant local power-holders completed with lower-level local power-holders if necessary. Neo-classical counterinsurgency prefers co-option of lower-level local power-holders completed with dominant local power-holders because this is necessary. There are also important differences in how local power-holders are co-opted. In colonial warfare local power-holders are co-opted by colonial administrators who conduct the bargaining process by use of a mix of intermittently used coercive and persuasive methods. The credible threat of force in the colonial époque guaranteed the administrators’ dominance vis-à-vis every type of local power-holders. In neo-classical counterinsurgency local power-holders are co-opted into a local administration under supervision of the counterinsurgents. The bargaining process that seeks to establish and consolidate co-optive relationships heavily emphasizes persuasive methods. Coercive methods are severely limited as there is no place for the (threat of) force in contemporary co-option, which leaves soft coercion as the only option for achieving an unwilling actor’s compliance.

These huge differences in the practical matters of co-option make it impossible to formulate a more detailed answer to our central question at this place. The historical variations, however, show a path to a more definite understanding of co-option as a tool
for counterinsurgency in weblike societies. To clarify this we need to graphically depict the findings on colonial warfare and neo-classical counterinsurgency in the analytical framework of co-option in weblike societies as introduced at the end of Chapter Two. In figure 4 the preferences of colonial warfare and neo-classical counterinsurgency are illustrated as points in the graph. These points indicate respectively that colonial warfare focuses at dominant power-holders with use of a balanced mix of methods, and that neo-classical counterinsurgency aims to co-opt a mix of local power-holders with predominantly persuasive methods. The variations that result from these differences are labeled $\Delta x$ for the variation in the use of the co-option continuum and $\Delta y$ for the variation with regard to the spectrum of co-option.

![Diagram showing the historical variations depicted in the analytical framework of co-option in weblike societies](image)

Figure 4: The historical variations depicted in the analytical framework of co-option in weblike societies

To start with the latter, $\Delta y$ indicates that although both concepts of counterinsurgency warfare target co-optees that are part of the co-option spectrum, neo-classical counterinsurgency has adopted a more balanced approach of whom to co-opt. As aforementioned colonial warfare did refer to a more balanced mix of lower and dominant local power-holders only when necessary. The key reason for this approach was that colonial practice aimed at seizing control with as less costs as possible; the colonial officials only held
limited resources for winning colonial wars. This, however, cannot explain why neo-classical counterinsurgency suffers from a similar scarcity of resources. Despite this similarity, neo-classical counterinsurgency opts to co-opt a mix of local power-holders in all locales, making up a weblike society. Consequently, the question raises whether or not this approach is actually executable in the reality of contemporary counterinsurgency warfare which is characterized by a limited availability of resources (and time).

Intensively related to this matter is variation $\Delta x$, which deals with the actual deployment of resources. Whereas colonial warfare adopted a balanced approach for co-opting predominantly dominant local power-holders, neo-classical counterinsurgency emphasizes the use of persuasive methods for co-opting a range of local power-holders. Due to the weak mechanism of co-option domination, neo-classical counterinsurgency lacks a potent stick for enforcing or controlling co-optive relationships. The review of co-option in weblike societies in the previous chapters has revealed that counterinsurgents must be able to field a flexible strategy that allows them to be the dominant as well as the preferable agent for local power-holders to co-opt with. Does the neo-classical concept of persuasive methods combined with a limited coercive capability provide counterinsurgents with enough leverage to be the preferable as well as the dominant agents in the reality of counterinsurgency campaigning in weblike societies?

$\Delta x$ and $\Delta y$, thus indicate that both colonial warfare and neo-classical counterinsurgency show deviations with regard to respectively the co-option continuum and the spectrum of co-option. Whereas the latter deviation can be explained by the need to overcome the scarcity of resources in colonial warfare, the former deviation is the result from a conceptual distinction which reserves the use of force for agents who are deemed unsuitable for co-option. We have used the historical variations among colonial warfare and neo-classical counterinsurgency to phrase questions about the application of co-option in the reality of contemporary counterinsurgency campaigns. A thorough understanding of co-option as a tool for counterinsurgency in weblike societies, however, requires us to mirror these questions with regard to colonial warfare. It should be explored how colonial warfare practiced co-option of dominant local power-holders—and if necessary of lower societal agents—with limited resources and by use of a mix of coercive and persuasive methods. A true understanding of co-option in counterinsurgency, therefore, can only be obtained by a comparative analysis of colonial and neo-classical experiences with co-option of local power-holders. Scrutinizing the application of co-option in the reality of counterinsurgency warfare at the grassroots level will reveal the dynamics surrounding the practical questions of whom to co-opt and how to co-opt, and consequently leads towards a more robust answer of this research’s central question.

As mentioned in this book’s introduction, we will study Dutch experiences with co-option in respectively colonial warfare and neo-classical counterinsurgency in the next parts of this study. These two cases illustrate the process of co-option within specific locales of weblike societies in the northern Sumatran Sultanate of Aceh and Afghanistan’s Uruzgan.
province. The most important matter in this research is to gain a detailed understanding of co-option as a tool for counterinsurgency in weblike societies. Therefore the case study is limited to only two experiences which allows us to scrutinize the dynamics of co-option. The questions raised here offer a sufficient ground for formulating hypotheses on the application of co-option in counterinsurgency. These are especially relevant with regard to co-option in contemporary counterinsurgency campaigns - which is a relatively new concept and which has triggered this research. The essential hypotheses that can be formulated are respectively; neo-classical counterinsurgents cannot co-opt a mix of dominant and lower local power-holders in a locale as they lack the resources for such an approach, and neo-classical counterinsurgency’s limited coercive capability is insufficient for controlling co-optive relationships. Though very interesting, these hypotheses cannot be tested by a comparative analysis of two cases only. Therefore we consider them as propositions which will be dealt with in the conclusive part of this book, but which should be subjected to further research in order to be attributed a binding and general value. Let us now submerge in the murky reality of counterinsurgency warfare by first studying Dutch experiences with co-option during the Aceh war.
Part II

The Aceh War
Chapter 4
Chapter 4: Aceh and the first decades of the war, 1873-1893

4.1 Introduction

Since the early days of the Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC, the [Dutch] United East-India Company) in the seventeenth century, the Dutch had learned to rely on co-option of local power-holders for obtaining control over trade and eventually also populations in various locales throughout the Indonesian archipelago. An illustration is given by the VOC’s 150-year spice monopoly on the Malukan islands that was the result of both voluntary and forced contracts with local rulers backed up by a continuous threat of punitive expeditions. This collaboration method brought the Dutch control of local populations in places of interest and colonial officials were capable of maintaining this control -despite several uprisings- as they continuously adapted their policy to the logic of each specific locale. Dutch colonialism came to a temporarily halt when the Napoleonic occupation of the Netherlands evoked the British to seize control of the Dutch colonial possessions. The British intermezzo ended on the 13th of August 1814 when the East Indies were officially returned to The Netherlands (although the actual hand-over would start in 1816). The Dutch government now took over the helm (the VOC was disbanded in 1799) and over the course of the century established political authority in the complete archipelago. The Dutch colonial state had to re-establish the collaborative equations with local power-holders as the British intermezzo had left the peoples of the Indies with a ‘rebellious spirit’ and many of the former co-optees had decided not to accept a renewed subjugation to Dutch colonial policy and its economic methods. This practice of restoring and extending control in the Indonesian archipelago would require nearly a century of continuous campaigning; it was not until the first decades of the twentieth century that the idea of the ‘Netherlands-Indies’ fully materialized as only then the Dutch succeeded to establish political authority into the last corners of the archipelago.

One of those territories to be added to the Netherlands-Indies was the northern Sumatran Sultanate of Aceh. Although the Dutch launched a first expedition in 1873, it was not until c. 1912 that the last remaining rebels gave up their guerrilla war and Aceh was finally pacified. Thereby the almost forty-year Aceh War became the most protracted campaign fought during the expansion of the Dutch colonial state. Moreover, the war took a heavy toll on the scarce colonial resources as it required the continuous commitment of a vast number of colonial

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forces and claimed a substantial part of the colonial budget. A campaign of such magnitude and duration was unprecedented and therefore the Aceh War is unique in Dutch colonial history. Moreover, winning this war turned out to be crucial for the establishment of the colonial state of the Netherlands-Indies as the approach developed to win the Aceh War was the key to ‘unlimited expansion’. This brought the colonial government control of the populations in the various locales throughout the archipelago, which sufficed for embarking on a process of further development of the colonial state. It is this new approach to colonial warfare that emerged during the Aceh War that matters to us in the context of this analysis; which methods and means were instrumental for obtaining control of the population in the rebellious northern Sumatran Sultanate?

The first two decades of the Aceh War proved disastrous to the Dutch. Despite tremendous efforts the colonial army did not succeed in pacifying Aceh. We will discuss these years later in this chapter in order to provide a background for a more detailed analysis of the Aceh War. Here it suffices to mention that the Dutch did not succeed in establishing effective collaborative relationships with local power-holders in Aceh’s fragmented societal landscape and that after twenty years of warfare Dutch control was limited to a fortified line surrounding the capital Kutaradja (as the Dutch called it) and its port Ulêelheuë. The situation changed for the better when the Dutch gradually adopted a population-centric strategy during the latter part of the 1890s. This new strategy, that was later dubbed the ‘Aceh strategy’, prescribed pacification through combined military and political actions under command of a single military officer who embodied both civil and military authority. Mainstay of this approach was a thorough ethnographical analysis of the local population as brought to perfection by the colonial government’s advisor on Islam and indigenous affairs, Dr. Christiaan Snouck Hurgonje. Considering the nature of the Aceh strategy, it is not surprising that Brocades Zaalberg and De Moor have referred to the Aceh experiences as ‘the roots of Dutch counterinsurgency’, and that other scholars have categorized the Dutch colonial ethnographic studies that supported this strategy as ‘counterinsurgency research’.

8 Acehnese names and titles are spelled as suggested either by Anthony Reid in his work *An Indonesian Frontier, Acehnese and other histories of Sumatra* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2005), or James T. Siegel in *The Rope of God* (Ann Harbor: the University of Michigan Press, 2000). As there exists no plural form of Acehnese words, the original term is unchanged in plural.
Just like their British and French contemporaries the Dutch colonial officials introduced the principle of minimum force, or so-called ‘functional force’ or ‘surgical force’, in their new strategy.\(^{11}\) Under influence of major (later general, and ultimately Governor-General) Joannes Benedictus ‘Jo’ Van Heutsz the idea of the selective use of force as a measure against malevolent elements among the population exclusively became firmly rooted in the Aceh strategy. The local people were considered future subjects who should be treated with care. As discussed in chapters two and three, this principle was typically explained according to the normative framework of the colonial era. This was also the case for the Dutch colonial officials in the Indonesian archipelago. The reality of the Aceh strategy, therefore -and despite the Dutch military’s official policy that the law of armed conflict was applicable to colonial warfare-, was characterized by the use of brutal force whenever military commanders deemed this necessary.\(^{12}\) Thus, we can ascertain that also in this new Dutch strategy the use of force never was far away.

The doctrinal need for precise application of force, however, fuelled the military adaptations that were part of the Aceh strategy; it stimulated the further development and adoption of a revolutionary new concept of small, offensive, and agile contra-guerrilla units, the so-called Korps Marechaussee.\(^{13}\) Albeit this military adaptation was one of the key elements of the new strategy, this study predominantly focuses on the political side of the new method, as we will analyze co-option of local power-holders as part of the Aceh strategy. Like aforementioned, co-option of local power-holders had been a feature of Dutch colonial rule in the archipelago since its earliest days. The lack of results during the Aceh War demonstrated the need for a new political system of co-option in order to obtain control in protracted pacification campaigns in rebellious locales. This system was introduced in 1898 by Snouck Hurgronje and Van Heutz and is often referred to under the name of the formal contract that regulated the relationship between co-optee and colonial administration, the Korte Verklaring (KV, short declaration).\(^{14}\) Whereas co-optive relationships in the past had been based upon mutual obligations and equality between colonial administration and

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\(^{13}\) An excellent oversight on the genesis and formative experiences of the Korps Marechaussee is provided by L. Voogt, ‘Een politieone eend in de Indische militaire blijt. Voorgeschiedenis, oprichting en formatieve fase van het Korps Marechaussee te Atjeh (1890-1896)’, Mededelingen van de Sectie Militaire Geschiedenis van de Landmachtstaf, Deel 8 (‘s Gravenhage: Koninklijke Landmacht, 1985). On the adaptation process see, for instance, Martijn Kitzen, ‘Western military culture and counterinsurgency: An ambiguous reality’, 16-17.

local power-holders, the new system first and foremost placed co-optees in a position of dependency. The Aceh strategy thus aimed at obtaining control over the population through co-optive relationships in which the colonial administration’s dominance was uncontested.

In order to augment our understanding of co-option as a tool for obtaining control over the population in counterinsurgency campaigns in weblike societies, we will study the implementation of the KV during the Aceh War. This cannot be done thoroughly without also studying the failure to establish effective co-optive relationships before the introduction of the new method. One of the main drivers for the change in the political approach was the 1896 treason of the colonial administration’s main Acehnese ally at that moment, a warlord named Teuku Uma (Teuku is a title for a male descent of an uléëbalang’s (Acehnese lord) family). The end of this co-optive relationship was one of the largest debacles in Dutch colonial history as Uma departed the colonial administration’s side at the moment he had become its pivotal asset at the local political marketplace. Thus, in this part of this study we will enhance our insight in co-option through an analysis of the Dutch fiasco with Teuku Uma (Chapter Five), and the implementation of the new co-option policy that followed this failure (Chapter Six). We will end the second part of this book by discussing the findings on co-option during the Aceh War in the light of the analytical framework constructed in the first part (Chapter Seven).

But for a thorough understanding of the local circumstances we will now start with describing Aceh itself.

### 4.2 The background of the war: an analysis of nineteenth century Aceh and the causes of the war

Understanding nineteenth century Aceh requires us first to delve into its history in order to uncover the roots of the Acehnese state. Therefore we need to go back as far as the eleventh century when Arabs and Indians sought their way east in pursuit of trade, and the northwest point of Sumatra became their bridgehead for disclosure of the riches that laid beyond. By the end of the thirteenth century this had resulted in the introduction of Islam and political
organization in the form of trade-oriented port-knights. Marco Polo actually visited the region in 1293 and described the influence of Arab traders on one of those kingdoms as it ‘is so much frequented by Saracen merchants that they converted the natives to the law of Mahommet’. Thus the region that later would become known as Aceh was home to a variety of port-states that shared Islam and trade. Although sharply divided, it appears those statelets respected each other’s suzerainty. Yet it is in this period that the roots of the Acehnese state can be found. When confronted with a Portuguese attempt to secure dominance over the Straits of Malacca, the port-states united in a successful attempt to expel the foreign intruders. Sultan Ali Mughayat Shah of Aceh, ‘a hitherto unimportant state at the extreme northwest of the island’, was the instigator who rallied and led the anti-Portuguese forces during their campaign (1520-1524). This not only resulted in a victory against the Portuguese, but also led to the creation of the Acehnese Sultanate. For a century the Sultanate prospered until it reached the peak of its power under Sultan Iskander Muda (‘Young Alexander’, 1607-1636). The sultan controlled all important ports and therefore he also controlled the trade in valuable spices, especially pepper. His monopoly of the pepper trade was so absolute that he openly proclaimed the Dutch and British merchants ‘the beggars of Europe’, who were obliged to come and eat the pepper out of his hand at the prices of his demand.

The Acehnese Sultanate united the four regions that became known as Aceh. These regions are Aceh Besar (or Aceh Proper, Great Aceh), Pidië, the East, and the West. Aceh Besar consists of the coastal plain of the north coast and the valley of the Aceh River. This region was the Sultan’s heartland and therefore it contained the capital, Banda Aceh Dar-es-Salaam, which was situated near the mouth of the river. The trade monopoly increased the city’s importance, as Acehnese spices were only available to foreign traders through the capital’s market. The Sultan’s wealthy court was a centre of Islamic trading and education networks. This further augmented the Islamic identity of Aceh, which had already become entrenched as the state’s ideological basis for the struggle against the Portuguese in the region. The capital’s wealth and cosmopolitan importance benefited Aceh Besar as a whole and consequently it became one of the most densely populated areas of Sumatra. Pidië (vulgo Pedir), situated to the east and south of Aceh Besar, is a broad, well-irrigated plain and traditionally important as it is the main producer of rice in Aceh. The East and the West are the marshy or mountainous coastal strips that were home to most of the pepper plantations. Those areas were less

23 The following fragments are based on James T. Siegel, The Rope of God, 12-14, and Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 1-5.
populated than Aceh Besar or Pidië, and the economic profitable industry drew a lot of settlers from the latter regions. The inlands of the East and West consist of inaccessible mountain lands. Exception is the area around the volcanic lake Laut Tawar as well as the lands direct to its south that are home to respectively the Gajo and Alas people.

The Sultanate not only physically united these regions, it also introduced a new administrative system. The country was divided into uléëbalangships and mukim. The latter were called after the original amount of village parishes (mukim) that convened for Friday prayers in a single mosque under the leadership of an Imam. The uléëbalang (from the Malay hulubalang or war-leader) were originally feudal lords who received tenure over a number of mukim. Pidië was fragmented in such principalities in order to enhance the Sultan’s control over this former independent kingdom, and in the East and the West uléëbalangships followed the geographical realities, as they typically were situated perpendicular to the coast with one of the many rivers as their axis.

Following internal and external problems, the Sultanate faced a sharp decline after the death of Iskander Muda. While the Sultan remained an important symbol for all Acehnese, by 1699 the monarch’s power was limited to the capital and its port. This loss of state authority allowed the emergence of a new political pattern during the 17th and 18th centuries. The administrative structure of the Sultanate, however, shaped this new political system as it were the officials of the state that filled the power vacuum. The Ulèëbalang gradually became hereditary chiefs with an entrepreneurial character, whose potential to cultivate land or open up trade appealed to the local communities. The shared recognition of the Sultan and the common ancestry of the administrative system, however, could not obscure that the formerly unified Acehnese state had gradually become a fragmented assembly of distinct statelets. The various miniature states even fought each other, and could openly ignore the Sultan. In times of crisis, however, the Sultan’s symbolic power acted as a unifying agent for counteracting internal problems as well as external threats.

Now we have explored the history of the Acehnese state it is time to focus on Aceh at the time of the war, the nineteenth century. Although the war lasted well into the 20th century, a description of Aceh and its international relations during the nineteenth century suffices for explaining the war’s background. We will first discuss Aceh’s political and societal situation and conclude with its position vis-à-vis the largest colonial powers in the region, the Dutch and the British, in order to reveal the origins of the Aceh War.

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Chapter 4 The Course of Co-option

4.2.1 Aceh in the nineteenth century

The decline of the Sultanate not only affected the Sultan’s political authority, it also ended his trade monopoly. As a result commerce was no longer restricted to Banda Aceh Dar-es-Salaam. In all four regions of Aceh ulëëbalang entrepreneurship thrived as local markets became accessible to foreign merchants. This process of political as well as economical fragmentation was further enhanced by European entrepôts, which came to dominate trade in the nineteenth century. Consequently the position of the ulëëbalang, who ‘levied tolls on their own markets, frequently warring each other for control of territory or trade’, was further strengthened; they became firmly entrenched as the most powerful political agents in Acehnese society.27 The new balance of power and the adjoining pattern of political organization that had evolved can be illustrated by the situation in the Sultan’s traditional heartland, Aceh Besar, which was prosperous and densely populated with an estimated 300,000 inhabitants in the nineteenth century.28

Aceh Besar was historically divided in three federations of ulëëbalang, the three sagi (corners).29 Each sagi was named after the number of mukim that it originally contained. Thus, the federation on the west-bank of the Aceh river was known as the XXVI mukim, the one on the east-bank as XXV mukim, and the federation in the up-stream hill lands was called XXII mukim. Reid has effectively demonstrated that by the nineteenth century these names merely reflected the original situation as especially the large and powerful sagi of XXII mukim had witnessed an exponential growth of its population and actually comprised 36 mukim at that time.30 The leaders of the sagi were hereditary chiefs, who originally had led the federations in war. They were known as Panglima (title for superior lord) Sagi. The three Panglima did not only exert authority over their respective sagi, they were also considered the guardians of the Sultanate.31 This position was acknowledged by each new Sultan through a tribute made upon his installation. Especially the family of the Panglima Polem who ruled the sagi of the XXII mukim obtained a powerful position in this system of political organization. The other two Panglima Sagi’s political authority did not match their formal position as rivals within their federations had become more important than those chieftains. The importance of such newly emerging agents was officially acknowledged through their appointment as additional custodians of the Sultanate. By the nineteenth century the twelve most important ulëëbalang (four from each sagi, including the Panglima) formed the council that overviewed the succession of the Sultan.

28 Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 4.
29 Graphically Aceh Besar can be presented as a triangle. The name sagi refers to the corners of this triangle. See Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 4-5, Azarja Harmanny, ”Vertrouwbare berigten”, 26-27.
30 Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 4.
31 Ibid.
The political system in Aceh Besar not only reveals that the ulëëbalang had grown more important than the Sultan, who by now could only exert his authority with the agreement of the most important ulëëbalang. It also shows that even within the boundaries of their own sagi, ulëëbalang were not only working together in alliances, but also competed with each other as is demonstrated by the decline of the role of the Panglima Sagi of XXV and XXVI mukim and the additional appointments in the hereditary council. Thus, despite the existence of an abundance of traditional titles and hierarchical structures, it were the ulëëbalang who had become the primary political agents in Acehnese society. The competition and cooperation between those agents determined the balance of political power in nineteenth century Aceh. The complicated, fragmented nature of this system is easily illustrated when one takes note of the fact that next to the dozens of ulëëbalang in Aceh Besar, there were more than 100 ulëëbalang-led statelets in Pidië, the East, and the West. Thus the ulëëbalang were the legitimate local power-holders who dominated the political marketplace at the grassroots level in nineteenth century Aceh.

The dominant position of the ulëëbalang, however, is somewhat misleading; although their political power had evolved since the decline of the Sultanate, ulëëbalang legitimacy was not as well developed. Aceh’s adat (traditional, customary law) regulated the ulëëbalang’s position through sarakata (letters patent) issued by the Sultan. Thus the monarch retained some of his influence, and despite ‘the complete flouting of his authority’, the ulëëbalang paid ‘great honor’ to the Sultan. Moreover, this role as source of legitimacy gave the Sultan some leverage to exploit divisions and rivalry between ulëëbalang in order to extend his own authority. Additionally the Sultan remained powerful enough to collect some tolls and influence trade. Typically the Sultan would also use his influence to rally ulëëbalang to fight for his cause as he did not posses a band of armed followers. Armed rivalry between the Sultan and the numerous local power-holders that manoeuvred on Aceh’s political marketplace was not unusual, as conflicts were even fought over such unsavoury matters as dancing boys. Therefore, it can be said that albeit political authority had shifted from the Sultanate to the ulëëbalang, the former was still a significant political force in nineteenth century Aceh.

The cause of this contradictory reality was the ulëëbalang’s faltering legitimacy and their need to have their status confirmed by the Sultan. Whereas the once centrally ruled Acehnese state was fragmented into numerous chiefdoms, its legal framework remained essential to the ulëëbalang. Despite their disregard for a higher central authority, they still were adat chiefs sanctioned from above. This unique feature of the nineteenth century Acehnese polity triggers questions about the legitimacy of the ulëëbalang vis-à-vis the population in their chiefdoms; apparently the ulëëbalang perceived a lack of legitimacy from below. Were they truly legitimate?

32 Anthony Reid, The Blood of the People, 12.
33 James T. Siegel, The Rope of God, 47. For a complete overview of the relationship between ulëëbalang and Sultan, see James T. Siegel, The Rope of God, 35-47.
34 Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 16-17.
authorities in the eyes of the people, or was Acehnese society even more complicated than it already seemed? As we have seen in Chapter Two, answering these questions requires a better understanding of the position of those chiefs in the interlocking mesh of societal institutions. The partial networks of kinship, economy, and religion in nineteenth century Acehnese society have to be vetted in order to understand how local power-holders with weak legitimacy maintained their authority as the primary political agents in this society.

In order to understand Acehnese societal institutions, it is necessary to consider the specific composition of that society. Siegel has distinguished four distinct influence groups within Acehnese society, uléëbalang, ulama (religious scholars), peasants and the Sultan and his group. Each group was encapsulated in its own world and did not depend on other groups for its basic role and identity. The Sultan fulfilled his symbolic position, the peasants lived in villages with their kin, the ulama studied in their religious schools, the dayah, and the uléëbalang focused on their entrepreneurship (even without the Sultan’s blessing). The groups accepted each other’s position on the premise that Aceh was an Islamic society in which they could live side by side without being placed in strict hierarchical relationships. The application of Islamic property law in Aceh – as one of the few areas in Indonesia –, for instance, even guaranteed full land ownership rights for common farmers. Albeit Islam was the binding agent in Acehnese society, it was this other historical force, trade, that allowed the uléëbalang to become the dominant political agents in this society. Their economic position not only allowed them to control trade and augment their own entrepreneurial activities, it also earned them influence over the people living in their chiefdoms. Thereby the uléëbalang became the sole societal actors that were capable of bridging the gap between the distinct groups. How did it come that those chiefs managed to establish their political authority through their economic position, and why the other societal institutions, and especially religion, did not succeed in producing equally important political authorities that appealed to all groups in Acehnese society?

A localized variant of kinship was – and is – the basis of Acehnese society. Most Acehnese lived in villages, ‘where relationships were governed by kinship’, and which were led by genealogically determined leaders and a council of adult men. In the power vacuum caused by the decline of the Sultanate such structures had flourished, leading to largely autonomous kin-governed territorial units consisting of several mukim ‘which vied with the uléëbalang for power’. By the nineteenth century, however, it was clear that the latter had prevailed in this struggle, as they had become the dominant actors on the local political marketplace. Kinship-based political authority thus succumbed to uléëbalang authority that was based on an elaborate economic structure. Only in the less accessible inlands – which were also of less

36 This fragment is based on James T. Siegel, The Rope of God, 11, 48, 68–69.
How did the ulêëbalang’s economic power win and secure their dominant political position in Acehnese society? Although often considered typical feudal lords, Aceh’s nineteenth century ulêëbalang were anything but feudal lords, and the people living in their ulêëbalangships (such a territory was sometimes called a nanngrou) were certainly no serfs. Typical feudal traits such as property and head taxes, or obligatory labour service did not exist in Aceh at that time. The relationship between authorities and their subjects were framed in matters of commerce. Where commodities were traded ulêëbalang authority materialized. The rights of the chiefs, the wasé ulêëbalang, allowed them to collect import and export duties over goods (typically 5 to 10 percent) and, for instance, levy toll for the use of roads. In return the ulêëbalang acted as intermediates linking sellers and (foreign) buyers and they were supposed to maintain the roads and guarantee security and peace in their territories. Moreover, in their role as entrepreneurs the chiefs typically held the largest stretches of agricultural land, which allowed them to be the most important facilitators of the local agricultural producers, especially in the fields of pepper, betel, and rice. Ulêëbalang involvement in the pepper industry even had led to dozens of new pepper-growing settlements along the coast strips of the East and the West, which had evolved into independent ulêëbalang-led statelets. Nineteenth Century ulêëbalang, thus, were primary figures of commerce, who combined this with political authority. Therefore we should now consider the nature and structure of this authority.

As explained in Chapter Two economic charisma typically spawns authority through a system of patronage. By addressing his follower’s need for resources for survival, an economic authority might grow to a full political authority who holds control of the local population. This is what also happened in the case of Aceh’s ulêëbalang. The chiefs drew their political authority from an elaborate patronage network. Within this network two distinct types of clients and corresponding ties can be distinguished. First there were the ulêëbalang’s closest followers, or rakan (although titles varied regionally). These clients totally depended on their patron. They lived in the vicinity of the chief and were even paid, fed and clothed by him. The bond that emerged from these ties was strong enough to create a kin-like solidarity in the form of extended families. This multi-stranded relationship between patron and client, however, was one of mutual interdependency. The rakan were pivotal to the ulêëbalang as they provided him with a militia-type capability to enforce his will if necessary.

In addition to these closest followers, the chief also used his economic power to weave a web of dependents among the local population, which primarily consisted of villagers. Local trade officials and kinship-authorities such as village and mukim heads were bought into the ulêëbalang’s patronage system, while the chief’s role as an entrepreneur in spices connected him with those depending on the spice industry. Ulêëbalang authority was mainly

40 Anthony Reid, An Indonesian Frontier, 8.
41 The following sections on ulêëbalang authority are based upon James T. Siegel, The Rope of God, 14-36, 45. Anthony Reid, The Blood of the People, 13-14.
exerted through the kinship-authorities who regulated administration and settled disputes at the village level. Only when conflicts could not be solved through these local channels, cases were brought before an uléébalang court (often with an outcome that only benefited the chief himself). Although all involved took advantages from their relationship with the chief in return for their assistance in his trade and administration, these dyadic ties were single-stranded (economy-focused) and less solid than the ones with the rakan. Acehnese societal cleavages prevented a more profound crosscutting of uléébalang and villagers. The latter respected the chiefs’ authority, but did not consider them part of their own distinct group. Uléébalang legitimacy, therefore, was weakly rooted in the major part of the population. Moreover, the chiefs’ tendency to act out of self-interest and let personal economic profit prevail over communal benefits added to this weak legitimacy. This is exactly the reason why the uléébalang sought the recognition of the Sultan -who was deeply respected by the villagers as Aceh’s primary cultural symbol- through sarakata; it placed their limited ties with the villagers in a sphere of immortal traditions and therefore strengthened their political authority. Despite this traditionalization of uléébalang authority, their legitimacy remained fragile throughout the nineteenth century. In addition to their economic position, which brought them control over local resources (typically agricultural land and trade), and the Sultan’s acknowledgement, it was not unusual for the chiefs to maintain their political authority with help of the rakan, who were used to enforce compliance of non-collaborative segments within the local population. Thus also the dark side typical for economically driven local power-holders manifested itself. To sum up, uléébalang legitimacy in nineteenth century Aceh was a complicated matter; on one hand it was strong enough to provide the chiefs the leverage to become the primary political authorities within Acehnese society, while simultaneously it could be so weak that the chiefs sometimes had to refer to the use of coercion against their subjects.

This analysis of the role of economy as a societal institution in nineteenth century Aceh brings us to the last of these institutions, religion. As mentioned Islam was -and still is- the binding agent of Acehnese society. Aceh’s adat was closely linked to religion as it was considered the local ‘means of fulfilling Islam’. Through the adat Islam culturally united all groups of Acehnese society under the leadership of the Sultan. In reality, however, each distinct societal group had its own vision on Islam and adat; they accepted it as the underpinning connecting them all, but brought it into practice according their own interpretation. The villagers, for instance, incorporated religion within their kinship structure, as the function of imum (imam) had become a hereditary office that combined the spiritual and administrative leadership of a mukim. Thus also Islam encountered the strict distinctions within nineteenth century Acehnese society. In the vision of the ulama, the predominant religious authorities, Islam stressed ‘the unity of all men despite the social identities which

42 James T. Siegel, The Rope of God, 70.
separated them’. 44 Therefore the core message of the ulama not only concerned the afterlife, but also urged for a new society in which men would abandon their identity and unite as Muslims. This explains why, despite the respect they enjoyed, the ulama were not well tied to the other groups within Acehnese society; their call to leave behind traditional social identity did not appeal to the people. Consequently the religious authorities did not exert political authority, and neither did they consider themselves that way. Yet, the ulama were certainly not without political power, as the Dutch would experience during the Aceh War. The religious authorities held enough influence to mobilize the masses. But what then were the sources of this power?

Although the ulama did not underkeep solid ties with the other societal groups, their bond with the largest group, the peasants, was far from absent. The religious scholars typically were individuals who had left their village and kins at young age to study in a dayah. 45 The ulama originally were peasants who had shifted their societal identity. Although this connection did not suffice for transferring a message of societal transition the people did not want to hear, it amplified messages that did appeal to the population. This happened in the case of the Acehnese struggle against the Dutch. The ulama perceived the Kompeuni, as the Acehnese commonly named the Dutch (referring to the VOC), to be kafirs (non-believers) and therefore called upon the population to conduct a perang sabil (holy war, Jihad). 46 The link between ulama and peasants allowed the former to successfully convey this message through a series of cleverly written epic poems such as the hikayat perang sabil. Additionally, the nature of this message that called on the Acehnese to defend their religion against invading infidels was such that it could not be ignored by anybody considering himself to be a faithful Muslim. Consequently it were the ulama who succeeded in transforming the resistance against the Dutch into a popular cause which attracted many followers. The colonial authorities, in this regard, spoke of the ulama-led resistance as orang muslimin (muslim people). Despite their leadership in the war effort, the religious authorities did not claim political authority. The ulama respected the ulèëbalang as the key political actors in Acehnese society. Liberated areas were returned to the ulèëbalang - although typically the ulama retained some influence - and conflicts between ulama and ulèëbalang mainly concerned the ‘personal immoralities’ of some of the latter (such as opium smoking, gambling, and pederasty). 47 Thus, albeit Islam did produce actors with political influence, the ulama, those never became the dominant political authorities within nineteenth century Acehnese society.

To sum up, we can conclude that nineteenth century Aceh was far from an entity. Although nominally a Sultanate and despite the survival of many traditional administrative structures and the adjoining titles, the sultan’s authority was mainly symbolic. Aceh was fragmented in numerous chiefdoms and true political authority rested with the ulèëbalang, commercial

entrepreneurs who controlled resources (such as trade and land) in those chiefdoms. Their economic position allowed them to provide the population at the grassroots level with the means necessary for survival (access to agricultural industry and trade) through a system of patronage. However, as Acehnese society was further fragmented into four distinct identity groups without strong ties between those groups, ulèëbalang legitimacy was not solidly rooted in the population. Their economic power gave them enough leverage to overcome this problem and to prevail over rivaling kinship authorities -who were left in charge of administration at the village level- and the Sultan -whose sarakata gave him some influence in ulèëbalang affairs. Additionally, in case their legitimacy failed, the ulèëbalang did not hesitate to enforce the local population’s compliance with help of personal militias consisting of their closest followers, the rakan. The ulama, who could call upon their position as religious authorities, were potentially the most important competitors of the ulèëbalang. Their core message that called upon the Acehnese to abandon their traditional societal identity in favour of a single common identity as Muslims, however, did not appeal to the population, and neither did the ulama aspire political authority. Their political influence, on the other side, could be considerable as they were connected -albeit loosely- to the largest part of the population, the peasants, and Islam remained one of the underpinning forces that appealed to all Acehnese. Thus nineteenth century Aceh was a complicated, fragmented society in which control rested with the ulèëbalang, but in which there were also many other groups and authorities of whom the ulama were to become the most influential during the Aceh War.

4.2.2 Aceh’s international position and the causes of the war

The return of the authority over the East Indies from the British to the Dutch government in the years following 1814 left much to argue. Especially on Sumatra and the Malay peninsula borders and influence spheres were blurred, which provoked colonial adventurers such as Raffles to claim additional territories for their country (of which the establishment of the Straits Settlement at Singapore is probably the best example). The London Treaty of 17 March 1824 was concluded to end this situation of uncleanness and to definitely call a halt to colonial disputes between the British and the Dutch in the East. The treaty arranged, among others, for an exchange of possessions; all British settlements in Sumatra (Benkulen) were transferred to the Dutch, while the British took over all Dutch possessions in India and the Malay Peninsula (Malacca). While the British respected Dutch suzerainty over Sumatra and most of the other islands of the Indonesian Archipelago and promised in the treaty not to interfere, they also sought to limit an expansion of Dutch influence. This led to a special accommodation for the hitherto independent Sultanate of Aceh. The 1824 London

Treaty envisaged ‘a status of independence friendly to the Dutch’. This meant that the Dutch by treaty not only respected Aceh’s independence, but also became responsible for it. Simultaneously, however, the treaty also called upon the Dutch to secure international shipping against Acehnese pirates. The London Treaty required the Dutch colonial government to guarantee Aceh’s independency in such a way that also the safety of trade in the surrounding waters was secured. Thus the treaty acknowledged Aceh’s international position as an independent state recognized by the two major powers in the regions. The commitment to protect shipping in Acehnese waters, however, would become a ground for future troubles.

The Dutch explained the treaty pragmatically and emphasized the obligation to respect Acehnese independency. This fitted official Dutch policy that called for onthouding (abstention) in the outer regions as the colonial government feared expensive military expeditions and still was in the process of re-establishing its rule on the most important islands of the archipelago. Whenever the pepper-trade with Aceh was harassed by malpractices and piracy from the side of the Acehnese -which happened frequently-, the Dutch pointed at the London Treaty’s prohibition on Dutch interference and reacted ‘that their intervention could be neither useful nor practical’. As a result Aceh became the subject of classic gunboat diplomacy when American, French, and English ships started to shell Acehnese coasts in retaliation for the depredation of their trade.

This situation continued until the early 1850’s when the Dutch realized they could no longer tolerate Acehnese piracy in the light of increasing international involvement with Aceh. Despite an awareness that true power rested with the ulêëbalang, and that the ‘Sultan’s authority was nil in his own territory [Aceh as a whole]’ the colonial government opted for a friendship treaty with the Sultanate as this was considered to be the best option within the framework of the 1824 treaty. The Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Trade was signed in Banda Aceh on March 30, 1857 and both parties agreed to underkeep peaceful relations and to cooperate in the field of commerce. Despite this spirit of friendship distrust between Acehnese and Dutch gradually grew worse. The Acehnese felt more and more threatened by Dutch economic expansion in adjacent territories such as Deli, while the Dutch were embarrassed by Acehnese diplomatic attempts to seek allies against the Dutch. Furthermore the Sultanate’s lack of determination to end piracy -which could be expected, as the Sultan was in no position to effectuate this- annoyed the Dutch colonial administration. With the

49 Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 13.
nearing completion of the Suez Canal in 1869 the situation became of strategic urgency. The Malacca Straits would replace the Sunda Straits as the main shipping route from Europe to the Orient. The Dutch obligation to protect international trade traffic in Acehnese waters became far more serious. The Acehnese realized this and stepped up their diplomatic effort to seek balance against the Dutch; they went as far as offering their submission to the Ottoman Sultan -who declined. The Dutch saw only one option; new negotiations with the British to break open the 1824 London Treaty in order to allow for Dutch interference in Aceh.

Although the British initially were skeptical, the timing of the request was excellent. Even the old Straits hands, who naturally opposed any extension of Dutch influence, came to realize that they would benefit from a Dutch occupation of Aceh. Not only was their trade often harassed by Acehnese pirates, it was also disturbed due to the chaotic situation within the Sultanate. More than once feuds between uléëbalang led to blockades of ports that caused a complete shutdown of trade in a particular region. Furthermore, newcomers in the region's commerce such as France, America, Germany, and Italy were challenging the Anglo-Dutch trade monopoly. This led the British Foreign Office to adopt the view that 'strategic corners in the world were better in Dutch hands than in those of some stronger Power'. Thus the British were willing to change their position and consequently the agreement reached in the Sumatra Treaty of 1871 lifted the ban on Dutch interference in Aceh in return for the Dutch possessions on the Gold Coast and certain trade benefits. Aceh's international position had now become fragile; a Dutch violation of its sovereignty would no longer provoke a reaction from the other major power in the region.

Initially the Dutch opted for a strategy of careful rapprochement with Aceh. The rationale beyond this approach was to move the Sultan towards surrendering Acehnese sovereignty to the Dutch. This would allow the Acehnese to remain formally independent, while the Dutch would control Aceh's external affairs, end piracy and guard the stability of local trade. The normally divided Acehnese leaders now agreed that a strategy of delay was the best answer to Dutch attempts to bring Aceh under indirect colonial rule. This would buy the Acehnese time to find new allies who would support them against Dutch interference. Dutch patience with Aceh, however, quickly faded away. By the beginning of 1873 Dutch Governor-General J. Loudon, the highest authority in the Dutch Indies, decided to change the policy and embraced a military operation against Aceh as a necessity. Rumors of upcoming American and Italian interference in Aceh as a result of Acehnese diplomatic efforts in Singapore provided him with a casus belli. Loudon deliberately exaggerated the reports on foreign intervention in

56 Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 52.
57 For a complete oversight of the 1871 Sumatra Treaty and its background see Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 52-78.
59 A profound overview of the change of Dutch policy in 1873 based on archival sources is provided by both Anthony Reid in The Contest for North Sumatra, 91-97, and C.R. Beamer in ‘The Atjeh War and the Roles of Civil and Military Authorities’, 48-52.
order to convince his superior in The Hague, Minister of Colonies I.D. Fransen van de Putte of the necessity to declare war on Aceh. With permission of the home government, the colonial administration agreed to send a commissioner with four battalions ‘with an ultimatum to acknowledge our sovereignty or war’. Despite clear indications that neither the United States nor Italy intended to intervene in Aceh, Loudon decided to press on as he wrote to his superior in The Hague that even without a foreign threat an expedition against Aceh would be necessary. A continuous series of rumors about foreign interest in Aceh, however, was provided by the Dutch Consul-General in Singapore and served to keep up the momentum in favor of the advocates of war. On 22 March 1873 a first ultimatum was delivered to the Sultan of Aceh. Although the Sultan answered he did not wish to wage war against the Dutch, further negotiations were fruitless; on 26 March 1873 war was declared on Aceh.

Aceh’s international position as an independent state thus had finally succumbed to the grinding machine of colonial expansion. Although Acehnese attempts to forge alliances with other powers had provided the Dutch with a reason to declare war in order to prevent foreign intervention, the true reasons were provided by the need to secure international shipping in Acehnese waters and stabilize trade in the region. Furthermore, Dutch sovereignty over Sumatra would only be completed when Aceh was added to the Dutch possessions. Remarkably, the Dutch during the 1850s revealed some awareness of the limited nature of the Sultan’s power and the fact that true power rested with the ulëëbalang entrepreneurs. Despite this knowledge Dutch -and also English- official relations with Aceh during the nineteenth century were kept with the Sultan and his officials. This seems to be a consequence of the 1824 Treaty that considered Aceh as an independent Sultanate. The course to deal with the Sultan as the official sovereign would be continued in the war as it was felt that the purpose of Dutch intervention in Aceh should not only be submission of the Sultan, but also a strengthening of his position vis-à-vis rival actors in order to enhance his control of Acehnese society. This preoccupation with the Sultanate would have great consequences for the Dutch war effort.

4.3 The first decades of the Aceh War, 1873-1893

The decision to launch a military operation against Aceh was typical for the quest for Dutch dominance of the archipelago. During the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century Dutch troops were involved in many conflicts in order to restore and expand the colonial state’s authority. As most opponents used irregular tactics the Dutch had a lot of experience with this type of warfare; hence fighting irregular wars was not uncommon to the Dutch Colonial Army. During the Java War (1825-1830) colonial troops even adopted tache

60 Loudon to Van de Putte, telegram 22 February 1873, Nederlandsche Regering, Officiele Bescheiden betreffende Het Ontstaan van den Oorlog tegen Ajeh in 1873 (‘s-Gravenhage: Algemeene Landsdrukkerij, 1881), 44.
61 Loudon to Van de Putte, letter 25 February 1873, Officiele Bescheiden, 76.
62 Ibid., 94.
d’huile-type tactics *avant la lettre* by building small fortifications (*bentengs*) in order to secure areas. The security offered by these *bentengs* attracted the local population and local economy prospered as markets were established under the protection of the *bentengs*.  

On Sumatra the colonial army had fought vicious irregular campaigns to restore Dutch authority as all old co-optive agreements -going as far back as the seventeenth century- with local power-holders proved to be worthless after the British *intermezzo*. Most notable is the war against the Padris, a conservative Islamic movement that had seized control over Minangkabau-Padang and the Padang highlands on Sumatra’s west coast after an almost twenty year civil war that started during the British period. It took a total of sixteen years (1821-1837) of intermittent military operations, known as the Padri Wars, to definitely defeat the Padris.

Despite such experiences the colonial army remained faithful to the principles of European-style conventional warfare. This had disastrous consequences as a remarkable pattern of colonial campaigning evolved during the nineteenth century. Typically, first a small expeditionary force was sent in. It was often defeated due to a combination of factors, of which underestimating the enemy was probably the most important one. After initial defeat a larger, better-equipped force was deployed. This force fought a tough battle with the enemy and in most cases prevailed because of its sheer numbers and firepower. If necessary the Dutch could repeat this step several times and even call on fresh troops from Europe. Albeit a tactically ineffective pattern, its strategic effect was that Indonesian rulers concluded that the Dutch Colonial Army was a formidable political force that had to be reckoned with; in their eyes Dutch resources seemed inexhaustible -while in fact they were severely limited.

This force posed a threat as much as it offered an opportunity to local power-holders as the choice for collaboration with the Dutch meant that they could hope on the support of the colonial army in struggles against rivals. Rationally, thus, collaboration with the Dutch seemed to be preferable over confrontation. Yet, internal conditions and considerations would not always lead to this conclusion. In those cases the colonial battering ram was employed according the typical pattern of (successive) European-style expeditions that would settle the confrontation in favour of the Dutch.

Albeit this approach mostly sufficed to establish Dutch authority, sometimes even successive expeditions did not succeed in reaching this goal. In those cases it was also necessary to revisit the *modus operandi* of the colonial army. Adaptation of the conventional concepts and tactics to the needs of irregular warfare was pivotal for prevailing against persisting indigenous opponents. This was the case in the Aceh War. As we have seen the situation in Aceh made the confrontation with the Dutch inevitable. The successive expeditions sent to Aceh from 1873 onwards were of limited effectiveness, and the adoption

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63 J.A. de Moor, ‘Warmakers in the Archipelago’, 52.
67 J.A. de Moor, ‘Warmakers in the Archipelago’, 55.
The Course of Co-option

Chapter 4

of the Aceh strategy during the 1890s was key for the eventual establishment of Dutch authority. Here we will discuss those first two decades of the Aceh War in order to provide a background for the next chapters. We will start with the first two expeditions launched against Aceh in 1873 and 1874 as the unsatisfactory Dutch disposition that resulted from these initial efforts heavily influenced the further course of the war. The lack of effectiveness of these expeditions materialized as a stalemate in which Dutch control was limited to a fortified line surrounding the capital and its port. Next we will discuss how the Dutch sought to breach this situation by launching many other expeditions and smaller ‘excursions’ in the years following the second expedition. Despite some successes, in 1884 a shortage of resources and political will forced the Dutch to fall back on their fortified line surrounding the capital in order to keep at least some foothold in Aceh.68 It was this so-called concentration policy that provoked the emergence of new ideas for winning the Aceh War. We will conclude this section by describing the most important of these new developments, namely Snouck Hurgronje’s analysis of Acehnese society (first published in 1892) and Van Heutsz’s brochure on the submission of Aceh (first published in three parts in 1892-1893), which later provided the underpinning of the Aceh strategy.69 Thus this background sketch of the Aceh War will cover the main events from the outbreak of the war in 1873 until 1893.

4.3.1 Establishing a foothold: the first Aceh expeditions

The first expedition was launched against Aceh in April 1873 and resulted in complete failure. A total of 3,369 troops (mainly infantry, supported by cavalry and artillery) under the command of general J.H.R. Köhler failed to reach their objective, the capture of the kraton of Kutaradja (as the Dutch wrongly called Banda Aceh), the presumed capital and residence of the Sultan of Aceh.70 The lack of intelligence was alarming, as even the exact position of the kraton was unknown to the Dutch. Disaster was complete as the soldiers were unable to find their objective (although unwittingly they came very near) and consequently were forced to retreat. The fierce resistance they encountered caused 45 dead, including Köhler, and 406 soldiers wounded.71 Within three weeks the soldiers were back on board of their ships. In his colonial warfare classic Small Wars Callwell mentions this expedition to illustrate the consequences of inadequate intelligence.72 This lack of knowledge, however, was not

70 G.D.E.J. Hotz, Beknopt Geschiedkundig Overzicht van den Atjeh-oorlog (Breda: Koninklijke Militaire Academie, 1924), 5-6. Kutaradja is actually the Acehnese name for the Sultan’s palace, literally meaning the King’s fort. See Anthony Reid, The Contest For North Sumatra, xiii.
71 Ibid., 88-89.
72 C.E. Callwell, Small Wars, 45-46.
only demonstrated by the ignorance about the exact location of the kraton. The assumption that by capturing its capital Aceh could be defeated is also the consequence of a huge misinterpretation of the political situation.

In European-style conventional warfare, the fall of the enemy's capital would automatically mean the collapse of effective government and, therefore, defeat. As we have seen, albeit nominally a Sultanate, true power in nineteenth century Aceh rested with the various ulèëbalang. Consequently, the Dutch strategy of subjecting the Sultan by co-opting or removing the Sultan was not the path to victory in this war. Aceh's fragmented society provided a serious problem to the Dutch. Although the Sultan only held token power when the Dutch declared war on him, they experienced that his symbolic position was strong enough to unite the population for resistance. This resistance led the Dutch to believe that their assumption was right; Aceh could only be conquered by subjecting the Sultan. Thus the Dutch preoccupation with the Sultanate that had also prevailed during the period of peaceful relations with Aceh casted its shadow over the Dutch efforts during the Aceh War. Despite an awareness that the situation was far more complex, and reports from indigenous informers that the Sultan’s power was almost non-existent, the Sultanate would remain the centre of gravity of Dutch war policy. Although this would change with the embrace of the Aceh strategy in the 1890s, even then the submission of the Sultan would remain something of an idée fixe, much to Snouck Hurgronje's discontent.73

The second Dutch expedition consisting of 13,000 troops under the command of retired general J. Van Swieten, the former Commander-in-Chief of the Dutch Colonial Army, landed on Acehnese soil in December 1873. This time the better equipped and informed force managed to reach its objective within two months. On January 24th 1874 the kraton was seized, but the Sultan managed to evade captivity by retreating into the interior, where he died of cholera on January 26th.74 Although the expedition resulted in a clear tactical victory, the death of the Sultan forced the Dutch to revise their political plan as the idea was to establish Dutch rule by coercing the Sultan into collaboration with the Dutch colonial government. Van Swieten, as overall commander of the campaign, decided -against his own instructions- that the Dutch would ignore the pretenders to the Sultan’s throne, and that they would take up central authority in Aceh themselves.75 This radical change in the political course demonstrated Van Swieten’s awareness of the situation on the ground; in his opinion Dutch dominance could not be achieved through the person of the Sultan.

The decision to proclaim Dutch sovereignty over Aceh was deemed the best way forward to establish control over Aceh’s complicated fragmented society. The Dutch high command not only confirmed Van Swieten’s new course, it also issued detailed instructions to establish a permanent military post in the kraton of Groot Atjeh (Aceh Besar) as a symbol

75 J.M. Somer, De Korte Verklaring, 190-191.
of the authority of the Dutch colonial state. Simultaneously the other Acehnese regions, which the Dutch called *Onderhoorigheden* (Dependencies), were to be brought under Dutch rule through their local rulers. Thus the Dutch adopted an administrative division between *Groot Atjeh*, which came under direct colonial rule, and the *Onderhoorigheden*, that were to be ruled through their local chiefs. The rationale underlying this policy again demonstrated the Dutch pre-occupation with the administrative structure of the Sultanate; it was assumed that the seizure of the *kraton* -in Dutch eyes the symbol of central power- was sufficient to bring Aceh as a whole under Dutch rule. Van Swieten issued proclamations to the people and their chiefs in both the *Onderhoorigheden* and *Groot Atjeh*, stressing Dutch willingness to establish peaceful co-optive ties with local power-holders -this demonstrates that co-option was crucial for direct as well as indirect rule. It was emphasized that Islam and *adat* would be respected by the colonial administration, and that local power-holders would retain their authority as long as they submitted themselves to the colonial administration. It was also clearly communicated that those chiefs unwilling to collaborate with the Dutch would be subjected to coercive measures. Additionally, the *ulëëbalang* of the three *sagi* were specifically warned not to appoint a new Sultan.

Initially the new policy caused much optimism. The Dutch military success in *Groot Atjeh* immediately led to an advance by local power-holders there, while in the *Onderhoorigheden* the rulers of most of the statelets had signed a six-article declaration of submission by March 1874. The latter accepted Dutch sovereignty, symbolised by the Dutch flag, and were summoned to rule justly, fight piracy and slavery, deny support to enemies of the Dutch, and not to engage in relations with foreign powers in return for official recognition -materialized in a certificate- as local rulers by the Dutch colonial administration. With Dutch presence limited to *Groot Atjeh*, this was achieved through a ‘proclamation tour’ by three naval vessels that visited respectively Aceh’s east, north, and west coast. Colonial administrators on board of the ships were tasked to persuade the local power-holders of the numerous *ulëëbalangships* to submit, or, if necessary, to coerce the *ulëëbalang* into submission by imposing a naval blockade. Encouraged by these successes Van Swieten considered the situation stable enough to call an end to the second expedition in April 1874. In his eyes the Dutch had established a sufficient level of control that would easily be augmented without military action, as the Acehnese would soon start to realize that Dutch presence was ‘both permanent and tolerable.’

79 An overview of those *ulëëbalang* is provided in Kielstra, *Beschrijving van den Atjeh-Oorlog*, 359-362, while the model declaration and certificate of recognition can be found in the same book as bijlages XXIX and XXX.
81 Anthony Reid, *The Contest for North Sumatra*, 111.
This analysis of the situation, however, did not match the reality on the ground. The local power-holders who had submitted themselves in Groot Atjeh, were typically minor players on the local political marketplace who either found themselves in the line of fire or saw collaboration with the Dutch as an opportunity to enhance their own position vis-à-vis more powerful rivals. This is illustrated by the main Dutch ally, Teuku Nyak of Meuraksa, who approached the Dutch in order to protect his possessions and augment his influence in the sagi of the XXV mukim. 82 While unintentionally focusing on such lower-level power-holders, Van Swieten unwittingly missed some great opportunities to co-opt more powerful leaders. Teuku Nyak Chut Lemrong, the Panglima Sagi of the XXVI mukim, for instance, sought Dutch help in order to definitely confirm his status, which was suffering from claims by rivals. 83 Van Swieten declined the offer commenting that he thought that the $8,000 Teuku Lemrong demanded for his cooperation was too high a price to pay for such allegiance. 84 Thus Dutch influence on the population of Aceh Besar was limited and only in the direct surroundings of Kutaradja they could rightly claim some level of control. 85 This limited influence made the Dutch in the eyes of most ulëëbalang not an attractive partner to collaborate with; the colonial administration simply had nothing to offer.

If this was the reality in Groot Atjeh, where the Dutch at least held some presence, it is easy to imagine that Dutch control in the Onderhoorigheden was completely absent. Although the (threat of) a naval blockade had made all but the ulëëbalang of the most hostile statelets (Pidië, Meureudu, Samalanga, Simpang Ulim, and the statelets north of Meulaboh) sign the six-article declaration of submission, Dutch control remained nominal only. 86 The Dutch lack of means meant that statelets that had accepted colonial rule were not interfered, even when it became clear that they started to support the resistance in Groot Atjeh. Moreover, the most important coercive tool, the naval blockade was far from effective as not half of the 50 ships necessary for this measure could be gathered in Acehnese waters. Thus, Dutch authority over the Onderhoorigheden existed on paper only, and J.M. Somer correctly has summarized this episode in the Aceh War as ‘the concluding of meaningless declarations’. 87

The main shortcoming of the Dutch strategy as formulated by Van Swieten was that it did not establish the Dutch colonial administration as an actor capable of obtaining control over the Acehnese. Although Van Swieten rightly concluded that submission of the Sultan would not suffice to bring Aceh’s fragmented society under Dutch rule, the replacement of the Sultan by Dutch colonial authority was insufficient as well. The fundamental flaw of this approach is its assumption that Aceh could be centrally ruled from the kraton of

82 Azarja Harmanny, ‘Vertrouwbare berigten’, 59-60.
83 Paul van ’t Veer, De Atjeh-oorlog, 98.
84 Until c. 1900 the Spanish silver dollar was the preferred currency in Aceh. This currency was locally referred to as reuggét Atjêh, or Acehnese dollar. See J. Kroumer. *Algemeen Samenwattend Overzicht van Land en Volk van Atjêh en Onderhoorigheden*, Deel II (Leiden: Brill, 1923), 56, 58-59, Anthony Reid, *The Contest for North Sumatra*, 293.
85 Anthony Reid, *The Contest for North Sumatra*, 112.
86 Ibid., 113-114.
Kutaradja. In other words, the Dutch removed a central authority with merely symbolic power and replaced this with their own central administration. Of course the latter lacked the former’s symbolic power and neither did the Dutch possess the means to establish their authority themselves. The Dutch had grossly overestimated the capture of the kraton as they had believed that this action alone would suffice to bring the Acehnese under their rule. Contradictory to his own analysis of the role of the Sultan, Van Swieten introduced a Dutch administration modeled after the Sultanate’s impotent administrative structure. This choice to claim Dutch suzerainty over Aceh as a whole, while only establishing permanent presence in a small bridgehead surrounding the kraton ‘would plague the Dutch government for the remainder of the nineteenth century’. Therefore the second Aceh expedition, despite its military success, was a political failure, as it left the Dutch without any grip on Aceh’s fragmented society in both Groot Atjeh and the Onderhoorigheden. What van Swieten had left behind in Aceh was a garrison of 4,000 soldiers under siege in Kutaradja. What now were the consequences of this disposition?

4.3.2 A desperate quest for control

It did not take long for the Dutch to realize that their claim of control over Aceh was nothing more than an illusion. Since its establishment the bridgehead in Kutaradja had been continuously harassed by Acehnese fighters and there was mounting evidence that the submitted statelets of the Onderhoorigheden increasingly supported the resistance in Groot Atjeh with manpower, money, and supplies. Albeit Acehnese society was highly fragmented, the Dutch presence acted as a binding agent that mobilized whole Aceh in a mutual struggle against the Dutch, just like a Portuguese invasion had first united Aceh in the sixteenth century. Meanwhile it also became clear that Dutch control over the Acehnese could not be obtained centrally. An 1875 report on Acehnese society by Assistant-Resident R.C. Kroesen (who was the senior civil advisor of Van Swieten’s successor, general J.L.J.H. Pel) identified the ‘lack of unity of authority’ as the mean reason for the ‘reluctance to submit’. Due to its high degree of fragmentation Aceh could not be centrally ruled; other measures were needed. Moreover, Kroesen’s report also revealed the importance of the ulama in unifying and mobilizing the population against the Dutch. Although at that time different ulêébalang were the main leaders of the resistance (most notable among those leaders was the Panglima Polem of the sagi of the XXII mukim), it was a first sign of the pivotal role of the ulama in the organization of popular resistance.

89 For troop levels see Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 296.
90 Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 113-114.
92 Ibid.
This new appreciation of the situation led Dutch authorities in both Kutaradja and Batavia to adopt the view that control over Aceh could only be obtained by unconditional submission of the various ruling chiefs in Groot Atjeh as well as the Onderhoorigheden. Now, given the shortage of resources of the Dutch colonial state, a discussion developed over the methods needed to achieve this aim. Governor Pel in Kutaradja stressed that credible Dutch authority in Aceh could only be achieved if the local administration would be able to submit local power-holders through force of arms. On the other side there was the suggestion that money should be used to buy the local power-holders’ submission - there was always enough money available for this purpose as it was deemed cheaper than commitment of military resources. Pel deemed this unsuitable:

‘If the enemy is brought to submission by force of arms then we will be able to lay down the law; if however he becomes persuaded by means of money to submit, we shall then be obliged to negotiate with him.’

Thus, the local colonial administration pleaded for a coercive capability to dominate the collaborative relationships with Acehnese chiefs; without a credible stick, the chiefs would return to their behaviour of formal submission, while simultaneously thwarting Dutch attempts to consolidate and augment colonial rule. Consequently, it was decided -with Batavia’s endorsement- that offensive military operations in Groot Atjeh as well as the establishment of Dutch presence in the Onderhoorigheden were pivotal for obtaining control over this highly fragmented society.

Given the shortage of resources of the Dutch colonial state the execution of this new strategy was troublesome from its onset. Four successive Dutch Governors (Pel, G. Wiggers van Kerchem, A. Diemont, and K. Van der Heijden, all soldiers who embodied military as well as civil authority) launched a series of offensive actions, including a total of thirteen expeditions and three smaller excursions, during the next years of the war. Yet, once military action seemed successful, their lack of means forced the Dutch to accept a period of inaction that typically allowed the Acehnese to recuperate and reorganize. This is clearly illustrated by the 1877 ban on offensive operations. Hitherto the war had costed a tremendous 70 million guilders, and the home government in The Hague urged for a cut in the expenditures. The adoption of a ‘policy of goodwill’ (including the rebuilding of the Great Mosque of Banda Aceh) and a constraint on military operations ushered a period of inaction, which allowed the Acehnese to organize for an 1878 offensive against the main Dutch positions surrounding

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93 Governor Pel to Governor-General Van Lansberge, 30 April 1875, quoted in C.R. Beamer, ‘The Atjeh War and the Roles of Civil and Military Authorities’, 129.

94 For a summary of the policies and offensive actions of these governors see J.M. Somer, De Korte Verklaring, 204-214, 236–237.
This abruptly ended the ‘policy of goodwill’ and provoked a brutal Dutch reaction culminating in general Van der Heijden’s 1879 punitive expedition that was characterized by the use of indiscriminate force against villages. Enemy activity almost ceased after this expedition, as did The Hague’s will of additional funding. Under these circumstances the Dutch considered the situation sufficiently stable to halt further military action and Van der Heijden’s troops were quickly reduced from 10,500 to 6,500 men. As by now the costs of the Aceh War exceeded the incomes from the Netherlands-Indies, the Dutch were anxious to claim that the Acehnese were finally convinced of Dutch superiority, and that their submission could now be obtained through persuasion within a matter of time. Thus, the Dutch announced the end of the Aceh War on 6 April 1881. Rule was transferred to a civil Governor, A. Pruys van der Hoeven, who adopted a policy of further military constraint.

Anthony Reid has described the fluctuation of Dutch policy as a ‘ruinous oscillation’; the periods of military action brought the Dutch military success, while the periods of inaction made this success unsustainable. Every time when control over additional segments of Acehnese society seemed within hand’s reach, their shortage of resources forced the Dutch to fall back on positions surrounding Kutaradja without maintaining a sufficient capability to effectively consolidate and augment their newly gained influence. Consequently this new Dutch influence quickly faded away. By 1881, therefore, Dutch control over Aceh as a whole was still non-existent. Moreover, the use of brutal force had completely alienated a substantial part of the population from the Dutch administration, while the fluctuating policy had revealed Dutch weaknesses. As a result the seeds of resistance had now spread more widely. The Dutch would soon reap what they had sown.

The Dutch efforts in Groot Atjeh had resulted in the 1878 surrender and consecutive deportation of Habib Abd ar-Rahman, an Arab and former co-regent and guardian of the Acehnese Sultan who had assumed the overall leadership over the resistance in 1876. Albeit a large success in Dutch eyes, Abd ar-Rahman’s removal was far from a step forward; his understanding of Acehnese society and ability to unite the local power-holders of the various societal fragments were unique. Abd ar-Rahman’s position as resistance leader was so strong that he probably came the closest to the form of central authority that the Dutch had wrongly attributed to the Sultan. The Dutch, however, did not realize and explore this and according to Reid therefore lost the biggest opportunity thus far to augment their control over Acehnese society. Abd ar-Rahman’s removal by the Dutch brought to light that the ulëëbalang were divided over the course of the war effort. Some advocated submission to the Dutch, while most were in favour of continuation of the resistance. This division freed the

95 Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 183-184.
97 Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 201-203.
98 Ibid.
99 Ibid., 182.
100 Ibid., 185.
way for Van der Heijden’s brutal raid of 1879, which would have unforeseen and unpleasant consequences for the Dutch. Although enemy activity ceased after this expedition, the situation below the surface was all but calm.

The unintended effect of Dutch military operations was that they fundamentally changed the nature of Acehnese resistance. Thus far the war effort on Acehnese side was predominantly conducted by individual ulëëbalang, who had confronted the Dutch in pitched battles either in defense of their own district or in unison with other ulëëbalang as was the case under Abd ar-Rahman. By the end of 1879 most of those chiefs, as well as the newly appointed Sultan (or Pretender Sultan as the Dutch called him, we will come back to him later) had fled Great Aceh as a result of the brutal punitive expeditions. The latter established his court in exile in the city of Keumala in Pidië, while most ulëëbalang took refuge in the hills between Pidië and Great Aceh. The elusion of the Acehnese war leaders ushered a shift from more or less organized resistance to an insurgency of which the ulama were the main instigators.101 This fitted a pattern that emerged as early as 1873 in which ‘traditional leaders lost influence to those known for their ability to organize war or to inspire religious enthusiasm’.102 Due to the ulëëbalang’s absence their already faltering legitimacy further weakened, which offered an opportunity for the ulama to augment their influence over the local populace. The ulama duly exploited this chance as they successfully appealed to the people by preaching that the war against the Kompeuni was a perang sabil. Moreover, when yet another Dutch policy change implemented by civil Governor Pruys van der Hoeven called upon co-option of the previously expelled ulëëbalang through gifts and salaries, this behaviour further diminished the chiefs’ faltering legitimacy and allowed for an increase of ulama influence in Great Aceh. As always, the ulëëbalang entrepreneurs preferred personal gain above the interest of the people living in their districts, and more and more of those chiefs started to cooperate with the hated Dutch colonial administration. The mobilization of the population by the ulama was so successful that by the end of Pruys van der Hoeven’s governorship in March 1883 the Dutch saw themselves confronted with a full-blown guerrilla. Under the next civil governor, P.F. Laging Tobias, the conflict was increasingly regarded as a battle between the civilized Dutch and primitive Acehnese ‘society as a collective’; the war had now become a people’s war under the leadership of the ulama.103

The Dutch were insufficiently aware that the notion of the war as a people’s war involving Acehnese society as a whole better reflected the situation on the ground than they actually understood at that moment. Their intervention had affected the societal balance of power and therefore the situation was becoming murkier than ever before. Next to the ulama, the decline of ulëëbalang authority was also exploited by opportunistic adventurers who sought to augment their own position by organizing and leading gangs of Acehnese irregulars against

102 Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 108.
The ulèëbalang themselves struggled to maintain their leading position which meant they played both sides (the Dutch as well as the Acehnese resistance) or changed side easily in pursuit of their own interest. Thus, despite the predominant role of the ulama, and the fact that by now it was also clear that Teungku (title for distinguished ulama) Chik di Tiro was the most important leader of the guerrilla, the popular resistance was as fragmented as Acehnese society itself. This all posed a formidable challenge to the Dutch; due to the unintended effects of their own policy, they now had to deal with an even more complicated opponent. Consequently, the situation in Great Aceh was growing out of control as the Dutch were increasingly confronted with guerrilla raids and shifting allegiances during 1883 and 1884.

The rebellion against the Dutch was not restricted to Great Aceh, also the Dependencies were the scene of growing unrest. Dutch control over those Dependencies had remained largely superficial, despite naval blockades, several expeditions, and the establishment of Dutch presence in the most defiant statelets such as Pidië, Gigiëng, Idi, Simpang Ulim, and Meulaboh. Of course, on paper Dutch control over the Onderhoorigheden had dramatically increased as a new declaration of submission was introduced that contained detailed instructions on the duties and rights of the local chiefs under Dutch authority. By 1884 this long declaration of eighteen articles was signed by most of the ulèëbalang of the Dependencies (a total of 43, while ten older co-optive agreements with others were still valid). Compliance to these declarations, however, remained nominal only, as the Dutch attempts to enforce this suffered from the same lack of means and corresponding policy oscillations as the war effort in Groot Atjeh. Even in those ulèëbalangships where the colonial administration succeeded in establishing a post, control was severely limited. Such posts were harassed by the Acehnese and the Dutch needed escorts to visit the ports. The weakness of the Dutch prevented any serious attempt to win the trust of local power-holders, and when the popular uprising spread local ulama started to launch attacks against Dutch posts in several statelets. Reid, therefore, has justly ascertained that the most important achievement of those posts was that they provided the insight that despite their nominal submission the Dependencies were supporting the Acehnese war effort in every way they could.

It is in these disorderly circumstances that the name of Teuku Uma (whom we will discuss in the next chapter) first emerges, when he harassed the Dependencies of the west coast with what the Dutch called his ‘thug’ band. The appearance of Uma and his gang was symptomatic for the deterioration of the situation in 1883 and 1884; it demonstrated the new reality of a widespread people’s war in which self-interested local power-holders were contributing to

105 Tiro in Pidië was home to one of the most famous dayah in Aceh. The head of this religious school was given the title Teungku Chik (Sheikh). See Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 204, 298.
106 See J.M. Somer, De Korte Verklaring, 206-221, Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 204, 189.
107 J.M. Somer, De Korte Verklaring, 209, for the declaration in eighteen articles see also 195-202, and Bijlage IV.
108 Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 189, 205.
109 Paul van ’t Veer, De Atjeh-oorlog, 141.
the resistance through individual exploits, and the leadership of the ulama was creating a growing mass of willing fighters throughout Aceh.

Unsurprisingly, the Dutch were forced to radically rethink their position when the situation completely grew out of control in 1884. As the small Dutch Colonial Army was already overstretched and The Hague was unwilling to provide more funding for the war, a new strategy for the Aceh War was to be formulated without the allocation of additional means. In order to maintain at least some foothold in Groot Atjeh the Dutch implemented the so-called concentration policy in 1885. This required the Dutch to abandon two thirds of the land they had occupied, while a total of about 4,700 troops were concentrated in a fortified line surrounding the capital Kutaradja and its port Ulèëlheuë -only a small part of Great Aceh. Other elements of this policy were the appointment of again a military commander, general H. Demmeni, as civil and military governor, a renewed sea blockade of Aceh’s coasts, and non-interference in the Dependencies in order to reduce costs. The new strategy corresponded with the latest imperial ideas as the establishment of a Dutch fortress was considered to signal ‘effective occupation in the spirit of the 1884 Berlin conference that ‘divided’ up Africa’. Within the safety of their perimeter the Dutch soldiers waited for the Acehnese to come and submit themselves. This concentration policy would dominate the Dutch operations in Aceh until it was abandoned in 1896. However, as it soon became clear that an attitude of complete passiveness was totally inadequate, the Dutch embarked on a new search for an appropriate method to win the Aceh War. It was this new attempt to find a solution that spawned the core ideas of the Aceh strategy that finally succeeded in establishing Dutch control over the Acehnese. Let us now take a closer look at these roots of the Aceh strategy.

4.3.3 Dawn of a new approach

The concentration policy called for a restraint on offensive operations outside the line, but when fortified posts came under attack and frequent infiltrations even caused security issues within the perimeter, this restriction became untenable. Teungku Tiro personally commanded such a 400-men infiltration raid that severely disturbed the order within the line in October 1887. Consecutively, in 1888 permission came to launch limited patrols outside the wire in order to disturb enemy activities. Two years later, in April 1890, the famous Korps Marechaussee was founded as a dedicated unit for defending the inner perimeter against infiltrating gangs, and soon this unit also started operating outside the line.

111 Emmanuel Kreike, ‘Genocide in the Kampong?’, 308.
112 Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 252-253.
113 The official task of the Korps Marechaussee encompassed patrolling within the line. By 1896, however, the Marechaussee had evolved into a highly capable Special Forces-like counter-guerrilla unit. See L. Voogt, 'Een politieeule eend in de Indische
important, however, was that the Dutch finally started to realize that a powerful political impetus was needed to secure colonial rule over Aceh, as Assistant-Resident K.F.H. Van Langen strikingly observed that:

‘During the Aceh War all the Acehnese tribes have unified, while forgetting about their previous feuds, and nothing has been undertaken from our side in order to confirm our rule by exploiting their disputes.’

As we have seen, there is no doubt that the Acehnese were unified in their animosity towards the Dutch. Internally, however, the Acehnese were not as unified, and the contradictions between different societal elements and local power-holders provided the Dutch with a potential lever for obtaining control over Acehnese society. Therefore, Van Langen’s observation points in the right direction; it was now up to the Dutch to find and exploit conflicts in Acehnese society that would lead to the collapse of the resistance and would finally bring Aceh under Dutch control.

In the only modern Dutch chronicle of the Aceh War, De Atjeh-oorlog, Paul van ‘t Veer claims that Dutch awareness of Acehnese politics only began after the colonial government’s advisor on Islam and indigenous affairs Dr. Christiaan Snouck Hurgonje’s 1892 Verslag omtrent de religieus-politieke toestanden in Atjeh (Report on religious-politico circumstances in Aceh) was published. Since 1873, however, Dutch intelligence had gradually shifted from topographical to political information. The symbolic role of the Sultan had become clear, although the discussion on the exact importance of his leadership remained vivid throughout the Aceh War. What was also clear to the Dutch were the different roles of the ulama and ulèëbalang. What was not clear, however, was the balance of power and relations between the Sultan, ulama and ulèëbalang. Thus, the Dutch had gradually obtained an insight in the different political groups, but they remained ignorant on the exact structure of power within Acehnese society.

When general H.K.F. Van Teijn assumed governorship in 1886 a new political strategy had been implemented as part of the concentration policy. Due to the lack of fine grained information on local political relations this strategy—once again—called for recognition of the Sultan as suzerain over Aceh. Although Van Teijn stressed that the colonial administration
would also take the positions of the clergy and chiefs into account, co-option of the Sultan was the mainstay of the Dutch strategy; it was believed that despite its symbolic nature the Sultan’s position was powerful enough to impose Dutch control via his collaboration. As the Pretender Sultan Tuanku (title for member of the Sultan dynasty) Daud held his court in exile in the city of Keumala, his party was referred to as the Keumala-party. It is here that the true lack of knowledge on the distribution of power really shows. The Dutch assumed the existence of a Sultan’s party that thrived on his leadership, as Van Teijn would experience; however, the Sultan’s prestige as a popular leader was highly dependent on the ulama and uleebalang who were the real power-holders on the Acehnese political marketplace at that time. When in 1889 negotiations between the Sultan and the Dutch administration failed to yield any result, Van Teijn showed remarkable understanding of the quagmire of Acehnese politics, as he wrote to the Governor-General of the Dutch East-Indies:

‘Had we to deal only with the Pretender Sultan and his entourage, then we would already be much further along. At present, however, Teungku di Tiro and his religious party are working against our purposes, while the mutual jealousy of our well-disposed chiefs [uleebalang struggling to maintain or augment their position] also poses no little obstacle here.’118

This hard-learned insight truly shocked Van Teijn and might have been too much for him, as he was also suffering from bad health. He offered his resignation the month after his report, but as he was only allowed to resign in 1891 he stayed long enough to witness the natural deaths of the two most important ulama (including Tiro). It was this event that finally paved the way for the development of a more profound understanding of Acehnese society as it was the immediate reason for Snouck Hurgronje’s interference in the Aceh War. In 1889 Snouck had been appointed as the colonial government’s advisor on Islam and indigenous affairs. At the age of 32, he already enjoyed a reputation as an internationally renowned Islamologist, mainly due to his 1884-1885 study on life in Mecca for which he converted to Islam. It was during this stay in the holy city of Islam that Snouck’s interest for Aceh and its inhabitants first developed. From discussions with Acehnese pilgrims he had learned the importance of Tiro as both religious and war leader, and on his appointment as colonial advisor he immediately submitted a proposal for a study visit to Aceh.119 As this first request was denied, Snouck was more than eager to accept Governor-General C. Pijnacker Hordijk’s


1891 assignment to study the effects of their leaders’ deaths on the *ulama* and how this faction would continue to influence the Keumala-party.\(^{120}\)

Snouck’s investigation took place from 16 July 1891 until 4 February 1892 and resulted in the already mentioned report on religious-politico circumstances in Aceh, which was presented to the Governor-General on 23 May 1892.\(^ {121}\) Although Snouck, much to his discontent, was confined to the area within the concentrated line, he succeeded in building rapport with ‘headmen and commoners from the Coasts [the Dependencies], as well as -and more predominantly- with those from the interiors of Great Aceh’.\(^ {122}\) Snouck’s residence in Mecca and conversion to Islam earned him great respect with the Acehnese, who attributed him titles such as *Toean Beusa Seunot to Waleeta Peureudan* (Sir Snouck of Weltevreden (the seat of the colonial government)) and *Doeli Chol Charoenja* (His Majesty Hurgronje).\(^ {123}\) His Meccan connections even allowed him to obtain information from unwilling locals, as he, for example, could call upon personal ties with respected Islamic religious scholars for winning the trust of *ulama*.\(^ {124}\) Such methods, backed up by his knowledge and language skills, distinguished Snouck from other colonial officials and were pivotal for unravelling the complex maze that constituted Acehnese society. Thus, he managed to compose a detailed ethnographic analysis of Acehnese society, which not only dealt with the position and roles of the different societal groups and the structure of power, but also included valuable information on religion, local customs and culture. Snouck himself was highly satisfied with the result and later reflected upon his work as the right diagnosis of the disease at a time ‘when many doubted me, while other doctors thought the complaint was beyond healing’.\(^ {125}\) Indeed Snouck’s work was not unanimously accepted, as we will see later. For now it is first important to take a closer look at the exact nature of Snouck’s diagnosis and the corresponding cure he suggested.

The Aceh report itself was more than an ethnographical analysis, it was also a detailed study of the root causes for resistance and non-collaboration in Aceh. Snouck distinguished four groups in Acehnese society -James T. Siegel follows Snouck in this regard-, the *ulèëbalang*, the *ulama*, the *gampong* dwellers (or peasants, the largest group), and the Sultan and his people and analysed the dynamics of interaction between those groups that followed the Dutch intervention to answer the question why ‘the Achehnese [sic] throughout their twenty years contest with the Dutch have not yet grasped the uselessness of their resistance to the
It was concluded that in this web of interaction the Sultan was ‘far from being an indispensable element’, and that the war had led to the rise of the ulama, as the authority of the ulèëbalang, the traditional rulers over the gampong dwellers, was disrupted by the Dutch intervention. In Snouck’s view the war had brought the Islamic clergy an opportunity to wrest power from the adat chiefs. Although their appeal to conduct a perang sabil against the Kompeuni brought them the sympathy of many Acehnese, the ulama also used a ‘tactic of terrorism’ to enhance the local population’s collaboration with their resistance. Unwilling ulèëbalang or gampong dwellers, for example, were forced to make contributions in money or goods to the war effort (so-called sabil-contributions). As the main interest for most Acehnese lay in personal survival and the protection of relatives and possessions, the bulk of the population opted to collaborate with the ulama in order to limit personal damage.

Of course the Acehnese were also subjected to Dutch attempts to establish control. The fluctuating policy of the past and the restraints of the concentration policy, however, had excluded the Dutch as a reliable partner in the eyes of many Acehnese. The colonial administration proved unable to protect well-disposed Acehnese from the resistance’s counter-collaboration measures and Dutch attempts to fight the irregulars often struck the population harder than it hit the ulama and their gangs of fighters. Snouck has captured this Dutch powerlessness and the accompanying situation in a powerful metaphor:

‘Thus we are, by taking a constrained position, in the situation of a chained monkey, who can be harassed to a point of maddening infuriation by a group of boys without too much danger for their own well-being; the gampong dwellers surrounding us have too fear the bites of the monkey as well as the stabs of his attackers.’

This not only illustrates Dutch impotence, it also shows that the Acehnese population was caught in an interposition between the ulama-led resistance on one side, and the Dutch colonial regime on the other. Although both parties vied for the people’s collaboration, it were the ulama who prevailed in this competition; the Dutch inability to establish themselves as a credible partner for collaboration made the religious scholars the dominant as well as the preferred agents for the local population to collaborate with. The imperative of limiting the damage to their own interest caused many -including the ulèëbalang- to support the resistance and the dominance of the ulama and their gangs of fighters is clearly demonstrated.

126 Ibid., 170.
129 Ibid., 62-63.
130 Ibid., 62.
by the fact that even the Acehnese within or adjacent to the concentration line started to switch sides or adopted a position of duplicity towards the Dutch.

Snouck’s diagnosis, thus, concluded that the Dutch intervention had shaped beneficial conditions for the ulama to seize the authority that traditionally lay with the ulëëbalang. The Dutch presence gave the religious scholars the leverage to augment their influence over the population as they could appeal to the responsibility of every Muslim to wage a perang sabîl against the kafirs of the Kompeuni. Moreover, in the fog of war the ulama could also employ coercive methods to obtain control over the population. The ulama had become the dominant faction in Acehnese society as they thrived on the war against the Dutch. Consequently, it was neither in their interest to win the war nor to cease resistance as this would lift the conditions that brought them power. The oscillating Dutch war policies had only acted in favour of the ulama and their irregular gangs as they had undermined the position of the ulëëbalang, and failed to target the resistance leaders and fighters. Due to this failure the Dutch had outmanoeuvred themselves as a credible partner to collaborate with; for the Acehnese, who found themselves caught in an interposition between the ulama on one side and the Dutch on the other side, it was obvious that the choice for the ulama was far better for their personal survival.

If the Dutch wanted to obtain control over Aceh they had to become the dominant as well as the preferable agent for the Acehnese to collaborate with. Therefore Snouck developed a cure that sought to exploit the struggle between ulama and ulëëbalang in order to establish Dutch rule; Van Langen’s idea of exploiting disputes within Acehnese society materialized in Snouck’s approach. The underlying rationale of this approach was that the Dutch had to gain control through co-option of the ulëëbalang. These traditional adat rulers were the true legitimate authorities, and the restoration of their authority would spawn and consolidate Dutch control over the Acehnese. Snouck was absolutely right about the ulëëbalang as the primary legitimate authorities within Acehnese society, however, he seemingly misrepresented them as similar to European hierarchical, feudal lords who were strongly tied to the peasants through their right to land. As we have seen afore ulëëbalang authority followed from their economic dominant position and although they were the legitimate leaders within Acehnese society, this legitimacy was only weakly developed. This misconception in Snouck’s vision would have consequences on the long term, which we will discuss in Chapter Six. It has to be mentioned that Snouck’s work contains many observations that contradict his conclusion of the ulëëbalang as feudal lords (a clear example is discussed in Chapter Six, paragraph 6.2.2). It might be that he accepted this idea as it better connected to the perception of the colonial officials and allowed him to formulate an understandable and acceptable strategy for winning the war. However, this cannot be proven and remains highly

131 Ibid., 72.
132 Snouck mentions Van Langen’s 1888 work De Inrichting van het Atjehsche Staatsbestuur onder het Sultanaat a couple of times in his report. Overall he seems to regard Van Langen as naive, because the latter attributes too much importance to the Sultan. Snouck, however, also expresses his admiration for Van Langen who presents detailed information on Acehnese society.

speculative. Siegel in this regard correctly remarks that ‘it is difficult to say what Snouck exactly thought about the uleebalang [sic]’. Anyway, for now it is first important to have a closer look at Snouck’s suggestions for the application of his cure.

The suggested approach consisted of three points; ignoring the Keumala-party, targeting of the resistance and its supporters, and stimulation of the local economy. First, the colonial administration had to completely coldshoulder the Sultan and his entourage as they were only minor actors in the Acehnese political arena. Instead of engaging the Keumala-party it had to be communicated to the adat chiefs that the colonial administration not only had replaced the Sultan, but -as opposed to the Sultan- also wanted to truly govern the Acehnese by bringing order and security and improving relationships between those chiefs. Second, Snouck considered ‘inflicting a sensitive blow, so that fear discourages the Acehnese from what has become a dangerous liaison to the gang leaders, as a condition sine qua non for the restoration of order’. This use of force functioned as a measure for altering the collaboration equation in favour of the Dutch. Although the population had to be spared as much as possible -even in case of a dubious attitude- Snouck advocated not only the targeting of ulama and other resistance leaders, he also stressed the need to deploy force against those elements of the population that actively supported the resistance. Such measures, however, required thorough intelligence that was to be established through systematic espionage of the gangs. Not only should this discourage active collaboration with the resistance, it also functioned to demonstrate the interpositioned population that the Dutch were the dominant party. Thus, it had to establish the colonial administration as the dominant actor for engaging in collaborative relationships. Third, Snouck stressed the importance of also becoming the preferred party for Acehnese chiefs to collaborate with. While the use of force functioned to restore trust in the power of the Kompeuni, the stimulation of agriculture, industry, and trade had to restore a belief in the beneficial intentions of the Dutch. Moreover, as an amelioration of their livelihood would strengthen the position of the uleebalang and gampong dwellers it would bring them in a better position to withstand the resistance’s attempts to enforce collaboration.

Thus, by adopting this threefold strategy the Dutch had to re-orient their war policy towards the relevant elements in Acehnese society in order to become the dominant as well as preferable actor in the struggle for control over the Acehnese. Imperative for the implementation of such a policy change at the local level was greater knowledge of Acehnese society and politics which in Snouck’s opinion not only required a specialized civil-military intelligence apparatus as part of the local colonial administration, but also a higher level of cultural awareness of individual colonial officials in order to approach the Acehnese in the

134 Ibid., 71.
136 Ibid., 95.
137 Ibid.
138 Ibid., 96.
right way. However, without permission from above a change of strategy was impossible. Whereas Dutch war policy had changed (too) frequently in the past, The Hague and Batavia remained reluctant to engage in a new, more offensive -and therefore expensive- approach for winning the Aceh War. This triggered another future key actor of the Aceh War, major J.B. Van Heutsz, to publish a brochure entitled *De onderwerping van Atjeh* (The submission of Aceh) in which he called upon the Dutch political leadership to end its hesitant attitude and demonstrate the its will and determination to prevail in the Aceh war through the adoption and perseverance of a robust approach in *casu* Aceh.140

According to Van Heutsz, who had last served in Aceh as Governor Van Teijn’s chief of staff, ‘the Acehnese would never submit unless forced to do so and only he, who demonstrates to possess the power to have his will respected, will be the master, whose orders they will obey’.141 Consequently, Van Heutsz urged for a strategy that would obtain Dutch control, or in his words ‘put a foot on the neck of the Acehnese’, by demonstrating them that it was better not to mess with the colonial administration.142 The use of force in combination with a strict naval blockade and other non-violent sanctions such as fines was to exclude any option but submission to the Dutch. Just like Snouck, Van Heutsz thought that the Sultan should be ignored, and it were the legal chiefs (i.e. the *adat* chiefs, the *ulëelahang*) whose co-option was pivotal for definitely establishing Dutch rule over the Acehnese. Over all, however, the suggested strategy change remained somewhat vague, and the main influence of the brochure was its call to demonstrate Dutch will and determination through a more offensive approach.143 As a result Van Heutsz was invited to write a white paper for the Dutch minister of colonies, which provoked a reaction from Snouck, who agreed on the need for offensive actions, but differed on the realization of this approach.144 Although K. van der Maaten reports that Van Heutsz and Snouck had been acquainted since earlier days in the Netherlands, it goes without doubt that this discourse was the start of their successful professional cooperation in the Netherlands-Indies.145 This was the brochure’s true merit; it

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139 Ibid., 94, 97. With regard to civil-military interaction at the local level Snouck denounces the rivalry between the army, the navy, and the civil administrators. He urges for more ‘punctual cooperation’.


145 K. van der Maaten, *Snouck Hurgronje en De Atjeh Oorlog*, 106. Reportedly Snouck and Van Heutsz first met in Breda where the former enjoyed his middle education, while the latter followed a course as a sergeant. Later they again ran into each other as respectively lecturer and course member at the Dutch Army staff college. Although there is no uncertainty about their encounter at the staff college, the Breda connection is doubtful as this must have taken place before 1870, when Van Heutsz was transferred to Maastricht. Snouck Hurgronje, who was born in 1857, was barely a teenager at this time. This makes the Breda connection highly unlikely.
Chapter 4 The Course of Co-option

sparked an exchange of thoughts between two men who would pioneer a new strategy that would finally mark the watershed in the Dutch Aceh policy.

Although Snouck’s report and Van Heutsz’s brochure ushered in the dawn of a new approach at their appearance in 1892-1893, the actual becoming of this strategy lay in the future. Despite Governor Van Teijn’s experience, and Snouck’s extensive ethnographical analysis of Acehnese society that had revealed the true distribution of power, the policy of the Dutch in Aceh remained to bring the Sultan to submission. Albeit the overall objective did not change, the local colonial administration in Kutaradja kept searching for methods to break the stalemate caused by the restraints of the concentration line. The challenge was to augment Dutch control over Aceh from within the perimeter of the line with limited resources only; large military actions were neither possible, nor thinkable. When colonel (later major-general) Ch. Deijkerhoff became the eleventh Governor of Aceh in January 1892, he took the initiative to seek the help of an Acehnese ally who yielded enough influence to convince the Sultan to submit to the Dutch. Such an ally was found in the powerful Acehnese warlord Teuku Uma, an opportunistic political adventurer who had benefited from the war to grow from a minor actor to the uncontested lord of almost complete Aceh’s west coast.146 In September 1893 the treaty between Uma and the Dutch administration was sealed and for the next years the political strategy of the Aceh War was dominated by what was afterwards called the Teuku Uma policy. We will elaborate on this episode of the Aceh War in the next chapter; first it is time to draw some conclusions on the first twenty years of the war.

4.4 Conclusion

After twenty years of war Dutch control over Aceh was limited to the concentration line surrounding Kutaradja, and -as Snouck revealed- even within the perimeter of this line the population’s attitude towards the colonial administration was dubious. The Dutch had desperately struggled to augment their control beyond the original bridgehead, but ultimately failed to accomplish this. The resulting stalemate at least secured Dutch possession over the capital; sufficient to claim Aceh as Dutch territory by the imperial standards of that day. But why was it that the Dutch expansion machine had stalled in Aceh? For sure, the failure to establish control over the Acehnese can be largely attributed to the continuous changing of the Dutch war policy. All these different policies, however, shared a common feature, namely the misinterpretation of the Acehnese societal landscape. Even when the positions of the Sultan, ulama and ulêêbalang became more clear, the Dutch were highly ignorant of the relationships between those groups, which shaped the local political marketplace. Despite an awareness of the limited authority of the Acehnese Sultan that pre-dated the Aceh War, the Dutch war authorities wrongly attributed great political power to the Sultan and the Sultanate’s administrative institutions. This assumption made the Sultan a central

objective in any Dutch policy, either as an actor to be co-opted or to be outmaneuvered. Similarly the nature of the power of the ulëëbalang was misunderstood, which, for instance, led to co-option of minor actors, while major actors were ignored. Moreover, the Dutch also weakened the position of the ulëëbalang as they were unaware of those chiefs’ fragile legitimacy. Dutch military operations often separated local chiefs from their populace, and when ulëëbalang were co-opted after a punitive action, the local population did not think well of their chief’s association with the brutal Dutch administration. The ulama duly exploited this weakening of ulëëbalang legitimacy as they greatly augmented their grip on the Acehnese by preaching the perang sabil against the Kompeuni. Consequently, the main result of the Dutch intervention thus far had been the strengthening of the ulama and their resistance against the new colonial administration.

In terms of co-option it can be said that from the onset of the war the Dutch were willing to practice cultural legitimation, but failed to acknowledge the exact pattern of legitimacy of Aceh’s highly fragmented society. Of course the colonial administration quickly understood that Acehnese society was spread over autonomous -but interdependent- locales such as Great Aceh, Pidië, and the many other coastal micro-states of the Dependencies that were defined by the frontiers of ancient kingdoms or the geographical realities of the environment. The complexity of Acehnese society was further augmented through the existence of four different identity groups; ulëëbalang, ulama, gampong dwellers, and the Sultan and his entourage. It were the connectedness of those groups, their mutual relationships, and their interactions that shaped the structure of Acehnese society within the boundaries of each distinctive locale as well as in its completeness. Dutch intelligence had gradually revealed the existence of those groups, but failed to grasp the exact nature of their political relations. This only changed with Snouck’s report on Acehnese society. Snouck rightly identified the ulëëbalang and the ulama as the main political actors in war-infested Acehnese society. In his opinion the war had brought the clergy the opportunity to wrest power from the chiefs, who were the original legitimate authorities. Although this analysis correctly pictures the political situation and pattern of legitimacy in Aceh after twenty years of war, even Snouck’s view contained a misconception, as he -contrary to many of his own observations-portrayed ulëëbalang legitimacy as of a hierarchical, feudal nature. As we have seen ulëëbalang authority was mainly based on their economic position, and their legitimacy vis-à-vis the population under their influence was only weakly developed. This misconception would have huge consequences for the future, which we will discuss in Chapter Six. For the colonial administration’s understanding of Acehnese society during the Aceh war, however, Snouck’s report marked the watershed and meant a huge leap forward as it correctly identified the main political actors and their mutual relations. When Snouck’s analysis was accepted as the underpinning for the Dutch Aceh strategy during the latter part of the 1890s it finally allowed the Dutch to thoroughly practice cultural legitimation -albeit based upon a wrong understanding of the exact nature of the chiefs’ legitimacy.
Thus far we have not discussed the mobilization of local militias through co-opted power-holders. The main reason for this is that the Dutch made only limited use of such additional resources during the first half of the Aceh War; they simply lacked sufficient stable co-optive relationships to employ this measure in an efficient way. Snouck illustrated that even when more durable co-optive relationships allowed the Dutch to mobilize local militias, the resistance’s counter-collaboration efforts thwarted the effective use of these local fighters. Such militias were more a liability than an asset and therefore the Dutch did not succeed in initiating a successful mobilization during the first two decades of the war. The underlying reason for the shortage of sufficient stable co-optive relationships, of course, lies in the lack of understanding of Acehnese society. The answer to the question of whom exactly to co-opt varied with the oscillations of the war policy. The ulêëbalang of Great Aceh were intermittently subjected to rapprochement -also through coercive methods- or expulsion, and the Dutch attitude towards the Sultan was the subject of similar fluctuations. The Dutch only engaged in more durable co-optive relationships with local power-holders in the area surrounding their Kutaradja bridgehead and, through declarations of submission, with the numerous ulêëbalang who ruled the individual Dependencies. In both cases, however, the durability of the co-optive relationships remained highly hypothetical. Even in the eyes of well-disposed local power-holders the Dutch were unable to establish themselves as either the dominant or preferable partner for co-option during the first two decades of the war. To understand the reasons for this we have to take a closer look at the methods for co-option as used by the colonial administration.

Wherever the Dutch engaged in more durable relationships, they failed to establish dominance as a consequence of their lack of resources. The reliance on a poor system of naval coercion, for instance, did not suffice for maintaining dominance over the statelets of the Dependencies that had nominally subjected to Dutch rule. Despite the signed treaties the micro-states increasingly supported the resistance with the Dutch in no position to interfere. The Dutch in Aceh, typically, lacked a capability for collaboration domination. Even in the scarce cases the Dutch managed to establish and maintain dominance -i.e. in the vicinity of the bridgehead- the lack of resources prevented them from also becoming the preferable partner for co-option. The colonial administration had sufficient means to coerce those local power-holders into co-option, but lacked the resources to protect those agents against the highly effective counter-collaboration of the ulama-led resistance. In order to limit personal damage, the co-optees adopted an attitude of duplicity against the Dutch, which rendered the co-optive relationships ineffective. Thus, even in the case of a consistent strategy towards local power-holders, the Dutch were incapable of establishing themselves as credible partners for co-option. The limited resources affected the coercive as well as the persuasive side of the co-option continuum. Contradictory, the only means available in a sufficient quantity was money. But without a capability to enforce compliance or to protect

their co-optees, the use of money as a reward-based persuasive method was of limited use, as Pel had already remarked in 1875.

Yet, in 1893 the war-weary Dutch policy-makers were determined not to spend more resources on what they deemed a protracted conflict with no option to reach a satisfactory solution. A Dutch withdrawal would be explained as a sign of weakness by the other colonial powers in the region and the colonial subjects in the Indonesian archipelago. Victory seemed unattainable. A continuation of the existing stalemate at least secured Dutch possession over the capital; sufficient to claim Aceh as Dutch territory. Therefore it is understandable that Dutch authorities in The Hague and Batavia decided not to allocate additional resources to Aceh. If the local administration wanted to augment its control it had to search for methods that would not require additional means. A hitherto insufficiently exploited path had been that of mobilization of additional resources from within Acehnese society. What if the local administration could forge a true durable relationship with a local power-holder who could greatly augment their capabilities? And what if such a local power-holder yielded enough influence to assist the Dutch in obtaining their political goal, the submission of the Sultan? Let us turn to the next episode of the Aceh War, that brought a new Dutch policy to obtain control through a co-optive alliance with one of Aceh’s most powerful local leaders, warlord Teuku Uma.
Chapter 5
Chapter 5: The Teuku Uma policy

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter we have obtained an overview of nineteenth century Aceh, its society, and the first two decades of the war. In this chapter we will focus on a specific episode in which the Dutch colonial administration adopted a policy designed to obtain control over the population through collaboration with a dominant local power-holder, warlord Teuku Uma. As we have seen in Chapter Three this was the preferable method for winning colonial wars; thus far, however, the Dutch had been unable to establish an effective co-optive relationship with such a local power-holder. Of course, the colonial administration had -with intervals- pursued the submission of the Sultan, but it failed to accomplish this due to the policy oscillations informed by the ever present lack of means. Therefore, it was important for the Dutch to find a local ally whose interests coincided with the Dutch aims, so that an effective co-optive relationship could be forged without a means-consuming campaign to enforce such an alliance. In this regard Teuku Uma, an opportunistic actor who had recently risen to dominance over Aceh’s west coast, was a promising figure, as he needed Dutch support for consolidating this position vis-à-vis his rivals. The ensuing co-optive relationship with Uma (established in 1893) appeared a tremendous multiplier for Dutch control over Aceh. It even allowed the colonial administration to extend the concentration line without the use of additional colonial troops thanks to the deployment of Uma’s militia. In the end, however, the relationship ended in disaster as Uma departed the Dutch side in 1896 at the moment he had become their pivotal asset on the local political marketplace. The colonial administration in Kutaradja, thus, proved to be unable to control its main co-optee. It was this failure that would finally open the door for the establishment of effective co-optive relationships as part of the Aceh strategy.

This specific case is selected as it not only sheds a light on the difficulties of establishing and maintaining co-optive relationships as part of a colonial pacification campaign, but also illustrates the (potential) benefits and dangers of the mechanism of co-option. An analysis of how and why this co-optive relationship was forged, and how it was mutually exploited and lost will reveal the dynamics of co-option in the reality of colonial warfare in a highly fragmented societal environment. The role of Uma and his militia in the Dutch strategy will clarify the Dutch notions of cultural legitimation and consecutive mobilization, and the process used to identify and monitor Uma as a key co-optee as well as the methods used to establish and maintain the relationship will provide an insight in how the Dutch decided whom to co-opt and how they actually practiced co-option. Thus, this analysis will enable us to draw conclusions on the fundamental as well as the practical facets of co-option in the reality of a colonial pacification campaign in a highly fragmented society.

1 This chapter contains edited material from Martijn Kitzen, ‘Between treaty and treason’.
In order to provide a thorough reconstruction of the collaboration between the colonial administration and Uma, this chapter provides a chronological narrative of the relationship between both parties. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Uma and his ‘thug’ band first appeared on scene during the turmoil of 1883 and 1884, when the Dutch learned of his rising power along the west coast. In the following years the Dutch would fight as well as collaborate with Uma. This experience already revealed Uma’s opportunistic character -the Dutch would call it treacherous- as typically he did not keep promises and always preferred to pursue his own interests. As this period provides an insight in Uma’s position and behavior as a local power-holder, we will start our analysis with an overview of the years before the strategic alliance with the Dutch. Next we will discuss why the colonial administration in Kutaradja in 1892 -despite some of their earlier experiences- decided to consider a co-optive relationship with Uma as its main asset for augmenting Dutch control over Aceh. The co-optive treaty was signed in 1893, which marked the start of the collaboration that would last until 1896, when Uma once again deserted the Dutch. We will deal separately with the 'effective' years of the co-optive relationship from 1893 until 1895 and its decline in 1896, before we will conclude this chapter by discussing our findings in the perspective of the analytical framework for understanding co-option.

5.2 Prelude

The full-blown guerrilla that confronted the Dutch in 1883 was led and inspired by the ulama with help of opportunistic local power-holders. These latter agents ‘do not form the soul of the movement of resistance’ as ‘they have other objects in view than the holy war, objects which they would if necessary gladly avail themselves of our [the Dutch] help to attain’. The practices referred to by the opportunistic chiefs were known to the Acehnese as main perang (playing at war); the use of connections with different opposing parties in order to increase one’s power and wealth. Snouck further describes the opportunistic adventurers as charismatic personalities whose unique ability to deal with the circumstances of the war -both as soldiers and as diplomats- enables them to bind followers and successfully claim authority. Typically these warlords start augmenting their influence by operating as leaders of roving gangs, until they have won sufficient connections and power to challenge traditional authorities in order to establish themselves as dominant local power-holders of an ulèëbalangship. Once consolidated in their new position, the opportunistic chiefs start behaving as typical Acehnese local power-holders; they increase their wealth and power by use of the same ‘plundering’ methods (such as tolls and taxes) as employed by the other

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3 Anthony Reid, *The Contest for North Sumatra*, 274.
agents on the local political market-place and abandon the methods that were used during their period as gang leaders. This last step qualifies such chiefs as ulèëbalang themselves.

Teuku Uma is commonly considered the champion of these opportunistic adventurers as he took tremendous benefit from the chaos of the war to rise from a relatively humble position to become one of Aceh’s most influential chiefs. His deeds are extensively commented in the Acehnese epic poem *hikayat perang Kompeuni*, which was first recorded by Snouck in 1892. The poem states that Uma started his career as a priman, a freeman without an office and without any authority. Originally from a less influential ulèëbalang family from the west coast Dependency of Meulaboh, he started to gain influence as a political actor in the northern part of Aceh’s West coast during the period of civil government that followed Van der Heijden’s governorship. His charismatic character allowed him to form a marauding gang consisting of minor war leaders and many followers. The first confrontation with the Dutch happened when Uma protruded to the municipality VI mukim, which lies in Great Aceh’s sagi of the XXV mukim (and lies adjacent to the west coast). The original ulèëbalang of this community had fled and the colonial administration had replaced him by one of their allies, who extorted the local population. Uma enjoyed massive popular support in his fight against the Dutch and their puppet ruler, but returned to the west coast to continue his marauding activities. In 1883 he returned to Great Aceh offering his submission to the colonial administration. The Dutch, however, recounted his earlier opposition, and Governor Laging Tobias demanded that he ‘should first prove that he is earnest by some achievement on behalf of the Government which at the same time would irrevocably discredit him in the eyes of the enemy’.

An appropriate mission for Uma to prove his allegiance was found in tasking him to release the crew of the Nisero, a British steamer that had ran aground on the west coast Dependency of Teunom in November 1883 and which was consequently seized by Teuku Imam, the Raja of Teunom. This energetic ulèëbalang had become an enemy of Uma as he was one of the few west coast rulers strong enough to withstand Uma and his gang. The Dutch, therefore, deemed it highly suitable to fight the Raja of Teunom by his rival thug Uma. The opportunistic

5 Snouck’s description of Acehnese opportunistic adventurers going through a roving and a stationary phase remarkably resembles Mancur Olsons’s concept of roving and stationary bandits, which was published 100 years later. See Mancur Olson, ‘Dictatorship, Democracy, And Development’, American Political Science Review 87:3 (September 1993).
nature of Uma, however, fully exposed itself to the Dutch when Uma was landed with arms and money to free the crew in July 1884. Instead of fulfilling his mission Uma killed the crew of the launch that brought him ashore and started augmenting his hold on the west coast with his new equipment and money. The Dutch reacted with a naval bombardment and by putting a price on his head, but due to his roving existence these measures resulted no effect as Uma remained out of reach of the colonial administration’s clawless grip. Uma’s rival Teuku Imam also benefited from this move as he eventually released the Nisero’s crew in return for, among others, a $100,000 ransom.

What followed next was a phase in which Uma transformed from a gang leader to the most respected and influential power-holder of Aceh’s west coast by 1886. Moreover, he also established himself as one of the leading uléëbalang in Great Aceh’s sagi of the XXV mukim and thereby became firmly embedded in traditional Acehnese authority circles. How did he manage to accomplish this? Snouck summarized it as a combination of ‘tact, good luck, and knowledge of men’ with ‘cautious mental reservation’. Uma had successfully enriched himself as a gang-leader and acquired pepper plantations along the west coast which further added to his income. He cleverly used his wealth to build a reputation of generosity that served to create solid ties with his followers and made him popular with the Acehnese. As a matter of fact the poet of the hikayat perang Kompeuni describes how he received many gifts from Uma’s ‘generous hand’. The combination of military might and popularity among the people brought Uma such influence that most of the west coast’s traditional chiefs opted not to compete with Uma, but preferred ‘to retire into the background’. Furthermore Uma cleverly augmented his power through political marriages. It were those marriages that secured him an influential position in Great Aceh’s sagi of the XXV mukim. His most famous wife Chut Nyak Din was the daughter of his uncle Teuku Nanta, the powerful but aging uléëbalang of the VI mukim, while he was -among others- also married to the daughter of the less influential Panglima Sagi of the XXV mukim. Thus Uma became a powerful uléëbalang himself.

12 C. Snouck Hurgronje, The Achehnese, Volume II, 112. W.C. Nieuwenhuijzen, De Toekoe Oemar-Politiek, Inleiding en Wording (’s-Gravenhage & Batavia: De gebroeders Van Cleef & G. Kolff en Co., 1897). Although published anonymously, the latter book was later attributed to Nieuwenhuijzen. See Paul van ’t Veer, De Atjeh-oorlog, 200. Writing style, arguments and access to data indeed are similar to Nieuwenhuijzen’s series of articles also published in 1897 under the title ‘De politiek van de oorlog in Atjeh’ in the magazine Indisch Militair Tijdschrift.
13 Paul van ’t Veer, De Atjeh-oorlog, 155.
Uma’s guile and his use of *main perang* tactics are clearly demonstrated by the way he arranged his official recognition, his *sarakata*, by the Sultan. Since Uma’s wealth had increased he had used it not only to adopt a generous attitude toward his followers and the general population, but he had also regularly overwhelmed the Sultan’s court in Keumala with gifts. Thus the Sultan was brought in a position in which he could not refuse anything to Uma, which eventually led to the issuing of letters patent in which Uma was officially recognized as *amir ul-bahr*, Lord of the Sea, of the west coast.\(^\text{18}\) This position officially entitled Uma to collect the Sultan’s levies along the West coast, and although Uma had augmented his position as he was now nominally acting on behalf of the Sultan he also openly flouted the Sultan’s authority and acted in his own interest:

‘He [Uma] also both in word and deed yielded to the Sultan as much as he chose, and looked on his sealed letters of appointment as a mere ornament that might at times give an official flavour to his pretensions.’\(^\text{19}\)

Uma adopted a similar attitude toward the leading ulama; he presented them with gifts and the *hikayat perang Kompeuni* tells us that he even went as far as declaring himself ready to completely obey Teungku Tiro’s will. Snouck commented that this declaration was a typical example of ‘those empty promises which Achehnese [sic] chiefs make with a view of keeping out of one another’s way’.\(^\text{20}\) Uma never took orders from Tiro or any of the other leading ulama, but joined their fight against the Kompeuni whenever it was in his own interest.

If Uma employed these tactics to empower his position *vis-à-vis* his Acehnese rivals, why shouldn’t he use similar methods against external rivals that were competing for influence over Aceh? As aforementioned the colonial administration first encountered Uma’s opportunistic character, which the Dutch called treacherous, during the Nisero affair. As Uma’s wealth and power increased he adopted an attitude of periodical rapprochement towards the Dutch. This strategy was informed by the need to secure the shipping of his yearly pepper harvest.\(^\text{21}\) However, when on 14 June 1886 the Hok Canton, a British owned steamer operating under the Dutch flag, anchored at Rigas bay in the west coast Dependency of Rigaih to negotiate the trade of Uma’s pepper crop, the ship was robbed and its European crew members were taken hostage by his men. Reportedly this incident instigated as a result of an existing personal feud between Uma and the ship’s Danish captain, Hansen, who was mortally wounded in

\(^{18}\) C. Snouck Hurgronje, *The Achehnese*, Volume I, 148-149. C.R. Beamer, ‘The Atjeh War and the Roles of Civil and Military Authorities’, 412-413. Anthony Reid, *The Contest for North Sumatra*, 261. It has to be mentioned that the Sultan showed a similar tact from his side when traditional rulers protested Uma’s appointment. The Sultan pointed out to the protesters that Uma had been named chief of the sea and not over the land.


\(^{21}\) Paul van ’t Veer, *De Atjeh-oorlog*, 179.
the melee aboard the ship.\textsuperscript{22} The hikayat perang Kompeuni, however, presents the cutting out of the Hok Canton as a carefully prepared and concerted ruse from the west coast’s Sea Lord in order to thwart the Dutch administration.\textsuperscript{23} Albeit this latter explanation is highly doubtful, there is no hesitation that Uma was well aware of how his rival Teuku Imam, the Raja of Teunom, had benefitted from the Nisero affair and that Uma aimed to use the Hok Canton in a similar way. Governor Demmeni immediately reacted by sending a punitive expedition that failed to release the hostages and, despite the capture of some of Uma’s blood relatives—who were to be used as hostages by the colonial administration—, only demonstrated the colonial administration’s ‘military impotence’.\textsuperscript{24} As a consequence the Governor-General prohibited a further military solution to the Hok Canton affair, and the Dutch paid Uma a ransom of $25,000. Together with the $15,000 plundered of the ship and a rich booty of goods this made considerable revenue that Uma generously shared with his followers and friendly chiefs as well as with Teungko Tiro, who thankfully proclaimed that ‘henceforth Teuku Uma might look on him as father’.\textsuperscript{25} Uma, thus, took direct and indirect benefits from The Hok Canton affair. However, as he again had embarrassed the colonial administration, there could be no rapprochement to protect his next pepper harvest. Moreover, the Dutch were eagerly seeking a way to punish this opportunistic local power-holder.

An appropriate punishment was quickly found as it was concluded that Uma would suffer most by affecting his main ground of income, the pepper trade. Yet, it took almost two years for effective measures to be implemented. Governor-General O. van Rees first overruled the by Governor Demmeni’s successor, colonel (later general) Van Teijn, suggested closure of Uma’s ports on the west coast as it opposed the officially policy.\textsuperscript{26} When The Hague changed its policy in 1887 Van Rees finally gave permission for a naval blockade of Uma’s ports from February to May 1888. In addition to this the Dutch supplied arms to Uma’s biggest rivals—ironically including the protagonist of the Nisero affair, the Raja of Teunom—and provided naval gun support along the west coast.\textsuperscript{27} Furthermore, the colonial administration put a $5,000 bounty (that if necessary could be raised to $10,000) on Uma’s head in the Straits Settlements in order to prevent an escape abroad.\textsuperscript{28} These measures proved to be highly effective as Uma quickly approached the colonial administration in order to submit. Uma’s urgency to appease the Dutch is clearly demonstrated by the fact that he not only sent letters, but also dispatched a personal messenger and that his father-in-law Teuku Nanta and his


\textsuperscript{26} Anthony Reid, \textit{The Contest for North Sumatra}, 262-263.

\textsuperscript{27} NA, MvK, 1850-1900, 6183, Geheim Verbaal 27 september 1888 K14, 53/1, Van Teijn aan Van Rees, 6 augustus 1888.

\textsuperscript{28} NA, MvK, 6183, Geheim Verbaal 27 september 1888 K14, 53/1, Van Rees aan Van Teijn, 6 augustus 1888.
main wife Chut Nyak Din also sent letters announcing Uma’s willingness to submit to the Dutch.29

Unsurprisingly the Dutch were not too enthusiastic about this offer, and they replied that submission could only be considered if Uma would completely comply with their strict demands:

‘Uma should first offer convincing evidence proving the sincerity of his promises of better behaviour and reliability, therefore he should quietly settle in the VI mukim, no longer interfere in the west coast and leave all pending issues of that area to the colonial administration’s power of decision, before his request for amnesty could be taken into consideration.’30

The purpose of these demands was not only to deal with Uma, they also aimed at restoring the authority of the adat chiefs who had disappeared to the background as a consequence of Uma’s rise to power (most of the ruling ulëëbalang of the west coast’s Dependencies had signed declarations of submission and thus were nominally subjected to the Dutch). Simultaneously, the colonial officials were in doubt about how to exactly treat Uma if he would comply with all demands. Uma himself stressed that he could be a useful ally to the Dutch as ‘he would employ all his influence and power according to our [the colonial administration’s] insights’.31 Governor Van Teijn in Kutaradja developed the view that Uma as an opponent could inflict much harm, but as an ally his influence and knowledge would be instrumental in restoring order in the VI mukim.32 This provoked the governor to ask Batavia for detailed instructions on how to act upon Uma’s submission. The reaction from his superiors left little room for doubt as it was stated that Van Teijn ‘wrongly expected prosperity from the submission of this inveterate robber’, who —according to Batavia— would never be fully accepted by the adat chiefs as even in the eyes of the Acehnese he was considered an ‘orang djahat’, a dangerous man.33 Therefore, it was explicitly forbidden to engage in any kind of collaborative relationship following Uma’s possible submission.

Thus, the Dutch attitude towards Uma, that resulted from the different encounters with this opportunistic local power-holder, was that he could be granted amnesty when he would comply with the Dutch demands, but he certainly would not be attributed any influence under the authority of the colonial administration. The temporarily closure of the west coast as a tool for augmenting Dutch influence proved so successful that under Governor-General Pijnacker Hordijk it was also implemented for the whole north coast in two stages in 1889 and

29 NA, MVK, 6183, Geheim Verbaal 27 september 1888 K14, 53/1, Van Teijn aan Van Rees, 28 juni 1888.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
32 NA, MVK, 6183, Geheim Verbaal 27 september 1888 K14, 53/1, Van Teijn aan Van Rees, 27 juni 1888.
33 NA, MVK, 6183, Geheim Verbaal 27 september 1888 K14, 53/1, Van Rees aan Van Teijn, 6 augustus 1888.
1890, while the west coast was re-closed in January 1890. Such blockades, however, not only affected Uma, but harmed all local power-holders dependent on trade, and consequently led to a decline of their power. As simultaneously the ulama became more powerful, traditional chiefs as well as opportunistic local power-holders started to ‘demonstrate signs of rapprochement’ towards the colonial administration. The ensuing atmosphere created the conditions for negotiations with the Keumala-party through the mediation of well-disposed chiefs. In 1889 the first indirect contacts with the court were established, and in 1890 the colonial administration dispatched friendly ulëëbalang as official negotiators to Keumala. Although these efforts remained without tangible result, the submission of the Sultan seemed within hand’s reach. The Dutch were, once again, focused on the Sultan as their main political objective. Uma, thus, faded away from the centre of the colonial administration’s attention and succeeded in maintaining his position as one of Aceh’s most powerful local power-holders by continuing his main perang tactics vis-à-vis Acehnese rivals, while carefully avoiding a new confrontation with the Dutch. A new encounter -in one way or another-, however, was inevitable if the colonial administration genuinely wanted to establish Dutch control over Aceh.

5.3 The Path to co-option

The renewed impetus to realize the submission of the Sultan was based upon the mediation of well-disposed chiefs. As mentioned, various attempts failed to yield result. It was felt, however, that the conduct and the course of the negotiations had proven the Sultan’s willingness to submit. All what was needed now was an influential person, a single powerful ally, who held enough personal influence to convince the Sultan to submit. Van Teijn’s successor (as of May 1891), Governor F. Pompe van Meerdervoort, deemed Teuku Uma, who had repeatedly approached the colonial administration, the right person to definitely persuade the Keumala-party. Consequently he pleaded for a complete and unconditional pardon, as this would win the confidence of the Sultan and his followers. Aceh’s Governor had considered the disadvantages and benefits and thought that despite Uma’s past and a realistic chance that he would once again betray the Dutch, his influence on the Keumala-party was worth the risk. Governor-General Pijnacker Hordijk, however, did not agree and reconfirmed Van Rees’ 1888 official instruction that there should be no collaboration in

34 Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 263. These measures would eventually evolve in a systematic naval blockade, a so-called scheepvaartregeling, which spawned Dutch control of trade as colonial officials levied tolls and duties on behalf of the ruling ulëëbalang. Resident Scherer was the main initiator of this scheepvaartregeling that according to his belief could pacify Aceh and its Dependencies within three years at an additional expenditure of 200,000 guilders annually. See G.A. Scherer, Hoe moet Atjeh gepacificeerd worden? Voordracht gehouden in het Indisch Genootschap (’s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1891), 45.
35 Paul van ’t Veer, De Atjeh-oorlog, 179-180.
36 NA, MvK, 6204, Geheim Verbaal 13 oktober 1891Kab R 14, 51/1, Pompe van Meerdervoort aan Pijnacker Hordijk, 13 oktober 1891.
whatever form with this ‘robber and murderer’ who had violated the ‘European as well as the indigenous laws of war’.\footnote{NA, MvK, 6204, Geheim Verbaal oktober 1891 Kab R14, 51/1, Beschikking Pijnacker Hordijk aan Pompe van Meerdervoort, 20 augustus 1891.}

On 18 December 1891 it was reported that the Sultan would visit Teuku Uma in the VI mukim to confer about their mutual submission to the Dutch administration in Kutaradja.\footnote{NA, MvK, 6206, Geheim Verbaal 15 februari 1892 D2, Indisch Depêche 31 december 1891 91/2, Pompe van Meerdervoort aan Pijnacker Hordijk, 18 december 1891.} Pompe van Meerdervoort assessed this message as highly improbable, but he found it suitable evidence for a connection between Uma and the Sultan and his party. Before he could take further action, however, he resigned over a conflict with the Governor-General concerning the naval blockades, which he had deliberately neglected because he thought that the Acehnese chiefs would only fully support the Dutch if there was no interference with their trade.\footnote{For a detailed account of Pompe van Meerdervoort’s attitude towards naval blockades and his resignation see C.R. Beamer, ‘The Atjeh War and the Roles of Civil and Military Authorities’, 448-453.} When his successor colonel (later major-general) C. Deijkerhoff was installed in January 1892, he incorporated the idea of submitting the Sultan through Uma and immediately took the initiative to pursue careful rapprochement. From then on the strategy of the Aceh War would be slowly dominated by what was afterwards called the Teuku Uma policy. Now it is clarified why the colonial administration at the grassroots level in Kutaradja was once again considering collaboration with Uma, it is time to shed a light on how Batavia was convinced and how the co-optive relationship with this highly opportunistic local power-holder was actually forged.

Given the antecedents there was absolutely no doubt about Uma’s opportunistic character within the Dutch camp (colonial officials typically would call him treacherous). Even the main advocates of Uma’s co-option, such as Governor Deijkerhoff, agreed that Uma was a ‘robber and murderer’, who had not only violated agreements with the Dutch, but also had demonstrated similar behaviour towards indigenous actors.\footnote{NA, MvK, 6210, Geheim Verbaal 21 mei 1892 N7, Indisch Depêche 10 maart 1892 31/1, Deijkerhoff aan Pijnacker Hordijk, 28 februari 1892, 1.} Deijkerhoff, however, wrote to his superior Governor-General Pijnacker Hordijk, that he would never start negotiations with such a ‘scallywag’, were it not that the situation had changed. Uma had approached the Dutch government with an invitation to discuss his submission. On January 30 Deijkerhoff’s Assistant-Resident for Great Aceh met Uma in his house in Lampisang, where the latter offered his submission as well as to guarantee security of his home territory of the VI mukim.\footnote{Ibid., 2-3.} The next day one of the chiefs mediating with the Keumala-party, Tuanku Hussain (a member of the Sultan’s family who had relinquished his claim on the throne and lived in Kutaradja), confirmed Uma’s intentions and additionally announced that Uma also would open negotiations about the Sultan’s submission on favourable conditions for the colonial regime.\footnote{On Tuanku Hussain see K.F.H. Van Langen, Beknopt Alfabetisch informatieboekje, 87-88, and Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 172.} The analysis of the Governor’s staff was that, once Uma collaborated with the
Dutch side, the ulama hard liners within the Keumala-party would exclude and fight him. This was confirmed by a report on a 15 February meeting between Uma, Teuku Nya Muhammed, and Teuku Muda Ba’et, the powerful chiefs of respectively the IX mukim of the sagi of the XXV mukim and its adjacent municipality of the VII mukim of the sagi of the XXII mukim. The three chiefs had agreed to submit to the Dutch while abandoning the side of the Keumala-party, and had discussed a mutual defense against the ulama-led resistance, the orang muslimin. Due to the religious scholars’ influence on the Keumala-party it was not deemed very likely that Uma’s co-option would directly bring the Sultan to submission. Deijkerhoff and his staff, however, saw other possibilities.

If Uma switched to the Dutch side, this would mean a ‘sensitive blow’ to the Sultan’s reputation as it would demonstrate the Acehnese that the Dutch were the most powerful actor in theatre. That might cause the Sultan to reconsider his position and submit to the Dutch. Further Uma’s militia would provide the small colonial garrison with much-needed extra capability that could be used to clear a pocket of orang muslimin opposing the western line and give the Dutch control over the islands that belonged to Great Aceh. The administrators in Kutarakja believed Uma could fulfill these tasks as he came from a good family and his marriages had secured him a solid position as an ulèëbalang. It was felt that collaboration with a man that enjoyed such a reputation and network in Acehnese society could only benefit the Dutch cause. Moreover, it was feared that if the Dutch rejected his offer, Uma and his powerful militia would become strongly embedded in the Keumala-party as it was reported that the Sultan was more than willing to appoint Uma as one of his supreme war leaders.

But why would Uma cooperate with the Dutch? The Assistant-Resident of Aceh identified four reasons for this. First, it was known that Uma lacked funding to maintain his activities. Reportedly he was even struggling to provide his 83 closest rakan with their daily share of food, opium, and money. It was also known that Uma had suffered some decline of his power as a consequence of the naval blockades aimed at his ports along Aceh’s west coast. He feared an attack on his home territory of the VI mukim by his father-in-law’s old-time rival Teuku Nyak of Meuraksa. The latter was the original hereditary chief of this municipality who was wrested from his authority by Teuku Nanta somewhere around 1840. According to one source this threat was the true reason for Uma’s meeting with Teuku Nya Muhammed and Teuku Muda Ba’et as these chiefs had promised to support Uma with 200 soldiers each in return for a share of his pepper levies. A third reason was to be found in Uma’s conviction that the Keumala-party was preparing another policy towards the Dutch. He feared the unpredictable consequences of such a change. A final reason was believed to

44 Ibid., 15-20.
46 Ibid., 8.
be the influence of Uma's main wife, Chut Nyak Din, who presumably wished her husband would quit his adventurous live. Probably the first two reasons were the most urgent ones, as later intelligence indicated that Uma's position was weakened by a huge debt of an estimated $15,000 to $20,000.\textsuperscript{49} Furthermore, during his second meeting with the Assistant-Resident Uma already requested to be contracted by the colonial administration as a Panglima with the accompanying income.\textsuperscript{50}

The colonial authorities in Aceh had declined all such requests. From the beginning of the negotiations it was made very clear that Uma's traitorous behaviour of the past was not yet forgotten, and an official alliance with the Dutch could only be sealed, if Uma first would give proof of his good intentions; 'deeds first, than forgiveness'.\textsuperscript{51} Deijkerhoff also stressed the need to 'take measures in order to immediately punish Uma, if he tries to deceive us again'.\textsuperscript{52} A possible sanction would typically include his family and Uma himself had already offered to despatch his wife or one of his sons to Kutaradja as a guarantee for his behaviour. Thus, the local colonial administration in Kutaradja was willing to co-opt Uma if he would first demonstrate his good intentions and under the condition that they obtained an instrument for dominating the co-optive relationship with this infamous opportunist. It was believed that these prerequisites would allow the Dutch to bind a dominant local power-holder, who would augment the colonial administration's influence on the local political marketplace and provide them also with the much-needed resources to augment their military capability.

In Deijkerhoff's view the benefits of Uma's co-option now outweighed the risk as he wrote to his superiors in Batavia:

>'Is it to our benefit to decline all of Teuku Uma's offers, or should we exploit his attempts for rapprochement? I have asked myself the answer to this question many times during the last fourteen days. He is and remains a robber and murderer, whose deeds deserve severe punishment, if we would possess the power to do so. Now we are lacking this power, however, it seems to me, that it would be a good policy to try to connect him -if he himself takes steps in that direction [i.e. compliance to Dutch conditions]- to our interests and have his resources at our disposal.'\textsuperscript{53}

The first reactions from Batavia were negative. The Indian Council, the highest advisory body of the colonial government, was sceptical about Deijkerhoff's plan and also demonstrated a lack of situational awareness by remarking that Aceh's Governor 'seemingly

\textsuperscript{49} NA, MvK, 6219, Geheim Verbaal 28 juni 1893 N8, Indisch Depêche 2 maart 1893 16/1, Deijkerhoff aan Pijnacker Hordijk, 16 februari 1893.

\textsuperscript{50} NA, MvK, 6210, Geheim Verbaal 21 mei 1892 N7, Indisch Depêche 10 maart 1892 31/1, Deijkerhoff aan Pijnacker Hordijk, 28 februari 1892, 7.

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 12.

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 16, italics by author.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 20-21.
doubted the intangibility of our military position in Great-Aceh. Governor-General Pijnacker Hordijk followed the advise of the council and rejected co-option, as Uma’s unpredictable opportunistc behaviour could inflict serious damage to the Dutch effort. Yet the door to collaboration was not completely shut as the authorities decided that, after a clear demonstration of Uma’s good intentions they might reconsider the matter.

On 28 July 1892 Deijkerhoff also received the report of Snouck Hurgronje’s mission to Aceh. As aforementioned Snouck depicted Uma as an opportunistic ‘political adventurer’, who tactfully and certainly not without ‘reservatio mentalis’ had become the most important and respected head of the west coast. In the process he had caused grievance to some of the traditional chiefs of the area, as well as that he had demonstrated a total disregard of the Sultan, in whose name he was officially acting. Snouck also stated that Uma, through the influence of his father-in-law, had become the de facto ruler of the saga of XXV mukims, as the true chief was rather powerless. Furthermore, the report showed that in the past Uma’s main concern in dealing with the Dutch had been his desire to obtain money and that his position now indeed had suffered from the naval blockades of his ports that had seriously cut his revenues. Thus the report sheds some more light on the true intentions of Uma, as due to these setbacks he needed Dutch support to deal with competing more traditional ulëëbalang. In these circumstances Snouck advised the colonial government that there were some options for cautious co-option:

‘A powerful man like Teuku Uma could, once won [for the Dutch cause], give us access to the whole west coast and a part of the XXV mukim. The administration, however, should first be totally convinced, that his interests and ours concur; further, as soon as a good relationship is established, one should continuously seek to exploit it in such a manner that, when Uma dies, the administration could replace him, because a so heterogeneously composed authority like Uma’s often vanishes with its creator.’

Additionally H.T. Damsté reports that Snouck personally advised Deijkerhoff ‘if Uma holds out his hand, take it, but hold it!’. Snouck, thus, also advocated co-option under the condition that it was practiced carefully and only if the colonial administration was convinced of the candour of Uma’s intentions. His analysis demonstrates an understanding of the charismatic
nature of Uma’s authority and he expected that in the current situation recognition of this authority would lead to an effective co-optive alliance.

Snouck’s report, however, would win Batavia’s approval for the Teuku Uma policy in a way unrelated to his insightful analysis of this opportunistic political adventurer. In the report Uma was somewhat of a detail as the core analysis identified the ulama as the true war-mongers, who mobilized the population against the Dutch. As aforementioned the Sultan and his Keumala-party were considered highly irrelevant to the conflict. For Snouck the solution in Aceh, therefore, was to re-adopt an offensive strategy in order to pursue and kill the Islamic clergy and their armed bands. This was to be followed by a pacification campaign, in which the colonial government would firmly consolidate its control. During the concentration policy, such an approach was out of question, as it required a new Dutch engagement with massive commitment of additional resources. Deijkerhoff fiercely opposed Snouck’s report and wrote an angry 105-page reaction to his superiors in which he denounced new Dutch offensives as these would further alienate the population, which was already tired of war.60 In language that almost resembles modern counterinsurgency doctrines Deijkerhoff emphasized the importance of the population, patience, political reconciliation and counter-guerrilla actions. Deijkerhoff acknowledged the ulama’s influence, but considered the uléëbalang as more important, because they enjoyed respect and were the legitimate leaders whose mediation was essential for influencing the population. Thus, the Governor saw the latter as vital for establishing Dutch rule over Aceh as they were instrumental in obtaining control over the population. In his opinion this could be established without Snouck’s proposed offensive operations against the ulama. Moreover, Deijkerhoff seems also personally aggrieved by Snouck as his reaction is permeated with disdain seemingly caused by the latter’s disregard of the local administration during his research in Aceh.61 An earlier letter to the Governor-General in which Deijkerhoff disapproved of both Snouck’s advice and Van Heutsz’s brochure contained a similar tone.62 Further it has to be mentioned that under Pompe van Meerdervoort the administration in Kutaradja had already commissioned an ethnographical study of the Acehnese by its medical officer J.R. Jacobs. When Deijkerhoff took over Aceh’s governorship he also became the patron of this study of which he mentions that it will clearly demonstrate some of Snouck’s errors -which it did not.63 More important than Deijkerhoff’s annoyances was that the administrators in Batavia also rejected Snouck’s recommendation for the obvious reasons; instead of a return to military aggressiveness, they favoured a political approach, which would not require additional resources and would

61 Ibid., 64.
63 Ibid., 16, see also Julius Jacobs, Het Familie- en Kampongleven op Groot-Atjeh, Een Beijdrage tot de Ethnographie van Noord-Sumatra, Deel I (Leiden: Brill, 1894), 5. The study is also dedicated to Deijkerhoff.
‘exploit discord between the Acehnese and support the secular chiefs against the ulama’. Thus the colonial government followed just the political element of Snouck’s advice, while his call (and Van Heutsz’s) for military actions in support of this political approach was ignored. The result was a new policy under which the Dutch aimed to establish control over Aceh through the ulêëbalang’s influence and resources.

This change in political policy inspired the events that took place in Aceh in 1893. Now collaboration with ulêëbalang was the preferred approach, the chances that Batavia would give permission for Uma’s co-option had risen considerably. In February Uma again approached the local administration in order to discuss his submission. Uma was told that as long as the Dutch fortifications suffered from fire from the VI mukim, it was impossible to consider a more favourable attitude towards Uma. When subsequently the shootings stopped, the time had come for Deijkerhoff to call upon Uma to definitely demonstrate his good intentions; the local administration in Aceh deemed it suitable that Uma would clear the sagi of the XXV mukim of the orang muslimin. This must have been a great opportunity for Uma to secure and augment his position under a mandate and with support of the colonial authorities in Kutaradja. The actions began in July 1893 and Uma succeeded in quickly establishing dominance with the help of a coalition of well-disposed chiefs. Undoubtedly the supplies of food and opium as well as money provided to Uma by the Dutch (a total of $23,818 was spent on the operation in the XXV mukim) were instrumental in forging this alliance of ulêëbalang. Furthermore the Dutch supported Uma and his troops with artillery and several infantry companies, that executed feint attacks and occupied tactically essential positions that were cleared by the Acehnese allies. As the operation was on, Deijkerhoff was still in doubt about Batavia’s permission for further collaboration with Uma, as he informed his superiors that he had ‘further plans with Uma, that, I do not doubt, will bear Her [the colonial government’s] complete approval’. When Deijkerhoff sent Batavia a cable with Uma’s progress as of 8 August, the answer from Pijnacker Hordijk was that he was curious to learn if the Governor

64 NA, MvK, 6222, Geheim Verbaal 1893 Q14, Indisch Depêche 25 november 1893, Gouverneur Generaal aan Minister van Koloniën, 25 september 1893, see also Advies van de Raad van Nederlandsch Indie, vergadering 8 september 1893. Although these reports are from September 1893, the political policy changed as of end January 1893. J.M. Somer, De Korte Verklaring, 228.


66 NA, MvK, 6221, Geheim Verbaal 23 september 1893 B12, Indisch Depêche 17 augustus 1893 71/1, Deijkerhoff aan Pijnacker Hordijk, 2 augustus 1893 621/R.

67 Ibid., 7.

68 NA, MvK, 6223, Geheim Verbaal 30 november 1893 X14, Indisch Depêche 14 september 1893 82/1, III Missive Deijkerhoff aan Pijnacker Hordijk, 29 augustus 1893.

69 During the collaboration with Uma a typical pattern of military operations would develop in which Uma’s militia would do the fighting, while the Dutch would use their fire power to support him and consecutively occupy enemy positions which were taken by Uma’s men. See, for instance, NA, MvK, 6221, Geheim Verbaal 23 september 1893 B12, Indisch Depêche 17 augustus 1893 71/1, Deijkerhoff aan Pijnacker Hordijk, 2 augustus 1893 621/K., 12, NA, MvK, 6223, Geheim Verbaal 30 november 1893 X14, Indisch Depêche 24 augustus 1893 77/2, I Deijkerhoff aan Pijnacker Hordijk, 16 augustus 1893, 7, NA, MvK, 6223, Geheim Verbaal 30 november 1893 X14, Indisch Depêche 28 september 1893 87/5, I Deijkerhoff aan Legercommandant Pittius, 30 augustus 1893, 4,9,11.

still acted in accordance with his instructions of 20 August 1891, which explicitly excluded any form of collaboration with Uma. It now becomes clear that Deijkerhoff acted on his own initiative, for in his next dispatch to Pijnacker Hordijk he replies that he operates in conformity with previous instructions, merely allowing Uma an opportunity to show his good intents. Deijkerhoff also mentions that he promised his personal recommendation for forgiveness by the colonial administration, once Uma had chased the muslimin from the XXV mukim. He also promised the title of Panglima Perang Besar (great warlord), but did not mention any financial or administrative benefits. On 10 August the ulama and their supporters were successfully chased from the XXV mukim in a last combined operation of Acehnese militias supported by Dutch troops. Batavia was now confronted with a fait accompli.

Deijkerhoff’s after action report to the Governor-General refers to the discussion with Uma about the conditions of his ‘proof of intent’. In February Aceh’s Governor had expressed that in his opinion no talks were to be conducted as long as the concentrated line was harassed from the western village of Lamtih. It seems that after this initial step Uma himself offered to sweep the whole sagi. Considering his own interest, this hardly comes as a surprise. As aforementioned Uma conducted the operation with some help of Dutch forces, but relied mostly on allied chiefs to provide him with additional manpower. One of those chiefs had been equipped by the Dutch with 28 rifles. This modus operandi provided a lot of information on local politics as it became clear that most chieftains in Great Aceh preferred to stay in the background or fulfilled a dubious role (i.e. collaborating with both the resistance and the Dutch). It was remarkable that there was such a low number of casualties on Uma’s side, which the administrative staff in Kutaradja attributed to the nature of Acehnese warfare. This allowed opponents to negotiate before fighting and one of the parties could opt not to stay and fight, but instead retreat without suffering harm. In Deijkerhoff eyes’ Uma had passed the test and he requested total forgiveness for Uma by the colonial administration in Batavia. The fact that of the 28 rifles, which were lent to one of Uma’s allies, twenty had already been returned to the Dutch provided even more evidence of his pro-Dutch attitude. Also, on 25 August Uma personally came to Kutaradja in order to submit himself and ask Deijkerhoff for forgiveness, which prompted the latter to despatch another request for a positive decision from Batavia. Confronted with all these developments, the Indian
Council and the Governor-General now approved Uma’s rehabilitation, warning that treason was still assessed as a realistic danger, and that ‘vigilance was required to prevent Uma from using his newly-acquired power against us’. Thus, on 5 September 1893 Governor-General Pijnacker Hordijk finally empowered Governor Deijkerhoff to establish a co-optive relationship with Teuku Uma:

‘I [Pijnacker Hordijk] authorize You [Deijkerhoff] to grant an unconditional and complete pardon to Teuku Uma on behalf of the Government of the Netherlands-Indies with allotment, if you still deem this desirable, of the title of Teuku Panglima Perang Besar and the guarantee that he will not be punished or fined for previous occasions.’

5.3 The co-optive relationship with Uma

On 30 September 1893 a ceremony was held in Kutaradja in which Governor Deijkerhoff sealed the treaty with Teuku Uma, as the latter and 15 of his lieutenants pledged allegiance to the Dutch. A five-article certificate of ‘appointment and confirmation’ arranged Uma’s installation as Panglima Perang Besar, under the name of Teuku Djohan Pahlawan. In this function Uma became the colonial administration’s supreme warlord for Aceh and its Dependencies and he was entitled to raise a permanent legion of 200 soldiers under command of two of his brothers and a trustee, and 40 lieutenants. The legion was all paid for by the Dutch administration which meant that Uma himself received an allowance of 1,000 guilders a month, his three commanders 150 guilders, the lieutenants 50 guilders and the fighters 25 guilders. This brought the total costs of the legion at 8,450 guilders a month, or 101,400 guilders annually. According to the official treaty Uma was obliged to fulfil Dutch request to fight ‘folks who cause riots’ throughout Aceh and its Dependencies, and during operations under his command all Acehnese chiefs had to follow his orders.
The colonial administration would provide the necessary war supplies and Uma himself received -in addition to his allowance- a newly built house. In order to control their new co-optee the Dutch obliged Uma to report himself as soon as possible if summoned to Kutaradja, and forbade him to interfere in internal Acehnese affairs unless tasked by the colonial government or when it concerned his own influence sphere (i.e. XXV mukim and the west-coast). These formal checks and balances could be enforced by cutting Uma’s income through a blockade of his pepper trade or denial of Uma’s allowance as well as diminishment of the other support he received. The staff in Kutaradja, thus, had made its provisions to dominate the co-optive relationship and punish Uma in case he would deceive them once again. Now both requirements for Uma’s co-option-proof of his good intents and a capability to punish him- were met and the official treaty was sealed, the colonial government could start exploiting the influence and resources of their new ally.

Uma’s successful operation in the XXV mukim inspired a further development of the new Dutch policy in Aceh. Co-option of the leading ulëëbalang was the key element and the civil administrators were urged to build up rapport with the mukim chiefs in XXV mukim, all of whom had received financial compensation for their support during the operation and would from then on receive an allowance of 25 guilders a month each. By supporting the secular adat chiefs in their feud with the ulama, the Dutch strived to relieve the war-weary population in Groot-Atjeh. The logic underlying this strategy was the assumption of the Dutch administrators that the ulëëbalang were the legitimate rulers, who enjoyed support, or at least the acquiescence, of the majority of the population. In Deijkerhoff’s view this collaboration could only be maintained by the expansion of Dutch rule outside the concentration line to the areas of the XXV and XXVI mukim, and later also the XXII mukim. By utilizing the militia and power of the chiefs, control could be established without additional colonial troops and Dutch offensives.

When the new Governor-General C.H.A. van der Wijck came into office in October 1893, Deijkerhoff sent him a detailed explanation of his strategy, which had already been implemented by then and that -according to Deijkerhoff- had surprised the government with an almost unprecedented success achieved with few resources. The strategy was based on four pillars, namely (i) chasing away the muslimin gangs, (2) using allied militias as force multipliers, so that additional Dutch forces or offensive operations were not required for the execution of the plan, (3) creating an area cleared of enemy gangs surrounding

84 W.C. Nieuwenhuijzen, De Toekoe Oemar-Politiek, 53-54.
85 See NA, MvK, 6223, Geheim Verbaal 30 november 1893 X14, Indisch Depêche 12 oktober 1893 93/1, IV Missive Deijkerhoff aan Pijnacker Hordijk, 23 september 1893 & NA, MvK, 6225, Geheim Verbaal 12 april 1894 X14, Indisch Depêche 8 maart 1894 108/1, Deijkerhoff aan Van der Wijck, 19 december 1893.
86 As aforementioned ulëëbalang legitimacy was fragile and predominantly based on their economic dominant positions. The bond between those chiefs and their subjects was not as tight as the Dutch assumed. Both the staff in Aceh as well as Snouck Hurgronje failed to observe this.
87 NA, MvK, 6224, Geheim Verbaal 5 februari 1894 W1, Indisch Depêche 9 november 1893 98/1, VII Missive Deijkerhoff aan Van der Wijck, 27 oktober 1893, 11.
88 NA, MvK, 6225, Geheim Verbaal 12 april 1894 X14, Indisch Depêche 8 maart 1894 108/1, Deijkerhoff aan Van der Wijck, 19 december 1893.
the concentration line in *Groot Atjeh*, whereas the population, chiefs, and clergy were all supposed to collaborate with the Dutch and would keep the enemy out of their territory, if necessary with Dutch materiel support, and realizing (4) the provisional occupation of the mentioned territory by Dutch troops and Acehnese militias, which were to be replaced as soon as possible by an ‘Acehnese legion’ under the command of Uma, the champion of this new strategy. The legion would eventually leave, when the local chiefs could guarantee safety. Thus, Uma became instrumental for achieving control over the population in Aceh. Hence the new policy became known as the Teuku Uma policy.

Not only Uma’s fighting power, but even more his tactful skills at negotiating deals with other actors were vital to obtain support from influential local power-holders. This led lieutenant-colonel W.C. Nieuwenhuijzen, Deijkerhoff’s Chief of Staff, to observe that:

‘Teuku Djohan’s [Uma’s new name was mostly used by those serving in Aceh’s administrative staff] legion prompted dominance on all sides; it could not only be considered a pistol on the chest of the orang muslimin, but also a tool to boost the zeal of uléebalang and imams who are not unsympathetically disposed towards us, concerning the protection of their territories against incursions by ulama gangs.’

Uma indeed had demonstrated a remarkable talent in achieving collaboration with various local power-holders in the XXV *mukim*. The situation had become quiet and the Dutch government was pleased. Deijkerhoff ordered repairs of roads and bridges, and opened the market within the concentration line to traders from this *sagi*. The Dutch administrators thus stimulated the local population to resume their agricultural activities. Even a festival for the local population was organized on which occasion the newly co-opted chiefs were officially installed as allies of the Dutch and rewarded with small amounts of money. Soon, however, rumours were heard about the remarkable methods used by Uma. Of course, Snouck Hurgronje was the first to report on these methods. Although Snouck admitted the success of Uma’s operations, he was triggered by the ease of that success in the XXV *mukim*. Indeed, it was very remarkable that Teungku Kutakarang, one of the main *ulama* leaders after Teungku di Tiro’s death and a resident of the XXV *mukim*, had suddenly refrained from all activities,

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89  W.C. Nieuwenhuijzen, *De Toekoe Omar-Politiek*, 103. Deijkerhoff, in this regard, makes the same remark and also mentions the ‘pistol on the chest’ metaphor in a letter to Van der Wijck. NA, MvK, 6225, *Geheim Verbaal 12 april 1894 X14, Indisch Depêche 8 maart 1894* 108/1, Deijkerhoff aan Van der Wijck, 19 december 1893, 23.


Chapter 5 The Course of Co-option

whereas simultaneously his opponents were all chased away by Uma’s men. Snouck deemed it highly probable (and history would prove him right) that Uma and Kutakarang had made a deal, as the latter had preached that the fight against Uma should not be considered a holy war. This effectively meant that Uma’s militia (contrary to Dutch colonial forces) was not to be fought by Kutakarang’s followers. Thus, Uma could easily pacify the saga and in the process help Kutakarang to secure his position by chasing away his competitors. 92

The administrative staff in Kutaradja remained enthusiastic about Uma’s co-option and Deijkerhoff even claimed that due to Uma’s mediation many of the XXV mukim’s ulèébalang now fully supported the Dutch and actively opposed the muslimin gangs. Snouck was worried about the lack of critical review of the results achieved by Uma. According to Snouck the only interest of the chiefs was for them to exercise control over their territory undisturbed; a trait that had caused the Dutch as much advantage as troubles during the war. 93 Further collaboration with the Dutch colonial administration inevitably would lead to interference with their business and a decline of their authority on the long run. This self-interest explained their lack of zeal for the Dutch cause, as expressed by Kutaradja’s Chief of Staff Nieuwenhuijzen. Moreover, it gave them a reason to collaborate with the ulama gangs against the Dutch, as they provided some extra fighting power to defy Dutch interference with their rule. Now it was assumed that an ‘adventurer’ could suddenly convince them to trust the Dutch administration. This was simply to good to be true. One of Snouck’s sources in Aceh did some research and confirmed rumours that the occupation of newly established posts by Uma’s legion was a farce. 94 The informer stated that the guards were only on station to make sure the Dutch would give them their allowance of rice and opium. Another rumour was also confirmed; some chiefs and imams in the controlled areas still allowed the ulama to collect taxes from the population in order to finance the perang sabil. It was also reported that Uma even staged attacks on enemy positions in order to mislead the Dutch. 95 These were all serious concerns, as it slowly became clear that Uma was using bribes and deals with ulèébalang and ulama to establish a superficial level of control. The Indian Council still approved Deijkerhoff’s strategy and the role of Uma as it had brought the Dutch their first large success in years. Due to the methods allegedly used by Uma, however, Deijkerhoff was urged ‘not to show any distrust, but also not to trust Uma’. 96 Aceh’s Governor was not going to show the required critical attitude towards Uma, as throughout the period of co-option he kept on praising his Panglima Perang Besar. Moreover, it seems that Deijkerhoff deliberately stimulated Uma’s methods as, for example, the expenditure for operations included a vast

93 NA, MvK, 6225, Geheim Verbaal 12 april 1894 55, Indisch Depêche 8 maart 1894 16/1 Brief van Snouck Hurgronje, 3-4.
95 NA, MvK, 6225, Geheim Verbaal 12 april 1894 55, Indisch Depêche 8 maart 1894 16/1 Besluit van de Gouverneur Generaal, 8 maart 1894, 26.
96 NA, MvK, 6225, Geheim Verbaal 12 april 1894 55, Indisch Depêche 8 maart 1894 16/1 Advies van de Raad van Indië, uitgebracht in de vergadering 9 februari 1894, 25-30.
amount of money for rewards, and he also provided plenty of opium for distribution among local chiefs.  

Uma thus demonstrated his superb command of main perang tactics as he cleverly exploited his connections with the different opposing parties in order to increase his own power and wealth. In his home territory of the sagi of the XXV mukim as well as in the west coast Dependencies under his influence, Uma could call upon an extended network of family and friends, who were mobilized to create an apparently peaceful atmosphere, of which they all took some material or immaterial advantage. In the rest of Aceh, however, Uma’s influence and connections were limited. Snouck had correctly pointed at the boundaries of Uma’s influence and Deijkerhoff also seemed to realize this as his strategy emphasized a ‘locals-first’ approach. He preferred the use of the militias of local uléébalang to clear their territory from enemy activity and, after that, he would bring in Uma’s legion. The idea behind this approach was that the latter’s presence would allow the members of the local militia to resume their daily livelihood.

Inspired by the large success in the XXV mukim, Deijkerhoff was determined to keep up the momentum of his new strategy and he intended to rapidly organize a similar operation in one of the other sagi of Great Aceh (which had priority over the Dependencies in order to relief the pressure from the concentration line). When Teuku Nya’ Banta, the Panglima Sagi of the XXVI mukim, approached the administration in Kutaradja with a plan for clearing his territory of muslimin on the condition that he would receive the same support as Uma, the next opportunity revealed itself.  

Nya’ Banta was trusted by the Dutch as he was raised and educated at the expenses of the colonial administration after his father, an important Dutch ally, was murdered by a rival. He was powerful enough to withstand his competitors in the sagi and was officially recognized as its leader by both the Dutch and the Sultan. Although it seems logical for such an ally to offer his help to the colonial administration, this was undeniably also an internal Acehnese attempt to form a counterbalance against Uma’s newly won position. Through the eyes of Acehnese local power-holders Uma’s alliance with the Dutch had made him a most dangerous competitor, whose influence had to be contained. Further evidence for this thesis is provided by the fact that Nya’ Banta’s father in law Teuku Nyak of Meuraksa, indeed the long-time rival of Uma’s family, was the driving force beyond Nya’ Banta’s offer. Together with their relative Teuku Chut Tungkub of the sagi’s municipality of the XIII mukim Tungkub they formed an alliance of some 1,300 local fighters that was to clear the XXVI mukim for the colonial administration in order to consolidate their position.

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97 See, for example, NA, MvK, 6223, Geheim Verbaal 30 november 1893 X14, Indisch Deelche 14 september 1893 82/1, III Missive Deijkerhoff aan Pijnacker Hordijk, 29 augustus 1893, and NA, MvK, 6226, Indisch Deelche 17 januari 1894 3/1, Deijkerhoff aan Van der Wijck, 3 januari 1894.

98 NA, MvK, 6223, Geheim Verbaal 30 november 1893 X14, Indisch Deelche 24 augustus 1893 77/2, Deijkerhoff aan Pijnacker Hordijk, toelichting op veertiendaagsch verslag, 16 augustus 1893.

as influential local power-holders on Aceh’s political marketplace and to prevent a further augmentation of Uma’s influence.100

The operation started on 2 September 1893 and was characterized by an initial progress of the involved militias. But soon cracks appeared in the improvised war machine. Teuku Chut Tungkub was unable to rally his militia, because his subordinate chiefs (all mukim chiefs who were the crucial connection between the ulëëbalang and the peasants living in the villages) demanded money for their further collaboration. Tungkub, known for his ‘greed and avarice’, refused to pay his subordinates, so they did not engage in combat.101 Albeit Tungkub solved these problems, his contribution to the operation remained troublesome and on 28 September he informed the Dutch that he could no longer support his Acehnese allies. A few days later, however, he again approached the colonial administration with a request for weapons and money, which would allow him to mobilize his people.102 The administrators in Kutaradja, however, were fed up with Tungkub’s hesitance, that by now seriously hampered the whole operation. He was arrested and punished with an administrative sanction for his ‘deceitful and mendacious behaviour as well as a disrespect for the Netherlands-Indies’ authorities’ which meant that he was detained in a fortification in the west coast Dependency of Meulaboh.103 In the mean time the operation received a further setback as Teuku Nya’Banta was wounded and Teuku Nyak was temporarily unable to command his militia in the field.

Now the operation had definitely stalled, Deijkerhoff decided to use his new trump, Uma’s legion. First Uma was ordered to meet with Nya’ Banta and Nyak on 8 October 1893 in order to discuss the operation thus far.104 Deijkerhoff deliberately staged this as a threat in order to encourage the local ulëëbalang to pick up the fighting. It was made clear that if nothing would happen, Uma would become the overall commander of the action, and thus he would be able to augment his influence in the XXVI mukim. Teuku Nyak was the first to protest and asked Deijkerhoff to keep Uma out of the affairs of the sagi. However, as there was not much change by 20 October, Deijkerhoff ordered Uma to clear the XXVI mukim from muslimin.105 When Uma joined the fight with 100 of his fighters on 21 October 1893, he was promptly appointed commander over the local ulëëbalang and their militias exactly as was arranged in the official co-optive treaty.

Of course, the local chiefs were far from pleased with this measure. The Dutch had allowed a dangerous outsider into their locale to interfere with their affairs. Teuku Nyak had

100 NA, MvK, 6223, Geheim Verbaal 30 november 1893 X14, Indisch Depêche 28 september 1893 87/1, IV Missive Deijkerhoff aan Pijnacker Hordijk, 14 september 1893, 14.
101 Ibid., 14-15.
102 NA, MvK, 6223, Geheim Verbaal 30 november 1893 X14, Indisch Depêche 26 oktober 1893 95/1, Missive Deijkerhoff aan Pijnacker Hordijk, 11 oktober 1893, 6-7.
103 NA, MvK, 6224, Geheim Verbaal 5 februari 1894 W1, Indisch Depêche 13 november 1893 99/1, I Extract journaal van de Gouverneur van Atjeh etc., 10 t/m 22 oktober 193, 24 oktober 1893, 7.
104 NA, MvK, 6223, Geheim Verbaal 30 november 1893 X14, Indisch Depêche 26 oktober 1893 95/1, Missive Deijkerhoff aan Pijnacker Hordijk, 11 oktober 1893, 8.
105 NA, MvK, 6224, Geheim Verbaal 5 februari 1894 W1, Indisch Depêche 9 november 1893 98/1, Missive Deijkerhoff aan Van der Wijck, 25 oktober 1893, 872/K, 15.
already communicated his disapproval of this move, but soon many additional complaints about Uma were sent to and filed by the administration in Kutaradja.\footnote{NA, MvK, 6224, Geheim Verbaal 5 februari 1894 W1, Indisch Depêche 14 december 1893 110/1 III, Missive Deijkerhoff aan Van der Wijck, 5 december 1893, 12.} Whereas a similar situation, that occurred simultaneously along the west coast where Uma’s former rivals were worried about his new powerful position, was handled with care (a conference between local power-holders and Dutch administrators was organized and Uma was made to promise he would consider his former enemies as friends, and ultimately he was forbidden to interfere with the administration of the west coast), the Dutch ignored the appeals of the allied chiefs in the XXVI mukim.\footnote{See, NA, MvK, 6223, Geheim Verbaal 30 november 1893 X14, Indisch Depêche 28 september 1893 87/1, IV Missive Deijkerhoff aan Pijnacker Hordijk, 14 september 1893, 20-21, and NA, MvK, 6224, Geheim Verbaal 5 februari 1894 W1, Indisch Depêche 9 november 1893 98/1, Missive Deijkerhoff aan Van der Wijck, 25 oktober 1893,872/K, 16, NA, MvK, 6232, Geheim Verbaal 11 april 1895 G6, Missive Deijkerhoff aan Van der Wijck, 29 januari 1895.} Moreover, Deijkerhoff considered it his only mistake that he had relied on Nya’ Banta’s and Nyak’s capabilities for too long. Furthermore the settlement of Teuku Chut Tungkub’s detainment demonstrated a clear disregard for the local chiefs who requested his release.\footnote{Ibid., 7-13.} Bail was set at a tremendous $10,000 as well as the consignment of his both wives and children. When the local chiefs of the XIII mukim Tungkub were unable to raise the money, Dutch troops arrested the family. This caused a general panic in that municipality and made the population leave the scene. Thus, what began as an initiative by three local power-holders to consolidate their own position and prevent Uma’s interference in the sagi of the XXVI mukim, led to the opposite effect; the allies had lost the trust of the Dutch -although the colonial administration permitted all three of them to remain in their position-, the situation on the ground had become very confused, and, most important, Uma was allowed to intervene.

Uma successfully restored the peace in the XXVI mukim and the sagi was declared free of muslimin by 17 November 1893.\footnote{NA, MvK, 6224, Geheim Verbaal 5 februari 1894 W1, Indisch Depêche 23 november 1893 102/1, IV Telegram No. 337 Deijkerhoff aan Van der Wijck, 17 november 1893.} Now Uma was practicing main perang across the boundaries of his own area of influence. The support made available to him by the colonial administration provided the leverage for this modus operandi. This resulted in the cooperation of some chiefs and clergy, including Nya’ Banta and Chut Tungkub (who was forgiven once the bail was paid on October 28 1893) who saw no other option to maintain their position, while others persistently refused to collaborate with Uma.\footnote{‘Snouck Hurgronje aan Van der Wijck’, undated, ed. E. Gobée and C. Adriaanse, Ambtelijk Adviezen van C. Snouck Hurgronje, 172-174. As aforementioned this letter can be dated to end 1895 as it is probably a draft version of a more formally formulated letter included in NA, MvK 6235, Geheim Verbaal 31 december 1895 M19, Indisch Depêche 9 november 1895 44/c. See also NA, MvK, 6224, Geheim Verbaal 5 februari 1894 W1, Indisch Depêche 9 november 1893 98/1, VIII Missive Deijkerhoff aan Van der Wijck, 28 oktober 1893, 877/K.} The latter were completely hostile to the Dutch, while the former copied Uma’s behaviour and started to arrange deals with the colonial administration as well as with the resistance (now including Uma’s enemies). Snouck consequently concluded in 1895 that during the two years that Uma had exerted control over the XXVI mukim, this control was far from complete and rather superficial. The relatively
peaceful situation that had existed in this sagi since the events of 1893 was the result of a precarious balance, ‘a modus vivendi’, between the colonial administration, the local chiefs, and the leading ulama.111 This came at the cost of the colonial administration’s authority as the main perang tactics practiced by Uma and other local power-holders officially allied to the Dutch undermined Kutarakja’s position. The deals cut between these Dutch co-optees and the ulama-led resistance clearly illustrate this; the colonial administration’s payment for guarding the posts in the area was shared between ulèëbalang and ulama, and the latter were permitted to freely collect tax for the holy war against the Dutch.112

When Uma was ordered to pacify the sagi of the XXII mukim, the result was even worse. Initially Deijkerhoff had hoped to keep up his momentum and ordered Uma to invade the sagi immediately after the operations in the XXVI mukim ended on 17 November 1893.113 The operation in XXII mukim ended in December, but soon it became clear that follow-up would be necessary as the results were unsatisfactory. A renewed offensive was launched in February 1894 and lasted until April, but also failed to yield a successful result.114 From then on actions against (parts of) the XXII mukim became a frequently recurring event during Uma’s period as a Dutch co-optee. The reasons for this can be found in the attitude of the chiefs and clergy of the central valley of the Aceh River that dominated the XXII mukim. This area had always been a stronghold of ulama resistance, making its local power-holders less sensitive to Uma’s main perang practices. At best Uma’s methods resulted in a temporary break in enemy activities in some areas of this sagi, but they certainly did not suffice to consolidate a solid foothold in this pocket of resistance.115 The only tangible result of the repeated actions in the XXII mukim was the establishment of two temporary posts, Anak Galung and Senelop, some six kilometres into the sagi.116 However, when General J.A. Vetter, Commander-in-Chief of the Dutch Colonial Army, visited Aceh on an inspection trip in 1895, he reported that those posts were too vulnerable to sustain as they were situated too deep in hostile territory.117 Moreover, Vetter also remarked that whereas the situation in the XXV and XXVI mukim was quiet and the population’s attitude was favourable to the Dutch, there had been no such change in neither the situation nor the people’s attitude in the XXII mukim since the commencement of operations in this sagi.118

111 ‘Snouck Hurgronje aan Van der Wijck’, undated, 176. See also NA, MvK, 6230, Geheim Verbaal 1 december 1894 E1, Indisch Depêche 26 juli 1894 68/1, Snouck Hurgronje aan Van der Wijck 15 juli 1894, 1.6. This letter is not included in ed. E. Gobée and C. Adriaanse, Ambtelijk Adviezen van C. Snouck Hurgronje.


113 NA, MvK, 6224, Geheim Verbaal 5 februari 1894 W1, Indisch Depêche 23 november 1893 102/1, IV Telegram No. 337 Deijkerhoff aan Van der Wijck, 17 november 1893.

114 See NA, MvK, 6226, Geheim Verbaal 8 mei 1894 N6, Indisch Depêche 14 maart 1894 18/1, Deijkerhoff aan Van der Wijck, 27 februari 1894, 7, NA, MvK, 6227, Geheim Verbaal 23 juli 1894 E1, Indisch Depêche 19 april 1894 31/1, Deijkerhoff aan Van der Wijck, 10 april 1894, 7.

115 Ibid., 176-178.


118 Ibid., 3.8.42.
What did the colonial administration think of these results of the Teuku Uma policy thus far? Of course, Deijkerhoff was positive about the effects of Uma’s co-option. He remained so until the end of the collaboration and fiercely argued against any attempts of the colonial administration in Batavia to limit Uma’s role in Aceh.¹¹⁹ The methods used by his protégé were subordinate to the benefits for the Dutch, also to the assumed benefits for the population brought about by the stability in especially the XXV and XXVI mukim. As mentioned in the previous paragraph army commander Vetter also noted the peaceful situation and benevolent attitude in those sagi of Great Aceh. However, Vetter was critical about the lack of progress in the XXII mukim, the main pocket of ulama-led resistance. Furthermore, he considered Uma’s position too powerful to match with Dutch interest and urged for a more solid base (i.e. additional colonial troops) for consolidating colonial rule in the XXV and XXVI mukim and establishing control in XXII mukim.¹²⁰ Enhanced military patrolling among the people would make the Dutch less dependent on opportunistic Acehnese allies, and thus the Dutch ‘would no longer need to assume [from their co-optees] that the situation was quiet and peaceful, but certainly know this’.¹²¹ Snouck went one step further and called the stable situation in Great Aceh a ‘beautiful panorama that he [Uma] magically projects on the eyes of the administration and which is founded on deception’ and that this would last only as long as Uma would be allowed to play ‘en grande seigneur’ with Dutch guilders.¹²² Governor-General Van der Wijck, who was advised by Snouck, therefore constantly raised questions concerning Uma’s integrity -albeit he initially supported Uma’s role.¹²³ The consecutive collision between the colonial administrators in Batavia and Kutaradja eventually led to a conference in December 1895. This conference between Van der Wijck and Deijkerhoff was based on Vetter’s inspection report and heavily informed by Snouck and thus led to a constraint on Uma’s role in Aceh. Against Deijkerhoff’s will it was decided that Uma’s role would be restricted to his own sagi of the XXV mukim and small parts of XXII mukim while the XXVI mukim would be controlled by the Dutch Colonial Army with help of the local chiefs.¹²⁴

In the light of the concentration policy, however, it is understandable that Deijkerhoff regarded his Teuku Uma policy a success. The combined operations of the Dutch Colonial Army and Uma’s legion had extended the line, as ten new posts (among which Anak Galung and Senelop) were established in 1894 and 1895. The temporary new posts, which were to be replaced by more solid fortifications, together formed the Buitenlinie (outer line). Dutch


¹²⁰ NA, MvK, 6237, Geheim Verbaal 23 April 1896 Z5, Indisch Depêche 26 december 1895 981/1, Vetter, Nota betreffende mijn bevindingen in Atjeh en Onderhoorigheden en de daarop gegronde voorstellen, 14 december 1895, 43, 52-55.

¹²¹ Ibid., 60.

¹²² ‘Snouck Hurgronje aan Van der Wijck’, undated, 170.


casualties had decreased considerably as the frequent attacks and infiltrations had ceased, and all this was achieved without a significant enlargement of Dutch troops.\footnote{C.A. Heshusius, ‘Honderd jaar geleden: de geconcentreerde linie in Atjeh’, 37-38.} Therefore, it is not surprising that Minister of Colonies Bergsma supported Deijkerhoff, criticized Batavia’s attempts to change the policy in Aceh and even nominated Deijkerhoff for promotion to Knight third class of the highest Dutch military order, the Militaire Willemsorde.\footnote{See NA, MvK, 6232, Geheim Verbaal 5 april 1895 R5, Telegram Bergsma aan Van der Wijck, 5 april 1895, and NA, MvK, 6232, Geheim Verbaal 11 april 1895 F6, Bergsma aan Koningin-Regentes Emma, 11 april 1895.} Bergsma’s opinion, however, was ill-informed as it was based upon reports on the situation within the concentration line. Bergsma was impressed by these reports and considered the situation in Aceh as a whole of less importance. His assessment of the effects of Uma’s collaboration was positive and, consequently, he characterized the situation in Aceh in 1895 as follows:

‘Within the concentrated line and in the territories between this line and the temporary posts [the outer line] the safety of persons and properties was almost as desired; the only offence that was now and then committed was cattle-lifting.’\footnote{NA, MvK, 6234, Geheim Verbaal 18 september 1895 B14, Bergsma aan Van der Wijck, 18 september 1895.}

The enhanced safety situation within the line did not come at the expense of the Dutch Colonial Army. But what price did the Dutch pay to maintain their co-optive relationship with Uma? The administration in Kutaradja invested vast amounts of money in, and supplied weapons and other goods, to their Acehnese allies. As aforementioned the annual costs for maintaining Uma’s legion were more than 100,000 guilders. Additionally, the allocated budget for the various local militias of other ulëëbalang (all together varying between 600-900 soldiers) totalled another 120,000. Further, 66,300 guilders were reserved for the allowances of co-opted chiefs and their subordinates.\footnote{W.C. Nieuwenhuijzen, De Toekoe Oemar-Politiek, 108-109.} The importance of money for establishing and maintaining these co-optive relationships is further stressed by Deijkerhoff’s remark that there was ‘no better means than money to link Acehnese local power-holders to our interests’.\footnote{NA, MvK, 6234, Geheim Verbaal 18 september 1895 B14, Bergsma aan Van der Wijck, 18 september 1895.} As the main co-optee, Uma also received many other benefits and privileges, including a new house, built for the Panglima Perang Besar at the expense of 11,364 guilders (according to Deijkerhoff this move was also necessary to enchant Uma’s main wife Chut Nyak Din).\footnote{NA, MvK, 6226, Geheim Verbaal 8 mei 1894 N6, Indisch Depêche 17 januari 1894 5/1, Deijkerhoff aan Van der Wijck, 3 januari 1894, 6.} In comparison with the total costs of the colonial forces, such an amount might not be extravagantly high, but the immaterial costs of the Teuku Uma policy were far higher of course. By relying on Uma for military actions as well as for the co-option of other chiefs, the Dutch strategy in Aceh had become dependent on a single local power-holder of dubious
reputation. As a consequence of the empowerment of Uma, the Dutch apparently controlled the biggest part of Great Aceh; but did the Dutch also control Uma?

It was clear that Van der Wijck and Snouck rather thought the opposite, and they were proved right. They had warned many times against Uma’s opportunistic behaviour. He would ultimately pursue his own interests and not those of the colonial authorities that nominally commanded him. It turned out that the alliance lasted as long as the conditions were favourable for Uma to practice his main perang methods with support of Dutch money and goods. The turning point came in December 1895. Not only did Batavia oblige the local administration in Kutaradja to put a constraint on Uma’s role, but far more important was the death Teungku Kutakarang, Uma’s trustworthy ulama-ally in his home saga of the XXV mukim. Immediately a surge of enemy activities was reported. Kutakarang’s successor refused to participate in Uma’s main perang practices. He dispatched messengers announcing that from then on the fight against Uma and his legion was also regarded as a holy war. Effectively this meant a call to the people to stand up and fight against Uma. This was a huge blow to Uma, as suddenly his position had come under attack from within his own power centre, the XXV mukim. The superficially stable situation in Aceh now deteriorated quickly.

5.4 The end of the co-optive relationship and its aftermath

In January 1896 the inner perimeter of the concentrated line was infiltrated and the main Dutch barracks near Kutaradja came under attack. Moreover, the posts of the line were frequently threatened. Especially in the south the situation was bad, as resistance from the XXII mukim grew fiercer. Deijkerhoff decided that it was time for another operation in this saga, and ordered Uma to assemble his legion and auxiliary militias in order to launch an attack at the end of March. Even though some reports had revealed Uma was about to defect, Deijkerhoff was convinced that his protégé would solve the issue in the XXII mukim. In the preparations for this operation the administration in Kutaradja delivered a lot of new equipment and supplies to Uma. Some 878 rifles, including 378 of the new Beaumont-type, and 25,000 bullets were distributed. In addition, $18,000, opium and other supplies were handed over to Uma. However, the excursion, which was scheduled for 29 March, would never take place. When operations did not commence on that day, it became clear that Uma had departed from the Dutch side. Deijkerhoff now desperately cabled Van der Wijck asking

131 NA, MvK, 6234, Geheim Verbaal 23 april 1896 25, Indisch Depêche 6 januari 1896 i/1, Deijkerhoff aan Van der Wijck, 21 december 1895.
133 A. Kruisheer, Atjeh 1896, 11.
Chapter 5 The Course of Co-option

for immediate assistance and informing him that not only had Uma abandoned the Dutch side, but that also other chiefs had started to do the same.\textsuperscript{136}

On 30 March Uma sent Deijkerhoff a letter in which he explained that he had decided to take a break from his war activities, for the Dutch had offended him, his connections, and the people of Aceh.\textsuperscript{137} Uma cynically suggested that those responsible for these offenses, a Dutch colonial official and an Acehnese agent, should be ordered to mount an offensive against the XXII mukim. Furthermore he insisted that despite his refusal to fight he would maintain his loyalty to the Dutch and especially to the administration in Kutaradja:

\begin{quote}
\textit{... and if Your Excellency [Deijkerhoff] wishes to punish me, I will not resist, for my feelings for the Kompeuni are unchanged, and I hope to remain under the shadow of the Governmental flag, while I haven’t changed my feelings for Your Excellency, the colonel of the staff [Nieuwenhuijzen], Resident [K.F.H.] Van Langen, and the Assistant-Resident in Kutaradja.}\textsuperscript{138}
\end{quote}

Uma repeated this message in several successive letters in one of which he even called Deijkerhoff his father.\textsuperscript{139} Uma’s claim of unchanged loyalty to the Dutch, however, was highly doubtful; an investigation of the accused offenses produced the insight that it concerned minor incidents which were heavily exaggerated by Uma.\textsuperscript{140} Moreover, a report by Resident Van Langen demonstrated that Uma had truly departed the Dutch side for various reasons varying from the decline of his influence to superstitious prophecies about his death and the birth of a son who would become ‘Raja of Aceh’ (Chut Nyak Din was pregnant, but ultimately this pregnancy turned out to be illusionary).\textsuperscript{141} At the end of March 1896 Uma’s position at the local political marketplace had become such that it simply was no longer in his interest to continue the current collaboration with the Dutch. The ‘treason’, thus, was a logical outcome of the calculus of self-interest.

Whereas Uma’s loyalty to the colonial administration did certainly change, his opportunistic character proved to be of an unchangeable nature. This was most clearly demonstrated in his letters of 12 and 23 April in which he suggests that a payment of 150,000 guilders a month would be enough for him to resume his activities and secure entire Aceh

\textsuperscript{136} NA, MvK, 6239, Geheim Verbaal 8 augustus 1896 N14, Indisch Depêche 2 april 1896 27/2, telegrammen Deijkerhoff aan Van der Wijck, 29 en 30 maart 1896.

\textsuperscript{137} See NA, MvK, 6238, Geheim Verbaal 21 mei CB/30, Brief Toekoe Oemar aan Deijkerhoff, 30 maart 1896 & A. Kruisheer, Atjeh 1896, Deel I, 315-316.

\textsuperscript{138} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{139} See NA, MvK, 6239, Geheim Verbaal 8 augustus 1896 N14, Indisch Depêche 22 april 1896 37/2 & Indisch Depêche 11 mei 1896 42/1, Brieven van Toekoe Oemar/Djohan 12,15 & 25 april & Kruisheer, Atjeh 1896, Deel I, 316-326.

\textsuperscript{140} See NA, MvK, 6239, Geheim Verbaal 8 augustus 1896 N14, Indisch Depêche 14 april 1896 33/1, Proces Verbaal van verhoren van Controleur der 2e klasse K.W. Gisolf & Hoofddjaksa Mohamad Arif.

and its Dependencies from ‘Trumon to the corner of Perlak’ for the Dutch and maintain a peaceful and orderly situation similar to that on the island of Java.\textsuperscript{142} This enormous sum of 1,800,000 guilders annually, together with a ban on interference of other ulëëbalang with Uma’s war efforts, apparently sufficed to tip the balance of Uma’s interest in favour of further collaboration with the Dutch. This comes as no surprise as such a price would unquestionably make him the most powerful local power-holder in entire Aceh. At that time, however, the Dutch authorities were unanimous in rejecting the proposal as they mutually concluded that Snouck’s analysis had always been right; ‘indeed, sad but true in all respects’, Uma had been performing a ‘comedy’ for the Dutch and they now no longer intended to prolong this play.\textsuperscript{143} On 26 April 1896 the co-optive relationship formally ended when the ‘traitor’ Uma was officially fired as the colonial administration’s Panglima Perang Besar and he lost Dutch recognition of his position as an ulëëbalang.\textsuperscript{144} From now on the hunt for Uma was open and it was publicly proclaimed that ‘the Netherlands-Indies’ government does not want to deal with such a person, who can be trusted by no one, and betrays everyone’.\textsuperscript{145} Whereas Uma first was an entrusted co-optee of the Dutch, he now had become their enemy; but what where the ramifications of this ‘treason’?

The direct consequence of Uma’s defection was the collapse of ‘Deijkerhoff’s house of cards’.\textsuperscript{146} Dutch control outside the inner perimeter of the concentration line quickly faded away as local chiefs - driven by their need to survive- opted to collaborate with a more powerful party, i.e. Uma or the ulama-led resistance. Moreover, the Dutch rewards and support had brought Uma sufficient power to claim a leading position in the resistance.\textsuperscript{147} Uma, the ulama-led gangs, and the Sultan now joined efforts against their mutual enemy, the Dutch colonial administration. This was the beginning of a cooperation that ultimately would also physically unite the three parties as from 1898 they all conducted their hostilities against the Dutch from Pidië.\textsuperscript{148} Thus Uma’s ‘treason’ boosted the Acehnese resistance and painfully demonstrated that the local administration’s perception of Dutch control over the Acehnese outside the concentration line was founded on an illusion. The direct result of Uma’s abandonment therefore was that the Dutch once again were enclosed in the fortified zone surrounding Kutaradja. All attempts to end the stalemate of the concentration policy had been in vain as the colonial regime found itself in the same position as at the beginning of this policy in 1885.

\textsuperscript{142} See NA, MvK, 6239, Geheim Verbaal 8 augustus 1896 N14, Indisch Depêche 22 april 1896 37/2, Bief van Tokeve Oemar aan Deijkerhoff, and A. Kruisheer, Atjeh 1896, Deel I, 322-323.

\textsuperscript{143} NA, MvK, 6239, Geheim Verbaal 8 augustus 1896 N14, Indisch Depêche 18 mei 1896 45/1, Vetter aan Van der Wijck, 9 mei 1896.

\textsuperscript{144} NA, MvK, 6239, Geheim Verbaal 8 augustus 1896 N14, Indisch Depêche 11 mei 1896 42/7, Besluit waarnemend Gouverneur Van Langen, 26 april 1896.

\textsuperscript{145} NA, MvK, 6239, Geheim Verbaal 8 augustus 1896 N14, Indisch Depêche 11 mei 1896 42/7, Proclamatie Vetter, 27 april 1896.


\textsuperscript{147} C. Snouck Hurgronje, The Acehnese, Volume I, XIII-XIV.

This setback demanded a response. The Teuku Uma policy had become a complete failure because the administration in Kutaradja was unable to control its main co-optee; the line between treaty and treason had been too easy to cross. The Dutch had been the preferred agent for co-option as long as it was in Uma’s interest to do so. However, the administration in Kutaradja, bounded by the limitations of the concentration policy, was far from being the dominant actor in Aceh and therefore incapable of enforcing compliance of its co-optees. Therefore the Dutch needed to tip the balance of power in their favour in order to gain control over the Acehnese. This required a change of policy that started with the replacement of Deijkerhoff. In order to save the situation Army Commander Vetter was named temporarily Governmental Commissioner for Aceh and dispatched with an expeditionary force of more than 2,000 soldiers, mainly drawn from Padang and Java. Vetter understood that the Dutch could only control Aceh if they were capable of demonstrating and maintaining their dominance over the Acehnese. The troop reinforcements finally brought the means for establishing the hard-needed credible coercive capability the local administration in Kutaradja lacked under the limitations of the concentration policy. Moreover, by reputation Vetter was the right person to implement a more aggressive policy; after an initial failure to quell a Balinese uprising on Lombok in 1894 due to a similar ‘treason’ of the ruling Raja, Vetter had successfully pacified the island by adopting a brutal offensive policy.

Upon his arrival on April 8 Vetter immediately initiated a punitive expedition in the valley of Great Aceh in order to demonstrate the dominance of the Dutch colonial authorities. Using his reputation, he made it clear to the Acehnese that compliance with the Dutch would bring peace upon them, while a failure to do so would result in brutal actions:

‘I have wiped Mataram on Lombok [the capital and a resistance stronghold] from earth and I have subdued the big and mighty Tjakra Negara [another stronghold of the resistance on Lombok]. Do you wish me to impose those disasters on Aceh once again? Is it needed once again for our soldiers to come here with thousands and many canons to destroy what makes you happy? … Where my troops won’t be confronted with resistance, nobody needs to fear for his life, property and possessions, however, where I will meet resistance, I will break it, thus it is in your hands to be spared from the disasters of war.’

Hardened by twenty years of war, however, the Acehnese were used to such language from the authorities in Kutaradja. Acehnese local power-holders, knowing that a surge in Dutch offensive actions was typically a temporarily affair and aware of the strength of the resistance-a result of the passive concentration policy and the current concord between especially Uma’s faction and the ulama-led resistance-, mostly ignored Vetter’s proclamation and chose to collaborate with the Acehnese war parties. Consequently the Dutch colonial troops were met with well-organized and equipped resistance, that also enjoyed full popular support. Therefore Vetter opted to assemble his troops within the inner perimeter concentration line (the outer line was abandoned now) in order to launch mobile columns against selected targets. Of course the first of these actions was to be directed against the culprit of the turmoil, Uma.

On 27 April the excursion to punish Uma started. The operations focused on Uma’s positions and strongholds in his home territory of the VI mukim, but also in the adjacent IV mukim. Uma’s residence Lampisang was conquered on May 24 by a mobile column under command of then lieutenant-colonel Van Heutsz (of course there was no trace of Uma himself). Remarkably, Van Heutsz had suggested exactly such a ‘general Bugeaud-style’ razzia operation with mobile columns in case of Uma’s defection in his 1894 white paper. Just like the other gampongs in the area Lampisang was completely razed and Uma’s four houses, among which the newly-built house that cost the Dutch 11,364 guilders, were blown up on Vetter’s personal orders. Queen Wilhelmina and Queen-Regent Emma even congratulated the Governmental Commissioner and his troops with this achievement, but the situation in Aceh was still far from stable. The excursion against Uma ended in June with the thorough annihilation of the last stronghold in the VI mukim, gampong Lamasan. Under massive infantry protection a small army of some 800 convicts and 400 Chinese coolies as well as two engineer sections completely razed the village, cut down all the trees, and even went as far as levelling all the burial mounds. Dutch operations under Vetter were not characterized by modesty. Needless to say that these actions sufficed to discourage popular support for Uma, but also hugely alienated the population from the Dutch. However, Vetter’s goal was the establishment of Dutch dominance in Aceh, and such punitive excursions clearly demonstrated the power of the colonial administration.

Yet, Vetter realized that the Dutch with their limited resources could not control the Acehnese without obtaining their collaboration. After the end of the action against Uma, the Governmental Commissioner considered his task completed; aggressive military actions once again had been introduced as a part of the policy in Aceh, and it had been revealed

153 P. van ’t Veer, De Atjeh-oorlog, 195.
to the Acehnese what it meant if Kutaradja fully unleashed its coercive capabilities. Now it was important to maintain this coercive stick, but also to reach out to the population. Therefore, Vetter’s last order to the Dutch troops in Aceh on June 27 1896 was meant to restrain Dutch brutalities as it stated that looting was prohibited and that the practice of razing gampongs was only to be executed at a commander’s explicit orders. More important, Aceh’s new Governor major-general J.J.K. de Moulin received instructions from Batavia to maintain the concentration line as the core of the Dutch occupation and to use it as a base for launching targeted military strikes against pockets of resistance in Great Aceh. The new Dutch policy first anticipated controlling Great Aceh through offensive military actions before expanding the colonial administration’s influence in the Dependencies. After De Moulin’s untimely death (only ten days after he assumed his governorship), the new policy was further implemented by Interim Governor colonel J.W. Stemfoort and from November 1896 by Governor C.P.J. van Vliet. It was during this period that the new approach further evolved under influence of Vetter and Snouck. Albeit the latter opposed the idea of an initial limitation of Dutch actions to Great-Aceh, both he and Vetter agreed that the targeted actions against the Acehnese resistance should be conducted from a permanent post in each sagi. The deployment of a mobile column to an operating base within a sagi would allow the Dutch to employ ‘quick measures against those gang leaders, who try to destroy our influence there’. This method aimed at enhancing the local population’s collaboration with the Dutch colonial authorities as the presence and continued patrolling of Dutch colonial forces would not only discourage collaboration with the Acehnese war parties, but would also offer protection against intimidation and other kinds of violence.

Thus, the main consequence of Uma’s defection was another Dutch policy change in which the colonial authorities finally broke with the limitations of the concentration policy. From now on the approach in Aceh would be characterized by systematic military action. Three permanent bases were established in respectively Lhok Nga (XXV mukim), Indrapuri (XXII mukim), and Tjot Mantang (XXVI mukim) and linked to the concentration line by a modern tramway. These posts enabled the Dutch to fence off the local population from the resistance as well as to launch (swift) operations against armed gangs and their leaders, and therefore allowed the Dutch to gain a solid influence over the population in Great Aceh. Uma’s defection made the Dutch colonial authorities realize that Aceh could not be controlled without some capability for applying firm action when needed. Consequently 1896 became a pivotal year in Aceh; it witnessed the return of aggressiveness on the side of the Dutch after more than a decade of the concentration policy’s restraint. And although Uma initially succeeded in

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157 A. Kruisheer, Atjeh 1896, Deel I, 308.
evading the punitive excursions that were launched against him under this new impetus, the actions made possible by this policy change would ultimately lead to his fall, as we will see in the next chapter. Now that the Dutch in Aceh had rediscovered the utility of military action and a policy had been implemented to maintain this military action, it was time to link this to a political approach. This combined military and political approach would finally bring Aceh under Dutch control and would become known as the Aceh strategy. For now, however, we will first draw some conclusions on the Teuku Uma policy, and leave the discussion of the Aceh strategy for Chapter Six.

5.5 Conclusion

What insights can be obtained from this infamous episode in Dutch colonial history? Uma's co-option seemingly offered the Dutch colonial authorities a way to breach the stalemate of the concentration policy at the lowest costs possible - i.e. without additional troops or massive use of other resources. As we have seen in Chapter Three such an approach of co-opting dominant local power-holders was the preferred tool for establishing control over local populations in colonial warfare. Why the Dutch, who had built a considerable empire in the East Indies by use of this method, failed to implement it during this stage of the Aceh War? A thorough understanding of this failure will enhance our understanding of the utility of co-option as it sheds a light at the difficulties of establishing and maintaining co-optive relationships in the reality of colonial warfare. Therefore we will now discuss this chapter's findings in the light of the analytical framework for understanding co-option in order to unravel the causes for the debacle of the Teuku Uma policy.

Just like during the first two decades of the Aceh War, the colonial authorities fully accepted the necessity of practicing cultural legitimation in order to enhance and consolidate Dutch control over the Acehnese. Despite a growing insight in the structure of Aceh's fragmented society, the implementation of this concept was still based on a flawed conception of the pattern of legitimacy of the target society. Submission of the Sultan remained the main goal of the Dutch political strategy, and co-option of uléëbalang was considered instrumental in obtaining this goal. When the Dutch combined the abstinence of the concentration policy with systematic naval blockades, the uléëbalang, with their dependency on trade, were most affected. Consequently those chiefs started to demonstrate rapprochement towards the colonial authorities. This created the conditions for negotiation with the Sultan as well-disposed chiefs were employed to mediate with the Keumala-party. The outlook of the ensuing indirect contacts with Keumala was promising; despite the lack of tangible results, the Sultan’s submission seemed within hand’s reach. It was at this point that Uma’s co-option became part of the strategy for submitting the Sultan. It was believed that either Uma’s influence on the Sultan would persuade the latter to definitely submit himself, or that Uma’s collaboration with the Dutch would mean a sensitive blow to the Sultan as co-option of such
an important chief would demonstrate that the Dutch were the most powerful actor in Aceh. Although Snouck repeatedly warned that this rationale was founded on a misconception of the Sultan’s power and ‘Acehnese adat with regard to matters and relationships’, the ultimate goal of the Teuku Uma policy remained the submission of the Sultan.160

The Dutch, thus, sought to definitely settle the war and legitimize colonial authority through the Sultan. Uma’s co-option, however, brought them also an opportunity to directly enhance their position within the restrictions of the concentration policy. As aforementioned, the Teuku Uma policy gradually evolved in a full-fledged strategy aimed at relieving the pressure of the concentration line and establishing Dutch control in Great Aceh, while augmenting Kutaradja’s influence in Aceh as a whole. In addition to Uma, the colonial authorities aimed at co-opting local chiefs in all three sagi in order to chase away the muslimin gangs and obtain the collaboration of the local population. Whereas Uma, as the main Dutch co-optee, could be used to assist in this process, the intention of the strategy was to win the consent of the population through their legitimate chiefs at the grassroots level, predominantly the local ulèëbalang. The actual implementation of this strategy, however, greatly augmented Uma’s position in Great Aceh and prevented the effective co-option of local chiefs by the administration in Kutaradja. We will further discuss this when dealing with the way the colonial authorities approached the issue of whom exactly to co-opt.

In addition to a ban on offensive actions for the colonial troops, the concentration policy also put a restraint on the availability of resources for fighting the Aceh War. This meant that already scarce resources were further limited, which especially concerned the troop level of the small Kutaradja garrison. Therefore, mobilization of local militias was essential as it circumvented the ban on offensive actions by Dutch troops and provided the local colonial authorities with a much-needed force-multiplier. The Teuku Uma policy thrived on the use of local militias to protect the Dutch positions and to act as a lever for augmenting Dutch control, especially in Great Aceh. The Dutch exploited the co-optive relationships with local power-holders in order to rally the necessary troops for chasing away the ulama-led resistance and fencing off the population at the grassroots level. The champion of this grassroots mobilization, of course, was Uma himself. Not only was Uma appointed as the colonial regime’s supreme Acehnese field commander under the title Panglima Perang Besar, his militia was also permanently paid, equipped and supplied by the Dutch. The official co-optive treaty institutionalized this militia as an Acehnese legion under command of Uma, who was obliged to follow Dutch orders to fight throughout Aceh and its Dependencies. Thus Uma’s legion became the mainstay of the Dutch strategy as it provided Kutaradja with the means to launch offensive military actions under the restrictions of the concentration policy. Moreover, the legion proved also a political instrument as it provided a counter-balance against ulama gangs and offered local power-holders and their populace protection against the resistance’s counter-collaboration efforts. The militias of those local chiefs were typically

used on a temporarily basis in order to spawn an initial level of control (if necessary assisted by Uma’s forces), while the main task of Uma’s legion was to consolidate initial control in close conjunction with the Dutch authorities. The rationale underlying this approach was that it allowed the war-weary local population to pick up its livelihood as soon as possible.

Although formally institutionalized, Uma’s militia was only loosely controlled by the Dutch authorities. Reports of staged attacks and duplicity in the occupation of posts did not trigger Kutaradja to impose a more strict control on the legion. On the contrary, until the end of the co-optive relationship the legion was considered an essential tool for augmenting control and was seemingly treated without suspicion. This offers the only possible explanation why Kutaradja delivered 878 rifles, 25,000 bullets and a lot of other supplies a few days prior to Uma’s defection. Despite its formal status and the clear regulation of the command structure and accountability towards Kutaradja as regulated by the official co-optive treaty, in its essence the legion was never anything more than a typical Acehnese gang sanctioned and supplied by the Dutch. Kutaradja’s lack of control over the legion can be directly linked to the failure to control Uma. As a warlord Uma had gradually emerged on the political scene and before establishing himself as an ulêêbalang in the VI mukim he had been marauding the west coast with his gang. Consequently, his fighters had become his closest rakan who kept solid ties with their charismatic chief, who had not only led them in war, but also had provided them with the resources necessary for survival as well as that he had shared his newly acquired wealth with them. The lack of control over Uma will be further analyzed when we discuss the methods of co-option that were used by the Kutaradja government in order to establish and maintain the co-optive relationship with Uma. Now we will first focus on the way the Dutch approached the problem of whom exactly to co-opt during the period of the Teuku Uma policy.

As aforementioned the primary reason for Uma’s co-option was his presumed influence on the Sultan. In the then existing view of Acehnese society and its political structure the Sultan was considered to be the most dominant local power-holder and therefore his co-option would spawn an acceptable level of control without too much costs. As the Sultan failed to submit, the Dutch started to exploit Uma as their most important co-optee. Of course, at that moment, Uma himself was one of the most influential and dominant local power-holders in Aceh as a whole. Therefore he undoubtedly was an interesting and potentially valuable ally for the Dutch. Even Snouck, who did not share Kutaradja’s view of Aceh’s societal constitution, agreed that Uma’s position was so powerful that his co-option would deliver the Dutch vast benefits. Snouck, however, also pointed at the limits of Uma’s influence and repeatedly warned that Uma could be useful for controlling the west coast and XXV mukim, but should not be attributed a role in other parts of Aceh or Acehnese affairs.⁶¹

In other words, if Uma was to be exploited effectively by Kutaradja it could only be through his position as the dominant local power-holder in the locale he controlled. Although

⁶¹ Snouck first mentioned Uma’s potential role and limitations as a Dutch co-optee in his 1892 Aceh report and echoed his vision from then on.
Deijkerhoff did not agree with Snouck, he initially seemed to realize that control over Aceh's fragmented society could only be won through a 'locals-first' approach; first local power-holders were to be co-opted and Uma and his militia were only to act as enablers in this process as they served as a guarantee for security.

The 1893 operation in the XXVI mukim was initiated according to this strategy. The most important local power-holders Teuku Nya’ Banta, his father in law Teuku Nyak, and Teuku Chut Tungkub offered the Dutch their collaboration in order to clear the sagi of muslimin. In reality, however, these local power-holders feared Uma’s growing influence and acted in order to prevent Uma from becoming too influential in their own locale. When the alliance of local chiefs stalled and failed to achieve success, Kutaradja abandoned its ‘locals-first’ strategy and brought in Uma -exactly what the local power-holders had feared. Moreover, one of the local chiefs, Teuku Tungkub was punished for his neglect. Whereas Uma was intended to serve as a facilitator in the whole process of establishing Dutch control through co-option of local power-holders, he took over the leadership of the process itself and thereby tremendously increased his influence across the boundaries of his home territory. Uma now acted as a mediator for establishing co-optive relationships between local chiefs and the administration in Kutaradja, just like he had done in his own sagi of the XXV mukim. With use of his main perang tactics Uma established a network of local power-holders dependent on him (such as Teuku Nya’ Banta and Teuku Chut Tungkub), as well as that he alienated certain others. Despite this division both groups built a precarious modus vivendi by copying the main perang tactics, which meant they cut deals in order to maintain the balance of power at the grassroots level. Dutch control over the XXVI mukim as acquired by Uma, thus, was rather superficial, but was by all means acceptable to the standards of the administrators in Kutaradja. This was confirmed when Deijkerhoff ordered Uma to pacify the XXII mukim in November 1893 immediately after the end of the operations in the XXVI mukim. Deijkerhoff’s policy now completely focused on Uma for establishing control in all sagi of Great Aceh and lower-level local power-holders were co-opted through his mediation only. Thereby Kutaradja had come to rely on a single dominant local power-holder who was tasked to establish control in locales across the borders of his own area of influence.

In hindsight it is obvious that the Dutch allowed Uma to become too influential. Instead of limiting his influence to his home territory, Uma was ordered to establish control over the whole of Great Aceh. In doing so the local administration created a monster that was difficult to dominate and ultimately went out of control; the Dutch were completely dependent on Uma who quickly became the most powerful figure in the local society. Although the administration in Kutaradja was not permeated by local influences, its dependency on Uma prevented the effective implementation of a balanced co-option strategy that included persuasive as well as coercive methods. Moreover the scarcity of resources -especially troops- and the limitations of the concentration policy severely weakened Kutaradja’s capability for co-option domination. The only credible method for enforcing compliance was that of a systematic naval blockade of Uma’s ports. This method had seriously affected Uma in
the years before the alliance, but was never employed during the co-optive relationship. Apparently the colonial administrators were afraid that Uma would deflect, if they imposed sanctions, and therefore they refrained from doing so.

Total dependency on Uma explains why an effective system of sanctions in order to guarantee his collaboration with the Dutch was never imposed, despite calls for such measures by administrators in both Batavia and Aceh (including Deijkerhoff). Instead, the relationship with Uma was based entirely on incentives that belong to the persuasive side of the co-option continuum, such as the provision of political support, money, weapons and other materiel goods. Consequently, for Uma the colonial administration was the preferred partner to collaborate with as long as he benefitted from these incentives; there was no stick to guarantee Uma’s co-option in case the collaboration was in contradiction (either temporarily or longer) with his personal interest. While the Dutch were incapable of dominating their co-optive relationship with Uma, they did possess a capability for dominating co-optive relationships with lower-level local power-holders as demonstrated by the punishing of Teuku Tungkub during the 1893 offensive in the XXVI mukim. However, it was the insolvency to effectively control dominant local power-holders that attracted the attention of indigenous rulers. By 1894 the idea that the protracted nature of the Aceh War had paralyzed Dutch coercive capabilities persisted in the mind of dominant local power-holders throughout the archipelago. As a result the Dutch advantage in the overall collaborative equation was at risk. It was the brutal 1894 Lombok expedition under command of general Vetter that restored the balance in favour of the colonial state. Albeit this exemplary use of force sufficed for remaining in control of the rest of the archipelago, it did not affect Uma’s behaviour as a co-optee. As we have seen the Dutch only deployed a credible capability for dominating Uma when it was too late.

An additional observation prompted by Uma’s case concerns the pivotal role of intelligence. It is far too easy to blame Governor Deijkerhoff personally and consider his naivety and confidence in Uma the main reasons for the debacle that occurred. It should not be forgotten that Deijkerhoff was assisted by a staff of very competent civilian administrators and military professionals many of whom had already served in Aceh for several years. Publications by Resident Van Langen and Chief of Staff Nieuwenhuijzen have shown a thorough insight into, and understanding of, Acehnese society. Although there was enough information on Uma’s methods and intents, as well as on the superficial level of control, the decisions made by the staff in Kutaradja were miserable. Snouck Hurgronje demonstrated that intelligence is an art that not only requires information, but also an appropriate assessment of that information. As most of the information on Uma was considered to be based on rumours spread by jealous competitors, the local staff failed to process different

163 In this regard the later Prime Minister H. Colijn, who had participated in the Lombok expedition and served as a lieutenant in Aceh at that time, reported that he -like everybody else- was convinced of Uma’s loyalty after the Dutch demonstration of force in Lombok. See Herman Langeveld, Dit leven van krachtig handelen, Hendrikus Colijn 1869-1944, Deel een 1869-1933 (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Balans, 1998), 72.
pieces of information into good intelligence. A thorough analysis could have revealed that Uma was indeed of use as long as his influence was limited to the XXV mukim and the west coast, where he held a position as a legitimate ruler. Furthermore, proper intelligence would have shed a light on the superficial condition of control that resulted from the dubious practices of his legion and the true nature of the co-optive relationships with lower-level power-holders he established on behalf of the administration in Kutaradja. Such intelligence would immediately clarify that the Dutch should have taken additional measures, both to control their main co-optee and enhance the overall level of control. Snouck in fact, made all these points. Unfortunately, the local administration only started listening to Snouck, when it was already too late.

Eventually, the colonial administration's failure to achieve co-option domination is the most important insight to be obtained from the Teuku Uma policy. As aforementioned, controlling local populations through collaboration with local power-holders naturally demands a capability to control such agents. This not only requires sufficient resources, but also fine-grained intelligence in order to constantly monitor a local agent's influence and intentions. What it comes down to is, that this is what the Dutch administration failed to establish. Thus, the Teuku Uma case became a disgrace for the Netherlands. Uma's defection caused an inconvenient feeling to many Dutchmen, at home and overseas. Soon songs were heard demanding punishment of the traitor Uma. Also a board game, called the Teuku Uma game was produced, in which players had to catch Uma with the help of 25 pawns representing soldiers. 164 The instruction-card of the game reads: 'When both parties attend the game with the same amount of vigilance, chances are even'. 165 If colonial officials managed to develop and awareness of the interests and intentions of local power-holders, indeed chances were even, as typically their own intents were well-known among the local population and their rulers. War, however, is not about even chances: it is about the best chance necessary to succeed. Therefore, not only intelligence is vital for establishing and maintaining collaborative relationships, but also the resources to dominate such a relationship. In the case of the Teuku Uma policy there was a lack of will from the Dutch colonial state to deploy sufficient resources for dominating the co-optive relationship with a dominant local power-holder. Linked to a poor understanding of Uma's true motives and modus operandi this resulted in the absence of an effective mechanism for co-option domination. Consequently, when Uma felt it was no longer in his interest to collaborate with the Dutch, he crossed the line between treaty and treason without any obstruction.


165 Ibid., 45.
Chapter 6
Chapter 6: Pacification at last: the emergence of the Aceh strategy and the establishing of Dutch control

6.1 Introduction

After the dust of the Teuku Uma debacle had settled it became clear that a new wind was blowing in Kutaradja. The colonial administration had once again embraced an offensive policy in order to settle the protracted conflict in Aceh. The initial Dutch reaction to Uma’s defection had definitely lifted the restrictions of the concentration policy and created a basis for establishing Dutch control outside the perimeter surrounding Kutaradja. The adjoining atmosphere opened the door for the implementation of new ideas on the Dutch policy in Aceh. Although Snouck and Van Heutsz first coined their views in 1892 and 1893, only now they were about to be given an opportunity to influence the colonial administration’s policy in Aceh. As discussed in Chapter Four it was predominantly this influence that provided the core underpinning for the so-called Aceh strategy that ultimately would lead to the end of hostilities around 1912. This combined military and political approach was based on two fundamental elements; (a credible threat of) force and co-option of ulëëbalang in a more balanced way.¹ The first was meant to guarantee Dutch dominance by constantly reminding the Acehnese of the strength of the colonial administration. The second principle was to obtain control through exploitation of the legitimate authority of the ulëëbalang, or as special government commissioner F.A. Liefrinck stated in 1909:

‘Despite the many undesirable qualities and faults of these chiefs, they are the ones who have influence on the population and thereby have much to offer in enabling us... to reach our goal. The more that can be left to them, the better it is.’²

In this chapter we will explore how this strategy emerged in the years after 1896 and how it ultimately led to the pacification of Aceh as the Dutch now managed to consolidate their newly obtained control. Of course the use of co-option of ulëëbalang as a tool for controlling the Acehnese directly touches upon this book’s main question. As aforementioned, the new politico-administrative system that originated as part of the Aceh strategy became known under the name of the Korte Verklaring (KV), the formal declaration that regulated the


² Liefrinck quoted in Anthony Reid, The Blood of the People, 12.
relationship between co-optee and colonial administration. It was the KV system that allowed the Dutch to co-opt the chiefs in control of the various locales in Great Aceh as well as the Dependencies, but the key insight from the Uma debacle was that such an approach could not go without a credible capability for controlling these co-optees. Therefore the principle of (credible threat of) force is also carefully studied in this chapter as it was instrumental in establishing and maintaining effective co-optive relationships with the ulèëbalang. Moreover, ultimately (during the pacification phase, starting under Governor Swart) the Dutch would manage to control as much as 103 ulèëbalangships by co-opting mainly dominant local chiefs with a security apparatus consisting of some 4,000 colonial troops, which is roughly 700 men less than the Kutaradja garrison during the concentration policy. Thus, an analysis of both the military and politico-administrative components of the Aceh strategy can provide a thorough insight in the utility of co-option for obtaining control over a highly fragmented society with limited resources only.

The study of this historical case of co-option as part of Dutch colonial warfare offers us the benefit of hindsight. Before drawing some final conclusions on how the Aceh strategy with use of co-option finally pacified Aceh, we should use this advantage to reflect on some long-term effects. It was especially the misconception on the exact nature of ulèëbalang authority that would have huge ramifications as the Dutch strengthened this authority as part of the consolidation of their rule. We will deal with this at the end of this chapter in a discussion of the way the colonial administration sought to consolidate and augment the acceptable level of control obtained during the pacification. But for now we will start this chapter with an analysis of the emergence of the Aceh strategy and its military and politico-administrative components in the years immediately after Uma’s ‘treason’.

6.2 The beginning of the end: the emergence of the Aceh Strategy

In the previous chapter we have seen how a policy of systematic military action was introduced and preserved following the 1896 turmoil. The establishment of permanent bases in each of Great Aceh’s three sagi brought the administration in Kutaradja a capability for effectively augmenting its influence at the grassroots level. Fencing off the population from resistance influence as well as targeting of ulama-led gangs and Uma’s militia successfully augmented collaboration with the Dutch colonial regime under Governor Van Vliet. However, despite Vetter’s explicit orders and against Snouck’s advises the razing of gampongs in pockets of resistance remained a frequently practiced method for definitely clearing Great Aceh of enemy influence and was even advocated by civilian officials. Van Heutsz, who acted as one of the column commanders (in the rank of lieutenant-colonel) during this period and

3 Ibid., for the garrison strength during the concentration policy see section 4.3.2. It should be noted that in his brochure ‘De onderwerping van Atjeh’ Van Heutsz claimed that Aceh could be pacified with the number of troops available under the concentration policy. J.B. van Heutsz, ‘De onderwerping van Atjeh’, Indisch Militair Tijdschrift 24 (1893), 127.
who did not shy away from the use of force himself, denounced the continuation of such senseless destruction as it did not encourage the adat chiefs in those areas to submit and co-opt with the Dutch.\(^4\) Although the military presence throughout Great Aceh featured such excessive use of force against communities under enemy influence, the overall situation quickly ameliorated and in all three saga refugees started to return to their villages and work their land.\(^5\)

Their military presence thus brought the Dutch acquiescence of a major part of the local population as it allowed people to pick up their lives and livelihoods. As always the administration lacked the resources for controlling the population solely by its own means; it had to exploit this situation through the various ulèëbalang ruling the different local communities.\(^6\) This time, however, the Dutch realized that the dialectic of power dictated that there would always be a certain degree of freedom to act for their co-optees; it was up to them to implement a system that would check such acts were in concurrence with the Dutch interests. Even more important than this insight was that -due to its military presence at the grassroots level- the administration in Kutaradja could bargain with local power-holders from a position of strength. Although the co-optive system that resulted from these premises would only be fully developed under Van Vliet’s successor Governor Van Heutsz and his direct advisor Snouck (which we will discuss later in this chapter), their current dominance gave the Dutch an initially acceptable level of control over Great Aceh’s population. This is clearly demonstrated by the ending of the curfew that prohibited any movements outside gampong at night in April 1897 as well as the definite dismantling of most of the fortified posts of the concentration line during 1897 and 1898—which freed more troops for deployment in the saga.\(^7\) Furthermore colonial administrators started to register all male residents of each individual gampong in Great Aceh. Recorded men were subsequently issued so-called gampong passes under the responsibility of their own chief, who was fined by the Dutch in case of neglect. This allowed the Dutch troops to identify indigenous males encountered during patrols.\(^8\)

The biggest threat to this relatively stable situation came from gangs that intruded the three saga from the Dependencies. As it was impossible for Dutch troops to maintain an ubiquitous presence throughout Great Aceh, resistance fighters awaited their chance in order to launch incursions that thwarted collaboration with the Dutch and collected taxes


for the *perang sabil*. Especially adjacent Pidië became the centre of resistance as it was the traditional home base of both the Sultan’s party in Keumala as well as the *ulama*-led gangs.\(^9\) Further, Panglima Polem, the Panglima Sagi and leader of the resistance of the XXII *mukim* took refuge in this area, and early 1898 Teuku Uma and his gang also crossed over from the west coast to Pidië.\(^10\) This last move definitely opened the eyes of the colonial administration with regard to the incongruence of its policy to focus on Great Aceh only. Snouck had always argued against this limitation of Dutch action as he understood that albeit Acehnese society was highly fragmented, its locales were interconnected through the mesh of relationships that existed between the various actors dominating its political structure (this is further explained in the next section of this chapter). Influenced by their shared interests, these relationships now had brought together the main resistance leaders in order to continue and coordinate their operations from the safety of their Pidië sanctuary.

The Dutch colonial authorities realized that Snouck’s opinion on this matter could no longer be ignored. Governor-General Van der Wijck therefore issued three important orders in March 1898.\(^11\) First the restriction of Dutch actions to Great Aceh was abandoned through the authorization of an expedition to Pidië on 5 March. Second, on 10 March Snouck’s title was changed into Adviser for Native and Arab Affairs, with the instruction to spend as much time in Aceh (with the authority of a Resident) as he considered necessary. This decision finally gave Snouck direct influence on the formulation and implementation of the Dutch policy in Aceh. Third and last, on 25 March Van Heutsz was appointed as Governor of Aceh. This last move had become possible by Governor Van der Vliet’s request to be relieved from his post. Van Heutsz, who the previous year left Aceh when he was promoted to chief of staff of the Dutch Colonial Army in the rank of colonel, had already stressed the importance of Dutch action against Pidië in his brochure *De onderwerping van Atjeh*.\(^12\) The exchange of ideas between himself and Snouck that followed from this publication as well as his conduct as a column commander during the 1896-1897 operations had won him Snouck’s recommendation. Due to the latter’s influence Van Heutsz’ appointment now was a fact and the two instigators of what would become known as the Aceh strategy were finally brought together in order to implement their ideas to end the Aceh War.

The principles of Snouck and Van Heutsz’s new approach were laid down in the form of an instruction for Aceh’s Governor jointly formulated by both men.\(^13\) The instruction defines the

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13 Snouck Hurgronje apparently made a first draft (17 articles) based on the instruction issued to Governor Van Vliet. Snouck and Van Heutsz discussed and adapted the instructions early April 1898 which led to the submission of a final draft (21 articles) by
‘system of the future’ as an effort that seeks to control the Acehnese through a combination of political and military measures. These measures were designed to obtain and consolidate the collaboration of the population through their chiefs and in the lingo of this book’s analytical framework they can be classified as a mix of coercive and persuasive methods for establishing and dominating co-optive relationships. On the coercive side it was proclaimed that the Sultan and hostile chiefs were not to be engaged politically, but should be subjected to restless military action until they submitted to the colonial administration. Gang leaders and chiefs unwilling to submit were to be ‘merciless persecuted and destroyed’ (including Uma who even was dealt with in a separate article). In case a local chief and his followers collaborated with the resistance the entire population of that specific locale could be treated as hostile if this was deemed necessary. Once the operations had ended that specific chief and population would be fined. Such measures, however, should always be in proportion to the situation and local resources, and it was explicitly forbidden to burn gampongs. Other coercive measures concerned a total ban on the possession of firearms and the carrying of other arms. Furthermore local chiefs who had submitted to the colonial administration could be fined for their failure to comply with Dutch demands concerning security and public order.

On the persuasive side the most important measures concerned incentives for collaboration for both chiefs and commoners, compensation of suffered damage, permission to possess and bear (fire)arms, and allowances for adequate co-option with the Dutch. The latter would only be granted once a local chief had proven his ability to maintain the rest and order in his locale as well as that he had demonstrated powerful collaboration with the colonial administration in order to bring prosperity to the local population. Additionally the allowance could be withheld in case of failure to comply with Dutch demands (as mentioned in the previous paragraph). After the debacle of the Teuku Uma policy the Dutch administration had become more careful with arming Acehnese allies. Therefore the instruction explicitly mentioned that only high ranking Acehnese co-optees intimately connected with the administration could be granted a permit to hold and possess firearms in order to maintain a capability for self-defense. The main responsibility for the protection of the chiefs and the population against enemy counter-collaboration efforts (such as threats and the use of force) now lay with the Dutch troops. The incentives for collaboration and compensation of damage were intended to stimulate chiefs and members of the population to provide the Dutch with the hard-needed intelligence and other clues for eliminating gang leaders and containing resistance influence in a locale.

Additional measures for enhancing Dutch control were the registration of all chiefs and members of the population, powerful intervention in case of violent contention between

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ulèëbalang, and education of the sons of the chiefs in order to prepare them for future positions as Dutch co-optees or indigenous members of the colonial administration. All these facilities provided the administration in Kutaradja with a balanced mix of methods that -if implemented well- would make the Dutch the dominant as well as the preferable actor for the ulèëbalang to collaborate with. This all was to be realized with limited resources only. Although no longer exclusively centred on Great Aceh, the main effort of the Dutch policy still focused on this most densely populated area. The small units of the Korps Marechaussee were to patrol and administer the three saqi of Great Aceh, while three battalions of infantry were to provide a backup capacity in Kutaradja. The Dependencies would be covered by coastal strongpoints from which mobile columns could be launched to impose Dutch rule and defeat any resistance gangs. Larger expeditions in the Dependencies could be organized by deploying the Kutaradja-based battalions, if necessary complemented with Marechaussee. Such an action, however, could only be approved by the government in Batavia. The instruction mentions one exception to this rule; Pidië. The accumulation of the resistance in that statelet made it pivotal for controlling Great Aceh as well as the Dependencies. Therefore, the new policy’s ultimate coercive measure for establishing Dutch dominance, the restless military action in order to enforce submission or destroy hostile leaders, was to be directly applied to Pidië. Thus, when Van Heutsz and Snouck (separately) arrived in Aceh in May 1898, they immediately began to craft a consistent strategy designed to achieve clear and well-thought objectives, starting with the mopping up of the Pidië sanctuary. We will now take a closer look at how their cooperation ushered the beginning of the end of the Aceh War.

6.3 The Pidië expedition

For the Dutch the expedition against Pidië marked the first feat of arms of the new policy designed and implemented by the duumvirate Snouck and Van Heutsz. Before we explain how this exactly materialized in the Pidië expedition, it is first required to sketch the situation in that statelet. In Chapter Four we briefly described Pidië as a well-irrigated plain that once had been an important independent kingdom due to its role as the region’s main rice provider. During the sixteenth and seventeenth century the Acehnese Sultanate had succeeded in conquering and controlling Pidië by fragmenting its power over a number of ulèëbalangships. The results of this divide and rule policy still dominated the political reality in late nineteenth century Pidië; despite its small geographical size -it roughly resembled a triangle with a 44 kilometre base (the coast line) and a 22 kilometre altitude (from coastal Sigli to inland Keumala)- there were c. 20 independent locales controlled by local chiefs.

Historically, most of those uléëbalangships belonged to two opposing bonds (which were internally loosely connected, comparable with Great Aceh’s sagi), the federations of the XII and VI uléëbalang.\(^{16}\) Originally the members of the XII uléëbalang had held a feudal tenure of the Sultan of Aceh, while the uléëbalangships of the VI uléëbalang were the dependencies of the statelet Keumangan. Therefore the latter chiefs were traditionally connected to the sovereign of Keumangan. The power of those federations had suffered a considerable decrease as a consequence of the decline of both supreme rulers and internal feuds, which allowed the individual uléëbalang to pursue their self-interest and engage in political and commercial relationships with members of the opposing federation. Despite this decline, the federations were still important societal institutions in nineteenth century Pidië as they were the primary alliances for defying outside threats.

This role as collective security bodies also explains the relationships between the federations and some of the main resistance leaders. As a result of their traditional animosity both federations had sought powerful allies to support their cause. Such allies were best to be found in adjacent Great Aceh, the most influential statelet in the region. For the federation XII an alliance with the Sultan of Aceh was the obvious choice as it was historically connected to this ruler. The federation VI, on its turn, engaged in a friendly alliance with the family of the most important Panglima Sagí of Great Aceh, the Panglima Polem of the XXII mukim.\(^{17}\) As this sagí’s VII mukim Pidië lay within the territory of the old kingdom, its ruler had a strong interest in balancing Pidië’s internal affairs and certainly sought to prevent the dominance of one faction. Additionally, it should be noted that the Panglima Polem was also the most important guardian of the Sultanate (as mentioned in Chapter Four, section 4.2.1), and thereby the choice for this ally guaranteed a counterbalance against the influence of the Sultan. Although these alliances stemmed from the first half of the nineteenth century, they were still very alive at its end.\(^{18}\) The then acting Panglima Polem and his family still supported the federation VI and also mediated in internal feuds between its members. Similarly, the Sultan of Aceh had maintained his ties with the federation XII. Snouck observed that although there was a clear geographical watershed between Great Aceh and Pidië, both locales were intimately connected through their politics.\(^{19}\) This political connection as well as its proximity to Great Aceh made Pidië an ideal refuge for both the Sultan and Panglima Polem (who of course also held the benefit of his rule over the VII mukim Pidië).

In 1879 the Sultan was the first to flee to Pidië when he established his court in Keumala, at that time a tiny gampong well up the Pidië river.\(^{20}\) Although Keumala belonged to the federation VI, the Sultan and his allies of the federation XII managed to obtain the

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\(^{16}\) For detailed information on both federations see Redactie Indisch Militair Tijdschrift, ‘De Pedir-Expeditie’, Indisch Militair Tijdschrift 29 (1898), 486-494. For the federation as institutional entity and the comparison with Great Aceh’s sagi see C. Snouck Hurgronje, The Achehnese, Volume I, 91-92.

\(^{17}\) Ibid.

\(^{18}\) Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 16.

\(^{19}\) ‘Snouck Hurgronje aan Van der Wijck, 31 mei 1897’, 225.

\(^{20}\) Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 204-205.
The Course of Co-option

Chapter 6

The submission of its chief and thereby it came under the direct influence of the Sultan. In 1894 the federation VI succeeded in expelling the Sultan from his new capital, but in 1897 he regained control and even obtained the submission of some other members of the federation VI. Since his early days in Keumala the Sultan’s symbolic power as the supreme Acehnese sovereign had attracted important resistance leaders, including the most important ulama such as Teungku Tiro. The presence of the Sultan, therefore, had hugely contributed to Pidië’s role as a centre of resistance. Other resistance leaders such as Panglima Polem took refuge in Pidië as a direct consequence of the new Dutch policy in Great Aceh after 1896. Due to the remarkable fact that the VII mukim of his sagi lay within the geographical confines of Pidië, its hilly, unruly border with the rest of the XXII mukim and his good connections with the federation VI, Polem continued to fight the Dutch in his home sagi. This continuation of his very active leading role as well as the fact that he mainly operated from his own mukim, might explain why his presence was of little support to the federation VI. After all the Sultan’s influence over several of that federation’s individual members had grown considerably by the end of 1897. Nevertheless, at that time most of the important war leaders and their gangs had gathered in Pidië. According to Snouck this accumulation offers an explanation why the last important Dutch opponent, Teuku Uma, also crossed over. As always Uma sought to secure his influence in Aceh’s political landscape and the current situation urged him to seek a modus vivendi with the leadership of the XXII mukim and the various factions and actors in Pidië. His experienced fighters who were armed with modern Dutch rifles and plenty of rounds, which by now were nicknamed ‘Deijkerhoff-pastilles’, gave Uma enough leverage to obtain a leading position. However, in order to exert this influence it was required that Uma and his gang established themselves in Pidië.

Despite the vivid animosity between different parties and resistance leaders they all seemed to realize that the biggest threat came from the Dutch who now glared at Pidië as the centre of the resistance. On the first of April 1898—the news of the Dutch decision to launch an expedition had now reached Pidië—all parties as well as Teuku Uma and some other gang leaders were invited by the Sultan to gather in Garot (an ulèëbalangship that kept friendly ties with both federations) in order to discuss the Dutch threat. The outcome of this meeting was that the local chiefs and the leaders of the resistance agreed to stand united against the Dutch. All parties pledged allegiance to the Sultan and vowed to conduct a perang sabil—which again demonstrates the power of the Sultan as a symbol for unifying the Acehnese against external threats as well as the influence of the ulama who were framing the war against the

21 Redactie Indisch Militair Tijdschrift, De Pedir-Expeditie, Indisch Militair Tijdschrift 29 (1898), 492.
24 C. Snouck Hurgronje, ‘LIX De Pedir-Expeditie 1898’, Verspreide Geschriften van C. Snouck Hurgronje, Deel IV, Geschriften Betreffende den Islam in Nederlands-Indië, ed. Wensinck, A.J. (Bonn: Kürt Schroeder, 1924), 337. This article was originally published in the Java-Bode of 17-18 October 1898 under the pseudonym Si Gam.
Chapter 6 The Course of Co-option

kafirs of the Kompeuni as a holy war. Thus, for the moment all influential actors were unified by their shared hostility towards the Dutch. The large degree of fragmentation that characterized the natural state of Pidië’s political structure, however, would play a significant role in the near future. Let us now return to the Dutch expedition and first discuss how the guidelines of the new instruction were translated in operational objectives for altering the situation in Pidië into the colonial administration’s advantage.

The expedition’s goal of mopping up the Pidië sanctuary and establishing Dutch control over this persistent centre of resistance was echoed by its three main objectives. First the main force, which would be landed at Sigli (where a small Dutch outpost was situated), was to fight itself a way into the VII mukim Pidië. Second Panglima Polem had to be attacked and defeated, and if necessary ‘restlessly persecuted’ until his submission would follow. Additionally all other chiefs and resistance leaders encountered in the VII mukim had to be treated in the same way. Third, and last, all resistance in the ulëëbalangships of the federations XII and VI had to be destroyed, while Dutch control would be established by coercing the local chiefs and the population to accept Dutch authority. These objectives clearly demonstrate the influence of the new instruction as they reflect the newly adopted measure that hostile chiefs and resistance leaders were subjected to restless military action until they submitted to the colonial administration—or face their liquidation if they remained unwilling to comply. Additionally they also indicate that the expedition’s priority was stopping the probing attacks against Great Aceh, which mostly originated from the VII mukim. The clearing of Pidië as a whole was to be achieved once this initial objective was completed.

Although only Panglima Polem is explicitly named in the expedition’s objectives and they are unclear about which other chiefs and leaders would be exactly encountered, they were formulated with a deep understanding of the political situation in Pidië and its connections with Great Aceh. Evidence of this is given by the fact that it was clearly stated that Panglima Polem was not to be killed, but should be submitted. The Dutch realized that his position as an adat chief in Great Aceh as well as in Pidië was so powerful that his co-option was a prerequisite for controlling the population under his influence. Snouck later declared that Polem was fully aware of this, which is easy to understand as he received the first letter demanding his submission in August 1896. Further evidence of the profound understanding of the political situation is provided by the distribution (to all the expedition’s officers) of an official publication called ‘Facts concerning the Pidië-region’, which included a detailed list of chiefs and resistance leaders residing in Pidië. Based on intelligence gathered

26 These were described in the colonial government’s 5 March decision that sanctioned the Pidië expedition. See Redactie Indisch Militair Tijdschrift, ‘De Pedir-Expeditie’, Indisch Militair Tijdschrift 29 (1898), 486, J.C. Pabst, Oost-Indische Krijgsgeschiedenis VII, 5, G.D.E.J. Hotz, Beknopt Geschiedkundig Overzicht van den Atjèh-oorlog, 50.
through local informers by Sigli-based colonial inspector Ch.L.J. Palmer van den Broek, the disposition and intentions of the Sultan and his entourage, all chiefs who had fled Great Aceh as a consequence of the Dutch actions since 1896, the leading ulama (including Teungku Tiro’s successor Teungku Chut Pliëng), and all local chiefs were discussed. Among the Great Acehnese chiefs in exile Panglima Polem, and Teuku Uma, who by now called himself the Panglima Sagi of the XXV mukim, were the most important. Another remarkable name on the list was Teuku Chut Tungkub, who had definitely turned against the Dutch after Uma’s defection -not very surprising considering his prior treatment by Kutaradja as discussed in the previous chapter. The local chiefs, who were the legitimate rulers of Pidië’s different locales, received a letter which explained the purpose of the expedition and invited them to a meeting with the Dutch administration in Sigli.29 This meeting took place on May 26 with only eight of the 30 invited chiefs attending. Although the low turnout alone was not a proper indicator of the proposition of individuals chiefs, it was clear that the resistance was influential enough to prevent a massive attendance. Moreover, those attending were suspected of duplicity, which further stressed the strength of the resistance in Pidië. Thus, the expedition was well-informed about the key leaders it had to target in order to achieve its objectives. Let us now have a closer look at how this was realized during the actual undertaking itself.

The expedition’s main force was commanded by Van Heutsz, who was accompanied and advised by Snouck. Its strength was 6,000 men and its main fighting power consisted of four infantry battalions, one division (twelve brigades of eighteen ‘carbines’ each) Marechaussee, an artillery battery and a reduced cavalry squadron.30 The main body was supported by a smaller column (2,000 strong) consisting of an enhanced infantry battalion with artillery and cavalry support operating out of Seulimeum in Great Aceh’s sagi of the XXII mukim. This force was to screen the watershed between Pidië and Great Aceh in order to deny fleeing resistance gangs the access to the valley of the Aceh river. In case such a gang managed to break through it had to be pursued and destroyed. All in all the operation was a massive undertaking -it was one of the largest expeditions of the Aceh War- demanding the deployment of all three battalions of the Kutaradja garrison, a considerable part of the Marechaussee (its total strength at that time was five divisions) and support, as well as two additional infantry battalions and parts of the artillery and cavalry that were dispatched from Java. The enormous logistical effort to bring all these troops to their starting points in Sigli and Seulimeum was further complicated by the fact that the starting date, which initially was set for July 1, was rushed to


the 1st of June. This was the consequence of an advise by Snouck and Van Heutsz, who deemed the unification of the resistance in April as a deterioration of the political situation that called for urgent action. As a result of increased efforts, all troops were deployed to Sigli and Seulimeum and ready for action on May 30. The Dutch now were both well-informed and well-equipped for the operations that would commence on the first of June.

The latest intelligence indicated the exact whereabouts of the Sultan, Panglima Polem and Teuku Uma. Moreover, a concentration of resistance gangs had assembled in the vicinity of Garot (c. 7.5 kilometres from Sigli), where they had raised fortifications under command of Uma. In order to secure the route to the VII mukim this pocket of resistance had to be dealt with first. Therefore the expedition started on June 1 with an attack on Garot, which was taken that same day after some light skirmishes. The expected heavy fighting did not occur and conquered enemy positions showed traces of a hastily retreat as large quantities of gunpowder, ammunition and other supplies were found. This was confirmed by intelligence on June 3 when it was reported that Teuku Uma, the Sultan, and their fighters, had fled in southern direction and that the former was suffering from an illness.

Now the threat on the flank of the marching route to VII mukim Pidië was neutralized, Van Heutsz ordered an all-out attack on that district’s capital Padang Tidji, the suspected residence of Panglima Polem. In order to surprise the opposing gangs an attack from two directions was ordered, and therefore the Seulimeum column as well as the main force started their advance on Padang Tidji on June 4. Despite some resistance the main force reached the VII mukim’s capital in the afternoon of the next day (the distance between Sigli and the target was roughly 15 kilometres). Of course there was no trace of Panglima Polem, and Van Heutsz provokingly established his headquarters in this chief’s house. This prosperous advance of the main force was largely enabled by the collaboration of the gampong head of Beurabo, who complied with the instruction for local chiefs that was issued during the May 26 meeting and which called for them to welcome Dutch forces by flying a white flag. As the population of this specific village had not fled it can be suspected that their headman had a good reason to collaborate with the Dutch; its inhabitants had to be guarded from either Dutch military force or retaliation of resistance gangs. Consequently, the gampong head of Beurabo acted as a local guide and reported that Polem and 30 of his closest followers had left the VII mukim in southeastern direction three days ago, which greatly decreased the probability of heavy

31 Van ‘t Veer argues that this advance of operations was due to the fact that Snouck had advised that June was a harvest period which diminished resistance activities. However, Snouck’s own letters as well as contemporary secondary sources attribute the advance to the political situation in Pidië. See, Paul van ’t Veer, De Atjeh-oorlog, 236, ‘Snouck Hurgronje aan Van der Wijck, 9 april 1898’, ‘Snouck Hurgronje aan Van der Wijck, 11 april 1898’, ‘Snouck Hurgronje aan Van der Wijck, 21 april 1898’, K. van der Maaten, Snouck Hurgronje en De Atjeh Oorlog, Deel II. 33-35, J.C. Pabst, Oost-Indische Krijgsbescheiden VII, 11-12, G.D.E.J. Hotz, Beknopt Geschiedkundig Overzicht van den Atjèh-oorlog, 52.


fighting. The Dutch, thus, successfully established themselves in Padang Tidji on the 5th of June.

The next day the Seulimeum column, which had encountered no opposition at all, but had to find its way through challenging terrain, also reached the district. With such a massive presence in their area many other gampong chiefs came to submit themselves. They all received personal permission to carry a pointed weapon, and a return of refugees to their villages was also granted on the condition that the total population would remain unarmed. Additionally the Dutch also announced the construction of a road between Sigli and Padang Tidji and a permanent military post. It should be noted that these gampong headmen were all local power-holders of the lowest level who bridged the gap between the villagers and the dominant local power-holders, the ulèèbalang. In normal circumstances the gampong headmen would certainly not be entitled to submit to the Dutch. This all indicated that the dominant local actors had left the area before the Dutch arrived. In order to truly control the VII mukim the submission of those latter actors was required. However, without any substantial threat in the VII mukim, Van Heutsz decided to concentrate his forces in Sigli in order to launch actions against the resistance gangs who had fled to the other parts of Pidië. Therefore both the main force as well as the Seulimeum column marched to Sigli in which place they arrived on the 9th of June.

In the meantime intelligence had singled out the newest whereabouts of the Sultan, Teuku Uma, and Panglima Polem. The Sultan was in Keumala and Uma had taken positions to the east of that city. Both men had discussed their situation in a meeting which was also attended by many ulama under the leadership of Teungku Chut Pliëng. Teuku Bentara, the chief of Keumangan, announced in a personal letter to Van Heutsz that Panglima Polem had found refuge in his ulèèbalangship. It was suspected that this letter was written with Polem’s knowledge and therefore it was explained as a first sign of rapprochement. The Dutch answered that the VII mukim Pidië would remain occupied, that a road was being constructed, and that Polem would lose all chances to return to his area if he would persist in his resistance. Moreover, it was also announced that his stay in Keumangan would be denied in case of a failure to submit. Thus, the objectives for the next actions of the Pidië expeditions were clear; a force under command of Van Heutsz would target Polem in Keumangan and subsequently march on Uma’s positions (which were situated directly to the west of this ulèèbalangship). A second column would advance towards Keumala. The start of both actions was set for June 12.

Before the beginning of the new operations Snouck was struck by an accident that forced him to stay at the headquarters in Sigli. Although there is not much information on this

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incident, he was apparently kicked by a horse somewhere around June 11.\footnote{The only contemporary sources mentioning this accident are De Locomotief (a newspaper), of June 23, the Indisch Militair Tijdschrift, and a letter of Governor-General Van der Wijck to Minister Cremers of July 10 (referred to by Beamer). A 1903 letter of Snouck briefly mentions his injury, and the later works of Damsté and Van der Maaten also discuss the accident, but its circumstances remain unclear. See, P. Brooshooft, ed., De Locomotief, Donderdag, 23 Juni (Semarang: Dagblad “De Locomotief”, 1898), 1, Redactie Indisch Militair Tijdschrift, ‘De Pedir-Expeditie’, Indisch Militair Tijdschrift 29 (1898), 633, 728, C.R. Beamer, ‘The Atjeh War and the Roles of Civil and Military Authorities’, 550, ‘Snouck Hurgronje aan Rooseboom, 2 October 1903’, ed. E. Gobée and C. Adriaanse, Ambtelijk Adviezen van C. Snouck Hurgronje, 329, H.T. Damsté, ‘Drie Atjeh-Mannen, Snouck Hurgronje - Van Heutsz - Van Daalen’, Koloniaal Tijdschrift 21 (1937), 631, K. van der Maaten, Snouck Hurgronje en De Atjeh Oorlog, Deel I, 169.} This resulted in a fractured shinbone which, of course, left Snouck immobilized. The operations of June 12 lasted until the 19th of that month and were characterized by the same lack of resistance as experienced during the first operations.\footnote{Redactie Indisch Militair Tijdschrift, ‘De Pedir-Expeditie’, Indisch Militair Tijdschrift 29 (1898), 628-646, 661-674, Pabst, Oost-Indische Krijgsgeschiedenis VII, 21-27.} Albeit the Dutch suffered some losses during scarce skirmishes, they could easily advance towards their objectives. Van Heutsz’s hunt for Polem and Uma was fruitless, which led him to divert his force to Keumala in order to seize the Sultan’s capital with his total expeditionary force. Both columns arrived in Keumala on June 14th and the capital was taken without any resistance, and of course also without any trace of the Sultan and his entourage. The next days both forces took different routes back to Sigli in order to enforce a confrontation with resistance gangs. Van Heutsz’s force, which marched via the VII mukim, as well as the smaller column did not meet any significant opposition and they both arrived in Sigli in the afternoon of the 19th. Due to the lack of opposition Van Heutsz deemed the assistance of the forces from the Seulimeum column no longer necessary. These troops started shipping back to Kutaradja on June 20, and the main force was given a week of recuperation in which only patrols and road construction (with some assistance from the local population) would continue.\footnote{Redactie Indisch Militair Tijdschrift, ‘De Pedir-Expeditie’, Indisch Militair Tijdschrift 29 (1898), 728.} Van Heutsz, accompanied by Snouck, also took a steamer to Kutaradja in order to deal with his responsibilities as Aceh’s Governor. On June 25 Van Heutsz returned to Sigli without Snouck, whose shinbone required extensive medical care in Kutaradja.\footnote{Redactie Indisch Militair Tijdschrift, ‘De Pedir-Expeditie’, Indisch Militair Tijdschrift 29 (1898), 731-755, G.D.E.J. Hotz, Beknopt Geschiedkundig Overzicht van den Atjeh-oorlog, 53.} Thus, the Pidië expedition was deprived from its most important adviser.

Upon his return in Sigli Van Heutsz dispatched a patrol to the VII mukim in order to investigate the possibilities for the construction of a tram track that would connect Sigli, Padang Tidji, and Seulimeum.\footnote{Redactie Indisch Militair Tijdschrift, ‘De Pedir-Expeditie’, Indisch Militair Tijdschrift 29 (1898), 628-646, 661-674, Pabst, Oost-Indische Krijgsgeschiedenis VII, 21-27.} This endeavor encountered considerable resistance with locals reporting the presence of enemy gangs in the area. Intelligence found out that this deterioration of the situation was caused by the return of some ulêebalang who were directly related to Panglima Polem. In the meantime Van Heutsz led a two-battalion action against Uma in the south.\footnote{Redactie Indisch Militair Tijdschrift, ‘De Pedir-Expeditie’, Indisch Militair Tijdschrift 29 (1898), 728-731, G.D.E.J. Hotz, Beknopt Geschiedkundig Overzicht van den Atjeh-oorlog, 53.} While the latter operation realized its tactical objectives, it once again did
not succeed in initiating a direct confrontation with Uma. On the other hand, it encountered enough enemy fighters to suffer some serious casualties. All in all the situation in Pidië was characterized by a growing resistance. Nevertheless, the Dutch military presence had led to the submission of a couple of the leading ulëëbalang. The active collaboration of these chiefs with the Dutch administration, however, was reluctant and the solution to the deterioration of the situation was to be found in stepping up this collaboration in order to gain adequate intelligence. Assistant-Resident J.A. van Rijn van Alkemade remarked that ‘if they [the submitted chiefs] wish so, they are totally capable of obtaining the most precise information concerning the whereabouts of the enemy heads and their gangs, as well as about their plans’. Thus, Van Heutsz took measures to end the meek attitude of the involved ulëëbalang. They were threatened with heavy fines for lack of collaboration, and in order to strengthen this threat, an example was set by, among others, fining the chiefs of XII mukim Pidië and II mukim Gigiëng -both powerful figures within respectively the federation XII and VI- for enemy actions and presence within their influence sphere.

In addition to the worsening of the situation in Pidië, Van Heutsz received alarming news of an uprising in Idi, another of Aceh’s east coast Dependencies. As a consequence of the Pidië expedition Teungku Tapa, a religious leader who had gathered a considerable following in Idi within a short period of time, had started to preach the perang sabil against the Kompeuni. The matter was so urgent that Van Heutsz organized an expedition that consisted of major elements of the Pidië expedition (including one infantry battalion and all Marechaussee) under his own command. From July 6 until July 24 the Governor’s focus lay on this uprising. With use of decisive force the rebellion was quelled, the local ulëëbalang were subdued and a total fine of 150,000 guilders was imposed on Idi’s ulëëbalangships. These measures sufficed for establishing a collaborative equation in which Dutch dominance was guaranteed. Now the situation in Idi was stable, the troops and their commander once again embarked for Pidië.

During the fighting in Idi, operations in Pidië had continued in a slower pace and the situation remained much the same. Now the commander and all force elements had returned it was time to implement the Governor’s instruction’s principle of restless military action. Therefore, a massive mobile column consisting of the bulk of the expeditionary force was established inland in Tjot Meurong (c. 18 kilometres from Sigli), in order to engage in a relentless pursuit of enemy gangs. In the beginning of August the Tiro-region, the centre of ulama activity was cleared, and thereafter the Dutch troops started a coordinated day and night chase throughout Pidië from not less than five mobile posts (which communicated through optical or wire-based means). With regard to intelligence, however, the Dutch soon discovered that their assumption about the role of submitted chiefs was wrong. The

44 Ibid., 755, 922-923, Pabst, Oost-Indische Krijgsgeschiedenis VII, 33-34.
resistance leaders continuously changed their positions and it was even reported that Uma never slept for more than two hours in the same place. Dutch pressure gradually caused the Sultan, Panglima Polem, and Uma to take refuge in the upland country. In these regions the influence and knowledge of the mostly coastal ulèëbalang who collaborated with the Dutch was severely limited; they were only capable of providing proper intelligence about persons and incidents within their own influence sphere. Moreover, their spies were reluctant to gather intelligence in the hostile inner land as they feared execution upon discovery (which had already occurred a couple of times). Consequently, intelligence about the resistance leaders and their gangs was mostly of a general nature and lacked the fine-grained information needed for targeted actions. Despite this intelligence gap, the operations in Pidié’s coastal plain were successful. Gangs were chased away and the start of road construction between the Dutch posts was the first sign of a more permanent system for the consolidation of control.

The Dutch actions revealed the first cracks in the opportunist coalition of the resistance. At the end of July, the Sultan had appointed Uma as the leader of the perang sabil, much to Panglima Polem’s discontent. When Dutch pressure increased, Polem refused to join forces with Uma and retreated to the VII mukim. Uma and the Sultan fled into the mountains wilderness of Tangsé, well behind Pidié (60 kilometres from Sigli). On the night of August 14 a Marechausse raid was launched against Polem, but failed to arrest him. As the road between Sigli and Padang Tidji neared its completion, it was decided that the Dutch post which would be established there (at the road’s completion), would turn its attention to Polem and deny him any stay in the VII mukim. For the moment the main effort lay with Uma and the Sultan and therefore an enhanced battalion was dispatched to the Tangsé area on the 14th of August. This action failed to reach their objective as the Dutch soldiers ran into stiff resistance in a narrow gorge which was barricaded by Uma’s gang. Despite several ambushes they proceeded, but when they encountered an obstacle which could not be cleared, the patrol’s commander decided to abandon the operation without reaching Tangsé. Now the ulèëbalang of Keumala, Teuku Ben, who was well-connected to the Tangsé area and who had previously supported the resistance gangs, was summoned to the Dutch camp and forced

47 Pabst, Oost-Indische Krijgsgeschiedenis VII, 36.
52 Ibid., 139.
to join a new action as Van Heutsz’s guide. On August 22 two columns, each roughly an enhanced battalion, marched against Uma and the Sultan in the second action against Tangsé. This time one column, under personal command of Van Heutsz, reached the target by circumnavigating the trapped gorge and it arrived in Tangsé on the 25th of August, just in time to surprise a part of Uma’s rear guard. Uma himself, however, had left the area for the west coast on the 24th. The local population reported that the Sultan had visited eight days before, and that he had also continued his way to the west coast. This fleeing of both leaders definitely marked the end of the resistance coalition. Moreover, as the always opportunistic Uma had used the opportunity to seize some of the Sultan’s treasures (of which some even symbolically represented the Sultan’s position), it was highly unlikely that a new coalition between these actors would be formed. A new alliance between the pious Polem and the mondain Sultan was equally unlikely. Thus, the march on Tangsé had definitely broken the backbone of the united resistance.

In the strain of this operational pace the Dutch colonial apparatus also demonstrated a first sign of internal tensions. Snouck, who was still immobilized, but who had returned to Sigli half August, remarked that Van Heutsz initially planned to burn down the gampongs of the Tangsé area as he considered them an ‘enemy fortress’. This was directly against his Governor’s instructions, and also contrasted with Van Heutsz his own statements. Most of the orders of the Pidië expedition, for example, explicitly urged the soldiers to respect the properties of the population in the villages. Whereas Snouck regarded the population of Tangsé as future subjects, Van Heutsz and the military staff regarded them as active enemies. Snouck argued that the villagers in the gampongs were caught between the Dutch and the resistance, and that the Dutch only could win this battle by demonstrating that they were the preferable party for collaboration. Dutch domination was to be achieved not by punishing the population, but through control over the adat chiefs ruling these villages. The military staff on the other hand, wanted to demonstrate Dutch dominance through punishment of the population in the gampongs. Ultimately, Van Heutsz followed Snouck’s advise in this case, nevertheless a fundamental contradiction between the military and Snouck had revealed itself for the first time.

The Acehnese resistance was -once again- divided, and its main leaders were the subject of Dutch actions throughout Aceh, but what about the local resistance in Pidië? As already mentioned the Dutch established a permanent post in the VII mukim. This left the Polem-family unable to exert their influence and brought the Dutch direct control over the

54 Redactie Indisch Militair Tijdschrift, ‘De Pedir-Expeditie’, Indisch Militair Tijdschrift (1899), 56,59. H.T. Damsté, ‘Drie Atjeh-Mannen, Snouck Hurgronje - Van Heutsz - Van Daalen’, Koloniaal Tijdschrift 26 (1937), 642. Ironically, Teuku Ben was the only casualty (severely wounded) when the Dutch were fired upon at the start of their flanking of the trapped gorge.
56 C. Snouck Hurgronje, ‘LXIII De Excursie ter Noord- en Oost-Kust van Atjeh en hare Gevolgen’, Verspreide Geschriften van C. Snouck Hurgronje, Deel IV, 392. This article was originally published in the Java-Bode of 4, 9, 10, and 14 November 1899 under the pseudonym Si Gam.
58 See, for example, Redactie Indisch Militair Tijdschrift, ‘De Pedir-Expeditie’, Indisch Militair Tijdschrift 29 (1898), 552, 676, 733.
population. Most of the ulama-led gangs had been chased away and the Tiro-region was also under Dutch control. This brings us to the final objective of the expedition, the submission of all ulêëbalangships of the federations XII and VI. A Dutch report on the political situation in Pidië at the end of August informed that all important heads of the federation VI now were subjected to Dutch authority.\(^5\) Moreover, under pressure of the Dutch the ulêëbalang had reconciled themselves. Snouck even managed to force the most extremist chief to accept the situation by ordering the kidnapping of his wife and children on the 28th of August (after a tip from a local informer).\(^6\) As a token of trust, the federation VI now was allowed to guard some important locations with its own men. Simultaneously the chiefs also were threatened with a 25,000 guilders fine for the continuation of enemy activities within their influence sphere (the sum of the fine was the same as the original gift received by the head of the federation VI for flying the Dutch flag in 1874).\(^6\)

The federation XII, as well as all remaining chiefs, were definitely submitted during September.\(^6\) Snouck, who had declared himself fit for action, played an important role in this final part of the expedition.\(^6\) On September 5 an Acehnese who wanted to complain about a night raid on his gampong was received by Snouck and his Acehnese assistant. By use of his knowledge on local affairs and Islam Snouck cleverly managed to obtain precise information on the whereabouts of some of the most defiant local chiefs, which happened to be the village of Beureunun. This was exactly the kind of fine-grained intelligence the Dutch had been continuously looking for. As the information was promptly turned into action, the prominent defiant chiefs could be arrested, which triggered the submission of other chiefs during the days following this event. Panglima Polem and his family were the only local power-holders of the Pidië region who did not submit to the Dutch. The Dutch occupation of the VII mukim Pidië, however, forced Polem to seek refuge in other parts of Aceh such as the east coast Dependency of Samalanga.\(^6\) Moreover, as soon as November 1 the first member of his family submitted to the Dutch and was subsequently fully restored in his position as an ulêëbalang. During October the troops from Java had already returned to their home bases and as the network of roads was completed the Dutch disbanded most of their posts.\(^6\)

One battalion of the Kutaradja garrison manned the post in the VII mukim, while another remained present for the rest of Pidië. Furthermore, -and as aforementioned- ulêëbalang

\(^6\) Redactie Indisch Militair Tijdschrift, 'De Pedir-Expeditie', Indisch Militair Tijdschrift (1899), 145.
\(^6\) Ibid., 141-151.
\(^6\) K. van der Maaten, Snouck Hurgronje en De Atjeh Oorlog, Deel I, 170-172, 187, H.T. Damsté, 'Drie Atjeh-Mannen, Snouck Hurgronje - Van Heutsz - Van Daalen', Koloniaal Tijdschrift 27 (1938), 8-16. Paul van 't Veer, De Atjeh-oorlog, 237. Although Van der Maaten and Van 't Veer consider this the most important event of the Pidië expedition, it should not be forgotten that the conditions for this operation were made possible by chasing away the larger resistance gangs and their leaders from Pidië. Snouck himself also regarded the breakdown of the united resistance as a prerequisite for the submission of all Pidië's ulêëbalang. See 'Van der Wijck aan Snouck Hurgronje, 15 September 1898', K. van der Maaten, Snouck Hurgronje en De Atjeh Oorlog, Deel II, 17.
\(^6\) Pabst, Oost-Indische Krijgs geschiedenis VII, 49.
militias started to fill the gap left by the withdrawn Dutch troops as they started to operate as local auxiliaries capable of maintaining peace and order in their specific ulêëbalangship. The resistance sanctuary had been cleared and the expedition was successfully completed. The expedition’s last report on the political situation captured the situation as follows:

‘In a country that for years fell victim to anarchy and where our influence five months ago was contained to a limited number of ulêëbalangships along the coast, order and peace was obtained on such a basis that with the fullest confidence in the future the consolidation can be established on this moment. It is a matter of logic that, for the time coming, the strong arm will dominate this process, while once a higher degree of order is obtained, a gradual reduction of troops will take place, which, as it seems now, will be the case in the near future.’

Overall, the expedition had succeeded in mopping up the Pidië sanctuary and dealt a severe blow to the Acehnese resistance. It demonstrated that firm military action could win the Dutch superiority in order to turn the situation at the local level to their advantage. This, however, was neither revolutionary, nor was it new to the Acehnese. In the past the Dutch had repeatedly succeeded in dominating the local level (particularly in Great Aceh under Van der Heijden). The consolidation and preservation of this control was the true problem as it repeatedly fell victim to the lack of resources and policy changes of the Dutch administration. Therefore, the most important issue raised by the Pidië expedition was the consolidation of its results with the limited resources available in Aceh. In this regard the above quoted report presents a positive outlook by suggesting that the military present could be reduced in the near future. The best reason for this optimism lay in the fact that under the new policy -as codified in the Governor’s instruction- the Dutch troops had treated the local population as future subjects, whose properties and livelihood had to be spared as much as possible. Simultaneously Dutch dominance was projected through the adat chiefs who, although they were treated with respect, were seriously punished for a lack of collaboration. Thereby the Dutch had created conditions in which they became the preferable as well as dominant partner to collaborate with. This provided an underpinning for the consolidation of Dutch control and meant a clean break with the past. The question now was how to maintain this advantage in the collaborative equation without a massive deployment of military resources at the grassroots level. Moreover, although the backbone of the united resistance had been broken in Pidië, this region represented only a small part of Aceh as a whole. Pacification of Aceh and all its Dependencies required the Dutch to establish and maintain dominance at the grassroots level without the abundance of troops that were available for the Pidië


expedition. How could this all be achieved, and what, in this regard, was the significance of the success in Pidië? To answer these questions we have to submerge in the political system that evolved in the wake of the Pidië expedition.

6.4 The *Korte Verklaring*

Since 1874 the Dutch policy on Aceh and its Dependencies had been characterized by an administrative distinction between Great Aceh and the Dependencies. Based on the wrong assumption of the Sultanate as a strong central state, Van Swieten had adopted this policy in order to bring the Sultan’s heartland under direct colonial rule, while the Dependencies were to be ruled indirectly (as it was assumed that they would follow the centre, see Chapter Four). This policy had caused the Dutch to focus on Great Aceh; Dutch resources were concentrated in the Kutaradja area and most large actions took place in the valley of Great Aceh. The Dependencies, on their turn, were submitted through so-called long declarations of eighteen articles which arranged a co-optive relationship between local *ulêébalang* and the Dutch colonial administration. Additionally the Dutch kept small outposts in some of the Dependencies and incidentally launched limited military actions or imposed naval blockades to enforce Dutch rule. As we have seen in Chapter Four this system principally brought the Dutch nominal control; in reality the chiefs of the Dependencies enjoyed complete autonomy as they mostly could ignore the Dutch. Moreover, despite the distinction between Great Aceh and the Dependencies, Dutch rule in the former region was also bothered by a lack of control. Due to the lack of resources and frequent policy changes, Dutch rule in Great Aceh was essentially indirect in nature.68 As typically for colonial states the *de facto* situation in directly ruled and indirectly ruled entities was much the same, despite the formal dichotomy. In chapters two and three it was already mentioned that both systems of indirect and direct rule heavily relied on co-option of local power-holders. The difference between the two systems was that the latter system directly incorporated local rulers in the structure of the colonial government, while indirect rule considered such power-holders as sovereigns, who had pledged allegiance to the colonial state. Obviously a system of direct rule offered the colonial administration more latitude to control its co-optees, but here also reality was more blurred than the official denominations suggested. In some of Aceh’s Dependencies, for instance, the situation had shifted towards direct rule as a cause of the introduction of systematic naval blockades.69 In general, however, the situation in the Dependencies was characterized by a lack of Dutch control, despite formal declarations of submission. Snouck illustrated the uselessness of this system of long declarations by pointing at Pidië, which due to its proximity to Great Aceh had regularly encountered Dutch interference (especially

69 Ibid.
at its coast). 70 By 1898 all *ulëëbalang* (including the members of both federations) who had signed the long declaration had been succeeded, and their successors had never insisted on a renewal of the treaty. Not one of the c. twenty *ulëëbalang* of Pidië did attribute any value to the formal contract with the Dutch.

On the other side, the Dutch themselves were bound by the long declarations which encompassed a respect of the suzerainty of the *ulëëbalangships* and imposed severe restrictions on Dutch interference. Measures such as the levying of toll, jurisdiction, agriculture and mining concessions *et cetera* could only be introduced with the approval of the local chief. 71 Of course, war measures such as naval blockades and military intervention could be employed by the Dutch to enforce compliance without regard for official contracts. However, now the Dutch had adopted an active policy for controlling and permanently pacifying Aceh as a whole, all these measures should become part of the colonial administration’s ‘peace measures’. 72 Snouck and Van Heutsz, therefore, envisioned the introduction of a uniform administrative system in Aceh and its Dependencies. This system was to unite whole Aceh under direct rule of the Dutch colonial administration with all local *adat* chiefs signing a simple declaration in which they stated that their followers and themselves were totally subjected to the colonial government and that they would comply with all governmental instructions. 73

The origins of this idea take us back to the Pidië expedition. It was during the first month of this undertaking that Van Heutsz raised the idea of the new administrative system and its adjoining short declaration to Governor-General Van der Wijck. Although Snouck is considered as its main architect, both men of the duumvirate agreed that the new offensive policy in the Dependencies, which currently was being practiced in Pidië, could only be fully exploited through the introduction of a system that would definitely arrange the political relationships between local chiefs and the Dutch administration. 74 Whereas the new Governor’s instruction had referred to the ‘system of the future’, the short declaration and the adoption of direct rule for Aceh as a whole encompassed the ultimate contours of this system. The Dutch, however, lacked the resources to enforce the total submission of all local power-holders of the more than 100 independent statelets of the Dependencies; what was needed to introduce this new extensive system, therefore, was a decisive and exemplary demonstration of Dutch dominance. Success in notoriously defiant Pidië would set such a deterrent example as it would show the capabilities that would be unleashed in case local power-holders failed to accept total submission to the Dutch. As we have seen this success indeed was obtained

in Pidië where the resistance was defeated while the ulêbalang were treated with dignity and respect, but also fined for anti-Dutch activities. This clearly illustrated that it was in the Acehnese adat chiefs’ personal interest to co-opt with the Dutch. Thereby the expedition brought the colonial administration the necessary leverage for bringing the Dependencies under Dutch control. This was the true merit of the Pidië expedition, or as Somer put it:

‘Breaking the resistance in Pidië has been the morally and politically starting sign of an extensive vigorous political system ... the fortunate outcome of this act of war [the Pidië expedition] has become the key to further measures; measures that will lead to the total submission of the Acehnese to our will; not only on the terrain of military operations, but also in a politico-administrative manner.’

Before we will deal with the actual implementation of this new administrative system in Aceh as a whole, we will first discuss how it took its definite form. As aforementioned Van Heutsz had first coined the idea in a June 1898 letter to Van der Wijck in which he also announced that Snouck, Assistant-Resident Van Rijn van Alkemade, and himself would further develop the proposal during the Pidië expedition in Sigli, if time permitted so. Van der Wijck passed the idea to his General Chancery for advise. Whereas the duumvirate in Aceh considered their plan as a practical measure, the Governor-General’s advisory body reflected upon it from a more theoretic point of view and raised judicial objections. According to Article 43 of the 1855 Governor-General’s Instruction indigenous rulers were granted the right of self-government. This right could only be violated if ‘repeated persuasion’ to comply with the Dutch colonial government had been fruitless and even then the measures taken should be in proportion to the situation. The General Chancery was not convinced of the necessity to bring the chiefs of Aceh’s Dependencies under direct rule under the condition of total submission. Further, it was argued that measures such as the levying of toll could be implemented without a change of the old system, and that such a change would only cause rebellion against these measures. The true reason for Batavia’s objections, however, lay in a fear of a British reaction as the introduction of direct rule in the Dependencies could be explained as a violation of Article III of the 1824 London Treaty (this view was also shared by officials in The Hague). This was the exact reason why earlier attempts to introduce one administrative system for the whole of Aceh had failed. Both in

75 Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 278.
76 J.M. Somer, De Korte Verklaring, 249.
77 Ibid., 252-253.
1881 and in 1891 Aceh’s Governors had been overruled when they proposed to impose direct rule in the Dependencies in order to exploit the effects of naval blockades.

A thorough answer to these objections was formulated by Snouck in Sigli on August 24 (while Van Heutsz was on his way to Tangsé). It was here that the true genius behind the proposal revealed itself as Snouck wrote a meticulous answer to the General Chancery’s report which he considered ‘to be too much inspired by the wish to search for objections, and to be largely based on theory, which goes around the local facts’. First he argued that the ulêëbalang of the Dependencies could not be regarded as indigenous rulers in the sense of Article 43 of the Governor-General’s Instruction as those chiefs were in the ‘first place heads of popular plantations, culture undertakings, or complexes of enterprises and merchants’. This is remarkable as Snouck commonly depicted the ulêëbalang as hereditary feudal lords, who were tied to their followers through their right to land (as discussed in Chapter Four). Ulêëbalang rule indeed shared many characteristics of such a feudal system as it was based on heritage, adat and the Sultan’s sarakata, but in essence those chiefs remained economic entrepreneurs. In this writing Snouck demonstrates clearly that he was fully aware of this economical basis of ulêëbalang legitimacy, while in his advises he had always emphasized the ‘in the Acehnese national consciousness deeply rooted hereditary [feudal] principle’. We will elaborate on the consequences of this hiatus in the latter part of this chapter. In addition to this clarification on the true nature of ulêëbalang rule, Snouck’s answer also contained a description of the de facto relationships between the administration in Kutaradja and the chiefs of the Dependencies. He explained that ulêëbalang in their behaviour totally disregarded the long declarations, and that in practice the Dutch employed war measures to enforce compliance. Now the effectiveness of those measures had dramatically increased, more and more chiefs stated that they were obeying, because ‘soedah taloeq sama Kompenie’ (they had already submitted to the Kompeuni). Thus, the chiefs had already started to accept total submission to the Dutch, and Snouck further developed this point by stating that the ongoing Pidië expedition and the success in Idi had left the chiefs of the north and east coast prepared to sign a declaration of total submission. He also expected the ulêëbalang of the west coast to follow as the new active policy would soon start to affect them.

All in all Snouck argued that in the current situation the balance of power had been restored in favour of the Dutch. Moreover, compliance with new tolls and additional measures under the new system would not cause any disturbance as the chiefs’ revenues would remain untouched; they even would profit from the socio-economic development of their ulêëbalangships (which would benefit the population and thereby raise production, yielding more tax income for the colonial administration as well as the chiefs). It was also

80 ‘Nota van Snouck Hurgronje [aan Van der Wijck], 24 Augustus 1898’, 260-264.
81 Ibid., 261.
82 Ibid., see also Karel E.M. Bongenaar, De ontwikkeling van het zelfbesturend landschap in Nederlands-Indië, 302.
83 J.M. Somer, De Korte Verklaring, 267; Karel E.M. Bongenaar, De ontwikkeling van het zelfbesturend landschap in Nederlands-Indië, 303.
84 ‘Nota van Snouck Hurgronje [aan Van der Wijck], 24 Augustus 1898’, 262.
Chapter 6 The Course of Co-option

subtly mentioned that Minister of Colonial Affairs and former Deli tobacco magnate J.Th. Cremer was an advocate of such a policy. Snouck’s request to ‘put an official seal on the current situation in order to provide a better foundation for our authority in the future’ was well-received by Van der Wijck, who replied on October 14 with the request to file an official proposal for the introduction of a new, shorter declaration. This was accomplished in a letter of 12 November 1898 that expounded Snouck’s and Van Heutsz’s plan for the new politico-administrative system for Aceh and its Dependencies based on either the establishment of direct rule, with self-government by the ulëëbalang, or the introduction of a simplified short declaration of total submission. A model of this Korte Verklaring (KV) was included in the letter and consisted of two articles in which an ulëëbalang declared that his ulëëbalangship was part of the Netherlands-Indies and that he was totally subjected to Dutch rule as embodied by the Governor-General (Article 1), and in which he vowed to comply with all regulations issued by Aceh’s Governor (Article 2).

It is remarkable that the 12 November letter presented two alternatives for Aceh, the establishment of direct rule with self-government, or the introduction of the KV (while maintaining the official indirect status of the Dependencies). Both options, however, would lead to the same result as they gave Kutaradja more ‘direct’ control of the Dependencies and thereby mirrored the actual situation. This again demonstrates that in the reality of colonial practice the difference between indirect and direct rule was highly hypothetical. Although there is no clear supporting evidence available, there can be little doubt that the introduction of the KV with preservation of the indirect status, was considered less provoking to the British. Although Van der Wijck officially rejected the first alternative on the ground of a lack of administrative resources, it seems that fear of a British reaction was a huge factor in the decision not to implement direct rule in Aceh as a whole. Nevertheless, de facto Van Swieten’s 1874 distinction ceased to exist as the politico-administrative system of the KV brought the Dependencies effectively under direct control of Kutaradja, with self-government being conducted by the ulëëbalang. Furthermore Minister Cremer as an old Deli hand knew that the British, and especially the Straits Settlements, were more concerned with the reality of Dutch rule, than with its form. As there had been no complaints from the Straits with regard to the naval blockades as practiced since 1893 which also opposed the 1824 Treaty, Cremer anticipated that there would be no danger in implementing the KV. Thus The Hague fully supported the new politico-administrative system that would bring the Dutch direct influence in Aceh as a whole. On March 19 1899 Cremer telegraphed his definite

85 Ibid., 264, on Cremer’s background see Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 280.
89 Ibid., 276, Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 279-280.
approval on the condition that the contract of the KV would be amended with one article that explicitly prohibited submitted local power-holders from engaging in relationships with foreign powers (this would become Article 2 of the KV).\textsuperscript{91}

Meanwhile, the first KV had already been signed by Teuku Imam, the Raja of Teunom, on December 13 1898.\textsuperscript{92} Ironically, it was precisely the protagonist of the Nisero affair (see Chapter Five), who now was the first to offer his total submission. Even more ironic was the fact that Uma was instrumental in this matter. When Uma fled Tangsé for the west coast he had picked up his earlier existence as leader of a roving gang. Uma’s 800-strong, well-armed, and highly experienced gang made him a formidable rival to the chiefs of the west coast’s Dependencies. Uma’s old nemesis, Teuku Imam, felt so endangered that he applied to the Dutch colonial administration for assistance against Uma. This provided the Dutch not only with a chance to end the exceptional status of the Raja of Teunom (in the deal ending the Nisero affair the Dutch had agreed to severely limit their interference in Teunom, Snouck, therefore, anticipated serious resistance from this actor against the KV), but also an opportunity for definitely dealing with Uma. Therefore, Van der Wijck had approved Snouck and Van Heutsz (in his October 14 letter) to continue with the introduction of the KV in case Teuku Imam would offer his submission. The Dutch had already deployed a battalion of infantry and six Marechaussee brigades to the west coast in order to find Uma.\textsuperscript{93} These forces now started to co-operate with the Raja of Teunom in order to protect his ulèëbalangship and with help of local informers the chase for Uma fully developed. The ensuing relentless pursuit ended in the night of 10-11 February 1899 when Uma was killed in an ambush at the beach north of Meulaboh.\textsuperscript{94} Uma succumbed to what once had been his own method for dealing with competitors; collaboration with the Dutch colonial administration in Kutaradja.\textsuperscript{95}

Thus, the politico-administrative system of the KV was first introduced in Aceh. Its simple contract brought local power-holders self-government at the price of total submission, and thereby it brought the Dutch control as the colonial government’s dominance was assured under this contract. The administration was entitled to freely interfere in local rule and could even limit its extent if the insights of local colonial officials deemed this necessary.\textsuperscript{96} The KV, therefore, constituted the framework for co-optive relationships with local power-holders in which the Dutch lawfully where the dominant party. As we have seen this theoretical dominance matched the actual situation after dominance was achieved as a consequence of the Pidië expedition. We should not forget, however, that this expedition was enabled by

\textsuperscript{91} J.M. Somer, De Korte Verklaring, 283-284, 360-363, Karel E.M. Bongenaar, De ontwikkeling van het zelfbesturend landschap in Nederlands-Indië, 303-304.


\textsuperscript{93} Paul van ’t Veer, De Atjeh-oorlog, 238-239, G.D.E.J. Hotz, Beknopt Geschiedkundig Overzicht van den Atjèh-oorlog, 58-57.

\textsuperscript{94} See also Departement van Oorlog, Aanhangsel van het Voorschrift voor de Uitoefening van de Politiek-Politieele Taak van het Leger (Weltevreden: Reproductiebedrijf Top. Dienst, 1929), 433-434.

\textsuperscript{95} Martijn Kitzen, 'Between treaty and treason', 109.

\textsuperscript{96} See also Elsbeth Locher-Scholten, Sumatraans sultanaat en koloniale staat, 217.
Chapter 6 The Course of Co-option

a temporary surge of forces through allocation of extra troops from Java, while Kutaradja had strictly limited resources for controlling Aceh, and that most of those resources remained concentrated in Great Aceh. The question, therefore, is how the Dutch secured the introduction as well as the consolidation of the KV system in Aceh as a whole, without a substantial presence in the Dependencies; how exactly did the Dutch establish and maintain stable co-optive relationships in which they were the dominant actor?

The case of the Raja of Teunom demonstrates that Snouck and Van Heutsz cleverly exploited the new Dutch reputation gained during the Pidië expedition by dispatching a small force to the west coast in order to continue the hunt for Uma. This not only showed the resoluteness to aggressively pursue the resistance, but coincidentally also acted to assist local power-holders against rivals who collaborated with the resistance. The Dutch reputation was further boosted by this demonstration of will and capability to offer protection or assistance in local feuds with parties associated with the resistance. Thereby the Dutch not only proved to be the dominant party for local power-holders to co-opt with, but also the preferable as they would offer co-optees protection and assistance. This reputation of the Kutaradja administration as the dominant as well as the preferable partner for ulèëbalang to collaborate with was further established during the remainder years of Van Heutsz’s governorship through the introduction of coercive as well as persuasive measures for establishing and maintaining co-optive relationships with the local chiefs. It was predominantly the use of force or the threat of punishment, however, that enabled the Dutch to control Aceh at an acceptable level. A series of expeditions and smaller excursions (all without the deployment of additional troops from outside Aceh) functioned to uninterruptedly project Dutch dominance. The 1901 Samalanga expedition was the last large expedition (two infantry battalions with support arms) of the Aceh War. During this action Van Heutsz celebrated his 50th birthday with the destruction of the ulama fortress of Batéë Iliq, which was instrumental in breaking the organized resistance in Aceh as a whole.97 Even more important, the examples provided by the repeated expeditions had convinced most ulèëbalang that, in contrast to the past, the new Dutch active policy would not fade away and that Kutaradja would maintain its dominance at all costs. Therefore by January 1903 most Acehnese chiefs had opted to submit to the Dutch and signed the KV.98

Now the colonial administration’s strength had become commonly accepted among the Acehnese, the Dutch focused on the splintered remains of the resistance and the defiant adat chiefs of the Gajo and Alas tribes of Aceh’s uplands. Thus far these remote peoples had been relatively untouched and unexplored by the Dutch colonial administration. After 1901, however, the resistance gangs started to use the various Gajo and Alas tribal micro states in the inaccessible interior surrounding Laut Tawar as their sanctuary (due to the Dutch

pressure in the remainder of Aceh). This provoked Kutaradja to launch a total of seven excursions between 1901 and 1905, among which the most infamous excursion of lieutenant-colonel G.C.E. Van Daalen in 1904. This undertaking which involved some 198 Marechaussee who roved the Gajo and Alas statelets for 163 days was characterized by brutalities against the local population. An estimated 25-33% of the inhabitants of the area were killed (2902 people), among whom 1159 women and children. This was exactly the kind of alienating violence Snouck had wanted to avoid at all costs. Whereas Van Heutsz during the early days of his governorship had followed Snouck’s advises to strictly confine the use of force against the population as the indigenous people were to be considered as future subjects, the reality on the ground had gradually become more and more dominated by military hardliners like Van Daalen. The firm but selective violence against resistance leaders as envisioned by Snouck, thus, had turned into the use of massive force against the complete population of areas in which the resistance was active. In Snouck’s vision the inhumane practices of officers like Van Daalen, who according to Snouck possessed ‘a deeply-rooted disdain for all what is indigenous’ had spoilt the gains of the new policy. This was one of the reasons why Snouck had resigned his position as an advisor in Aceh a year earlier, in October 1903. This resignation urges us to take a short detour in which we clarify the circumstances of the schism of the Aceh duumvirate, before we will continue our discussion on how exactly the Dutch colonial administration established and maintained co-optive relationships with the limited available resources.

Another important -probably the most important- reason for Snouck’s resignation was a profound difference in insight on the political course in Aceh between Van Heutsz and Snouck. By 1903 the tactic of the relentless pursuit was so effective that the Sultan and Polem submitted themselves on respectively 10 January and 6 September. As mentioned before the latter was destined to be restored as Panglima Sagi of the XXII mukim if he accepted total submission to the Dutch. On January 1 1904 Polem was definitely installed in this function, and he remained a trusted co-optee of the colonial administration until his death in 1940. The way forward after the Sultan’s submission was less clear and caused the definite schism in Aceh’s duumvirate. The 1898 Governor’s instruction had explicitly stated not to engage the Sultan actively. The rationale underlying this restraint was Snouck’s correct point that although the Sultan was a rather powerless figure at that moment, his symbolic power, however, would prove difficult to handle by the Dutch in the future.

99 C. Snouck Hurgronje, Het Gajōland en Zijne Bewoners (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1903), XII-XIII, see also C. Snouck Hurgronje, Nota van Wenken die bij de Aanraking met Hoofden en bevolking van het Gajōland te behartigen zullen zijn (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1902).
100 G.D.E.J. Hotz, Beknopt Geschiedkundig Overzicht van den Atjeh-oorlog, 61-64, Paul van ‘t Veer, De Atjeh-oorlog, 267-282
101 ‘Snouck Hurgronje aan Rooseboom, 2 October 1903’, 344.
102 G.D.E.J. Hotz, Beknopt Geschiedkundig Overzicht van den Atjeh-oorlog, 60-61, Paul van ‘t Veer, De Atjeh-oorlog, 245. Interestingly both men were captured in an indirect way. The Sultan surrendered after a Marechaussee patrol arrested his wife, while Polem submitted because his mother was caught by a similar patrol.
On new year’s eve of 1902 the Sultan approached the colonial administration to find out whether or not he would be exiled upon his submission. While Snouck was absent, Van Heutsz opened negotiations -against his own Governor’s instruction- that resulted in a permission to reside in Aceh and also an allowance from the Dutch administration. Albeit seemingly innocent obligations, Snouck was afraid that this would be explained by the Acehnese as a restoration of the Sultanate. This would encompass an additional layer of indigenous administration in Aceh and thereby would endanger the newly-won direct influence of the colonial administration. Snouck pointed at the fact that many ulèëbalang had already paid tributes of hundreds of dollars upon the Sultan’s submission. Van Heutsz, who in his brochure De Onderwerping van Atjeh had advocated the restoration of the Sultanate under Dutch supervision, saw in the Sultan’s submission an opportunity to definitely pacify Aceh and its Dependencies. When the Sultan attempted to influence ulèëbalang, however, he was met with mockery, and Van Heutsz’s plan soon turned out to be unworkable. Moreover, ultimately Snouck’s opinion prevailed when the Sultan was exiled in 1907 -ironically by then Governor Van Daalen- exactly because of the fact that his presence was a continuous source of unrest. Back in 1903 this dispute with van Heutsz on the role of the Sultan was the trigger for Snouck to definitely give up his advisory role in Aceh.

Thus the cooperation of the duumvirate ended. Although Snouck’s objections were very serious and his ideas had not always been executed properly, it could not be denied that for the first time the Dutch colonial administration had obtained an acceptable level of control in Aceh as a whole. As aforementioned the exemplary utility of military force had been instrumental in achieving this situation. The system of the KV was the politico-administrative reflection of this new situation, and was the most important merit of Snouck’s involvement in the field as it ‘gave the secular elite a vested interest in stability under Dutch authority, and so drove deeper the wedge between them and the ulama [resistance]’. Whereas the continuous expeditions and excursions convinced or coerced most ulèëbalang to submit, the other measures of the KV system acted to consolidate and maintain the newly established co-optive relationships and thereby provided the underpinning for further pacification efforts. The ulèëbalang were treated with respect, but also punished for anti-Dutch activities in their area of interest. What had gradually evolved from 1898 until 1903 was a system that focused on co-option of the legitimate local power-holders ruling the various local communities (down to the mukim level) through a mix of methods that varied from sanctions to incentives.

108 Officially the Sultan was expelled for seeking the support of the Emperor of Japan against the Dutch. The importance as well as the authenticity of the intercepted correspondence, however, was doubtful. Nevertheless they gave the Dutch a good reason to get rid of the Sultan, who remained in exile until his death on Java in 1927. See Paul van ’t Veer, De Atjeh-oorlog, 281. ‘Snouck Hurgronje aan Heemskerk, 4 Mei 1908’, ed. E. Gobée and C. Adriaanse, Ambtelijk Adviezen van C. Snouck Hurgronje, 376-378.
109 Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 278.
We will now discuss the various methods that were used to consolidate and maintain these co-optive relationships as well as the Dutch colonial administration’s organization for controlling all 150 co-opted local power-holders in Great Aceh and the more than 100 micro states of the Dependencies.\footnote{A.J. Piekaar, \textit{Atjèh en de Oorlog met Japan}, 7.}

First the matter of administration. The need to supervise co-optees at the local level as part of the new policy in Aceh had first been acknowledged in the 1898 Governor’s instruction. The ameliorated situation in Great Aceh prompted the attribution of grass-root level daily administration to captains and lieutenants of the \textit{Marechaussee}, who were ordered to ‘continuously control the to our [Dutch] authority submitted heads and population’.\footnote{K. van der Maaten, \textit{Snouck Hurgronje en De Atjeh Oorlog}, Deel II, bijlage LXXIV, 162-163.} When the introduction of the KV after the Pidië expedition brought the Dutch a similar level of control in the Dependencies, the demand for officials to exert this control greatly increased. Under the mandate of the Governor’s instruction the officers of the \textit{Marechaussee} were also to be appointed as the military and civil authorities in the newly controlled locales. The choice for these officers can be explained by the fact that the \textit{Korps Marechaussee} since its foundation had required its officers to obtain a full insight in local political and social affairs in addition to at least some command of the Acehnese language and knowledge of the local \textit{adat}.\footnote{L. Voogt, ‘Een politionele eend in de Indische militaire bijt. Voorgeschiedenis, oprichting en formatieve fase van het Korps Marechaussee te Atjeh (1890-1896)’, 24-25.} Although the situation in Great Aceh had become so stable that more and more members of this corps could be relieved from pure military tasks in order to conduct administrative tasks in the micro states of the Dependencies, this was not enough, and additionally officers from other Dutch Colonial Army units were also installed in the function of ‘officer-civil authority’.\footnote{H.W. Van den Doel, ‘De ontwikkeling van het militaire bestuur in Nederlands-Indië’, 36-37, G. D.E.J. Hotz, \textit{Beknopt Geschiedkundig Overzicht van den Atjeh-oorlog}, 58-59.} Hardliner Van Daalen, later Prime Minister of the Netherlands H. Colijn, and K. van der Maaten, whose book about Snouck is used in this chapter, were among those officers.\footnote{For a thorough oversight of Colijn’s involvement in Aceh see Herman Langeveld, H., \textit{Dit leven van krachtig handelen}, 65-115.} All these local agents were centrally supervised and directed by the Assistant-Resident in Kutaradja. This organization with military officers embodying civilian authority would be kept up until pacification was fully accomplished.

It were these officer-civil authorities who represented the Dutch colonial government with which local power-holders had sealed the contract of the KV. The officers were engaged on a daily basis in the bargaining with the \textit{ulêêbalang} in order to maintain and exploit the newly established co-optive relationships. It was to their insight that the mix of coercive and persuasive methods of the new politico-administrative system was to be deployed as they were instructed to ‘make the chiefs oblige to take those measures the colonial administration deems necessary in order to guarantee peace, order, and security etc. through efficient instructions and a tactful use of the available coercive means’.\footnote{J.M. Somer, \textit{De Korte Verklaring}, 305, italics by author.} On
the coercive side the ultimate method, of course, was a military action in the form of an expedition or excursion. This method, however, was only called upon in areas in which the resistance still had considerable influence and was not intended to enforce compliance in case a local chief had already submitted himself. This also applied to the (tightening of) naval blockades which were primarily designed to establish control by limiting trade and arms smuggling. Nevertheless, these measures were regularly applied throughout Aceh during Van Heutsz’s governorship, and their exemplary working provided the officers-civil authorities with a potent stick to threaten unwilling co-optees.\footnote{‘Nota van Snouck Hurgronje [aan Van der Wijck], 24 Augustus 1898’, 261-262, ‘Van Heutsz aan Van der Wijck, 12 November 1898’, 232-233.} Although the military administrators were accompanied by a small military detachment (which did not suffice to control a locale by occupation), the coercive methods that allowed them to tactfully enforce compliance with the KV typically encompassed non-military measures such as fines and the application of indigenous jurisdiction.\footnote{J.M. Somer, ‘De Korte Verklaring’, 306-307, Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 277-279.}

To start with the latter, the indigenous jurisdiction was to be executed by the adat chiefs under supervision of the local military administrator. It was envisioned that ultimately Aceh would be completely ruled through the uléëbalang, and that Dutch interference with their administration would be minimal only. For the moment, however, ‘the low state of development of many chiefs’, required the local colonial administrators to pass sentences with the acquiescence of the local power-holder(s) responsible for maintaining the indigenous law.\footnote{‘Snouck Hurgronje aan Rooseboom, 2 October 1903’, 344.} This position of the colonial administrators could be used to exert pressure on co-optees in order to comply to Dutch demands. For instance, an uléëbalang or his followers could be convicted for crimes related to supporting the resistance, or resistance activities within the chief’s influence sphere. As such a conviction would be officially passed through an adat-sanctioned court, this was considered a very subtle way to enforce compliance of muttering co-optees. Nevertheless, the sentences imposed could be very heavy and less tactful, especially if the local civil-military official was a hardliner like Van Daalen. Snouck has pointed at this officer’s inhumane and cruel verdicts during his spell as officer-civil authority of Pidië. Local chiefs and complete segments of the population were sent in exile or received as much as twenty years of penal servitude.\footnote{Ibid., 344-345.} Even Van Heutsz agreed that this had been too much, but he argued that Van Daalen had learned from this experience.\footnote{‘Beoordeling van Van Daalen door Van Heutsz, 29 April 1904’, J.W. Naarding, Het Conflict Van Heutsz–Snouck Hurgronje–Van Daalen, Bijlage XVIII, 63.} During Van Daalen’s later governorship, however, he did not demonstrate any advanced insight in the matter. He even went as far as converting an adat-court’s verdict from expulsion into the death penalty when a Marechaussee patrol was completely destroyed in the
The Course of Co-option

Chapter 6

ulèëbalangship Keureutoë. 121 Ulèëbalang Teuku Tjhi Tunong was executed on the allegation of high treason - despite the local colonial administrator stating his innocence - for failing to prevent the resistance’s ambush in his area of influence. Thus, it is clear that the supervision over the indigenous jurisdiction provided the colonial administration a powerful tool for enforcing compliance with the KV. The abuse of this tool by military hardliners, on the other hand, was a constant sorrow that actually required close monitoring by experienced and dedicated civil colonial officials such as Snouck or the Assistant-Resident in Kutaradja. As this could not be achieved throughout Aceh as a whole, excesses occurred as long as Aceh was not fully pacified and civil authority transferred to the civil colonial administrators.

The most widely used coercive measure was imposing fines. This method was very effective as it directly affected the main source of ulèëbalang power, their economic position. Both Snouck and Van Heutsz realized this. Snouck stated that ‘the Acehnese are too sensitive in their purse and too precise calculators not to feel any increase in financial pressure in its full power’. 122 Van Heutsz argued that besides (the threat of) military force ‘skimming the purse is the mighty running engine that drives the machine the way we want’. 123 The truth of these statements was reflected in the outcome of the introduction of the fining of ulèëbalang in order to enforce compliance with the KV; the stability of the indigenous administration in the ulèëbalangships increased as the gap between the ulama-led resistance and the adat chiefs widened now the latter stepped up their collaboration with the Dutch in order to protect their own interest. 124 The importance of this economically focused interest was also exploited by the Dutch as part of the persuasive methods for maintaining co-optive relationships through the allocation of allowances. Albeit we will discuss this below, it should be mentioned here that withholding such allowances was considered a powerful tool for exerting pressure. 125 This negative use of allowances was also part of a colonial administrator’s daily toolkit for controlling co-optees at the grassroots level.

The persuasive measures all aimed at the ulèëbalang’s self-interest, and therefore were highly attractive for these economically-driven local power-holders. Allowances provided a strong incentive for a loyal attitude towards the colonial administration and ultimately could range from 10,200 guilders a year for strategic important dominant chiefs and 240 guilders annually for lower-level local power-holders. 126 Initially, however, the Dutch intended to be very careful with such fees. The 1898 Governor’s instruction ordained that allowances could only be authorized with the explicit permission of the Government of the Netherlands-

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121 H.T. Damsté, ‘De Executie van Teukoe Tjhi’ Toenong te Lhō Seumawè in 1905’, Koloniaal Tijdschrift 27 (1938), 490-492, see also M.H. du Croo, Generaal Swart, Pacificator van Atjeh, 95.
122 Nota van Snouck Hurgronje [aan Van der Wijck], 24 Augustus 1898’, 263.
Indies -without doubt a consequence of the Teuku Uma debacle. In order to qualify for a governmental salary submitted chiefs should have demonstrated their will and capability to maintain peace and order within their influence sphere as well as their strong support for the local colonial administration (this was already mentioned in section 6.2). Snouck also argued that the ulëëbalang should not become fully dependent of a fixed income of the colonial administration. In order to give local power-holders a permanent interest in the further development of their ulëëbalangship their traditional source of income, the levying of toll, was maintained under Dutch supervision. The rationale of this decision was that more development meant a higher production rate which would augment the chiefs’ tax incomes. The naval blockades that affected large parts of Acehnese commerce could be used to support this measure as Dutch administration of all trade would deny local cheapskates and smugglers their part of the profit. Other financial benefits available to ulëëbalang under the KV system were royalties paid for mining or plantation concessions (particularly along the east coast). All together this combination of a fixed allowance and variable income through traditional tolls under Dutch supervision or additional royalties, was highly attractive for the entrepreneurial ulëëbalang. The Dutch thereby succeeded in also becoming a preferred partner for collaboration (in addition to their dominance) and thus they became capable of maintaining stable co-optive relationships with submitted chiefs. Moreover, these financial measures greatly enhanced institutionalization of the ulëëbalang; although the signing of the KV contract had formally turned them in Kutaradja's co-optees, the Dutch salaries as well as the supervision of toll levying visibly identified the chiefs as agents of the colonial administration.

In addition to these economic incentives the persuasive methods of the KV system also encompassed measures for empowering local power-holders. As we have seen in the case of the Raja of Teunom the Dutch were capable of providing protection and assistance against rivals related to the resistance. Later, when the co-optive relationships had grown more stable, the Dutch started to exert their colonial control through the ulëëbalang; those local power-holders became adat chiefs as well as colonial administrators working under the supervision of Dutch officials at the grassroots level. In practice this duality of the ulëëbalang as co-optees within the politico-administrative framework of the KV encompassed a strengthening of the ulëëbalang as adat chiefs vis-à-vis the other Acehnese societal groups, i.e. peasants and ulama in their locales as well as the Sultan and his group. It was felt that the adat was the basis for peace in Aceh and that maintaining this peace as well as further development could not be established through transformation or modernization. Whereas Dutch administrators were capable of interfering with ulëëbalang rule, they opted to support the adat chiefs and minimize

127 'Ontwerp “Instructie voor den Gouverneur van Atjeh en Onderhoorigheden” (Kolonel Van Heutsz)’, 163.
128 ‘Nota van Snouck Hurgronje [aan Van der Wijck], 24 Augustus 1898’, 264.
130 Anthony Reid, The Blood of the People, 13, see also A.J. Piekaar, Atjèh en de Oorlog met Japan, 7.
such interference as long as the situation was peaceful and the co-optive relationship stable. Consequently the ulëëbalang primarily remained adat chiefs, and their dual role as agents of the Dutch colonial administration took the form of an empowerment of the former role. Whereas the economically oriented ulëëbalang traditionally were capable of exerting some influence in law and religion, the Dutch support concentrated the administration of these fields in their hands exclusively at the expense of the local villagers and ulama.\textsuperscript{132} Furthermore the afore mentioned allowances and extra income allowed the ulëëbalang to tighten the dyadic ties with their rakan, who now became salaried administrative officers.\textsuperscript{133} These persuasive methods for maintaining the co-optive relationships as part of the KV hugely contributed to an individual ulëëbalang’s power position and therefore they not only provided an incentive to engage in a co-optive relationship with Kutaradja, but also to maintain this relationship in order to guarantee Dutch support.

Thus, the politico-administrative system of the KV finally succeeded to establish and maintain stable co-optive relationships with local power-holders in Great Aceh as well as the Dependencies. The Pidië expedition, the many other military actions that took place between 1898 and 1903, and the naval blockades constituted a credible threat to coerce defiant or unwilling ulëëbalang into submission. Backed up by this potent stick Dutch colonial officials at the grassroots level could practically enforce compliance by fines and judicial punishments for a lack of collaboration. Despite their scarcity of resources the Dutch had created a system in which their dominance was evident. This not only required the (exemplary) use of force, but also the establishment of an administrative apparatus capable of exerting influence over local power-holders in the over 100 locales of the Dependencies as well as Great Aceh. Such an apparatus was realized through the introduction of the new function of officer-civil administrator which allowed military officers to act as local administrators until a locale was stable enough to be handed over to a Dutch civilian official. On the other side the Dutch implemented persuasive methods designed to serve an ulëëbalang’s self-interest. This turned out to be highly successful as co-option with the Dutch not only enhanced the economic position of these chiefs, but also served to empower them \textit{vis-à-vis} rivals and other societal groups. Consequently it was not only highly attractive for the ulëëbalang to sign the KV’s contract and engage in a co-optive relationship with the colonial administration, but also to maintain this relationship in order to secure Dutch support. Consequently, the coercive and persuasive measures as part of the KV made the Dutch the dominant and the preferable actor to collaborate with, for that moment as well as in the future. This was a clean break with the past in which the Dutch had only managed to obtain such a position temporarily. Moreover, it should be noted that the permanent character of the new politico-administrative system received additional substance through the implementation of Snouck’s idea to educate

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{132} Anthony Reid, \textit{The Blood of the People}, 14, A.J. Piekaar, \textit{Atjèh en de Oorlog met Japan}, 8.
\item \textsuperscript{133} James T. Siegel, \textit{The Rope of God}, 87.
\end{itemize}
the sons of the co-optees under supervision of the colonial administration. In sum, the coercive and persuasive measures of the KV created the condition which for the ulêëbalang excluded any option but co-option with the Dutch in order to serve their self-interest. To paraphrase Reid, the politico-administrative system of the KV gave the ulêëbalang a ‘vested interest’ in accepting and maintaining a co-optive relationship with the Dutch colonial administration.

6.5 The road to pacification: 1904-c. 1912

The Aceh strategy thus was a combination of the exemplary use of force with the politico-administrative system of the KV that allowed the Dutch colonial state to obtain control with limited resources only. Its genesis under the duumvirate Snouck and Van Heutsz had indeed brought the Dutch an acceptable level of control over the various locales of Aceh and its Dependencies. Moreover, in the years to come the Aceh strategy would provide the underpinning for definitely pacifying Aceh and it would also become instrumental in establishing the colonial state of the Netherlands-Indies into the utmost corners of the Indonesian archipelago. For the moment, however, the end of Van Heutsz’s governorship in June 1904 marked the beginning of a setback in the pacification of Aceh and its Dependencies. When Van Heutsz was appointed Governor-General of the Netherlands-Indies he was succeeded in Aceh by major-general J.C. van der Wijck. Van der Wijck continued the policy of his predecessor and emphasized economic development, but his governorship turned out to be a brief intermezzo as he was promoted to Commander of the Dutch colonial army in 1905. This opened the way for a new Governor in Aceh, and on May 6 1905 colonel Van Daalen, the infamous military hardliner, was installed as Governor of Aceh and its Dependencies.

Whereas Van der Wijck had continued Van Heutsz’s policy exactly the way it was intended, Van Daalen followed his own interpretation. The core of the policy that was originally designed by Snouck and Van Heutsz was the combination of exemplary force, tactful coercive measures, and persuasive incentives for collaboration. Van Daalen emphasized the use of force and coercive measures. He believed this was the only way forward to full Dutch control over the Acehnese-and hence it was instrumental in finally achieving pacification. Although his reputation as a military hardliner and his ideas on the pacification of Aceh were widely known and even mentioned in an earlier assessment, Van Heutsz had always considered Van

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135 Anthony Reid, The Contest for North Sumatra, 278.
137 J. Langhout, Economische Staatkunde in Atjèh (Den Haag: W.P. Van Stockum & Zoon, 1923), 86-87, see also J. Kreemer, Algemeen Samenvattend Overzicht van Land en Volk van Atjèh en Onderhoorigheden, Deel I, 41.
Daalen the best candidate for the position of Governor of Aceh. Snouck, on the other hand, had always warned against Van Daalen’s appointment as he feared that this hardliner would alienate the local population with a policy of ‘rough submission’, which would completely ‘disorganize the health of the patient [Aceh]’. Snouck’s warning became truth during the governorship of Van Daalen. As already illustrated afore, Governor Van Daalen’s brutal policy imposed hardship on the Acehnese. This not only affected the resistance and its supporters, but also the common villagers and the ulëëbalang. Van Daalen’s distrust of the indigenous chiefs was so profound that despite the continuation of the politico-administrative system of the KV, he effectively attempted to govern without them.

The results of this policy were disastrous. The years 1905 and 1906 were characterized by an increased level of resistance in the Dependencies and a deterioration of the political situation in Great Aceh. This provoked Van Daalen to step up his campaign of fierce military action in order to quell any renewed uprising with brutal force. It might be remembered that the Dutch lacked the resources to implement such an approach in Aceh and its Dependencies as a whole (now there were even less resources as due to the stable situation at the start of Van Daalen’s governorship an infantry battalion had redeployed to Java). Whereas the Aceh strategy compensated this lack of resources by exploiting the exemplary use of military force through political deals with local power-holders, Van Daalen’s distrust of the ulëëbalang deactivated this mechanism. This resulted in a return of the organized resistance. Again it were the ulama who were leading the reorganization of the resistance, but they also engaged the Sultan, whose symbolic authority was exploited in order to mobilize the Acehnese against the Kompeuni (exactly what Snouck warned for in 1903, see section 6.4). By 1907 ulama-led gangs once again systematically harassed the Dutch throughout Aceh and its Dependencies, and even the suburbs of Kutaradja came under attack. This time Van Daalen’s reaction not only encompassed fierce military action, but also the arrest of the Sultan, who now was correctly identified as a pivotal agent of the resistance and consequently exiled to the Malukan islands (and later to Java). Despite these measures the situation worsened and the ulama-led resistance gradually established a firm foothold in the Dependencies.

As we have seen in Chapter Three (section 3.3) of this book, domestic resentment on atrocities committed overseas was not uncommon in the colonial époque. Van Daalen’s policy and the resulting hardship suffered by the Acehnese triggered a powerful reaction back home in the Netherlands. A series of seventeen articles written by a retired Marechaussee officer (lieutenant W.A. van Oorschot) under the pseudonym Wekker (whistleblower) discussed gruesome details of atrocities in Aceh and held Governor Van Daalen personally responsible.

141 Anthony Reid, The Blood of the People, 12.
143 Ibid.
The consecutive political debate led to an official investigation into the situation in Aceh, which was to be conducted under the personal command of Governor-General Van Heutsz. The inquiry took place from 25 November until 24 December 1907 and the report (which was published in the first months of 1908) concluded that Van Daalen had failed to administer Aceh according to the guidelines provided by the Governor-General. Van Daalen was disgraced by this conclusion and resigned as Governor of Aceh and its Dependencies on May 4 1908.

During Van Daalen's governorship the Dutch had drifted away from their new Aceh strategy and its goal of definitely pacifying Aceh. It was Van Daalen's successor, lieutenant-colonel (later general) H.N.A. Swart who had to repair the damage caused by his predecessor and was tasked to achieve the pacification of Aceh and its Dependencies. Swart was an experienced officer who had fought in Aceh, earned a Militaire Willemsorde, served as officer-civil authority in the Dependencies and had acted as military and civil Resident in Borneo and military and civil Governor of Celebes (current Sulawesi). Upon his arrival in Aceh he immediately broke with Van Daalen's policy and adopted a combination of politico-administrative measures and military action. Although Van Heutsz had his new Governor initially placed under the supervision of special government commissioner Liefrinck, it soon became evident that Swart fully subscribed to both the politico-administrative and military principles of the Aceh strategy.

Swart's willingness to embrace the components of the Aceh strategy was clearly illustrated by his actions. One of his first actions upon arrival was to travel to the resistance-infested east coast and organize a meeting in order to reach out to the local uléëbalang in Lhō Seumawè. When Swart pointed at the presence of the resistance in their uléëbalangships, the chiefs replied that this was indeed the case, and more important, that they themselves also had become supporters of the resistance. The main reason for their defection was Van Daalen's disastrous abuse of the system of fining uléëbalang. Throughout Aceh and its dependencies chiefs had been fined on unlawful grounds and in some cases allowances had been withheld for two and a half years (also without any lawful basis). Swart promptly undid such illegal measures, and he returned the money to the uléëbalang (which he often did in person) which typically sufficed for changing a chief's attitude towards the Dutch colonial

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145 Ibid.
147 For a complete biography see M.H. du Croo, Generaal Swart, Pacificator van Atjeh (Maastricht: Leiner-Nijpels, 1943).
149 M.H. du Croo, Generaal Swart, Pacificator van Atjeh, 90-91.
administration. On the other hand Swart maintained fines that were founded justly. The latter, however, could be remitted if the concerning chiefs would demonstrate their good behaviour towards the colonial administration and would clear their ulëëbalangship from resistance influence for a year and longer. Such matters were implemented throughout Aceh and its Dependencies and thereby Swart repaired the in the KV system essential sanction capability that could be used by local administrators for their daily bargaining with local power-holders at the grassroots level.

When the situation ameliorated as a consequence of Swart’s initial measures, additional incentives were added to the administrators’ toolkit for establishing, augmenting, and maintaining co-optive relationships with ulëëbalang. Next to the stimulation of an ulëëbalangship’s economy -which would generate more tax income for both ulëëbalang and colonial administration-, also the issuing of interest-free loans, and the introduction of silver and golden honorary badges for loyalty and merit, were used as persuasive measures for tying the local chiefs to the colonial administration. Swart even reintroduced the allocation of firearms for maintaining order and peace in an ulëëbalangship in case co-optees had become intimately related to the colonial administration and the political situation within their area of influence was sufficiently stable. The flexible employment of such inducements restored the colonial administration’s dominant position vis-à-vis local power-holders as it once more created a vested interest for the ulëëbalang; the Dutch had again become the preferable partner to collaborate with. Whereas Van Daalen had attempted to rule without the ulëëbalang, Swart, thus, successfully re-embraced co-option of those chiefs as the centre of gravity of his politico-administrative efforts and thereby he correctly followed the path of the KV system.

As we have seen the KV system thrived on the premise of a credible capability for enforcing submission to -and if necessary further compliance with- the Dutch colonial administration. This military component of the Aceh strategy was characterized by the exemplary use of force against notoriously defiant chiefs in order to demonstrate Dutch dominance, and intensive patrolling for giving a relentless pursuit to resistance elements. Although Swart did not organize an expedition or excursion, his first military decision was to dispatch a large Marechaussee action against the Keureutòë and Pasè region (at Aceh’s east coast) of which the ulëëbalang and their subjects openly collaborated with the resistance. The Marechaussee aggressively targeted the resistance, and simultaneously reached out to the chiefs. The latter move was inspired by an analysis of the local political situation. This analysis had spawned the insight that ulëëbalang defection and collaboration with the resistance

153 See also Anthony Reid, *The Blood of the People*, 12.
was a direct consequence of the neglect of these local power-holders during Van Daalen’s governorship which had resulted in power-struggles for the shrinking resources of the region. The Marechaussee cleared the ulêëbalangships from resistance influence and reconciled the ulêëbalang of the region under the auspices of the colonial administration. Consequently the Dutch regained control over the local population of the region.

In addition to Keureutê and Pasê five other regions were singled out as focal points for Marechaussee action (Pidië, Bireuën and Lhô Seumawè, the region surrounding Laut Tawar and Döröt, the west coast, and the Gajo-lands). In some cases the renewed appearance of Dutch colonial soldiers sufficed to enforce submission of defiant ulêëbalang. On Aceh’s west coast, for example, Teuku Banta and Teuku Bén Blang Pidië submitted themselves within two months. In other cases the combination of political and military engagement brought the Dutch control, with the former element bringing aboard the chiefs and their population, while the Marechaussee prevented retaliation from predatory resistance gangs (this, for instance, was the case in Keureutê and Pasê). In the Gajo-lands, however, the Marechaussee only accomplished their mission after fighting a tough counter-guerrilla against a tribal rebellion under command of the local chiefs.

By 1912 all these regions were firmly under Dutch control and the organized resistance had collapsed as a consequence of intensive patrolling by the Marechaussee. Remarkably the use of military force mostly focused at the ulama-led gangs who harassed local chiefs and their populations with counter-collaboration measures and predatory actions. Apparently the ulêëbalang of the focal areas either remembered what the Dutch military was capable of, or they were truly aggrieved by Van Daalen’s policy, for they often submitted without being the direct subject of military action and seemed appeased by the new political measures (including the payment of their allowances). Similarly, Swart did not need to refer to massive demonstrations of Dutch military might for stabilizing Dutch control over populations in the other parts of Aceh and its Dependencies. The restoration of the link between the use of force and engagement of the ulêëbalang according the politico-administrative system of the KV sufficed for tipping the balance of the collaborative equation in Dutch advantage. Dutch dominance was so complete that Swart even allowed exiled Acehnese (except for the Sultan and his son), among whom many chiefs, to return to their homelands. It was said, therefore, that Swart re-established Dutch control over the Acehnese ‘with an iron hand in a velvet glove’. The iron hand, however, effectively dealt with the resistance which virtually ceased to exist as the last leading ulama of the Tiro-family succumbed to the hand of the Marechaussee. With the end of the resistance, and the Acehnese under stable Dutch control

155 M.H. du Croo, Generaal Swart, Pacificator van Atjeh, 103-115.
156 See also J. Jongejans, Land en Volk van Atjeh, Vroeger en Nu, 345, G.D.E.J. Hotz, Beknopt Geschiedkundig Overzicht van den Atjêh-oorlog, 68.
157 J. Langhout, Economische Staatkunde in Atjeh, 98.
through the co-opted *ulèëbalang* the pacification of Aceh was finally achieved after almost 40 years.

In the remaining years of Swart’s governorship the pacification was consolidated through the stimulation of socio-economical development and the enhancing of the colonial administration. With regard to the former it has to be mentioned that an impulse was given to education, and even the first girls’ schools were introduced in Aceh.\(^{160}\) The administration of Aceh and its Dependencies was administratively divided in six departments (Great Aceh, North Coast, East Coast, West Coast, and the Gajo- and Alas-lands), each under the authority of either an Assistant-Resident or an officer-civil authority for the more problematic Gajo- and Alas-departments.\(^{161}\) These departments were on their turn divided in a great number of sub-departments which hugely enhanced supervision over the co-opted *ulèëbalang* who effectively administered the population at the grassroots level. This stretched administrative apparatus allowed for the full implementation of *adat* justice monitored by the colonial administration (with limited interference only), and also included specialized agricultural advisors as well as Dutch-controlled municipal treasuries for every *ulèëbalangship*.\(^{162}\) Although military officers still made up the bulk of the colonial administrative apparatus, civil administrators gradually started to take over sub-departments which were deemed sufficiently stable. In 1918 the consolidation of the pacification was considered complete and Swart handed over the governorship to A.G.H. van Sluys, the first civil Governor of Aceh and its Dependencies since Laging Tobias in 1884. Although Aceh would remain an exceptional part of the Netherlands-Indies, it was finally incorporated in the colonial state’s regular administrative structure.

### 6.6 Pacification to last? The revenge of the *ulama*

Since its pacification in c. 1912 Aceh has repeatedly suffered from the recurrence of violent conflict. Although the Dutch controlled Aceh until the arrival of the Japanese in 1942, they were harassed by several smaller uprisings in the twenties, of which the communist-influenced Bakongan Revolt led to some larger skirmishes between 1924 and 1926.\(^{163}\) Generally, however, such organized resistance was atypical and most violent incidents concerned sporadic individual actions, typically knifings, which were known as *Atjeh moorden* (Aceh murders). Due to the occasional character of such incidents the Dutch considered Aceh secure enough. During the latter days of their rule the colonial administration even adopted a more relax


attitude towards the ulama and allowed them to organize themselves in the Persatuan Ulama Seluruh Aceh (All-Aceh Ulama Association), better known under the acronym PUSA. However, on the eve of the Japanese invasion in 1942 PUSA turned against the Dutch and proved instrumental in the organization of a full blown insurgency leading to the collapse of Dutch colonial rule in Aceh and its Dependencies. This uprising was inspired, prepared, and supported by the Japanese organization for fifth-colum work, F-kikan (F-organization) and lasted for four days until the Japanese Imperial troops landed in Aceh. Despite their aid, the Japanese also encountered Acehnese resistance during the wartime occupation of the region. And after the Japanese surrender a bloody civil war between PUSA and the uléébalang dominated the scene during 1945 and 1946. It is tale telling that the Dutch never returned to Aceh after the end of the Second World War. But even when the Dutch colonial era in the Indonesian archipelago ended Aceh remained a conflict-harassed part of the new Indonesian state. In 1953 the Acehnese massively joined the Darul Islam rebellion (see Chapter One, section 1.3.1) against Sukarno’s modern, secular government. Later, in 1976, a separatist uprising under the leadership of the Free Aceh Movement (commonly known as GAM, from Geraka Aceh Merdaka) initiated a protracted insurgency against the Indonesian state. This latter conflict only ended as a consequence of the massive destruction and casualties suffered by the Acehnese after the December 2004 Tsunami, and currently it appears that violent contention in Aceh has faded away -at least for the moment.

Taking into account this track record of violence since c. 1912, the durability of Dutch control over the Acehnese as achieved by the pacification can be questioned. Snouck once stated that the pacification of Aceh would only be complete when patrolling by Dutch colonial troops could be ceased. If we take this as the standard for thorough pacification, Aceh has never been pacified under the Dutch. Patrols and other demonstrations of force were needed to quell the intermittent uprisings and occasional spikes of violence that were considered an inherent feature of Acehnese society; it was the ‘fatum of the country’. The Atjeh moorden, in this regard, were treated like an epidemic mental disease typical for the Acehnese. The Dutch, thus, considered violence endemically to Acehnese society, and therefore violence could never be fully eliminated from Aceh. In the eyes of the colonial administrators Dutch control over the Acehnese after c. 1912 was sufficiently stable to prevent the re-emergence of massive organized resistance. After forty years of war this level of pacification was acceptable and the sporadic violence was considered nothing more than an uncomfortable nuisance.

As was mentioned in Chapter Three (particularly in section 3.3) pacification in colonial warfare exactly aimed at achieving such an acceptable level of control sufficient to function as an underpinning for further steps; pacification was only the first stage in a process of establishing, consolidating, and augmenting the colonial state’s control over a local society. If we take this typical pattern of colonial state development into account, the first step was indeed achieved by the pacification. The durability of the during the pacification obtained level of control, however, is related to the next steps of this pattern. Although the topic of wider state building after the establishment of an acceptable level of control is outside the scope of this study, we will briefly touch upon the matter of how the Dutch consolidated and augmented their control over the Acehnese after the pacification. This will further add to our insights on the use of co-option as a tool for controlling fragmented societies.

In the first half of the twentieth century the colonial state of the Netherlands-Indies successfully augmented its control over the peoples of the archipelago through administrative reforms that greatly enhanced state penetration down to the lowest levels of societal organization.170 Whereas a locale’s dominant local power-holders were instrumental in achieving pacification, the colonial administration now also directly approached legitimate power-holders and their followers at the village level (see section 3.3). Albeit co-opted dominant local power-holders remained pivotal agents for the colonial state’s control over local societies, the reach out to the lower levels greatly enhanced the connection between the colonial administration and the bulk of the population living in gampongs. In Aceh, however, this was not the case. It was felt that the after forty years of war pacification was too valuable to be risked for the implementation of administrative reforms. As co-option of the uléébalang was the cornerstone of Dutch control in Aceh, successive Dutch Governors argued that ‘nothing could be done either to alienate them or to undermine their authority’. 171 To all costs the status quo had to be defended against administrative reforms initiated by the central government in Batavia. For instance, measures aimed at enhanced popular representation, the institution of an indigenous bureaucracy and the reorganization of the 103 uléébalang-ruled statelets into better manageable units were all rejected by the administration in Kutaradja. Co-option of uléébalang, thus, became a dogma for maintaining Dutch control over the Acehnese.

The dogmatic embrace of the uléébalang by the Dutch colonial administration, however, would become the main cause for the recurrence of violence in Aceh. The reason for this lay in the Dutch misconception of uléébalang legitimacy. Whereas those chiefs in essence were economical entrepreneurs who derived their political power from their power over the market in a specific locale, the Dutch empowered them if they were feudal lords. Snouck’s works and advices on the Acehnese had thoroughly embedded this idea of the uléébalang as hereditary feudal lords in the policies and practices of the colonial administration in Aceh.

171 Anthony Reid, The Blood of the People, 12.
and its Dependencies. This remains somewhat of a riddle— and might only be solved by further research in Snouck’s personal documents—as we have seen in section 6.4 of this chapter that Snouck was fully aware of the economical basis of ulëëbalang power.\textsuperscript{172} With the full support of the colonial administration the ulëëbalang started to use their newly gained position in order to maximize their personal economical benefits. They received extraordinary salaries from the colonial administration and were allowed to levy duties and taxes.\textsuperscript{173} In addition to these lawful revenues, the ulëëbalang as ‘feudal lords’ could easily enrich themselves through less lawful practices such as levying corvée for private purposes, seizing land and exploiting control over irrigation to their own advance.\textsuperscript{174} As the Dutch entrusted the ulëëbalang with the administration of both adat and religious affairs, such predatory behaviour often remained unpunished. Nevertheless the chiefs did not enjoy complete impunity as the Dutch also removed ulëëbalang whose predatory behaviour exceeded every standard such as for example Teuku Uma of Keumangan who abused his position to obtain the ownership of half of the rice fields in his area of influence.\textsuperscript{175} All in all, however, ulëëbalang rule was characterized by the pursuit of self-interest at the cost of the population living in the villages within their influence spheres.

The hardship encountered by the local villagers as a result of the colonial administration’s empowerment of the ulëëbalang as feudal lords not only widened the gap between the chiefs and the gampung dwellers, it also affected the people’s attitude towards the Dutch. Moreover, the colonial administration received the blame for this situation.\textsuperscript{176} Illustrative in this regard is a 1921 report on the Atjeh moorden by the colonial government’s advisor on native affairs, R.A. Kern.\textsuperscript{177} Kern revealed that these violent incidents were triggered by grievances caused by ulëëbalang power abuse and oppression. Not only had the Dutch empowered those chiefs tremendously, they had also successfully eliminated the ulama, the societal agents traditionally capable of checking the power of the secular chiefs, and thus the villagers were completely left to the ulëëbalang’s discretion. As most victims of the Atjeh moorden were either Dutch officials or other Europeans it was clear that in the eyes of the Acehnese the colonial administration was the true culprit of their desperate situation. The Dutch government, however, only subscribed to this warning in 1939 when it was already too late. For the remainder years of Dutch rule the Acehnese were allowed to openly air their criticism of ulëëbalang rule. Although the colonial administration did little to change the system itself, it

\textsuperscript{172} See in this regard also Siegel who draws a similar conclusion as he argues that Snouck thought of Aceh as a feudal-like society, while Snouck’s own observations simultaneously refuted this vision. James T. Siegel, \textit{The Rope of God}, 70-71.

\textsuperscript{173} In some cases the salaries rendered the chiefs almost completely dependent on the Dutch colonial administration as in Pidië, for example, the allowances exceeded more than half of the total income of this statelet. Although the ulëëbalang had initially engaged in co-optive relationships with the Dutch because of both personal benefits and a credible threat of military force, they now became so dependent of such allowances that critical colonial officials sometimes considered them beggars sponsored by the colonial administration. See, Anthony Reid, \textit{The Blood of the People}, 13, J. Jongejans, \textit{Land en Volk van Atjeh, Vroeger en Nu}, 345.

\textsuperscript{174} Anthony Reid, \textit{The Blood of the People}, 13-14.


\textsuperscript{176} Anthony Reid, \textit{The Blood of the People}, 14-15.

\textsuperscript{177} See also Paul van ’t Veer, \textit{De Atjeh-oorlog}, 296-297.
facilitated the re-appearance of the ulama party as a political actor when it gave permission for the foundation of PUSA in 1939.\footnote{Anthony Reid, The Blood of the People, 26.} Thereby the uléëbalang’s traditional counterbalances once again entered Aceh’s political marketplace.

Uléëbalang legitimacy had always been weakly developed due to their mainly economical powerbase and tendency to self-enrichment, it now completely stalled as a consequence of their predatory and oppressive behaviour in the decades following the 1912 pacification. The most important source of uléëbalang political authority now was their exclusive access and use of the Dutch colonial administration’s power and resources. Of course some chiefs tried to exploit this new security for the benefits of the villagers of their uléëbalangship. Teuku Thji Peusangan, for example, put a lot of effort into the socio-economic development of his area of influence.\footnote{A.J. Piekaar, Atjèh en de Oorlog met Japan, 18-19, James T. Siegel, The Rope of God, 88-89.} Most chiefs, however, increasingly had to rely on Dutch assistance for enforcing their authority. In Pidië in 1933, for example, uléëbalang were even pleading for colonial troops in order to make the villagers work harder in their fields.\footnote{Anthony Reid, The Blood of the People, 15.} While such a dependency might be wishful from the perspective of dominating co-optive ties with local power-holders in order to control the local population, it worked contrarily as this dependency caused a shift in the nature of uléëbalang authority. Whereas the uléëbalang were originally weak legitimate authorities, they now had become coercive authorities who were increasingly losing the connection with the villagers under their influence. The Dutch, thus, had created a paradox by their dogmatic embrace of uléëbalang co-option; any co-option strategy seeks to obtain and maintain control through the legitimate agents in a specific target society, but through the colonial administration’s rigid preservation of the position of the uléëbalang as feudal lords -based on a wrong conception of the nature of these chiefs’ legitimacy- it had gradually delegitimized its own co-optees. Dutch colonial rule in Aceh, therefore, unintentionally obtained an oppressive character towards the local population.

The results of all this revealed themselves at the end of Dutch colonial époque and beyond. With the collapse of the colonial administration the uléëbalang lost their main source of political power. As the Sultanate had been abolished by the Dutch, the chiefs could not fall back on their traditional method for strengthening their authority through the Sultan’s sarakata. Consequently the uléëbalang rapidly lost control over the villagers living in their uléëbalangships. This all occurred to the advantage of the ulama assembled in PUSA. Since its foundation in 1939 this movement increasingly succeeded in connecting the ulama with the aggrieved Acehnese villagers. Traditionally the connection between those two distinctive societal groups was very weak as the ulama’s message of a new society in which men would abandon their identity and unite as Muslims did not appeal to the villagers (see Chapter Four, section 4.2.1). After years of uléëbalang oppression, however, the ulama’s message ‘was conceived of in terms of transition’ promising progress under the banner of Islam.\footnote{James T. Siegel, The Rope of God, 130-131.}
PUSA had enough supporters to organize -with Japanese aid- the 1942 insurgency against the Dutch, and later it continued its fight for a new society during the bloody civil war with the ulêëbalang, as well as the rebellion against Sukarno’s secular Indonesian state. What has emerged from this is an Acehnese ethnic identity strongly intertwined with Islam. And while GAM’s later separatist struggle cannot be regarded as a religious fight, it thoroughly exploited this distinctive Acehnese ethnic identity rooted in Islam as a vehicle for mobilizing Acehnese villagers for its cause. Although even today ulama remain Islamic scholars with a strict interpretation, their forefathers, thus have created an Acehnese national identity which for the first time since the demise of the Sultan gave the Acehnese a powerful tool for unifying against outside threats. Strikingly this new weapon was first used by an Acehnese Western-style businessman and veteran of the 1953 rebellion named Teungku Hasan Mohammed di Tiro, indeed a direct descendant of Teungku Chik di Tiro, the first leader of the ulama-resistance against the Dutch.

6.7 Conclusion

Despite the poor long-term effects of ulêëbalang co-option, it is without doubt that this co-option was instrumental in pacifying Aceh after nearly forty years of war. Dominance over the ulêëbalang provided the Dutch control over the Acehnese within the influence spheres of these agents. Around 1912 the degree of control spawned by this co-option strategy was sufficiently stable to consider the whole of Aceh and its Dependencies pacified; the next steps would be the consolidation and augmentation of this control through further development of Aceh as a part of the Netherlands-Indies. Whereas the Dutch colonial state successfully deployed this development process for penetrating and connecting to the lower societal levels in other parts of the archipelago, this was not the case in Aceh. The pacification was deemed too precious to risk and therefore the colonial administration convulsively retained to the ulêëbalang as their exclusive connection to the Acehnese. Contradictory, it was the combination of this dogmatic embrace with a poor understanding of the true nature of ulêëbalang legitimacy that caused the loss of control on the long term. Nevertheless, as aforementioned, the initial approach had finally won the Dutch control over the Acehnese living in the multiple locales constituting Great Aceh and the Dependencies. As this analysis is about obtaining control over the population in colonial wars in fragmented societies, and it was the objective of such wars to establish an initially acceptable level of control, this conclusion focuses on the successful pacification of Aceh by use of co-option. Notwithstanding this emphasis on achieving acceptable control as part of a military campaign, we will regularly refer to the

long-term ramifications experienced in Aceh as a warning that the consolidation of control requires a proper follow-up that enhances the connection between state and target society.

The Aceh strategy’s combination of exemplary military force against notoriously defiant societal segments and the politico-administrative system of the KV finally succeeded in establishing Dutch control over the Acehnese. The former element of this strategy reminds of Kalyvas’ approach of selective violence (see Chapter One, section 1.2.2). Just like selective violence, exemplary force seeks to enhance or ‘generate collaboration via deterrence’. However, it should be stressed that the Aceh strategy was of a fundamentally different character than Kalyvas’ selective violence. Whereas selective violence aims at delivering targeted sanctions to identified individual defectors within a specific locale, exemplary force in Aceh took the form of large military actions in locales in which the resistance was vividly represented. Thereby other communities and their power-holders were indirectly warned that collaboration with the ulama-led resistance was an invitation for Dutch military action within their own locales. A more important and the most fundamental difference concerns the ideas underlying both approaches. Selective violence is a variant of physical control over a territory. This approach seeks control over the population by first establishing physical control - in this case through selective violence-, which is consecutively augmented through collaboration. Due to the limited resources available in Aceh, physical control - even through selective violence - over the total of Aceh and its Dependencies was simply unachievable and at best a locale could be physically occupied for a limited amount of time (see for example the Pidië expedition and its aftermath). Consequently control had to flow from collaboration and not vice versa. Exemplary force, therefore, was not so much used to achieve physical control over selected locales, but intended to demonstrate Dutch dominance, and thus set the collaborative equation to the colonial administration’s benefit. It was this conditional collaboration that brought the Dutch a sustainable level of control over the Acehnese.

The emphasis on collaboration is further illustrated by the pivotal role of the KV within the Aceh strategy. The use of force was subordinated to this politico-administrative system; as aforementioned, military actions served to demonstrate Dutch dominance and thereby local power-holders were brought to accept total submission by signing the KV. Especially the 1898 Pidië expedition, which preceded the introduction of the KV, won the Dutch a reputation of resoluteness and aggressiveness against the resistance and its collaborators. The series of military actions against a limited number of defiant statelets of the Dependencies that took place from 1898 to 1901 definitively convinced local power-holders in the whole of Aceh that this time the Dutch would maintain their dominance and by 1903 most uléebalang had signed the KV. When Swart in 1908 had to repair the damage inflicted to the KV system by Van Daalen, he also opted for exemplary use of force against selected regions. This quickly re-established Dutch dominance in the collaborative relationships and was instrumental in achieving the 1912 pacification. Now we have stressed that the Aceh strategy was truly a collaboration strategy and that force was used in support of the politico-administrative

184 Stathis N. Kalyvas, The Logic of Violence in Civil War, 142.
element of this strategy -and not to obtain physical control over a territory-, it is time to
draw some conclusions on the use of co-option within this successful strategy. Therefore
we will now analyze the Aceh strategy with use of this book’s analytical framework for
understanding co-option.

The Aceh strategy fully subscribed to the idea of cultural legitimation. Moreover, in
contradiction to the past, it also successfully practiced this elementary principle of co-
option. Albeit the ulèëbalang were wrongly conceived as feudal lords, they were correctly
identified as the legitimate local power-holders dominating the various locales of Aceh and
its Dependencies. This comes as no surprise as Snouck’s conception of Acehnese society,
as first presented in his famous 1892 study, was of great influence on the new strategy.
The Governor’s instruction jointly formulated by Van Heutsz and Snouck in 1898 already
emphasized the need to obtain the people’s collaboration through their legitimate chiefs,
and during the next years the ulèëbalang clearly became the centre of gravity of Dutch
attention. We will further discuss this below when dealing with the methods of co-option
used by the Dutch.

Despite the emphasis on the ulèëbalang as the key legitimate agents for obtaining control
over the Acehnese, the old obsession with the Sultan and the Sultanate again revealed itself
when Van Heutsz unilaterally -and against the instruction issued by Snouck and himself-
accepted the submission of the Sultan in 1903. Although this definitely caused a schism in the
duomvirate that had successfully initiated the Aceh strategy, the Sultan’s submission did not
interfere with the newly established politico-administrative system of the KV in which the
ulèëbalang were the pivotal agents of co-option. The Dutch did not need the Sultan to spoil the
gains of the new KV system. Governor Van Daalen, who succeeded Van Heutsz in 1905 did not
trust the ulèëbalang and he effectively tried to rule without them, relying on the use of force
and physical control instead. As he lacked the resources for such an approach and rapidly lost
the collaboration of the legitimate chiefs, Dutch control plunged and the situation in Aceh
quickly deteriorated. This setback opened the way for an even stricter application of cultural
legitimation under Governor Swart. To start with, Van Daalen had exiled the Sultan because
of his ties with the resistance, and thereby this political agent, whose symbolic power had
preoccupied the minds of many Dutch commanders, definitely disappeared from the scene
-perhaps this might be considered as Van Daalen’s key contribution to the pacification of
Aceh. Even more important, the Dutch now fully realized that Aceh could only be controlled
through co-option of the ulèëbalang. This offers an explanation for the focus on these local
power-holders that dominated Dutch policy in Aceh since that time. The restoration and
sustainment of co-optive relationships with the various chiefs of Aceh and its Dependencies
quickly re-established Dutch control on a sufficient level to declare Aceh pacified by c. 1912.
As was aforementioned, on the long term, however, the Dutch lost control as their dogmatic
embrace of ulèëbalang co-option combined with their wrong understanding of the exact
nature of those chiefs’ legitimacy led to a decline of ulèëbalang legitimacy. Unwittingly,
this lack of proper follow-up after the pacification transformed the Dutch adherence to the principle of cultural legitimation into a practice of cultural delegitimation.

After the debacle of the Teuku Uma policy the Dutch adopted a reserved attitude towards the mobilization of local militias. Van Heutsz’s instruction in this regard explicitly mentioned that only high ranking co-optees intimately connected to the colonial administration could be granted a permit to hold and possess firearms for self-defense. The reality of obtaining control over a highly fragmented society with limited resources only, however, often necessitated the use of local auxiliaries. Even during the well-equipped Pidië expedition well-disposed local chiefs were permitted to deploy their own men for self-protection. The ulëëbalang of the federation VI, for instance, were allowed to guard some of their important sites with their own fighters. This was cleverly presented as a token of trust by the colonial administration, but also carefully checked by simultaneously threatening the involved chiefs with a fine for any enemy activity within their influence sphere. In the case of the Raja of Teunom, the first local power-holder to sign the KV, the Dutch deployed their own forces in conjunction with this ulëëbalang’s limited self-defense capability; an indisputable and necessary measure as both parties were committed to the fight against their mutual enemy, Teuku Uma. Thus, despite the official policy, Dutch colonial forces still operated along local militias in the practical reality of the Aceh War after 1896.

The demand for auxiliaries further increased when the additional ‘surge’ troops started to redeploy to their home bases in other parts of the archipelago after the Pidië expedition. Consequently, the mobilization of local militias gradually became re-accepted as a part of the policy. This time, however, the KV system arranged the institutionalization of these fighters as it allowed for a proper system of checks and balances. Local militias were to be deployed by the ulëëbalang for enhancing order and peace within an ulëëbalangship. If a chief proved capable to establish and maintain the rest in his area of influence, this hugely added to his prestige in the eyes of the colonial administration, which would win the ulëëbalang favours such as allowances and other benefits. This heavily contrasts with the Teuku Uma policy that allowed local power-holders to deploy their fighters against rival ulëëbalangships and which gave those chiefs a tremendous latitude for chasing their own interests even when this contradicted the Dutch interest. After Van Daalen’s intermezzo, Swart quickly reintroduced the KV system’s use of local militias for maintaining order. Moreover, even the allocation of firearms to these militias was reinstated on the condition that a specific ulëëbalang had demonstrated a sufficient degree of loyalty to Kutaradja. Thus, ultimately the mobilization of local militia once again became a fully integrated part of the Dutch policy which was institutionalized through the KV-system.

The answer to the question of whom exactly to co-opt was an expression of the Aceh strategy’s adherence to the principle of cultural legitimation. The ulëëbalang were clearly identified as the most important adat chiefs, the pivotal legitimate authorities in Aceh’s fragmented society, and consequently intelligence focused on the exact position and role of individual ulëëbalang and the relationships between those chiefs. Undoubtedly, Snouck’s
personal involvement in Aceh hugely contributed to the gathering and analysis of such information, as he, for instance, observed the intimate connection between political actors in Great Aceh and Pidië that explained why this latter statelet was the most importance sanctuary for the former area’s defiant local power-holders and their resistance gangs. The Pidië expedition itself offers many examples of the importance of the ulëëbalang in the new Dutch strategy. First the expedition’s order clearly stated that the most important chief and resistance leader, Panglima Polem was not to be killed, but submitted in order to exploit his power and influence as an ulëëbalang in both Pidië and Great Aceh. Next the order mentions the different federations in Pidië, and summons the colonial troops to submit the individual chiefs united in these alliances. Furthermore the information booklet with facts concerning the Pidië-region contained detailed information on both local ulëëbalang as well as on Great Acehnese chiefs in exile who could possibly be encountered during the expedition. What was also demonstrated during this expedition is the Dutch practice to engage lower-level local power-holders if necessary as happened in the VII mukim Pidië, where all dominant power-holders had fled the scene. The colonial soldiers, however, were fully aware of the limited use of such connections, as ultimately the dominant ulëëbalang were needed for definitely establishing control over the different communities represented by lower-level chiefs.

Thus the new strategy in Aceh definitely focused on the ulëëbalang as the key societal agents to co-opt. This not only echoed in intelligence and daily operations, but was also firmly embedded in the official policy as presented by the politico-administrative system of the KV; the colonial administration was to gain control over the Acehnese through the ulëëbalang ruling over the more than 100 different ulëëbalangships. Although the proper application of the KV system was interrupted during Van Daalen’s governorship, its foundation had been thoroughly constructed by the Snouck-Van Heutsz duumvirate which allowed Swart to restore the system and pacify Aceh within four years. The ulëëbalang, therefore, were the ultimate Dutch answer to the question of whom to co-opt to gain control over Aceh’s highly fragmented society. Let us now draw some conclusions on the methods that were used to establish and maintain Dutch-dominated co-optive relationships with these local power-holders.

The methods of co-option employed under the new Aceh strategy varied from massive military force to subtle persuasive measures. As aforementioned the former was of an exemplary character; the utility of force was to demonstrate Dutch dominance. The series of expeditions and excursions initiated by the 1898 Pidië expedition and concluded with the 1901 Samalanga expedition not only effectively terminated the organized resistance, more important, they also convinced the various ulëëbalang throughout Aceh that if necessary the Dutch were capable of achieving and maintaining dominance at the local level. This was further enhanced by the systematic application of naval blockades that also had an exemplary working. Consequently most Acehnese chiefs submitted to the Dutch by signing the contract of the KV. In modern military parlance we might call these military actions ‘shaping operations’ for they created the conditions that allowed the swift implementation of
the politico-administrative system of the KV. Additionally the military capabilities provided a stick for enforcing compliance of co-optees. The KV system itself, however, did not prefer military measures in order to dominate co-optive relationships with the ulëëbalang. Although the credible threat of force provided a potent capability for co-option domination, more tactful non-military measures aimed at a local power-holder’s personal interest were the preferred tool for enforcing compliance with the colonial administration.

To a huge extent this was made possible by the installation of the function of ‘officer-civil authority’, that allowed Dutch military officers at the grassroots level to act as independent government officials with both civil and military authority. Their civil and military powers combined with their knowledge of local affairs enabled those officers to supervise the local chiefs and -if necessary- to deploy tactful coercion through local jurisdiction and effective economical sanctions such as fines and the withholding of allowances. Although the system established a credible and independent -i.e. free of local influences- Dutch administrative capacity at the local level, its proper working was highly dependent of individual officers. In the case of military hardliners operating as civil-military officers, the local population was often subjected to less tactful coercion resulting in many hardships for the local population. Overall, however, it was the proper application of the KV-system through the grassroots administration embodied by the civil-military officers under Van Heutsz and Swart that won the Dutch colonial state control over the Acehnese. Thus we can conclude that the coercive side of the Aceh strategy’s co-option continuum consisted of a credible stick for co-option domination created by the exemplary use of military force and more tactful coercive measures aimed at economical resources for enforcing compliance of co-optees. Lammers stresses this conclusion as he has described the Pax Neerlandica established in the Indonesian archipelago during the early twentieth century as a consequence of the application of the Aceh strategy’s combination of soft coercion, or perintah alus, vis à vis indigenous local power-holders backed up by the use of military force (as aforementioned in Chapter Two, section 2.3.2).185

The persuasive methods of the Aceh strategy’s co-option continuum mirror the tactful coercive measures as they were also designed to have a direct impact on a local power-holder’s self-interest. Given the economical basis of ulëëbalang political power, the allocation of allowances, permits for levying tolls, and royalties for mining or plantation concessions, were highly attractive methods for securing and ensuring ulëëbalang co-option. Albeit the Dutch initially were very careful with such economic measures, their appeal to the local chiefs quickly turned financial incentives into a key element of the KV system; in addition to the coercive measures that guaranteed Dutch dominance, the economic persuasive methods offered the Dutch a rather easy and relatively cheap way for also becoming the preferred partner for local power-holders to collaborate with. The Dutch ability to establish and consolidate co-optive relationships with Acehnese chiefs was further augmented as the colonial administration demonstrated its willingness and capability to provide collaborating

185 Cor J. Lammers, Vreemde Overheersing, 253.
effective assistance and protection against rivals related to the resistance (as was the case with the Raja of Teunom). Long-term co-optive relationships were forged through the appointment of co-opted chiefs as colonial administrators. This effectively encompassed an empowerment of the ulëëbalang in their role as adat chiefs. Whereas those entrepreneurial chiefs traditionally were attributed some influence in law and religion, the Dutch gave the ulëëbalang nearly absolute powers in those fields. Albeit this hugely added to those chiefs’ power positions and strengthened the ties with their closest followers, ulëëbalang empowerment came at the cost of local villagers and ulama. The Dutch failure to acknowledge and address the resulting grievances would ultimately lead to a re-emergence of ulama-led resistance and the collapse of ulëëbalang rule when those agents lost the protection of their Dutch patrons in the wake of the 1942 Japanese invasion.

Ultimately, we can conclude that Aceh was finally pacified as a result of the introduction of a strategy that combined the exemplary use of force with the engagement of the ulëëbalang through the politico-administrative system of the KV. The former provided the colonial administration with a credible capability for co-option domination and succeeded in winning the Dutch a position as the dominant partner in any co-optive relationship. This dominance gave Dutch colonial administrators at the grassroots level (initially military officers combining civil and military authorities) sufficient leverage for successful application of the more tactful coercive methods and persuasive measures of the KV. As those provisions were designed to directly affect a local power-holder’s self-interest, the Dutch also succeeded to become the preferable partner for the local chiefs to collaborate with. Thus, the colonial administration succeeded in definitely setting the collaborative equation in its advantage, and thereby it finally managed to establish and maintain stable co-optive relationships with local power-holders throughout Aceh as a whole. This sufficed for establishing an acceptable level of control over the Acehnese living in a total of 103 ulëëbalangships. However, a key insight that can be obtained from the period following Aceh’s pacification is that a co-option strategy requires a proper follow-up in order to enhance the connection between state and target society and thereby transform the initially acceptable level of control into durable control over the population. As this was not the case in Aceh it can be said that after nearly forty years of war Aceh’s pacification was achieved at last, but not to last.
Chapter 7
Chapter 7: The Aceh War as a case study of co-option of local power-holders in colonial warfare

7.1 Introduction

In the previous three chapters we have scrutinized Dutch experiences with co-option during the nearly four decades of the Aceh War. The purpose of this detailed account was to obtain a profound understanding of the exact role and utility of co-option in the grim reality of colonial warfare. This chapter discusses the resulting insights in the light of the analytical framework for understanding co-option as provided by the first part of this book. Moreover, in combination with that framework’s underlying theoretical and historical analyses’ more general findings on co-option in colonial warfare this chapter’s discussion will allow us to draw conclusions on the application of co-option in colonial warfare for answering this book’s main question of how counterinsurgents have co-opted local power-holders in order to attain control over the population in a weblike society. Although a full answer to this question can only be given after incorporating the insights on co-option in contemporary counterinsurgency campaigns, this chapter provides a robust understanding of co-option in the practical reality of colonial warfare by use of the Dutch experiences during the Aceh War.

In Chapter Three we have already concluded that colonial warfare fully subscribed to the idea of cultural legitimation as this approach allowed a colonial state to seize control over vast populations without too much costs. The colonial state’s typical lack of resources necessitated this approach and focused on establishing an acceptable level of control, which was to be augmented during the further development of the colonial state. Similarly, the mobilization of resources at the grassroots level greatly added to the colonial state’s limited capacities for establishing and maintaining control over the population. Consequently, the mobilization of auxiliary militias was a key feature of colonial warfare. Typically this would take the form of co-optive agreements with preferably dominant local power-holders which formalized these agents and their militias as part of the local administrative structure. Colonial warfare, thus, embraced the fundamental principles of co-option - i.e. cultural legitimation and mobilization- in order to compensate the ever-present lack of resources colonial states were suffering from.

This rationale also echoes in the practical application of co-option in colonial warfare. Dominant local power-holders were the preferred partners for co-option as they not only had the most resources to offer, but also could be effectively controlled with the limited resources of the colonial state -which did not suffice for an extensive program of co-option down to the lowest societal levels. However, in case the pacification of a locale by use of dominant local power-holders failed, (additional) co-option of lower-level local power-holders was a valid strategy, as this still required fewer resources than a full military occupation. Despite this preference to minimize the need to engage in costly military campaigns, the use of
military force was never far away in colonial pacification campaigns. The predominant (and less expensive) methods for establishing and controlling co-optive relationships, however, were soft coercion and persuasive measures that could be effectively employed by colonial administrators at the grassroots level. Through this combination of a credible stick for enforcing compliance and an effective capability to dominate the bargaining process at the local level colonial warfare adopted a co-option continuum that included an effective mechanism of co-option domination. Thus, colonial warfare incorporated co-option as a strategy for winning without too much fighting.

As we have seen, the Aceh War drew a lot—if not too much—of the Dutch colonial state’s resources for a protracted period of time. Although eventually the conflict was settled by co-option of the uléébalang with limited resources only, it took the Dutch more than twenty years to develop a strategy that facilitated effective co-option of those legitimate local power-holders through a combination of exemplary force, soft coercion and persuasive incentives. Moreover, it took the colonial administration another ten years to effectively implement this Aceh strategy, and ultimately control was lost due to a lack of proper long-term follow-up. With regard to the latter it can be said that the Dutch colonial government failed to establish a durable connection with Acehnese society. Yet, the focus of this book lies on the pacification effort that seeks to establish an initially acceptable level of control, and therefore we will only briefly touch upon this matter. More relevant to our central question is the fact that, despite the Aceh strategy’s similarities with the mentioned general findings on co-option in colonial warfare, the actual application of co-option in the grim reality of colonial warfare was apparently difficult to realize. In order to fully grasp these difficulties in the way colonial soldiers and administrators sought to obtain control over the population through co-option of local power-holders this chapter analyzes the evolution of co-option throughout the Aceh War. In order to draw a definite conclusion we will study the fundamental issues of cultural legitimation and mobilization as well as the way these were operationalized by addressing the practical questions of whom exactly and how to co-opt.

7.2 Cultural legitimation

Collaboration with legitimate local power-holders was a key feature of the colonial campaigns of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Despite this universal acceptation of cultural legitimation, the actual implementation of this principle could be quite cumbersome as was illustrated by the example of the French pacification of Tonkin-Annam (Chapter Three, section 3.3.1). The French, who preferred co-option of local power-holders prone to ‘benevolent assimilation’, initially deemed the legitimate local power-holders, the traditionalist mandarins and the royal court, unsuitable for co-option. As a result the French lost the opportunity to practice cultural legitimation, and were forced to adopt a violent and costly military approach. In 1891, after nine years of fighting without satisfactory result, the
French switched to a strategy that aimed at co-opting the legitimate local power-holders, which finally facilitated the application of cultural legitimation. The mandarins and the court were successfully co-opted with a balanced mix of violent and non-violent methods, and the pacification was achieved in 1896.

This example of a late nineteenth century French pacification campaign demonstrates that the French preference for local power-holders susceptible to cultural assimilation troubled the application of cultural legitimation. Albeit the Dutch (and also the British) did not share such a preference and generally tended to maintain the existing societal (power) structure of a target society, it cannot be denied that in Aceh the Dutch only succeeded in successfully implementing effective cultural legitimation with the introduction of the Aceh strategy after almost 25 years of war. This is even more remarkable if we take into account that since their earliest presence in the Indonesian archipelago the Dutch had relied on co-option of local power-holders for obtaining control over the population in a whole variety of locales. Moreover, the Dutch colonial army spent the better part of the nineteenth century fighting campaigns to (re-)establish collaborative relationships with local power holders in order to restore and extend Dutch control in the wake of the effective end of the British intermezzo in 1816. What then did cause the troubled implementation of cultural legitimation during the Aceh War?

Certainly it was not a lack of willingness to practice cultural legitimation that hampered the Dutch quest for control over the Acehnese. From the onset of the war in 1873 the Dutch colonial administration demonstrated its readiness to co-opt local power-holders in its frequently changing war policies. As we have seen in Chapter Four, the common ground shared by all these different policies was their misinterpretation of Acehnese society. Despite an awareness of the limited authority of the Acehnese Sultan and the administrative structure of the Sultanate pre-dating the Aceh War, Dutch war authorities attributed great importance and even held a preference for collaboration with the Sultanate and its institutions for more than thirty years (more exactly from 1873 until the banishment of the Sultan in 1907). A possible explanation for this preference can be found in the fact that it was a time-honored practice of Dutch colonialism to obtain control through co-option of dominant indigenous power-holders such as Javanese Princes or Sumatran Sultans, and that nominally the Sultan was the dominant local power-holder in control of all Acehnese.1 In Aceh, however, this assumption wrongfully made the Sultan the center of gravity of any Dutch policy until the emergence of the Aceh strategy. Whether these policies were designed to co-opt or outmaneuver this symbolic authority and his entourage, they all were based on a misunderstanding of Aceh’s societal landscape. This lack of knowledge also revealed itself in the treatment of the uléébalang, who were deemed subjects of the Sultan and therefore considered as pawns in the battle for influence over this local power-holder. Dutch measures often undermined the fragile legitimacy of these local power-holders, and weakened the

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ties between ulëëbalang and the local population. Additionally the lack of understanding of societal relationships and positions also revealed itself in co-option of minor actors, while simultaneously ignoring more pivotal power-holders. Consequently, the Dutch were unable to effectively implement cultural legitimation and their frequently changing policies only strengthened the resistance against the colonial administration.

Thus, the failure to acknowledge the exact pattern of legitimacy of Acehnese society was the main reason for the poor implementation of cultural legitimation. Albeit the colonial administration had gradually obtained an understanding that Acehnese society was both physically and socially fragmented as it consisted of various autonomous—but interdependent—locales and four different identity groups (ulëëbalang, ulama, gampong dwellers, and the Sultan and his entourage), it failed to grasp the connectedness of those groups. Therefore the Dutch lacked an insight in the crucial relationships and interactions that shaped the structure of Acehnese society within the boundaries of each distinctive locale as well as in its completeness. This only changed with Snouck’s 1892 report on religious-politico circumstances in Aceh. After scrutinizing the dynamics of interaction between Aceh’s four distinctive identity groups Snouck rightly concluded that the ulëëbalang were the predominant legitimate authorities who ruled over the various local segments of Acehnese society. Although Snouck rightly described the decline of those chiefs’ legitimacy as a consequence of the Dutch war policies and the ulama’s quest for political power, his view contained a misconception as he considered ulëëbalang legitimacy of a hierarchical, feudal nature; Snouck conceived the way ulëëbalang ruled their locale as similar to (medieval) European feudal rule. The Acehnese chiefs, however, drew their legitimacy as political authorities from their economic power, and above all this legitimacy was only weakly developed. As we have seen in Chapter Six, this misconception would ultimately inform a poor long-term follow-up strategy (after Aceh’s pacification), which even de-legitimized the ulëëbalang. Despite this misunderstanding on the exact nature of ulëëbalang legitimacy itself, Snouck’s report correctly depicted the pattern of legitimacy of Acehnese society. Therefore this analysis was instrumental in implementing cultural legitimation as part of the Dutch war strategy.

Before Snouck’s view of Acehnese society became definitely accepted as the underpinning of the successful Aceh strategy, the colonial administration made one last attempt to submit the Sultan. Based on their flawed conception of Acehnese society and its division of power, the Dutch aimed at influencing the Sultan through the ulëëbalang, and particularly by use of their most important ally, Teuku Uma. This seemingly was in concurrence with Snouck’s political advice to seek the support of those local chiefs (Snouck had also acknowledged the potential of Uma for controlling the Acehnese of the west coast), but the plan’s ultimate goal contradicted the insights on the true nature of the Sultan’s power and therefore its failure was inevitable. Moreover, the colonial administration’s shortage of resources and lack of will to establish a capability for offensive actions made the Dutch heavily dependent on Uma’s militia. As it became clear that the Sultan would not submit, Uma himself became
the main agent of Dutch control and the colonial administration employed its ally and his powerful militia to seize control over the Sagi of Great Aceh. This so-called Teuku Uma policy subscribed to the idea of cultural legitimation as it intended to win the consent of the population through their legitimate local chiefs. In reality, however, Uma abused his position to enhance his status in Aceh's political landscape at the expense of the ulèëbalang, which of course prevented effective co-option of those local power-holders (we will deal further with this in section 7.4 when dealing with the matter of whom to co-opt). The Teuku Uma policy, thus, unintentionally aimed at practicing cultural legitimation after its initial goal of submitting the Sultan had failed. Yet, its rationale was still based on a lack of understanding of the pattern of legitimacy in Acehnese society, and therefore it also failed to implement cultural legitimation.

The debacle of the Teuku Uma policy not only cleared the way for the acceptance of Snouck’s vision of Acehnese society, it also led to the direct involvement of Snouck in Aceh. Together with newly appointed Governor Van Heutsz, Snouck was to give the Dutch war effort a new impetus in order to finally settle the conflict. As of 1898 the duumvirate implemented their new policy that would evolve into the Aceh strategy. This strategy fully adhered to the notion of cultural legitimation as it was designed to win control over the Acehnese by co-opting the ulèëbalang. The introduction of the politico-administrative KV system, which arranged accommodations between those local power-holders and the colonial administration, clearly illustrates that this time cultural legitimation was actually being practiced. As a result most ulèëbalang had become Dutch co-optees by 1903. In that year however, the old preference for the Sultan revealed itself once again as Van Heutsz, much to Snouck’s discontent, decided to accept his submission. Although this did not directly harm the relationships between the co-opted chiefs and the colonial administration, Van Heutsz’s unilateral action caused a definitive schism in the duumvirate. The departure of Snouck, followed by Van Heutsz in 1905, caused a relapse in the consequent application of cultural legitimation. Governor Van Daalen did not trust the ulèëbalang and drifted away from the official policy as he preferred a strategy of physical control (for which he lacked the means). Consequently Dutch control plunged during his three-year governorship, and it became clear that Aceh could not be controlled without the local chiefs. Consequently, Governor Swart in 1908 re-embraced cultural legitimation and immediately began restoring and consolidating the co-optive relationships with the ulèëbalang. As aforementioned, it was this new impulse to the consequent application of the Aceh strategy’s principle of cultural legitimation that provided the Dutch a sufficient degree of control over the Acehnese to declare Aceh pacified by c. 1912.

The key insight on cultural legitimation to be derived from the Aceh War is that the actual application of this principle of co-option requires an awareness of the target society’s pattern of legitimacy. Albeit this seems an open door, the reality of the Aceh War reveals that the Dutch colonial administration, despite its willingness and experience with cultural legitimation -although this experience offers also a possible explanation for the Dutch obsession with the
Sultan-, failed to implement cultural legitimation as a result of its faltering understanding of Acehnese society and its division of power. Only when Snouck’s conception of the *ulëëbalang* as the legitimate local power-holders dominating the various locales was accepted, the Dutch succeeded in implementing cultural legitimation. A second insight provided by the case of the Aceh War is the troublesome adoption and consequent application of an actual strategy based on the principle of cultural legitimation. Snouck’s report on Acehnese society was presented some twenty years into the war, yet it took the Dutch another five years and a huge national debacle to accept the report’s insights on Acehnese society and adopt a strategy that followed these insights. Moreover, Van Heutsz acceptance of the Sultan’s submission as well as military hardliner Van Daalen’s total disregard for the *ulëëbalang* clearly demonstrate the difficulties in consequent application. Aceh was only pacified when Swart fell back to the application of cultural legitimation as originally intended by Snouck and Van Heutsz. The Aceh War, therefore, illustrates that it is not only pivotal to obtain a thorough understanding of the target society’s pattern of legitimacy, but that these ideas should also be accepted and transformed into concrete actions by subsequent authorities in charge of the war effort.

A last point that should be addressed with regard to cultural legitimation is the fact that Snouck’s analysis effectively revealed the pattern of legitimate authority in Acehnese society, but failed to grasp the true nature of *ulëëbalang* legitimacy. Although this did not hamper the pacification, it did cause de-legitimation on the long term. This produces the insight that acceptable control over a society might be acquired by co-opting the legitimate authorities, but that further consolidation and augmentation of control requires a profound insight in the exact nature of those authorities’ power. If such an understanding can be acquired and incorporated in the beginning of the campaign, of course, this will greatly enhance the application of co-option. Typically, however, the fragmented weblike societies that are the subject of this book are highly complicated and therefore it is almost impossible to obtain such an insight at the onset of the struggle for control. Therefore the pattern of legitimacy as accepted as underpinning for cultural legitimation should be subjected to continuous evaluation with use of the population centric intelligence that is gathered for answering the question of whom exactly to co-opt. We will discuss this further in section 7.4.

To sum up, the Aceh War has demonstrated that the proper application of cultural legitimation not only requires an awareness of the target society’s pattern of legitimacy, but also an acceptance of this awareness and a commitment from subsequent commanders to transform it into policy and concrete action. Furthermore, albeit a general awareness on the legitimate authorities might suffice for obtaining initial control (and thus pacification), this awareness should be further developed in order to maintain a more robust underpinning for augmentation and consolidation of control through the proper application of cultural legitimation. The Aceh War case study has revealed that these seemingly obvious conclusions even caused problems with the effective implementation and practicing of cultural legitimation in the époque of colonial warfare when the necessity to practice...
cultural legitimation in the struggle for control over fragmented indigenous societies was universally accepted.

7.3 Mobilization

Grassroots mobilization of local militias was of vital importance to the colonial states that were always short of resources. These militias provided the colonial administration with cheap additional means in order to establish or underpin control over the local population. Therefore, the raising of indigenous auxiliaries through local power-holders was an essential feature of imperialism and practiced by all colonial powers. Typically, such local defense forces remained under command of local power-holders and institutionalization within the larger framework of the colonial security apparatus was arranged through the agreement that formalized the co-optive relationship between a specific local power-holder and the local colonial authorities. Thus, local militias essentially remained a localized tool of statecraft, despite their institutionalization within the colonial state's governmental structure. Dutch experience with mobilization during the Aceh War is dominated by the Teuku Uma debacle that demonstrated that even when institutionalized, the deployment of local forces requires tight control by local governmental authorities. Despite the universally accepted importance of mobilization for protracted colonial pacification campaigns, the application of this principle during the Aceh War -again- reveals that implementation into the practical reality could be quite cumbersome. Of course, ultimately the Aceh strategy included mobilization of local self-defense forces, as the ulèëbalang were held responsible for the security and order of their ulèëbalangships. As a consequence of the Teuku Uma debacle, however, the Aceh strategy was initially very reluctant with regard to the use of indigenous auxiliaries. Moreover, during the first half of the Aceh War the Dutch failed to effectively mobilize local militias. Let us now discuss the previous chapters’ findings on mobilization in order to shed a light on the exact nature and causes of the troublesome application of mobilization in the reality of colonial pacification as experienced during the Aceh War.

The first two decades of the Aceh War were dominated by frequent Dutch policy changes that prevented the emergence of stable co-optive relationships with local power-holders. The main reason for this oscillation was the combination of a poor understanding of Acehnese society with an ubiquitous lack of resources. Both the Sultan and Great Aceh’s ulèëbalang were intermittently subjected to a strategy of rapprochement or expulsion, and every time success seemed within reach the shortage of resources forced the Dutch to abandon their current approach and fall back on their positions surrounding Kutaradja. It was in this bridgehead that the colonial administration succeeded in establishing some of its more durable co-optive relationships with local power-holders, but even in these cases this did not result in the much-needed mobilization of local militias. The resistance effectively employed counter-collaboration measures -which the Dutch were unable to mitigate- that
prevented the efficient deployment of fighters, and consequently local militias became more a liability than an asset. Thus, the frequent policy changes that were informed by a lack of understanding of Acehnese society and a shortage of resources prevented the successful introduction of mobilization during the first two decades of the Aceh War.

The restrictions of the concentration policy, which banned all offensive actions by colonial troops and imposed a further restraint on the available resources, prompted a necessity to mobilize local militias for any new impetus to end the Aceh War. Although the co-option of Acehnese warlord Teuku Uma started as an attempt to definitely submit the sultan, it soon transformed in a policy aimed at grassroots mobilization of local militias for the defence of Dutch positions and to act as a lever for augmenting Dutch control over Great Aceh. Whereas the first two decades of the war were characterized by a lack of mobilization, the Dutch now put mobilization at the centre of their strategy. Co-optive relationships with local power-holders were intended to raise local militias for chasing away the ulama-led gangs and protecting the population at the grassroots level. The champion of this strategy was Uma, whose militia became fully institutionalized as the local government’s Acehnese legion. The co-optive treaty installed Uma as the colonial state’s supreme Acehnese field commander, who was obliged to follow Dutch orders, and who would also receive massive financial, material, and logistic support. Uma’s legion thus became the mainstay of the Dutch Aceh policy as it provided the local colonial administration with the means to embark on a new series of offensive actions in order to establish control over the Acehnese. This approach aimed at co-option of the ulèëbalang and the use of those chiefs’ self-defense forces for clearing their areas of resistance influence. Uma’s legion was instrumental in this approach, as it not only provided a follow-up capability for consolidation – that allowed local fighters to return to their livelihood as soon as possible-, but also offered protection against the resistance’s counter-collaboration efforts.

Despite this clear rationale, the outcome of the Teuku Uma policy was disastrous as Uma abandoned the Dutch side at the moment Kutaradja had become totally dependent on him. The failure of this mobilization policy can be attributed to a lack of control over the mobilized militia which is directly linked to a lack of control over its commander. Despite the formal institutionalization Uma enjoyed a large degree of freedom, which he used to pursue his own interest. The poor understanding of Acehnese society caused the Dutch to oversee much of this as they allowed Uma to expand his personal influence to other parts of Great Aceh under the denominator of establishing Dutch colonial control. Likewise many reports on duplicity or Uma’s intimidating attitude vis-à-vis local chiefs went unchecked. Consequently, the promising mobilization approach of the Teuku Uma strategy did not render success and even brought the Dutch on the verge of defeat. The lack of control that caused this failed mobilization will be discussed in section 7.5 when we will analyze the methods of co-option used to maintain the co-optive relationship with Uma. At this place, it is important to acknowledge once more that a poor understanding of Acehnese society was a major factor
contributing to the debacle and thus seriously hampering the effective implementation of mobilization in the Aceh War.

This obstacle to mobilization remained with the official Dutch policy in the years following Uma’s treason, and clearly echoed in, for instance, the instructions for the new Governor as formulated by Snouck and Van Heutsz; it was explicitly mentioned that only high ranking co-optees who were intimately connected to the colonial administration could be granted permission to possess firearms. Despite this official reluctance, the grim reality of colonial pacification -establishing control over fragmented societies with limited resources only- often necessitated the use of local militias. This time, however, the use of local auxiliaries was linked to tight control over the local power-holders in command of such militias. The Pidië expedition as well as the military actions in its wake saw Dutch colonial forces operating with local militias. This further increased when the additional troops deployed to Aceh after the Teuku Uma debacle started to redeploy and consequently mobilization was again accepted as part of the official Dutch war policy in Aceh. The Aceh strategy’s KV system allowed for the institutionalization of local defense forces as well as that it guaranteed an effective system of checks and balances for controlling indigenous allies. Militias were to be deployed by the ulëëbalang for enhancing order and peace within an ulëëbalangship. When a chief proved capable of achieving this objective, this would secure him additional favours from the colonial administration. Thereby, the Dutch not only restricted the use of militias to the own influence sphere of specific ulëëbalang -in contrast to the Teuku Uma policy-, but they also created incentives for the proper deployment of auxiliary fighters. Swart took this approach even one step further in his final drive towards pacification; the allocation of firearms to co-optees who had proven themselves sufficiently trustworthy was restored as official policy. Thus mobilization again became part of the official policy in Aceh; this time, however, it was both successfully implemented as well as an effective contribution to the pacification effort as it established security at the grassroots level.

The successful use of mobilization as part of the Aceh strategy was enabled by the combination of an enhanced insight in Acehnese society and a proper system for controlling co-optees. The latter we will discuss later (in section 7.5) when dealing with the methods of co-option, the former (negatively) correlates with the cause for failure of previous attempts to introduce mobilization, in which the lack of societal understanding fulfilled a huge role. While mobilization and cultural legitimation are fundamental underpinnings for any co-option strategy, and were universal traits of colonial warfare, the actual application of those principles could be quite cumbersome. The lack of understanding of the target society renders the practicing of cultural legitimation and mobilization diffuse. The first point where this diffusion reveals itself is in the elementary question any practitioner of co-option should answer at the outset of his campaign; the question of the center of gravity, or whom exactly to co-opt in order to establish control over the target society?
7.4 Whom to co-opt?

The discussion of the fundamental matters of cultural legitimation and mobilization has already revealed that the question of whom exactly to co-opt was answered differently during the course of the Aceh War. Whereas initially the emphasis lay on the Sultan - albeit ulêëbalang were also co-opted to influence the Sultan-, the Teuku Uma policy focused on a single dominant chief, while the Aceh strategy ultimately aimed at co-opting individual ulêëbalang as rulers of Aceh’s various locales. The driving forces behind these actual choices of co-optees were both the need to co-opt legitimate local power-holders as well as the demand to mobilize additional resources from Acehnese society, with a change in choice occurring as a consequence of an enhanced insight in the local conditions. This coincides with the general image of the actual selection of co-optees in colonial pacification campaigns as discussed in Chapter Three (section 3.3.3). Preferably dominant local power-holders positioned at the upper end of the co-option spectrum were engaged in order to establish an acceptable degree of control over the local population. When this approach did not suffice, co-option of other, lower-level, local leaders would be included in the co-option strategy as was for instance the case with the British in Sudan during the combined Neo-Mahdist rebellion and 'White Flag' mutiny.

In Aceh, the Dutch wrongly conceived the Sultan as being the dominant authority capable of exerting control and mobilizing additional forces. When results failed to come, the colonial administration engaged another dominant local power-holder, Teuku Uma. As this approach ended in disaster, the Dutch were forced to radically adjust their co-option strategy in order to engage the true legitimate authorities, the ulêëbalang, who were situated at a lower societal level -i.e. a local segment, the ulêëbalangship. In order to contribute to our general understanding of co-option in the reality of counterinsurgency warfare it is of particular interest to analyze the way in which the Dutch colonial administration identified and selected its co-optees as well as the influence of the driving principles of cultural legitimation and mobilization on this process. Therefore we will now discuss the various answers given to the question of whom to co-opt during the Aceh War.

During the first two decades of the war the emphasis lay on the Sultan. Although the preference for the Sultan as an agent of co-option would remain with the Dutch until his banishment in 1907, the initial period of the war is characterized by an active policy seeking the submission of the Sultan either directly or indirectly. The former translated into attempts to capture the Sultan or engage him politically, while the latter approach sought to obtain influence over the Sultan through the ulêëbalang, who were perceived to be his subjects. The rationale underlying this focus on the Sultan was that he was considered the dominant legitimate authority in Aceh, and qualitate qua not only the most influential societal agent capable of exerting control over the Acehnese, but also capable of mobilizing additional resources from within Acehnese society. As aforementioned this image of the Sultan as supreme authority coincided with Dutch experiences in other parts of the archipelago,
notably on Java and Sumatra, but did not concur with the actual power structure in nineteenth
century Acehnese society in which the Sultan was merely a symbolic authority. Obviously,
the Dutch were ill-informed on the constitution of the target society in Aceh. Albeit a weak
intelligence position in the initial phase of a campaign was not uncommon in colonial
warfare, the start of the Aceh War was even to contemporaries like C.E. Callwell a case of
extreme poor intelligence. To make matters worse, the Dutch did not succeed in developing
a comprehensive understanding of Acehnese society until the acceptation of Snouck's report
as the underpinning of the Aceh policy in 1898. Yet, during the first period of the war colonial
officials did gain information on local politics and power structures, which concurs with
the general pattern of colonial pacification (see 3.3.3). The colonial administration, however,
was unable to transform this information into a thorough understanding as it was captured
by its bias in favour of the Sultanate. This not only confirmed the false proposition that Aceh
could be pacified through the Sultan, it also influenced the choice of co-optees at the lower
societal levels. The lack of insight into the local political landscape and the exact role of the
ulëëbalang caused the Dutch to focus on Great Aceh, co-opt minor actors, while alienating or
ignoring more major players. Moreover, attempts to submit the Sultan through the chiefs
often weakened the position of the latter vis-à-vis their subjects. It should also be mentioned
here that the colonial administration additionally engaged in co-optive relationship with
various chiefs of the Dependencies. These relationships, which were arranged through long
declarations, however, were ineffective and did not add to Dutch control. Furthermore, they
were considered of subordinate importance to the Sultan. Thus, the first two decades of the
war the answer to the question of whom exactly to co-opt was dominated by the idea of the
Sultan as key to colonial control over the Acehnese. Therefore, the Sultan had to be co-opted
either directly or indirectly through the ulëëbalang of Great Aceh. In the latter case the lack of
knowledge of Acehnese society not only informed the false assumption of control through
the Sultan -who was to be influenced through the chiefs-, but also led to a poor choice of co-
optees and even weakened the ulëëbalang's position.

The Teuku Uma policy was a direct derivative of the strategy to submit the Sultan through
the ulëëbalang. Uma's presumed influence over the Sultan was the primary reason for his co-
option by the colonial administration. When the Sultan's submission failed to occur, the
Dutch administration started to exploit Uma as its main co-optee, as his personal influence
had increased stability and Dutch influence in Great Aceh and along the west coast. At that
moment Uma indeed was one of the most influential and powerful local power-holders
in Aceh, and even Snouck agreed that he was a potentially valuable ally for the Dutch. The
choice to co-opt Uma, therefore, is perfectly understandable. Snouck, however, also pointed
at the limits of Uma's influence as he argued that this chief could only be effectively co-

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2 C.E. Callwell, Small Wars, 45-46.
3 An excellent illustration is Resident Van Langen’s 1888 work on the Sultanate and its institutions. As aforementioned Van
Langen was particularly well-informed and even admired by Snouck for his detailed knowledge of Acehnese society. Despite
this, Snouck also considered Van Langen naive as he was pre-occupied with the Sultan and the Sultanate. See K.F.H. van
Langen, De Inrichting van het Atjehsche Staatsbestuur onder het Sultanaat.
opted in his position as dominant local power-holder of the west coast and the XXV mukim of Great Aceh. The answer to the question of whom exactly to co-opt, therefore, required a more extensive answer. Although Kutaradja did not share Snouck’s point of view, Governor Deijkerhoff seemed to realize that control over Aceh’s fragmented society could only be obtained through the ulêëbalang in command of the various locales. Therefore a ‘locals-first’ approach was adopted which sought to co-opt local power-holders with Uma and his militia in a supporting role as enablers of security. Due to the unsatisfactory results of this policy (predominantly the failure of the 1893 operation in the XXVI mukim), soon Uma’s role was augmented from a facilitator of the co-option process to the supervisor of this process. Uma now acted as a mediator for building and maintaining co-optive relationships between the Dutch colonial administration and local ulêëbalang. This had been an effective strategy for establishing control in Uma’s own area of influence, but proved disastrous when applied to other parts of Great Aceh. Whereas the Dutch previously had identified and selected potential co-optees themselves, they now out-sourced this process to their main ally. Uma, however, followed his personal interest in answering the question of whom to co-opt. Consequently he created a network of local power-holders dependent on him (with use of his main perang tactics), while he alienated others -especially major actors capable of withstanding or even competing with him. Together with the double-dealing of all involved local power-holders, this created a highly superficial level of control, which collapsed as soon as Uma abandoned the Dutch side. Therefore the colonial administration’s decision to co-opt a single dominant local power-holder did not obtain its desired effect. Although the ‘local-first’ approach fitted the structure of Acehnese society, the leading role of Uma prevented the effective implementation of this policy. Despite warnings to limit Uma’s influence to the west coast and XXV mukim, the Dutch allowed him to expand his role in other parts of Great Aceh. The fact that many signs indicating the duplicity of their main co-optee were ignored by the administrators in Kutaradja, illustrates that the Dutch completely failed to monitor and evaluate their agent of control. Thus, it went unnoticed that the answer formulated to the question of whom to co-opt had gradually drifted away from the underpinning of the co-option strategy, which initially aimed at establishing co-optive ties with the various local ulêëbalang throughout Aceh.

The Aceh strategy provided a more solid link between the pattern of legitimate authority in Acehnese society and the identification and selection of co-optees. Snouck’s analysis of Acehnese society was now accepted as the underpinning of the Dutch war policy and thus the ulêëbalang were clearly identified as the pivotal legitimate authorities in Aceh’s highly fragmented society. The adoption of this premise shaped the intelligence process which increasingly focused on the exact position and role of individual ulêëbalang as well as the connections between those chiefs. The example of the Pidië expedition demonstrates that Dutch colonial officers were fully aware of the necessity to co-opt the ulêëbalang in command of a locale and the availability of good quality fine-grained intelligence about local power-holders marks a contrast with the past. In absence of the dominant legitimate local power-
holders of a locale (of whom many had fled the scene) the colonial officers even engaged lower-level chiefs such as village leaders in order to establish a temporarily connection with the local population. It was clear to everyone, however, that ultimately only a co-optive relationship with a particular locale’s dominant ulêëbalang would suffice to establish control over that specific segment of Acehnese society. The ulêëbalang, thus, were the Aceh’s strategy definite answer to the question of whom to co-opt in order to establish control over the various fragmented segments of Acehnese society.

The Aceh strategy greatly added to the improvement of population centric intelligence and the implementation of the idea of the ulêëbalang as key to Dutch colonial control, yet the ultimate testimony of this strategy’s adherence to the principle of ulêëbalang co-option was its political-administrative system of the KV. This system allowed ‘officers-civil authorities’ to establish and exploit co-optive relationships with the ulêëbalang at the local level in Great Aceh as well as the Dependencies. The proximity of these colonial officials to the (potential) co-optees enabled them to identify, select, and monitor those agents with knowledge of local affairs. Although we will discuss this in more detail in this chapter’s next section, it is important to mention this system here because its officials were capable of checking a co-optee’s role as a legitimate authority of a specific societal segment. Consequently the question of whom exactly to co-opt could be properly answered for the more than 100 different locales constituting Acehnese society. Albeit this system’s strength was highly dependent on the quality of individual colonial officials, and its gains were spoilt during hardliner Van Daalen’s governorship, it was the proper application of the KV system under Swart that finally won the Dutch control over the Acehnese through the ulêëbalang. Thus it can be concluded that Snouck’s analysis of Acehnese society -as well as his personal involvement- was instrumental in identifying the ulêëbalang as the centre of gravity of the Dutch co-option strategy, but that the exact answer to the question of whom to co-opt could be formulated and checked with use of the KV system’s administrative body that reached down to the various locales of Acehnese society.

In sum, the Dutch learned the hard lesson that co-option can only be practiced successfully if its subjects are truly the legitimate political authorities of a target society. Albeit this seems rather obvious, it should not be forgotten that both the Sultan and Teuku Uma enjoyed legitimacy to a certain extent. The former, however, was merely a symbolic authority and his political influence was rather limited. The latter was a legitimate political authority and a dominant local power-holder of Aceh’s west coast and Great Aceh’s sagi of the XXV mukim. Yet, his political authority was limited outside those areas and he certainly was not perceived as a legitimate political authority in other parts of Aceh. In both cases the colonial administrator failed to acknowledge that its intended co-optee was not a dominant local power-holder capable of gaining control over Aceh as a whole. Ultimately Aceh could only be pacified by co-opting the various ulêëbalang ruling over Acehnese society’s more than 100 localized segments. The KV system and its executives finally allowed Kutaradja to formulate the right answer to the question of whom exactly to co-opt. Despite this anomaly
from colonial warfare’s preference for the less-extensive co-option of (a limited number of) dominant local power-holders for establishing control over a target society, such a highly localized co-option strategy was not uncommon in colonial pacification campaigns seeking control over complicated fragmented societies (see Chapter Three, section 3.3.3).

7.5 The methods of co-option

Aceh’s *ulëëbalang* were ultimately co-opted through exemplary force as well as the complementary use of predominantly soft coercion and persuasion by ‘officers civil authorities’ at the grassroots level. This concurs with the findings on the methods of co-option in colonial warfare as presented in Chapter Three (section 3.3.4). In colonial pacification campaigns exemplary force was key to establishing a credible threat of force, and thereby achieving co-option domination. Colonial officials (either military or civilian) at the grassroots level provided the colonial state with an administrative apparatus independent of local influences, while their positioning also allowed them to deploy a balanced mix of preferably soft coercion and persuasive methods for bargaining with local power-holders in order to establish and maintain co-optive relationships. Albeit the Aceh strategy and its KV system clearly mirror this general trend, it took the Dutch almost three decades to implement this approach. As we have seen afore the Dutch initially made wrong assumptions on Acehnese society and failed to identify the *ulëëbalang* as the pivotal legitimate authorities. Even in cases they focused on these chiefs in order to influence the Sultan (in the vicinity of Kutaradja, as rulers of the Dependencies, or as part of the Teuku Uma policy), the Dutch failed to establish co-option domination or to conclude effective bargains with the *ulëëbalang*. In order to enhance our insight in the application of co-option in the reality of colonial warfare, we will first analyze those failures with regard to the methods used for co-option. Subsequently we will obtain an insight in the way the Aceh strategy and its KV-system ultimately obtained co-option domination and effectively established and maintained co-optive relationships through complementary use of the co-option continuum’s methods.

In the first two decades of the Aceh War the frequent Dutch policy changes prevented the realization of effective co-optive relationships with either the Sultan or the *ulëëbalang* of Great Aceh. Those local power-holders, who at that time were perceived as key to Dutch control in Aceh as a whole, were intermittently subject of rapprochement (also by use of coercion) or forceful expulsion. This ambiguity not only rendered the colonial administration an unreliable partner to collaborate with, the inconsistent use of force also failed to win the Dutch a reputation as the dominant partner for co-option. The colonial officials only managed to establish more durable co-optive relationships in the ‘side-show’ in the surroundings of their Kutaradja bridgehead and the Dependencies. Even in those cases, however, Dutch dominance was nominal only and therefore the durability of those co-optive relationships was highly hypothetical.
The lack of resources was the main reason for the colonial administration's inability to establish effective co-optive relationships. Dutch dominance in the Dependencies, for instance, depended on a poor system of naval coercion which did not suffice for this purpose. When it became increasingly evident that many of the 'co-opted' *ulëëbalang* were supporting the resistance, the Dutch where in no position to interfere. Moreover, Dutch influence in the Dependencies was also severely limited by the nature of the long declarations which encompassed a respect for the suzerainty of allied *ulëëbalangships*. In the Kutaradja bridgehead the continuous military presence assured Dutch dominance, but was insufficient for protecting co-optees against the resistance's highly effective counter-collaboration. Consequently the Dutch were the dominant actor as they held enough means to coerce local power-holders into co-option, but were not the preferred agents as this would expose local chiefs to resistance violence. The *ulëëbalang* in the vicinity of Kutaradja reacted by adopting an attitude of duplicity towards the Dutch, which served their personal survival best, but of course rendered the co-optive relationships ineffective. Thus, even when the Dutch were capable of establishing dominance, they did not succeed in positioning themselves as the dominant as well as the preferable partner for local power-holders to collaborate with.

A last observation from this period concerns the limited utility of money as reward-base persuasive method for co-option. Governor Pel in 1875 already emphasized that money as an incentive for co-option was useless without an adjoining capability to enforce compliance or protect co-optees. Contradictory to the lack of other resources, money was available to the Kutaradja administration in sufficient quantities, yet in particular the lack of military forces rendered this tool ineffective.

The Dutch dependence on Teuku Uma was also a consequence of the lack of resources -especially troops- as well as the self-imposed limitations of the concentration policy. The colonial administration ‘outsourced’ the task of co-opting legitimate local power-holders to Teuku Uma and thereby created its own monster of Frankenstein as this greatly enhanced the latter's power, while simultaneously decreasing the options to control this agent with the limited available resources and methods. Additionally, Kutaradja lost its independent position *vis-à-vis* the Acehnese chiefs by becoming totally dependent on Uma. This put a further restraint on the use of coercive methods as the Dutch could not risk to alienate or lose their pivotal ally. Consequently Kutaradja was unable to employ a balanced co-option strategy that included coercive as well as persuasive methods, and Uma quickly grew out of control.

On the coercive side of the co-option continuum the only available option for establishing dominance over Uma was a systematic naval blockade of his ports along the west coast. In the past this method had been highly successful in forcing Uma to comply with Dutch demands or urging him to seek rapprochement. Yet this method was never used during the co-optive relationship, as it was suggested by the local colonial administration that such coercive measures would lead to the deflection of this pivotal co-optee. Despite this fear the colonial officials in Kutaradja as well as in Batavia realized that they needed some sort of
The Course of Co-option

Chapter 7

The Course of Co-option

stick to control Uma, but this repeatedly echoed insight never took a tangible form. Instead
the co-optive relationship with the dominant Uma was entirely based on reward-based
incentives that belong to the persuasive side of the co-option continuum. Political support,
money -here we should again take notice of Pel’s 1875 remark-, weapons, and other goods
were the means used to bind Uma to the Dutch and to keep him aligned with the Dutch
war policy. While (temporarily) deprivation of such incentives might be an effective coercive
method for influencing co-optees, Uma’s power position made him practically invulnerable.
Uma used the Dutch support to enhance his own position and left the Dutch side when he
felt that the benefits of the incentives no longer outweighed the negative consequences of
his alliance with Kutaradja. Uma’s behaviour as a co-optee, thus, was never inspired by Dutch
dominance, but purely the consequence of a calculation of self-interest.

It has to be mentioned here that during the period of the Teuku Uma policy the Dutch
did effectively deploy coercive measures against the lower-level ulèëbalang of Great Aceh as
for instance they did not refrain from detaining or fining unwilling chiefs or their relatives.
Ultimately, however, this did not matter as the exploitation of the co-optive relationships
with such local power-holders was also left to Uma. The impotence to control this dominant
local power-holder was far more important as co-option of dominant local power-holders
for controlling a target society was not only a general preference in colonial warfare, but also
a key trait of Dutch colonial rule in the archipelago. Consequently the overall collaboration
equation of the colonial state was at risk and this was only settled through the exemplary
working of the brutal 1894 Lombok expedition. This, however, did not affect the situation
in Aceh or Uma’s behaviour in particular. The Dutch only managed to deploy a credible
coercive capability -in the form of troop reinforcements and the abolition of the caveats of
the concentration policy- when it was too late; at that point Uma had already abandoned
Kutaradja’s side while taking with him a tremendous amount of received support.

Uma had collaborated with the colonial administration as long as he had felt that this
served his personal interest. The persuasive methods of the Dutch rendered them the
preferred partner for collaboration until Uma considered an alliance with the resistance
essential for maintaining his influential position within the Acehnese political landscape.
Without a Dutch capability for co-option domination there was no check to prevent this
switch of sides; in other words, Uma did not need to worry about Dutch-inflicted damage
to his personal interest as a consequence of his turncoat behaviour. The Aceh strategy
initiated by Snouck and Van Heutsz sought to prevent such ‘treason’ by creating a vested
interest for the ulèëbalang to accept and maintain co-optive relationships with the colonial
administration. Collaboration with the Dutch would benefit their personal interest, while
any other option would be punished and result in damage to that interest. The Aceh strategy
thus was designed to render the colonial administration the dominant as well as the preferred
partner to collaborate with.

The methods used for this purpose varied from massive military force to subtle persuasive
measures that covered the full range of the co-option continuum. On the coercive side co-
option domination was established through a series of expeditions and smaller excursions that demonstrated the Dutch will and capability to use force against a defiant or non-complying locale and its rulers. This exemplary force was augmented through the systematic application of naval blockades, which were a powerful method for striking unwilling ulèébalang in their essential economical activities. In essence these demonstrations of force were ‘shaping operations’ as they established Dutch dominance and thereby created the conditions for also becoming the preferred partner for collaboration. The politico-administrative system of the KV backed up by the credible threat of force facilitated the institutionalization of a balanced co-option strategy that succeeded in setting a favourable co-optive equation that was predominantly based on tactful (non-military) coercion and persuasive measures aimed at an individual ulèébalang’s personal interest.

Instrumental in implementing the KV system were the ‘officers-civil authorities’ who provided Kutaradja with a capability for establishing an independent administration at the grassroots level. As mentioned in section 7.4 it was the proximity of those officials to the local people that allowed them to identify and monitor legitimate local power-holders and establish durable co-optive relationships. Despite the official distinction between directly ruled Great Aceh and the indirectly ruled Dependencies the KV system was consistently implemented in Aceh as a whole through the use of the short declaration that gave the Dutch almost unlimited freedom to interfere in local affairs. Thereby the Dutch for the first time succeeded in connecting to the more than 100 localized segments of Acehnese society (the ulèébalangships). Due to their knowledge of local affairs the ‘officers-civil authorities’ were capable of deploying a tailored mix of tactful coercion and persuasive incentives to control local co-optees. If necessary they could also call upon the use of military force, although this was considered a last resort. The preferable methods for punishing non-compliance were the use of local jurisdiction and effective economical sanctions such as fines and the withdrawal of allowances. The persuasive methods used by the colonial administration’s local agents predominantly mirror the latter as they were also designed to have a direct impact on the ulèébalang’s source of political authority, their economical power. The attribution of allowances, permits for levying tolls, and concessions were highly attractive incentives for the Acehnese chiefs. Albeit the colonial administration was initially very careful with such economical measures, their strong appeal to the ulèébalang’s personal interest quickly turned financial rewards into a key element of the KV system. If we again take note of Pel’s 1875 remark with regard to the use of money, it is clear that the Aceh strategy and its KV system for the first time succeeded in linking financial incentives with an accompanying stick for effectively enforcing compliance. Other persuasive elements of the Dutch co-option strategy were assistance and protection against rivals related to the resistance, and on the long term the appointment of co-optees as colonial administrators. The latter mainly encompassed empowerment of the ulèébalang as adat chiefs under supervision of Dutch colonial administrators. As aforementioned this was a highly controversial measure as it was based on a poor understanding of the precise nature of ulèébalang legitimacy, and therefore
ultimately contributed to the delegitimation of these chiefs and a re-emergence of the ulama-led resistance. Yet, this method was not employed for pacifying Aceh and therefore we will not consider this in our final conclusion about the Aceh strategy.

Aceh was ultimately pacified by use of a strategy that succeeded to win the colonial administration a position as the dominant as well as the preferred partner for local power-holders to collaborate with. A series of military operations sufficed for establishing a credible stick for co-option domination, while more subtle methods of coercion and persuasive incentives at the grassroots level sufficed for definitely setting the equation in favour of the colonial administration. A last word here should be dedicated to the availability and use of resources. Despite a surge in troop levels immediately after the Uma debacle, the Aceh strategy and its KV system finally managed to pacify Aceh with 4,000 troops, which is 700 less than the Kutaradja garrison during the concentration policy. The sequencing of methods and clever use of available resources were pivotal in achieving this. First the additional surge troops were deployed against notorious defiant locales and their chiefs in order to set an example. Once this was established the Dutch could deploy smaller detachments to other parts of Aceh in order to establish co-optive relationships with use of tactful coercion and persuasive incentives. Swart even succeeded in implementing this without additional troops, as he had to repair the Aceh strategy and its KV-system after Van Daalen’s governorship. Military operations against five selected resistance-dominated locales sufficed for establishing co-option domination as it once again became clear that the Dutch were capable and willing to use effective force. Backed up by this exemplary force the more subtle methods of the KV-system sufficed for pacifying Aceh within the next four years. Thus, a final insight that can be obtained from the Aceh strategy is that not only the balanced use of the methods of the co-option matters, but also the sequencing as in this case co-option domination was obtained first. This created the conditions for the introduction of the KV-system and its methods and thereby it was instrumental in establishing a highly effective system for establishing and maintaining co-optive relationships in which the Dutch colonial administration, despite its limited available resources, was the dominant party.

7.6 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed this book's findings on co-option during the Aceh War in the light of the more general findings on co-option in colonial warfare. The resulting analysis allows us to draw a final conclusion on the Aceh War as a case study of co-option of local power holders in the reality of colonial warfare and thereby adds to our understanding of the utility and applicability of co-option for establishing control over highly fragmented societies. The insights gained here will be used to answer this study’s central question of how counterinsurgents have co-opted local power-holders in order to attain control over the
population in a weblike society. This, however, will only take place in this book’s conclusion. At this place we will focus on the definite conclusions of the Aceh case.

Cultural legitimation and mobilization of resources from within the target society were key features of colonial pacification campaigns. The scarcity of resources available to colonial states typically necessitated the use of local power-holders and their militias for establishing control over the population of a target society. Although the Dutch had gained considerable experience in practicing these underlying principles of co-option from the early days of their presence in the Indonesian archipelago onwards, they encountered severe difficulties in putting these principles into practice during the Aceh War. Only after more than two decades the Dutch started to implement the first elements of what would become a successful co-option strategy. The key reason for this flaw lies in a poor understanding of Acehnese society, which prevented the formulation of an effective co-option strategy with the limited resources available. Albeit seemingly obvious, subsequent Dutch commanders either failed to develop or accept an appropriate awareness on Aceh's highly fragmented society and its pattern of legitimacy as the underpinning of their approach to the war. This lack of understanding rendered the practicing of cultural legitimation and mobilization diffuse, if not impossible.

The failure to practice co-option during this first period of the war is evident in the various answers formulated to the practical questions of whom exactly to co-opt and how to co-opt those local power-holders. Consistent with the general trend in colonial warfare the Dutch initially aimed at co-option of a dominant local power-holder. The political structure of Acehnese society, however, was dominated by the *ulêébalang* who were the legitimate authorities in command of the various locales constituting the overall societal network. The Sultan, who was initially the centre of gravity of the Dutch co-option strategy, was merely a symbolic authority, while Teuku Uma, who became the pivotal co-optee when Dutch options were severely limited due to a scarce of resources and the self-imposed restraints of the concentration policy, was essentially the dominant local power-holder of the west coast and its adjacent part of Great Aceh. Thus, both these local power-holders enjoyed a certain extent of legitimacy, but neither of them was a key legitimate agent capable of controlling Acehnese society as a whole. Moreover, the lack of knowledge of local affairs prevented the Dutch to effectively employ their limited resources and triggered a series of policy changes which rendered the colonial administration an unreliable agent to collaborate with. During this period the Dutch never managed to become the preferred as well as the dominant partner for collaboration. At best the colonial administration managed to become either the dominant partner as was the case in the vicinity of the Kutaradja bridgehead or a temporarily preferred partner as was the case with Teuku Uma. The latter case illustrates the further ramifications of practicing co-option without fine-grained knowledge of local affairs and without a proper capability for co-option domination as the administrators in Kutaradja were highly ignorant of Uma’s duplicity and convinced that they controlled Uma through the allocation or withdrawal of rewards only. This of course turned out be an illusion and
clarified that not only the true legitimate authorities had to be engaged, but also that the
colonial administration had to create a vested interest which made them the preferable as
well as the dominant agent for co-option.

Ultimately Aceh was pacified through a well-thought co-option strategy that established
Dutch control over the population through the ulëëbalang ruling over the more than 100
localized segments of Acehnese society. Instrumental in designing and implementing this
approach was the 1898 acceptance of Snouck's 1892 report on Acehnese society. Thus the
question of whom exactly to co-opt was finally answered by use of a proper analysis of the
pattern of legitimacy of the target society, and thereby the principle of cultural legitimation
became embedded in the Dutch war policy. Although mobilization was initially reluctantly
practiced as a consequence of the Uma debacle, the use of self-defense forces for securing
the population under ulëëbalang control gradually became a key feature of the so-called Aceh
strategy. This all was possible due to the introduction of a system that allowed for the balanced
application of co-option at the grassroots level. First, however, the colonial administration
had gained itself a reputation as the dominant partner to collaborate with through the use
of exemplary force. The notorious defiant statelets of Aceh's Dependencies were singled out
for military actions and the consecutive series of operations sufficed to demonstrate Dutch
willingness and capability to deploy force at the local level. Once this credible stick for co-
option domination was created, the colonial administration sought to establish co-optive
relationships with the various ulëëbalang ruling over the locales of Acehnese society. The
KV-system and its 'officers-civil authorities' provided Kutaradja with a capability to engage
the leading ulëëbalang of a locale with a tailored package of co-optive methods based on
local knowledge. The methods employed as part of this approach were directly aimed at an
ulëëbalang's personal interest and typically encompassed economical rewards as well as fines
and the withdrawal or withholding of the economical incentives. Backed up by exemplary
force these local colonial officials managed to establish and maintain a system of co-option
in which the Dutch created a vested interest for the ulëëbalang to co-opt; non-compliance
was severely punished, while compliance was generously rewarded. The Aceh strategy, thus,
finally established the colonial administration as both the dominant as well as the preferred
partner for Aceh's legitimate local power-holders to collaborate with.

In terms of this book's framework for understanding co-option the Aceh strategy
addressed the dominant local power-holders at the local level through a balanced use of the
coercive and persuasive methods of the co-option continuum (see figure 5). The ulëëbalang
are positioned in the middle of the spectrum of co-option as they were dominant power-
holders of a societal segment at the local level, but enjoyed only limited influence over larger
segments of the target society. With regard to the co-option continuum it can be stated
that the Aceh strategy employed a balanced mix of coercive and persuasive methods for
establishing and maintaining effective co-optive relationships. Although tactful coercion
and incentives dominated the daily practice of co-option by the 'officers-civil authorities',
the exemplary force of the military expeditions was pivotal for establishing a credible stick
for co-option domination. As usual in colonial warfare the threat of force was never far away, and therefore the Aceh strategy also represents a balanced mix. Although the total of Acehnese casualties in the years after the introduction of the Aceh strategy (1898-1914) mounted to a tremendous 23,807 (more than four percent of the population), it should be noted here that to the standards of that time the Aceh strategy might have been a genuine example of limited force in colonial warfare. Of these casualties 11,187 occurred during Van Daalen’s governorship, which still leaves some 12,620 casualties attributed to the exemplary force of the Aceh strategy. A recent analysis suggests that a total of as many as 100,000 Acehnese must have perished during the Aceh War, of whom most died as a consequence of the inconsistent Dutch strategies in the 1870s and 1880s, while the indigenous casualties of the five-year Java War (1825-1830) must have exceeded 200,000. All these numbers are totally unacceptable by today’s standards, yet they indicate that the Aceh strategy’s exemplary force inflicted significantly less casualties than usual in colonial warfare. However, it goes without doubt that brutal force was a reality of colonial pacification as even exemplary force included massive casualties in order to create a credible capability for co-option domination. Therefore, we have to conclude that such lethal force was a key trait of co-option in colonial warfare as it fulfilled a pivotal role in setting the collaborative equation to the advantage of the colonial state.

Figure 5: The Aceh strategy depicted in the analytical framework of co-option in weblike societies


Compared to the general trend in colonial warfare the successful Aceh strategy deviates in its choice of co-optees (depicted as $\Delta y$ in figure 5). Whereas colonial pacification preferably aimed at co-opting dominant local power-holders in the upper part of the spectrum of co-option-agents capable of dominating various fragments or even complete societies-, the Aceh strategy co-opted the dominant power-holders at the local level. This is indeed an exception from the standard, but as was explained before, this was a not uncommon exception in the colonial époque as the need to address a complicated target society’s pattern of legitimacy would often demand co-option of lower-level local power-holders. Typically a colonial campaign would first aim to co-opt a dominant local power-holder as such an agent not only could rally most resources, but also could be controlled with limited resources. If this approach did not suffice, the more intensive co-option of lower-level local power-holders was an option. Clearly this is what happened during the Aceh War. Aceh’s highly fragmented society could not be controlled with use of dominant local power-holders, but only through co-option of the ulëëbalang, the legitimate authorities in charge of the various locales of that specific society. Whilst this observation concurs with the principle that any co-option strategy should be based on cultural legitimation, we should keep in mind that it took the Dutch colonial administration more than twenty years to come to this conclusion. With regard to this book’s specific subject of counterinsurgency in weblike societies it is important to develop a proper understanding of the target society in order to formulate a proper strategy for identifying and controlling co-optees. However, especially in highly fragmented and complicated weblike societies such an awareness on the structure of local society might not be available from the onset of the campaign. Therefore it is of pivotal importance to develop a clear picture of the societal landscape as soon as possible and to accept this analysis as an underpinning for adjusting the campaign’s design. As we have seen in the case of the Aceh War, it took the Dutch almost twenty years to develop such an understanding in the form of Snouck’s report, while it took war authorities another six years to accept this report as the basis of the Dutch strategy in Aceh. When this strategy was ultimately implemented, the colonial administration managed to control the Acehnenese by co-opting the legitimate local power-holders in command of the more than 100 various locales through a combination of exemplary -yet brutal- force and a locally applied mix of tactful coercion and persuasive methods. Additionally, however, it should be mentioned that this result was not to last as in the period following Aceh’s pacification the Dutch failed to adopt a proper follow-up strategy that enhanced the connection between state and target society and thus could transform the acceptable level of control into durable control over the population. Instead the ulëëbalang were wrongly empowered, as they were attributed almost absolute powers in the fields of law and religion at the cost of villagers and ulama. In the long run this delegitimized Aceh’s chiefs and inspired a renewed uprising of the ulama-led resistance. Thus, our last key insight of the Aceh War stresses the importance of an appropriate follow-up strategy that consolidates and exploits the gains of the pacification campaign. Let us now continue this book with an analysis of the application of co-option in the reality of modern counterinsurgency warfare by studying Dutch experiences in Afghanistan’s Uruzgan province.
Part III

The Uruzgan campaign
Chapter 8
Chapter 8: Afghanistan, Uruzgan, and the War from 2001 until 2006

8.1 Introduction

In this part we will study the use of co-option in the reality of contemporary counterinsurgency warfare. As argued in Chapter Three (section 3.5) today’s campaigns can best be described as neo-classical counterinsurgency adapted to the specifics of the current operational environment. Domestic pressure demands intervening foreign counterinsurgents to establish, consolidate, and transfer control to a preferably democratic host-nation government, (re-)constructed by the counterinsurgents themselves, and all this within a limited time frame and with limited resources only. The situation on the ground, however, thwarts the implementation of this concept as target societies in countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan are characterized by a complicated weblike structure and a weak or even absent connection to a modern central state government capable of controlling such a society as a whole. Consequently contemporary counterinsurgency with its limited time and resources aims at establishing control at the grassroots level in the various locales of the target society and transferring this control to a host-nation government capable of providing basic security and services to the population in those locales, while wider state-building efforts are delivered through long-term stability and reconstruction. Today’s counterinsurgents, therefore, seek to establish and consolidate control over the population at the local level and transfer this control to a local administration - representing the host-nation’s government - capable of maintaining security and addressing the people’s basic needs. This all has triggered the re-invention of co-option of local power-holders for obtaining control over the populace and establishing a durable connection with the local administration.

The next chapters provide an analysis of the four-year (2006-2010) Dutch mission in Afghanistan’s Uruzgan province in order to obtain an insight in the application of co-option in the daily reality of contemporary counterinsurgency campaigns. The Dutch Uruzgan campaign is exemplary for today’s counterinsurgency warfare as it was shaped by domestic pressure to focus on stabilization and reconstruction of this war torn province -as part of a modern Afghan state governed from Kabul- with limited resources and within a limited time frame, while the soldiers on the ground were confronted with an insurgency rooted in a complicated weblike society only weakly connected to the tottering structures of the new Afghan state. Consequently the Netherlands’ Task Force Uruzgan (TFU) adopted neo-classical counterinsurgency ideas as its Leitmotif and gradually incorporated recent field...
innovations such as for instance Key Leader Engagement (KLE, see 3.5.4), measures to mitigate the Improvised Explosive Device (IED) threat, and counter-network methods for disrupting or destroying the local Taliban. Of course we will focus on the implementation and execution of KLE as this concept embodies co-option in modern campaigns. For a thorough analysis of co-option in the TFU campaign we will distinguish between the initial phase of the campaign in which the Dutch accepted and developed neo-classical counterinsurgency ideas on population centric warfare as the underpinning of their operational framework and the advanced phase in which the campaign gained momentum as an adapted neo-classical counterinsurgency campaign. The June 2007 battle for Chora district is considered the campaign’s hinge point as this provided ‘a real adaptive moment’ after which enhanced neo-classical counterinsurgency became solidly anchored in both TFU’s overall campaign plan and day-to-day operations. Therefore, we will first discuss co-option during the TFU campaign from its onset until the battle of Chora and its aftermath (2006-2007, Chapter Nine), and subsequently scrutinize the more advanced phase of the campaign (2008-2010, Chapter Ten). We will conclude this case study with a discussion of the findings on co-option during the Dutch Uruzgan campaign in the light of the analytical framework for understanding co-option as a tool for controlling the population in weblike societies (Chapter Eleven). Thus this part will add to our understanding of co-option in the reality of contemporary counterinsurgency warfare through a thorough analysis of co-option during the four-year Uruzgan campaign.

Before immersing in the daily reality of practicing co-option at the grassroots level in Uruzgan province we have to address the background of the Dutch campaign as it was embedded in the larger Afghan campaign. This brings us to another feature of contemporary counterinsurgency campaigns; their multinational dimension. Although the United States’ (US) armed forces have borne the brunt of the burden in both the Iraqi and Afghan campaigns, modern counterinsurgency is typically carried out by multinational coalitions. Especially the campaign in Afghanistan, where the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has commanded the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) since 2003 -as opposed to Iraq, where the United States commanded the multinational coalition-, has demonstrated the extent this international cooperation can possibly take in modern counterinsurgency warfare. The ramification of this multilateral character of contemporary counterinsurgency warfare.


is that the overall campaigns are easily hampered by a lack of unity of effort as individual contributing nations tend to prefer their own agenda over the campaign plan and thus essentially are fighting separate campaigns. In Afghanistan this problem was tackled as part of the 2009-2010 surge by General Stanley A. McChrystal who actively sought to improve unity of effort by synchronizing the mission and ensuring a shared understanding of the mission throughout ISAF’s forces as well as enhancing the coordination with the Afghan Government and other international actors, including liaison with NATO and national capitals of contributing countries. By 2011 these measures had given the Afghan campaign a renewed momentum, yet the multinational dimension remained a complicating factor as NATO collectively agreed on a transfer of responsibility to the Afghan government by 2014, but various contributing countries held different visions on the moment of withdrawal of their own troops. In some cases the most significant national contribution had already been ceased before this discussion, as was the case with the Dutch mission in Uruzgan that ended in August 2010.

At the grassroots level, where counterinsurgents seek to control the local population, the consequences of this international dimension of modern counterinsurgency campaigns are twofold. First, variations in national troop contributions can cause a transfer of authority over a specific locale between intervening countries. A national counterinsurgency force might find itself deploying to a specific area in order to take over from another contributing country, and transfer this locale to yet another country after a certain amount of time - as demanded by national politics. This so-called transfer of authority over operating areas has been commonly observed in Iraq as well as Afghanistan. In Iraq, for instance, Dutch forces took over the southern province of Al Muthanna from US Marines in August 2003, and in spring 2005 handed over the province to British and Australian forces. For the Uruzgan campaign a similar pattern evolved as Dutch forces took over authority over the province from a US Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in August 2006 and the TFU transferred its authority to a combined American and Australian force in August 2010. Especially in the NATO-led ISAF campaign, which evoked a vivid debate on burden sharing within that alliance, a pattern of frequent transfers of authority over various of Afghanistan’s 34 provinces revealed itself when one contributing country took over from another. The second consequence of the multilateral character of today’s campaigns for the grassroots level concerns the combined


composition of task forces or sharing of a local area of operations between countries. At the end of its mission in 2010 the Dutch-led TFU, for example, mainly consisted of Dutch and Australian units, but was further augmented by elements from the United States, France, Singapore, and Slovakia. Additionally, Australian, Dutch, and US Special Forces under direct command of ISAF’s special operations branch were active in Uruzgan Province, while also vast numbers of Afghan National Army (ANA) troops and Afghan police officers were operating alongside coalition forces.

Unsurprisingly both the continuous transferring of authority and concurrently operating in the same area of operations brought forward issues of coordination and differences between countries. Although this study does not focus on these problems concerning the counterinsurgents’ unity of effort, we here have to deal with the impact of these consequences of today’s multinational counterinsurgency campaigns on the interaction between counterinsurgents and local population. The people of a locale and their power-holders are confronted with subsequent national contingents as well as with soldiers from different intervening countries simultaneously. While we will address the latter in our next two chapters on co-option during the Dutch Uruzgan campaign, we will start the exploration of the former consequence of the internationalization of counterinsurgency campaigns in this chapter. The 2006-2010 TFU campaign largely took place before McChrystal’s review and synchronization of the overall ISAF campaign when different countries were still effectively fighting separate campaigns. At the grassroots level the differences between succeeding countries could have disastrous effects for the local population, as Haji Abdul Rahman, a tribal elder from Sarobi district (65 kilometres east of Kabul) experienced after French soldiers took over from Italian troops in July 2008:

“When the country [nationality of the forces] changed and the French came here there was a big attack on them. We knew the Taleban came to the city and we knew they didn’t carry out attacks on the Italian troops but we didn’t know why.”

For the local populace a benign environment had turned hostile overnight due to the change of nationality. In this case the underlying cause for this deterioration was that the Italian secret service had cut a deal with local warlords and Taliban commanders in which they paid tens of thousands of dollars for keeping the area quiet. As the French were unaware of this

11 Tom Coghlan, ‘French troops were killed after Italy hushed up ‘bribes’ to Taleban’, The Times, October 15, 2009, www.timesonline.co.uk (accessed October 19, 2009), see also Tim Reid, ‘United States admits tackling Italians over payments to the Taleban’, The Times, October 17, 2009, www.timesonline.co.uk (accessed October 19, 2009).
deal, and payments had stopped when the Italians left, local actors picked up their weapons and started fighting again.

In the case of Uruzgan the so-called Hand-Over-Take-Over (HOTO) between the US and the Dutch highlighted significant differences in the approach to control the population by influencing the local political landscape. Whereas the US opted to control Uruzgan’s society through dominant local power-holder Jan Mohammed Khan (commonly known among western troops and diplomats as JMK), the Dutch chose to distance themselves from this predatory warlord who had marginalized and even alienated large parts of the local population while favouring his own people. Although many of Jan Mohammed’s rivals started to exploit this new opportunity and actively collaborated with the TFU, the former remained a highly influential agent in Uruzgan throughout the Dutch campaign. In order to fully grasp this situation we need to explore both Uruzgan’s societal background as well as the American intervention in this local society prior to the HOTO in 2006. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that Uruzgan is just one of 34 Afghan provinces of the new Afghan state and that its society is part of the larger webleke society in Afghanistan as a whole. Therefore, we will also address this wider context and the connection between the Kabul-led Afghan state and its webleke society. Consequently the 2001-2006 US Uruzgan campaign will also be discussed in relationship with the larger war effort in Afghanistan, which additionally serves to sketch the background for the involvement of NATO and especially the Dutch deployment in 2006. Thus, this chapter seeks to provide a thorough understanding of the situation at the grassroots level in Uruzgan and the background of the TFU campaign through an analysis of Afghanistan and its society as a whole and Uruzgan’s societal landscape in particular as well as through a subsequent discussion of the Afghan War from 2001 until 2006 with special attention for the US involvement in Uruzgan province. Furthermore we have to mention here that at the end of Chapter Ten we will touch upon the HOTO between the TFU and the combined Australian and US task force in 2010 and at that place we will also discuss the ramifications of this transfer of authority for ISAF’s control over the local society. But let us now start with describing Afghanistan and its webleke society as well as the specific societal situation in Uruzgan in order to capture the local background against which the four-year TFU campaign took place.

8.2 Afghanistan, its webleke society, and the local societal landscape in Uruzgan

Today’s Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is a landlocked country of some 647,500 square kilometres, an area rather larger than France, or about the size of Texas. In the south and

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the east it shares a 2,430 kilometres border with Pakistan, while in the north Turkmenistan (744 kilometres), Tajikistan (1,206 kilometres), and Uzbekistan (137 kilometres) are its neighbours. In the north east there is also a short border with China (76 kilometres), and in the west Afghanistan is bounded by Iran (936 kilometres). This geographical interposition at the crossroads of the Iranian Plateau, Central Asia, and the Indian subcontinent has long rendered Afghanistan's location of strategic importance. Despite the rugged terrain consisting of snow-covered mountains, unforgiving deserts, and vast steppe, it has always been the primary land passage connecting these regions and their great powers, as the nearby Himalaya range forms a rather impassable barrier. Consequently, the country has always drawn foreign attention and has witnessed countless invasions since ancient times. The local population has historically responded to such interventions by mounting a people's war in which they confronted powerful regular armies with guerrilla tactics that allowed them to exploit their superior knowledge of the difficult terrain and local circumstances. Testimony to the effectiveness of this method is that Alexander the Great's generalship met its biggest test when confronted with a guerrilla in the Persian satrapies of Bactria and Sogdania (covering a large part of present-day Afghanistan) that forced him to adapt the organization and tactics of his troops.\textsuperscript{14} Later, Marco Polo - who thus not only visited Aceh, but also Afghanistan - also observed the traces of many wars as well as the local population's preparedness to defy foreign invasions.\textsuperscript{15} In the colonial era the Afghan corridor was the theatre of the so-called Great Game between the British and the Russian empires, while the 1979-1989 Soviet invasion and the current Afghan War are the most recent examples of foreign intervention in the country.

Unsurprisingly, present-day Afghanistan has been hugely shaped by all these historical conflicts, with the current Islamic Republic of Afghanistan only being the result of the latest foreign intervention. Acquiring a thorough understanding of modern Afghanistan thus requires us to delve deeper into the way the wars of the past have moulded the country and its society. Therefore this section first explores this historical dimension before we engage in a more detailed discussion of Afghanistan's current weblike society and the local societal landscape in Uruzgan province.

8.2.1 The becoming of present-day Afghanistan

As we have seen Afghanistan has a long track record of foreign interference harking back to antiquity. For understanding modern Afghanistan, however, it is the latest epoch, which


begins in the second half of the nineteenth century, that matters most. It was at this time that the Great Game between the British and Russian empires led to the establishment of Afghanistan as a buffer state between those empires. Following the Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878-1880) and a Russian advance towards Afghanistan, a joint commission of British and Russian officials agreed upon a Russo-Afghan frontier which was demarcated in 1887, while in the following years the British intent not to share a common border with the Russians led to an expansion of the Afghan buffer state towards the east to the border with China which was completed in 1895. As northern British India was harassed by Pashtun tribes living in the eastern and southern part of Afghanistan, there was also a demand of a more clear boundary between Afghan and British influence spheres. In 1893 the foreign secretary of British India’s government, Sir Henry Mortimer Durand, therefore, delineated the furthest border of British control along the so-called Durand line, which cut straight through the Pashtun heartland. Afghanistan’s ruling authority, the Amir of Kabul and its Dependencies, ‘Abd al-Rahman Khan, reluctantly accepted this division of the Pashtun tribes. Present day Afghans still report that the Amir only signed the agreement as the British lured him into drunkenness by feeding him a tremendous amount of port. An increase of the yearly British subsidy from 1.2 to 1.8 million rupees as well as a promise not to hinder the import of weapons and ammunition, however, provide more realistic reasons for ‘Abd al-Rahman’s consent. Although the Durand line has remained disputed ever since, its demarcation was completed in 1897, and by 1901 all boundaries of Afghanistan, including that with Iran, had been defined. Thus, the geographical contours of present-day Afghanistan became clear at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Simultaneously to the setting of the geographical borders, the British managed to seize control over Afghanistan’s foreign policy in return for considerable support in the form of money, weapons, and -if necessary- military support to the Amir of Kabul as arranged by the 1879 so-called Gandamak Treaty ‘of eternal peace and friendship’. The consecutive influx of British resources to the Kabul government enhanced an already ongoing transformation of the Afghan state from a tribally based empire towards a more modern centralized entity. Although the Afghan empire state had been a centrally ruled kingdom under Ahmad Shah Durrani (r. 1747-1773) in the eighteenth century, rivalry and internal power struggles within

19 The title of the Amir was later changed into Amir of Afghanistan and Dependencies. Willem Vogelsang, The Afghans, 261.
20 Willem Vogelsang, ‘Naar een zelfstandig Afghanistan?’, 545.
22 Willem Vogelsang, The Afghans, 260-261, see also Edgar O’Ballance, Afghan Wars, 1839 to the present (London: Brassey’s, 2002), 41-42. At the time of the signing of the treaty Ya’qub Khan was Amir of Kabul.
the ruling Durrani confederacy of the Pashtun tribe led to a protracted civil war that corroded the state’s centre. As a result the central administration in Kabul could rally significantly less resources and had to fall back on other methods for consolidating its authority. Under Amir Dust Muhammed Khan (r. 1826-1863), the state reverted to establishing control through a series of alliances and co-optive ties with local tribes and warlord-like local power-holders, among whom many of the Amir’s closest relatives. It has to be mentioned that the British defeat during the First Anglo-Afghan War (1839-1842) and its aftermath greatly added to Dust Muhammed’s capabilities -both in the form of a boost of reputation and an increase of resources- for engaging and dominating accommodations with Afghanistan’s various local segments. Consequently, while essentially remaining an imperial entity consisting of various autonomous segments and a centralized administrative authority, the process of renewed centralization of the Afghan state, which was further enhanced by the influx of British resources after the Second Anglo-Afghan War, had already begun after the First Anglo-Afghan War. Let us now take a further look at how this centralization process influenced the becoming of present-day Afghanistan.

‘Abd al-Rahman Khan assumed the office of Amir of Kabul and its Dependencies in 1880. He was empowered by the British, who originally intended to maintain their influence in Afghanistan through divide-and-rule politics, encompassing the acknowledging of both the Amir as well as of various local princes. Soon, however, the British realized that for Afghanistan to remain an effective buffer state without too much costly interference, a strengthened state would be a better solution. This change of policy opened the road for ‘Abd al-Rahman ‘to extend his power and strengthen central authority, with the financial backing of the British and without fear of foreign intervention’. In twenty years time ‘Abd al-Rahman managed to definitely transform Afghanistan into a centralized state through a policy that drastically curtailed the position of local power-holders and sought to break with many traditional aspects of Afghan life. Unsurprisingly, this invoked much resistance of traditional local power-holders which was ruthlessly dealt with, winning ‘Abd al-Rahman the nickname of ‘Iron Amir’; he personally estimated that his quest for control had cost the lives of some 120,000 of his subjects by 1894. When the Amir died in 1901 the central administration in Kabul effectively exerted control over the peoples living within the newly established Afghan borders. The beginning of the twentieth century, thus, not only marked the emergence of the geographical contours of present-day Afghanistan, it also saw the establishment of a more modern centralized state within those boundaries.

24 Christine Noelle, State and Tribe in Nineteenth-Century Afghanistan, The Reign of Amir Dost Muhammad Khan (1826-1863) (London: Routledge, 2008), xiii-xiv. The Durrani-led state was originally dominated and ruled by kings of the Sadozai branch of the Popalzai sub-tribe. From its onset, however, there was a vivid rivalry between the Sadozai and the Muhammedzai, a branch of the Barakzai sub-tribe. By 1818 the decline of power of the Sadozai dynasty provoked the Muhammedzai to take over control of the Durrani-state. Tapper, ‘Introduction’, 31-32.
27 Willem Vogelsang, The Afghans, 268.
The ‘Iron Amir’ was succeeded by his son Habibullah (r. 1901-1919), whose reign -thanks to his father’s repressive policy- was characterized by the absence of internal unrest. Therefore Habibullah could embark on a policy that reached out to traditional religious leaders and tribal chiefs (the latter being commonly referred to as khans) and placated them by enhancing their role in the state’s administration through, among others, the institution of a state council for tribal affairs.\(^{28}\) In addition to these predominantly rural traditionalists within Afghan society, an urban modernist faction, mainly consisting of a growing group of civil servants and others whose interest lay with the central state, arose during the first two decades of the twentieth century.\(^{29}\) Amanullah (r. 1919-1929), Habibullah’s son who took over when his father was killed in 1919, was an advocate of the modernization of Afghanistan and immediately set out to reform the Afghan state in order to bring about social and economical change.\(^{30}\) Inevitably this policy brought Amanullah on a collision course with both the traditional leaders and the British, who still were supervising Afghanistan’s foreign policy. To begin with the latter, the Amir started the Third Anglo-Afghan War in 1919. After one month of fighting an armistice was declared and by subsequently signing the Treaty of Rawalpindi the British agreed that the Afghans would resume control over their own foreign policy, which allowed the latters to embark on an international course in support of intentional social change at home.\(^{31}\) The opposition of the traditional faction fully revealed itself when Amanullah in 1923 presented Afghanistan’s first written constitution that aimed to turn the country in a modern nation-state. The constitution discarded the idea of tribal affiliation and religious influence in the administration. For many of the traditional religious and tribal leaders this interfered too much with their interests and traditions. Confronted with rising discontent and a tribal rebellion in Khost in 1924, the Amir called for a Loya Jirga in order to endorse his reforms -ironically the new constitution had abandoned the idea of exactly such tribal participation. Although Amanullah assumed the title of King in 1926, stepped up his reforms inspired by a trip to Kemal Atatürk’s Turkey and Reza Shah’s Persia, and held another Loya Jirga in 1928 in order to explain his ideas, he gradually lost the connection with the traditionalist faction representing the many tribally living Afghans. As Amanullah also failed to develop an army capable of quelling tribal rebellions, his fate was sealed. In 1929 the King was forced to abdicate; Amanullah’s plan for modernization of the Afghan state had failed because, despite his ‘real genius for state-building formula’, and support from the urban modernist faction, he failed to acknowledge ‘the realities of [traditional] tribal power’.\(^{32}\)

Amanullah’s successors Nadir Shah (r. 1929-1933), Zahir Shah (r. 1933-1973), and Daud Khan (prime minister 1953-1963, president 1973-1978), turned out to be more adept in balancing a

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\(^{29}\) Willem Vogelsang, *The Afghans*, 273-274.

\(^{30}\) Ibid., 276, Tapper, ‘Introduction’, 36.


policy of careful modernization against the interests of the tribes dominating local life in rural Afghanistan - still the better part of the country. The Afghan state constructed by these rulers imposed an external administrative structure on Afghan society and thus ‘encapsulated rather than confronted social resistance’. This encompassed an accommodation to traditional tribal leadership, who ruled the countryside, as well as the incorporation of the urban modernist elite into the state’s administration. Consequently, the Afghan state was highly dependent on local power-holders for its control over rural Afghanistan, while its executive apparatus was almost exclusively controlled by the modernist elite. This precarious balance was codified in the 1964 Constitution which turned Afghanistan into a constitutional monarchy, acknowledging a shift in power from the monarch to the modernist elite as well as the strategy of encapsulating traditional local institutions who by now were represented in the centre by a democratically elected parliament. The key driver of this state was the influx of foreign resources to the state’s centre. Although the Afghan kings initially tried to create an export economy based on rural products, this was insufficient to support the state-building effort. After the British withdrawal from India, the Cold War opened a new episode of Afghanistan’s strategic importance as both the Soviet Union and the United States vied for its allegiance. The resulting aid (from 1955 to 1978 the Soviet Union gave $1.27 billion economic aid and $1.25 billion military aid, while the United states donated $533 million for economic aid) allowed the Afghan state to build a 100,000 men army, schools, roads, bureaucracy, etc., independent from the realities of tribal power that threatened the state in the past. This foreign support, however, was also instrumental in encapsulating traditional local leaders, who were tied to the central government through a system of patronage. The Afghan state thus came to rely on a system in which the modernist elite in Kabul acted as an intermediary for redistributing foreign resources to the various local segments of Afghan society. This system did not try to enhance state penetration at the local level - i.e. beyond the traditional local leaders-, and consequently the Afghan state failed to create a popular basis. Moreover, the various local segments did not need to organize in a larger (tribal) alliance as they were connected to the state through individual ties between their leaders and members of the national government that allowed them to optimize their advantage. Thus, the Afghan state that emerged during the rule of Nadir Shah, Zahir Shah, and Daud Khan was characterized by the absence of a popular basis due to a high degree of political fragmentation; instead the state’s modernist elite was connected to society through a Kabul-based patronage network that mediated the distribution of foreign resources to the leaders of local societal groups.

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33 Barnett R. Rubin, The Fragmentation of Afghanistan, 20, Tapper, ‘Introduction’, 37. All three rulers were members of the Musahiban family which descended from a brother of Amir Dust Muhammed Khan.
Whereas in the past resistance of the traditional tribes of the countryside had posed the biggest threat to the Afghan state, the end of the Durrani-led state was caused by the left wing of the modernist elite. When in 1973 Daud Khan usurped the throne of Zahir Shah in order to found a republic, he enjoyed considerable back up from leftist-orientated military officers and Marxist elements.\(^{38}\) Daud, however, continued the practice of encapsulating local traditional leaders and increasingly sought to reduce his reliance on the left wing as well as the Afghan state’s dependency on the Soviet Union. On April 27\(^{th}\) 1978 the communist People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) seized power with help from the Soviet-dominated Afghan tank corps and air force in the so-called Saur revolution (27 April corresponds to the seventh of the month of Saur).\(^{39}\) The PDPA had only a small power base that was ‘almost entirely urban-based, and fatally ignorant of affairs in the countryside’.\(^{40}\) This lack of popular support combined with internal conflicts and power struggles within the PDPA led to growing opposition and unrest in the country. In December 1979 the situation had become so unstable that the Soviet Union launched a full-scale military invasion in support of the communist regime.

The Soviet intervention, however, did not succeed in diminishing the opposition against the communists. Although the urban elite organized protests and demonstrations, the bulk of the resistance against the communist government and the Soviet invasion came from the countryside.\(^{41}\) A kaleidoscope of different local fighting groups emerged, as well as an increasingly growing number of external parties led by Afghans who had fled abroad -predominantly to Pakistan.\(^{42}\) Consequently the Afghan resistance was characterized by a lack of unity as its ‘structure would be difficult to fit into a line-and-block chart and there was never a central leadership that was critical to the cause’.\(^{43}\) Those different groups, however, coalesced under the banner of Islam, as -despite differences in interpretation- they all considered themselves as mujahideen (literally those fighting a Jihad) fighting the infidels of the communist regime and their Soviet assistants. Another binding factor was the growing importance of foreign support that was predominantly channelled through Pakistan.\(^{44}\) As the local groups started to ally themselves with external parties in order to secure a hard-needed influx of supplies and weapons the position of Afghan leaders from abroad became increasingly powerful. Yet, in the end, the mujahideen remained far from a unity, which caused the Kabul regime and the Soviet forces unconquerable difficulties, as it proved impossible to


\(^{41}\) William Maley, The Afghanistan Wars, 49-56.

\(^{42}\) Willem Vogelsang, The Afghans, 311-317.


\(^{44}\) In addition to a focal point for the deliverance of material support Pakistan itself also provided a sanctuary in which Mujahideen groups could (re-)organize, train and recuperate. On the various dimensions of external support to an insurgency see Bard E. O’Neill, Insurgency & Terrorism, From Revolution to Apocalypse (Washington: Potomac Books, 2005), 142-148.
defeat this splintered resistance. This lack of success forced the Soviets to withdraw with a significant loss in lives, resources, and national prestige in 1989.\textsuperscript{45} Afghanistan was left with a Soviet-sponsored communist regime under President Dr. Muhammad Najibullah and a whole range of disunited, but very vivid mujahideen factions.

Whereas traditionally Afghanistan’s stability had been the result of a precarious balance between the authorities in the state’s centre and the traditional rulers of the rural locales, the remnants of the Soviet intervention did much harm to this system. One of the responses to the fragmented, localized nature of the resistance had been the slaughtering of local tribal leaders, which left a power vacuum at the grassroots level that was filled by either opportunistic military leaders or ulama such as the local religious leader, the mullah.\textsuperscript{46} These new types of local power-holders were instrumental in the emergence of two defining forces that still have a major impact on Afghanistan and its society; respectively the warlords and the Taliban. Initially the Kabul regime remained in control of major parts of the country due to a successful policy of divide and rule that exploited disunity among the mujahideen and co-opted many of the local commanders and their militias with help of resources donated by the Soviets.\textsuperscript{47} With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 this steady influx of resources faltered and the end of the communist rentier state under President Najibullah now became a matter of time. In March 1992 a group of northern militias under command of Abdul Rashid Dostum rebelled against the government and after joining forces with famous mujahideen commander Ahmad Shah Massoud they marched for Kabul (with many local militias and deserted Afghan soldiers joining them along the way), which fell on April 25.

Kabul thus came in the hands of the northern militias who put forward professor Burhanuddin Rabbani as the new president.\textsuperscript{48} Although we will come back to the ethinical differences in Afghanistan in the next section of this chapter, it should be mentioned here that the northern militias were composed of non-Pashtun ethnicities such as Uzbeks (Dostum) and Tajiks (Massoud, Rabbani). The Pashtun thereby were not represented in the centre, a situation unprecedented in recent history and unacceptable to this major ethnical group. The Pashtun, however, were too divided to make a serious thrust for Kabul, and the group that posed the most formidable threat to the northern militias was Gulbuddin Hekmatyar’s Hezb-I Islami. Internally, however, the coalition of northern militias was also facing problems as there were tensions between the various fractions. As the fighting for Kabul continued the government lost its grip over the country and opportunist local commanders started to act


as predatory warlords. In some parts of the country this warlordism took a flight beyond the local level as larger, regional polities emerged such as Dostum’s six-provinces fiefdom around Mazar-i Sharif in the north and Ismail Khan’s self-proclaimed Emirate of Herat covering three provinces in western Afghanistan.49 The Afghan state thus had totally collapsed which was reflected in the decision making of the various parties who now fought each other in rapidly changing alliances in order to secure their self-interest ‘in a situation in which there was no state to provide an overarching guarantee of security’ and even to preserve their position by preventing ‘any such state from taking shape’.50

It was in this unstable situation that the Taliban first entered the Afghan political arena. Since 1992 Kandahar province had become a hotbed of social unrest as various warlords vied for power and banditry and anarchy ruled daily live. The Taliban originated as one of several mujahideen groups looking to end this situation. However, the difference with other fighters was that the Taliban embraced an agenda on strictly religious grounds that distanced themselves from the warring parties and won them the moral high ground in this disturbed society. From its onset the movement aimed at restoring peace, disarming the population, enforcing Sharia law and defending the Islamic character and integrity in Afghanistan.51 The name Taliban itself refers to Talib which is Arabic for religious student, a term commonly used for the thousands of Afghan and Pakistani Pashtun who have gone through the Pakistani madrassas (religious schools) and are thus closely connected and led by the ulama. In 1994 the Taliban, under command of the notoriously pious Mullah Omar, demonstrated their sincerity in several cases in which they fought against warlords and their militias who reportedly had abducted and dishonored girls or quarreled over a young boy they wanted to sodomize. As the Taliban defeated the warlords, freed the innocent victims, and punished the immoral behavior of the perpetrators these actions brought them popular support, as well as -not unimportant- significant quantities of weapons and ammunition. Supported by Pakistan, which saw the Taliban as a client for securing its interest in Afghanistan, the movement gained momentum and in November 1994 it controlled Kandahar, with adjacent Uruzgan and Zabul province following within a couple of weeks. Over the next years the Taliban grew into a formidable fighting force (including an estimated number of 80,000 to 100,000 Pakistani fighters between 1994 and 1999) that effectively employed a mix of coercion, exploitation of the population’s resentment against the warlords as well as the use of money ‘to win the hearts and pockets’ of its opponents.52 Kabul fell in September 1996 and by 1999 the Taliban had seized control over virtually all of Afghanistan except for the northeast where Massoud’s forces successfully opposed the Taliban until the end of their regime.

49 With regard to the north it has to be mentioned that the system of warlord polities that emerged in the 1990s bore remarkable similarities with the traditional Uzbek system of devolved polities known as the Chingizid appanage system in which the power of the centre was severely constrained. Antonio Giustozzi, Empires of Mud, 38-39.
The Taliban’s religious character reflected in its anti-modernist stance on statehood; Afghanistan was governed as an Islamic emirate, a proto-state with limited instruments. Urban centres such as Kabul were considered ‘Cities of Sin’, in which the religious police exercised close control over the population, while the rural countryside was considered naturally secure and therefore could be controlled through co-option of local commanders (with unsuitable commanders being discarded or assassinated). Although the Taliban failed to establish a state-like economic system, they hugely benefited from their control over a criminalized economy that brought them a considerable income from smuggling and opium taxes -contradistinctive to their religious purity. All together these revenues combined with Pakistani assistance allowed the Taliban to maintain a firm grip on Afghanistan’s fragmented society through a balanced approach of coercion and co-option. The collapse of the Taliban government, however, was ushered by the presence of another foreign sponsor, Osama Bin Laden. In 1996 Bin Laden, who was a strong believer in the early Wahhabist branch of Islam to which the Taliban’s Deobandi interpretation is closely related, offered Mullah Omar his unconditional support and financial backing in return for shelter and protection by the Taliban government. From his Afghan sanctuary Bin Laden reorganized and trained Al-Qaeda and planned and ordered various terroristic attacks, among which the 1998 bombings of the US embassies in East Africa, the attack on the USS Cole, and of course the attacks of 11 September 2001 on US soil. Although we will address the US reaction that toppled Mullah Omar’s regime in section 8.3, this is the place to remark that the collapse of the Taliban government again led to a rise of locally-based power centres independent of Kabul.

To conclude, the historical background of present-day Afghanistan was dominated by a continuous struggle for enhanced centralization -and most times also modernization- under influence of imperialism, the Cold War, and armed conflict, in all of which externally provided resources fulfilled an essential role. Yet, the forces of centralization never succeeded in overcoming the importance of local powers as throughout its recent history Afghanistan has always been characterized by a substantial degree of decentralized rule. In order to obtain an understanding of this natural disposition towards decentralization that has persisted until today, we will now take a closer look at Afghanistan’s societal landscape.

53 William Maley. *The Afghanistan Wars*, 196-198. Abdulkader Sinno, ‘Explaining the Taliban’s Ability to Mobilize the Pashtuns’, *The Taliban and the Crisis of Afghanistan*, ed. Crews, R.D., Tarzi, A., (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 82-87. The strategy of co-option was used throughout the country, but originated from the Pashtun dominated areas on which the Taliban held extensive knowledge of the societal landscape. Hamid Karzai’s father Abdul Ahad Khan Karzai was assassinated as he was deemed unsuitable for co-option.


8.2.2 Afghanistan’s weblike society

The history of present-day Afghanistan reveals that Afghan society as a whole could only be controlled through a system that acknowledged the independence and autonomous position of the various local societal segments. This high degree of fragmentation and the corresponding heterogeneous nature of control that have survived until today qualify Afghan society as a weblike society. In this section we will explore the origins of this fragmentation by analysing the political system of Afghan society, which means that we will also have to deal with the societal institutions of kinship, economy, and religion as they have a defining impact on a society’s political constellation (see Chapter Two, section 2.2). In this chapter’s next section we will continue this analysis and provide a more specific background for the Uruzgan case study as we will zoom in at the grassroots level of Afghan society by providing a sketch of the societal landscape in Uruzgan province. But let us now start with a more general overview of Afghan society as a whole.

The most obvious division in Afghan society is that between the different ethnic groups making up Afghanistan’s population of more than 31 million people.66 As aforementioned the Pashtun are by far the largest group making up some 40 to 50 percent of the total population.67 Although research has revealed that there are more than 50 different ethnicities coalescing in twenty main groups, most scholars agree that after the Pashtun, the Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras are the most important groups.68 Geographically, the Pashtun dominate the south and east of the country, the Tajiks the northeast, the Uzbeks the north, and the Hazaras central Afghanistan.69 Furthermore there are considerable differences with regard to language (with Pashto and Dari being the official languages) and religion (Sunni versus Shi’a, Sufism, and even non-Islamic religions) between the various ethnicities. The most important ethnic cleavage, however, has centred on the confrontation between the Pashtun and the other groups as those have all suffered from Pashtun expansionism and dominance of the Afghan state since the days of the Durrani empire. Despite this still vivid antagonism and all other ethnic differences, ethnicity itself cannot explain the high degree of fragmentation that characterizes Afghan society, as even within ethnic groups there are huge variations between communities. Afghan society, therefore, is ‘in no sense homogenous’ as it encompasses ‘a kaleidoscopic collection of ‘micro-societies’, with porous and flexible boundaries’.60 Such an endogenous ‘micro-society’ is the basic unit for political participation and better known as a qawm, a solidarity group protecting the interest of its members.61 Afghan society, thus, is

57 Willem Vogelsang, The Afghans, 16.
59 For a complete oversight of the peoples of Afghanistan see Willem Vogelsang, The Afghans, 16-39.
essentially a network of these solidarity groups. Obtaining an understanding of this society consequently requires us to vet the societal structure of these solidarity groups as well as the interactions between those groups.

The sociological basis of a qawm is either true or constructed kinship such as for example, tribe, extended family, profession, residence etcetera. Especially among the Pashtun the tribal system with its institutions, values, customs, and rights encoded in the Pashtunwali traditionally provides a strong ground for the formation of solidarity groups on the basis of (sub-)tribal allegiance. As the qawm historically emerged in order to protect the interest of its members and address their strategies for survival, solidarity groups formed around a range of topics such as the necessity to deal with the state, ecological conditions as for example irrigation, or religious differences. Although we will discuss the qawm as a distribution network here below, it should be noted at this place that a solidarity group might follow a non-territorial pattern as for instance the inhabitants of several villages in a valley can be divided along tribal or religious lines. As a matter of fact many present-day villages in the south and centre are non-homogenous due to the fact that tribal differences are more important than spatial coherence. Yet, in times of need even such heterogeneous groups might align in order to form an alliance, as has been the case throughout Afghanistan’s recent history. More specifically, the Soviet-Afghan war revealed that such bonds often followed the administrative division of the Afghan state (from province to sub-district level) as local solidarity groups sought to secure the allocation of resources through state channels. Here we again touch upon the qawm as an economical distribution network. Therefore we will now first delve into this role.

As we have learned from the recent history of Afghanistan, the distribution of foreign resources was the Afghan state’s key mechanism for dominating the various local segments. Unsurprisingly, those local segments have always been striving to maximize the influx of those resources, while simultaneously minimizing state encroachment. The central state itself stimulated this process as it sought to divide larger societal segments (such as tribes) in smaller solidarity groups which were less capable to contest state dominance. With the kin-group as basic unit this system evolved into an extend patronage network in which personal ties between a qawm’s leadership and government officials guaranteed the allocation of resources. Whereas kin-unit leadership historically was based on egalitarian principles or the competency to protect the group, the ability to deal with the government and the leadership of other (competing) qawms has become an important trait of local power-holders ruling over solidarity groups. Khans, maliks, and other solidarity group leaders have typically

63 Gilles Dorronsoro, Revolution Unending, 11.
64 Ibid., see also Willem Vogelsang, The Afghans, 25.
established themselves as patrons overseeing the distribution of state resources addressing the strategies of survival of the members of their qawm. Thus state co-option empowered the position of qawm leaders as their economic power base prospered due to their exclusive access to state resources. As a result solidarity groups have become more hierarchical, and the power of local power-holders is rooted both in kinship as well as in their economic position as patrons overseeing the distribution of state resources within their respective qawms.

The last institution that completes the mesh determining a society’s political structure is religion. Islam in Afghanistan has many different faces as both Sunni and Shi’a branches are present and there is also a huge influence of local Sufism. At the grassroots level Islam provides the people with a structure for everyday life and interaction with other solidarity groups and the state. Religious agents like the village mullah, the sayyad (descendant of the Prophet) or pir (Sufi spiritual guide) are more or less independent societal actors who typically mediate between communities and thereby act as the lubricant of Afghanistan’s weblike society. A mullah presiding over a village mosque, for instance, might be the crucial link between the village’s qawms, as those solidarity groups all belong to his parish and visit his mosque, but are strictly segregated in every other aspect of life. Due to their independent position the religious agents are commonly placed outside the tribal structure or regular solidarity groups. This explains why religious agents, despite their important roles, traditionally do not exert political authority. As aforementioned, this recently changed when the Taliban mullahs assumed power in the turmoil after the collapse of the Afghan state in the early 1990s.

To fully understand this we need to discuss the role of the higher and more educated clergy, the ulama. Although Islamic scholars abstain from politics, the well-respected Afghan ulama-as elsewhere- historically provided the state with religious legitimacy as they generally supported the rulers in Kabul. Due to the weak position of the Afghan central state this additional legitimation was more than welcome. However, when the state became stronger during the twentieth century, it started to explore other legitimation grounds (such as the constitution) and the power of the ulama declined. This changed again during the Afghan-Soviet War in which the ulama played a crucial role in the resistance as they sought to affect a religious repositioning of the political order. In 1996 a gathering of 1,200 ulama sanctioned the Taliban regime and thereby it created legitimacy for a government ruled by ‘a poor village mullah’. In addition to the role of religious agents operating as grass-roots mediators between the various Afghan solidarity groups, the ulama thus also act as a binding agent due to their ability to enhance state legitimacy. The current Afghan state and its international

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67 See, among others, Olivier Roy, Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan, 30-38; Martin Ewans, Afghanistan, A Short History of Its People and Politics, 7-9; Barnett R. Rubin, The Fragmentation of Afghanistan, 31-32.
68 Gilles Dorronsoro, Revolution Unending, 11.
70 Gilles Dorronsoro, Revolution Unending, 17-19.
71 Ahmed Rashid, Taliban, 41-42.
sponsors have acknowledged this reality by involving the national council of ulama in the state-building process.\footnote{Suhrke, When More is Less, 201.}

The societal institutions of kinship, economy, and religion together define the political structure of a society. Based on our exploration of Afghanistan’s weblike society thus far we can conclude that the basic political unit, the qawn -or kin-based solidarity group- is led by local power-holders who have gained their political power by establishing a patronage system that redistributes state resources. Interaction between the solidarity groups is generally characterized by rivalry and competition, but if necessary groups will also align in order to secure their interest. The influence of religion on political authority is most obvious in the legitimizing power of the ulama, but on the grassroots level religious agents typically fulfil the role of mediator and do not exert political power. Thus, Afghanistan’s weblike society is a complicated mesh of various kin-based solidarity groups that protect the interests of their members. Albeit ethnicity is not the main cleavage in Afghan society, kin-units of course are related to an ethnic group. As this study focuses on Uruzgan province in the Pashtun-dominated southern part of Afghanistan, we will now provide a brief sketch of Pashtun society -also the major part of Afghan society- and its local power-holders.

Most Afghan Pashtun belong to either the Durrani or Ghilzai confederations of the Pashtun tribal structure.\footnote{Willem Vogelsang, The Afghans, 21-28, see also Barnett R. Rubin, The Fragmentation of Afghanistan, 28.} Although the Durrani have traditionally dominated Afghanistan, they are outnumbered by the Ghilzai who are estimated to be twice as many. The confederations are far from a unity as they are subdivided in a whole range of tribes, sub-tribes, clans, and even smaller kin-units on the basis of a segmentary lineage structure in which the various descent groups form an interlocking tribal organization. Pashtun qawms usually correspond to the tribal or sub-tribal level, but may also refer to lower levels as even the smallest kin-units feud with each other in order to secure access to scarce resources or even fight over seemingly trivial immaterialist matters such as sex -yet, important as it guarantees reproduction.\footnote{The Liaison Office, ‘A Survey of Uruzgan Province’ (Kabul, 2006), 5, Dupree, L., ‘Tribal Warfare in Afghanistan and Pakistan’, 267-269.} While tribal segments will unite under external pressure, as has been the case during Afghanistan’s many wars, the protection from competing kin-units is the default situation. As we have seen this principle is echoed throughout Afghan society as by basic rule a qawn -in absence of an external threat- considers the next qawn the main danger.\footnote{Olivier Roy, Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan, 215.} Traditionally Pashtun kin-ship groups were egalitarian solidarity groups with leaders being elected or empowered by tribal councils consisting of all adult males, the jirgas. Although consensus-building remains an important feature of Pashtun life, tribal notables such as the khans and maliks have gradually obtained a more hierarchical role. Especially the khan, the most important tribal leadership institution, over time became a hereditary feudal-like office in which leaders succeeded to develop extensive clienteles as a result of
their access to state resources. Yet, Afghan Pashtun society—unlike Pakistan’s (see Chapter Two, section 2.2.2)—was not truly feudal as despite the dependency on the khan as a patron, commoners were not regarded as subjects of those lords, but rather seen as participants in complex local politics.76

Local Pashtun politics also explain the emergence of a new type of khan during the Soviet-Afghan War of the 1980s, the ‘tribal entrepreneur’.77 Due to the destabilisation of the tribal environment at that time, protection against outsiders once more became the most important aspect of the kin-unit. As the old khans by now were predominantly economically-based authorities, a new generation of tribal leaders proficient in commanding fighters and thus protecting their kin-group took over. Although essentially a highly localized dynamic, this soon spread out as the tribes sought to unite against the external security threat. The tribal entrepreneurs were the strongmen ‘who claimed tribal leadership on the basis of a real or alleged unifying role within the tribes or tribal segments’.78 These strongmen rose to power thanks to foreign sponsors such as Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United States and filled the vacuum left by the old khans. Furthermore, they started exploiting the cultivation of poppy as a source of revenue and thereby gave rise to the illicit drugs economy that still persists in Afghanistan today.79 Some of these tribal entrepreneurs can best be described as tribal warlords, who not only were capable of defending their kin-group by waging war, but also possessed the skills to exert tribal leadership—as opposed to ruling their own warlord polity. After the war the new khans consolidated their position through a continuation of the same feudal-like patronage system used by the old elite. Although this structure was interrupted during the 1994-2001 Taliban rule, it quickly re-emerged in 2001 with the US government as main foreign sponsor.80 Moreover, contrary to the warlord polities in the north and west that since 2001 have been perceived as a threat to the new Afghan state, the fragmented tribal structure of the Pashtun did not allow for the emergence of a single dominant leader. Therefore the strongmen and tribal warlords ruling the Pashtun solidarity groups were capable of underkeeping good relationships with both the international community and Kabul, which further strengthened their position as they obtained a steady access to (aid) resources. Thus political authority in Pashtun solidarity groups nowadays rests with tribal entrepreneurs who have established themselves as patrons capable of dealing with each other, the central Afghan state, and the international presence. Let us now turn to the specific case of Uruzgan province in order to see how this political constellation materializes in the reality on the ground of one of Afghanistan’s weblike society’s many locales.

76 William Maley, The Afghanistan Wars, 10.
78 Ibid., 5
8.2.3 An Afghan locale: Uruzgan's societal landscape

Uruzgan is a rural and mountainous province located in the Pashtun dominated greater Kandahar region of south Afghanistan (Kandahar, Helmand, and Zabul also are part of this region). Administrative boundaries in this region were adjusted various times by successive Kabul governments in order to divide important tribal groups and enhance state influence. Uruzgan province itself was established in 1964, while the largest recent border shift occurred in 2004 when the Hazara majority communities in the north were separated from the Pashtun dominated south and formed into Daikondi province. As this case study deals with the Dutch mission in Uruzgan from 2006 until 2010, we will here focus on the societal landscape in the southern part. Albeit we will deal with some events that occurred from 2001 until 2006, the emphasis on Pashtun society does not interfere with this as even before the administrative reorganization Pashtun dominance rendered the southern part crucial for any attempt to obtain control over Uruzgan province. Similarly, we will focus on the districts surrounding the province’s main population centres of Tirin Kot and Deh Rawud, and to a lesser extent Chora district, as the Pashtun solidarity groups living in those districts form the high ground of Uruzgan’s human terrain. Let us now start with a general oversight of Uruzgan’s population and Pashtun tribal organization in particular.

Uruzgan’s populace consists of an estimated 395,000 mainly rural living inhabitants. The vast majority of this population is ethnic Pashtun (91%), with Hazara (8%) and other ethnicities (1%) making up the ethnic minorities. The Hazara live predominantly in the northern districts of Gizab and Khas Uruzgan, which renders the rest of the province almost exclusively inhabited by Pashtun. The Uruzgan Pashtun can be divided along three tribal confederations, the Zirak Durrani (57.5%, including the influential Popalzai, Barakzai, and Achekzai sub-tribes), Panjpai Durrani (18.5%, mainly the Nurzai), and Ghilzai (9%, of which the Hotak and Tokhi are the predominant sub-tribes), as well as some smaller tribes (6%). Originally Uruzgan was dominated by the Ghilzai, but as Afghanistan historically was ruled by Durrani Pashtun, Durrani tribes were moved to Uruzgan at the end of the nineteenth century. This section contains edited material from Martijn Kitzen, ‘Close Encounters of the Tribal Kind’. Martine van Bijlert, ‘Unruly Commanders and Violent Power Struggles’, in Decoding the New Taliban, Insights from the Field, ed. Antonio Giustozzi (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 155-156. The Liaison Office, ‘A Survey of Uruzgan Province’, 14-15. Originally Gizab district became also part of Daikondi province. However, in 2006 it was again placed under control of Uruzgan. Martine van Bijlert, ‘Unruly Commanders and Violent Power Struggles’, 174. The 2004 reshuffle was arranged by president Karzai in the run up to the presidential elections as a respond to a longstanding demand from the Hazara community. See also The Liaison Office, ‘A Survey of Uruzgan Province’, 13, Dan Green, The Valley’s Edge, 36, Susanne Schmeidl, The man who would be king, 9. Uruzgan’s places and names are spelled as suggested by experts and scholars such as Martine van Bijlert, Susanne Schmeidl, and Willem Vogelsang. The ISAF forces sometimes deviated from this spelling as Tirin Kot and Deh Rawud, for instance, were most commonly spelled as Tarin Kowt and Deh Rawod. Martine van Bijlert, ‘Unruly Commanders and Violent Power Struggles’, 155. Susanne Schmeidl, The man who would be king, 10. The Liaison Office, The Dutch engagement in Uruzgan: 2006-2010, 3. The percentages are estimates in relation to the total population.
century by Amir 'Abd al-Rahman Khan in order to end Ghilzai dominance.\textsuperscript{88} This resulted in the Ghilzai being marginalized throughout the province and today the pocket surrounding the provincial capital of Tirin Kot is the only area where Pashtun of both Ghilzai and Durrani descent are living. The Ghilzai-Durrani divide still forms a relevant source of tribal grievance in Tirin Kot district as the former consider themselves victims of years of Durrani oppression.

Another societal cleavage resulting from this policy of Ghilzai marginalization is that between Zirak and Panjpai Durrani. The latter confederation is a construct created by the Zirak Durrani in order to assimilate Ghilzai tribes, and therefore the Panjpai are often considered second-class Durrani.\textsuperscript{89} Especially in Uruzgan’s western district of Deh Rawud this divide is ‘hot’ as the Panjpai constitute the majority of the district’s population, while governmental rule has traditionally rested with the Zirak Durrani. It therefore comes without surprise that the current Taliban insurgency has found fertile soil in the Ghilzai and Panjpai Durrani areas surrounding Tirin Kot and Deh Rawud. It should also be noted that Mullah Omar, the overall Taliban leader, is a Ghilzai tribesman who spent some time living in Deh Rawud.\textsuperscript{90}

To make things more complicated, the divides between different tribal confederations are important, but not as important as the affiliation with sub-tribes, which form the main solidarity groups and thereby define ‘patterns of loyalty, conflict and obligations of patronage’.\textsuperscript{91} When the communist regime sought to establish control over Uruzgan’s population by eliminating traditional tribal confederation leaders, local mujahideen commanders stood up against the communist governance and their Soviet allies.\textsuperscript{92} Since the demise of the communist regime, these commanders, who are organized along sub-tribal lines and often are also related to the old khans -which allowed them to mobilize fighters within their sub-tribal solidarity group-, have become the most influential power-holders in the province. A 2010 study illustrated this as it revealed that of fourteen identified key actors in Uruzgan province, only three lacked a mujahideen background (because of their age, but all three had family ties with important commanders), and that of the original eight most important commanders, four still held key positions, while two had become leading figures within the Taliban.\textsuperscript{93} As all these different sub-tribe commanders control specific areas and maintain their own supportive networks which they provide with resources, Uruzgan’s society has suffered from an increasing degree of fragmentation. In addition to traditional tribal grievances following the confederation divide, this process of fragmentation has led to conflicts which even take place within confederations and sub-tribes. The result is a chaotic situation in which sub-tribe commanders continuously fight against or alongside each other

\textsuperscript{88} Susanne Schmeidl, The man who would be king, 10.
\textsuperscript{89} The Liaison Office, The Dutch engagement in Uruzgan: 2006-2010, 4.
\textsuperscript{90} Bette Dam, Expeditie Uruzgan, De weg van Hamid Karzai naar het paleis (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij de Arbeiderspers, 2009), 13. See also Martine van Bijlert, ‘Unruly Commanders and Violent Power Struggles’, 156-158. Dan Green, The Valley’s Edge, 36.
\textsuperscript{91} Martine van Bijlert, ‘Unruly Commanders and Violent Power Struggles’, 156-157, interview with Martine van Bijlert, Tirin Kot, November 16, 2008.
\textsuperscript{92} This is an example of a counterinsurgency strategy of unquestioned dominance leading to escalation of the conflict.
\textsuperscript{93} Susanne Schmeidl, The man who would be king, 24, 50-52.
depending on what serves their interest best. Thus, Uruzgan’s societal landscape is dominated by sub-tribal qawms led by tribal entrepreneurs, the former mujahideen commanders, who replaced the traditional leaders, the old khans, during the Soviet-Afghan War. It needs to be mentioned here that Uruzgan’s illicit poppy economy most probably is a significant source of revenue for these local power-holders.\footnote{On poppy agriculture in Uruzgan and the Dutch counternarcotics policy see Erik Donkersloot, ‘Wij deden toch niets tegen de pappaverteelt?’ (Thesis, Utrecht University, 2010), Erik Donkersloot, Sebastiaan Rietjens, Christ Klep, ‘Wij deden toch niets tegen de pappaverteelt?’, een onderzoek naar counternarcotics in Afghanistan, Mili
taire Spectator 179:9 (2010), Erik Donkersloot, Sebastiaan Rietjens, Christ Klep, ‘Going Dutch, Counternarcotics Activities in the Afghan Province of Ururzgan’, Military Review (September-October 2011).} Yet, up until now little is known about the local narco-industry. Although this leaves part of the interaction between different solidarity groups - and their leaders - unexplained, it should be noted that interests in poppy cultivation ‘just’ represent an unknown, shady, side of palpable confrontations or collaborations between these sub-tribal factions. Moreover, during their four-year campaign the Dutch considered counternarcotics subordinate to the counterinsurgency effort and therefore preferred to take no actions against key leaders suspected of involvement in poppy trade. For the Dutch the necessity to work with legitimate local power-holders simply outweighed the fight against drugs. Consequently, we will not delve further into (counter-)narcotics in this book, but focus on the tangible - yet not always visible - actions of the predominant local leaders representing their qawms. Therefore it is now first necessary to take a closer look at the different solidarity groups and their leaders in order to obtain an insight in Uruzgan’s political marketplace prior to the start of the Afghan War in 2001.

The relatively small Popalzai sub-tribe of the Zirak Durrani confederation which only accounts for 10.5% of Uruzgan’s population, has always been one of the province’s most powerful factions as it is historically well-connected to greater Kandahar’s regional power network and more recently also to the Kabul administration since Hamid Karzai himself is a Popalzai from a renowned family.\footnote{Susanne Schmeidl, The man who would be king, 18-21, 49. Historically there was also a connection with the Kabul government as the original Durrani kings who ruled prior to 1818 were also Popalzai. See note 24.} The Popalzai are spread over the main population centres, and only form a majority in the surroundings of Chenartu village in southern Chora district (which would become a separate district in 2008).\footnote{Chenartu district was created by the Popalzai-dominated provincial government in order to give the Popalzai in this area direct access to resources rather than through the non-Popalzai administration of Chora District. The Liaison Office, Three Years Later, A socio-political assessment of Uruzgan Province from 2006 to 2009 (Kabul: TLO, 2009), 5,19.} Yet, the Popalzai are highly influential in Tirin Kot en Deh Rawud, while they do not exert substantial influence in Chora district. The most important leading figure to emerge from this group was Jan Mohammed Khan of Tirin Kot district, who despite his humble descent succeeded in becoming a prominent Popalzai militia commander during the communist era. After the fall of the communist regime Jan Mohammed seized the governor’s compound in Tirin Kot, an act which caught the attention of the Rabbani government and which led to his appointment as governor of Uruzgan. Reportedly, a young Hamid Karzai, whose life would later be saved by Governor Jan Mohammed during a tribal feud, used his leverage as deputy foreign minister to arrange the
appointment of his fellow tribesman and mujahideen. Jan Mohammed effectively exploited his new position and access to governmental resources to claim his position as Uruzgan’s most important Popalzai leader, despite the fact that his main competitor, Malem Rahmatullah Khan (also from Tirin Kot district), was a descendant of the old traditional leadership. Yet, Jan Mohammed’s power as Uruzgan’s governor was limited due to the continuing inter-factional frenzy, which added to struggles over power and resources within the various sub-tribes. In spite of mediation attempts by Uruzgan’s religious leaders, feuding between the various sub-tribes remained the norm and even led to some fierce fighting. One of those conflicts was just another episode of a longstanding conflict between the Popalzai and their main rivals, the Barakzai.

Just like the Popalzai the Barkazai are a Zirak Durrani sub-tribe tapping from the power networks of the greater Kandahar region and the national government. Although with 9% it accounts for an even smaller part of the provincial population than the Popalzai, it is equally well-presented in terms of power and influence. Haji Zaher Khan Mohammad (from Tirin Kot district) was the predominant mujahideen commander of this faction and also enjoyed an excellent reputation as a descendant of the traditional tribal elite. Albeit not much is known about internal rivalry, it is clear that Rozi Khan and his brother Shah Mohammed as well as Commander Akhtar Mohammed also rose to power during the mujahideen era with Rozi Khan gradually becoming the most important Barakzai leader. Whereas their Popalzai rivals controlled the provincial capital, were influential in Deh Rawud and dominated the Chenartu region during the Rabbani years, the Barakzai network and its area of influence largely coincided with the northern parts of both Tirin Kot and Chora districts. As aforementioned the relationship between both powerful Durrani sub-tribes is contentious with regular spurs of violence, yet their access to wider power networks guarantees an influx of resources that gives them an edge over the other sub-tribal factions.

The Achekzai, the largest of Uruzgan’s Zirak Durrani sub-tribes, make up some 35% of the local population. In comparison with non-Zirak Durrani factions they are well-presented on the provincial political marketplace, however, they are not as powerful as either the Popolzai or the Barakzai as they are not equally well-connected to regional or national power networks. Additionally the Achekzai’s area of influence mainly concerns the northern

97 Ibid., 24-25. See also Martine van Bijlert, ‘Unruly Commanders and Violent Power Struggles’, 157. Bette Dam, Expedie Uruzgan, 91-92. Van Bijlert reports that the accident in which Karzai was saved by Jan Mohammed occurred ‘in the early 1980s’. As she also mentions that Jan Mohammed was governor at that time, this event should be dated in the early 1990s, which is confirmed by Bette Dam who gives a more detailed account of the event.

98 Bette Dam, Expedie Uruzgan, 37-38, Martine van Bijlert, ‘Unruly Commanders and Violent Power Struggles’, 157. It was during an earlier run of this conflict in the 1980s that Hamid Karzai’s life was saved by Jan Mohammed.

99 The Muhammedzai clan of the Barakzai sub-tribe replaced the Popalzai kings and dominated the Kabul Government from 1818 onwards, see note 24.

100 Susanne Schmeidl, The man who would be king, 18-21.


102 Bette Dam, Expedie Uruzgan, 27-29, Dan Green, The Valley’s Edge, 136-137.

103 Susanne Schmeidl, The man who would be king, 18-21.
districts of Khas Uruzgan and Gizab and therefore they do not play an important role in the province’s main population centres. Exception is Chora district, where the Achekzai form the major part of the population of which Malem Abdul Khaleq was the most important leader. Moreover, due to his descent from the traditional Achekzai tribal elite Abdul Khaleq, who reportedly was an important facilitator and strong supporter of the mujahideen but not a fighting commander himself, was highly influential in Uruzgan’s Achekzai community as a whole. Additionally Abdul Khaleq’s excellent reputation earned him the respect of many of Uruzgan’s inhabitants, and he kept close ties with the Barakzai (especially with Rozi Khan) together with whom the Achekzai dominated Chora district. Now we have dealt with the three most important sub-tribes of Uruzgan’s Zirak Durrani majority, we will turn to the second-largest confederation, the Panjpai Durrani.

The Nurzai sub-tribe forms the bulk of Uruzgan’s Panjpai Durrani tribesmen and constitutes 17.5% of the province’s overall population. The Nurzai mainly live in the western part of Uruzgan and they are the largest sub-tribe in Shahidi Hassas/Charchena district and a vast majority in Deh Rawod district. With regard to the latter district it has to be mentioned that the Babozai, which are the other majority group, partly consider themselves as a branch of the Nurzai. The reason for this lies in the origin of the Panjpai as a Zirak Durrani construct for assimilating Ghilzai tribes. Whereas the Nurzai collectively agree upon their status as Panjpai, some elders of the Babozai consider themselves as Panjpai Durrani, while others consider themselves as a branch of the Hotak sub-tribe of the Ghilzai confederation. However, even combined with the Babozai the Nurzai remain a politically weak faction. None of the leading mujahideen commanders was of Nurzai origin, and the sub-tribe has been particularly ill-represented at Uruzgan’s political marketplace. Only Haji Ghulam Hayder Khan, who fought as a commander during the mujahideen era, could claim some influence. This political weakness is echoed at the local level in Deh Rawud, where the Nurzai (and Babozai) majority traditionally has been dominated by a Popalzai minority—as aforementioned the cleavage between Panjpai and Zirak Durrani is still ‘hot’ in this district. Albeit outweighed by their Popalzai counterparts, Nurzai power-holders of both mujahideen and inherited backgrounds have gained some importance in Deh Rawud’s political arena due to the relative size of the popular segment they represent. Yet, overall the Nurzai are a political weak faction in Uruzgan’s societal landscape.

The last and smallest segment in Uruzgan’s societal landscape consists of the sub-tribes of the Ghilzai confederation that together make up 9% of the provincial population. Albeit divided and politically weak, the Ghilzai delivered two of the most important mujahideen commanders, Mohammed Nabi Khan and Mullah Shafiq. The latter is the leader of

104 Dan Green, The Valley’s Edge, 71-72, 136-137, Susanne Schmeidl, The man who would be king, 50.
105 Susanne Schmeidl, The man who would be king, 18-21, 49. The names Shahidi Hassas and Charchena (four currents) are used interchangeably.
107 Susanne Schmeidl, The man who would be king, 20-21, 52-54.
108 Ibid., 24.
Hotak sub-tribe living in the Mirabad valley of eastern Tirin Kot district. Despite being a representative of a minor Ghilzai sub-tribe, Mullah Shafiq himself enjoyed a reputation as one of Tirin Kot’s top tribal leaders and a fierce opponent of Popalzai leader Jan Mohammed Khan.\(^9\) Mohammed Nabi Khan emerged as the main mujahideen commander of the Tokhi sub-tribe living in the Deh Rafshan area of northern Tirin Kot district. Due to his descent from a traditional tribal elite family, he also held some influence in the Mirabad valley and reportedly he too had a troublesome relationship with Jan Mohammed Khan.\(^10\) Additionally it should be noted that the Tokhi sub-tribe was the scene of some of Uruzgan’s fiercest intra-factional feuding as a conflict between Mohammed Nabi’s ally Haji Hashem Khan and another Tokhi mujahideen commander, Haji Hodud, over an RPG (Rocket-Propelled Grenade) escalated and split the Tokhi sub-tribe in two factions respectively living along the east bank and the west bank of the Deh Rafshan river -this illustrates that even seemingly simple resources can trigger huge conflicts.\(^11\) Mohammed Nabi Khan’s influence within the Tokhi sub-tribe, consequently, mainly concerned the east bank. Despite the prominence of both Mullah Shafiq and Mohammed Nabi Khan, their influence at Uruzgan’s political marketplace was limited as they -unlike their main Zirak Durrani rivals- did not possess access to wider power networks and resources. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that the Ghilzai in Uruzgan form a small minority in a societal landscape dominated by Zirak Durrani sub-tribes. Therefore, the Ghilzai of Uruzgan are politically weak.

As aforementioned the mujahideen commanders have dominated Uruzgan’s political marketplace since their ascent to power. The commanders are the tribal entrepreneurs that lead their respective sub-tribal qawms and either fight or cooperate with their competitors in order to secure access to resources or gain increased prominence. When the Taliban took over Uruzgan province at the end of 1994, however, the power of the mujahideen commanders was curtailed and some of these actors even were marginalized. Yet, most of the mentioned commanders were co-opted by the Taliban regime and thus could retain their positions.\(^12\) Exceptions were Jan Mohammed Khan and Mohammed Nabi Khan, who both were imprisoned. Although not many details are known regarding the latter, it is known that Jan Mohammed Khan, who on the advice of the Karzai family voluntary gave up his governorship in order to give way to the Taliban, was initially allowed to consolidate his powerbase. However, upon learning that he had repeatedly joined Hamid Karzai on visits to the US embassy in Pakistan where they discussed the possibilities to mount a coup against the Taliban regime, the Taliban jailed him on allegations of treason.\(^13\) It should also be mentioned that Jan Mohammed’s fiercest opponent Mullah Shafiq, a fellow Hotak tribesmen (and reputedly also a direct relative) of Taliban leader Mullah Omar, rose to a prominent position

\(^{9}\) Bette Dam, *Expeditie Uruzgan*, 13, 40.
\(^{13}\) Bette Dam, *Expeditie Uruzgan*, 11, 41, 50, 58, see also Dan Green, *The Valley’s Edge*, 134.
within the Taliban. Moreover, within the Taliban’s top hierarchy there where many leaders who originated from Uruzgan. In Uruzgan itself, however, the Taliban controlled the local political marketplace through a series of accommodations with the prominent mujahideen commanders. This explains why those commanders today still command the high ground of Uruzgan’s societal landscape as after the fall of the Taliban they immediately started to exploit the power vacuum and assumed their roles as tribal entrepreneurs securing political positions and resources as much as possible. Yet, the 2001 US-led intervention would tremendously alter the balance of Uruzgan’s political marketplace as it opened new channels of resources through both the newly installed Afghan government under President Hamid Karzai as well as through the presence of foreign forces. We will address these developments, starting with Karzai’s 2001 armed uprising which was launched from Uruzgan, later in this chapter in order to obtain an insight in Uruzgan’s political landscape directly prior to the 2006 deployment of Dutch forces. Now we will first discuss the overarching context provided by the Afghan War from 2001 until 2006.

8.3 The Afghan War 2001-2006

The latest war in Afghanistan started on 7 October 2001 as the US reaction to the 9-11 attacks and initially could be characterized as a punitive expedition against the perpetrators of those attacks and their hosts. Consequently, not only eliminating Al-Qaeda, but also toppling the Taliban regime were the key objectives of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), and the enemy at that time was commonly referred to as AQT (Al-Qaeda/Taliban). The hunt for Al-Qaeda, however, proved to be an uncompletable task due to the elusive character of this terrorist network and the fact that many of its members left Afghanistan for Pakistan or other destinations -with Al-Qaeda still active today, and Osama Bin Laden, the main instigator of the 9-11 attacks, only being killed in May 2011. The removal of the Taliban government, on the other hand, was a more tangible task that was swiftly accomplished by December 6 when Mullah Omar and other senior leaders decided to flee and hide (mostly in Pakistan). In this section we will focus on the consolidation of this early success of which the ramifications determined the further course of the Afghan War. First we will discuss how a US-led coalition sought to pursue limited objectives with a small footprint, whereas in 2003 the international intervention in Afghanistan under command of NATO embraced

116 Astri Suhrke, When More is Less, 4-5.
a wider agenda that led to a rapid expansion of foreign presence throughout the country, which was completed in 2006. Next we will discuss the consequences of the international intervention at the grassroots level through an exploration of the way US forces influenced the societal landscape in Uruzgan province in the five years prior to the start of the Dutch TFU mission in 2006. Of course we will also address the role of Afghan actors and the Afghan state in the sketch of the wider events of the Afghan War. Therefore we will first delve into the evolution of the overarching campaign.

8.3.1 The first five years of the Afghan campaign

The speedy overthrowing of the Taliban regime was achieved through the so-called ‘Afghan model’, a clever combination of US airpower, Afghan anti-Taliban militias and a relatively small number of US Special Forces who ‘bridged the gap between the world’s premier air force and indigenous allies’.119 The bulk of the Afghan proxy forces where provided by the United Front for Islamic Salvation of Afghanistan, more commonly known as the Northern Alliance.120 As mentioned earlier in this chapter Afghanistan’s northeast had been the only part of the country to defy Taliban dominance under the leadership of the Tajik Ahmed Shah Massoud. Albeit Massoud was murdered by Al-Qaeda two days prior to the 9-11 attacks, his forces spearheaded the anti-Taliban offensive and soon were joined by Dostum’s Uzbeks and other factions.121 Aided by US Special Forces and air power the Northern Alliance quickly conquered key positions in northern Afghanistan and Kabul was taken unopposed on November 13. Overall, the fighting in the north was mainly over by 26 November when a pocket of resistance of some 5,000 hard-core Arab fighters in Kunduz city surrendered, and attention shifted to the Taliban’s stronghold in the southern city of Kandahar.

 Whereas the mainly Tajik and Uzbek proxies of the northern alliance had been instrumental in defeating the Taliban in northern Afghanistan, they were less useful in the Pashtun dominated south. Therefore US Special Forces had teamed up with Hamid Karzai in order to start an uprising against the Taliban in Uruzgan province. Albeit we will cover this in more detail in this chapter’s next section, it is important to notice here that Karzai’s position as a prominent Popalzai and former mujahideen brought him sufficient leverage to mobilize Uruzgan’s population (including Zirak and Panjpaí Durrani, Ghilzai and even Hazaras) and

121 The following account of the fall of the Taliban regime is predominantly based on William Maley, The Afghanistan Wars, 219-222, Seth G. Jones, In The Graveyard Of Empires, 91-95. See also Brian Glyn Williams, ‘Report From the Field, General Dostum and the Mazar i Sharif Campaign: new light on the role of Northern Alliance warlords in Operation Enduring Freedom’, Small Wars & Insurgencies 21:4 (December 2010), 610-611.
launch a thrust against Kandahar from Tirin Kot. While Karzai, thus, threatened the city from the north, another US-supported local power-holder, Gul Agha Sherzai, advanced from the south. The Taliban consequently opted to leave Kandahar for Pakistan, and on 9 December Hamid Karzai entered the city in an unarmed convoy. By December 17 the initial phase of the campaign was completed as also the last Taliban and Al-Qaeda stronghold at the Tora Bora cave complex in eastern Afghanistan was mopped up, with many hard-core fighters, reportedly including Bin Laden, escaping to Pakistan. Now time had come to consolidate this initial success that had effectively terminated Al-Qaeda’s Afghan sanctuary by toppling the Taliban regime.

The first steps for consolidation had already been taken in the German city of Bonn where under the auspices of the United Nations (UN) a conference on the future of Afghanistan was held from 27 November to 5 December 2001. This conference was attended by a representative group of relevant Afghan parties excluding the Taliban and led to the so-called Bonn Agreement that offered a blueprint for Afghanistan’s political transition towards a representative and freely elected government, outlining a series of benchmarks to be achieved. Most important of those benchmarks were the convening of an Emergency Loya Jirga to agree on a transitional government, formulating a new constitution, and the organization of free parliamentary and presidential elections. Furthermore, it was decided that this process would be initialized by an interim administration under the leadership of Hamid Karzai -a Pashtun and therefore an acceptable candidate for the bulk of the Afghan population-, who took power on December 22. The Emergency Loya Jirga of June 2002 confirmed this choice as Karzai was also named as the head of the transitional government. This transitional authority continued the course of the Bonn agreement and convened a constitutional Loya Jirga that took place in December 2003 and January 2004. Ultimately the first elections were held on 9 October 2004 and again Karzai was confirmed as the head of state of the new Afghanistan, this time as freely elected president (receiving 55,4% of the vote). When another successful round of elections for the Wolesi Jirga, the lower house of the national parliament, and provincial councils was held in September 2005, Afghanistan was seemingly ‘well on the way to consolidating a new and civilized form of politics’.

122 Bette Dam, Expeditie Uruzgan, 87-90.
123 Actually the fall of Kandahar was much more complicated as an old rivalry between the predatory Gul Agha Sherzai and well-respected local power-holder Mullah Naqib flared up in the wake of the Taliban’s retreat on 6 December. The former, supported by US Special Forces, emerged from the struggle as Kandahar’s new governor. Hamid Karzai, however, favored Naqib, and it was Karzai’s mediation that led to an agreement between both rivals. For a detailed account on the events in Kandahar in 2001 see Sarah Chayes, The Punishment Of Virtue, Inside Afghanistan After The Taliban (New York: The Penguin Press, 2006), 43-83.
Yet, the success of what Astri Suhrke has critically dubbed the ‘liberal project’ was of a rather superficial nature. The Bonn Agreement implied that the new Afghan state was modelled after developed Western states with a liberal political order and a centralized structure. As we have seen earlier in this chapter, the Afghan state has always relied on some form of accommodations with local power-holders for establishing its rule, and consequently the post-2001 ‘liberal project’ did not match the traditional relationship between state and society as familiar to the Afghan people. Some observers have even argued that ‘in essence, the Karzai government is illegitimate because it is elected’. This bold statement, however, misses the point that under its democratic cloak the Karzai government had firmly established its rule by meticulously weaving a web of patron-client relations with local power-holders throughout Afghanistan. This not only resembled the way the Afghan state had bypassed its own formal structures with use of external revenues in the past, it also brought back the warlords and commanders who had been driven to the background during the Taliban regime and now reappeared on the front stage of Afghanistan’s political arena. The bargaining process that facilitated the co-option of those agents not only empowered their position at the grassroots level, it also drew them into the official state structure as governmental offices were used as rewards for collaboration with the Kabul government. Consequently, the state’s institutions were permeated with local power-holders and their protégés and corruption became a key feature of the new Afghan state -albeit it should be noted that this was nothing new as this fitted the time-honoured pattern of government in Afghanistan. Similarly, the elections (especially those for the Wolesi Jirga and provincial councils in 2005) were merely the formal translation of these new politics, which led some scholars to conclude that Afghanistan’s political transition could be characterized as a form of ‘warlord democratization’. Thus, de facto the Bonn Agreement had created an Afghan state in which a weak central government backed by foreign aid had established its rule by co-opting warlords and former mujahideen commanders controlling Afghanistan’s numerous locales.

The light footprint adopted by the intervening US forces was never intended to support the building of a modern democratic state in Afghanistan. Yet, the consolidation of its success

130 Giustozzi argues this happened intentionally as he states that ‘the creation of a temporary and hybrid ‘feudal state’ was seemingly meant to build and consolidate a strong political centre that would gradually expand its power over the numerous local segments. Antonio Giustozzi, Empires of Mud, 90. See also Chapter Three, section 3.5.2.
in toppling the Taliban regime required the adaptation of the campaign for this purpose. Therefore, the Bonn Agreement, endorsed by the Americans, called upon the international community to dispatch a multinational force for assisting the new Afghan Government by securing Kabul and its surroundings. Thus ISAF came into existence as the international community’s military contribution to the state-building process in Afghanistan. When the first forces -a British contingent- deployed to Kabul in December 2001 it was clear they were going to support the new Afghan administration, while parallel to the ISAF mission OEF would continue to pursue the remnants of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda in the periphery. Soon, however, it became obvious that state building in Afghanistan would require ISAF forces to assist in providing security beyond the capital and its direct environment. While US troop numbers gradually increased from approximately 1,000 Special Forces in 2001 to about 10,000 mostly conventional forces in 2003 in order to keep up the pressure on enemy fighters in the wide-stretched remote locales of Afghanistan’s countryside, US policy makers had blocked an early 2002 proposal for the expansion of ISAF -allegedly in order to save strategic air-lift assets for a future campaign in Iraq.132 This decision had painstaking ramifications as the lack of security forces tipped the balance in the co-optive relationships between the Karzai government and local power-holders in favour of the latter. Consequently many of the warlords and mujahideen commanders reverted to the same misbehaviour they had been demonstrating in the years before the Taliban’s rise to power. Moreover, those agents often enjoyed support of locally deployed US forces as they were considered essential intelligence providers and force multipliers in the fight against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. Especially the south, the traditional Pashtun heartland where the Taliban had started their march to power, suffered from repressive and predatory local power-holders such as the infamous Gul Agha Sherzai, who ruled Kandahar with American support.133

To repair this mistake the United States in 2003 lifted its ban on ISAF’s expansion beyond Kabul, and sanctioned by UN Security Council Resolution 1510 the mission, which now was led by NATO, deployed to the north in 2004 (stage I), the west in 2005 (stage III), and the south and east in 2006 (stage III/IV).134 Furthermore, US forces -still predominantly operating under the banner of OEF- in 2003 adopted stabilization as their main mission and at this point counterinsurgency first emerged as the theme of the Afghan campaign.135 As part of this change PRTs now were introduced as a tool for supporting the state-building process

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in the countryside through economic development as well as the provision of security. Although originally designed as a quick fix to fill the gap created by the initial blockade of ISAF’s expansion, the PRT concept would become a standard instrument in both the counterinsurgency campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq - as was already mentioned in section 3.5.4.136 All these measures, however, could not prevent the Taliban from exploiting the 2002 strategic mistake of blocking ISAF’s expansion; between 2002 and 2006 the movement gradually established and consolidated a strong foothold in the south and the east (and it even was expanding beyond these regions). Consequently, by the time ISAF troops were deploying for stage III and IV of the expansion, they were confronted with a full-blown insurgency that was now also known as the Neo-Taliban.137

The seeds for the re-emergence of the Taliban thus were sown by a flaw of the implementation of the Bonn process which partly restored the pre-Taliban situation (especially in the south) in which predatory local power-holders were dominating the local level without any effective control from the Kabul government. The new Taliban recruited their largest following among tribes and local communities who had been marginalized by such agents and their foreign (predominantly US) allies.138

Although US military forces had adapted their mission and campaign theme, and under command of NATO ISAF was expanding to support the state-building process in the whole country, it was also deemed necessary to link this to a further enhancement of the position of the Karzai government. Whereas the Bonn Agreement was concluded as its benchmarks had been formally realized, the international community acknowledged that the institutions of the Afghan state were far from perfect and hugely incapable to facilitate the further development of the country - mainly due to the role of local power-holders, who not only ruled the local level, but also permeated the administration. Therefore in 2006 the so-called Afghanistan Compact was drawn up by the Afghan government and the international community. This agreement contained a shared vision on the further development of Afghanistan, and while the Afghan government committed ‘itself to realising this shared vision of the future’, the international community, in turn, committed ‘itself to provide resources and support to realise that vision’.139 The Afghanistan Compact encompassed the improvement of security, governance, rule of law and human rights, and economical and social development in the next five years. Furthermore the elimination of the drugs industry was identified as a vital cross-cutting spearhead. These new benchmarks where integrated in the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) and thus the compact resulted in a tangible plan subscribed to by both Afghan government and international community, of

136 An excellent analysis of the emergence and role of PRTs in the Afghan campaign is provided by Miriam Grandia Mantas, ‘Provincial Reconstruction Teams, Symbool van NAVO-commitment in Afghanistan of meer?’.  
137 Antonio Giustozzi, Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop, 1-6.  
which the latter provided the resources for a proper implementation. The overall emphasis for the next five years would lay on socio-economic development, for which foreign aid was to be used to strengthen the state’s institutions’ ability to improve the daily life of the Afghan people at the grassroots level.\footnote{Ibid., 9-14, see also, Ali A. Jalali, ‘Afghanistan: The Challenge of State Building’, Afghanistan, Transition Under Threat, ed. Hayes, G., Sedra, M. (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008), 33, William Maley, ‘Looking Back at the Bonn Process’, 18, Fatima Ayub, Sari Kouvo, ‘Righting the course? Humanitarian intervention, the war on terror and the future of Afghanistan’, International Affairs 84:4 (2008), 652-655.}

Thus, by 2006 the Afghan campaign had evolved from a purely punitive expedition into an ambitious stabilization mission in which the international community not only had committed itself to the provision of security through military forces, but also had bought into a more extensive state-building program aimed at creating a modern, democratic Afghan state, the ‘liberal project’. Soon, however, this all proved too ambitious as in spring 2006 the re-emergence of the Taliban triggered a surge of violence (mainly in the south) that required immediate action.\footnote{See, among others, Antonio Giustozzi, Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop, 1-8, Seth G. Jones, In The Graveyard Of Empires, 210-212, Astri Suhrke, ‘A Contradictory Mission? NATO from Stabilization to Combat in Afghanistan’, 224-225.} The Afghanistan Compact and the consequential ANDS had never taken such a deterioration into account and therefore the new strategy was virtually derailed before its implementation had properly started. ISAF’s stage III and IV expansion, on the other side, continued as scheduled, and consequently those troops found themselves fighting a full-fledged insurgency; despite its wider agenda, the international community now was focusing on security first. The roadmap provided by the ANDS was abandoned as the various contingents reverted to ‘tactical solutions and quick fixes’ for achieving the compact’s objectives.\footnote{Ali A. Jalali, ‘Afghanistan: The Challenge of State Building’, 33, 43.} The integrated approach for Afghanistan as a whole, thereby, faltered and individual donor countries increasingly channelled aid through their national military contributions to ISAF, with PRTs as main vehicle for development support.\footnote{Nipa Banerjee, ‘Peace Building and Development in Afghanistan’, Afghanistan, Transition Under Threat, ed. Hayes, G., Sedra, M. (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008), 254-258, Astri Suhrke, When More Is Less, 86.} Needless to say that this did not do much to strengthen the position of the central government. Furthermore, it also led to huge differences between the locales where various national contingents were operating and even within those locales there could be differences as sometimes several nationalities shared an operating environment. To add to this complicated situation, ISAF troops found themselves fighting the insurgency side-by-side with OEF forces. While the latter had adopted counterinsurgency tactics, many of those troops in the south were still relying on the collaboration of repressive local power-holders or had developed an oversimplified understanding of the Taliban’s connections with local tribes.\footnote{See for instance Antonio Giustozzi, Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop, 46-47, 59-60.} It was against this background of a fragmented overarching campaign focusing on securing a state that was characterized by a weak central government and \textit{de facto} was dominated by local power-holders, that a contingent of Dutch troops as part of ISAF’s stage III expansion deployed to Uruzgan province and took over from a US PRT in August 2006. In the next chapter we will...
8.3.2 Uruzgan 2001-2006

Although Uruzgan is commonly considered a relatively backward province, it has become of symbolic importance to the Taliban as well as for the Karzai government. Many individuals of the former’s top leadership have some kind of connection with Uruzgan, while President Karzai’s march to power commenced there in October 2001 as part of OEF. It is this latter occasion which has hugely shaped the political marketplace in Uruzgan after the fall of the Taliban as many prominent locals kept direct ties with Karzai as a result of their support during the uprising, and Karzai’s trustee Jan Mohammed was (re-)installed as the provincial governor. Understanding the societal landscape and the political relationships in Uruzgan prior to the Dutch involvement, therefore, first requires an analysis of Karzai’s expedition in order to reveal how the various influential local power-holders were related to the president. Once we will have obtained clarity on this matter, we will look at the political order that emerged as a result of these ties and the new situation in Afghanistan, and how US operations under the flag of OEF further influenced Uruzgan’s political marketplace. To conclude we will also look into the way the Taliban sought to regain influence in Uruzgan as part of their renewed appearance. But, as mentioned, let us first start with the events of 2001.

Karzai left Pakistan and first arrived in Uruzgan armed with CIA (Central Intelligence Agency)-provided satellite telephones and money, and accompanied by just a couple of confidants around October 11. Operating from the **qala** (walled house typical for rural Afghanistan) of a befriended mullah he set out to forge alliances with local power-holders in order to mobilize support for his uprising against the Taliban. OEF had only just begun, and the opening moves of the war went almost unnoticed in rural Uruzgan. As the Taliban still seemed steady in control of the province, many local power-holders were initially reluctant to join Karzai. The Taliban had largely left them in peace on the condition that they would not interfere with their rule, and violating these accommodations would end this peaceful equilibrium. Yet Karzai, thanks to the large sum of CIA money, succeeded to rally some of the most important local power-holders in the province. Among the first to be approached was fellow Popalzai Malem Rahmatullah Khan who, in absence of the jailed Jan Mohammed Khan, had become the local sub-tribe’s most important leader. Rahmatullah initially reacted reticent to Karzai’s request, but was persuaded to join –reportedly verbal persuasion combined with a sum of 100,000 Pakistani rupees (roughly $1,600 at that
delve more deeply in the Dutch mission, now we will first address the situation in Uruzgan as a result of the first five years of the Afghan campaign.

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146 The following fragment on Karzai’s expedition and the role of Uruzgan’s local power-holders is predominantly based on chapters seven, eight, and nine of Bette Dam’s *Expeditie Uruzgan*. See Bette Dam, *Expeditie Uruzgan*, 85-142.
147 See also Martine van Bijlert, ‘Unruly Commanders and Violent Power Struggles’, 157.
The Barakzai community, however, was less supportive as their main leader Rozi Khan did not join Karzai due to the longstanding conflict with the Popalzai. On the other side some Barakzai leaders who were not actively engaged in this feud, most notably Sultan Mohammed, opted to join the uprising. Ghilzai leader Hashem Khan of the Tokhi sub-tribe, the ally of the then jailed Tokhi leader Mohammed Nabi Khan, contacted Karzai offering his allegiance as well as his services to negotiate the collaboration of two more Ghilzai communities. His initiative was well rewarded with some 200,000 rupees (reportedly much to Malem Rahmatullah’s envy who immediately tried to claim 50,000 rupees from Hashem Khan) to demonstrate Karzai’s intent to recruit beyond the divide separating the various Pashtun confederations. Additionally, Karzai could also count on the ethnically different Hazara of northern Uruzgan who fiercely opposed the Taliban and immediately chose to join the uprising.

Despite this considerable success Karzai’s expedition initially ended in disaster as the ad hoc coalition failed to materialize in a capable fighting force. Due to different opinions on the exact approach and mounting Taliban pressure the uprising quickly lost momentum. Even a US weapons drop on November 1 could not boost the morale of the fighters. Of the approximately 150 men who initially joined Karzai only a couple remained (most fled or were sent home) after a march full of hardship through the remote mountains that separate east from west Uruzgan. The Taliban even claimed Karzai’s death. Consequently Karzai saw no other option than retreat and was extracted by US helicopters that flew him to safety in Pakistan less than a month from the start of his uprising.

Under the leadership of Mirabad Hotak leader Mullah Shafiq, the nemesis of jailed Popalzai leader Jan Mohammed Khan, the Taliban set out to clear the supporters of Karzai’s expedition in the Popalzai-dominated areas of Tirin Kot district. This action was so effective that when a week after their evacuation the first of Karzai’s confidants returned in order to prepare the comeback of their leader, they found that virtually all those who had sheltered them were in detention or hiding. Consequently Karzai’s expedition, which now would be reinforced by a twelve men strong US Special Forces A-team and six CIA agents, would be reinserted in Deh Rawud district where Karzai’s allies from the local Popalzai community were left untouched by the Taliban.

On 14 November US helicopters landed Karzai and his US advisors in the vicinity of Deh Rawud where they indeed received shelter from the local Popalzai leaders. The next day, however, they immediately set out for Tirin Kot. At this time news of the War had reached Uruzgan and it was also clear that the Taliban had suffered considerable losses in the north and that Kabul had fallen on November 13. The inhabitants of the provincial capital had enthusiastically greeted this news, and many of them now openly denounced the Taliban. Without doubt this was fed by persistent rumours on Karzai’s undertaking that had kept buzzing around since his first arrival. Confronted with this situation the local Taliban structure

149 Ibid.
Chapter 8 The Course of Co-option

collapsed and many officials fled and reportedly went into hiding in Mullah Shafiq’s Mirabad area. In order to exploit this vacuum the Karzai expedition rushed to Tirin Kot, receiving additional weapons for new recruits by airdrop on their way. In Tirin Kot they were not only met by Karzai’s allies from the first hour, but also by main Barakzai leader Rozi Khan who now joined the coalition because he realized he had to overcome the longstanding conflict with the Popalzai – and especially Jan Mohammed – in order to secure a future position. Rozi Khan had kept a secret weapons cache and was now using these weapons against the Taliban. Not only had he seized the governor’s compound, but he also had fought the last remaining Taliban fighters in Tirin Kot’s police office and seized its arsenal. Combined with his good reputation among the Barakzai and Achekzai this made him a pivotal actor for Karzai to ally himself to. Thus, Karzai’s coalition in Uruzgan now incorporated the most important sub-tribes of the dominant Zirak Durrani (57.5% of the population), while also sub-tribes of the other confederations and Hazaras had joined the effort.150

The new coalition immediately received its first test when the Taliban started launching attacks at Tirin Kot. Only about forty Afghan fighters showed up to assist US Special Forces with the defence against hundreds of (mainly Pakistani and Arab) Taliban from Kandahar in the south, while Rozi Khan and his militia advanced to counter a Taliban offensive from the Mirabad area to the east. Despite the small number of local fighters, the coalition succeeded in defeating the Taliban thanks to massive US air support guided by the Special Forces – demonstrating the effectiveness of the ‘Afghan model’. This show of force was also instrumental in boosting the local commitment to Karzai’s expedition as local power-holders now massively opted to join a coalition that possessed such a tremendous military might.151 It was, therefore, hugely through the support of US military resources that Karzai’s expedition gained a renewed impetus which following the battle for Tirin Kot not only culminated in the thrust for Kandahar, but also won Hamid Karzai his position as head of the interim administration and future president.

In Uruzgan itself the success of Karzai’s expedition initially led to the emergence of a political order reflecting the broad coalition of local power-holders that had supported Karzai. Although the Zirak Durrani Pashtun, notably the Popalzai and Barakzai, again obtained the most powerful positions, the overall situation was characterized by a relative balance in power, unprecedented in Uruzgan’s recent history. Malem Rahmatullah was rewarded with the governor’s position and he received personal instructions from Karzai to welcome back and accommodate former Taliban members.152 Rozi Khan became the provincial chief of police, while his main Achekzai ally Abdul Khaleq was appointed chief of Chora district.153 The leaders of sub-tribes of the Panjpaï Durrani and Ghilzai such as Tokhi chief Hashem Khan

151 See also Martine van Bijlert, ‘Unruly Commanders and Violent Power Struggles’, 157.
152 Bette Dam, Expeditie Uruzgan, 180, Dan Green, The Valley’s Edge, 123, The Liaison Office, ‘A Survey of Uruzgan Province’, 28,
153 Dan Green, The Valley’s Edge, 71-72.
received Karzai’s word that they would maintain a permanent influence in political affairs. Furthermore former mujahideen commanders and local prominents Mohammed Nabi Khan and Jan Mohammed Khan, who both were detained by the Taliban, returned to the province. It was the comeback of this latter Popalzai power-holder, former governor and Karzai-trustee, however, that ushered the end of the relative stability on Uruzgan’s political marketplace.

In 2002 after only a few months Rahmatullah was replaced by Jan Mohammed Khan as provincial governor. Although Karzai later compensated Rahmatullah with the post of provincial minister of education and paid for his pilgrimage to Mecca, it was clear that Jan Mohammed had successfully retaken his old position as the province’s dominant Popalzai leader. The main reason for this move laid in the US desire to step up anti-Taliban operations. Jan Mohammed was not only known by the Americans (he had repeatedly joined Hamid Karzai on his visits to the US embassy in Pakistan during the Taliban regime), he now had become an even fiercer Taliban opponent as a result of the hardships and torments suffered during his detainment. The US, therefore, empowered Jan Mohammed as part of OEF’s hunt for the remnants of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. The ramifications of this appointment for Uruzgan’s new political order were catastrophic. Jan Mohammed immediately set out to consolidate and enlarge his power by playing divide and rule to neutralize the Barakzai and Achkazai majority within Uruzgan’s Zirak Durrani Pashtun, while he simultaneously adopted a ruthless policy of marginalizing the Ghilzai and Panjpai Durrani through repressive measures. Furthermore Jan Mohammed’s governorship was characterized by its predatory nature as he continuously enriched himself by levying additional taxes as well as arrogating property and other possessions. To enforce his rule Jan Mohammed made extensive use of a 800-1,000 men strong militia under command of his nephew Matiullah Khan, who closely collaborated with US Special Forces. Since opponents were consequently labeled as Taliban, the governor assured himself of the almost unconditional support of these American soldiers. This so-called false reporting (see also Chapter One, section 1.2.2) gave the targeting ‘a strong tribal dimension’, with the various sub-tribes of the Ghilzai and Panjpai Durrani confederations typically branded pro-Taliban. The 2004 documentary Taliban Country offers a grim insight in the daily consequences of these practices at the grassroots level as

154 Bette Dam, Expeditie Uruzgan, 183.
155 Ibid., 180-181.
157 Jan Mohammed, for example, demanded $1,500,000 governor’s tax annually from Chora district and stimulated the illicit poppy economy in order to increase his revenues through taxing the farmers who cultivated these crops.
159 Martine van Bijlert, ‘Unruly Commanders and Violent Power Struggles’, 158, see also Susanne Schmeidl, The man who would be king, 21.
it captures Jan Mohammed operating along US Marines while harassing village dwellers on allegations of ties with the Taliban.160

Unsurprisingly Jan Mohammed’s rule invoked much resistance and repeatedly Karzai’s intervention was called upon by those who had supported him in 2001, but were now suffering from the provincial administration’s policy. This, however, was to no avail despite the fact that in Uruzgan’s political marketplace direct access to President Karzai remained one of the most important sources for securing resources, positions, or consolidating one’s power.161 Yet, it was Jan Mohammed who kept the closest ties with Karzai, and therefore he was virtually inviolable. As part of his policy Uruzgan’s governor gradually removed all of his rivals from official positions and replaced them by Popalzai associates or ‘long time friends’.162 Achezkai leader Abdul Khaleq was relieved from his function as chief of Chora district, and Ghilzai leaders of the Tokhi sub-tribe Mohammed Nabi Khan (who, it should be remembered, had also returned to Uruzgan after his imprisonment by the Taliban) and Hashem Khan felt so endangered by Jan Mohammed that they fled to Pakistan and Kandahar respectively.163 Police chief Rozi Khan, however, managed to stay in office, despite various attempts to get rid of him. Needless to say that relations between the chief of police and governor became seriously troubled. More and more the official positions within the provincial administration were occupied by Jan Mohammed’s network and Rozi Khan’s police was effectively outmanoeuvered by incorporating Matiullah Khan’s militia within the governmental structure as so-called Afghan Highway Police (AHP, which was better equipped than the regular police force and officially tasked to guard the Tirin Kot-Kandahar highway).164

Under influence of Jan Mohammed’s policies Uruzgan’s societal landscape suffered from an increased degree of fragmentation. The disturbance of the tribal balance of power in favor of the Popalzai minority led to a chaotic situation in which not only traditional tensions between Zirak Durrani, Panjpai Durrani, and Ghilzai were exaggerated, but also grievances within the confines of those confederations and even within sub-tribes were further polarized. The result was a chaotic situation in which sub-tribe commanders intermittently fought against or alongside each other depending on what served their interest best.165 The mujahideen commanders who had also dominated the political marketplace before the Taliban (supported by their allies and networks) remained the most powerful political agents in this situation; Rozi Khan controlled most of the Barakzai, Abdul Khaleq the Achezkai,

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162 See, for instance, Dan Green, The Valley’s Edge, 222.

163 Bette Dam, Expeditie Uruzgan, 182-183.


the Ghilzai, however, were increasingly splintered and suffering from internal feuds as their main leaders went into exile because of Jan Mohammed’s effective marginalization, and the Panjpaie sub-tribes’ were kept politically weak. Jan Mohammed Khan himself, of course, was the champion of this self-created disorder as he cleverly legitimized and consolidated his powerbase by presenting himself as the only one able to somehow control this chaos [with use of his own means as well as his guaranteed access to national and US resources], justifying his lasting occupation of the post of governor, despite the Popalzais [sic] being a small minority in Uruzgan.166 Although Karzai was convinced that Jan Mohammed was the right man in the right seat, the provincial governor’s legitimacy at the grassroots level never spread beyond the power block he had created around his clientage network of Popalzai associates and personal friends from other sub-tribes.167

Whereas US Special Forces had almost unconditionally supported Jan Mohammed throughout his governorship, the US PRT that was established in the province in the summer of 2004 gradually obtained an awareness of the true nature of his policy and the consequences for the local political situation.168 They welcomed the 2005 election of Jan Mohammed’s opponent and former Chora district chief Abdul Khaleq (with overwhelming votes) as one the province’s representatives in the Wolesi Jirga. Moreover, candidates tied to Abdul Khaleq as well as to Rozi Khan were elected in the Provincial Council. Jan Mohammed, naturally, also had his straw men elected in both Wolesi Jirga (Mohammed Hashim Watanwal) and Provincial Council and even had US Special Forces arresting one of the candidates running for his opponents. The US PRT, however, arranged this person’s release and ultimately a more balanced political situation with representatives of all three powerful Zirak Durrani factions was secured. Yet, other sub-tribes remained ill-represented and especially the Ghilzai were more and more alienated from the provincial government as a result of Jan Mohammed’s brutal repression. The newly elected Provincial Council, therefore, set out to involve them with the provincial administration.169

This attempt, however, came too late, as the resurging Taliban had already found fertile soil in the Ghilzai and Panjpaie Durrani areas surrounding Tirin Kot and Deh Rawud.170 The marginalization of those tribes as well as the exclusion of former Taliban from the political marketplace -despite Karzai’s initial promise of reconciliation- made that many local leaders opted to join the Neo-Taliban because of their dissatisfaction with the (provincial) government, or even felt forced to do so as collaboration with the Taliban was their only option for survival.171 Hotak leader Mullah Shafiq (the former mujahideen and Taliban

166 Antonio Giustozzi, Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop, 57-58.
167 A detailed description of Jan Mohammed’s network can be found in Susanne Schmeidl, The man who would be king, 26-27.
169 Ibid., 126.
commander and fierce opponent of Jan Mohammed, whose surrender was initially accepted), for instance, was soon targeted by Jan Mohammed with the support of US Special Forces. His native Mirabad area was the scene of some of the most brutal actions of the governor’s militia, which reportedly included torture of prisoners and mutilation of perished fighters. Albeit Mullah Shafiq fled to Quetta in Pakistan, his position within the Taliban only grew stronger and by 2006 he was deemed to be Uruzgan’s most important Taliban commander, controlling (from Pakistan) 10 sub-commanders and 600 to 1,000 fighters. Whereas Mullah Shafiq’s network covered the eastern part of Uruzgan province, and most notably Tirin Kot and Chora districts, the Taliban fighters in the west of the province were directly linked to Mullah Berader, a Popalzai from Deh Rawud who until his arrest in 2010 was the second man (and military commander) of the overall Taliban movement. The effectiveness of this local organization was mirrored by the re-emergence of local Taliban commanders as relevant political actors at the lowest societal levels. Local leaders and communities increasingly sought to negotiate with the Taliban about matters such as ‘requests for safe passage, permission for NGO activities, punishment of criminals or the reigniting in of oppressive strongmen, mediation in conflicts, or the removal of fighters from residential areas’, or mutually agreed to leave each other alone - which meant that the local population also would not collaborate with the government and foreign forces. In case of non-compliance, however, the Taliban would not hesitate to deploy coercive measures against local power-holders or their people, and therefore the relationship between Taliban and local population can be characterized ambiguous at best.

At the eve of the Dutch mission Uruzgan, thus, was characterized by a highly fragmented local society in which various actors were vying for power and influence. Popalzai leader Jan Mohammed Khan was on top of the local political marketplace, as he not only possessed the vastest resources, including his own militia, but also kept the closest ties with President Hamid Karzai as well as that he enjoyed the back up of US Special Forces. Albeit the 2005 elections had empowered the Barakzai and Achekzai sub-tribes under the leadership of respectively Rozi Khan and Abdul Khaleq of the same Zirak Durrani confederation, the sub-tribes of the Panjpai Durrani and Ghilzai were either incapable to compete with more powerful actors (the Panjpai leaders) or simply held no direct access to Uruzgan’s political marketplace (Tokhi leaders Mohammed Nabi Khan and Hashem Khan as well as Hotak and Talib leader Mullah Shafiq). The Taliban’s successful re-emergence had re-established them as a political actor in Uruzgan, though their influence was limited to the lowest societal levels. In this melee the local population typically sought to secure its survival along sub-tribal lines, which remained the most important qawms, but sometimes different

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172 Bette Dam, Expeditie Uruzgan, 184-185. Jan Mohammed Khan not only shared a history of personal rivalry with Mullah Shafiq, he also suspected the latter to be the instigator of his imprisonment under the Taliban.


solidarity groups also existed within sub-tribes or emerged across tribal divides as especially those local people who were not represented by powerful political actors felt the need to establish ties with more important local power-holders. Moreover, the struggle for power in Uruzgan was characterized by ‘almost daily’ shifting alliances as solidarity groups felt caught between the major forces influencing the political landscape; the dominant local power-holders, the (provincial) government, the Taliban, and of course the international presence. With regard to the latter we can conclude that US Special Forces had supported Jan Mohammed throughout his governorship, whereas the US PRT had encouraged the re-establishment of Rozi Khan’s Barakzai and Abdul Khaleq’s Achekzai in the provincial administration. Yet, it has to be concluded that overall the US involvement in Uruzgan from 2001 until 2006 consolidated Jan Mohammed Khan’s position as dominant local power-holder and simultaneously put him in the governor’s chair, while the ‘dark side’ of his rule went largely unnoticed or was unaddressed, which alienated his personal rivals and their solidarity groups from the Afghan government. Now we have dealt with the social-politico developments in Uruzgan in the period prior to the HOTO between the US and the Dutch, we can commence our analysis of the way the Dutch task force manoeuvered at the provincial political marketplace in order to obtain control over the local population. But let us first wrap up the conclusions of this chapter.

8.4 Conclusion

This chapter has aimed at providing an insight in the context of the operational environment of the 2006-2010 Dutch mission by sketching the historical and societal background of Afghanistan and Uruzgan as well as the first five years (2001-2006) of the Afghan War and its effects at the grassroots level in Uruzgan province. To conclude this context analysis we will now discuss our findings focusing on Afghanistan in general and Uruzgan specifically. We will start with the former in order to finish with an oversight of the situation at the grassroots level in Uruzgan that functions as a starting point for the next chapter on the first two years of the TFU campaign.

The historical background of present-day Afghanistan was dominated by a continuous struggle for enhanced centralization -and most times also modernization- under influence of imperialism, the Cold War, and armed conflict, in all of which externally provided resources fulfilled an essential role. Yet, centripetal forces never succeeded in overcoming the importance of local powers as throughout its recent history Afghanistan has always been characterized by a substantial degree of decentralized rule. From the early Durrani empire in the eighteenth century until today’s Islamic Republic of Afghanistan alliances and co-optive ties with tribes and local power-holders have been a key trait of the Afghan state. Interestingly, it can be observed that the pattern of centralization follows variations

176 Bette Dam, Expeditie Uruzgan, 186, see also Martine van Bijlert, 'Unruly Commanders and Violent Power Struggles', 162.
in the use of coercion by the central government; the government in Kabul held its strongest influence under the ‘Iron Amir’ ‘Abd al-Rahman as well as under the Taliban, who both ruled the country with considerable use of coercion for controlling local power-holders. The longest period of stability, however, occurred under the rule of King Zahir Shah (r. 1933-1973) when Afghanistan gradually evolved into a modernized hybrid state -centrally ruled, but with a large role for local power-holders- that succeeded in accommodating both the traditional tribal leadership of the countryside as well as the newly emerged modernist elite of the cities. The redistribution of foreign resources by the Kabul government was instrumental in encapsulating both rural and urban societal forces.

The Afghan state’s endemic need to accommodate local power-holders and the groups they represent, is a logical consequence of the weblike structure of Afghan society which until today has been characterized by a high degree of fragmentation and a corresponding heterogeneous nature of control. This fragmentation goes beyond the obvious differences between Afghanistan’s many ethnicities (with the confrontation between Pashtun and non-Pashtun as main cleavage), as even within ethnical groups huge variations between communities exist. Solidarity groups (based on either true or constructed kinship) protecting the interests of their members, qawms, are the basic units of societal organization which facilitate political participation and distribution of economical goods. In Pashtun society, which is the focus of this case study, qawms most commonly correspond to sub-tribal segments within the overarching tribal organization. Although these sub-tribal qawms will unite as Pashtun when facing external threats, by default they are competing units and protection against rival solidarity groups is a key function of the qawm. Due to the interaction with the state’s centre those entities have evolved from more or less egalitarian-led to groups led by tribal notables in a hierarchical role. Especially the khans, the most important tribal leaders, have become hereditary feudal-like patrons with extensive client networks thriving on their access to state resources. During the Soviet-Afghan War of the 1980s, however, these economically-based authorities were gradually sidelined by a newly emerging type of khan, the so-called tribal entrepreneur. These tribal entrepreneurs were foreign-sponsored local strongmen capable of protecting their solidarity groups by use of force (typically mujahideen commanders), but sometimes also possessed the skills to exert true tribal leadership. After the end of the war the new khans consolidated their power by assuming the same feudal-like patronage role as the old elite. Whereas this led to the emergence of warlord polities in northern and western Afghanistan, the fragmented tribal structure of the Pashtun did prevent the dominance of a single leader. However, predatory behavior and violent repression of rival qawms, which both were less common under the old khans, increasingly occurred in this new political constellation and provided one of the key reasons for popular support to the Taliban. The rule of the latter, therefore, interrupted the political system of the new khans. Yet, since 2001 political authority in the Pashtun-dominated south and east of the country again has rested with a range of tribal entrepreneurs who have established
themselves as patrons (of a qawm) capable of dealing with each other, the central state, and foreign aid.

The first five years of the Afghan campaign unintentionally consolidated and even augmented the role of Pashtun tribal entrepreneurs as they were instrumental in the OEF hunt for the remnants of Al-Qaeda and the Taliban in the southern and eastern parts of Afghanistan and benefitted from their connections with the Karzai-government in Kabul. The light footprint adopted by US forces urged those forces to rely on local allies as force multipliers, who were essential for providing intelligence as well as additional fighting power in the form of militias. Due to the absence of an effective mechanism for controlling these agents -a direct consequence of the initial US ban on expansion of the ISAF mission- they abused their positions and often reverted to the same predatory behavior and repressive practices they had been demonstrating in the years prior to the Taliban. The ‘liberal project’ which introduced a wider agenda of building a western-model centralized state by implementation of the Bonn-agreement, de facto -contradistinctively- led to an Afghan state ruled by a weak central government backed by foreign support and dependent on collaboration of warlords and former mujahideen commanders controlling the country’s numerous locales. This dependency not only increased the position of these local power-holders at the grassroots level, it also gave them leverage over the state’s institutional apparatus as official positions were used as bargain chips for securing collaboration. Especially Pashtun leaders well-connected to Karzai benefited from this new political order. In order to repair the flaws of the state-building process the international community stepped up its effort by expanding the ISAF mission to Afghanistan as a whole as well as the adoption of stabilization measures such as PRTs by OEF forces. Moreover, in 2006 the Afghanistan Compact and the consecutive ANDS strategy were drawn up to enhance socio-economic development by strengthening the institutions of the Afghan state with foreign resources. By that time, however, the ramifications of the flaws in the Afghan campaign had created fertile ground for the re-emergence of the Taliban which in the spring of 2006 triggered a surge of violence that predominantly focused on southern Afghanistan. It was in these conditions that NATO forces seeking to strengthen the new Afghan state according to the idea of the ‘liberal project’ deployed to the greater Kandahar region as part of ISAF’s stage III expansion in August 2006. Thus the rise of the new Taliban and the ISAF expansion converged which promptly derailed the overall strategy provided by the ANDS and left individual countries fighting a full-fledged insurgency in order to restore security in their area of responsibility. This was the background of the deployment of Dutch forces for the TFU mission; let us now conclude this chapter with an analysis of the local circumstances in Uruzgan.

Uruzgan’s societal landscape largely follows the Pashtun tribal structure as clear distinctions exist between the Zirak Durrani, Panjpai Durrani, and Ghilzai confederations. As typical for Pashtun society, the sub-tribes of these confederations form the most important qawms, and therefore sub-tribal affiliations define the structure of Uruzgan’s society. Yet, it should be mentioned that even within sub-tribes different solidarity groups might exist as
is the case with the Tokhi community which is the scene of fierce intra-factional feuding. Leadership of the sub-tribes lies with former mujahideen commanders, Uruzgan’s tribal entrepreneurs, who during the communist regime took over from the old khans -with whom they often keep good relations. These commanders vie (including violent contention) or cooperate with each other in shifting alliances in order to secure power and resources on Uruzgan’s political marketplace. The most dominant leaders that have emerged from the mujahideen era are Popalzai leader Jan Mohammed Khan, Rozi Khan of the Barakzai sub-tribe, and Abdul Khaleq of the Achekzai (all Zirak Durrani), as well as Tokhi leader Mohammed Nabi Khan and Hotak elder Mullah Shafiq (both Ghilzai). The rivaling Popalzai and Barakzai sub-tribes are relatively small but well connected into the power networks of the greater Kandahar region and Kabul and therefore constitute the most powerful factions in Uruzgan. The large Achekzai sub-tribe is also well- represented on the political marketplace and traditionally keeps good ties with the Barakzai. The combined Panjpai Durrani and Ghilzai are less influential and typically are considered lower-ranking Pashtuns by the province’s Zirak Durrani majority. Yet, the Ghilzai, which form the smallest minority, have produced two important provincial leaders. The Panjpai, however, are weakly represented and their influence is limited to the lowest societal levels. Although the Taliban curtailed the influence of the here mentioned local power-holders, they all survived to re-assume their roles as tribal entrepreneurs securing political positions and resources immediately after the fall of the Taliban. Thus, until today the here mentioned mujahideen era commanders (and their inheritors) are the main political actors representing the various sub-tribal qawms on Uruzgan’s political marketplace.

Since the fall of the Taliban Uruzgan’s political constellation has been hugely influenced by the presence of US forces as well as the new Afghan government under Popalzai President Hamid Karzai. Although during his expedition in Uruzgan the latter had promised that nobody would be excluded from the province’s new political order, it soon became clear that former Taliban supporters like Hotak leader Mullah Shafiq were unwelcome to participate in the political process. Moreover, also some of Karzai’s first-hour supporters were denied the ability to consolidate their positions (especially the Tokhi leaders). This was a consequence of the appointment of Karzai-trustee and fellow Popalzai Jan Mohammed Khan as provincial governor in early 2002. Jan Mohammed immediately started to play divide and rule for neutralizing the Barakzai and Achekzai power block and set out a ruthless policy for marginalizing the Ghilzai and Panjpai Durrani through repressive measures. The new governor enforced his rule through his own militia, US Special Forces who were deliberately led to believe that his rivals were Taliban, and his ties with Hamid Karzai. Furthermore, Jan Mohammed cleverly wove a web of Popalzai associates and ‘long time friends’ for consolidating his power, albeit he never succeeded in obtaining legitimacy beyond this patronage network. The only rival strong enough to defy Jan Mohammed’s policy was provincial chief of police and Barakzai leader Rozi Khan, who was later joined by his Achekzai ally Abdul Khaleq. The US PRT (active since summer 2004) welcomed this counter-balance
against Jan Mohammed and supported attempts to include the marginalized sub-tribes in the new provincial government. Yet, this came too late as the Panjpa Durrani and Ghilzai sub-tribes already had become fertile soil for the re-emerging Taliban, who by 2006 had developed an extensive network in Uruzgan capable of maintaining ties with the local population through either persuasion or coercion.

Thus, Dutch forces found themselves deploying to an Afghan locale as foreign interveners supporting the Afghan government of Hamid Karzai whose governor was responsible for marginalizing his rivals and repressing large parts of the local population. To make things worse, US forces had actively supported and even participated in this alienating policy which fuelled suspicion against foreign forces. Moreover, as a consequence of Jan Mohammed Khan’s rule the re-emerging Taliban had firmly established themselves in the province. The local population now found itself caught between local power-holders, the government, the Taliban, and foreign forces; how could the Dutch TFU in the first place obtain control over the local population in such circumstances -not to speak of consolidating and transferring this control to the Afghan government?
Chapter 9
Chapter 9: Task Force Uruzgan 2006-2007: establishing a foothold

9.1 Introduction

The arrival of a Dutch quartermaster detachment, the Deployment Task Force (DTF), in Uruzgan in March 2006 coincided with the replacement of Jan Mohammed Khan by Governor Abdul Hakim Munib, a well-educated Ghilzai Pashtun from Paktya who kept close ties with Karzai and held a background as undersecretary for tribal and border affairs in the Taliban government. This move was a consequence of an early November 2005 meeting between Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs Ben Bot and Hamid Karzai in Vienna’s Hotel Imperial in which the former stated that the Netherlands’ government considered the removal of Jan Mohammed a sine qua non for the commitment of its troops. With US ambassador to Afghanistan Ronald Neumann supporting the Dutch demand, Karzai eventually complied reluctantly, and on 27 February he recalled his protégé to Kabul where Jan Mohammed was appointed as the president’s chief advisor for tribal affairs. While this high level diplomacy cleared the way for the deployment of the Dutch task force, the soldiers of the DTF were preparing to construct what would become TFU’s two main operating bases near Uruzgan’s most important population centres of Tirin Kot and Deh Rawud. Seemingly the Dutch were well-informed on local circumstances even before the start of the TFU campaign; the culprit of the instable situation in the province was removed and replaced by a new governor who could operate relatively independent of local influences (and whose tribal and political background would allow him to reach out to alienated segments of the population), and Dutch forces themselves would focus on the districts accommodating the larger part of the local population allowing them to influence the people.

These measures also perfectly fitted the stance taken by Dutch politicians and media that the Dutch mission was primarily a reconstruction mission that would enhance the local population’s living conditions by strengthening the Afghan government as described in the roadmap of the ANDS. This position was an outcome of the political debate prior to the 3


3 Neumann’s position becomes clear from a report written to him by Dan Green, at that time the US Political Advisor (POLAD) in Uruzgan. The full report is attached to Green’s book on his experiences, see Dan Green, The Valley’s Edge, 221-226.


February decision to definitively commit Dutch troops for two years, in which the discussion had evolved around the dichotomy of a ‘benevolent’ reconstruction mission versus a ‘malign’ fighting mission. Moreover, framing the TFU mission this way also concurred with the self-created myth of the so-called ‘Dutch approach’, a subtle, non-violent way of conducting operations by focusing on the local population and the government rather than on fighting the insurgent opponent, that was practiced before in Iraq’s Al Muthanna province (2003-2005) and during a PRT mission in Baghlan in northern Afghanistan (2004-2006). In the public debate this approach was unanimously considered to be highly contrastive to -and better than- the more violent methods employed by US forces as part of their OEF mission. It should also be noted that with regard to the TFU mission senior policy makers within the Ministry of Defence initially avoided the term counterinsurgency as it was perceived to invoke an image of a predominantly violent approach associated with for instance the Indonesian war of decolonization and the US experience in Vietnam. The outcome of the political debate, thus, was clear; the Dutch would deploy on a population-centric mission ‘that would aim at fostering stability and security through augmenting the local population’s support for the Afghan authorities, while diminishing support for the Taliban and related groups’ with CIMIC (Civil-Military Cooperation), reconstruction activities as well as promotion of such activities by others as pivotal elements. Combat troops of the Battle Group (BG) would provide security assistance -if necessary also with offensive actions- to allow the PRT and Afghan authorities to implement this approach, which was considered more subtle than the methods of their US predecessors. But how would this turn out in the reality of soldiering at the grassroots levels in Uruzgan where the Dutch immediately were confronted with the challenges of waging a population-centric counterinsurgency campaign -despite the high-level aversion of the term amidst a highly fragmented society?

In this chapter we will analyze the first two years of the Dutch mission in Uruzgan including pre-deployment operations that created the conditions for the commencement of the TFU campaign on 1 August 2006. Of course the specific topic of this book demands us to


7 This became evident during the conference Counter-Insurgency, Historical Roots and Relevance organized by the Netherlands Institute of Military History and the Royal Society of War Studies in The Hague on November 14 and 15 2007. On the second day a vivid debate evolved between Thijs Brocades Zaalberg, a military historian, and the late Professor Jan Geert Siccama, a senior policy advisor at the Ministry of Defence. When Brocades Zaalberg argued that the TFU mission effectively was a counterinsurgency mission as it bore many resemblances to counterinsurgency, Siccama fiercely denounced the use of the term as he associated it with violent repression of uprisings. In an earlier article and policy paper Brocades Zaalberg had already convincingly expanded his argument, see Thijs Brocades Zaalberg, ‘‘Hearts and Minds’ of ‘Search and Destroy’? Leren van klassieke counter-insurgency’ and T.W. Brocades Zaalberg, P.M.H. Groen, J.A. de Moor, A. Ten Cate, ‘Historische Analyse Counter-Insurgency’ (Policy paper, Nederlands Instituut voor Militaire Historie, 2006). Siccama later explained his point as he argued that counterinsurgency has a negative connotation because of its connection to ruthless state reactions to insurrections of the (post-)colonial past, whereas the campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan were of an emancipatory nature as they for example aimed at ‘promoting citizen’s and women’s rights’. See Jan Geert Siccama, ‘New and Innovative Counterinsurgency-Related Books’, Insurgency and Counterinsurgency: Irregular Warfare from 1800 to the Present, ed. Brocades Zaalberg, T., Hoffenaar, J., Lemmers, A. (The Hague: Netherlands Institute of Military History, 2011), 265-266.

8 Tweede Kamer, Dossier 27925, no. 193.
focus on the way Dutch forces sought to establish control over the population by exploiting
the gap left by Jan Mohammed’s removal with use of Uruzgan’s other major political actors
enjoying legitimacy from their respective societal segments. Doing so, however, also
requires us to obtain a profound insight in how the TFU’s understanding of the local societal
situation evolved and how TFU structure and mission developed during the first two years
of the campaign. As was already mentioned in the previous chapter, the 2007 battle of Chora
turned out to be the hinge point after which the campaign gained momentum as an enhanced
neo-classical counterinsurgency campaign. The term battle, indeed, explicitly implies that
Dutch forces were engaged in fierce fighting. Despite the political label of reconstruction
mission soldiers had been actively involved in fighting the Taliban since Dutch Special
Forces operating along the DTF had met the first resistance in April 2006.9 Thus, fighting
was an essential and integrated part of the TFU mission from its beginning. Similarly, the
aversion to the word counterinsurgency at the highest policy levels did not echo in the field.
Military officers at the lowest executive levels recognized that the TFU mission effectively
was a population-centric counterinsurgency campaign, which resulted in the bottom-up
introduction of counterinsurgency concepts into the overall campaign.10 It was only after
the battle of Chora that these ideas, which reflected the reality on the ground in Uruzgan,
gradually were accepted by policy makers and politicians in The Hague and officially
implemented in the TFU campaign plan. That leaves us here with the first two years of the
campaign; how did the TFU establish a foothold in Uruzgan, and could the Dutch soldiers
operating from their Tirin Kot and Deh Rawud bases for this purpose indeed exploit the
removal of Jan Mohammed as well as the knowledge that had informed this move? To answer
these questions we will first discuss the experiences during the pre-deployment period
(March 2006-August 2006) and the first TFU rotation, TFU-1 (August 2006-January 2007). Next
we will look into the battle of Chora, its prelude and aftermath, which corresponds with the
TFU-2 (January 2007-August 2007) and TFU-3 (August 2007-January 2008) rotations. We will
conclude this chapter with a discussion of our findings including the extent of the level of
control obtained as a consequence of the first two years of TFU operations.

9.2 First contact

The start of operations on the first of August 2006 marked the beginning of what would
eventually become a four-year campaign (initial commitment was until 2008) in which a

9 Arthur ten Cate, Martijn van der Vorm, Callsign Nassau, 244-245. See also Deedee Derksen, Thee met de Taliban, 109-110, Christ
Klep, Uruzgan, 42-46.
10 See for instance Hans van Griensven, ‘It’s All about the Afghan people, Eén jaar 1 (NLD/AUS) Task Force Uruzgan’, Atlantisch
Perspectief31:6 (2007), 10, Piet van der Sat, ‘Kick the enemy where it hurts most, De steun van de lokale bevolking, daar gaan
het om’, Carré30:1 (2007), 15-17, Ralph Coenen, ‘Counterinsurgency Operaties, geen succesvol optreden zonder gedegen
counter-insurgency’, 299-301, Martijn Kitzen, Sebastiaan Rietjens, Frans Osinga, ‘Soft Power the Hard Way: Adaptation by the
whole range of Dutch military units accompanied by civilian experts would be deployed to southern Afghanistan. The various rotations of the 600-strong BG and 60-person PRT formed the nucleus of the mission, but it also consisted of an extensive Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition, and Reconnaissance (ISTAR) unit, a Psychological Operations Support Element (PSE), Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams (OMLTs), an Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) team, Special Forces (SF), air assets, artillery, engineers, military police, medical and logistical support, etcetera. Overall troop levels at any time varied between 1,400 and 2,000 soldiers at peak moments when different units were going through their HOTOs. Albeit all these assets might have had a unique contribution in exerting influence over the local population, our analysis will focus on the overarching construct that determined the strategy and controlled the actions of this kaleidoscope of continuously rotating units, the TFU, and more specifically its staff. Therefore this narrative follows the subsequent rotations of TFU commanders and their staff, yet if necessary we will also delve into the role of individual units. We will see that especially the pioneering phase of the first year requires us to do so as the TFU staff and its subordinate units were struggling with the adaptation to their mission in Uruzgan’s complicated environment.

Alongside the Dutch units an augmented Australian reconstruction and mentoring battalion operated as part of the TFU, and several other countries such as France, Slovakia and Singapore contributed small contingents to the mission. The United States, who previously were lead nation in Uruzgan province also retained their presence in the province with a detachment of Special Forces operating independent from the Dutch task force. This brings us to the HOTO between US and Dutch forces that effectively started during the pre-deployment period when several Dutch officers were attached to the US PRT staff in order to increase the situational awareness of the TFU, while the troops of the DTF and Special Forces started cooperating with US forces. Moreover, albeit the Dutch effort at that time emphasized construction of bases and logistical facilities, it also focused on understanding and shaping the operational environment in order to enhance security and create more permissive conditions for the TFU to fulfill its mission. Therefore we will start our analysis of the first TFU experiences with a discussion of the pre-deployment phase of the campaign from March to August 2006.

12 Australia initially focused on reconstruction, while in 2008 mentoring was added as the second main task of its detachment, additionally Australian Special Forces also were active in the province. On the first role see Mick Ryan, ‘The Military and Reconstruction Operations’, Parameters 37:4 (Winter 2007-08), 58-70, on Australia’s contribution in general see Nicole Brangwin, Ann Rann, ‘Australia’s military involvement in Afghanistan since 2001: a chronology’, Background Note, 2010–11, (Canberra: Parliamentary Library, 2010).
9.2.1 Initial moves: understanding & shaping

As the main body of the DTF started the construction of base facilities in Tirin Kot and Deh Rawud, the high level diplomacy that had successfully secured Jan Mohamed’s removal continued. The next step concerned the replacement of provincial chief of police Rozi Khan, whose association with the predatory government of Jan Mohammed was considered an obstacle in the outreach to alienated segments of Uruzgan’s population. At the end of May General Qasim, a ‘professional outsider’ was installed as police commander, overseeing a poorly equipped and undermanned force of some 350 Afghan National Police (ANP) officers. With the discharge of Rozi Khan the bulk of Uruzgan’s police force, consisting of men personally affiliated to the Barzakzai strongman, had melted away. This concurred with official Dutch policy that regarded collaboration with militias off-limits as it strived to purge Afghan security forces from local influences. Albeit this position can be perfectly understood from the perspective of long-term state building, which requires independent institutions free of local influences, its short-term ramifications in Uruzgan were devastating for the fragile counterbalance against Jan Mohammed Khan’s network; the sacking of Rozi Khan left Matiullah Khan’s AHP -which was not touched by Dutch diplomacy- as the only capable force in the province and thereby seriously weakened the position of the Barakzai and Achezkai power block. Furthermore it also undermined the position of Governor Munib who initially was supported by Rozi Khan, but now faced serious troubles as his former chief of police and several of his relatives were either actively or passively involved in anti-government and anti-coalition actions (Taliban gangs, for instance, suddenly enjoyed freedom of movement within their areas of influence). This led to a rise of Taliban activities in the Barakzai- and Achezkai-dominated areas and a subsequent worsening of the provincial security situation in spring 2006. Whereas Dutch high level diplomacy aimed to shape the operational environment in order to create more permissive conditions for the TFU to reach its aim of a more stable and secure Uruzgan through augmenting the local population’s support for the government, its initial achievements were highly dubious and only worsened local security.

The root cause for this failure was a lack of fine-grained intelligence on local circumstances in Uruzgan. Although the Dutch decisions to lobby for the replacement of Jan Mohammed and to focus TFU operations on Tirin Kot and Deh Rawud district were based on correct

14 See, Tweede Kamer, Dossier 27925, no. 213 & 218.  
16 See, for instance, Tweede Kamer, Dossier 27925, no.221, personal correspondence with lieutenant-colonel Andy van Dijk, military assistant commander TFU-2, 16 October 2013.  
17 Although there is no source available that can clarify why Matiullah’s AHP was not affected by Dutch diplomatic measures, a possible explanation might be that this unit resorted under a regional AHP headquarters in Ghazni, and thus, unlike Uruzgan’s ANP, did not report to the local government which was the focal point of Dutch attention. It also has to be mentioned that under pressure from Karzai Matiullah Khan publicly announced his support for Governor Munib. See The Liaison Office, ‘A Survey of Uruzgan Province’, 44, Dan Green, The Valley’s Edge, 157.  
18 Dan Green, The Valley’s Edge, 154-157.
assumptions and suggested an extensive knowledge, the initially available information was rather superficial and certainly not as detailed as required for a population-centric campaign seeking to re-establish governmental control over a highly fragmented local society. For instance, the fact that Rozi Khan’s relationship with Jan Mohammed was of an involuntary nature and part of a precarious tribal balance went unnoticed. Similarly, the removal of Jan Mohammed was not directly accompanied by empowerment of his successor or measures to curtail the former’s network, allowing him to remain a dominant actor in Uruzgan. Actually many residents were counting the days when Jan Mohammed Khan would return.19 This hiatus in knowledge, however, was acknowledged by the Dutch government as early as 22 November 2005, when the letter informing parliament on the details of the intended mission to Uruzgan stated that once a decision would be made, work on a so-called civil assessment containing an analysis of local power relations would commence as soon as possible.20

As soon as possible turned out to be May 2006 when an Afghan NGO, The Liaison Office (TLO), hired by the Royal Netherlands embassy in Kabul started to conduct ethnographic field research in Uruzgan province.21 This study lasted until June and TLO’s detailed report ‘A Survey of Uruzgan Province’ was presented to the embassy in July where its findings were used to formulate the civil assessment’s context analysis.22 The civil assessment as such also was to act as guidance for the strategic engagement of communities through development aid. For this purpose a team of Dutch military CIMIC officers, among whom captain Mirjam Grandia-Mantas, was embedded with the US PRT, while designated TFU civilian advisor for development aid (a civil servant of the Dutch Ministry for Development Cooperation) Marten de Boer was dispatched to the embassy in Kabul to assist with the preparation of the rapport.23 The civil assessment was completed in August, which was too late for the first TFU rotation to incorporate its findings in the pre-deployment training and planning. Thus, while the civil assessment and especially the TLO analysis meant a huge leap forward in the overall Dutch knowledge of Uruzgan, the soldiers of TFU-1 (and also the DTF) did not fully benefit from it. But how then did the first task force obtain an advanced understanding of the local circumstances that could be used upon its deployment?

As early as fall 2005 conferences on a possible mission to Uruzgan had been organized at the brigade (13th mechanized brigade, October 2005) and army level (December 2005) and by January 2006 individual units had started to produce reports based on openly available

19 Ibid., 155.
20 Tweede Kamer, Dossier 27925, no. 193.
22 See Royal Netherlands Embassy in Kabul, ‘Civil Assessment’ (Kabul, 2006), and Royal Netherlands Embassy in Kabul, ‘Context Analysis Uruzgan Province’ (Kabul, 2006).
One such document, an unclassified reader compiled by the CIMIC staff section of 13th mechanized brigade (which originally was tasked for the first task force, but eventually would provide the staff of TFU-2 as well as the second rotations of both BG and PRT), demonstrates that despite the rudimentary character of the available information (‘internet/books’), Dutch soldiers tried to compose a comprehensive picture of their future operational environment. In addition to basic facts the report discussed the state of the local government, the humanitarian situation, tribal diversity, US presence, and even included available assessments of individual villages. Additional information was also acquired by reconnaissance parties involving the commanders of future TFU units, which had taken place as of November 2005. Furthermore, intelligence on the local security situation was provided by a Dutch Special Forces contingent operating from Kandahar as part of OEF. The green berets escorted early Dutch fact finding missions to southern Afghanistan in May, June and September 2005, and since October 2005 they had launched several probing missions into Uruzgan which all reported on the growing Taliban opposition, triggering an advise to adopt counterinsurgency as the main theme of the TFU’s campaign plan. As of April 2006 Dutch Special Forces were withdrawn from OEF and regrouped in what was named the Viper detachment, a Special Forces unit that would support the DTF and later the TFU. During the pre-deployment period the Vipers stepped up their reconnaissance effort in Uruzgan and were repeatedly drawn into heavy fighting, which we will discuss further below. While the operations of those Special Forces produced great classical military intelligence on terrain and what were dubbed Opposing Militant Forces (OMF), fine-grained information on the local population and power dynamics needed to paint a more comprehensive picture was only sparsely available to the various military units preparing for their TFU deployments.

Illustrative in this regard is that military officers who would deploy to Uruzgan were initially not invited to attend a roundtable with Governor Munib and twelve of the province’s tribal leaders and elected officials in Kabul on 8 May 2006. This three-hour meeting which

25 See Section S9 13 (NLD) Mechanised Brigade, ‘Appendix 5, Area Study Uruzgan, Annex U to OPORD C-13 Mechbrig, 18-01-2006’, (Unclassified Report, Oirschot, 2006). The Taliban is not mentioned in this report, probably this was deemed a task for the intelligence section (S2).
27 Arthur ten Cate, Martijn van der Vorm, Callsign Nassau, 230-233, 242-248.
29 See, interview with brigadier Theo Vleugels, commander TFU-1, Utrecht, 12 November 2009.Tweede Kamer, Dossier 27 925, nr. 214, 221, and Marten de Boer, ‘New perspectives for conflict transformation, development and diplomacy: implementing a cautious and fully balanced approach against the odds in Uruzgan’, 229. De Boer mentions that both Minister of Foreign
was hosted by the Dutch embassy was attended by high level officials such as Minister of Foreign Affairs Bot and Deputy Chief of Defence Staff lieutenant-general Hans Sonneveld, but colonel (later major-general) Theo Vleugels, who was assigned the command of TFU-1, and members of his staff were only invited after Vleugels asked for a chair. As no follow-up session was planned the future TFU commander considered the roundtable an isolated event and during the work-up towards the start of the mission no further contacts with local actors were established.

To fulfill the need for a better understanding of Uruzgan’s operational environment both TFU core elements, BG-1 and PRT-1 in June pushed forward their intelligence officers (S-2), captains Ralph Coenen and Jan-Willem Feith, to Tirin Kot where they liaised with US intelligence officers and especially the intelligence section of the US PRT. Yet, it was considered too late to use the information gathered by both officers in the pre-deployment program, and the newly acquired knowledge was mainly intended to give the units an underpinning for their operations after the HOTO on August 1. They obtained knowledge on tribal affairs, the local government, US operations, NGOs, etc., which was regularly reported to the Dutch Military Intelligence and Security Service (Militaire Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst, MIVD). Albeit there is no direct evidence, it is highly likely that an unclassified MIVD report on tribal relations in Uruzgan that was disseminated through military channels in July was informed by the work of both S-2 officers, as it contained well-informed information on local power relationships with details such as percentages indicating tribal distribution slightly deviating from the TLO report that was drafted for the civil assessment. Furthermore, the report also discussed the sacking of chief of police Rozi Khan in relation to the Barakzai and Achekzai power block. A commonly named source for this information by all involved Dutch officers (next to both intelligence officers, also their commanders and the members of the CIMIC team embedded within the US PRT) is the US PRT’s political advisor (POLAD), Dan Green, who was nicknamed ‘Afghan Dan’. Indeed Green possessed this kind of knowledge as during his previous tour as a POLAD in 2005 he had been one of the advocates of the empowerment of the Barakzai and Achekzai as a counterbalance against Jan Mohammed’s dominance (see 8.3.2). Moreover, Green was also the writer of

Affairs Bot and his Defence colleague Henk Kamp were attending the meeting. This is erroneous as the official parliamentary sources do not report the presence of Kamp, but mention Sonneveld as highest defence representative. Similarly a 2012 report by the Dutch national ombudsman regarding a complaint about the Dutch embassy in Kabul only mentions Minister Bot, see Nationale Ombudsman, Rapport 2012/098, Rapport over een klacht over Nederlandse ambassade Kabul (Afghanistan) (Den Haag: De Nationale Ombudsman, 2012), 5.


31 Interview with captain Jan-Willem Feith, S-2 PRT-1, Amersfoort, 14 December 2009.


a report (2005) that had informed US ambassador Neumann's position in a meeting with Hamid Karzai regarding the removal of Jan Mohammed. In this report Green had stated that any effort to get rid of Jan Mohammed ‘must take into account the entrenched nature of his influence’ and therefore he urged to remove AHP chief Matiullah as well. According to Green’s views Rozi Khan was also to be sacked, as he was incompetent for the job of provincial chief of police. Contrary to what had happened in spring 2006, however, Green’s plan called to respect Rozi Khan’s position as one of the leaders of the Barakzai/Achekzai power block, and therefore he had to be appeased by a position as deputy governor, while one of Rozi’s closest associates, a very competent Achekzai ANP officer, would be named chief of police. For the Dutch staff officers in Tirin Kot Green’s detailed knowledge was a valuable source of information that was used to obtain a better understanding of local affairs in the pre-deployment phase as well as during the HOTO period between TFU-1 and the US PRT. It has to be mentioned, however, that Green later admitted that he gave the Dutch ‘a good portion’ of his files, but kept the most for his successor, Linda Specht, who would stay with the remaining US forces in Uruzgan. This confession indicates that the comprehensive intelligence picture obtained by TFU units during the pre-deployment period was far from complete.

A commonly reported obstacle by Dutch officers during the pre-deployment and HOTO period was the cumbersome cooperation with the US PRT, which formally was in lead of the US effort in Uruzgan. Even Dan Green, who was added to the PRT in June 2006 to smoothen the transfer of authority to the Dutch, denounced the policy followed by the US PRT commander as well as his negative attitude towards the new-coming allies. Whereas the previous PRT, in which Green also served as a POLAD, had empowered the Barakzai/Achekzai power block as a counterbalance against Jan Mohammed, the subsequent PRT, which took over around February 2006, again focused on control through collaboration with members of Jan Mohammed’s Popalzai-dominated network. This was totally opposed to higher US policy, as ambassador Neumann supported the removal of this predatory local power-holder. The choice for Jan Mohammed’s side, however, concurred with the view of locally operating US Special Forces who heavily leaned on the support of Matiullah and his AHP. As part of the PRT’s policy the latter’s force was to be integrated within the ANP, which would further strengthen Matiullah’s position. The PRT commander, naval aviator

34 The full report is attached to Green’s book on his experiences; see Dan Green, The Valley’s Edge, 221-226.
35 An example of the detailed information given by Dan Green on matters such as the tribal composition of villages, key leaders, etc. can be found in an unclassified report in which Green provided answers to questions from Dutch officials. See Anonymous, ‘Questions for Department of State Representative’ (Tirin Kot, 4 August 2006).
36 Dan Green, The Valley’s Edge, 181.
38 Dan Green, The Valley’s Edge, 148-149.
and former top gun instructor commander Steve Hartung, lacked any understanding of either local power dynamics or the way to influence them and has been depicted by Green as ‘acting more like a war tourist than a confident commander’. 40 Yet, Hartung was full of self-confidence about his own appreciation of the situation, allowing no interference with his policy or engagement of local actors by outsiders. This especially applied to his Dutch successors, whom he considered to be ‘unprepared, arrogant, and so forth, and he seemed to go out of his way to antagonize them’. 41 Hartung’s attitude permeated the US PRT, resulting in a narrow-minded operational mindset and bad relationships with its successors. Both Dutch PRT intelligence officer captain Jan-Willem Feith and CIMIC officer captain Mirjam Grandia-Mantas have described the US PRT as an extension of the local US Special Forces; its staff did not emphasize the advance of governance or the understanding of culture and tribal relationships, but focused on joining the Special Forces in the fight against the Taliban, which among others materialized in the PRT conducting airmobile actions by night. 42 Except for the knowledge of Dan Green, therefore, there was not much to be learned or taken over from this US PRT.

Despite the US PRT’s lack of contribution to the subsequent TFU mission, its policy heavily influenced shaping operations in preparation of the deployment of the main Dutch task force. If the US PRT had followed the line of its predecessors, the effect of the removal of Jan Mohammed could have been augmented by further measures curtailing the influence of his associates at the grassroots level. Instead its anti-Taliban focus and especially its consensus with US Special Forces left Jan Mohammed’s replacement much unexploited. Moreover, as Matiullah’s AHP was considered a pivotal anti-Taliban asset, Jan Mohammed remained highly influential in Uruzgan’s political marketplace. Thus shaping operations were characterized by a lack of political engagement, and of an almost exclusively kinetic nature as they took the form of a series of clearing operations that had started during spring and culminated in the ISAF Regional Command South (RC-S)-led summer offensive ‘Mountain Thrust’. 43 It has to be remarked that while those operations rightly aimed to augment security by diminishing Taliban influence and presence in selected target areas, they -contrary to counterinsurgency wisdom- did not intend to hold such cleared areas as there were insufficient troops to do so. US Special Forces fulfilled a predominant role in clearing Uruzgan, for which purpose they received assistance from the US Tenth Mountain Division, Matiullah’s AHP, ANP -at least what was left of it after the sacking of Rozi Khan-, ANA, and their fellow Australian and Dutch Special Forces detachments. As promised afore, we will now briefly discuss the actions of the latter detachment in order to provide an insight in these shaping operations.

40 Dan Green, The Valley’s Edge, 149. Green uses the alias Joe Gates for the PRT commander, his real name was drawn from an unclassified presentation given by Green’s fellow POLAD Reiter, see Richard ‘Ruff’ Reiter, Tarin Kowt Provincial Reconstruction Team Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan.

41 Dan Green, The Valley’s Edge, 149.

42 See interview with captain Jan-Willem Feith, S-2 PRT-1, Amersfoort, 14 December 2009, personal correspondence with major Mirjam Grandia Mantas, CIMIC liaison with US PRT, 12 May 2014.

43 See, among others, Arthur ten Cate, Martijn van der Vorm, Callsign Nassau, 240, 245, Dan Green, The Valley’s Edge, 158, 160.
Since the Viper detachment had joined the DTF in April 2006 in order to pave the way for the start of the TFU campaign, it had been conducting reconnaissance patrols to gather intelligence. Due to a lack of jamming capacity against radio-controlled IEDs, the Dutch operators (as soldiers of Special Forces are referred to) were dependent on their Australian and US counterparts for their operations, and therefore the Viper detachment always operated in conjunction with one of those allies.\footnote{Arthur ten Cate, Martijn van der Vorm, \emph{Callsign Nassau}, 243-244, George Dimitriu, Gijs Tuinman, Martijn van der Vorm, ‘Operationele ontwikkeling van de Nederlandse Special Operations Forces, 2005-2010’, 116, Marco Kroon, ‘DTF-acties Nederlandse Special Forces in de Chora-vallei’, 30.} Furthermore the Dutch Special Forces had encamped next to their US comrades, with whom they got along pretty well.\footnote{Dan Green, \emph{The Valley’s Edge}, 182.} The missions these combined Special Forces undertook often evolved into heavy fighting as they started to encounter the tactically trained and well-equipped fighters of the Neo-Taliban. The Viper detachment reported its first enemy contact at the end of April and during the next weeks it became clear that the OMF were well-established in the Deh Rafshan area and the adjacent Baluchi valley in northern Tirin Kot district. The situation was severe enough for the commander of the Viper detachment to report that ‘it has become clear that our squads are engaged in a war’.\footnote{Commander First Viper detachment quoted in Arthur ten Cate, Martijn van der Vorm, \emph{Callsign Nassau}, 245.} In June a major Taliban offensive aimed at the Chora district centre was repelled by the Special Forces, whom by now had gathered precise information on the opponents strength and locations. Consequently in July the combined Special Forces, led by the Australians, launched a huge clearing effort, operation Perth, that aimed to reduce the security threat to Tirin Kot (and indirectly also to Deh Rawud) by sweeping the Baluchi valley and its adjacent areas of Deh Rafshan and Chora district.\footnote{George Dimitriu, Beatrice de Graaf, ‘The Dutch COIN approach: three years in Uruzgan, 2006-2009’, 438-439, Arthur ten Cate, Martijn van der Vorm, \emph{Callsign Nassau}, 251-254, Marco Kroon, ‘DTF-acties Nederlandse Special Forces in de Chora-vallei’, 30-35.} Viper operators were tasked to move through the Baluchi valley in order to clear any OMF resistance, which took them nine days of continuous fighting. The operation was considered a huge success as 200 to 300 Taliban fighters were killed with minor coalition casualties and no losses among the Dutch. Moreover, platoon leader Marco Kroon was later awarded the \emph{Militaire Willemsorde} for his actions during the operations. The biggest achievement of the operation, however, was the reduction of the Taliban threat and the immediate enhancement of the overall provincial security situation as the start of TFU operations approached.

Of course the total of these type of shaping operations hugely added to the permissiveness of the operational environment as they thwarted Taliban operations throughout Uruzgan and inflicted heavy casualties on the opponent’s side. Yet, the sustainability of this success was doubtful, the Baluchi valley, for instance, soon again was a hotbed of insurgents. In this regard the commander of the second Viper detachment (August 2006), correctly observed that ‘the enemy is fluid’; more worrying, however, was the conclusion that came along with this observation, ‘for us the Taliban is anyone shooting at us’.\footnote{Deedee Derksen, \emph{Thee met de Taliban}, 115, see also George Dimitriu, Beatrice de Graaf, ‘The Dutch COIN approach: three years in Uruzgan, 2006-2009’, 438.} Due to the kinetic focus
Chapter 9

The Course of Co-option

of the shaping operations there had been little attention for the local population. As a consequence of operating with the US and Australian Special Forces, the Dutch operators had accepted their view on Uruzgan’s demographics and therefore they unwittingly followed the false assumption that the divide between Zirak Durrani and Ghilzai (which included Panjpai Durrani) tribesmen and the rather binary difference between ‘good’ government and ‘bad’ Taliban supporters coincided; a vision which at that early moment was shared by most Dutch soldiers, and which was only corrected when TFU operations brought an advanced understanding of local circumstances. The side effects of the shaping operations, therefore, were less positive than the immediate advancement of security suggested; by operating with their American and Australian colleagues the Dutch Special Forces had openly aligned themselves with Matiullah’s AHP which was extensively used by the US Special Forces in particular. Additionally, clearing operations such as Operation Perth had also caused civil casualties and many people felt forced to flee and leave their property. The local population, and especially the alienated Ghilzai tribes living in the Baluchi valley and Deh Rafshan area, consequently, started to associate the Dutch with the Popalzai elite of Jan Mohammed’s network and expectations about the TFU were low. Inadvertently the shaping operations had provided segments of the local population with a reason not to trust the Dutch at best, or to shoot at them at worst. Following the logic that anyone shooting at Dutch soldiers was regarded Taliban, this could possibly lead to a ‘catch-22’ situation in which those actively unsympathetic to Dutch forces were further alienated from them and driven in the hands of the Taliban.

Thus, on the eve of the TFU campaign Dutch soldiers not only had obtained a less than complete understanding about their future operational environment, the positive effects of Jan Mohammed’s removal were also largely spoilt due to the absence of measures against the former governor’s Popalzai-dominated network and the fact that Dutch forces now were being associated with this elite. Higher policy made by decision makers in The Hague and actions taken at the grassroots level had drifted apart even before the start of TFU operations. For a large part this discrepancy can be attributed to the lack of a profound

49 Only in Deh Rawud district Dutch operators had joined US Special Forces in civil affairs matters and in July they had even addressed a shura, a meeting of important local leaders, where they announced the deployment of the Dutch PRT. Yet, such operations were relatively scarce and subordinate to kinetic actions aimed at capturing or killing Taliban insurgents. See Arthur ten Cate, Martijn van der Vorm, Callsign Nassau, 248-250.

50 See interview with captain Jan-Willem Feith, S-2 PRT-1, Amersfoort, 14 December 2009, Bette Dam, Expeditie Uruzgan, 186-187, George Dimitriu, Gijs Tuinman, Martijn van der Vorm, ‘Operationele ontwikkeling van de Nederlandse Special Operations Forces, 2005-2010’, 116-117, MIVD, ‘SupIntrep Afghanistan, Stamverhoudingen in Uruzgan’. Albeit the MIVD report is relatively well-informed; it also states that ‘a considerable part of the Ghilzai have joined the Taliban’ and that there were tribal affiliations between Taliban and Ghilzai. The report, however, also nuances this as it explains that the Ghilzai were most affected by Jan Mohammed’s predatory behavior. This corresponds with Dan Green’s view on this matter. See for instance Dan Green, The Valley’s Edge, 161-162. Yet, in the fog of war such nuances often became trivialities. Furthermore the general assumption of the Taliban as a Ghilzai-based insurgency itself was totally erroneous as discussed in the previous chapter and argued by, among others, Giustozzi. See Antonio Giustozzi, Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop, 46-52.

51 In the case of Operation Perth ten civilian casualties and 270 displaced persons were reported. See Michiel De Weger, ‘Vipers or Tigers? Early Dutch Special Forces operations in Uruzgan’, 138, Bette Dam, Expeditie Uruzgan, 186.

52 See interview with captain Jan-Willem Feith, S-2 PRT-1, Amersfoort, 14 December 2009, Bette Dam, Expeditie Uruzgan, 186-187.
understanding of local power dynamics combined with locally operating US forces with a
different view on local actors (especially with regard to Jan Mohammed and Matiullah), and
an own force incapable to operate independently (as a consequence of the lack of jamming
capacity). From the traditional military point -it might be remembered that population-
centric counterinsurgency demands significant adaptation from this point-, however, the
pre-deployment phase can be considered a success as the reconnaissance activities of the
Viper detachment and its allies had pin-pointed the main pockets of Taliban resistance and
cleared those areas from enemy fighters.

On the short term the advance of provincial security that resulted from these operations
was a huge result as this not only allowed the forces of the DTF to build the main operating
bases in Tirin Kot and Deh Rawud, but also provided a permissive environment for the
deployment of the TFU and the handover of responsibility over the province and its people
from the US PRT. Equally important, in the wake of operation Perth Governor Munib,
a Ghilzai himself, succeeded to broaden his support as on July 20 he held meetings with
Ghilzai elders from the Deh Rafshan, Baluchi, and Mirabad areas discussing the security in
their areas and the support needs of the inhabitants.53 This was the provincial government’s
first reach out to these alienated communities and Munib was determined to continue this
course as he had gained confidence during a trip to Kabul earlier that month. Whereas Munib
previously was haunted by his background as an outsider, the sacking of Rozi Khan, and,
of course, the remaining influence of Jan Mohammed, it seemed that senior government
officials in Kabul now had expressed their explicit support for him. In the last days prior to
the start of the TFU campaign Munib felt strong enough to fire corrupt government officials
associated with Jan Mohammed’s Popalzai network, among whom the mayor of Tirin Kot.
Additionally, the new governor now publicly announced that he wanted to enroll the support
of Tokhi-leader Mohammed Nabi Khan, who had fled to Pakistan as a consequence of Jan
Mohammed’s rule and now was back in Afghanistan.54 While Dutch (and coalition) pre-
deployment activities had not provided a sufficient understanding of local power dynamics
and rendered Jan Mohammed’s removal largely unexploited, Munib’s actions in those final
days before the start of the TFU campaign did shape the political marketplace by offering
opportunities to the Ghilzai and curtailing Popalzai influence. Now it was up to TFU-1 to
take advantage of this work and demonstrate to the local population that they truly wanted
to augment support for the local government by offering equal chances to all segments of
Uruzgan’s population.

53 Dan Green, The Valley’s Edge, 155-156.
9.2.2 TFU-1

The first Task Force not only deployed with a less than complete understanding of Uruzgan’s complicated operational environment, it was also confronted with the challenges to lead an effort of unprecedented size in the history of the modern Dutch military, and simultaneously had to adapt to the demands of a population-centric counterinsurgency campaign.55 In this section we will explore how TFU-1 fulfilled its pioneering role from August 2006 until January 2007, and how this shaped the Dutch quest for control over the local population. Therefore we will first discuss the evolution of the TFU’s initial campaign plan, the so-called ‘Master Plan’, as well as the role of the subordinate units.56 Subsequently we will deal with the way TFU-1 sought to obtain influence in Uruzgan’s political marketplace.

As mentioned in this chapter’s introduction, politicians and decision makers in The Hague formulated a mission goal including some guidelines prescribing the TFU to foster stability and security in Uruzgan by augmenting the local population’s support for the Afghan government through CIMIC and reconstruction activities predominantly, with combat troops providing security assistance to create a permissive environment for such activities.57 Albeit this aim and approach were rooted in previous Dutch experiences in the Balkans, Iraq, and northern Afghanistan, and can be directly linked to a 2005 white paper concerning military missions in failing states, they provided hardly any tangible directions for implementation by the first task force.58 Consequently, TFU-1 set out to design its own plan within the framework of high level policy (including the ANDS). Despite this process being initiated during the pre-deployment training, the definitive Master Plan, with influx of the civil assessment, was only completed two months in the actual deployment.59 This plan was subsequently embraced by the defence staff and became the TFU’s official campaign plan. TFU-1 commander colonel Vleugels later commented on this episode that:

57 Tweede Kamer, Dossier 27925, no. 193
Chapter 9 The Course of Co-option

... [The guidelines] from higher level were very broad. That did not allow me to see what my end state would be. We didn’t have a campaign plan when we started, but we later got one from my higher headquarters that was close to ours, which is not surprising as they told us to do what we told them we would do.60

TFU-1, consequently, started its campaign without a proper campaign plan, which gave subordinate units some latitude to pioneer their own approach. Especially the first BG provided by the 12th airmobile infantry battalion under command of lieutenant-colonel Piet van der Sar succeeded in exploiting this gap as its staff had already devised a plan based on classical counterinsurgency principles.61 The unit had been actually assigned the Uruzgan BG mission as early as November 2005, while the staff of TFU-1 was appointed late December 2005 and only started to work together effectively during the integration (final) exercise in March and April 2006.62 The 12th battalion’s advantage was that it had been training for, among others, stabilization tasks as part of the high readiness NATO Response Force (NRF), and consequently its staff and soldiers had obtained proficiency with the tasks they were up to in Uruzgan. Contrastingly, lieutenant-colonel Nico Tak’s 42nd tank battalion which had been assigned the PRT role at an equally early moment had to adapt from large-scale manoeuvre warfare to the predominantly non-kinetic PRT mission.63 Consequently, the first BG held an edge over the PRT, which would heavily influence their cooperation as we will discuss below.64 Moreover, the 12th battalion also enjoyed a lead over the TFU staff, and the knowledge and ideas of the BG could easily find their way to the emerging campaign plan.65

Thus, under influence of the BG’s staff a first concept of operations evolved envisioning the deployment of TFU forces to two so-called Afghan Development Zones (ADZs) surrounding Tirin Kot (primary ADZ) and Deh Rawud (secondary ADZ). These ADZs were designated areas in which improvement in security and governance was to enhance the ties between the Afghan government and the local population, allowing the former to gain control by convincing the people of the government’s legitimacy.66 Furthermore, the ADZs were to act as a bridgehead for controlling the whole of Uruzgan province; a phased approach would first enable establishment and consolidation of the ADZs through the disruption of OMF

60 Russell W. Glenn, S. Jamie Gayton, Intelligence Operations and Metrics in Iraq and Afghanistan (Santa Monica: RAND, 2008), 9.
62 Interview with brigadier Theo Vleugels, commander TFU-1, Utrecht, 12 November 2009.
63 Interview with colonel Nico Tak, commander PRT-1, Utrecht, 6 November 2009.
64 See also interview with lieutenant-colonel Joost Doense, G-3 TFU-1, Breda, 25 April 2007.
activities and the provision of security creating the conditions for sustained development as well as an opportunity for expanding beyond the original ADZs. This approach clearly echoes the *tache d’huile* or ink spot concept, a heritage of both colonial warfare as well as the classical counterinsurgency era. Despite The Hague’s aversion to the term counterinsurgency, ideas stemming from its history thus percolated to the actual TFU strategy. Remarkably, the 12th battalion forms the nucleus of the Van Heutsz regiment -indeed named after the one time colonial officer and governor of Aceh who together with Snouck Hurgronje pioneered the Aceh strategy. Albeit this traditional link with the Dutch colonial army and the strategy for winning the Aceh War sometimes has been suggested as the inspiration for the BG’s embrace of counterinsurgency, involved officers commonly credit the 12th battalion’s intelligence officer, captain Ralph Coenen, with the introduction of counterinsurgency concepts in both the staff of BG-1 and TFU-1.

The ultimate TFU-1 campaign plan, the Master Plan, provided a detailed guideline for pursuing security and stability in Uruzgan province. In order to enhance the position of the provincial government TFU would expand its footprint from the original ADZs to the rest of the province’s population centres within four rotations (two years). This was to be achieved through four lines of operation respectively aimed at governance and justice, security and stability, development, and the TFU’s own credibility. While the latter intended to secure the TFU’s freedom of action and movement, the other three lines of operation all sought to bolster the local government’s capacities, influence, and authority. This included mentoring and assisting the locally operating Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF, all forces part of Afghanistan’s security apparatus, i.e. army, police, etc.), which were expected to guarantee the security and stability in the long run. Furthermore 23 effects were discerned which had to be obtained to create a secure and stable province under the helm of the Afghan government.

67 Interview with brigadier Theo Vleugels, commander TFU-1, Utrecht, 12 November 2009, interview with colonel Piet van der Sar and captain Ralph Coenen, commander/S-2 BG-1, Weert, 28 September 2009. Ralph Coenen started reading counterinsurgency literature when the 12th battalion was preparing for its NRF task. As his knowledge grew, it increasingly fed into the battalion’s staff, where it was enthusiastically embraced by commander lieutenant-colonel Piet van der Sar. At the time of the assignment as BG-1 a profound knowledge of counterinsurgency thus led to the use of counterinsurgency concepts that were also accepted by the TFU’s staff. Throughout the TFU campaign both Coenen and Van der Sar have advocated the use of counterinsurgency methods and contributed to the spread of knowledge through lectures, advises, and the publishing of articles. See, for instance, Piet van der Sar, ‘Kick the enemy where it hurts most. De steun van de lokale bevolking, daar gaat het om’, presentation Piet van der Sar, *De Bataljonstaakgroep in een Counterinsurgency Campagne*, 31 maart 2008, interview with Piet van der Sar, Leo van Westerhoven, ‘Counter insurgency in Uruzgan, ‘Eerst zien, dan pas geloven’, zeggen de Afghanen’, *Armex* 91:1 (2007), Ralph Coenen, ‘Counterinsurgency Operaties, geen succesvol optreden zonder gedegen kennis’, Ralph Coenen, ‘De Taliban in Uruzgan, Het karakter van de vijand en een aantal heroverwegingen om hem effectiever te bestrijden’, *Militaire Spectator* 178:3 (2009), interview with Ralph Coenen. Anonymous, ‘Peloton tussen kamp en dorp. Platoonhouse in Uruzgan als middel in de counterinsurgency-aanpak’, *Landmacht* 5:2 (March 2007). On the suggested link with the Aceh strategy see Eric Vrijssen, ‘Als vlooien op een wilde hond’, *Oude Van Heutsz strategie is inspiratie voor aanpak Taliban*, *Elsevier* 62:52 (30 December 2006), 26.


69 The TFU thus followed the so-called Effects-Based Approach to Operations (EBAO); the effects were linked to measurable criteria that allowed the monitoring of the mission’s progression. See Belinda Smeenk, Rudi Gowuweelu, Harm van der Have
An old military adage warns that no plan survives first contact. This once again proved to be true as the TFU immediately after the start of its mission was ordered to provide substantial support (one of its three infantry companies for about a month) to operation Medusa, a large-scale anti-Taliban operation in Kandahar province under command of RC-S. Even more important, Chora district had to be included within the Dutch ink spot as the Taliban continuously threatened this densely populated area. Whereas an initial troop-to-task analysis had already revealed a structural lack of means to maintain a permanent security presence in the originally identified ADZs, the drain of forces and immediate expansion of the footprint caused an overstretch from the onset of the campaign. Furthermore, the inadequate situational awareness with regard to the local population as well as the inexperience of both staff and soldiers with the new TFU organization and especially with the PRT mission characterized the start of the TFU campaign (we will discuss this further below). Consequently, the Master Plan turned out to be too ambitious for the available capacity causing the TFU staff and its subordinate units to search for a modus operandi allowing them to deliver security and enhance the local government’s control to the best of their limited abilities.

Due to the scarcity of capabilities BG-1 opted to emphasize continuously active patrolling (preferably by foot). Although the unit experimented with two so-called platoon houses during its tour (one in northern Tirin Kot district, and one in the north of Deh Rawud district), the available resources were insufficient for maintaining a permanent presence in the whole of the appointed ADZs. Therefore the battalion’s staff decided that in addition to their own security operations, the main effort should be directed at building an effective local counter-organization. The counter-organization is a classical counterinsurgency concept that prescribes a broad approach for organizing an effective administration and mobilizing the population against an insurgency. As BG-1’s main mission was to create a permissive environment for the local government to become more effective -corresponding with the Master Plan’s operation lines of security and stability, and a credible task force-, it focused on the enhancement of the local security apparatus. The advancement of the provincial government itself was the core business of the PRT -that thereby addressed the operation line of governance and justice as well as that of development.

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72 Interview with colonel Piet van der Sar and captain Ralph Coenen, commander/S-2 BG-1, Weert, 28 September 2009.

73 The idea of the counter-organization is most thoroughly described by McCuen. See John J. McCuen, The Art of Counter-Revolutionary War, 85-127.

74 For the BG mission see Piet van der Sar, ‘Kick the enemy where it hurts most, De steun van de lokale bevolking, daar gaat het om’, 12, on the PRT mission see Gerard Koot, ‘Tankers in een wederopbouwrol: Provincial reconstruction in Uruzgan’, 18. On mission and role of BG and PRT see also interview with brigadier Theo Vleugels, commander TFU-1, Utrecht, 12 November 2009.
to organize a counter-organization of local forces that would be able to keep a permanent posture by manning small operating bases throughout the province. Lieutenant-colonel Piet van der Sar preferred the use of ANP and ANA forces for realizing this plan. The reality, however, was that at the beginning of the TFU campaign these forces were insufficiently available in Uruzgan; the local police force had almost vanished after the dismissal of Rozi Khan, while only a small contingent of ANA soldiers was active in the province. The theory of the counter-organization solves this problem by stressing the importance of local militias for self-defense, however, as aforementioned Dutch forces in Uruzgan were operating under a political caveat that banned any form of cooperation with such entities. A rather ingenious solution that matched the reality on the ground with that of the politicians and policy makers in The Hague was found by drafting tribal militias as so-called Afghan National Auxiliary Police (ANAP), which formalized them as part of the official ANSF.75 Thus the TFU, and more specifically the BG, could start practicing the idea of the counter-organization in order to enhance the government’s security footprint and improve the security situation at the grassroots level.

The need to recruit local allies for the ANAP program urged the BG to establish contacts with local leaders. A first ally was found in Fazil, a militia commander from the Barakzai and Popalzai dominated Kowtwal village on the west bank of the Deh Rafshan in northern Tirin Kot district.76 Fazil, who held ties with Matiullah Khan, was instrumental in establishing a much-needed first barrier between pro-government Kowtwal and the Taliban-dominated villages to its north (among others Kowtwal’s school had recently been burnt by the Taliban).77 Fazil and his men were predominantly drafted into the ANAP as a local self-defence force, but soon the locally well-respected Fazil was also employed for careful rapprochement of the communities living to the north at either side of the Deh Rafshan river. Typically the BG would exploit Fazil’s contacts by dispatching its recce platoon on patrols to trace potential allies. If a key leader was encountered the platoon would call for BG commander Van der Sar (who was nicknamed ‘Big Smurf’ by his recce troops) to come in and set up a meeting. Tokhi elder Ismael Khan of the west bank’s Kakarak village was among the first leaders engaged this way. Despite a very positive meeting, the influence of the Taliban in the area was evident as Ismael Khan explicitly stated that he would be slaughtered if he would collaborate with the Dutch ISAF forces. A more successful reach-out to the previously marginalized Tokhi communities was accomplished in Surkh Murgab, where returned Tokhi-leader Mohammed Nabi Khan and his people (who previously had fought international forces) proved more than

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75 The ANAP was a nation-wide program that sought to address the immediate need for more security forces by recruiting 11,000 officers, of which 1,000 in Uruzgan. See Tweede Kamer, Dossier 27925, no. 237.
76 This section is predominantly based on the interview with colonel Piet van der Sar and captain Ralph Coenen, commander/S-2 BG-1, Weert, 28 September 2009. For more information on villages and Deh Rafshan power dynamics see PRT4, ‘Deh Rashan’ (Unclassified Report, Tirin Kot, January 2008).
willing to join the ANAP and establish a series of police posts and check points on the east bank of the Deh Rafshan. The ANAP officers were monitored, assisted, and trained by the BG, whose patrols paid regular visits to their indigenous auxiliaries. Contradistinctively the initial success of the counter-organization strategy was demonstrated by the untimely death of Fazil, who together with seven of his fighters was killed in an ambush on the road between Tirin Kot and Kandahar in January 2007. Albeit this incident was commonly reported as a Taliban action, it is most likely that Matiullah Khan ordered the killing of his ally in order to curtail Fazil’s rapidly growing influence as a key TFU collaborator -which made him a potential rival for Matiullah. This explanation is strongly supported by the location of the ambush; at that time the highway between Tirin Kot and Kandahar was under tight control of Matiullah’s men of the AHP and Taliban ambushes were extremely rare.

Matiullah Khan himself had offered his services to the BG on several occasions. Van der Sar and Coenen once met him during a dinner arranged by the commander of the Afghan Security Guard (ASG), a militia operating as a local private security company and responsible for securing the outer perimeters of the coalition camps. In a cordial sphere Matiullah emphasized his reputation -with the Americans- as a Taliban hunter as well as his ability to distinguish between the insurgents and the innocent population. Both Van der Sar and Coenen deemed Matiullah a valuable contact because of his influence and as a source of intelligence, but further cooperation could only be of a limited nature due to his bad name among large segments of the local population (most notably the Ghilzai). Therefore a continuation of informal contact was considered the best way forward. Albeit Matiullah invited Van der Sar for a follow-up dinner at his home, this meeting never took place due to an illness of the former that required immediate treatment in India.

Next to Matiullah and Mohammed Nabi Khan the BG also established contact with other influential local power-holders such as Malem Sadiq, the brother of Achekzai leader Malem Abdul Khaleq (who by now was residing in Kabul as a member of parliament), and Barakzai Commander Akhtar Mohammed, both of Chora district. Additionally many lower-level power-holders were engaged by BG patrols. Yet most of these meetings occurred randomly as platoons coincidentally ran into local elders in the area of operations of a specific mission.

78 See also interview with captain Jan-Willem Feith, S-2 PRT-1, Amersfoort, 14 December 2009, interview with brigadier Theo Vleugels, commander TFU-1, Vught, 7 December 2009.
79 Interview with colonel Piet van der Sar and captain Ralph Coenen, commander/S-2 BG-1, Weert, 28 September 2009. Joeri Boom also briefly mentions Fazil’s death, but describes it as a Taliban ambush. See Joeri Boom, Als een nacht met duizend sterren, Oorlogsjournalistik in Uruzgan (Amsterdam: Podium/BKB, 2010), 94-95.
80 Interview with colonel Piet van der Sar and captain Ralph Coenen, commander/S-2 BG-1, Weert, 28 September 2009. During its campaign the TFU hired about 250 ASG members for the protection of its bases in Tirin Kot and Deh Rawud. See Tweede Kamer, Dossier 27925, no. 295.
81 Interview with colonel Piet van der Sar and captain Ralph Coenen, commander/S-2 BG-1, Weert, 28 September 2009. Commander Akhtar Mohammed was nicknamed Akhtar Mohammed ‘Brown Eyes’ by the Dutch in order to distinguish him from Chenartu Popalzai leader Akhtar Mohammed as well as from Taliban commander Akhtar Mohammed ‘Red Eyes’. See Anonymous PRT-3 staff officer, Wezep, 21 September 2009, Martijn Kitzen, ‘Uruzgan Field Notes’, 95-96.
Only in Deh Rawud ADZ, where infantry platoons were assigned their individual operating domain and villages, more structural ties with lower leaders were forged.82

The soldiers of the BG, thus, made first contact with many of Uruzgan’s local power-holders in their quest to raise an effective counter-organization as well as during their continuous patrols. Yet, the experiences thus far had brought the BG on a collision course with the PRT, and especially with its commander lieutenant-colonel Nico Tak, who considered engagement of local power-holders a typical task for the specialized soldiers and civilian officials of the PRT.83 Moreover, due to the afore mentioned lead of the BG vis-à-vis the PRT and the TFU staff which resulted in the influx and acceptance of BG ideas and plans by the latter, many within the PRT felt overlooked. Tak -rightly- assumed that strengthening the local government required him to empower Governor Munib by enhancing his relations with Uruzgan’s local power-holders. BG commander Van der Sar, on the other hand, primarily sought to implement the classical counterinsurgency idea of establishing a counter-organization. In classical counter-insurgency locally operating (infantry) units typically fulfill roles in the field of security, governance, as well as development, and therefore no distinction between PRT-like and BG-like units exists. Although the definition of the exact roles of the BG and PRT as well as their mutual relationships and that with the TFU staff would remain troubled during the pioneering rotation of PRT-1 and BG-1, both commanders as well as TFU staff officers felt that the units had to improve their cooperation through enhanced integration. This resulted in an integrated approach towards patrols in which a PRT mission team would join a BG patrol. Furthermore the division of tasks was such that the BG primarily emphasized the provision of security and force protection, while the PRT became the prime unit to engage local power-holders for enhancing governance and development. However, as the about 60 PRT officials were far too less for maintaining contact with all key leaders, infantry platoon commanders would support the PRT in engagement of lower-level local power-holders. The dominant local power-holders were the exclusive focus of the military and civil officials of the PRT, with the commander of the TFU providing a backup capability that permitted an escalation of authority if this would be necessary to achieve an agent’s collaboration.

The ANAP program, which sought to enhance governmental control by institutionalizing local militias, now also became a responsibility of the PRT. Members of the military police were employed to teach the Afghan recruits a short course in policing at what now was called Kamp Holland, the main Dutch base in Tirin Kot.84 The BG remained active in mentoring and

assisting the ANAP posts and units in the field. More important was that the engagement of Tokhi leader Mohammed Nabi Khan (who was first contacted by the BG under the ANAP program) now was continued by the PRT. As a result of repeated talks with Governor Munib, who already kept good ties with his fellow Ghilzai tribesman Mohammed Nabi, the PRT officials at this time were aware of the latter’s potential for re-connecting Uruzgan’s alienated Ghilzai tribes with the provincial government. The Dutch soldiers even considered Mohammed Nabi the key player for controlling the whole of the Taliban-dominated area that reached from northern Tirin Kot district via the Baluchi valley to adjacent Chora district. Consequently, the Dutch set out to establish a co-optive relationship with Mohammed Nabi through development projects (among others a bridge was constructed) as well as the ANAP program. Albeit PRT commander lieutenant-colonel Nico Tak felt that he lacked the assets to come to business with key leaders, the Dutch succeeded in securing Nabi Khan’s collaboration.

This certainly can be regarded a successful first reach-out to the Ghilzai, and Mohammed Nabi cooperated with the TFU for its entire campaign. The first results, however, were somewhat disappointing as his position proved to be of a more limited nature than assumed by the Dutch.

As mentioned in the previous chapter (section 8.2.3), Mohammed Nabi’s direct influence mainly concerned the east bank of the Deh Rafshan area and parts of Mirabad valley, and he held only limited influence in the Baluchi valley as well as on the west bank of Deh Rafshan (the latter due to internal struggle within the Tokhi sub-tribe). This first became clear when he was ambushed in the Baluchi valley and called PRT commander Tak for assistance. TFU commander Vleugels then decided that ‘Mohammed Nabi’s leverage might be crucial [for the TFU mission], and therefore we will relief him’, but not at all costs, ‘we won’t blow up the valley’ (with massive bombing by a B-1 bomber) or engage in extensive fighting. Consequently, the mission of extracting Mohammed Nabi Khan was assigned to the Special Forces of the Viper detachment, who successfully rescued the TFU’s key collaborator. This incident indicated that Mohammed Nabi’s influence in the Baluchi valley was limited as he could not rally local fighters to come to his relief, but was completely dependent on Dutch support. A series of other incidents occurred at the end of the four-month rotation of the first BG and PRT when the TFU decided to extend its oil spot by building a post in Mohammed

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86 For Mohammed Nabi Khan’s attitude towards the TFU see interview with Mohammed Nabi Khan Tokhi conducted by Ralph van Kemenade, Tirin Kot, 9 January 2010.

87 Interview with brigadier Theo Vleugels, commander TFU-1, Vught, 7 December 2009.

88 Although no report is available this incident can be dated September 21 2006 as one source mentions an OMF attack on tribal elders in the Baluchi valley with Dutch forces giving support. See Peter Grotens (ed.), Als wij het niet doen, wie dan wel? Herinneringsboek TFU-1 (Den Haag, 2007), 55. Furthermore Ten Cate and Van der Vorm state that Viper at that time was operating in the Baluchi valley area. Arthur ten Cate, Martijn van der Vorm, Callsign Nassau, 256-257.
Nabi Khan’s area of influence near Surkh Murgab. From the start of its construction this post, named Poentjak (a reference to the colonial era as this is the name of a mountain pass in west Java where the regiment traditionally linked to the unit that formed BG-2 had established an outpost during the Indonesian War of Independence), came under repeated attacks of the Taliban despite its location and the presence of Mohammed Nabi’s ANAP. This not only revealed the limited nature of Mohammed Nabi’s power, but at that moment also gave him a reputation of duplicity as the Taliban could freely execute their operations in his home area. However, these incidents also signaled the strength of the Taliban in northern Tirin Kot district. Albeit Mohammed Nabi Khan’s power was not what it was expected to be, he remained a key player to diminish the Taliban’s influence and reach out to at least a part of the previously marginalized segments of the population. Therefore, the Dutch soldiers continued their engagement of this local power-holder throughout the TFU campaign; yet this would never be as intensive as during these first months.

The episode with Mohammed Nabi demonstrates that the Dutch would attribute development projects, train and assist militias in order to formalize them and even go as far as providing security to co-opted power-holders. The case, however, also reveals that the understanding of the local population and its leaders still was far from perfect. As aforementioned (section 9.2.1) the detailed information of the civil assessment had simply come too late to be incorporated by BG-1 and PRT-1. Furthermore the unfamiliarity with this aspect of intelligence combined with an implicit preference for kinetic operations against the Taliban -despite TFU commander Vleugels stressing the need for a population-centric approach-, resulted in an intelligence process still optimized for gaining and processing enemy-centric intelligence. A much heard claim in this regard is that during the early stages of the TFU campaign some officers considered the reading of Khaled Hosseini’s *The Kite Runner* a sufficient preparation for understanding Uruzgan’s complicated societal landscape. This hampered the development of an appropriate situational awareness in the complicated operational environment provided by Uruzgan’s fragmented society, a flaw that most heavily affected the PRT whose mission was completely dependent on such


91 This claim was echoed more widely during informal talks and meetings, and is explicitly mentioned by PRT-2 commander Koot. See interview with colonel Gerard Koot, commander PRT-2, Utrecht, 19 December 2009, and, for instance, Martijn Kitzen, ‘Uruzgan Field Notes’, 47.
information. Even the completion of the civil assessment did not improve this deficiency, as there were insufficient civil experts to assist the military in overcoming their inexperience in dealing with this kind of fine-grained information. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which had produced the civil assessment, initially dispatched only two representatives to assist in its implementation on the ground in Uruzgan. POLAD Rochus Pronk, who focused on the provincial government and functioned as the link between the TFU and the Dutch embassy in Kabul, and development cooperation advisor (ontwikkelingssamenwerking adviseur, OSAD) Marten de Boer, who until the middle of September spent much of his time in Kabul in order to finalize the civil assessment. Thus, even when appropriate information about the local population and its socio-politico structure became available through the civil assessment, this did not immediately transform into a more thorough understanding of Uruzgan’s societal landscape.

The situation took a change in the right direction when an additional development cooperation advisor for tribal affairs (ontwikkelingssamenwerking/tribal adviseur, OSTAD) was embedded in the PRT. This Dutch national, with about twenty years of working experience in Afghanistan and Pakistan, had previously worked as an advisor of the Canadian PRT in Kandahar (while being employed by the British Department for International Development (DFID)), and combined a thorough understanding of Pashtun society with an extensive network in the greater Kandahar region and command of the Pashto language. The presence of this dedicated tribal advisor opened new opportunities for the soldiers of the TFU, who now could benefit from his expertise to enhance their understanding of Uruzgan’s local society and its power structure as well as in the daily contacts with the local people and their leaders. Whereas the Dutch initially sought to understand the dynamics of (violent) contention in Uruzgan along lines of pro-government and pro-Taliban –with the term OMF being used as a synonym for Taliban–, a more nuanced image now gradually emerged. Of course, the tribally inspired rivalry between Jan Mohammed Khan’s Popalzai network and especially the Ghilzai Pashtun had been acknowledged afore, but in addition to this tribal dimension the conflict in Uruzgan by this time was also analyzed by studying the position and role of the dominant local power-holders, the so-called power brokers, current political relationships of local leaders, as well as the affiliation of local leaders and sub-tribal segments during the mujahideen era. This multi-faceted concept for understanding Uruzgan’s complicated

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92 See also interview with lieutenant-colonel Joost Doense, G-3 TFU-1, Breda, 25 April 2007.
94 Interview with anonymous TFU OSTAD, The Hague, 1 March 2010. See also Emiel de Bont, Onder Taliban en krijgsheren, Nederland en de oorlog in Afghanistan, 205-206, major S.F. King, Civil-Military Cooperation in the Kandahar PRT, Kandahar, 2006, presentation on CIMIC experiences. De Bont refers to this advisor under the alias Gerard. Although the OSTAD’s exact date of arrival cannot be traced (neither he could remember it during the interview), this occurred somewhere during fall 2006. The first time his appointment was publicly mentioned was on 15 September 2006, see Noël van Bemmel, ‘In Uruzgan is diplomaat gezworen kameraad’, Volkskrant 18 September 2006, accessible via http://www.volkskrant.nl/vk/nl/2686/Binnenland/article/detail/779704/2006/09/18/In-Uruzgan-is-diplomaat-gezworen-kameraad.dhtml.
The pioneering PRT-1 was the first to initiate this comprehensive analysis, it was optimized by their successors of PRT-2 who not only took advantage of the OSTAD’s advise, but also enjoyed the benefit of possessing the completed civil assessment (which they found hard to get as it was only made available to them after repeated requests) for obtaining a proper level of situational awareness before their actual deployment.95 Furthermore it has to be mentioned that in addition to the OSTAD, PRT-2 commander Lieutenant-colonel Gerard Koot also made good use of a Dutch national interpreter, Mr. Hamidi, who not only possessed an excellent command of both Pashto and Farsi, but also had quickly developed a good grasp of local politics and relationships that was instrumental in completing the layers of conflict model.96

It goes without doubt that the OSTAD’s contribution was of great value to the entire TFU; this was also acknowledged by the fact that as of the third month of the TFU mission his expertise was incorporated in regular meetings with the task force’s most important actors, including the commander.97 In addition to improving the understanding of the local circumstances, the OSTAD also smoothened the interaction with the local population. Of vast importance was his advise to use only Dutch national interpreters for the engagement of local leaders. Whereas PRT-1 already had observed that some local power-holders were uncomfortable with locally hired interpreters, the OSTAD could clarify this as most of those interpreters held a tribal affiliation to either the Barakzai or Popalzai sub-tribes of the greater Kandahar region and he also suspected that they reported their findings outside TFU channels.98 Another example was his urge for enhanced vetting of the official local representatives attending shuras with the combined BG and PRT staff in Deh Rawud, as he -rightly- suspected that these representatives were merely straw men of dominant power brokers and not the legitimate leaders of the district’s marginalized Babozai and Nurzai sub-tribes. Yet, the OSTAD himself sometimes experienced resistance to his attempts to imprint a more population-centric mindset.99 While the soldiers’ implicit preference for enemy-centric operations can partly explain this resistance, an additional explanation is given by the OSTAD’s character. Albeit very competent the OSTAD is commonly described as an eccentric individual whose elucidations were extremely hard to follow even by well-

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96 In 2008 Mr. Hamidi would become the TFU’s assistant tribal advisor and as such he spent the entire four years of the TFU-campaign (except for leave) in Uruzgan. We will expand his role in the next chapter. Interestingly, Mr. Hamidi first offered his services to the Dutch forces in 2005 when he was on a holiday trip travelling by car from the Netherlands to Kabul. In northern Afghanistan he ran into the Dutch PRT at Pol-E Khomri as he assisted the local population to improve schooling with help of the PRT. See interview with Mr. Hamidi, TFU cultureel adviseur (CULAD), Tirin Kot, 22 November 2008.


prepared officials such as PRT staff officers or POLADs.\(^{100}\) This, in combination with long periods of absence due to leave and work outside the perimeter of the camp, made him rather inaccessible, especially to the BG, the TFU’s largest sub-unit. Moreover, his tendency not to share all information -in order to protect his sources- and extensive contacts among the local population as well as the fact that he had been working for other foreign powers gave him a dubious reputation in the eyes of many soldiers who were used to guard their operational security. On the other side the OSTAD enjoyed much respect from PRT personnel who were more dependent on his knowledge; commanders and staff officials generally report a good working relationship and appreciated the OSTAD’s advises.\(^{101}\) Thus, the OSTAD’s influence on the TFU was felt best within the PRT.

In addition to his direct contribution to the military’s TFU mission the OSTAD and the other two civilian advisors deemed a so-called ‘Track 2’ approach, which encompassed ‘covert action and activities through actors close to the local communities’, necessary.\(^{102}\) This program would focus on marginalized segments of the population and try to co-opt ‘high value collaborators’, including internally displaced persons and opinion leaders, through quick and visible (development) projects (QVPs) executed by Afghan NGOs. Whereas ‘Track 1’ mainly consisted of regular TFU and Afghan government development activities within the ADZs, ‘Track 2’ actions predominantly concentrated on the areas outside the TFU’s oil spot. Albeit some of the military officials of the PRT were involved with ‘Track 2’, the program’s exact whereabouts were not clear to the TFU’s other units and its staff -many soldiers were even completely unaware of its existence.\(^{103}\) Reportedly this was a deliberate choice to protect local collaborators and prevent disturbances caused by military interference. Consequently ‘Track 2’ was not synchronized with the TFU’s campaign plan and operations, and therefore its potential remained largely unexploited. Moreover, a bifurcation between both tracks occurred as both development advisors focused on ‘Track 2’ QVPs, while the military officials of the PRT sought to engage the local population and its leaders within the ADZs through CIMIC activities.

Even more important was that while PRT-1 commander Tak already had complained about the lack of means for establishing ties with key leaders, the 2006 budget of €1,000,000 for

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\(^{100}\) See Emiel de Bont, *Onder Taliban en krijgsheren, Nederland en de oorlog in Afghanistan*, 206, see also interviews with brigadier Theo Vleugels, commander TFU-1, Vught, 7 December 2009, colonel Piet van der Sar and captain Ralph Coenen, commander/S-2 BG-1, Weert, 28 September 2009.


'Track 2' QVPs doubled the €500,000 allocated for CIMIC (with respectively €1,000,000 and €2,000,000 for the first year of the campaign); a December 2006 update mentions 50 CIMIC projects, and more than 200 QVPs conducted by seven local NGOs. Additionally €3,000,000 of Dutch development aid for Uruzgan was channeled through the central government in Kabul, which rendered this budget out of control of the TFU and prone to malign influences within the Afghan government as well as to corruption. Both PRT-1 and -2 observed how the Afghan government’s institutional structure built around central and provincial ministries also minimalized the influence of Governor Munib as for instance tons of money for new schools were directly transferred from Kabul’s Ministry of Education to Uruzgan’s local educational ministry. Former governor and Popalzai tribal leader Malem Rahmatullah Khan who was now Uruzgan’s minister for education, hugely benefitted from this as he also possessed a construction company that received the exclusive order to build the new schools. The asymmetry between the Dutch budgets for CIMIC and development through QVPs and Afghan government channels remained unchanged during the whole four-year TFU campaign, culminating in a total of €4,000,000 spent by the PRT versus a tremendous €126,000,000 spent on development aid. As both the donation of aid to the government and the QVPs executed by local NGOs were almost impossible to verify, most money spent on development in Uruzgan could not be used as a leverage tool for enhancing the TFU’s control over the local population. Thus, only a limited amount of money, the CIMIC budget, was available to engage the bulk of Uruzgan’s local power-holders who were living within the ADZs -the main area of interest for the TFU- in order to obtain their collaboration.

Despite all these difficulties of which at least a part is inherent in initiating a population-centric campaign with multiple units -of which most were inexperienced with this kind of campaign- and other actors in a highly complicated operational environment, TFU-1 can be credited for its continuous effort to empower Governor Munib. The reach out to the formerly alienated Ghilzai communities, which was started by the new governor just before the beginning of the TFU campaign, was amplified by BG-1’s engagement of Tokhi leader Mohammed Nabi Khan. When the PRT took over the lead of this effort, the course was continued and TFU commander Vleugels even deployed Dutch forces to protect Mohammed Nabi asking himself ‘what would it mean to Munib if I won’t intervene’. Albeit the results of this contact were not as spectacular as first expected, it re-established a durable connection between at least a significant part of Uruzgan’s Ghilzai and the local government that would endure long after the end of Munib’s governorship. PRT-1 commander Tak established a good relationship with Munib and he became the primary TFU agent (supported by the POLAD) to

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107 Interview with brigadier Theo Vleugels, commander TFU-1, Vught, 7 December 2009.
have regular (almost weekly) meetings with the governor. It has to be mentioned that Tak discovered Munib’s taste for fish that he duly exploited to smoothen their relationship by inviting Munib for dinner every time fish was served at Kamp Holland. It’s a testimony to their good relationship that Munib was shocked when Tak announced his departure after four months as he had expected the Dutch PRT to stay for a year just like their US predecessors. Yet, Munib found Koot to be an equally competent partner to deal with. Albeit both PRT commanders kept a good relationship with Uruzgan’s governor, they did not shun a critical attitude. Munib was confronted with evidence of corruption among the local government and precarious questions about his weeks-long visits to Kabul, during which his absence seriously hampered the advancement of the provincial government. It turned out that Munib spent much of his time in the capital because he was thwarted by the central government as a result of former governor Jan Mohammed Khan’s influence. Although Munib did not want to let down Hamid Karzai, he confessed this during a private meeting with Koot and Mr. Hamidi who started philosophizing about the relations between Jan Mohammed’s Popalzai network and the Karzai family and asked him to nod his head when they were right. Furthermore Munib’s position was also actively undermined by local representatives of the mentioned networks, especially by Khudai Rahim, his deputy governor and a direct relative of Jan Mohammed and Matiullah Khan. The TFU successfully blocked Rahim’s lobby to replace Munib and install Matiullah as provincial chief of police.

Matiullah Khan, the most powerful local power-holder allied to Jan Mohammed’s network, was carefully engaged by the Dutch soldiers of TFU-1 as already illustrated by the experiences of BG-1. Both PRT commanders repeatedly met Matiullah, and TFU commander Vleugels occasionally talked to him. Whereas the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs had issued an official ban on all contacts with Jan Mohammed, it was felt that Matiullah with his well-organized, equipped, and trained fighters (who were institutionalized as AHP), could not be ignored as he was a too influential player in Uruzgan’s political marketplace. Lieutenant-colonels Tak and Koot therefore actively sought to exert some influence in order to mitigate the spoiling effects of his militia on the outreach towards the marginalized Ghilzai tribes. This resulted in a tacit agreement that kept Matiullah’s fighters outside the main Ghilzai areas as he would confine his operations to the south of the Teri Rud river.

While Matiullah at least ‘temporarily and locally’ accepted this restriction, US Special Forces which had leaned heavily on his use as their prime anti-Taliban ‘gun dog’ were
less acquiescent.\textsuperscript{111} Added to their discontent of the Dutch policy that had been fed by the replacement of their ally Jan Mohammed by Governor Munib with his Taliban background, this now gradually resulted in the US Special Forces actively thwarting the TFU mission. The disobedience of an explicit order from TFU commander Vleugels - the overall area commander of Uruzgan - that called for them to cease cooperating with Matiullah was the culmination point of these different perspectives on with whom exactly to collaborate.\textsuperscript{112} Albeit Dutch major-general Ton van Loon, who just had assumed command over RC-S (dating this incident in November 2006), solved the conflict through the US Special Forces chain of command, the fundamental difference between the Dutch officers and diplomats and what they regarded as American operators with ""cowboy"" ways - 'as if that is an insult to an American' - would persist during the entire four-year TFU campaign (we will see this in the next chapter).\textsuperscript{113}

Matiullah himself had realized that his best chances to consolidate and enlarge his power lay in obtaining a higher position within the official security apparatus of the Afghan government. As we have already seen, the last US PRT actively sought to enlarge Matiullah's role within Uruzgan's branch of the ANP and other actors of Jan Mohammed's network started to lobby for his appointment as provincial chief of police. During the latter period of the TFU-1 rotations Matiullah himself set up a brilliant public relations masterpiece by which he demonstrated his competence for the job. In early 2007 Matiullah organized a ceremony at his camp in which he handed over 250 captured weapons to the head of the national disarmament committee who was purposely flown in from Kabul.\textsuperscript{114} After this all attendants, including PRT-2 commander Koot and his small security detachment, were regaled with an exorbitant dinner. Albeit it was evident to all that those guns were rusty and totally obsolete it was a clear signal to ISAF and Munib's provincial government that Matiullah applied for the function of provincial chief of police. Thus, the TFU-1 deployment had empowered Munib and brought about the much-needed reach-out to the Ghilzai community, but ended with the most influential local actor of Popalzai origin announcing his ambition to enlarge his power. This was an obvious hint that there was a long way to go to definitely curtail the influence of Jan Mohammed's Popalzai-dominated network.

9.3 The battle of Chora and its aftermath

In the early morning of Saturday 16 June 2007 the Taliban opened an all out attack on the centre of Chora district, a strategic junction connecting Uruzgan's four compass quarters (and consequently also an important connection between Helmand, Kandahar and

\textsuperscript{111} Interview with colonel Nico Tak, commander PRT-1, Utrecht, 6 November 2009.
\textsuperscript{112} Interview with brigadier Theo Vleugels, commander TFU-1, Vught, 7 December 2009.
\textsuperscript{113} Dan Green, \textit{The Valley's Edge}, 182.
The ensuing battle raged for four full days and saw TFU forces, ANSF, and local sub-tribal militias jointly repelling the attackers. Before this battle the situation in Chora was defined by a stalemate that resulted in a tacit understanding between local leaders (including government representatives) and Taliban commanders respectively seeking to secure trade and daily livelihood, and freedom of movement. After the fighting threw out the Taliban, the situation shifted in favor of the TFU and the provincial government, which triggered the Dutch soldiers to adopt measures for consolidating and exploiting this outcome. Furthermore, the intense combat revealed to the Dutch public that the TFU soldiers were involved in a full war with the Taliban insurgents. This opened the way to the adoption of counterinsurgency as the Dutch task force’s official campaign theme early in 2008; a development that would effectively render the remaining years of the TFU mission an enhanced neo-classical counterinsurgency campaign (which will be discussed in the next chapter).

At this point we will focus on the battle of Chora itself as well as on its immediate ramifications for the campaign and especially the TFU’s influence over Uruzgan’s political marketplace. In order to grasp these complicated affairs we will first study the battle and its prelude and subsequently analyze the aftermath of the struggle for Chora. This means that this account covers (parts of) the deployment of the second and third TFU staff rotations commanded by colonels Hans van Griensven (TFU-2, January 2007-August 2007) and Nico Geerts (TFU-3, August 2007-January 2008). Additionally we will study PRT-3 (the first six-month PRT rotation, April 2007-September 2007) and PRT-4 (October 2007–March 2008), which were led by lieutenant-colonels Gino van der Voet and Wilfred Rietdijk respectively. The reason for the focus on the PRTs is provided by the coarse distribution of tasks between BG (security) and PRT (engagement of the population and its leaders) that gradually evolved during the deployment of TFU-1 and was adopted as a standard for the remainder of the TFU campaign. Due to this book’s particular subject of co-option of local power-holders, the actual engagement of local leaders as well as its connection with the overall mission are the most important affairs to be studied. As aforementioned, we cannot analyze all contributions to the TFU mission, but if necessary essential details from the involvement of other units, such as the BG, will be incorporated in our analysis. Let us now first turn to the battle of Chora and the events that preceded it.


9.3.1 Chora, spring 2007: prelude and battle

When TFU-2 took over the helm from TFU-1, they clearly benefitted from the experiences of their pioneering predecessors. Colonel Hans van Griensven, a former lecturer of the Netherlands’ staff college, stated in his commander’s intent that the mission was to be regarded as a typical counterinsurgency operation in which he sought to make the OMF irrelevant -rather than destroying them- by winning the population’s collaboration. Therefore he called upon the Dutch soldiers to gear up their mindset for population-centric operations, ‘to build where possible and fight if necessary’, which was also captured in TFU-2’s motto ‘It’s all about the Afghan people’. Albeit not all elements of the TFU staff and units under its command turned equally adept in fulfilling this appeal (the TFU intelligence section remained predominantly focused on the Taliban, and some key personnel within the BG equally considered the fight against the insurgents the essence of the mission), Van Griensven’s emphasis on the importance of the local population would have a great impact on the TFU campaign, as we will see below.

A direct consequence of the new commander’s vision was that not only the distribution of tasks and roles between the BG and PRT as gradually established during TFU-1 was maintained, but that the latter unit now became leading. The BG would create the right conditions for the PRT by providing force protection and applying pressure with its patrols according the directions of the PRT, which fitted the TFU commander’s philosophy that ‘my task force is one big PRT’. While BG commander lieutenant-colonel Rob Querido had bought into this idea and together with his PRT colleague lieutenant-colonel Gino van der Voet had agreed to seek concurrence on their mutual operations, the relationship between Task Force staff and PRT on one side, and the BG on the other would remain tense during the TFU-2 rotation. A factor that might have influenced this was that both Van Griensven and Van der Voet belonged to the tight community of Dutch Army’s engineer corps (as well as the bulk of the PRT which predominantly consisted of personnel from 41 armoured engineer battalion), which smoothened their relationship as they held daily meetings late in the evening (usually between 23:00 and 24:00, often discussing their work while playing darts), while Querido as an infantryman was a relative outsider.

Initially the focus of the TFU-2 effort lay on the Deh Rafshan area in the north of the Tirin Kot ADZ. The situation around base Poentjak as well as on the river’s west bank remained

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troublesome with regular contacts between TFU soldiers and OMF.\footnote{See, for instance, Joeri Boom, \textit{Als een nacht met duizend sterren}, Oorlogsjournalistiek in Uruzgan, 76-90, Harm Ede Botje, "We zitten daar goed", Rapportage Op pad met onze jongens in Uruzgan", 29, Jos Groen, \textit{Task Force Uruzgan (2006-2010), Getuigenissen van een missie"}, 36-50.} Supported by BG patrols and the detachment on Poentjak the PRT set out to enhance stability in the area by engaging the local population. Like the previous rotation, PRT-3 had benefitted from the availability of the civil assessment and the knowledge gathered by their predecessors, which had brought them considerable information on the provincial government and the background of associated key leaders. More important, whereas PRT-2 had first conceptualized the conflict as multilayered, PRT-3 was fully aware of this complicated situation upon its deployment and immediately started to enhance its understanding with use of the OSTAD and interpreters such as Mr. Hamidi.\footnote{Interviews with anonymous PRT-3 staff officer, Wezep, 21 September 2009, colonel Gino van der Voet, commander PRT-3, The Hague, 9 March 2010, anonymous TFU OSTAD, The Hague, 1 March 2010, Mr. Hamidi, TFU CULAD, Tirin Kot, 13 November 2008. The remainder of this paragraph is also based on these sources.} This not only resulted in a better insight in the local dynamics, it also brought them an ability to actually interfere. The way the PRT sought to gain influence over the population on both banks of the Deh Rafshan river clearly bore the fruits of this new approach: it was understood that the divided Tokhi community could not be engaged through a single dominant leader, like the east bank’s Mohammed Nabi Khan Tokhi, and therefore the PRT staff opted for a reconciliation strategy in which respected Tokhi elder Doctor Abdul Baqi (who was well-connected to the communities on both sides of the river and related to Mohammed Nabi) fulfilled a key role. This program was a true reach-out to the whole of the Deh Rafshan’s Ghilzai tribes as it not only enhanced the collaboration of the east bank community, but also provided an opportunity to the west bank communities linked to the Taliban to connect to the local government. It turned out to be a huge success as in 2007 alone 140 local insurgents defected.\footnote{On Dr. Baqi and the reconciliation program see also Martijn Kitzen, ‘Uruzgan Field Notes’, 170, Peter ter Velde, \textit{Kabul & Kamp Holland, Over de stad en de oorlog"}, 225-226.} Yet, the main west bank Taliban commander, Gulam Razul, did not switch sides as the PRT’s involvement with Dr. Baqi’s efforts lost its momentum. Culprit was an immediate need to shift the focus of the main effort from the Deh Rafshan area to Chora district where as early as March 2007 signs of a serious Taliban threat were mounting.

As aforementioned, Chora district was the scene of a fragile equilibrium between the Taliban and local leaders, including the district chief, mayor and local chief of police. This situation was the result of the events that took place in June 2006 when an estimated 300 Taliban fighters overran the district. The insurgents were pushed back to the north by a combined force of Australian and Dutch Special Forces, US soldiers and overwhelming air power including Dutch AH-64 attack helicopters, US AC-130 gunships and close air support by A-10 fighters.\footnote{Arthur ten Cate, Martijn van der Vorm, Callsign Nassau, 237-240.} While this action restored the peace in the district itself, the Taliban retained their presence to its north and in the adjacent Baluchi valley, which rendered them an ability to exert influence in Chora. In order to consolidate the results of the coalition’s military actions
and prevent an increase of Taliban influence, the TFU included Chora district into its oil spot immediately after the beginning of the campaign. Due to the lack of means, Dutch presence took the form of bi-weekly patrols in which an augmented platoon of the BG, including a PRT mission team, would set up a temporarily patrol base at the so-called White Compound, the district centre in the town of Ali Shirzai. After a couple of days of patrolling the district, the Dutch would leave to return in two weeks. Yet, in April 2007 it became clear that this was insufficient as the Taliban was quickly raising its pressure and insurgents were attacking police checkpoints in the district’s west. This resulted in the deployment of elements of the Viper detachment to Chora as well as the permanent positioning of a company (two platoons strong) of the BG. The latter unit became entangled in almost continuously fierce fighting while retaking checkpoints or encountering Taliban fighters during the months April, May, and the first weeks of June.

Since the first indications of an imminent Taliban attack, the PRT staff had focused on Chora and devised a ‘rescue plan’ for the district. The enhanced BG presence was part of this plan that additionally called for strengthening the locally operating police. An additional problem was the weak position of Chora’s governmental officials, district chief Haji Obaidullah (a Barakzai befriended to Jan Mohammed Khan) had a poor reputation and the chief of police was despised for his corruption and the keeping of a chai boy. Therefore the PRT plan also called for direct engagement of the true authorities, the local tribal leaders, by allocating development projects. The underlying idea was to unite Chora’s tribes in order to mobilize them for a stand-off with the Taliban. Albeit it was known that the Achezkai and Barakzai dominated Chora, the exact relationships between various sub-tribal segments had remained terrain vague. Especially the so-called Barakzai triangle in the northeast turned out to be a source of contention within the Barakzai sub-tribe. It appeared that a 30-year old conflict over water and land (known as the ‘water conflict’) between prominent Barakzai tribal leader Commander Akhtar Mohammed and the less important Gul Badja Khan was the cause of a deep rift in Chora’s community. To enhance his position Akhtar Mohammed had allied himself with provincial Popalzai leader Jan Mohammed Khan, while the powerful Achezkai leader Malem Abdul Khaleq had supported the other side. As Abdul Khaleq and Barakzai leader Rozi Khan were the headmen of the Barakzai/Achezkai block that had constituted a credible counterbalance against Jan Mohammed’s Popolzai-dominated

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125 Ibid., 39-40, see also Arthur ten Cate, Martijn van der Vorm, Callsign Nassau, 268, colonel Hans van Griensven, lieutenant-colonel Rob Querido, and others, Battle of Chora briefing, Breda, 5 December 2007.
network, the local conflict within Chora’s community reflected the struggle for dominance in Uruzgan’s political marketplace. At this time, however, the PRT was not fully aware of the details of this highly politically polarized conflict. Yet, it succeeded in organizing shuras to discuss the deteriorating security situation of the district as well as the way forward to stability with representatives of both parties attending, including Akhtar Mohammed and Malem Sadiq (who represented his brother Abdul Khaleq as he was residing in Kabul to fulfill his duty as a Wolesi Jirga member).129

This is even more remarkable considering what by now had been learned about the attack on Chora in the previous year. It appeared that the fall of the district to the Taliban in 2006 was the result of a buyout, a deal between district chief Haji Obaidullah and the insurgents.130 Former governor Jan Mohammed Khan was the mastermind behind this affair, which was to demonstrate his enduring influence as well as the powerlessness of his successor Munib. In this typical Afghan demonstration of guile, the latter was reportedly ordered not to interfere with the events in Chora. While the TFU staff and PRT did not yet know the details of the political relationships within Chora district, they were well aware of the background of the 2006 battle of Chora in the run-up to the 2007 battle. Moreover, this knowledge had led to the acceptance of a working hypothesis predicting that the mounting Taliban pressure again could be linked to Jan Mohammed, who once more wanted to demonstrate his political power in Uruzgan, while simultaneously pushing Munib in disrepute. This time, however, the position of Jan Mohammed’s network would also be augmented as the mounting pressure would inevitably urge the local government and ISAF to call in Matiullah, who would only come to assistance on the condition of his appointment as provincial chief of police. The rescue plan for Chora sought to prevent a new buyout by establishing a permanent TFU presence (the BG company), and aimed at enhancing Chora’s local police as well as obtaining the cooperation of its tribal leaders to circumvent Matiullah’s involvement. Thus, the underpinning of the TFU policy in Chora was based on the assumption that Jan Mohammed’s political maneuver of 2006 was being repeated.

While there is little doubt that the actions in Chora also fitted the Taliban’s strategy of attacking district centres and police checkpoints in order to demonstrate their strength, the TFU’s working hypothesis was fueled by an accumulation of events.131 Among others there was the abstinent and sometimes reluctant attitude of Munib. Uruzgan’s governor was —again— spending much of his time in Kabul, and even thwarted TFU attempts to ameliorate the situation in Chora.132 For instance, when after repeated Dutch requests a 200 men strong ANP

132 On Munib’s attitude see also Emiel de Bont, Onder Taliban en krijgsheren, Nederland en de oorlog in Afghanistan, 200-202.
reinforcement for Chora was sent to Uruzgan, it was kept in Tirin Kot and Munib refused to use his influence for enforcing its deployment to Chora. Additionally, Matiullah Khan himself was conspicuously absent during the events in Chora. At one time he passed a message to the PRT stating that he was in Kabul, but more than willing to return to assist the TFU in Chora and for that purpose might be called any time. The national government itself demonstrated a seemingly deliberate lack of urgency and save the mentioned ANP reinforcement, not many other measures to support the TFU rescue plan were taken, despite the Dutch embassy’s engagement of senior national players. President Karzai, himself, played a rather dubious role as he offered a solution in the form of Matiullah’s appointment as provincial chief of police -more than probably on the advise of his counselor Jan Mohammed-, an offer duly rejected by both the TFU and the Dutch embassy. Furthermore, whereas various appeals for weapons to be sent to Uruzgan for distribution in Chora were denied, a delivery for Uruzgan Popalzai leader Akhtar Mohammed of Chenartu came through the channels carrying President Karzai’s personal approval. In a bold move TFU commander Van Griensven ordered these weapons to be delivered to Chora ‘because there is an Akhtar Mohammed too’. DynCorp, an American private military company responsible for the distribution to AN(A)P forces in the province, followed Van Griensven’s orders and brought the weapons to Chora where they were used to boost the arsenal of the police and local forces -the TFU never received any questions from either Kabul or Chenartu. The overall lack of support of the provincial as well as the national government combined with Matiullah’s posture all added to the credibility of the working hypothesis adopted by the TFU.

While the engagement of local leaders in Chora district itself was tightening the ties between the TFU and Achekzai leader Abdul Khaleq and his brother Malem Sadiq, who was the most important local leader on the ground, the Dutch now also started to seek for a durable counterbalance against Jan Mohammed’s remaining influence in the province. This brought them to Abdul Khaleq’s ally Rozi Khan, the province’s dominant Barakzai leader and former provincial chief of police. Any effective counterbalance against Jan Mohammed’s network could not succeed without this man, who a year before had been sacked on Dutch request. Due to this earlier association with Jan Mohammed’s government the initial approaches by the PRT were careful and indirect as it was felt that official contact was undesirable at this time. However, as by now it was gradually understood that despite Rozi Khan’s official position in Jan Mohammed’s government, he actually was an opponent of the former governor, the relationship soon improved and obtained a more public character. When an old man was detained by coalition forces on suspicion of involvement with an IED threat, Rozi Khan felt confident enough about his ties with the Dutch to plea for his release. He visited the PRT at Kamp Holland and informed them that this particular old man was a...
Pir, a local saint, who certainly would not engage himself in such matters. Moreover, if the holy man would not be released, the local population would certainly start revolting. PRT commander Van der Voet and the OSTAD checked these claims that they found to be true and subsequently asked TFU commander Van Griensven to set the old man free. Upon the man’s release Rozi Khan again came to the base in order to express his gratitude to Van der Voet personally, stating ‘I owe you one’. Consequently, the prelude to the battle of Chora brought the TFU contacts with the leaders of the Achekzai and Barakzai; the headmen of the only provincial power block that could provide an effective counterbalance against Jan Mohammed’s Popalzai network.

Yet, these contacts as well as the engagement of the tribal leaders in Chora itself were not developed sufficiently for preventing the Taliban from attacking the district. However, in the first weeks of June they did provide the TFU warnings that an attack was imminent. Just prior to the attack Wolesi jirga member Abdul Khaleq called the PRT on one of its public phone numbers to inform the Dutch that his people were considering an evacuation. Thus, the TFU was not caught off guard when the actual attack took place. Even more important was that in the weeks prior colonel Van Griensven had made up his mind about what to do in case of such an eventuality; the TFU would stand and fight. Albeit such a decision can only be taken in the heat of the battle itself, it was obvious that any other option would sever the task force’s credibility vis-à-vis the local population. Faced with the massive Taliban attack on Saturday 16 June 2006 Van Griensven, the TFU staff and its sub-commanders one more time carefully considered their options and confirmed that the best decision was to fight and repel the assault. In a dramatic gesture the commander of the BG company in Chora, Srebrenica veteran captain Larry Hamers, ordered the regimental flag of the Stoottroepen (shock troops, the same regiment that to no avail had tried to protect the safe haven Srebrenica in July 1995) to be flown next to the Afghan an Dutch flags. While his troops together with a small ANA detachment (40 soldiers) and a handful of AN(A)P men started fighting the Taliban, the staff in Tirin Kot was figuring out what would be the best option for relieving the district’s population and destroying the Taliban. It was evident to all that due to the TFU’s limited resources local allies would fulfill a crucial role in this operation. The question, however, was who of the local leaders would join the TFU forces and mobilize his men for the standoff with the Taliban.

136 Interview with anonymous PRT-3 staff officer, Wezep, 21 September 2009.
137 Interviews with colonel Hans van Griensven, commander TFU-2, The Hague, 28 January 2010, anonymous PRT-3 staff officer, Wezep, 21 September 2009, the decision during the battle itself and its argumentation are also captured by Tweede Kamer, Dossier 27925, no. 272, Emiel de Bont, Onder Taliban en krijgsheren, Nederland en de oorlog in Afghanistan, 226-228, Joeri Boom, Als een nacht met duizend sterren, Oorlogsjournalistiek in Uruzgan, 106-108, Peter ter Velde, Kabul & Kamp Holland, Over de stad en de oorlog, 158, 159.
138 Joeri Boom, Als een nacht met duizend sterren, Oorlogsjournalistiek in Uruzgan, 107-108, 115, colonel Hans van Griensven, lieutenant-colonel Rob Querido, and others, Battle of Chora briefing, Breda, 5 December 2007, Hamers was one of the co-presenters of this briefing.
Initially the process of mobilizing local allies went troublesome; it was difficult to get hold of Chora’s leaders in the turmoil. In the wider province the PRT started to call leaders who had handed in their weapons as part of Afghanistan’s demilitarization and demobilization program, but of whom it was suspected that they had secretly preserved some of their capabilities. Most people from outside Chora district, however, refused to meddle in affairs that they did not consider their own. Van Griensven recounts Van der Voet saying that ‘if we call Kabul this problem will be solved within the hour, however, we will be appointed a new provincial chief of police [Matiullah Khan]’. Change came when a PRT staff officer succeeded in contacting Rozi Khan who was expecting the TFU’s call for support and immediately responded to it. On Sunday 17 June Rozi Khan linked up with the commander of the BG, to join him on his way to reinforce the troops defending Chora’s district centre. As the Barakzai leader showed up with only a small militia of about 25 armed men -the PRT had informed Querido to expect up to 200 fighters-, disappointment was the first reaction. Yet, upon arrival at the white compound Rozi Khan immediately demonstrated his pivotal importance; after briefly shaking hands with company commander Hamers, he directly went into the district where Dutch patrols saw him visiting Chora’s tribal leaders in their respective villages. On the morning of Monday 18 June the full extent of his tribal diplomacy was revealed when rather unexpectedly 150 to 200 armed local men reported themselves at the district centre. Hamers forced a reluctant district chief Obaidullah to issue ammunition and the men quickly attached red and white barrier tape to their arms and guns for identification by TFU soldiers. It has to be mentioned that most of the fighters were connected to Achekzai leader Abdul Khaleq with the brave and charismatic Toor Abdullah as their most important field commander, while Commander Akhtar Mohammed decided to stay aloof. Rozi Khan, thus, had become a pivotal ally in the battle for Chora by mobilizing and organizing the local population -especially the segment linked to his ally Abdul Kahleq- through its leaders.

In the meantime the BG company had successfully held its ground thanks to overwhelming support from close air support and the 155 mm self-propelled pantserhouwitser gun at Kamp

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139 Interview with anonymous PRT-3 staff officer, Wezep, 21 September 2009.
141 Interview with anonymous PRT-3 staff officer, Wezep, 21 September 2009. It was this official who actually called Rozi Khan. See also interview with colonel Gino van der Voet, commander PRT-3, The Hague, 9 March 2010.
142 Colonel Hans van Griensven, lieutenant-colonel Rob Querido, and others, Battle of Chora briefing, Breda, 5 December 2007, Hamers was one of the co-presenters of this briefing, André Twigt, “We zijn door het oog van de naald gekropen”, Defensiekrant 4 October 2007, 3. See also interviews with colonel Hans van Griensven, commander TFU-2, The Hague, 28 January 2010, anonymous PRT-3 staff officer, Wezep, 21 September 2009.
While most of the artillery shelling took place in the night of 16 to 17 June, air support was almost non-stop as attack helicopters, fighter aircraft, and bombers were continuously stacked in the air space over Chora and a total of 67 bombs were delivered (of which 21 by Dutch F-16s). Additionally, the pressure was reduced by actions of the Viper detachment that on Sunday 17 June commenced operations in the adjacent Baluchi valley in order to draw away and fix as many as possible Taliban fighters. Furthermore the BG sent reinforcements to the district in preparation for a counterattack under the name operation Troy. In the evening of Monday 18 June, with all forces, including the local allies under Rozi Khan, complete, the sub-commanders gathered at the white compound for Querido’s final orders.

Troy commenced at ten o’clock local time in the morning of Tuesday 19 June. The plan called for the ANA and BG forces to push the Taliban out of the western part of the district, while Rozi Khan and his make shift militia would clear the east side. All were prepared for fierce fighting and heavy casualties, and it was expected that it would take 48 hours to achieve the operation’s aims. Things turned out quite different; the key objectives were reached within three and a half hours, and at the end of the day all positions were consolidated with only sporadic fighting. The Taliban had collapsed during the four-day battle as it had suffered many casualties including its main commanders, Mullah Mutalib and Mullah Ismael.

This success, however, came at a high price for Chora’s civil population that endured an estimated 50 to 80 casualties and between 50 and 100 wounded. Reports of the Afghan Government, Human Rights watch, the United Nations, and ISAF itself have indicated that the Taliban executed people and used them as human shields. Reportedly many were killed when they were trapped in their own houses that were bombed because those buildings were also being used by the insurgents.

Yet, the population’s attitude towards the TFU was generally positive. Immediately after the battle Van Griensven and Governor Munib flew to the district and convened a shura in which the latter immediately started to pay the traditional compensation fees for casualties to the families of the deceased (for which purpose a budget had been allocated by the Ministry of

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147 Arthur ten Cate, Martijn van der Vorm, Callsign Nussau, 269-271, colonel Hans van Griensven, lieutenant-colonel Rob Querido, and others, Battle of Chora briefing, Breda, 5 December 2007.
Development Cooperation). Rozi Khan told Querido that he had never expected the Dutch to stay, fight, and overcome. The battle had not only demonstrated TFU’s commitment to the local population in Chora, but also in Uruzgan as a whole. Moreover, the decisive outcome ended the influence of the Taliban in Chora and therefore the balance of power started shifting towards a new equilibrium. As people were quickly picking up old feuds, they were also looking to the main victors, the TFU, to settle the situation. Furthermore the alliance with Barakzai leader Rozi Khan had brought the Dutch an ally with a powerful position in the mesh constituting Uruzgan’s political marketplace. Thus, the battle of Chora ended in a clear victory for the TFU; not only in the traditional military sense, but also with regard to its credibility vis-à-vis Uruzgan’s population and as an increase of TFU influence over the population. The question for now was how to consolidate and exploit this to the benefit of the TFU campaign.

9.3.2 The battle’s aftermath

During the first year of the TFU campaign the task force had sought to establish and exploit collaborative relationships with local leaders through the allocation of development projects or the ANAP program. While this approach certainly had gained the Dutch some influence, it suffered from serious constraints; especially the limited budget for CIMIC actions within the ADZs restricted the PRTs leverage over the leaders of the major part of Uruzgan’s population. While PRT-1 commander Tak had already stated this, PRT-3 commander Van der Voet repeatedly echoed his discontent with these lacking tools. Moreover, as in a year time the military’s bureaucratic organization had established a time-consuming system of tight financial control that required any project proposal to be signed by multiple TFU staff officers -this in contrast to the much larger ‘Track 2’ budget that was largely spent without stringent verification-, the situation had become almost impracticable. Van der Voet rightly observed that with such a system it would be impossible to curtail the spoiling influence of Jan Mohammed who not only had built an extensive network, but also owned a substantial amount of agricultural land and reportedly held a vast share in Uruzgan’s illicit economy.

152 Ralph van Kemenade, ‘The Art of COIN, Adapting Air Assault Infantry Companies for Contemporary Counterinsurgency’, 41.
153 Interview with colonel Gino van der Voet, commander PRT-3, The Hague, 9 March 2010, PRT-3, Evaluatie PRT 3 ISAF TFU 2 en 3. The situation was worst in Deh Rawud, where the PRT mission team had to wait for more than three months to get its approvals. See Joeri Boom, Als een nacht met duizend sterren, Oorlogsjournalistiek in Uruzgan, 159-161.
battle of Chora, however, functioned as a turning point; it paved the way towards a durable connection between the TFU and Jan Mohammed’s rivals Rozi Khan and Abdul Khaleq’s of the Barakzai/Achekzai power block. Furthermore, if the hypothesis of the Dutch was right they had also prevented an increase of Jan Mohammed’s influence by defeating the Taliban and obstructing Matiullah’s appointment as provincial chief of police. It has to be mentioned at this place that while the correctness of this hypothesis could not be definitely proven, locally well-connected sources have indicated that there is enough supporting evidence to render it likely. All in all, the Dutch fighting forces, which were deployed as part of a population-centric plan to protect Chora in cooperation with local allies, had brought the TFU an amount of leverage exceeding the results achieved by the limited tools of influence previously employed.

The use of local allies and their militias was a bold move as it seemingly violated the Dutch government’s principle not to cooperate with such entities. TFU-2 commander Van Griensven who had to deal with his limited resources as well as the lack of support from the Afghan government, however, deemed this measure necessary and thought it in accordance with the Afghan culture in which any important leader maintained some kind of fighting force. The commander on the ground received full support from the political honchos in The Hague as a letter to parliament clarified that Rozi Khan’s ‘militia’ –the actual term itself is used- was to be considered as an ad hoc unorganized self-defense force of ‘home guards’ operating according to ‘ancient customs in (southern) Afghanistan’. While it was perfectly understandable that Chora’s leaders had mobilized their ‘home guards’, they were not part of the ISAF chain of command, and therefore parliament was informed that there was no structural cooperation between (Dutch) ISAF troops and militias. Due to the ‘exceptional situation’, however, the TFU troops had advised the local authorities in Chora to supply the civilians of the ‘home guards’ with ammunition –it might be remembered here that company commander Hamers had to force a reluctant district chief Obaidullah to do so. In other words, the TFU’s decision to use local militias was justified by the circumstances in Chora, but it had been operating on the brink of what was politically acceptable. If the task force was to consolidate and exploit the alliance with Rozi Khan, it had to search for options to formalize his position. Therefore it was quickly decided to empower him through an official appointment in the local government.


157 Tweede Kamer, Dossier 27925, no. 272.

Consequently, Rozi Khan was named provisional district chief of Chora (which would be followed by his definite appointment after elections on June 8, 2008). Institutionalizing fighters as part of the ANAP and allocation of development projects further stabilized the situation in Chora. This approach not only strengthened the ties between the TFU and Uruzgan’s most important Barakzai leader, it also gave renewed impetus to the Barakzai and Achekzai power block which now held influential positions in the local as well as the national government. The alliance with this faction, that represented Uruzgan’s major societal segment, greatly augmented the TFU’s influence over the population. Combined with the task force’s enhanced credibility this altering of the provincial balance of power led to a tremendous increase of relationships with local leaders; whereas the PRT had established contact with some 36 local leaders at the beginning of the year, there were 140 contact persons after the summer. Thus, the TFU certainly succeeded in consolidating the results of the battle of Chora.

The question that remained was whether or not the TFU would be able to further exploit this beneficial situation. Not only was there an upcoming rotation of both the TFU staff (September) as well as the PRT (October), it was also clear that Jan Mohammed’s network would seek a way to neutralize the newly gained influence of its main rivals. If we stick to the hypothesis of the second Chora battle as an attempt of Jan Mohammed to augment his influence, we can state that the former governor was severely struck by the resulting backfire. Jan Mohammed now faced a Barakzai and Achekzai faction that was cooperating with the TFU. Additionally, one of his long-time associates, Haji Obaidullah, lost his influence when he was replaced as Chora’s district chief. This required immediate counter-measures. The attitude of Governor Munib was illustrative in this regard. By now TFU decision makers assessed Munib to be under influence of Karzai - and thus of Jan Mohammed - as he was desperately seeking a position outside Uruzgan, where he had been increasingly caught between Kabul and a local society that had remained to see him as an outsider. This not only explained his passive and even reluctant attitude during the battle of Chora and its prelude, it also clarified the total lack of zeal he was demonstrating in the aftermath of the battle that offered him an excellent opportunity to improve his position as provincial governor. The relationship between Munib and Van Griensven quickly soured, and the governor did not show up at the latter’s change of command ceremony. This brings us to the point first mentioned; would the new TFU-3 staff continue the population-centric approach adopted by their predecessors, and would this enable PRT-4 to continue the exploitation of the effects of the battle for Chora district?

160 Peter ter Velde, Kabul & Kamp Holland, Over de stad en de oorlog, 178.
Chapter 9 The Course of Co-option

The TFU-3 staff led by colonel Nico Geerts assumed command on 1 August 2007.\textsuperscript{162} During its pre-deployment training the focus had been on kinetic operations, which is hardly surprising considering the recent heavy fighting in Chora as well as the fact that this remained the core business of the army. Geerts regarded an understanding of the local population important, as it was part of the TFU’s operational environment, but he thought the actual engagement of local partners to be the terrain of the specialists from the PRT. Consequently, the only members of the TFU staff that were actually involved in (the planning of) non-kinetic operations were its POLAD and officers of its CIMIC section. The TFU staff would typically define a geographical centre of gravity, which then was translated by the PRT staff into a population-centric approach for that specific area.\textsuperscript{163} This gave the PRT enormous latitude to determine the TFU’s policy \textit{vis-à-vis} the local population. Thus, while the TFU staff itself emphasized kinetic operations, a continuation of the adopted population-centric course was guaranteed by totally delegating these tasks to the PRT.

Of course, Van Griensven’s embracement of a population-centric approach for the task force as a whole conforms more to the concepts of counterinsurgency warfare, but, as we will see below, Geerts’ choice fitted the circumstances challenging the incoming TFU staff upon its deployment. Moreover, we should not forget that the term counterinsurgency was still avoided at the political level in The Hague -despite the experiences of the battle of Chora-, and that the body of knowledge related to this campaign theme was not as widespread as it would become during the next years; \textit{FM 3-24}, for instance, at that time was an unfamiliar doctrine to most Dutch staff officers.\textsuperscript{164} The TFU-3 staff understood that the exploitation of the newly gained influence in Chora district itself as well as in the still troubled Deh Rafshan area of northern Tirin Kot district would require the TFU to deal with the Baluchi valley, an enduring hotbed of Taliban activity. Therefore the TFU staff started to plan for a massive clearing operation in the valley. Operation \textit{Spin Ghar} took place between 25 October and 9 November 2007 and aimed at reducing the pressure that the Taliban in the Baluchi exerted on the adjacent regions of the TFU’s ink spot.\textsuperscript{165} \textit{Spin Ghar} never intended to establish a permanent presence in the valley -there were simply no means to achieve this-, which was considered a kill zone. Moreover, the return of the Taliban to the valley was anticipated -which actually happened within two months- as at the operation’s end new posts were established to guard its entrances at both the southern (Deh Rafshan) and northern (Chora) ends. This illustrates how a predominantly kinetic operation was used to create a more permissive environment for the engagement of the local population in adjacent areas.

\textsuperscript{162} Interview with colonel Nico Geerts, commander TFU-3, Amersfoort, 9 February 2010, Tjip Prins (ed.), “Niet is wat het lijkt”, Herinneringsboek TFU-3 (Den Haag, 2008), 3.
\textsuperscript{163} Interview with lieutenant-colonel Wilfred Rietdijk, commander PRT-4, The Hague, 5 September 2008.
\textsuperscript{164} Interview with colonel Nico Geerts, commander TFU-3, Amersfoort, 9 February 2010.
Any aspect of such an engagement, from planning to execution and evaluation, was left to the PRT. This had allowed PRT-3 to continue its consolidation and exploitation of the battle of Chora with local leaders for the remainder of its deployment that ended on 1 October. After a thorough two and a half week HOTO period PRT-4, under command of lieutenant-colonel Wilfred Rietdijk took over and continued the course adopted by its predecessors. The new role of the PRT meant that Rietdijk and his staff were leading the TFU’s population-centric effort, an opportunity they seized to synchronize and institutionalize what they considered the two most crucial of its aspects. First Rietdijk and his intelligence officer, captain Rob Rulkens, developed and implemented a Key Leader Engagement Plan (KLEP). This plan sought to synchronize (through a so-called contacts matrix) all engagements of the 50 most important local leaders by military and civilian TFU personnel as well as to coordinate with the American and Australian coalition partners as much as possible. Although the latter aspect remained a huge challenge as different views on Jan Mohammed’s network (between the Dutch on one side and the Americans and Australians on the other) would remain the norm during the entire TFU campaign, the KLEP was a huge leap forward within the TFU itself. All relevant key leaders were subjected to an engagement profile that not only contained an objective to be reached through the engagement of a specific individual, but also provided an insight on which other members of the task force were dealing with a key leader. However, a fundamental flaw that could not be overcome was the separation between the ‘Track 2’ program and the regular CIMIC activities. Consequently ‘Track 2’ remained largely unsynchronized with the wider TFU effort and the asymmetry in budgets between both programs lingered in place, which triggered Rietdijk to add to the complaints filed by his predecessors.

A second structural weakness tackled by PRT-4’s standardization drive concerned the intelligence obtained from key leaders. PRT-4, for instance, was totally unaware of the engagement of Tokhi leader Mohammed Nabi Khan by BG-1 and PRT-1, as no structured record on such actions had been kept. Now the PRT’s intelligence section under Rulkens started to feed all intelligence in the TFU’s database, which could be accessed by all relevant personnel. This also included the allocation of a specific personal identification number to each key leader. Albeit this system was heavy dependent on the correct submission and collation of

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reports, it was again a huge improvement, and guaranteed a transfer of knowledge to future rotations.

With regard to the actual engagement of key leaders PRT-4 certainly succeeded in keeping up the course adopted by its predecessors. In Chora district an attempt by Jan Mohammed to regain his influence was successfully defied when former district chief Obaidullah suddenly showed up with a letter of appointment signed by Karzai and commander Akhtar Mohammed sent armed fighters to support this claim.\(^{170}\) The majority of the local population revolted with back up from the Dutch who refused to accept Obaidullah’s return and supported Rozi Khan, which led to the withdrawal of the former. In the wake of this incident the TFU further augmented its position by providing a reach-out to Jan Mohammed’s local ally Commander Akhtar Mohammed. Furthermore empowering Tokhi leader Mohammed Nabi Khan, who was deliberately given a leading role as the prime distributor of fertilizer and corn on the east bank of the Deh Rafshan enhanced the position in this area.\(^{171}\) Mohammed Nabi’s subsequent increase of power led to a significant improvement of the local security situation as the number of violent attacks sharply decreased.

At the provincial level the ineffective Munib was replaced as part of a nation-wide move to make governmental institutions at the grassroots level less susceptible to corruption and influence from outside the Afghan government. Henceforth the so-called Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG, on which we will elaborate in the next chapter) would manage the appointment of governmental officials in Afghanistan’s provinces. For Uruzgan this meant that Asadullah Hamdam, an outsider and Ghilzai Pashtun of the Wardak sub-tribe who had been living in London for years, was installed as new governor.\(^{172}\) PRT-4 commander Rietdijk considered it his personal task to nurture and guide the new governor, and therefore arranged an introduction program in Uruzgan’s districts in which Hamdam was brought into contact with the local key leaders. Needless to say this gave the Dutch some leverage over the new head of the provincial government. Additionally a new chief of police, Juma Gul Hemat, a Babozai from Deh Rawud was installed. Although he later would turn out to be a notoriously corrupt member of Jan Mohammed’s network (he reportedly even considered Jan Mohammed his father), for the time being this appointment meant that Matiullah’s nomination for the job had been successfully thwarted.\(^{173}\) For the moment Dutch influence in the province, thus, further increased.


\(^{171}\) Interview with captain Rob Rulkens, S-2 PRT-4, Dordrecht, 9 February 2010.


\(^{173}\) Susanne Schmeidl, The man who would be king, 27.
Although most of the credit for this success lies with the PRT, at least a part of it should go to Geerts and his staff as they gradually realized that a purely kinetic focus would not suffice.\footnote{Interview with colonel Nico Geerts, commander TFU-3, Amersfoort, 9 February 2010.} This started when they learned that the primary root cause of violent contention in Uruzgan was not the Taliban-government contradiction, but mostly determined by the tribally inspired rivalry between Jan Mohammed and his opponents, in which an alliance with the Taliban offered local leaders an opportunity to enhance their position -they had been unaware of this. This insight triggered the staff to adopt the motto ‘nothing is what it seems to be’.\footnote{This was also the title given to TFU-3’s commemorative book. See Tjip Prins (ed.), “Niets is wat het lijkt”, Herinneringsboek TFU-3.} Whereas the Dutch could fight the Taliban, they could not fight the factional conflict in Uruzgan, and therefore it was most important to engage the local population in order to remove the source of the local conflict. It should also be mentioned that by this time it was understood that historical ties between many local leaders and important Taliban commanders hampered the Taliban’s counter-collaboration effort in Uruzgan.\footnote{Interview with captain Rob Rulkens, S-2 PRT-4, Dordrecht, 9 February 2010, see also Martine van Bijlert, ‘Unruly Commanders and Violent Power Struggles’, 171-173.} Targeted killings by the insurgents would only take place after repeated warnings, or could be averted through negotiations, and the most important local leaders were almost invulnerable to such attempts, which seriously limited Taliban influence. While Geerts was fully aware of the Dutch position to win the population by avoiding any collaboration with Jan Mohammed and Matiullah, he was astonished to learn that the Americans and Australians cooperated with these men.\footnote{Interview with colonel Nico Geerts, commander TFU-3, Amersfoort, 9 February 2010.} As the TFU-3 commander felt he held insufficient influence over his allies to stop their undermining activities, he chose for the non-kinetic attack as his best option. In consultation with the POLAD he asked The Hague for permission to conduct low profile talks with Jan Mohammed. Geerts was given permission to do so on the condition that he himself would not attend the meetings. Consequently, the POLAD and PRT-4 commander Rietdijk held two meetings with Jan Mohammed in November and December 2007. This meant that the TFU not only had re-established the Barakzai and Achekzai power-block and empowered the Ghilzai community through Mohammed Nabi, but also started a reach out to the Popalzai network; the Dutch task force was now establishing ties with all important factions in the province.

The PRT staff, however, deemed any public association with Jan Mohammed and his network undesirable, as it would alienate the allies of other factions who all considered the former governor and his entourage their mutual enemy.\footnote{Interviews with lieutenant-colonel Wilfred Rietdijk, commander PRT-4, The Hague, 5 September 2008, captain Rob Rulkens, S-2 PRT-4, Dordrecht, 9 February 2010.} A cunning solution was found by Geerts who would request the US Special Forces for Matiullah’s -the main local agent of Jan Mohammed’s network- assistance in areas where he deemed this possible without aggriev ing the populace (predominantly the Kandahar-Tirin Kot highway).\footnote{Interview with colonel Nico Geerts, commander TFU-3, Amersfoort, 9 February 2010.}
TFU commander also tried to prevent his coalition partners from using Matiullah in areas where this would cause severe problems. This, however, would prove to be an illusion as the Americans, for instance, deployed Matiullah in Deh Rawud district after the Taliban overran it in the fall of 2007, which eventually culminated in a brutal clearing action involving hundreds of Matiullah’s men in the beginning of 2008.\(^{180}\) Albeit it is impossible to prove causality with Geerts’ indirect engagement, Matiullah returned to participate in the provincial security council at the end of November 2007.\(^{181}\) The enhanced relationship with the TFU was further stressed when Matiullah showed up to attend Geerts change of command ceremony in January 2008, which actually was the first time both men talked to each other.

Thus, the first two years of the TFU campaign ended with a remarkable low level rapprochement between Jan Mohammed’s Popalzai network and the Dutch who had not only requested the former governor’s removal, but also were actively empowering his main opponents of the Barakzai and Achekzai as well as the Ghilzai. Equally remarkable was that TFU-3 commander Geerts, who at first considered such activities not his turf, had initiated this precarious diplomatic balancing act. Even more important was that in the meantime the Dutch government had announced its decision to extend the mission until 1 August 2010.\(^{182}\) The TFU-3 staff now found itself initiating the design of an improved campaign plan, the so-called Focal Paper, which was optimized and completed by TFU-4, the first unit that could truly benefit from the insights gained as a result of the battle of Chora (we will discuss this in the next chapter). Commander Geerts received orders from Prime Minister Balkenende to conduct talks with President Karzai to urge the Afghan government to step up its effort in Uruzgan.\(^{183}\) In yet another twist of fate the initially purely military-focused Geerts ended his term as TFU commander conducting a direct non-kinetic engagement with Afghanistan’s highest authorities.

9.4 Conclusion

By the end of 2007 the TFU was still far from reaching the Master Plan’s -unrealistic- objective of establishing control in all of Uruzgan’s population centres within two years. The result thus far was that the Dutch task force had established a foothold in Uruzgan; the TFU kept ties with the province’s dominant local power-holders representing the bulk of the population, including societal segments that were previously marginalized by Jan Mohammed Khan and his network. Moreover, TFU-3 had also carefully approached the latter faction through low

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\(^{180}\) On the incident in Deh Rawud see, among others, Peter ter Velde, *Kabul & Kamp Holland, Over de stad en de oorlog*, 196, PRT4, ‘Deh Rawod’ (Unclassified Report, Tirin Kot, 22 February 2008).


\(^{182}\) Tweede Kamer, *Dossier 27925, no. 297*.

\(^{183}\) Interview with colonel Nico Geerts, commander TFU-3, Amersfoort, 9 February 2010.
profile talks and indirect engagement. Additionally the PRT held some leverage over newly appointed Governor Hamdam. This all suggests that the Dutch soldiers were aiming for the construction of a wide basis to serve as the underpinning for definitively establishing and consolidating control in Uruzgan. For the moment, however, the level of control was far from sufficient; it was incipient at best. In Tirin Kot district -traditionally most closely connected to the provincial government- huge areas such as the west bank of the Deh Rafshan, the Baluchi valley, and Mirabad, remained under influence of the Taliban, while the effects of the engagement and reconciliation programs aimed at the Tokhi sub-tribes were not yet fully clear. As a result of Taliban action control in Deh Rawud district was limited to the district's centre in the vicinity of the Dutch base, a situation that would only change in the beginning of 2008. Most positive were the results in Chora district where Taliban influence had been neutralized after the 2007 battle and the local population supported acting district chief Rozi Khan, who was empowered by the TFU. Furthermore, the TFU’s actions in this district wielded a strong impact at the provincial political marketplace as they had re-established the influential position of the Barakzai/Achekzai power block. Yet, there remained much to be done to obtain a level control sufficiently acceptable to be transferred to the Afghan authorities. The next chapter will deal with the way the TFU, which had been committed for two more years, sought to expand its control over Uruzgan's fragmented society. But first we will conclude this chapter with a critical analysis of the way the Dutch task force had established a foothold during the first years of its campaign.

The most striking observation on this initial period concerns the failure of the mission’s rationale -as ordered by the political decision makers in The Hague- to materialize in a coherent and continuous comprehensive strategy. Whereas all efforts including the diplomatic prelude, DTF deployment and the various rotations of the TFU itself subscribed to the idea of ‘augmenting the local population’s support for the Afghan authorities, while diminishing support for the Taliban’, there were considerable differences and hiatuses in practicing this approach. It started with the removal of Jan Mohammed as a consequence of high level diplomacy. There is no doubt that this move was pivotal for any attempt to enhance the connection between the government and Uruzgan’s population; Jan Mohammed’s policy was a root cause for the insurgency in Uruzgan. Yet, there was no proper follow-up of this move as there was no effort to curtail his remaining influence in the province. Moreover, the position of Rozi Khan, one of the leading figures of the counter-faction was severely weakened when he was sacked as provincial chief of police due to his functional association with Jan Mohammed. Simultaneously, AHP chief Matiullah Khan, a direct relative of the former governor, was left untouched by the diplomatic offensive. Consequently, new Governor Munib faced a situation in which his predecessor still held much influence in the province, while the most important opposition to this influence was driven away from the local government. Additionally not much was done to empower Munib’s position.

184 Tweede Kamer, Dossier 27925, no. 193.
Chapter 9 The Course of Co-option

The deployment of the DTF offered the Dutch a first chance to start exploiting Jan Mohammed’s removal through locally present Dutch forces. In addition to the removal itself, the decision to focus on Tirin Kot and Deh Rawud, Uruzgan’s major population centres, suggested a population-centric philosophy underlying Dutch operations. Albeit that it was clear that the DTF’s main effort was to build two operating bases and accompanying infrastructure for the commencement of TFU operations, it was also an excellent opportunity to shape the operational environment as well as to enhance the understanding of the circumstances in Uruzgan. Yet, the shaping activities, predominantly conducted by the Special Forces of the Viper detachment, mainly aimed at identifying and mopping up Taliban hotbeds. While for the moment this enemy-centric approach greatly enhanced security and it can be perfectly understood from a traditional military point of view, it was of little support for exploiting the removal of Jan Mohammed. On contrary, the cooperation with US Special Forces, who made extensively use of Matiullah’s AHP, openly associated the Dutch with the Popalzai-dominated network of the former governor. The population-centric effort, however, received an unexpected boost in the final days prior to the start of the TFU campaign when Governor Munib took the initiative to remove corrupt government officials linked to Jan Mohammed and simultaneously started to reach out to the previously marginalized sub-tribes of the Ghilzai confederation. Seemingly Munib felt confident to act as a consequence of support from Kabul. The enhancement of the local security situation that had resulted from the shaping operations, however, was also instrumental, as it had created a permissive environment for Munib to conduct talks with tribal leaders from the Deh Rafshan, Baluchi, and Mirabad areas. Yet, overall the DTF period was marked by the absence of a deliberate strategy for exploiting the removal of Jan Mohammed or otherwise shaping the population’s attitude towards the forthcoming TFU mission.

With regard to intelligence the shaping actions during the DTF period had delivered great information on location and strength of the locally operating Taliban as well as on operating conditions such a terrain and weather. However, the understanding of Uruzgan’s highly complicated fragmented society was far from complete when the TFU campaign started at 1 August 2006. Albeit the TFU’s sub-units, BG-1 and PRT-1 had pushed forward their intelligence officers in order to enhance their information position, the gathered knowledge was insufficient. Whereas the POLAD of the US PRT provided considerable information on the local population to these Dutch pioneers, there remained much to learn, as crucial intelligence had not been shared. Furthermore, US forces in Uruzgan adhered to a false, simplified image of the Taliban as a tribal insurgency rooted in the Ghilzai confederation. The Dutch intelligence position was greatly augmented by the civil assessment and an underlying TLO report that contained fine-grained intelligence on Uruzgan’s society and its political marketplace. This information, however, was only made available to the TFU in August 2006 when its mission had already started -despite the fact that the TLO report was submitted to the Dutch embassy in July. The civil assessment, thus, simply came too late for
The Course of Co-option

Chapter 9

TFU-1, which commenced its campaign and had to design its plans with a less than complete understanding of Uruzgan’s complicated operational environment.

Due to the late arrival of the civil assessment, the definite version of the TFU’s campaign plan, the Master Plan, was only completed when the mission was two months underway. In combination with an unfamiliarity concerning the task force’s organization and its exact (division of) tasks this gave sub-units considerable latitude to pioneer their own approach. Especially BG-1, which already had been preparing for population-centric stabilization and counterinsurgency missions prior to its Uruzgan assignment, seized this opportunity to implement ideas obtained from studying (classical) counterinsurgency. The BG realized that it possessed rather limited capabilities for its main mission, the advance of security, and therefore started to engage the local population in order to mobilize a counter-organization against the Taliban. This established some of the first contacts between the TFU and local leaders, whose militias were to be institutionalized as ANAP forces. Mohammed Nabi Khan Tokhi was the most prominent figure reached through these first engagements, which corresponded with Munib’s effort to connect the Ghilzai with the provincial government. Additionally Matiullah Khan was engaged informally to maintain contact with this highly influential actor, without suggesting any alliance with the Dutch forces. Thus, the BG’s initiative finally brought some follow-up to the removal of Jan Mohammed, and when it was decided that the PRT would be leading in the engagement of local power-holders, this course was continued. During this time there even was a tacit agreement with Matiullah that he would not deploy his fighters in the Ghilzai areas. The faltering understanding of Uruzgan’s complicated societal landscape, however, soon revealed itself once again when the TFU believed Mohammed Nabi to hold sufficient influence to act as a lever for enhancing control in the troubled areas of northern Tirin Kot district up to Chora. While the Dutch soldiers quickly realized that their assumption was wrong, the commitment of Dutch Special Forces to rescue Mohammed Nabi out of an ambush, was a determined demonstration of the fact that the TFU would protect its local allies. In the end the task force’s situational awareness -and especially that of the PRT- finally increased when the Ministry of Foreign Affairs dispatched a dedicated tribal advisor, the OSTAD, to assist in the implementation of the civil assessment.

While the OSTAD’s knowledge was of crucial importance for obtaining an insight in the local dynamics, his appointment also led to a fundamental flaw that would stick for the entire TFU-campaign. Together with the POLAD and OSAD, the tribal advisor deemed it necessary to distinguish between ‘Track 1’ regular TFU and governmental development activities, and ‘Track 2’ covert development activities. The latter mostly took place outside the ADZs and were not synchronized with the TFU’s effort. This rendered the PRTs CIMIC actions the most important development tool to be used for increasing the task force’s leverage, while the bulk of the allocated money for development in Uruzgan was spent outside TFU channels. The immediate impact of the OSTAD, however, was overtly positive; the overall understanding of the conflict rapidly increased and with his assistance PRT-2, which also
benefited from the completed civil assessment, developed a concept for understanding the local conflict as multilayered, with the current government-Taliban dichotomy being the result of other conflicts that had originated either in the tribal sphere, or were related to power struggles between dominant leaders, while others even went back to the mujahideen era. This also provided an insight in the position of Governor Munib, who had arrived as an outsider to Uruzgan’s politics, and now was caught in a precious balancing act involving the local level as well as Kabul.

Thus, when TFU-1 handed over to TFU-2 it had provided a follow-up to the removal of Jan Mohammed by supporting the reach out to the Ghilzai, curtailing Matiullah’s influence and empowering Munib. The only opposition to this approach had come from US Special Forces, who were heavily leaning on Matiullah—another constant for the remainder of the campaign. TFU-1’s population centric-approach, however, was not a consequence of a deliberate strategy; it had emerged during a process in which the TFU staff as well as its subordinate units were struggling with the adaptation to their exact roles, tasks, and organization. TFU-2, which benefitted from the insights of its predecessors, intentionally embraced a population-centric approach in which the PRT was leading. By now Dutch soldiers not only had developed a thorough understanding of Uruzgan’s society, they were also using their knowledge for interfering in it. The reconciliation program that was initiated to enhance control by connecting with both sides of the heavy divided Tokhi sub-tribe in the Deh Rafshan area provides an excellent example. A rapid deterioration of the situation in Chora, however, forced TFU-3 to concentrate its efforts on this district, for which a comprehensive plan was designed involving the BG as well as non-kinetic TFU assets with the purpose to establish ties with local leaders and enhance the locally operating ANSF. While this plan failed to prevent a Taliban attack, it provided the basis for repelling the assaulters by a combined operation of ISAF forces, local militias (or ‘civil defence guards’ to legitimize their views with regard to the TFU’s political caveats), and ANSF. TFU-2, thus, demonstrated the Dutch commitment to the local population as well as its will to cooperate with local leaders.

Even more important was that the Dutch soldiers had formulated a hypothesis in which the mounting pressure in Chora was assumed to be an attempt by Jan Mohammed to demonstrate his influence and enforce the appointment of Matiullah as provincial chief of police. This illustrates a thorough awareness of the local political environment as well as concurrence with the earlier policy that had led to the removal of Jan Mohammed. Before the battle of Chora contacts with the two main leaders of Uruzgan’s most powerful anti-Jan Mohammed faction, the Barakzai/Achekzai power block, had been (carefully) established. The battle itself, however, resulted in the rising of its power as both Abdul Khaleq (mostly through his brother Malem Sadiq) and Rozi Khan became key allies of the TFU. While the former already held formal influence through his position as a member of parliament, the latter was empowered as Chora’s new district chief. Thus, Jan Mohammed’s power was curtailed as the position of his main rivals increased, and simultaneously Matiullah’s appointment as chief of police was being prevented. Moreover, it was also realized that
the ineffective Munib had come under increased influence of Kabul -and therefore of Jan Mohammed- and the TFU started acting in accordance with this insight.

Whereas TFU-2 had intentionally opted for a population-centric approach, TFU-3 focused on kinetic operations in order to consolidate the results of the battle for Chora district. While an understanding of the societal dynamics was considered important as part of the analysis of the environment in which the enemy had to be fought, the actual engagement of the people was considered the exclusive domain of the PRT. As their enemy-centric focus occupied the TFU staff and BG, and operation Spin Ghar was launched to relieve Taliban pressure on Chora and the Deh Rafshan area, the PRT enjoyed enormous latitude to continue the population-centric course adopted by its predecessors. PRT-4 seized this opportunity to introduce the KLEP, a program that synchronized the engagement of Uruzgan’s 50 most important local leaders by TFU assets (except for ‘Track 2’). Additionally it provided a tool for coordinating engagements with coalition partners. Another structural weakness tackled by this PRT was the fact that there was no systematical track record of previous engagements and intelligence provided by local leaders. Therefore a database was launched in which this information was made available to all relevant actors and conserved for future rotations.

Furthermore the PRT continued the exploitation of the battle of Chora as it strengthened the ties with the Barakzai/Achekzai faction and immediately started to mentor newly appointed Governor Hamdam, an independent outsider installed by the IDLG. Additionally the Ghilzai were actively engaged by enhancing the position of Mohammed Nabi Khan. Thus, it was the PRT that successfully continued the population-centric strategy embraced by TFU-2.

The TFU-3 staff, however, also learned that its enemy-centric focus was not enough. Remarkably, the staff gradually obtained the insight that the conflict in Uruzgan was largely inspired by the rivalry between Jan Mohammed’s network and the various other factions—an insight TFU-2 already possessed upon its deployment. As the TFU-3 commander learned that US and Australian forces were actively cooperating with Jan Mohammed and Matiullah, he decided (with back up from The Hague) that the TFU also should carefully approach those actors in order to gain some leverage that would serve to contain their spoiling influence. This resulted in low level talks with Jan Mohammed and indirect engagement of Matiullah through US forces. Although there is no proof of causality, Matiullah soon again started to show up for the provincial security meeting, which he had increasingly ignored under the Dutch. The hope to prevent Matiullah’s fighters from launching actions in areas where they had a bad reputation, however, quickly faded when his men were involved in a brutal action in Deh Rafud, which was overrun by the Taliban. Yet, it is undeniable that at the beginning of 2008 the Dutch forces actively cooperated with the most important rivals of Jan Mohammed, a strategy for which the underpinning was provided by the former governor’s removal in 2006, while they also had established low profile contact with Jan Mohammed and his most important local ally.

To end this chapter we can conclude that the Dutch strategy with regard to Uruzgan’s local population was far from a deliberately formulated plan, but rather a consequence of
initiatives taken by individual TFU-staff rotation and/or sub-units. While at the end of the first two years the TFU had succeeded in exploiting Jan Mohammed’s removal, the level of control was still fragile as it only had effectively started to do so after the battle of Chora; the re-establishment of the Barakzai/Achekzai power block had been definitely altering the provincial balance of power in favor of those opposed to Jan Mohammed’s network. This is not to trivialize the efforts before this time, especially the reach out to the Ghilzai in the Deh Rafshan was an important move as the Taliban enjoyed considerable support within those alienated communities. Eventually, however, any attempt to establish control in Uruzgan without Jan Mohammed was dependent on his most powerful and numerous rival factions, the Barakzai under Rozi Khan and Abdul Khaleq’s Achekzai. While variations in the task force’s strategy can be explained by the adaptation to a new task, organization, and environment, as well as the in counterinsurgency typical struggle to abandon the traditional military’s enemy-centric, kinetic point of view, the differences between units are remarkable. With the benefit of hindsight we can conclude that especially TFU-3’s approach, which did not continue TFU-2’s successful policy (that was formulated with use of insights obtained by TFU-1 and its sub-units), sticks out. It can be largely credited to PRT-4 that the population-centric course adopted under TFU-2 was continued. Moreover, the standardization of key leader engagement as well as the intelligence gained from this process was a huge leap forward providing a basis for continuity. The question for the remainder of the TFU campaign was whether or not the Dutch task force would actually succeed to institutionalize and continue the population-centric approach that had started to shift the political situation in Uruzgan’s highly fragmented societal landscape. As aforementioned, a restoration of the tribal balance, in which the Barakzai/Achekzai were given the position their power and numerical majority entitled them, was key to any attempt to control Uruzgan. If future TFU rotations could secure the collaboration of this faction and extend the cooperation with previously marginalized factions such as the Ghilzai they held a fair chance of realizing their aim of ‘fostering stability and security through augmenting the local population’s support for the Afghan authorities, while diminishing support for the Taliban’.  

185 Tweede Kamer, Dossier 27925, no. 193.
Chapter 10
Chapter 10: 2008-2010: Counterinsurgency as an underpinning for longterm stability

10.1 Introduction

The original 2006 TFU Master Plan envisioned 2008 as the year in which the task force would establish full control over Uruzgan’s population. By the end of 2007, however, it had become clear that this aim was far too optimistic; thus far the TFU had nestled itself and established a foothold in the province, but even within the original ADZs control was far from sufficient. The decision to extend the mission for another two years, until August 2010, gave the Dutch soldiers time to expand their foothold and achieve a level of control sufficient to be transferred to the Afghan authorities and assisting coalition forces. This required a more realistic campaign plan founded on insights and knowledge gained during the first two years. While the soldiers in the field had learned that a population-centric counterinsurgency approach was instrumental in augmenting control, the decision makers in The Hague had prevented a full-fledged acceptance of this theme as they associated it with violent repression of an uprising, which did not concur with the framing of the mission as a ‘benevolent’ reconstruction mission.1 By now, however, media coverage of the battle of Chora and the skirmishes in its aftermath (especially those in the Baluchi valley) had revealed that the reality on the ground did not correspond with this image, as Dutch soldiers regularly had to engage in fierce fights with the Taliban.2 Contradistinctively, thus, kinetic actions against the enemy opened the way to the formal embracement of counterinsurgency as the TFU’s campaign theme by illustrating the need for a robust population-centric approach to the Dutch public and its political leaders.

The TFU’s struggle to adapt to its mission and operational environment was exemplary for the Afghan campaign at that moment. Since the completion of the ISAF expansion in 2006 various national contingents had been confronted with the challenge of establishing control over a local society while simultaneously fighting the Taliban. A pattern evolved in which ISAF forces gradually adopted counterinsurgency ideas, but lacked the resources to properly implement such methods; in counterinsurgency terms the coalition could clear, but was unable to hold, let alone build.3 Furthermore, just like with the TFU variations between

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1 Early 2008 the combined experiences of the first two TFU staffs as well as those of officers who served in the staff of RC-S were captured in a concept army report that stressed the need to practice population-centric counterinsurgency and urged to adopt the right operational mindset for the implementation of this theme. We will discuss this below. Pieter Soldaat, Dirk Jan Broks, ‘Concept Informatiebulletin 08/01, Observaties over Operaties in Afghanistan’ (Draft doctrinal pamphlet, Opleidings- en Trainingscentrum Operatiën, Amersfoort, 2008), see also Martijn Kitzen, Sebastiaan Rietjens, Frans Oisinga, ‘Soft Power the Hard Way: Adaptation by the Netherlands’ Task Force Uruzgan’, 181-182.
3 Seth G. Jones, In The Graveyard Of Empires, 253-255.
different rotations and commanders could be observed in the choice of the exact approach. The British task force in Helmand, for instance, first altered between different approaches that all were to a greater or lesser extent enemy-centric, which were traded for a predominantly population-centric approach late 2007. Even at ISAF headquarters remarkable differences could be observed as in 2006 the British ISAF commander general Richards embraced a classical population-centric counterinsurgency strategy, while his successor US general McNeill in February 2007 opted for a kinetic approach ‘to teach the insurgents a lesson’.

With both the ISAF staff and the various national contingents seeking to adapt to the requirements of the Afghan War, the integrated approach for the country as a whole that had faltered in 2006 (see Chapter Eight) was far from being repaired by 2008; effectively every contributing nation was still fighting its own campaign. Moreover, President Karzai’s administration increasingly demonstrated signs of incompetence and corruption, which weakened support for the government among a population that was simultaneously confronted with a growing Taliban insurgency. Consequently, the security environment in Afghanistan as a whole had seriously deteriorated. While the overall ISAF campaign only regained its momentum after the 2009-2010 US surge had finally established unity of command and effort, the measures to improve governance were taken more promptly. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the IDLG had been established in 2007 to strengthen governance at the grassroots level, where the population was directly confronted with corrupt or incompetent governmental officials linked to the central administration in Kabul. This meant a first step in the change of the direction of the state-building effort. Whereas since the Bonn Agreement the emphasis had been on empowering a strong central government in Kabul, it was now felt that decentralization and bottom-up state building were most important (with additional top-down efforts) as they offered a better solution for the situation in Afghanistan with its complicated fragmented society in which personal ties with the Karzai administration had been the most important prerequisite to qualify for governmental posts. By the time of the 2008 Paris donor conference this shift in emphasis from top-down to bottom-up state building had become widely accepted by participating countries. Together with the lack of synchronization of the ISAF campaign this meant that the next years of the Afghan War would be even more characterized by national contingents focusing on the specific locales they had deployed to.

In this chapter, we will discuss the Dutch TFU campaign in Uruzgan during this period, and more specifically from 2008 until the transfer of authority to the combined US and Australian task force in August 2010. We will seek to answer the question whether the TFU succeeded in augmenting its bridgehead in Uruzgan’s human terrain, which was obtained

through collaboration with the Barakzai and Achekzai power block and a reach-out to previously marginalized societal segments. Although pivotal elements of the population-centric approach that had won the TFU its first successes had been standardized by the PRT, the full acceptance of such a counterinsurgency approach by the subsequent TFU rotations was a prerequisite for the successful exploitation of the foothold established during the first two years. As noted above, the media coverage of the violent actions in 2007 served to lift the ban on the embracement of counterinsurgency as the TFU’s official campaign theme. The year 2008, therefore, became a crucial year in the Dutch campaign in which the adaptation to counterinsurgency operations in Uruzgan’s societal landscape initiated innovations that set the standard for the remainder of the campaign. Consequently, this chapter will first discuss the conceptual and organizational changes that occurred during 2008, as well as their impact on the TFU’s interaction with the local population. Next we will scrutinize the Dutch campaign in 2009 and 2010 that can be considered a full-fledged neo-classical counterinsurgency campaign as it built on the innovations of 2008. This analysis will provide an insight in the nature of control obtained by the TFU and how the Dutch sought to transfer this control to the local government (which was further nurtured by the succeeding US and Australian task force). In order to obtain an understanding of the sustainability of the results achieved at the local level in a contemporary multinational counterinsurgency campaign we will also briefly discuss the situation in Uruzgan after the end of the Dutch mission. The chapter will conclude with an analysis of the way the TFU sought to augment its foothold by adapting to a neo-classical counterinsurgency campaign that sought to augment and consolidate control over a highly complicated fragmented society as well as by a discussion of the results -and their durability- of this approach. But let us now turn first to the year in which the underpinning for the remainder of the TFU campaign was forged.

10.2 2008: A year of change

Traditionally the small Dutch military has always relied on informal learning as most of its operational experiences remained unprocessed but were shared through the networks forming its tight community. Yet, as early as 2007 the army’s education and training center for operations issued an official information bulletin intended as a doctrinal guideline for counterinsurgency operations. This first publication explained the conceptual dimension of neo-classical counterinsurgency and in February 2008 a draft follow-up pamphlet entitled Observations on Operations in Afghanistan first emerged. The latter report was prepared by army officers who had served in the first two TFU staffs (including the both commanders,
colonels Vleugels and Van Griensven), as well as in the staff of RC-S (including former commander major-general Van Loon). These key officers had meticulously recorded their observations on new experiences at the technical, tactical, and operational level. The most important issue emphasized in the thirty-three page bulletin, however, was the need to adapt the mindset from enemy-centric kinetic operations to non-kinetic population-centric counterinsurgency warfare. Furthermore it was stressed that the publication was not intended as a prescriptive doctrine, but rather meant to transfer useful knowledge to future rotations, while simultaneously inviting other officers to submit their experiences for the writing of a new counterinsurgency doctrine. However, for no obvious reasons this carefully prepared bulletin was never officially disseminated within the armed forces. The traditional informal learning process, yet, guaranteed that the draft paper was distributed among future TFU staff rotations and informed pre-deployment trainings. Thus, experiences from the first two years shared within the tight community of the Dutch military provided a basis for the adaptation to population-centric counterinsurgency operations during the remainder of the TFU campaign. The question that matters now is how counterinsurgency was definitely anchored in the campaign and in which effect this resulted. Therefore this section first discusses the conceptual and organizational implementation of counterinsurgency in 2008, and subsequently turns to the situation on the ground in Uruzgan during this year.

10.2.1 Enter counterinsurgency

As we have seen in the previous chapter the design of a more realistic counterinsurgency oriented campaign plan, the so-called Focal Paper, had begun during the latter days of TFU-3. The bulk of the work on the plan as well as its implementation, however, took place during the TFU-4 rotation. Under command of colonel Richard van Harskamp, who had previously commanded the third rotation of the Dutch mission in Iraq, the Focal Paper was optimized until a definite version was presented on July 20 2008. The new campaign plan demonstrated a clear awareness that the nature of the mission as well as the geographical scope had changed:

11 Eventually the authors took the initiative to publish the bulletin as two articles in the professional military magazine Militaire Spectator in mid 2009 (Colonel Geerts, the commander of TFU-3, and a TFU-4 staff officer now also contributed). The doctrine that was supposed to encapsulate the experiences described in the articles appeared in November 2009, but it seems that the insights from the article were largely neglected as the term counterinsurgency, for instance, is hardly mentioned in this publication. See lieutenant-colonel Pieter Soldaat e.a., ‘Observaties rond operaties in Afghanistan (I), Militaire Spectator 178:5 (2009), lieutenant-colonel Pieter Soldaat e.a., ‘Observaties rond operaties in Afghanistan (II), Militaire Spectator 178:6 (2009), Opleidings- en Trainingscentrum Operatiën, Land Doctrine Publicatie, Militaire Doctrine voor het Landoptreden (Amersfoort: OTCOpn, 2009), Martijn Kitzen, Sebastiaan Rietjens, Frans Oisinga, ‘Soft Power the Hard Way: Adaptation by the Netherlands’ Task Force Uruzgan’, 182-183.

'TFU, as part of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), in co-operation with the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and in co-ordination with coalition forces is to conduct counterinsurgency (COIN) operations resulting in the expansion of the Afghan Development Zones... of Tarin Kowt, Chora and Deh Rawod [sic] in order to neutralise insurgency influence.'

Thus, the TFU officially adopted counterinsurgency as its mission, and the Focal Paper explained that Dutch forces’ main task was to assist the local government in providing a stable and secure environment by maintaining and augmenting the security situation, while the soldiers would also obtain the support of the local population. Furthermore the TFU would focus on facilitating the development of governmental structures, security forces, as well as development efforts of the Afghan authorities. The new campaign plan combined the military’s methodology of structured backward planning for the long term with the understanding of Uruzgan’s operational environment acquired in the first two years. This led to the remarkable -yet realistic- insight that only in 2050 Uruzgan as a province of the new Afghan state would be sufficiently developed to provide the majority of the population with a middle-income and meet their basic needs, with the local government in full control of all development and security efforts. However, the extension of the TFU mission until 2010 rendered this year as the “beacon” on TFU’s planning horizon, and the end state for the TFU campaign, subsequently, was to provide ‘the first step towards a viable and favourable future for Uruzgan in 2050’. Hence the TFU’s short-term counterinsurgency effort was to establish an underpinning for the Afghan government and its local and international partners to work towards long-term stabilization goals. This corresponds to the in neo-classical counterinsurgency campaigns typical distinction between counterinsurgency and long-term stabilization as described in Chapter Three (section 3.5).

The overall end state for 2010 was a safe and secure Uruzgan with an improved government capable of providing the local population a credible prospect of prosperity. This was split into three separate themes, governance, socio-economic development, and safe and secure environment, for which the end states were to be reached through a total of seven lines of effects. The Focal Paper thereby clearly echoes the influence of US counterinsurgency field manual FM 3-24 that prescribes this methodology for counterinsurgency campaigns.
The end states in all three fields were generic—and thereby realistic—as they stated that the local government post 2010 would remain dependent on a significant amount of external assistance for executing its essential tasks as well as for further development, and security tasks. However, with regard to the latter it was explicitly stated that the people’s perception at the end of the TFU mission should be that the ANSF were capable of securing Uruzgan’s three main population centres with coalition forces only operating in their support. Yet, even this formulation leaves a lot of latitude, as perception is difficult—if not impossible—to measure and the amount of external support could be adjusted to the actual need at the end of the TFU campaign.

Another important feature of the Focal Paper was that it concentrated the TFU’s efforts on Tirin Kot, Deh Rawud, and Chora districts exclusively—in contrast to the rather ambitious 2006 Master Plan that envisioned an expansion of the task force throughout the province. The three districts as well as the areas connecting them were divided in seventeen so-called Focal Areas that allowed a systematical event-driven—i.e. following the situation on the ground—consolidation and expansion of the TFU ink spot; as soon as the security situation in a Focal Area would be sufficiently stable, the task force could shift its attention to the next. A Focal Area was considered ‘ready’ as the local situation had demonstrated enough progress in the fields of governance and socio-economic development, and its security was transferred to the ANSF. While this approach meant a huge leap forward in terms of realistic objectives for the expansion of TFU and local government control, its design contained a fundamental flaw as the borders of the Focal Areas were primarily dictated by Uruzgan’s challenging terrain. Although the PRT had been consulted with regard to the disposition of communities and tribal distribution, geographic features—traditionally used to divide the battle space in a military operation—still prevailed over societal borders. Consequently the borders of the Focal Areas sometimes cut through an area in which an interconnected community was living. Nevertheless, all in all the Focal Paper was a proper population-centric counterinsurgency campaign plan that provided realistic guidelines and objectives for TFU operations until the end of the mission in 2010. Furthermore, the problem with the borders of the Focal Areas would be repaired as a consequence of the implementation of this approach, which we will discuss below.

In addition to these conceptual changes, the TFU also underwent significant organizational changes in order to boost its ability to conduct population-centric counterinsurgency operations in Uruzgan’s highly fragmented societal landscape. Most notable was the increase in civilian personnel; whereas the TFU had started its mission with only two civilian officials (a POLAD and a OSAD), soon complemented with a dedicated tribal advisor (the OSTAD),

21 Ibid., 5-6.
2008 marked a ‘surge’ in civilian personnel as their total number grew to twelve and the civilian contingent’s role became more prominent.23 This included the replacement of the OSTAD by two so-called cultural advisors (CULADs), Willem Vogelsang, a Dutch scholar with extensive knowledge of Afghanistan as well as experience on the ground (including a tour as advisor to the Dutch PRT in Pol-E Khomri), and Dutch-Afghan national Mr. Hamidi, who had intermittently served as a TFU interpreter since 2006 (see 9.2.2).24 Both men would fulfill their post until the end of the TFU campaign. Furthermore command of the TFU henceforth was shared by the military commander and the senior civil official, the civilian representative (CIVREP), who formed a duumvirate on basis of equality. This joint civil-military command structure served to enhance civil-military cooperation within the task force and anticipated the PRT’s transition from military to civilian command, which was planned for and actually took place in 2009. Let us now take a look at how this civilian ‘surge’ exactly augmented the TFU’s capability to conduct a population-centric counterinsurgency campaign.

A first effect of the increased civil capacity was that integration of military planning with tribal and political analysis became the standard.25 While military (intelligence) officers had gradually obtained the insight that population-centric intelligence was instrumental in obtaining the TFU’s goals, the capabilities to understand and use ethnographical data and methods to collect such information were greatly augmented by the civil staff, especially the two CULADs.26 Thus, population-centric intelligence became strongly embedded within the TFU’s staff process, which of course also functioned to enhance the task force’s overall understanding of the operational environment. Second, the deployment of additional civil experts brought the possibility to dispatch these officials on patrols with the soldiers of the PRT and BG.27 From 2007 onwards the TFU’s patrols had become increasingly focused on enabling PRT development activities in order to gain influence over Uruzgan’s population and liaise between communities and the government. This modus operandi received a huge boost as the additional civilian expertise greatly added to the patrols’ ability to conduct non-


26 Martijn Kitzen, ‘Close Encounters of the Tribal Kind’, 722-723. It should be mentioned that throughout the TFU mission there was only one dedicated military human factors analyst, typically an academically schooled junior officer, in the task force’s vast intelligence section. When the awareness on the importance of population-centric intelligence grew, also other officers became involved in and more proficient with what was named ‘white plate’ (population-centric) intelligence.

kinetic development activities. Consequently, patrols became a strong tool for producing non-kinetic effects. Last, the increased ‘civilianization’ of the TFU not only encompassed the deployment of additional Dutch civil officials, it also meant attracting NGOs to conduct development activities in Urugzan. While the PRT’s civilian experts would lead the development effort and liaise with the NGOs as part of the TFU campaign, the ultimate goal was to foster a long-term commitment from these organizations in which they would take over all development tasks from ISAF. During 2008 the number of NGOs operating in Urugzan gradually increased, and whereas there were only six NGOs active in Urugzan in 2006, the number of actors had increased to more than twenty by end 2008, and over 54 in 2009. It should be mentioned here that the five most prominent Dutch NGOs and twelve Afghan partner NGOs joined forces in the so-called Dutch Consortium for Urugzan (DCU), which mainly operated with local staff who effectively delivered aid ranging from educational support to agricultural development. Furthermore the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), which had been notoriously absent in Urugzan, agreed to open an office in Tirin Kot in 2009. The Dutch envisioned the United Nations taking over the leading role in the field of development in the post-ISAF era. On the short term, the increased involvement of NGOs bolstered the TFU’s counterinsurgency campaign as it stepped up the development effort in Urugzan.

Thus the civilian ‘surge’ greatly added to the TFU’s capability to conduct population-centric counterinsurgency operations by enhancing the understanding of Urugzan’s societal landscape and incorporating the use of population-centric intelligence in the TFU’s staff process, augmenting patrols’ abilities to deliver non-kinetic effects, and attracting NGOs to increase development in the province. Equally important as these organizational changes brought about by the increased ‘civilianization’ and the conceptual changes presented in the Focal Paper, was the deployment of the ANA’s fourth brigade to Urugzan. Albeit the Afghan government had already decided to deploy this unit in fall 2007, the first substantial numbers began to arrive in the course of 2008 and a total of 1,700 soldiers were deployed to Urugzan. These ANA soldiers provided the much-needed manpower for further increasing the provincial security situation and to hold areas previously cleared from the Taliban. Consequently, it were not only deliberate changes in the TFU’s campaign plan and composition that beneficially affected its capability to conduct a population-centric counterinsurgency campaign in Urugzan’s demanding environment, it was also the timely arrival of reinforcements in the form of relatively well-trained and equipped ANA troops.


30 Ministeries van Buitenlandse Zaken, Defensie en Ontwikkelingssamenwerking, Tussentijdse evaluatie ISAF 2008, 11.

31 Ibid., 12.
Let us now take a look at how this all materialized on the ground and came to provide the underpinning for the remainder of the TFU campaign.

10.2.2 Counterinsurgency on the ground

On 30 January 2008 colonel Richard van Harskamp took over command of the TFU from colonel Nico Geerts. TFU-3 had ended its tour with operation Kapcha As an operation in preparation of a larger forthcoming operation, Pathan Ghar, that would be conducted from 17 February until 15 March by TFU-4 in order to re-establish control over the Deh Rawud ADZ. It was in the wake of Kapcha As that US Special Forces together with Matiullah’s fighters launched a brutal offensive that cleared the district from Taliban presence. Consequently, operation Pathan Ghar met almost none resistance and the Dutch soldiers and their civilian accompanies seized the opportunity to engage the population to vet the local situation and pave the way to a more durable connection between the TFU and the Afghan government on one side and the people on the other. For this purpose the PRT dispatched the OSTAD and an intelligence NCO as reinforcements for the local mission team. It was found that while the people did not favor the Taliban, the dominant position of the district’s Popalzai minority had remained a root cause for grievance and distrust of the government and security forces, which was further exacerbated by Matiullah’s recent actions. Consequently, the Dutch deemed it necessary to support the district government, curtail Popalzai influence, and empower the Nurzai and Babozai majority. Albeit this action by the PRT fitted the division of tasks within the TFU that resulted from the experiences in 2006 and 2007, new commander Van Harskamp was surprised by the lack of involvement of the task force staff in the engagement of the local population and its leaders.

Van Harskamp’s experience in Iraq had taught him that establishing influence over local power-holders was essential for obtaining control over the local population. As TFU commander he expected to actively participate in this process and its planning, just like he had done in Iraq. While Van Harskamp came to accept his rather passive role as a tool for escalation supporting the engagement efforts of his subordinate commanders (especially the PRT) and civilian experts, he started to integrate and synchronize KLE at the task force staff level. Van Harskamp thought that the TFU leadership had remained too much in its (military) ‘tactical comfort zone’, and that the TFU staff had to focus more on non-kinetic counterinsurgency methods for realizing the campaign’s objectives. Embedding KLE,
which by now was commonly identified as a most important tool for influencing Uruzgan’s population, within the staff process was a logical consequence of this vision. The PRT’s KLEP was to be at the heart of a larger design that also encompassed the engagement of governmental actors by Dutch diplomats as well as Taliban leaders who would be either engaged or subjected to kinetic targeting (depending on their attitude towards the mission). The rationale of this approach was to address the campaign’s center of gravity, Uruzgan’s local population, by connecting them to the ‘outside world’ consisting of the Afghan government and ISAF forces.36

Despite this comprehensive and progressive design, KLE did not evolve in an integral part of the staff process during the TFU-4 rotation.37 While there were also issues with the integration of kinetic targeting and non-kinetic engagement (we will come back to this later as these issues became more apparent during TFU-5), the lack of synchronization between the ‘Track 2’ program and the PRT’s KLEP offers an explanation for this failure to fully implement KLE at the task force level. Albeit the CIVREP and POLAD were given a leading role in the task force’s KLE effort, TFU commander Van Harskamp was only sparsely informed about ‘Track 2’, which the civilian staff deemed too sensitive to be more widely communicated or subjected to an integrated and formalized TFU plan. When Van Harskamp finally learned more on ‘Track 2’ -after questioning its existence-, he was surprised about the amount of resources available for this program. This highly contrasted the problems he was experiencing in obtaining more funds for PRT projects from the Dutch embassy in Kabul. Consequently, the TFU-4 commander developed the point that ‘Track 2’ basically was a ‘war within a war’ and a potential hazard for the TFU campaign’s unity of effort.38 The Focal Paper, which became the TFU campaign plan as of March 2008, was to solve this problem by providing goals for the development of the province to which all Dutch actors had to subscribe. Albeit this did not suffice for implementing a comprehensive KLE program at the task force level during the TFU-4 rotation, bringing KLE to the attention of the TFU staff resulted in the incorporation of this tool in every operation that was planned and executed. Furthermore, notwithstanding the lack of synchronization with ‘Track 2’, the incorporation of KLE in the TFU’s staff process gave a huge boost to the cooperation and synchronization between the TFU’s staff (especially the intelligence section), its various subordinate units, and the civil experts on matters concerning the engagement of local leaders within the three main ADZs making up the task force’s oil spot.39 Overall TFU-4, thus, certainly took a first step in anchoring KLE at the task force level.

Combined with the increase of ANSF and the policy guidelines of the Focal Paper, the enhanced emphasize on engagement of local leaders was operationalized in a

counterinsurgency approach in which BG, PRT, and civilian experts systematically addressed the designated focal areas by use of the so-called USECT (understand, shape, engage, consolidate, transfer) framework. This phased method sought to obtain TFU’s 2010 end state by establishing, augmenting, and consolidating control over the local population of a Focal Area in cooperation with the ANSF and the Afghan government (the engage and consolidate phase respectively), and ultimately transfer the authority over the Focal Area to the Afghan government (the transfer phase). Local leaders were pivotal as they were considered instrumental in strengthening the connection between the local population and the Afghan government and therefore had to be engaged through development aid as well as involved in the local government. Military force, of course, was to create and maintain a permissive environment in a focal area, which required a permanent presence of security forces. Typically this was mutually achieved by ANSF and TFU forces, with the former becoming gradually more important, and ultimately taking over the responsibility for the security of a focal area -which also allowed TFU forces to shift their attention to other focal areas. Most crucial, however, was that that the whole process of establishing, consolidating and transferring control of a specific Focal Area was to be based on a thorough understanding of its local population and affairs as well as the role of the insurgency in these circumstances (the understand phase), which was to inform the formulation of a comprehensive strategy for winning the population of that specific area (shape phase). Let us now return to Deh Rawud district in order to illustrate the working of this counterinsurgency approach on the ground.

As aforementioned Pathan Ghar had re-established the Dutch forces in Deh Rawud district without any significant resistance and revealed that the bulk of the local populace was not in favour of the Taliban, but aggrieved by the political dominance of the Popalzai network. Roughly the conflict centered on the opposition between a small group of Popalzai, Nurzai, and Babozai leaders connected to Jan Mohammed Khan and President Karzai, and local leaders representing the politically ill-represented Babozai and Nurzai majority. Not only the understanding of the details of this political conflict and the way it permeated local society had tremendously increased during Pathan Ghar, the TFU had also concluded that stability in the district required curtailing the Popalzai network’s influence and empowering the leaders representing the politically weak majority. Furthermore Governor Hamdam wrote a personal letter to IDLG director Ghulam Jelani Popal asking him for more resources to consolidate the successes and strengthening the connection between the government and the district’s population (eleven copies of this letter were sent to ministries and government


agencies in Kabul, NGOs, and other international actors). Although causality cannot be proven, Minister Zia of Rural Rehabilitation and Development visited Deh Rawud at the end of Pathan Ghar in order to address an ad hoc assembly of 80 local leaders and present the contracts for development projects with a total worth of $850,000. Consequently, the large operation had hugely augmented the understanding of the local circumstances, provided the TFU with a strategy for strengthening the ties between the government and the population, and brought a significant investment in development projects to the district.

In the last days of March, following the conclusion of Pathan Ghar (15 March), the Focal Paper was introduced as the TFU’s campaign plan. Consequently, the exploitation of the gains from this operation could benefit from the logic of that plan, the increased availability of ANSF, and the emphasized importance of key leader engagement, which all would be delivered by applying the USECT methodology to Deh Rawud ADZ’s Focal Areas. Albeit the Focal Paper had distinguished five Focal Areas in the district, the operations at this time concentrated on the most important areas (as did operation Pathan Ghar); respectively Focal Areas D-1 (Deh Rawud north), D-2 (Deh Rawud south), and D-3 (west bank of the Helmand river). The main effort focused on the D-1 and D-2 areas that were most densely populated with daily live evolving around the district’s centre Deh Rawud bazaar (close to the local Dutch base Camp Hadrian). Area D-3, however, was also of vital importance as it functioned as the Taliban’s gateway connecting the district with insurgent sanctuaries in adjacent Helmand province. Pathan Ghar had predominantly engaged the local population in D-1 and D-2, but also enhanced the understanding and informed a new strategy for the district as a whole. It has to be mentioned that although the USECT methodology was only adopted after this operation, Pathan Ghar illustrates that the distinction between phases as well as their sequencing in the reality of counterinsurgency warfare was less rigid than suggested by this acronym. In order to reach the TFU’s 2010 objective of a safe and secure environment monitored by an improved local government, the results of the operation were exploited through a continuation of the engagement phase by building various posts for ANSF units and enhancing connections between the local government and local leaders representing all societal segments. While the first measure almost immediately established a permanent security presence in D-1 and D-2 as well as a bridgehead in D-3, reshaping the district’s political balance was a more complicated task that required precarious engagement of district authorities and local power-holders by the BG, PRT, as well as the civil experts.

46 Various police posts were established throughout the district and two ANA posts along the Helmand. This fitted in the Focal Paper’s approach to augment the role of ANSF by enhancing their presence at the grassroots level. Consequently the Dutch
This would become the first serious test for the TFU’s ability to conduct a coordinated and synchronized key leader engagement program involving several of its assets.

Due to Deh Rawud’s relative remoteness, daily operations of the locally operating Dutch forces were conducted quite independently of the main body in Tirin Kot throughout the TFU mission. Typically this resulted in a tight working relationship between the BG company and PRT mission team(-3) assigned to the district, albeit variations existed between rotations. Consequently the soldiers of the BG and PRT had been mutually involved in establishing and maintaining contact with the various local leaders and administrators. While the officers of the infantry company and the members of the PRT team remained the most important agents for engaging Deh Rawud’s power-holders, the TFU’s augmented attention for the district in the aftermath of Pathan Ghar allowed for the synchronization of the efforts at grassroots level with the KLE effort at the staff level. This resulted in a clear policy designed by the civil experts within the TFU staff—on basis of their own information and reports from the soldiers in the field—that envisioned the empowerment of the Babozai and Nurzai majority while simultaneously checking the power of the Popalzai-network. Even more important was that this new policy was comprehensively implemented with the soldiers on the ground acting under guidance and with support of the TFU staff’s civil experts. Thus, various TFU assets were now jointly and deliberately deployed to re-shuffle the political marketplace of Deh Rawud district and reach out to previously marginalized popular segments; but to what result?

While the soldiers on the ground were achieving some progress with regard to the advance of the Babozai and Nurzai by empowering leaders through development projects, they found it almost impossible to break Popalzai political dominance. This was not least due to district chief Ghulam Jalany Khan, a Popalzai tribal leader strongly embedded within the Popalzai-dominated establishment. The turning point came early in the summer when Mullah Kuday Nazar, the main Nurzai leader, was killed and his body mutilated. Many people accused district chief Ghulam Jalany of involvement in this brutal murder and a wave of protest swept through the district and beyond. This triggered a concerted action by Nurzai and others in Kabul that led to the sacking of the district chief, and the appointment of a temporarily acting replacement, Said Usman. This step greatly enhanced the independence
of the district’s government, as Said Usman was the intelligence officer, the S-2, of the locally operating first kandak (battalion) of the ANA’s fourth brigade, and originated from the eastern Afghan city of Jalalabad.50 Despite being an outsider less susceptible to local influences, Usman was respected by all parties as he was considered a neutral and skillful administrator. He was strongly supported by the Dutch, who tried to enforce his permanent appointment through diplomatic channels at provincial as well as national level and supported him with a monthly allowance of approximately $2000 paid from the budget of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.51 Usman used his influence to institute a new shura consisting of maliks, representing the various communities living in the district, which was to be held every Sunday, while also maintaining the Thursday shura of the traditional establishment.52 Both shuras together functioned as a kind of bicameral system, with the Sunday shura deciding upon proposals concerning local security and projects, and the Thursday shura as an advisory board for fine-tuning these proposals. This cunning move not only secured the allegiance of the powerful tribal leaders of the old elite -which was dominated by the Popalzai-, but also opened opportunities for political participation by the previously ill-represented majority. Moreover, as the Sunday shura now was the main decision making body, this altered the political balance in favor of the Nurzai and Babozai communities. On one of his first trips to Deh Rawud newly arrived CULAD Vogelsang commented that ‘… in essence this is a good development that more directly involves the local populace in the local administration’.53 Nurtured and supported by the locally operating Dutch soldiers of PRT and BG and the civil experts at the TFU level, Usman succeeded to break the dominance of the Popalzai at Deh Rawud’s political marketplace. Thus, the Dutch ISAF forces and Afghan government firmly established control over the bulk of the district’s local population living in Focal Areas D-1, D-2, and D-3. Moreover, the beneficial outcome of the engagement phase also triggered community leaders from the other two Focal Areas to seek active participation in the new political order of the shura system.54

During the engagement phase all relevant TFU actors had been cooperating in order to advance the position of Nurzai and Babozai leaders under new and independent district chief Usman. Notwithstanding the unity of effort, cultural differences between military and civil organizations continued to exist. An embarrassing example occurred when the PRT was paying Usman his allowance and took his picture; an offense to an Afghan dignitary, but necessary for military controllers who had to account for money paid to locals.55 The money,
however, directly came from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ budget, which did not require a similar accountability. While Usman did not take it as a personal offense, this incident once more illustrates the rigidity of financial control in the military (that had triggered complaints from PRT commanders as discussed afore), which was far from optimal for operations among the people. Nevertheless, in general the cooperation between the actors was good which allowed for supportive actions far beyond the grassroots level. Governor Hamdam, for instance, was approached by the POLAD to request the IDLG for Usman’s permanent appointment as soon as possible, and the Dutch embassy in Kabul was also involved in the process. The consolidation of the positive results in Deh Rawud required the strengthening of the newly adopted government structure. It was agreed that the PRT’s mission team would supervise and support this process on a daily basis, while the civil experts within the TFU staff would provide guidance and back up.

At the provincial level equally positive results were obtained during the TFU-4 deployment. The Dutch task force had been continuing its cooperation with the Barakzai/Achekzai power block of Rozi Khan and Abdul Khaleq as well as its policy of closely guiding Governor Hamdam. Among others this led to a definite consolidation of the situation in the Chora ADZ when Rozi Khan was installed as permanent district chief after winning elections on June 7 (organized and prepared by Hamdam) with 851 (30 percent) of 2,600 votes. As a consequence of Hamdam’s support for Rozi Khan, the connection between provincial government and the Barakzai/Achekzai was strengthened much too the benefit of the governor’s authority. With regard to the Ghilzai tribes, the Dutch kept on working with Tokhi leader Mohammed Nabi Khan. Ghilzai participation in the government was further enhanced when Mohammed Nabi’s fighters were being institutionalized within the ANP as the ANAP program was being terminated. The indirect contact with Matiullah Khan was also continued as his importance to the Dutch mission had increased considerably. Matiullah’s AHP was now re-organized and renamed as the Kandak-e Amniant-e Uruzgan (KAU), an operational police unit that was technically under command of the chief of police and part of the ANP structure. His task, however, remained unchanged and concerned securing the highway between Kandahar and Tirin Kot. It was at this time that Matiullah effectively started the economical exploitation of his monopoly by demanding a protection fee of between $1,700 and $3,000 per truck in

60 Tweede Kamer, Dossier 27925, no. 295.
a convoy (with an average of 200 trucks a month this made a fortune). Albeit the TFU still avoided being openly associated with Matiullah, it was heavily dependent on logistical subcontractors who did not hesitate to cut deals with the ‘lord of the highway’ and charge the costs to their Dutch clients. At this time, however, Matiullah was not in pursuit of political power and his commercial activities along the highway kept him away from aggrieved popular segments. Therefore he did not negatively influence the results achieved by the TFU-4, which had consolidated previous gains at the provincial level and in the Focal Areas of the Tirin Kot and Chora ADZs, while tremendously expanding control in the Deh Rawud ADZ (of which the most important Focal Areas now also were in the consolidation phase).

While the TFU, thus, had augmented its foothold over Uruzgan’s population as well as its influence in the provincial political marketplace during the first half of 2008, the Dutch task force’s most formidable antagonist in the struggle for control over Uruzgan’s fragmented society, former governor Jan Mohammed Khan felt all but powerless. TFU-4 commander Van Harskamp did not receive permission to continue TFU-3’s low-profile talks with this most important local power-holder, whereas he witnessed how the locally operating US Special Forces continued to support Jan Mohammed. A remarkable incident occurred when those US troops without notice used one of their assigned seats in a regularly operating Dutch helicopter flight to fly their ally Jan Mohammed to Kandahar. Even more important, Jan Mohammed felt confident enough to openly offend Governor Hamdam, when he took the latter’s place as the chair of an important shura about the organization of the local administration in April. He later told Dutch journalist Bette Dam that he felt free to do so because ‘I am the father of Uruzgan’, indicating that in his opinion the people in Uruzgan still considered him the most important leader. Yet, Jan Mohammed did not succeed in effectively thwarting the expansion of TFU influence during this period. An attempt to interfere with the affairs in Deh Rawud by preventing the removal of his trustee Ghulam Jalany in the wake of the murder on Nurzai leader Kuday Nazar failed because of the personal involvement of Hamid Karzai, who apparently refused to support Jalany as a consequence

62 Interview with Mr. Hamidi, TFU CULAD, Tirin Kot, 13 November 2008, colonel Richard van Harskamp, commander TFU-4, Susanne Schmeidl, The man who would be king, 33. The Hague, 8 March 2010, Joeri Boom, Als een nacht met duizend sterren, Oorlogsjournalistiek in Uruzgan, 249-252, Anand Gopal, No Good Men Among the Living, America, The Taliban, And The War Through Afghan Eyes, 255, Martijn Kitzen, ‘Uruzgan Field Notes’, 10-11. A much-heard anecdote that occurred during the summer of 2008, when the Australians tried to hire another security provider, illustrates Matiullah’s monopoly position. Whereas Matiullah demanded $21,000, the other party accepted the job for $9,000. Consequently Matiullah called the truck drivers and forbade them to drive, which drove the Australians back in his arms. This time, however, Matiullah demanded $90,000 for the job, but after talks with the Australians he generously accepted $21,000. Henceforth it was clear that only Matiullah would provide security on the road.


64 Indeed the Taliban were less a threat in the local political arena. Moreover, the insurgents mainly thrived on the consequences of Jan Mohammed’s aggrieving policies, which rendered the latter the most important opponent with regard to the fight for control.


66 See, interview with Jan Mohammed Khan conducted by Bette Dam, Kabul, 4 August 2008, Bette Dam, Expeditie Uruzgan, 188-189, see also Deedee Derksen, Therme de Taliban, 155-156.
of appeals from befriended local leaders (with direct access to the president). While the TFU obviously won this round, Jan Mohammed’s remaining influence in the province as well as his influence in Kabul, combined with his self-confidence as ‘the father of Uruzgan’ and support from US Special Forces still rendered him a threat to the consolidation of the progress of the Dutch mission.

10.2.3 Jan Mohammed strikes back

When TFU-5 took over from TFU-4 on 31 July 2008, the civilian surge was completed; the new staff not only brought additional experts (including both CULADs, a second POLAD, and a third OSTAD) to boost the level of civilian officials already present, it also introduced the principle of dual command; henceforth the TFU would be jointly led by a duumvirate consisting of the military commander and the CIVREP. Colonel Kees Matthijssen and CIVREP Peter Mollema were the first officials to put this into practice and fully integrate military and civilian assets in the planning and execution of operations according the guidelines of the focal paper. Consequently, TFU-5 was the first task force that from its onset could benefit from a comprehensive organization and a campaign plan tailored for conducting counterinsurgency in Uruzgan’s complicated operational environment. It would not take long before the new staff had to fully employ its capabilities for preserving all of the TFU’s previous results, as Jan Mohammed was about to draw his trump card.

Early September Jan Mohammed organized a meeting in Kabul in which 70 local leaders from Uruzgan (all affiliated to the former governor) had expressed their discontent with the province’s local governance, and especially with Governor Hamdam who was blamed of corruption, to President Karzai personally. Simultaneously Jan Mohammed began to publicly announce (among others also to the US POLAD) his ambition to return to the position of provincial governor as soon as possible. Moreover, he had also been engineering a new method for exerting influence over local affairs from Kabul. Just like before, Jan Mohammed continued his active interference in the appointment or sacking of local governmental officials. This time, however, he started to exploit his position as presidential advisor to influence the decisions of the IDLG, which reported directly to the president. To Jan Mohammed’s advantage he not only had direct access to IDLG director Ghulam Jelani Popal


70 Dan Green, The Valley’s Edge, 197.
(whose name clearly betrays his Popalzai descent), but also kept close personal ties with him; reportedly Jan Mohammed introduced Popal to President Karzai. Thus the key donors hailed IDLG and its much-praised ‘technocrat-reformer’ director, which had to bolster the position of the government at the grassroots level by decentralization and bottom-up state building free of corruption and malign local influences, turned out to be less independent than suggested by its name. With regard to Uruzgan the IDLG functioned as yet another leverage tool of Jan Mohammed Khan, whose position within the Kabul government and remaining influence in Uruzgan still rendered him the TFU’s most formidable antagonist in the struggle for control over Uruzgan’s highly fragmented society. With the benefit of hindsight, it can, therefore, be easily understood why the IDLG suddenly announced a three month trial period in which Governor Hamdam had to improve his performance or face removal in case of failure to do so.

Matters got even worse on 17 September when one of Jan Mohammed’s most important rivals and key TFU collaborator, Chora district chief Rozi Khan, was accidentally killed in a nightly cross-fire with Australian Special Forces. This was a serious blow for the Barakzai/Achekzai power block that had provided the TFU with an effective local counterbalance against Jan Mohammed’s influence. Additionally it also meant a severe blow to Governor Hamdam whose support of Rozi Khan had strengthened the connection between the provincial administration and the Barakzai/Achekzai faction -which enhanced the legitimate authority of the provincial government. In order to limit the damage of this unfortunate accident immediate action by the TFU-5 staff was required. A rift between the TFU and the Barakzai and Achekzai had to be prevented, the faction’s power in Chora as well as its role at the provincial political marketplace needed to be secured, while concurrently Jan Mohammed’s newest attempt to re-establish himself as Uruzgan’s dominant local power-holder had to be checked. It was clear that the new TFU staff had to launch a concerted comprehensive effort for safeguarding its interests from the grassroots level in the province up to the governmental level in Kabul.

To start with the TFU POLADs and CULADs, as well as the staff of the embassy in Kabul immediately approached Rozi Khan’s family and the most important leaders of the Barakzai/Achekzai power block that had provided the TFU with an effective local counterbalance against Jan Mohammed’s influence. Additionally it also meant a severe blow to Governor Hamdam whose support of Rozi Khan had strengthened the connection between the provincial administration and the Barakzai/Achekzai faction -which enhanced the legitimate authority of the provincial government. In order to limit the damage of this unfortunate accident immediate action by the TFU-5 staff was required. A rift between the TFU and the Barakzai and Achekzai had to be prevented, the faction’s power in Chora as well as its role at the provincial political marketplace needed to be secured, while concurrently Jan Mohammed’s newest attempt to re-establish himself as Uruzgan’s dominant local power-holder had to be checked. It was clear that the new TFU staff had to launch a concerted comprehensive effort for safeguarding its interests from the grassroots level in the province up to the governmental level in Kabul.

71 See Susanne Schmeidl, The man who would be king, 27, Martijn Kitzen, ‘Uruzgan Field Notes’, 238-239, Anonymous civil expert, ‘Politieke ontwikkelingen’. Unconfirmed reporting suggested that Jan Mohammed first met Ghulam Jelani Popal when the latter was working as a NGO director in Uruzgan. Contrary to other sources Kilcullen has stated that Popal is Karzai’s cousin. This seems unlikely as the former reports are drawn from well-informed experts. Even if Kilcullen is right, this is just another explanation for the good ties between Jan Mohammed and Popal. See, David Kilcullen, Out of the Mountains, 156.

72 On the position of the key donors and reputation of Popal see Astrid Suhrke, When More Is Less, 126.


74 See, among others, Bette Dam, ‘Wie was Rozi Khan?’, Anonymous civil expert, ‘Dood Rozi Khan’ (Unclassified report, Tirin Kot, 22 September 2008), Anonymous civil expert, ‘Politieke ontwikkelingen’, Willem Vogelsang, ‘Personal Documents, Tirin Kot, 2008-2010’, 22 September 2008. Reportedly Rozi Khan was killed when he together with some of his fighters scrambled to rescue a friend who thought that he was under attack of Taliban insurgents. These insurgents, however, were Australian Special Forces moving towards a nearby target. Due to the dark of night recognition was impossible and in the ensuing fire fight both parties thought they were firing at Taliban fighters.
Achekzai block, including Wolesi Jirga member Abdul Khaleq for whom an immediate flight to Uruzgan was arranged by the embassy. Much to their relief the Dutch learned that Rozi Khan’s death was unanimously perceived as an unfortunate accident, and that the Barakzai and Achekzai made a distinction between the Dutch forces and the Australian Special Forces involved in the accident. The collaboration between TFU and the faction, therefore, was not endangered, and on request of the locally operating Australian forces the Dutch (especially the Pashto-speaking second CULAD) mediated in the reconciliation between them and the family. Furthermore the Australians as well as the Dutch invested the incident, while a TFU attempt to conduct a mutual investigation with the Afghan government failed. President Karzai established an own board, including Jan Mohammed Khan, which met TFU commander Matthijssen and CIVREP Mollema at the governor’s compound in Tirin Kot. During this meeting the political nature of this committee became obvious as Jan Mohammed extensively deliberated on his period as governor when, according to his view, security was much better, the people supported the provincial government, while he also held an excellent relationship with US Special Forces. In a separate meeting with another member of this official governmental investigation board, Wolesi Jirga member and Jan Mohammed affiliate Mohammed Hashim Watanwal (see Chapter Eight, section 8.3.2), diplomats of the embassy learned that on 20 September he advised President Karzai to replace Hamdam. For now preventing the removal of Uruzgan’s governor was most urgent in order to prevent any increase of Jan Mohammed’s influence.

The TFU staff together with the UNAMA, US POLAD, and the Asia Foundation (an NGO), agreed that the independent outsider Hamdam offered the best chance for strengthening local government in the province. Therefore it was decided to conduct talks with the IDLG and step up the empowerment of the governor in order to diminish Hamdam’s vulnerability to accusations of malgovernance. A threefold strategy was formulated that would strengthen his role in coordinating development activities, improving financial control of the provincial government and enhance transparency through adequate reporting, and last, but not least, bolstering his popular support in the province. While the second measure was realized by appointing additional financial and economical advisors paid by the US and the Dutch, the other measures encompassed an extension of the TFU policy to nurture Hamdam. TFU personnel would coach the governor in his position as head of a newly founded provincial development council, and most important, his visibility in the province would be augmented through regular tours to the districts organized by the TFU. Accompanied by key TFU officials Hamdam would visit the local population and explain which projects were conducted under

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75 The following sections on the TFU’s reaction to Rozi Khan’s death as well as Jan Mohammed’s attempt to re-establish his position as Uruzgan’s dominant local power-holder are predominantly based on Anonymous civil expert, ‘Dood Rozi Khan’, Anonymous civil expert, ‘Politieke ontwikkelingen’.

76 Interview with Mr. Hamidi, TFU CULAD, Tirin Kot, 22 November 2008.

77 In his meeting with the Dutch diplomats Watanwal stressed that Jan Mohammed Khan would not be the perfect candidate to replace Hamdam. He considered a person of Ghilzai descent more appropriate. Without doubt, however, this person would be related to Jan Mohammed in one way or another.
auspices of the governor and his local representative, the district chief. This brings us to the position of the district chief. As aforementioned Hamdam’s support for Rozi Khan had bolstered his authority as it strengthened the connection with the Barakzai/Achekzai faction. At this time, a similar pattern evolved in Deh Rawud where the Nurzai and Babozai majority was more than happy with his decision to support a permanent appointment for the independent Usman. Both district chiefs, therefore, were the crucial link between the provincial government and the populace in their district, and essential agents in developing a steady mechanism of governmental control. Moreover, current TFU influence in Deh Rawud and Chora was mainly a consequence of the empowerment of the district chiefs. Consequently any attempt to preserve Hamdam at the provincial level also required the consolidation of the district chiefs with whom he collaborated.

First there was the problem of Rozi Khan’s death, which had rendered the seat of district chief in Chora unoccupied. Achekzai leader Abdul Khaleq called upon the TFU to support the appointment of Rozi Khan’s inexperienced son Mohammed Daud -in his early twenties- in order to preserve the leading role of the family. This would prevent a power struggle within the Barakzai segment of the combined Barakzai/Achekzai faction and consequently preclude a weakening of this important power block. Governor Hamdam seemingly realized this for he was quick to announce his intent to appoint Daud as Chora’s district chief. Albeit the TFU also favoured Daud’s appointment, it recognized that he did not enjoy the same level of authority like his father. Whereas Rozi Khan had managed to maintain stability among the internally divided Barakzai and Achekzai of Chora district (see the ‘water conflict’ discussed in section 9.3.1), it was questionable whether young Daud could achieve the same.

Therefore, in addition to engagement of IDLG director Popal by the Dutch embassy in Kabul to arrange his definite appointment, a full-fledged empowerment by civil experts and the locally operating PRT mission team(-2) and BG company was deemed necessary. The mission team commander de facto (and in coordination with the civil experts of the TFU staff) acted as Daud’s personal advisor after the latter asked the advise of a ‘wiser, older, well-educated man’. Furthermore the Dutch soldiers held regular shuras with tribal elders discussing the attribution of development projects, allowing Daud to make decisions and settle any disputes in this regard. Thus, Daud’s leverage -and authority- over the various popular segments was greatly increased.

Despite all these measures, Jan Mohammed Khan persisted in his attempt to regain dominance at the provincial political marketplace. He also understood that the district chiefs

78 Hamdam elaborated on his view on Said Usman in an interview conducted by Ralph van Kemenade. See interview with Asadullah Hamdam by Ralph van Kemenade, Tirin Kot, 30 December 2009.
81 Martijn Kitzen, ‘Uruzgan Field Notes’, 112.
82 Jerry Meyerle, Megan Katt, Jim Gavrilis, Counterinsurgency on the Ground in Afghanistan, How different units adapted to local conditions (Alexandria: Center for Naval Analyses, 2010), 141.
were pivotal agents of control for Hamdam and started to influence the IDLG as well as working the grassroots level. In Chora he thwarted Daud’s appointment by trying to demonstrate the latter’s incompetence for the job. Therefore, Jan Mohammed approached the various parties involved in the ‘water conflict’ and offered his mediation to definitely settle the conflict on the condition that all would drop their support for Daud. As the former governor’s old opponents refused to cooperate, this attempt failed. More cumbersome was the situation in Deh Rawud, where the IDLG had decided against Governor Hamdam’s and Dutch requests for Said Usman’s permanent appointment. Even worse, on 8 October 2008 Haji Zaher Khan, an important Popalzai power-holder from southern Deh Rawud, was formally named as the new district chief. Obviously, this move was yet another attempt of Jan Mohammed to re-establish his position in Uruzgan; after all Haji Zaher was a highly influential member of Jan Mohammed’s network and a personal friend of Hamid Karzai, who sought shelter in his house in 2001 (further he was also a cousin of Taliban second in command Mullah Berader). On the ground in Deh Rawud this rather unexpected appointment immediately triggered unrest and it was a severe threat to all recent gains as it effectively came down to a restoration of Popalzai dominance in the district. Consequently the TFU’s diplomats urged Governor Hamdam to write a letter to Ghulam Jelani Popal, the director of the IDLG, in which he asked for a reconsideration of the decisions ‘on behalf of the provincial government, the population of Deh Rawud, and the international community’ for the sake of security. With support of the Dutch embassy in Kabul, which engaged the national government and the IDLG, the appointment of Haji Zaher was eventually withdrawn and Usman’s position secured by end October. Similarly, Mohammed Daud was formally installed as Chora’s district chief on 27 October. Thus, the comprehensive multi-level engagement succeeded in preserving district chiefs capable of connecting the local population to Governor Hamdam’s provincial government. Moreover, due to the effective countermeasures Jan Mohammed’s offensive stalled, and in a meeting with Dutch Minister of Development Cooperation Bert Koenders IDLG director Popal explicitly stated that Jan Mohammed would not return as Uruzgan’s governor.

83 Martijn Kitzen, ‘Uruzgan Field Notes’, 84-87.
86 Asadullah Hamdam, ‘Benoeming district chief Haji Zaher, brief aan directeur IDLG’.
87 See also, Martijn Kitzen, ‘Uruzgan Field Notes’, 105.
89 Martijn Kitzen, ‘Uruzgan Field Notes’, 137.
10.2.4 Embedding KLE at the task force level

The previous episode again illustrated the need for a comprehensive approach for the engagement of local power-holders in Uruzgan’s complicated operational environment, where the situation could be influenced by affairs at the grassroots level in the districts, the provincial level, or even by decisions taken in Kabul. Whereas TFU-4 had successfully brought the KLE program to the attention of the TFU staff, TFU-5 set out to permanently embed KLE at the task force level. Therefore personnel of the TFU-5 intelligence section with assistance of the civil experts (especially the POLADs and CULADs) set out to design and implement a fully integrated KLE program at the task force level. This program was based on the staff’s own experiences as well as on the pioneering work of PRT-4 and continued TFU-4’s work on embedding KLE within existing staff processes such as intelligence and planning. Moreover, its ultimate purpose was to definitely provide the TFU commander and CIVREP with a mechanism to coordinate and synchronize the engagement of all local power-holders by TFU assets (both military and civilian).

The new TFU KLE program was founded on a 5-stage cyclic process in which all necessary TFU actors were involved. The first phase of the process was the identification of local leaders whose co-option was considered vital or at least relevant to TFU mission success (i.e. enhanced control over the local population by the provincial government). Once this phase was completed the possible effects (positive and negative, short and long-term) of engagement were assessed by studying a leader’s background, behavioral patterns, interests, and mapping of his influence network. This assessment phase was not only designed to clarify the effects that could be attained by engaging a specific agent, but also revealed how the TFU could possibly engage this actor. In the next phase this information would be used to determine a unique engagement profile for each individual. The majority of profiles aimed to establish or maintain a collaborative relationship with a key leader by addressing his personal interest through either empowerment or allocation of local development projects as had become common practice during the previous TFU rotations. A study of engagement profiles possible within the limitations of the TFU’s political and judicial framework, however, revealed that local power-holders could also be engaged by use of other methods (which we will discuss below). The next phase of the cyclic key-leader engagement program was the decision phase, in which the TFU commander and the CIVREP would mutually decide upon the proposed engagement profiles and order the subsequent execution of the profiles by the various TFU assets including civil experts, the PRT, and the BG (or request the assistance of

90 The following sections on the implementation of a KLE program by the TFU-5 staff contains edited material from Martijn Kitzen, ‘Close Encounters of the Tribal Kind’, 726-730. The author assisted in designing and implementing the TFU key-leader engagement program and was responsible for writing a TFU Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) on the subject.
91 See also Peter Mollema, Kees Matthijssen, ‘Uruzgan: op de goede weg, Civiel-militaire samenwerking in een complexe counter-insurgency operatie’, 410.
92 See lieutenant-colonel Hans van Dalen, ‘Key Leader Engagement, Influence by Proxy’, 139-147.
93 See ibid., 139-147, and lieutenant-colonel Hans van Dalen and Martijn Kitzen, Key Leader Engagement briefing, 20 mei 2009, presentation on TFU KLE program.
higher levels such as the embassy in Kabul). The cycle was completed with a measurement phase in which the attained effects were duly evaluated and, if necessary, a key-leader was recycled through the process. Although this systematical approach was abandoned due to the fact that there was no capability for deploying a dedicated program officer, it was successful in definitely anchoring KLE at the task force level as it firmly embedded KLE as a standard component of the TFU staff’s tool kit.94

As mentioned the KLE program explored other opportunities for engaging local leaders within the limitations of the TFU’s political and judicial framework. Whereas political empowerment and allocation of relative small-scale local development projects had sufficed to enhance control over Uruzgan’s population, the containment of the spoiling effects of Jan Mohammed and his ilk had proved to be a more troublesome affair. In case of the former governor his removal did not suffice for ending his influence in the province and it was clear that additional measures were needed. The TFU-5 KLE program guaranteed a permanent capability for the kind of concerted multi-level engagement that had successfully defied the former governor’s last attempt to re-establish his position (with a crucial role for the embassy for the engagement of Kabul agencies such as the IDLG).95 Furthermore, now the TFU staff was synchronizing KLE at the task force level the civil experts within the TFU-5 staff decided to reveal ‘Track 2’ to their military colleagues in order to link the program to the task force’s main effort.96 These measures bolstered the TFU’s ability to contain the negative influences of spoilers, but did not attack such agents directly. In this regard, removal of malign lower-level leaders -whom contrary to dominant local power-holders held insufficient power to retain their influence after removal- from official positions was identified as a key sanction for fighting actors causing grievance at the grassroots level, including the lower ranking representatives of Jan Mohammed’s network.

A case in point is provided by the removal of Toor Jan, a Barakzai sub-tribal commander and ANP officer who was infamous for his corruption, extortion, and predatory behavior towards Mirabad’s Ghilzai population of the Hotak sub-tribe.97 This lower-level leader was abusing his governmental position for exploiting a feud between the local Barakzai and Hotak. Needless to say that Toor Jan favoured the former and that his brutalities caused a lot of grievance among the Hotak people, who also had to face the fact that their ancestors’ graves were situated within the perimeters of his post. Earlier in 2008 this actor had already received warnings from Governor Hamdam after complaints from Hotak elders, but he had

95 Peter Mollema, Kees Matthijssen, ‘Uruzgan: op de goede weg, Civiel-militaire samenwerking in een complexe counter-insurgency operatie’, 411.
96 Interview with anonymous TFU intelligence officer 2, by telephone, May 27, 2011.
persisted in his malpractices. In the wake of TFU operation Bor Barakai (18-27 October) which sought to establish influence among the Ghilzai of the Mirabad valley, the staff decided to remove Toor Jan and scrap his police post; a move which was supported by Hamdam and effectively realized on November 5.98

Another utility that was explored by the TFU-5 staff was the coordination of non-kinetic KLE with the kinetic targeting effort in order to allow for the conversion of Taliban commanders. Traditionally the military aims at either capturing or killing enemy insurgent commanders, but in combination with the KLE program methods became available for approaching such commanders in a non-violent way. Referring to the traditional military color for staff symbols depicting enemy formations, this was dubbed ‘RED KLE’, as opposed to ‘GREEN (regular) KLE’.99 In order to illustrate the working of this tool it is necessary to understand that a typical local Taliban commander’s power is linked to the area where his supporters were living. Therefore his interest could be harassed by military operations on his territory. In one case an Uruzgan Ghilzai Taliban commander from Deh Rafshan area’s west bank had sought refuge in Pakistan as his territory had been subjected to consecutive military operations (among which Spin Ghar).100 This exile severely threatened his position as his rivals within the Tokhi sub-tribe started to claim power. Therefore he decided to offer TFU officials his collaboration in change for a return to power and development aid for the people living in his territory. The TFU staff deemed this an excellent opportunity to switch a local Taliban commander and gain more intelligence on the insurgency in Uruzgan. This particular defection would also augment governmental control in an area inhabited by some of the most alienated people in Uruzgan. Unfortunately the momentum of the action was lost as a consequence of coalition bureaucracy. This particular commander was already on the JPEL (see Chapter Three, section 3.5.4) and could not be easily removed from it.101 Allegedly he was later arrested in Pakistan. Yet it is important to notice that the TFU counterinsurgency approach that emerged during 2008 also sought to reach out to local people still actively affiliated with the Taliban; a first step in establishing an inclusive new political order.

The successful embedding of KLE at the TFU staff level not only enhanced the task force’s ability to continuously engage local leaders, these efforts were now also integrated with other TFU activities. Albeit the afore mentioned operation Bor Barakai could not yet benefit from the KLE program in its planning phase (at that time the program was still under development),

100 On this particular insurgent commander and his network see also Thomas Ruttig, ‘Final Report on Thomas Ruttig’s Mission (2 October – 6 December 2008)’ (Unclassified report, Oranienburg, 12 December 2008).
its exploitation made good use of the new tool. The removal of Toor Jan and his police post served to consolidate the results of the operation, and the TFU staff supported Governor Hamdam in organizing a *shura* with the elders of Mirabad’s Ghilzai tribes. TFU commander Matthijssen’s address to this *shura* clearly illustrates the *modus operandi* adopted by the Dutch task force for enhancing control over Uruzgan’s population:

> ‘The Governor needs to know what the needs are of the people in the area and you are the ones who can provide that. Based on these discussions the Government, supported by us, can then make a plan to start small scale development projects such as the repairing of schools or the improvement of irrigation canals. The Provincial Reconstruction Team of my Task Force stands ready to help.’

Thus, KLE was now a generic part of the TFU’s toolbox and was used in order to establish and maintain control over the local population as well as to empower the position of the provincial government led by Governor Hamdam.

The generic and integrated application of KLE not only resulted in an enhanced capability for establishing and maintaining (governmental) control over Uruzgan’s population, it also allowed for the utilization of this tool in support of military operations. TFU-5’s last action, operation *Tura Ghar* in January 2009, epitomized this approach as it was meticulously planned by a fully integrated team consisting of military staff, cultural, political and development advisors. For the first time this included ‘Track 2’ efforts as the military officers of the TFU staff were initiated in the program by the civil experts. The result was that tribal elders in the troublesome Baluchi valley were carefully approached, including a ‘below the radar’ meeting in the Pakistani city of Quetta -most probably conducted by a local contact of the CULADs. As the Dutch promised the allocation of development projects such as schools, roads, and hospitals to the Baluchi valley once their military operation had ceased, the

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102 It has to be mentioned that a regrettable incident occurred during operation Bor Barakai when British troops of 42 Royal Marine Commando arrested Hotak leader Malem Manan. Manan was a key leader in Uruzgan’s Ghilzai segment and linked to Tokhi leader Mohammed Nabi Khan. Consequently, he was a pivotal agent for establishing control over the alienated Ghilzai sub-tribes. Moreover, Malem Manan previously had established contact with the TFU and was willing to collaborate with ISAF and the government on condition of enhanced security. Despite this incident (and a similar incident one year later involving Australian forces) the Dutch managed to repair the relationship with Manan and they kept good ties until the end of the TFU mission. See Martijn Kitzen, ‘Uruzgan Field Notes’, 90, 213, Willem Vogelsang, ‘Personal Documents, Tirin Kot, 2008-2010’, 4, 11 August 2009, 2 January 2010. On Malem Manan see also Deedee Derksen, *Thee met de Taliban*, 144-147.


105 Interview with anonymous TFU intelligence officer 2, by telephone, May 27, 2011.

elders were willing to cooperate. This resulted in the decision to construct a permanent ANSF patrol base (Mashal) in the Baluchi valley in order to secure the populace and create a permissive environment for aid projects. The large-scale military offensive, which saw some 800 Dutch soldiers involved, did not meet any resistance. Although a direct causal relationship with the engagement of tribal elders cannot be proven, it is highly likely that the elders urged their tribesmen not to pick up their weapons.

This example clearly demonstrates that by now the TFU mastered KLE sufficiently for application throughout the full spectrum of its activities. To refer back to the USECT method for establishing and transferring control over the Focal Areas, KLE was now being used to augment the consolidation of control in preparation of a future transfer in the three main ADZs by maintaining ties with most important local leaders and empowering the provincial (both with regard to Tirin Kot ADZ and the province as a whole) and district governments (Deh Rawud and Chora). Furthermore, whereas establishing and augmenting contact with local political actors had been a crucial part of the engagement and consolidation phase of operation Bor Barakai, operation Tura Ghar had deployed such actions from the very start of its planning, which greatly increased the understanding of the local dynamics and shaped the design of the operation’s plan and most probably also affected the attitude of the local population. Thus, by the end of its rotation in January 2009 TFU-5 had consolidated TFU-4’s progress in the three main ADZs and expanded the task force’s influence sphere to the crucial geographical connection between Tirin Kot and Chora, the Baluchi valley, as well as to the Mirabad valley (respectively Focal Areas A-9 and A-6). With regard to the latter two areas, this encompassed establishing a first connection between the provincial government and the Ghilzai tribes since former governor Jan Mohammed’s brutal repressive policy had alienated these people and driven them into the arms of the Taliban. Therefore it can be stated that TFU’s policy of engaging the leaders of Uruzgan’s various (sub-)tribal segments while simultaneously promoting Governor Hamdam’s ‘independent’ government began to bear fruit.

By early 2009 it was clear that the changes of the year 2008 had transformed the TFU campaign into an effective counterinsurgency campaign tailored to the specific demands of Uruzgan’s operational environment. Moreover, as typical for modern counterinsurgency campaigns field innovations such as the KLE program that originated from the PRT had


108 Actually Tura Ghar was the first operation in which the TFU followed counterinsurgency’s logic that any clearing operation should be exploited by establishing a permanent presence among the population. The availability of sufficient ANA troops finally enabled this sustainment. See also Jan Renger Swillens, ‘Comprehensive Approach: de praktijk’, 582, George Dimitriu, Beatrice de Graaf, ‘The Dutch COIN approach: three years in Uruzgan, 2006-2009’, 443-444, Martijn Kitzen, Sebastiaan Rietjens, Frans Osinga, ‘Soft Power the Hard Way: Adaptation by the Netherlands’ Task Force Uruzgan’, 180-181.

109 A 2009 official evaluation by the Dutch government states that the TFU had firmly established itself in the three ADZs by the end of 2008, while a May 2009 survey by TLO explicitly states that Mirabad and the Baluchi valley remained problematic, but that governmental control had increased and violence decreased. See Ministeries van Buitenlandse Zaken, Defensie en Ontwikkelingszaken, Tussentijdse evaluatie ISAF 2008, 12, The Liaison Office, Three Years Later, 24.
been incorporated within the TFU.\footnote{110} All these developments provided the underpinning for the remainder of the campaign that now started to focus on the transfer of authority to both the local government - to the extent it was deemed ‘ready’ for assuming authority over Focal Areas as well as different policy fields - and other coalition partners. Despite the good progress and the fact that the campaign itself now could be effectively considered a full-fledged neo-classical counterinsurgency campaign, there remained significant challenges in achieving the 2010 end state of a safe and secure Uruzgan with an improved government capable of providing the populace with a credible prospect of prosperity. Most important, in this regard, is that the past year had added to the experiences of 2007 (especially the battle of Chora) and advanced the insight that establishing control by re-balancing the political order and connecting all societal segments to the local government did not so much suffer from the threat of the Taliban itself, but from the very reason that the Taliban in Uruzgan had become relevant, namely the influence of Jan Mohammed Khan and his Popalzai-dominated network. Dutch journalist Deedee Derksen, in this regard, went as far as stating that ‘the Taliban were supporting actors with cap guns...’, it was ‘war against the wrong people’.\footnote{111} The question that matters to us is how the TFU, in addition to securing the population, would continue its effort to outmanoeuvre Jan Mohammed in order to yield a sustainable and stable inclusive political order that through its connection to the local government would serve as the basis for achieving long-term development after the end of the TFU campaign. Therefore, we will now discuss the last phase of the TFU campaign.

10.3 2009-2010: the road to transfer of authority

On 2 February 2009 brigadier Tom Middendorp (who would become Chief of the Defence Staff in 2012) and CIVREP Joep Wijnands took over command of the TFU from colonel Kees Matthijssen and CIVREP Peter Mollema.\footnote{112} In an interview with The Economist Middendorp immediately elucidated that TFU-6 would make good use of the accumulated insights about the true nature of violent contention in Uruzgan:

‘... the Taliban are less of a threat to the tottering structures of the Afghan state than feuding local tribes and predatory warlords. The Uruzgan insurgency is mixed up with a notably vicious tribal war between the Popolzai [sic] tribe and minority Ghilzai tribes. Jan Mohammad [sic]...'}
Khan, a Popolzai warlord and former Uruzgan governor, marginalised the Ghilzais. This seems to have created lasting turmoil which is exploited by the Taliban.\textsuperscript{113}

Governor Hamdam, who stated that less than fifty percent of the resistance in Uruzgan, (‘and that even might be too much’) was connected with the Taliban -and even in that case often related to local feuds-, supported this view.\textsuperscript{114} TFU-6, thus, continued the campaign based on the idea that the core grievances in the province were caused by the remaining influence of Jan Mohammed and his associates. With the August 2010 end date rapidly approaching -it was already clear that another extension was highly unlikely due to the political climate in Dutch parliament and tensions within the government coalition-, this meant that the last three TFU rotations (TFU-6, -7, and -8) had to overcome many challenges in order to achieve the Dutch end goal of transferring a secure and politically stable situation that could function as an underpinning for long-term development.\textsuperscript{115}

First, the increase in security in the three ADZs had to be consolidated and responsibilities and tasks in this field were to be transferred to the ANSF as much as possible. This fitted the road chosen in the Focal Paper and as such encompassed tailoring this strategy to bridge the gap between the current situation and the desired end goal. For this reason the Uruzgan Security Plan (USP) was developed and implemented by a new security platform, the so-called ‘Big Six’; TFU commander Middendorp and CIVREP Wijnands, together with Governor Hamdam, ANP commander Juma Gul, ANA brigadier Abdul Hamid, as well as the head of the local branch of the National Directorate of Security (NDS, the intelligence service), general Aziz Zacharya, would meet every month to discuss and if necessary adjust the implementation of this new security plan.\textsuperscript{116} Henceforth local ownership of the security situation by the ANSF was progressively promoted and in addition to mentoring the ANA and ANP, Afghan troops were now also prepared for their task by partnering them with TFU forces at the company and platoon level. Further Dutch Special Forces, which had left Uruzgan at the end of 2007, were redeployed for the remainder of the TFU campaign in order to contribute to a durable security situation by disrupting Taliban networks outside the ADZs. Under the name Task Force-55 (TF-55) the detachment conducted highly effective actions against Taliban leadership, enablers,
and caches in Uruzgan’s remote outskirts as well as in adjacent provinces. Among those actions was a series of five operations in the second half of 2009 that would lead to the second Militaire Willemsorde for a Dutch Special Forces officer, major Gijs Tuinman, who was awarded the decoration in December 2014. The fact that during the TFU-6 rotation in May 2009 the last large-scale operation of the TFU campaign (Mani Ghar, which established a permanent combat outpost (Tabar) on the west bank of the Deh Rafshan) was conducted bears testimony to the effectiveness of the combined USP and the TF-55 actions. Consequently by August 2010 the security situation within the three ADZs was not only consolidated, but could also be maintained by the locally operating ANSF, with ISAF forces in a supporting role.

Even more important was that the TFU would end its campaign by leaving a politically stable province that could be subjected to long-term development efforts. As aforementioned this required the consolidation of the balanced political order that had gradually come into existence during the TFU campaign, as well as linking this order to an inclusive provincial government. While TFU-5 had successfully outmanoeuvered Jan Mohammed Khan for the moment, there were sufficiently of his straw men left in powerful positions in the province. Most prominent was chief of police Juma Gul, of whom by now it had become known that he was closely associated with the former governor and even considered him as his father. Albeit the Dutch had successfully thwarted Jan Mohammed’s attempt to re-establish his grip over the provincial and district governments, he still could be linked to key officials in sixteen (out of 25) of the provincial government’s departments. This contradicted to the Dutch objective of a more or less independent government open to all segments of Uruzgan’s fragmented societal landscape and therefore the Dutch stressed the need to step up the effort to guard over the dependency of the local government. In order to forward Hamdam’s ‘independent’ government any malign local influences had to be purged from it. This, however, not only pertained to Jan Mohammed and his network exclusively, but also to any other actors endangering the reputation of the government -especially in the eyes of previously marginalized popular segments. In this regard the episode of Barakzai police officer Toor Jan who extorted Mirabad’s Ghilzai tribesmen, and the anecdote in this book’s prologue on chairman Obaidullah of the ‘independent’ election commission who tried to deny the Ghilzai of Deh Rafshan and Mirabad access to polling stations, should be mentioned.

117 On TF-55 see Arthur ten Cate, Martijn van der Vorm, Callsign Nassau, 278-323. The deployment of TF-55 coincided with the US surge under general McChrystal who reorganized the command structure of ISAF Special Forces. Consequently TF-55 operated under the Special Operations Command and Control Element RC-5, and, thus, was not under direct orders of the TFU -in contrast to the earlier Viper detachment. This gave the operators the ability to execute tasks in the greater Kandahar region, of which Uruzgan’s Taliban networks were greatly dependent.


120 Susanne Schmeidl, The man who would be king, 27.

121 Ibid.
Thus, the main challenge for the remainder of the TFU campaign was not only to contain Jan Mohammed’s influence on the provincial political marketplace for that moment -i.e. maintaining the tribal balance-, but also to bolster the provincial government’s independent position in order to guarantee a durable link with all different societal segments that would be strong enough to withstand any new attempts to weaken this connection.

The experiences of previous TFU rotations had revealed how to mitigate significant obstacles with regard to maintaining a balanced political order and empowering the provincial government. Whereas the TFU KLE effort effectively dealt with such issues as influence from Kabul and synchronization within the TFU, coordination with locally operating US and Australian coalition forces remained troublesome. The latter, for instance, had weakened the Barakzai and Achekzai block by the accidental killing of Rozi Khan and offended the Achekzai by organizing a deliberate search in Malem Sadiq’s house in which many weapons were confiscated. More structural was the persistent rift between US Special Forces and the TFU regarding the collaboration with Matiullah Khan. Albeit US State Department officials (including those on the ground in Uruzgan) seemed to share the Dutch view of Matiullah as a spoiler preventing a durable political solution, the locally operating US Special Forces preferred to maintain their rather short-term view of Matiullah as a powerful ally in fighting the Taliban. The Dutch, on their part, did not involve Matiullah in the ‘Big Six’ and the USP, and thereby placed this powerful local actor and his militia outside the institutional structure of the provincial government -despite the fact that the KAU was nominally part of the ANP. By now Matiullah’s position was quickly rising thanks to his thriving entrepreneurship that gave him enough financial resources to buy influence in Uruzgan’s political marketplace. As a consequence of his increasing power, Matiullah now had become a competitor to his uncle Jan Mohammed. Moreover, he also demonstrated that he had learned from his relative’s mistakes as he created dependency by use of generous deeds and even financed his own development projects to address the needs of the local population. Of course, this ‘hearts and minds’ campaign was also intended to win the support of the foreigners. Yet, Matiullah’s past rendered him an unpopular figure in the eyes of many societal groups, including the Barakzai, Achekzai, and the previously marginalized Ghilzai tribes. His rising power and the nearing end of the TFU campaign more than ever demanded consensus between the TFU and US coalition forces in order to contain Matiullah’s potentially spoiling effects on a durable politically stable situation.

Next to coalition forces (by this time seven nations had deployed troops) and accompanying development agencies the international effort in Uruzgan now also encompassed a variety of NGOs (54 in 2009, among which the 17 members of the DCU) and international organizations such as UNAMA. In order to align all international and local parties for achieving the TFU’s

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123 See Anonymous civil expert, ‘Governance in Uruzgan Province-extended version’.
124 See, among others, Susanne Schmeidl, The man who would be king, 32-34, Anand Gopal, No Good Men Among the Living, America, The Taliban, And The War Through Afghan Eyes, 256-257.
2010 end goal of a sufficiently secure and stable situation that could serve as a platform for further development, it was deemed necessary to revisit the campaign plan once more; TFU-6 set out to replace the Focal Paper by an updated, more comprehensive plan, the Uruzgan Campaign Plan (UCP). The upgrade of the rank of the TFU-commander from colonel to brigadier, the March 2009 transfer of command over the PRT from a military commander to the CIVREP, and the appointment of an Australian lieutenant-colonel as chief of the TFU staff were additional measures to increase the task force’s leverage over all civilian and military actors in order to enhance unity of effort for the remainder of the campaign. Let us now take a look at how exactly the UCP aimed to establish a secure and stable province with an improved government, and which effects followed from its implementation.

10.3.1 The Uruzgan Campaign Plan on paper and in practice

In the evolution of the TFU’s campaign plan the UCP was a logical next step that took the Focal Paper’s counterinsurgency approach further in order to adapt it to the current operational environment (including local and international actors) and the pending requirements for realizing the task force’s 2010 end goal. As aforementioned the main purpose of this updated campaign plan was to enhance unity of effort among the various actors operating in the province in order to boost the campaign in preparation of the upcoming transfer of authority. Like the Focal Paper the UCP acknowledged that realizing long-term stability and development objectives would require ‘decades’ of efforts beyond 2010, which was to be specified by the Afghans themselves and their future international partners. Consequently, the TFU mission remained to establish a safe and secure situation that could function as a platform for long-term stabilization:


126 See also personal correspondence with anonymous PRT-7 staff officer, 17-18 December 2014, Jaïr van der Lijn, 3D ‘The Next Generation’, Lessons learned from Uruzgan for future operations, 36-37, Peter Mollema, Kees Matthijssen, ‘Uruzgan: op de goede weg, Civiel-militaire samenwerking in een complexe counter-insurgency operatie’, 401-402.

TFU will primarily focus on creating a stable and secure environment in which political, social, economic conditions are created under which the Afghan government, and national and international development organizations, can operate without TFU assistance.\textsuperscript{128}

The UCP explicitly stated that the TFU would cooperate with ANSF and coalition forces in order to expand the influence spheres of the ADZs, including establishing geographical connections between those areas. The cooperation with ANSF specifically would concentrate on the transfer of responsibility for security to these forces, as was agreed in the USP. Social and economical development would be conducted in close collaboration with UNAMA and various other international organizations and NGOs, which were considered capable of continuing these tasks after the TFU withdrawal. In cooperation with the Afghan government the TFU stepped up its effort to establish a representative provincial administration that largely would be able to exert control autonomously by August 2010. In the final version of the UCP all these matters converged in a clearly formulated and realistic objective for the TFU campaign:

\textquote[The TFU campaign objective, within the context of the UCP, as part of ISAF, in partnership with ANSF and in coordination with GIRoA [Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan], United Nations Assistance Mission Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the International Community, is to contribute to a reliable and effective government that can bring the government and the people closer together, and is able to provide a stable and secure environment and development progress in Uruzgan, in due course without ISAF support.\textsuperscript{129}]

The campaign objective, thus, was to be reached through activities aimed at enhancing governance, socio-economic development, and security; a continuation of the three major lines of operations of the Focal Paper, which were also identified in the 2006 Master Plan.\textsuperscript{130} This time, however, these lines were subdivided into nine ‘Reconstruction & Development’ themes on which progress should be achieved. As a means of providing common ground for all actors involved in the province these themes were projected in a conceptual comprehensive framework that also identified ‘disablers’ and ‘enablers’ that could affect

\textsuperscript{128} 2009 UCP quoted in Ingrid van Bemmel, Aletta Eikelboom, Paul Hoefsloot, ‘Comprehensive and iterative planning’ in Uruzgan, De ontwikkeling van het Uruzgan Campaign Plan’, 201.


\textsuperscript{130} For the UCP comprehensive conceptual framework see Ingrid van Bemmel, Aletta Eikelboom, Paul Hoefsloot, ‘Comprehensive and iterative planning’ in Uruzgan, De ontwikkeling van het Uruzgan Campaign Plan’, 201-203, Ingrid van Bemmel, Aletta Eikelboom, ‘Comprehensive Planning in Uruzgan’, 5-8, Martijn Kitzen, Sebastiaan Rietjens, Frans Osinga, ‘Soft Power the Hard Way: Adaptation by the Netherlands’ Task Force Uruzgan’, 171-172.
progression in either a negative or a positive way. Local conflicts, insurgent influence, and unsupportive key leaders were, among others, identified as ‘disablers’, while supportive key leaders, security forces presence, NGO and other development activities were considered important ‘enablers’. It should be noted here that the UCP stressed the importance of key leaders as both spoilers and valuable collaborators, and thereby the importance of KLE was finally anchored in the TFU campaign plan. Furthermore the UCP conceptual framework was based on a set of basic principles that were broadly propagated by the international community. Of those principles tribal balance and Afghan ownership were most relevant to Uruzgan at this time, but they also encompassed universal values such as human rights and gender equality. Thus, the conceptual framework of the UCP sought to buy in other actors and achieve unity of effort by emphasizing shared basic principles and communicating their (potential) role as ‘enablers’ of the TFU campaign, whereas threats to this campaign were indicated as ‘disablers’.

The conceptual framework was translated into an actionable population-centric approach by tailoring it to the needs of the people on the ground. This not only encompassed measures at the provincial level (such as institution building), it also required addressing the specific situation in Uruzgan’s different locales. For this purpose thirteen so-called ‘areas of influence’ were discerned, for each of which specific objectives and a customized approach were formulated, including the role of enablers and threats caused by ‘disablers’. Contrary to the seventeen Focal Areas, the confines of the newly identified areas were determined by use of societal and socio-economic characteristics rather than by geographical features. Thereby, the areas of influence allowed for optimal engagement of local communities. In addition to the areas of the three main ADZs, the Shahidi Hassas/Charchena district and Khas Uruzgan were now also incorporated in the plan, despite a lack of TFU presence in these areas. This can be explained by the fact that the UCP sought to establish an underpinning for long-term development in Uruzgan as a whole, as well as the fact that the Dutch task force also sought to actively involve actors operating in these districts (such as for instance US forces, ANSF and the Afghan government, local actors, and several NGOs).

Not only the Focal Areas themselves were replaced, also the USECT methodology that was introduced for systematically establishing and transferring control over these areas. Consistent with RC-S, where Dutch major-general Mart de Kruif now had assumed command, the TFU started to use the ‘shape, clear, hold and build’ phasing methodology for counterinsurgency operations. In the shaping phase an area and its people are meticulously analyzed to obtain a thorough understanding of local circumstances. On the basis of this understanding the insurgency is denied direct influence over the local populace.

131 This section on the areas of influence is based on Ingrid van Bemmel, Aletta Eikelboom, Paul Hoefsloot, “Comprehensive and iterative planning’ in Uruzgan, De ontwikkeling van het Uruzgan Campaign Plan”, 205-207, Ingrid van Bemmel, Aletta Eikelboom, “Comprehensive Planning in Uruzgan”, 9-12.

through military operations against insurgent fighters; the clearing stage. Once a locale is sufficiently cleared, socio-economic and political measures will be employed to consolidate the results as part of the hold phase. During this phase the ANSF start to gradually take over responsibility for the security situation. In the building stage the actual transfer of security responsibility as well as the transfer of control to the Afghan government takes place. By now the target area has become sufficiently stable to begin long-term development, for which purpose projects are planned and gradually started. Just like with USECT, the distinction between the different stages is not as clear-cut as suggested by the terminology. Shaping activities to enhance the understanding of local society are typically also part of the other phases. This also applies to security measures that typify the clearing stage. Given the fact that the three main ADZs had already achieved USECT’s consolidation phase by August 2008, and that since that time governance at the district level and presence of ANSF had improved, they could be largely categorized as in the build phase. Consequently, those areas could be expected to be ready for transfer of authority at the end of the TFU campaign. The districts in northern Uruzgan as well as the peripheral areas connecting the ADZs (especially the Baluchi valley, west bank Deh Rafshan, Mirabad valley, and the Tangi valley that connected Tirin Kot with Deh Rawud) were more troublesome as they could be categorized as being in an incipient holding stage at best. As the TFU henceforth would focus on the main ADZs as well as their geographical connections, these latter areas of influence would need close attention during the last year of the TFU campaign.

The UCP, thus was yet another population-centric campaign plan that sought to enhance autonomous governmental control through a multi-actor comprehensive approach delivering progress on the terrains of governance, socio-economic development, and security at the grassroots level. While the plan itself was well-contemplated and clearly formulated in order to provide a common ground for all (inter-)national civil and military actors active in Uruzgan, implementing the UCP in the reality of counterinsurgency warfare in a highly complicated environment was a challenge of a different order. Therefore it is hardly surprising that the TFU encountered some major troubles in its effort to enhance the unity of effort in the preparation of the transfer of authority. Let us now take a look at these difficulties, which were caused by internal factors within the TFU as well as by external factors related to other actors active in Uruzgan province.

First, the introduction of the UCP coincided with the enhanced civilianization of the PRT. This was to function as an accelerator for the cooperation with other civil actors and mainly encompassed a transfer of command from military authority to the CIVREP, while the main body of the PRT would still consist of military personnel. Albeit the staff of TFU-5 had already carefully prepared this move, the soldiers of PRT-7, who deployed under TFU-6 in March 2009, were not well informed about the details of the plan.133 Moreover, the CIVREP proved to be too busy to operate as director of the PRT, which caused unclarity with

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133 See Kees Matthijssen, Peter Mollema, ‘De Civiele Organisatie in Task Force Uruzgan’, and personal correspondence with anonymous PRT-7 staff officer, 17-18 December 2014.
regard to the exact chain of command. Due to this confusion the UCP and its ‘shape, clear, hold, build’ methodology were not clearly communicated to the PRT, which had conducted pre-deployment training with the USECt method. Although these issues were ultimately solved by the deputy CIVREP and the commander of the PRT’s military staff, they caused huge interference with the implementation of the UCP as the PRT was the main vehicle for achieving unity of effort with the numerous NGOs and international development actors. Another complicating factor, in this regard, was the fact that the UCP was classified as NATO secret -in accordance with military standards-, which made it impossible to share the document with actors such as NGOs.134

Another problem that seriously weakened the position of the PRT was that the extensive civil-military cooperation on the ground in Uruzgan prompted higher foreign affairs and development cooperation officials to cut their contribution to the budget for the military’s CIMIC projects. Despite protests by TFU commander Middendorp and CIMIC officials at the defence staff in The Hague, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs refused to allocate money from its funds to the relatively small CIMIC budget -it should be remembered here that during the entire mission there was a huge asymmetry between those budgets with a total of 126 million being spent by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs versus 4 million spent on CIMIC projects.135 Subsequently the PRT had to prioritize its projects and even declared a project stop in June. This situation was only solved after two months when the budget issues were apparently cleared and funds again started to pour in. Like aforementioned these projects were the main means for delivering development aid at the grassroots level within the TFU ink spot and a crucial tool of leverage for engaging local power-holders. As a consequence not only the PRT was seriously hampered by this bureaucratic struggle, but the TFU as a whole suffered from a temporary decline of its ability to deliver non-kinetic effects necessary for addressing the development and governance lines of operation of the UCP.

Last of the internal factors that troubled the implementation of the UCP was the TFU staff’s emphasis on kinetic military action against the Taliban. This, among others, revealed itself as a consequence of repeated rocket attacks against Kamp Holland, in one of which a Dutch soldier was killed and five others were injured. In response the west bank of the Deh Rafshan area, where the attacks originated from, became a top priority and the already mentioned large-scale operation (more than 1,000 soldiers) Mani Ghar was quickly launched to clear the forty square kilometres area of Taliban in order to mitigate the threat and establish a permanent presence.136 This all occurred without a proper understanding of the complicated local circumstances and in absence of an exact indication of the culprit of the missile attacks. Despite statements that the Taliban insurgency was not the main problem in Uruzgan, key

135 Personal correspondence with anonymous PRT-7 staff officer, 17-18 December 2014, see also Jair van der Lijn, 3D ‘The Next Generation’, Lessons learned from Uruzgan for future operations, 34.
136 Bette Dam, ‘Offensief is antwoord op aanval Kamp Holland’, Weblog Vrede en Veiligheid (Hans de Vreij), 16 May 2009, no longer available online.
members of TFU-6’s military staff relapsed to the military default mode that prescribes the use of force against the enemy, without linking this to a thorough understanding of the societal background of the insurgency in the province. 137 In combination with the aforementioned decline of non-kinetic capacity this preference for kinetic action further troubled the implementation of the UCP’s directives with regard to development and governance.

External interferences with the implementation of the UCP were mainly caused by different views among coalition partners on some of Uruzgan’s key local actors, especially Matiullah Khan. Both US and Australian Special Forces were cooperating with Matiullah, and due to his recent ascent to power their respective countries increasingly shared the view of Matiullah as a ‘security provider’. 138 In this view Matiullah and his militia were instrumental in realizing a safe and sustainable security situation in Uruzgan. This, of course, directly opposed the Dutch policy that considered him a powerful spoiler and a threat to durable political stability in the province. Both allies did not comply with the TFU course and continued their cooperation with Matiullah based on the arguments that international forces in Uruzgan were already totally dependent on the ‘lord of the highway’ for the protection of their supply route, and Matiullah’s excellent reputation as a provider of security and highly effective anti-Taliban fighter (propagated by US and Australian Special Forces whose commendations and tokens of appreciation decorated Matiullah’s office). 139 Furthermore, the Chief of the Australian Defence Force later defended the cooperation by pointing at Matiullah’s generosity towards the local population - as mentioned in section 10.3 this was part of his own ‘hearts and minds’ campaign. 140 Albeit the Dutch through their logistical sub-contractors indirectly paid for Matiullah’s protection along the Kandahar-Tarin Kot highway, they refused to do business with him and continued to prevent his appointment in an official governmental position (chief of police), while simultaneously continuing their policy to promote opposed local power-holders such as for instance the leaders of the Barakzai/Achekzai block and Tokhi prominent Mohammed Nabi Khan.

This deep rift between the Dutch policy and that of their Australian and US allies could not be repaired by the introduction of the UCP. Even worse, relations between US Special

137 Personal correspondence with anonymous PRT-7 staff officer, 17-18 December 2014. This confirms informal talks with staff officers (conducted by the author) during the TFU-6 period. Reportedly the Australian chief of staff, who held a Special Forces background, was one of the fiercest hardliners emphasizing the need for kinetic actions.
Forces and the Dutch TFU staff hit a low in July 2009 when the former learned that the Dutch were suspecting Matiullah of duplicity after seven Dutch soldiers had been wounded during a Dutch convoy on the Tirin Kot-Kandahar highway.\textsuperscript{141} This cumulated in a shouting match between a US Special Forces commander and one of the Dutch POLADs that occurred at the TFU staff compound in presence of Matiullah (who had been taken there by the US commander). A similar difference in interpretation concerned police commander Juma Gul, a protégé of Jan Mohammed Khan. Whereas the Dutch had gradually adopted the point of view that this actor should only be supported to prevent Matiullah’s installation and simultaneously should be actively engaged in order to contain his negative influence (especially corruption) on Uruzgan’s ANP, US forces on the ground propped up this predatory spoiler and even presented him a customized armoured Humvee.\textsuperscript{142} Unlike Matiullah’s case, however, US policy levels did not favor Juma Gul and officials from the US embassy in Kabul discussed this with, among others, President Karzai and IDLG director Popal.\textsuperscript{143} Yet, this latter case demonstrates that even when unity of effort was achieved at higher levels, this not necessarily led to an alignment at the grassroots level. It is hardly surprising therefore that a September 2009 TLO report explicitly called for a more cohesive engagement of Uruzgan’s local actors by the various coalition contingents.\textsuperscript{144}

Albeit these pivotal political differences between key coalition members would haunt the TFU campaign until its end, the TFU-6 staff succeeded in enlarging the unity of effort among the kaleidoscope of parties operating in the province. By the end of its rotation TFU-6 had sorted most internal organizational problems and established a workable civil-military interface (with the PRT as its main vehicle) capable of coordinating and delivering non-kinetic effects.\textsuperscript{145} Furthermore, the task force could build on the results of its predecessors, which meant that the support to the district officials in Chora and Deh Rawud had been continued as well as the empowerment of Governor Hamdam’s provincial administration. Consequently governmental control in the three main districts reached an unprecedented high; the approximate figures of 80% in Tirin Kot district, 90% in Deh Rawud, and 50-60% in Chora district were reported (in comparison governmental control in 2006 was estimated at respectively 30-40%, 20%, and 20%).\textsuperscript{146} Additionally, May 2009 witnessed the start of


\textsuperscript{142} Anonymous, ‘Uruzgan, s [sic] Shifting Sands’ (Kabul, 12 April 2009).

\textsuperscript{143} Emiel de Bont, \textit{Onder Taliban en krijgershen, Nederland en de oorlog in Afghanistan}, 236.

\textsuperscript{144} The Liaison Office, Three Years Later, 33.

\textsuperscript{145} Personal correspondence with anonymous PRT-7 staff officer, 17-18 December 2014.

\textsuperscript{146} The Liaison Office, Three Years Later, 24. Percentages are approximate levels of government access which correspond with governmental control in the respective districts.

This prestigious project, for which the German development organization Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) had already been awarded a contract by the Dutch Ministry of Development Cooperation in December 2007 (totaling 34 million for development activities throughout the province, GTZ’s so-called Uruzgan Provincial Development Project (UPDP), including some 15 million for the road), aimed at improving the geographical connection between the Tirin Kot and Chora ADZ through what the UCP labeled ‘sustainable infrastructure’.\footnote{Anonymous, ‘Veiligheidsovereenkomst verkiezingen ondertekend’, 28 July 2009, accessible at \url{http://www.defensie.nl/actueel/nieuws/2009/07/28/veiligheidsovereenkomst-verkiezingen-ondertekend}.}

Even more important was the political agenda of this project; the new road would run through the Deh Rafshan area and the Baluchi valley, the home areas of previously marginalized Ghilzai sub-tribes, thus the road construction was also intended to enhance the provincial government’s control over these communities by augmenting their economical and political opportunities.\footnote{Anonymous, ‘Commando-overdracht Task Force Uruzgan’, 3 August 2009, available through \url{http://www.defensie.nl/actueel/nieuws/2009/08/03/commando-overdracht-task-force-uruzgan}, on Rentenaar’s experience as POLAD in Iraq see Thijs Brocades Zaalberg, Arthur ten Cate, Missie in Al Muthanna, De Nederlandse krijgsmacht in Irak, 2003-2005, 61-147.}

We will come back to this project below when discussing the final stage of the TFU campaign. TFU-6’s biggest achievement, however, concerned the aforementioned advance in security that resulted from the increased unity of effort between TFU and ANSF units as agreed in the USP and coordinated through the monthly ‘Big Six’ meetings.

This not only augmented safety at the grassroots level in the districts, it also prepared Afghan forces for assuming full authority over the security situation. The upcoming presidential elections of 20 August 2009 would be the first big test as it was agreed by all involved parties that the ANSF would be responsible for the safety of the 49 polling stations with TFU forces in a back up role.\footnote{Anonymous, ‘Veiligheidsovereenkomst verkiezingen ondertekend’, 28 July 2009, accessible at \url{http://www.defensie.nl/actueel/nieuws/2009/07/28/veiligheidsovereenkomst-verkiezingen-ondertekend}.}

TFU-6 did not witness the course of the elections in Uruzgan as it transferred command to the TFU-7 staff under the leadership of brigadier Marc van Uhm and CIVREP Michel Rentenaar (who previously had worked as POLAD during the Dutch mission in Iraq) on August 3 2009. The new rotation greatly benefitted from the efforts of its predecessors. In preparation of the elections TFU-6 had organized a series of six meetings with the ‘Big Six’, the independent

Chapter 10 The Course of Co-option

It was mutually agreed that the ANP would secure the direct vicinity of each polling station (Tier 1), while the ANA would cover the outer area (Tier 2), and if necessary TFU forces would assist. Further a permanent Operational Coordination Centre-Provincial (OCC-P) was established to function as the ANSF’s headquarters (located within Kamp Holland’s outer perimeter). On election day brigadier Van Uhm monitored ANSF operations in the OCC-P, while CIVREP Rentenaar spent the day with Governor Hamdam. Both men reported a satisfactory performance of the ANSF, with no security incidents and all polling stations open to the public. Thus, the local ANSF for the first time demonstrated their capability to autonomously take the leadership over security affairs; a huge step in preparation of the 2010 transfer of authority.

The success in the increased effectivity and autonomy of the ANSF, however, could largely be attributed to the ANA’s fourth brigade. Uruzgan’s ANP under command of Jan Mohammed protégé Juma Gul was notorious for its corruption and lack of resoluteness. Chora district chief Mohammed Daud, for instance, complained that the provincial chief of police ‘keeps the money and supplies that are meant for the police force up here’. Moreover, Juma Gul was actively competing with Matiullah and his KAU for access to international and local resources. The ANA, on the other hand, was a professional military organization without ties to local actors and communities. Consequently it could operate relatively independent of local influences. During 2009 the fourth brigade reached its full strength and assisted by Dutch, French, Australian and American OMLT teams the brigade quickly developed into an efficient and capable military unit. Most important was that this greatly improved the possibility to enhance governmental control through permanent security. Fourth brigade commander Abdul Hamid demonstrated a clear awareness about this matter as he emphasized the manning of permanent posts and continuous patrols in order to convince the local population of the government’s capability to offer protection.

Among others, this approach was used to enhance grip over the troublesome peripheral areas connecting the main ADZs (Deh Rafshan, Mirabad, Baluchi and Tangi valley). In case of the Mirabad valley, ANA forces formed the backbone of TFU-led operation Baz Panje in which the valley was

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153 Tweede Kamer, Dossier 27925, no. 366.


156 Interview with Mohammed Daud, Chief of Chora District, by Ralph van Kemenade, Chora district centre, 14 January 2010.

157 Tweede Kamer, Dossier 27925, no. 366.

158 Interview with brigadier Abdul Hamid, commander 4 ANA brigade, 205 corps, conducted by Ralph van Kemenade, Tirin Kot, 24 January 2010.
swept once again (in conjunction with predominantly Australian forces) and a permanent patrol base (Wali) was established.\textsuperscript{159} Seemingly contradistinctive the increased role of the ANA as a key security provider triggered yet another conflict; the corrupt ANP feared for its position and the relationship between both core components of the ANSF quickly soured.\textsuperscript{160} This culminated in a shoot-out in the streets of Tirin Kot in December 2009 in which four civilians were killed. Consequently the ANA was banned from the capital, which secured the interest of the ANP. Thus, while Uruzgan’s ANSF forces had become increasingly capable and the overall provincial security situation was relatively good, the imbalance and rivalry between ANA and ANP damaged the unity of effort among the ANSF and caused worries for the upcoming transfer of authority.

Yet, with safety at an acceptable level, the TFU increasingly focused on the development and political lines of operation. CIVREP Rentenaar emphasized that the balance of the mission (‘80 percent’) lay with the non-kinetic effort in order to provide a durable platform for long-term stability.\textsuperscript{161} Under TFU-7 the socio-economical development effort was further boosted as the increased security in the province attracted more development organizations. By September 2009 a total of 54 actors, including five national Afghan programs, six UN agencies, three international companies, twelve international organizations, 22 Afghan NGOs, and six donor organizations were active in the province.\textsuperscript{162} Further the four-year DCU program yielded its first results in the fields of education and health care, and in Deh Rawud and Chora district the first steps were taken to transfer from CIMIC projects to structural long-term development.\textsuperscript{163} The only setback concerned the involvement of UNAMA, which withdrew a significant amount of its personnel from Uruzgan as part of a nation-wide reaction to an October 2009 attack on the UN in Kabul. The UCP had originally envisioned the UNAMA as the body that would take over the coordinating role of the TFU in the field of development.\textsuperscript{164} However, the reduction in UNAMA presence meant that it could not step up to this role. Consequently, the coordination of long-term development would most likely be transferred to a combination of actors including the local government, international organizations and the UNAMA. Despite this uncertainty with regard to the future coordination, the TFU campaign’s development effort gained increased momentum due to the contributions of the numerous involved actors, and the afore mentioned first


\textsuperscript{162} Tweede Kamer, Dossier 27925, no. 366, Jair van der Lijn, 3D ‘The Next Generation’, Lessons learned from Uruzgan for future operations, 37.


\textsuperscript{164} Ingrid van Bemmel, Aletta Eikelboom, Paul Hoefsloot, ”Comprehensive and iterative planning’ in Uruzgan, De ontwikkeling van het Uruzgan Campaign Plan”, 201.
steps to transfer from CIMIC to long-term development at the district level signified good progress towards the end of the TFU campaign.

The pivotal political effort continued to focus on the empowerment and professionalization of Governor Hamdam’s provincial government and the district levels in Chora and Deh Rawud. Back in 2008 the TFU had started to improve the provincial government’s financial control and enhance transparency through adequate reporting (see 10.2.3). During 2009 these measures were resulting in effect as, among others, ten highly qualified advisors were recruited and integrated in the governor’s office by the Asia Foundation. Furthermore, GTZ had been contracted to bolster local institutions through education; scores of civil servants had received additional courses in management skills and administration. Of course this all served the purpose to augment the position of Governor Hamdam’s administration, which had to become as independent as possible in order to connect to all societal segments of Uruzgan’s fragmented societal landscape. Hamdam himself benefitted from an increased role -thanks to Dutch empowerment- in the coordination of development activities that in combination with the increased security situation (through permanent presence) gave him sufficient leverage to establish ties with local communities at the grassroots level. This capability was not only used to link local power-holders to the government, but also to mediate in the reconciliation between various parties in order to ‘...bring all together the community’ by balancing ‘tribal issues’ and share power among parties. Such direct reach out by the provincial government mainly intended to support the positions of the district chiefs, the administration’s most crucial agents of control at the grassroots level. Hamdam stressed that the government should be structured as localized as possible to address the specific needs of the various societal segments. Among others the governor was working on a proposal (to the IDLG) to establish separate districts in Tirin Kot and Deh Rabshan (which currently were under the governor’s direct authority).

In Chora district the TFU rehabilitated the office of the district government, the white compound, which had been the centre of the 2007 battle. On January 14 2010 the new seat was opened and handed over to district chief Mohammed Daud, who for that occasion had organized a shura with approximately 40 local elders and Governor Hamdam as well as three provincial ministers in which governance, agriculture, education, and the judicial system were discussed. Furthermore, Daud requested the provincial administration to send representatives to his district at least once a month to allow for a swift reaction to popular

166 Tweede Kamer, Dossier 27925, no. 366.
167 Interview with Asadullah Hamdam by Ralph van Kemenade, Tirin Kot, 30 December 2009.
168 Ibid.
demands. This all greatly added to the prestige of the now 26 year old Daud, whose position as district chief at this time not only had become legitimized through his father’s heritage, but also by his personal deeds -which often resulted from TFU empowerment. Thus, at least at the provincial and district level ‘the tottering structures of the Afghan state’ had received a huge boost which resulted in a local administration that was actively seeking to explore its capabilities for augmenting and consolidating governmental control over Uruzgan’s population by establishing durable ties with the various local societal segments. This, of course, is not unimportant for a government that is expected to autonomously exert control as soon as possible -preferably by August 2010, the end of the TFU campaign.

All together the increased safety, the boosted socio-economic development effort and the strengthening of the local administration materialized in good progress on the ground. In addition to the building activities in the three ADZs, the local government and its allies now also held more grip over the peripheral areas connecting the main districts. These latter areas therefore could qualify as in a more advanced hold phase (with the main ADZs remaining in the build phase), which meant that the situation was becoming acceptable for a transfer of authority; after all the Afghan government and its security forces could exert control over the ADZs relatively autonomously, whilst assisting coalition forces could start to prepare the Afghans for expanding their authority to the outer areas.

Yet, during the last month of the TFU-7 rotation some potentially spoiling political developments revealed themselves. First, there was the issue of remaining interference from the national administration in Kabul with local affairs in Uruzgan. This became clear when in January 2010 the effective and independent Deh Rawud district chief Said Usman was suddenly sacked by Kabul on the ground of vague complaints about his policies, including the installation of a women’s shura. He was replaced by Khalifa Sadaat, a local Babozai leader who served as the town’s mayor under Jan Mohammed Khan, but was removed by Governor Munib.170  Albeit Khalifa Sadaat eventually turned out to be a competent administrator who continued Usman’s shura system that had brought a more equal division of power in the district, his appointment by Kabul caused a stir as it came as a total surprise to both the provincial administration and the TFU.171  There was absolutely no guarantee against such unexpected and disturbing intervention in the future.

Second, whereas the August 2009 elections had been a success in the field of security, its political outcome was more dubious. In addition to the presidential election, Uruzgan’s inhabitants could also elect a new provincial council. During the previous elections in 2005 the US PRT had backed up candidates from the Barkazai and Achezkai block and the council had evolved in a vehicle for re-balancing the political marketplace and involving previously marginalized tribes (especially the Ghilzai) in the provincial government (see Chapter Eight,

171 For details on Khalifa Sadaat as district chief see Jos Groen, Task Force Uruzgan (2006-2010), ‘Getuigenissen van een missie’, 290-302. Governor Hamdam extensively praised Said Usman in a 30 December interview. Moreover Said Usman himself was still awaiting a permanent appointment that he expected to obtain with support from the Dutch embassy. See Willem Vogelsang, ‘Personal Documents, Tirin Kot, 2008-2010’, 2 January.
In the current elections, however, all incumbents were outvoted. While this could be interpreted as a clear signal of discontent with the previous council, the reality was more nuanced. Nationwide voter turnout for the 2009 elections was extremely poor; a 50 percent decrease with the 2004 elections was reported. Uruzgan was no exception as of about 140,000 registered voters only 23,646 cast their vote for the presidential election and 28,326 for the provincial council. Among those scarce voters the Popalzai were overrepresented. Consequently the new provincial council was dominated by the Popalzai, whose political power had been curtailed by the preceding council.

A reason for the large turnout of Popalzai voters is given by the fact that other popular segments, especially the Ghilzai, apparently doubted the fair character of the elections and expected local strongmen to influence the outcome by use of corruption. Fact is that a majority of the new provincial council could be linked to either Jan Mohammed Khan or Matiullah Khan. Moreover, both new members of the national parliament’s upper house, the Meshrano Jirga, which were nominated by the Provincial Council, were supported by Matiullah (including Uruzgan’s first female senator, Hilla). When the new provincial council was installed on January 17 2010, the exact consequences of this shift were still unclear as the council held no formal powers. However, this episode illustrates that Jan Mohammed as well as Matiullah still held significant influence in the province, which apparently was sufficient for discouraging large parts of the local population to participate in the elections. It was against this worrying background that the last TFU staff under the leadership of Brigadier Kees van den Heuvel and CIVREP Jennes de Mol took over command of the mission on 1 February 2010.

10.3.2 The endgame

Up until now it had been clear that the TFU mission in its current form would end on 1 August 2010. As aforementioned (in section 10.3) the climate in Dutch parliament and tensions within the government coalition did not favor a new prolongation. Yet, during the last months a discussion had evolved over another extension of the Dutch mission in Uruzgan, this time with a much smaller mission focusing on the PRT. The new debate was fuelled by the wish...
of the United States and NATO to extend the Dutch contribution until August 2011. When on 4 February 2010 the Dutch government received an official request from NATO’s secretary-general Anders Fogh Rasmussen for a one-year smaller mission, a decision could no longer be postponed. Thus, a couple of days after the start of the TFU-8 rotation a fierce debate on Uruzgan dominated the political scene in The Hague. Within the government coalition the Christian Democrats of the CDA (Christen-Democratisch Appèl) favoured a new mission, while the Social Democrats of the PvdA (Partij van de Arbeid) stood solidly against any renewed military presence in the province. Soon this evolved in a full governmental crisis cumulating in the fall of the Dutch government in the early morning of 20 February. Consequently, it was clear that the TFU mission would definitely end on August 1 2010, a contingency that the military had always planned for. But what did this mean for the last TFU rotation and the situation on the ground in Uruzgan?

In the last days of TFU-7 local power-holders had already expressed their worries about a possible Dutch retreat and the consequences for the balance of power on the local political marketplace. Especially the Barakzai/Achekzai power block echoed its concerns during a shura organized by Chora district chief Mohammed Daud in which the local leaders proved remarkably well informed on the political debate in The Hague. Daud and his allies wanted to know what would happen after the Dutch mission, they were especially anxious over Matiullah’s rising power, as he repeatedly had sneeringly expressed his excitement on the upcoming withdrawal of the Dutch. Additionally rumours of Jan Mohammed Khan’s return as provincial governor swirled around. This corresponded with the image that emerged from the 2009 elections; in the perception of the local population both Popalzai power-holders still held significant influence in Uruzgan’s affairs. With the definite end of the Dutch mission in sight many locals feared a loss of the empowering force beyond the counter-balance against the two Popalzai strongmen, which would inevitably lead to a renewed dominance of the Popalzai on the provincial political marketplace. Mohammed Daud himself learned about the Dutch decision to withdraw before he was informed by TFU staff members, who were awaiting official instructions. Daud dramatically stated to CULAD Vogelsang that ‘he will leave as well, and preferably with us [the Dutch]’, an outcry that would be repeated many times during the final months of the TFU campaign (also by other non-Popalzai leaders such as Tokhi leader Mohammed Nabi Khan).

Of course the TFU sought to preserve the tribal balance in order to achieve its end goal of a politically stable province, in which all parties held a share in power. For the Dutch, however, the announced withdrawal inevitably led to a loss of leverage, despite the remaining

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178 Emiel de Bont, Onder Taliban en krijgsheren, Nederland en de oorlog in Afghanistan, 257-260.
179 See also Bette Dam, ‘The story of ‘M’: US-Dutch Shouting Matches in Uruzgan’.
presence in the province until August. Within a month this became painstakingly clear as Governor Hamdam was called to Kabul and fired on allegations of corruption. Reportedly Hamdam was indicted on thirteen points such as withholding money and self-enrichment by abusing his influence in the allocation of contracts for development work. 181 Most of these accusations were related to the construction of the road between Tirin Kot and Chora, which was intended to enhance the position of Hamdam’s independent government, but now contradistinctively had contributed to its end. However, even if the accusations were true, they were an absurd reason for dismissal in the Afghan context; corruption was widespread among government officials, and some of the most severe cases (such as Uruzgan’s chief of police Juma Gul) were left untouched. In an interview with Radio Netherlands Worldwide Hamdam pointed at the true reason for his sacking:

‘This is a political power game, in which the Afghan government seeks to install another governor, and therefore wanted my removal... it’s an insult to involve corruption. That is only an excuse for realizing political wishes.’ 182

Although we probably will never receive clarity about the exact reasons for Hamdam’s removal, indirect evidence supports his explanation. As aforementioned Jan Mohammed held significant influence with President Karzai and IDLG director Popal, further it was commonly known that the US, which was the most likely candidate to become the new lead nation in Uruzgan with the Australians as their main partner, favoured a more powerful position for Popalzai strongmen Matiullah Khan and Jan Mohammed Khan. 183 Therefore, it is not unlikely that Hamdam’s removal was a first step in preparing a return of Popalzai dominance in Uruzgan. Additional support for this interpretation is given by the fact that Karzai immediately installed Khudai Rahim as interim governor (previously deputy governor), a cousin of Jan Mohammed, and maternal uncle of Matiullah to whom he was most close. 184 Apparently Kabul now felt free to act this way and sack the independent Hamdam - who had always enjoyed Dutch support for his position vis-à-vis the central government- due to the upcoming end of the Dutch involvement in Uruzgan.

Mohammed Daud immediately reacted by convening a large *shura* of more than 100 tribal leaders to discuss the ramifications of the nearing end of the TFU mission.\(^{185}\) During this meeting, which was attended by Dutch CULAD Mr. Hamidi as well as the US and Australian POLAD, the Dutch were praised for pursuing tribal balance, while the US and Australians were bashed for violent interference with local affairs without an appropriate understanding of the delicate relationships between various societal segments (which triggered false reporting in which whole sub-tribes were labeled as Taliban). Almost all important local power-holders, except for those of Popalzai descent, participated in the *shura* or had dispatched a representative (for instance Tokhi leader Mohammed Nabi Khan sent his brother due to repeated attempts at his life in the last weeks). The Australian POLAD, also on behalf of his American colleague, pleaded for a dialogue with Matiullah Khan, which was considered a non-option by many participants. Instead the meeting led to the formulation of a declaration that asked the Dutch politicians in The Hague to reconsider their decision:

> ‘We Elders, Maleks and Commanders of tribes from the districts Tarin Kowt, Chora, Dehra Wood and Gizab in Uruzgan with firm faith in God Almighty and believing in the sacred religion of Islam appeal on behalf of the people of Uruzgan to the representatives of the Dutch people. … We fear that a withdrawal of Dutch soldiers from Uruzgan [has] lasting significant negative consequences for until now now the very successful process of social and economic development of the Province of Uruzgan. … We appeal to the elected representatives of the Dutch population, do not leave Uruzgan in the middle of the process of Province Building and please vote for a temporary extension of the ISAF Mission in Uruzgan in the interest of peace in Uruzgan, Afghanistan, and throughout the region.’\(^{186}\)

Although the petition proved to no avail, the *shura* leading to its presentation revealed that young Barakzai-leader Mohammed Daud (now commonly referred to with the suffix Khan) had grown to prominence as a well-respected authority capable of unifying various (sub-)tribal groups in defense of their shared interest. Thus, Mohammed Daud Khan had become the main antagonist opposing Matiullah Khan and Jan Mohammed Khan.

Both Popalzai strongmen launched an effort to erode Daud’s position. They sought the support of Daud’s uncle and rival within the Barakzai sub-tribe, Shah Mohammed (brother of the late Rozi Khan, see 8.2.3).\(^{187}\) Initially this approach was very successful, but

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\(^{186}\) A translation is given in Bette Dam, ‘Afghaanse petitie tegen vertrek Nederlanders’, a digital picture of the petition is in possession of the author.

as Daud naturally distrusted his uncle (because of their intra-factional rivalry), there were no tangible results. On contrary, at some point the relation between Shah Mohammed and Jan Mohammed soured, and the former turned for support to Daud (whom he also needed to act as a mediator for solving problems with Tokhi leader Mohammed Nabi Khan -again stressing the respect Daud enjoyed among Uruzgan’s leaders). Daud decided to help his uncle who according to Daud himself now spent his days complaining about Jan Mohammed and Matiullah and repeatedly and publicly declared that he had been misled by both Popalzai strongmen in ‘plotting against his own house’.  

A more successful attempt to discredit Daud led to Australian forces openly accusing the young Barakzai leader of ties with Taliban commanders and supplying the insurgents with (components for) IEDs. Daud told the Dutch that he indeed had rung various Taliban commanders from the remote north of the province at the explicit request and in presence of US and Australian Special Forces. In one case a Taliban commander even was attacked during or shortly after such a conversation. Later this commander had received photographs of Daud’s meeting with the Special Forces. Apparently Matiullah’s men who were accompanying the US and Australian operators were responsible for this. Consequently Daud had decided that he would no longer provide information on Taliban commanders to the Special Forces, which made him a dubious player in their eyes. CULAD Vogelsang captured the ramifications of this all in his personal notes:

‘Daud has now found himself in the position that he is neither being trusted as a broker by some of the Taliban leaders, and neither by the Australians and US. This is a situation that is really worrying. The Australians and US are now without a very useful source of information, but it could also affect the relationship between our successors on the one hand, and the Barakzai/Achekzai and Tokhi on the other.’

The Popalzai strongmen were also actively seeking Daud’s replacement as Chora’s district chief. Acting Governor Khudai Rahim preferred Daud’s long time advisor and mentor colonel Abdul Mohammed as the new head of the district government. The latter started to openly criticize Daud’s policies after he had accepted money (reportedly 50,000 Afghani) from Matiullah and had visited Jan Mohammed. Additionally it was announced that IDLG

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189 Willem Vogelsang, ‘Personal Documents, Tirin Kot, 2008-2010’, 26 July 2010. The date is erroneous and should be 26 June. The accusations were expressed during that day’s 08:00 TFU Daily Commander’s Update briefing.
190 Shah Mohammed provided information on the basis of which a member of Daud’s household had also been caught spying for Matiullah. See Willem Vogelsang, ‘Personal Documents, Tirin Kot, 2008-2010’, 1 July 2010.
192 Ibid., see also 1 July 2010.
director Popal together with Jan Mohammed Khan would soon visit Uruzgan’s districts in order to reorganize the local administration.

The effect of all these schemes was that Daud felt discouraged to continue his work as district chief. As aforementioned he repeatedly proclaimed his intent to resign as district chief and leave Uruzgan. Yet, he did not do so. The reason for his decision to stay was continued Dutch support and the fact that (future) Australian civil officials had also offered their back up -which meant that Daud still would enjoy benefits from ISAF forces after the Dutch withdrawal.193 Now the provincial government increasingly came under influence of the Popalzai strongmen, the TFU was mainly propping up the counter-balancing faction through the construction of the road between Tirin Kot and Chora. Security of this project became the responsibility of an alliance centered around Daud’s Barakzai/Achekzai block and the Tokhi under Mohammed Nabi Khan.194 Initially (in 2008) GTZ opted for Matiullah as the main security provider for the project. However, when Dutch parliament after reporting by Groene Amsterdammer journalist Joeri Boom learned of the proposed $200,000 a month contract with this strongman the TFU sought not to support, the deal was rejected.195 Albeit Matiullah reacted indifferently to this incident -after all he held plenty sources of income-, the assignment of Daoud and Mohammed Nabi Khan as main contractors was significant; it not only united the Barakzai/Achekzai block and an important segment of Uruzgan’s Ghilzai tribes, it also secured empowerment of this faction after the Dutch withdrawal (road construction was completed in October 2011).196 Thus, the Australian commitment to his case as well as the continuing support through the road security contract functioned as guarantees that convinced Daud to remain in office as district chief and, even more important, to stay in Uruzgan as the main leader of the counter-balancing faction.

Another measure taken by the TFU in order to come to a durable tribal balance was advocating the Australian and US idea of a reconciliation dialogue between Mohammed

196 For Matiullah’s reaction see Joeri Boom, Als een nacht met duizend sterren, Oorlogsjournalistiek in Uruzgan, 294. It has to be mentioned that a part of the security assignment was outsourced to a Kandahar-based private security company called Asia Security Group. This company was owned by President Karzai’s cousin Hashmat Khalil Karzai and apparently secured GTZ personnel. Albeit some sources hint at a larger role in coordinating road security, this is highly unlikely as the Asia Security Group was co-founded and partly owned by Jan Mohammed Khan, which meant that the latter would have significant leverage over the other parties involved in the process. Of course this would have been unacceptable to both Mohammed Daud Khan and Mohammed Nabi Khan. See, among others, Joeri Boom, ‘Wat laten we achter in Uruzgan? Veiligheid te koop’, De Groene Amsterdammer, 31 March 2010, Joeri Boom, Als een nacht met duizend sterren, Oorlogsjournalistiek in Uruzgan, 287-288, Christopher Reuter, ‘De dilemma’s van Uruzgan, iedereen heeft hier vijanden’, 38-39, Schmeidl, The man who would be king, 24. Anonymous, ‘Kazai, Hashmat Khalil’, Afghan Biographies, available at http://www.afghan-bios.info/index.php?option=com_afghanbios&task=view&total=10408&start=1141&Itemid=2, Maria Abi-Habib, Zia Sultani, ‘Senior Aide to Karzai Is Killed in attack’, The Wall Street Journal 18 July 2011, accessible through http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB1000142405270230446760457649242018688670.
Daud Khan and Mohammed Nabi Khan on one side, and Matiullah Khan on the other. Dutch officials repeatedly urged both Daud and Mohammed Nabi to attend such a meeting, to which they reacted not unwillingly. Yet Mohammed Nabi explained that this would be difficult to explain to his people, who had suffered many loses at the hands of Matiullah. Therefore he suggested that rapprochement should be primarily achieved through Mohammed Daud as the Barakzai did not suffer from a similar track record. Mohammed Daud indeed had informed the Dutch that he worked together with Matiullah in the past, and considered a meeting a serious option on the conditions that all parties would stop their interference in each other’s affairs, a fair representation and distribution of projects, as well as fair and heeded agreements. The Dutch advised Daud that these points should be the objectives of the dialogue rather than pre-conditions, which led to the promise that he would reconsider his position while adding that he previously held good working relationships with Matiullah. Furthermore former governor Munib indicated that there was sufficient ground for reconciliation and even offered the Dutch to mediate between both parties. Eventually in early July a meeting between Matiullah Khan, Mohammed Daud Khan, and Mohammed Nabi Khan was organized by Australian and US Special Forces at the PRT’s location. Although there were some tensions during the meeting, it was regarded a successful first step that would be followed by a more inclusive gathering with other elders that would take place after the end of the TFU mission.

Where does this all leave us with regard to the results of the TFU campaign? Certainly, when on 1 August 2010 authority was transferred to the US-Australian Combined Team Uruzgan (CTU) under command of US colonel James Creighton the Dutch could look back at significant successes. Progress was achieved in all three lines of operations. In the field of socio-economic development there were greater job opportunities, an improved agricultural sector, increased access to health care and education, as well as far better coverage of media and mobile phone networks. Especially in the three main ADZs the security situation had shifted as a result of TFU operations and an influx of ANSF, which now totaled some 2,000 to 3,000 ANP members and about 4,000 ANA soldiers. Albeit the latter were highly capable and proficient in operating independently, the lacking professionalization of the ANP ultimately prevented a full transfer of security leadership in the ADZs. In these three key districts, where most of Uruzgan’s population was living, governmental control had increased to an approximate level of 75% for Tirin Kot, 45% for Chora district (which was

197 The following section is predominantly based on Willem Vogelsang, ‘Personal Documents, Tirin Kot, 2008-2010’, 13 April 2010, see also Ibid., 1 July 2010.
201 Ibid., 34-37.
202 Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, Ministerie van Defensie, Eenbevolkings Nederlandse bijdrage aan ISAF, 2006-2010, 103.
not fully incorporated in the ink spot), and 85% for Deh Rawud district. Although these figures are a bit more conservative than those published in 2009 (see section 10.3.1), they still are impressive in comparison to the situation in 2006 when numbers were estimated at 30-40%, 20%, and 20% respectively. In ISAF’s counterinsurgency lingo the three main ADZs were firmly in the build phase, and as a consequence of TFU efforts during the last year even the peripheral areas connecting the key districts could now be classified as advanced hold or incipient build. The combined effect of all these results was a situation that seemed sufficiently stable and secure to commence with the transfer of control to the local government that would now start to exert its authority as autonomously as possible. This was completely in line with the TFU’s campaign objective as formulated in the UCP, and therefore it might be concluded that the campaign fully achieved its aim. Yet, at this point the developments that took place during the last months of the Dutch mission came to play a role.

The TFU’s campaign objective specified the nature of the local government that would take over control and function as the cornerstone for long-term development in Uruzgan as ‘reliable and effective’, and capable of bringing ‘the government and the people closer together’. Of course the TFU had greatly contributed to this by empowering Governor Hamdam’s independent provincial administration and connecting this body to well-respected district chiefs who enjoyed the legitimacy of the people at the grassroots level. Under Hamdam the previously marginalized Ghilzai were included in the government, as well as almost all other tribes. This formalized the tribal balance that had been so actively pursued by the Dutch in order to establish control over the population and which they sought to preserve as a platform for stability in the province. However, as we have seen, Hamdam was sacked by Kabul in March 2010 and replaced by interim Governor Khudai Rahim, who was closely connected to the Popalzai strongmen, and Matiullah Khan in particular. In the perception of the local population this not only weakened the provincial administration, but it also endangered the tribal balance as the Popalzai clearly had positioned themselves in an advantageous position vis-à-vis their rivals led by Mohammed Daud Khan. Thus, while the TFU campaign achieved significant progress in the fields of socio-economic development, security, and governance, its most pivotal achievement, the restoration of Uruzgan’s tribal balance, was now threatened by the same local government that was supposed to build
forth on this delicate equilibrium. Consequently, the sustainability of the stability brought by the TFU campaign was questionable. It was a grim omen that Khudai Rahim during the last provincial government meeting attended by TFU personnel provocatively stated that ‘nothing in Uruzgan will remember us to them [the Dutch]’.

Equally significant - and perhaps cynical - was that the Dutch, who throughout their campaign had emphasized the importance of formalizing local power structures by connecting them to the local government, ended their campaign propping up the counter-balancing faction of Barakzai, Achekzai, and Tokhi through a non-governmental project; the construction of the road between Tirin Kot and Chora.

10.4 Epilogue: return of the Popalzai

A month after the formal end of the TFU mission IDLG director Popal visited Uruzgan and attended several meetings at Jan Mohammed Khan’s and Matiullah Khan’s houses, which could be interpreted as a clear sign that the Popalzai strongmen were seeking to strengthen their position and get rid of their rivals in official positions, especially Mohammed Daud Khan. Moreover, Matiullah once more started to influence Daud’s uncle and intra-factional rival, Shah Mohammed, in order to erode the position of the young Barakzai leader. With the Dutch gone and Australian support focusing on informal empowerment, these latest efforts in what Daud and his allies unanimously considered an orchestrated attack by Jan Mohammed and Matiullah finally ushered his dismissal as Chora’s district chief during the fall of 2010.

The position of the Barakzai, Achekzai, and Tokhi alliance was further weakened when Achekzai leader Abdul Khaleq was not re-elected in the 2010 Wolesi jirga election (which in Uruzgan suffered from a very low turnout of 6.4%), while all newly or re-elected men were strongly linked to either one of the Popalzai strongmen. Furthermore, Khaleq’s brother and confidant Malem Sadiq was killed in a suicide attack in November. Albeit such attacks had become a signature of the Neo-Taliban, it was not the first time that a suicide attacker was used to settle a local dispute in Uruzgan where such assets could be hired through local Taliban commanders. All these developments led to a loss of strength of...
the counter-balancing faction, which, among others, also materialized in disputes over access to international financial resources. In one case it was reported, for instance, that Matiullah’s brother Rahimullah threatened entrepreneurs from the rival faction (including Daud’s brother Khushal).\textsuperscript{214} Most important, however, was that the Popalzai strongmen now had firmly re-established themselves as the most important actors in Uruzgan’s political marketplace. Although even in Popalzai-dominated villages people had a high regard for Daud, it was clear that Matiullah and Jan Mohammed held the most influence in the local administration and had the best ties with coalition forces. CULAD Vogelsang, who remained in Uruzgan until December 2010, personally witnessed the ramifications of this shift as local leaders expressed their concerns and dissatisfaction with the provincial government.\textsuperscript{215} Additionally he also observed how people at the grassroots level had adopted the view ‘that ISAF works very closely together with the militia of Matiullah, and that Matiullah is seen as using and manipulating ISAF’.\textsuperscript{216} Thus, before the end of the year, the tribal balance, which the Dutch had so arduously established and sought to preserve beyond their mission, had again shifted to an uneven division of power in which the Popalzai strongmen dominated Uruzgan’s political landscape as well as the provincial administration.

Mohammed Daud had already informed coalition forces that while Jan Mohammed and Matiullah Khan concordantly cooperated in their effort to sideline him, they also had a lot of differences.\textsuperscript{217} The two strongmen and relatives were actually rivals competing for exclusive power in Uruzgan. Whereas Jan Mohammed had dominated the province until 2006, his influence had decreased as a consequence of the Dutch intervention. Matiullah, on the other hand, had emerged more powerful due to the exploitation of his access to (inter-)national resources, despite the TFU’s policy to limit his influence. By 2010 he was actively challenging Jan Mohammed ‘by working hard on his image as a generous and inclusive leader’ and even created a \textit{shura} to discuss reform in the province.\textsuperscript{218} Jan Mohammed gradually lost terrain and in July 2011 even complained to journalist Anand Gopal that his relative Matiullah ‘has gone mad with power’, adding that if he could return as provincial governor, he would save Uruzgan from Matiullah’s dictatorship.\textsuperscript{219} A few days later the power struggle came to an abrupt ending when on July 17 2011 a Taliban assault team detonated a car bomb at the front

\textsuperscript{214} Willem Vogelsang, ‘Personal Documents, Tirin Kot, 2008-2010’, 30 November 2010. In this case it concerned the delivery of gravel for the construction of an airstrip in Tirin Kot. Whereas Rahimullah asked $50 per shipment, Khushal only asked $18-28. Consequently Rahimullah accused Khushal of ruining the market and threatened to burn his trucks if he would not increase his prices.


\textsuperscript{216} Willem Vogelsang, ‘Personal Documents, Tirin Kot, 2008-2010’, 30 November 2010 (2).


\textsuperscript{218} Susanne Schmeidl, \textit{The man who would be king}, 33-36. See also Paul Fishstein, \textit{Winning Hearts and Minds in Ururzgan Province} (Somerville, MA: Feinstein International Center, 2012), 7 Dan Green, \textit{The Valley’s Edge}, 207.

\textsuperscript{219} Anand Gopal, \textit{No Good Men Among the Living, America, The Taliban, And The War Through Afghan Eyes}, 271.
gate of Jan Mohammed’s place in Kabul and subsequently stormed the house with rifles and grenades killing the Uruzgan strongman and presidential advisor. 220

The assassination of Jan Mohammed Khan fitted a pattern of targeted killings of government officials and members of Karzai’s inner circle by the Taliban; only a couple of days before Jan Mohammed’s death, Ahmed Wali Karzai, the half brother of the president and the head of Kandahar’s provincial council as well as the major Popalzai powerbroker of the greater Kandahar region, had been killed (12 July 2011). These killings not only cleared Matiullah’s direct rival, they also rendered him one of President Karzai’s key allies in southern Afghanistan. 221 Subsequently, on August 7 2011 Matiullah’s long wished dream came true; Karzai named him Uruzgan’s chief of police and thereby his de facto status as the province’s key security provider was finally consolidated in an official position.

Matiullah’s appointment was not only a consequence of Karzai’s need to strengthen his network in the south, it was also a ramification of a deterioration of the security situation in Uruzgan. Following the Dutch withdrawal there had been a significant increase in local Taliban activity during the spring of 2011, which culminated in a complex Taliban attack on governmental targets in Tirin Kot on 28 July (resulting in 29 dead and 35 wounded; even nation-wide the scale of this event was exceptional). 222 Local rumours had it that this insecurity at least for a part could be attributed to Matiullah who reportedly had deliberately adopted a rather passive stance when Jan Mohammed blocked his appointment as chief of police following Juma Gul’s removal in April 2011. Matiullah, therefore, had a strong interest in seeing the new chief of police, Uruzgan outsider Fazal Ahmad Sherzad, fail in order to prove that he was the only credible security provider in the province. Well-informed sources deemed this explanation quite likely. 223 It should not remain unnoticed here that the surge in Taliban violence also demonstrates that whereas the TFU succeeded in temporarily outmanoeuvering the Taliban as a relevant actor during its mission, it apparently did not succeed in denying Uruzgan’s insurgent networks a capability for quickly re-emerging and mounting complicated violent actions that revealed their continued relevance. 224 It was only after Matiullah’s appointment as provincial chief of police that the security situation in Uruzgan rapidly ameliorated. This resulted in an increase of governmental control in all three key districts in the south as well as in the more remote areas in the north, which had not been incorporated in the TFU’s ink spot. Approximate figures of 80-90% for Tirin Kot, 95%
The Course of Co-option

Chapter 10

The Course of Co-option

The Liaison Office, *Ur uzgan: 18 months after the Dutch/Australian Leadership Handover*, 116-121. Percentages represent estimated levels of governmental control in respective districts.


The Liaison Office, *Ur uzgan: 18 months after the Dutch/Australian Leadership Handover*, 71.

Hans Ariëns, ‘Nog steeds werk aan de weg’. Eventually the costs for the construction of the road totaled €22.5 million.

Yet, despite the increased security situation, the Taliban had firmly re-established themselves and remained capable of launching violent actions throughout the province.\(^{226}\)

Of course, the re-emergence of the Taliban in Uruzgan can also be linked to the shift in the tribal balance that occurred after the end of the TFU campaign. The successful actions of the Popalzai strongmen to diminish the position of the Achekzai, Barakzai, and Tokhi alliance certainly caused grievance among those societal groups. The local power-holders leading the counter-balancing faction, however, realized that cooperation with the government and international assets offered the best chance to secure their interests. For the time being the contract for securing the construction of the Tirin Kot-Chora road guaranteed them a fair share of influence in the province (as well as access to international (financial) resources). Furthermore Mohammed Daud, Mohammed Nabi Khan, as well as Abdul Khaleq were well-connected to governmental officials in Kabul and to regional powerbrokers in Kandahar (most notably Nangarhar governor and Barakzai strongman Gul Agha Sherzai, see 8.3.1).\(^{227}\)

Allegedly, the removal of Juma Gul in April 2011 and the appointment of the independent outsider Sherzad as his replacement was a direct result of the exploitation of such contacts by the leaders of the counter-balancing faction.

The position of Daud’s alliance had also received a boost by the appointment of an outsider as Uruzgan’s new governor. Mohammed Omar Sherzad, a well-educated Khogiani Pashtun (from the Karlani confederation, not endogenous to Uruzgan) from Nangarhar had been a long-time friend of the Karzai-family.\(^{228}\) Albeit his welcoming reception on 13 December 2010 was overshadowed by Jan Mohammed Khan, who received a massive applause for his return to the province, Governor Sherzad gradually proved to be a professional and highly competent administrator who was hailed by local communities for his neutrality and impartiality. Moreover, by the end of 2011 he held good relationships with all key tribal leaders and reportedly he had evolved into ‘an important symbol for Uruzgan’s non-Popalzai tribes’.\(^{229}\) The latter was extremely important as the road between Tirin Kot and Chora was opened in October 2011, ending the lucrative security contract that had served as a guarantee for power sharing.\(^{230}\) Yet Mohammed Daud expressed his concerns over the future as he stated that he needed additional weapons to protect his people against Matiullah, who he
perceived as ‘worse than the Taliban’. Although the Australians stepped in to mediate and arranged a meeting between Daud and Matiullah, the former felt increasingly threatened and started to spend more time in Kabul for his safety. Despite this measure the young Barakzai leader Mohammed Daud Khan was killed on 30 October 2011 at the hands of his friend Sameullah Popalzai, who recently had received shelter in Daud’s Kabul house. Matiullah’s involvement, of course, could not be proven, but there is little doubt that Daud’s death served his interest as this eliminated his main remaining rival (as aforementioned Jan Mohammed Khan had been killed in July 2011). Thus, by the end of 2011 the counter-balancing faction of Barakzai, Achekzai, and Tokhi on the one hand had lost their leader and main source of influence and income, but on the other hand they had gained the support of Governor Sherzad. It was to be seen whether this was sufficient to secure the faction’s interest vis-à-vis Matiullah, now by far the strongest actor in the province.

Of course Matiullah continued his power play; Governor Sherzad now found himself on a collision course with Matiullah, who confronted the governor to express his dissatisfaction and initiated a lobby for Sherzad’s removal. Consequently the well-respected Sherzad was sacked in April 2012 and replaced by another Uruzgan outsider with good connections to President Karzai, Amir Mohammed Akhundzada (the younger brother of former Helmand governor Sher Mohammed Akhundzada). The new governor developed a similar policy of working towards an inclusive government, which after a while again -inevitably- triggered a rift between Uruzgan’s provincial governor and Matiullah Khan. This time Matiullah accused the governor of corruption (contradistinctively Akhundzada enjoyed a reputation as a wealthy man who did not care for self-enrichment) and organized protests by Tirin Kot residents as well as a lobby in Kabul. In March 2014 the game was over for Governor Akhundzada as Karzai fired him while appointing Amanullah Taimuri as his replacement.

231 Anand Gopal, No Good Men Among the Living, America, The Taliban, And The War Through Afghan Eyes, 272.
233 The Liaison Office, Uruzgan: 18 months after the Dutch/Australian Leadership Handover, 72.
of the 2014 (nation-wide) conclusion of the ISAF campaign. Thus, after more than seven years of ISAF presence and almost ten years of PRT operations, Uruzgan was finally being governed by an autonomous local administration with support of locally operating ANSF. Yet, Matiullah’s overall power as well as his official position and influence in governmental affairs left little doubt about the fact that the provincial government again was dominated by a Popalzai strongman.

Although Uruzgan’s autonomous administration was far from independent, it neither was of an exclusive nature - unlike Jan Mohammed’s government. Even among those previously critical of Matiullah - and his past -, his reputation had increased. This could be partly attributed to Matiullah’s ‘hearts and minds’ campaign that brought security and development to local communities. More important was the pragmatic reasoning of both local power-holders previously opposing the Popalzai strongman as well as Matiullah himself; with foreign troops and aid providers gone the former lost their main guarantee for a relatively stable and secure environment, while the latter was deprived of his main source of income and power. Consequently, collaborative relationships emerged between Matiullah and the leaders of Uruzgan’s societal segments including the Barakzai, Achekzai, and even some previously marginalized Ghilzai tribes. Therefore it seems that ultimately a form of inclusive government materialized in Uruzgan as co-optive arrangements between local power-holders and Matiullah Khan served to connect societal segments to the provincial government, a rather unexpected consequence of dynamics brought about by foreign intervention and -remarkably- the consecutive withdrawal of international forces.

The assassination of Matiullah by a burqa-clad Taliban suicide attacker in Kabul on 18 March 2015, however, ushered an abrupt end to Uruzgan’s new political order. A Popalzai attempt to install one of Matiullah’s brothers as his replacement failed - he was also killed - and by the end of May a new violent power struggle emerged between Uruzgan’s various factions (this was wrongly interpreted by Dutch media as a Taliban take over of the province).

237 For the end of CTU and PRT presence see Facebook pages of both units, respectively https://www.facebook.com/CombinedTeamUruzgan, and https://www.facebook.com/PRTUruzgan.


New Afghan President Mohammed Ashraf Ghani (installed 29 September 2014) reportedly favours Uruzgan’s non-Popalzai sub-tribes, but the local government still depends on the well-equipped and organized militia of the late Matiullah Khan for maintaining security in the province. Thus, a new fragile balance arose in which Matiullah’s heritage has secured significant Popalzai leverage over the provincial political marketplace, while the other factions also hold a firm share in power as a consequence of support from Kabul. Despite the emergence of this more or less tribally balanced new order—exactly what the TFU was trying to establish—this newest episode in Uruzgan’s seemingly ever-recurring cycle of power struggles has raised growing concerns about the sustainability of stability in Uruzgan. Therefore, it remains questionable whether the current inclusive political order can serve as an underpinning for long-term development.

10.5 Conclusion

In the last two years of its campaign the TFU successfully consolidated and expanded the bridgehead in Uruzgan’s human terrain that resulted from the first two years. Instrumental in achieving this success was the full-fledged embracement of counterinsurgency that occurred during 2008. The conceptual and organizational changes brought about an adaptation that bolstered the TFU’s capability for establishing and consolidating control over Uruzgan’s fragmented societal landscape. Moreover, the revision of the campaign also led to more realistic expectations about the pace of advance in the province as it was accepted that only in 2050 the local government and economy would be sufficiently developed to function as a stable province of the new Afghan state. With the end of its mission set for 2010, the TFU mission now was redesigned to take ‘the first steps towards a viable and favourable future for Uruzgan in 2050’ by providing a safe and secure environment as well as improving the local government in order to give the local population a credible prospect of prosperity.242

Thus, the reorientation of the mission towards counterinsurgency was meant to establish an underpinning for long-term stabilization efforts—as typical in modern counterinsurgency—after the withdrawal of the Dutch troops. In this conclusion we will analyze how the adaptation to counterinsurgency spawned augmented control over the local population and consecutively discuss the nature of this control in relationship to the campaign’s end goal of providing a stable platform for further development.

The new TFU campaign plan introduced by the staff of TFU-4, the Focal Paper, clearly echoed the spirit of the population-centric counterinsurgency approach described in the 2006 US field manual FM 3-24 as it sought to enhance governmental control by securing the people’s collaboration through improved governance, socio-economic development, and security. Now it had been acknowledged that even after the 2010 end of the TFU campaign the local government would require significant assistance, the end states in all three fields were

deliberately formulated in a generic way emphasizing the importance of progress rather than setting absolute goals. This gave the Dutch some latitude to match their campaign to the actual situation on the ground instead of imposing a tight schedule of objectives of which it was unclear whether or not they were achievable within the time span of the TFU campaign. The only explicitly stated goal was that by 2010 the people living in the three main ADZs would perceive the ANSF capable to provide security with coalition forces only acting in a back up role. Yet, even this goal is not as clear-cut as it seems; it is almost impossible to determine the perception of Uruzgan’s population. This end state, however, illustrates that from now on the TFU campaign would concentrate on the three key districts, another important feature introduced in the Focal Paper -the 2006 Master Plan aimed at the province as a whole. For this purpose the districts of Tirin Kot, Deh Rawud, and Chora were subdivided in seventeen so-called Focal Areas that allowed a systematical expansion of the TFU ink spot. An individual Focal Area would be addressed by a tailored approach to achieve progress in the fields of security, governance, and socio-economic development, and as soon as the situation was sufficient stable, the Dutch task force would shift its attention to an adjacent area. The ideal result of this approach encompassed a full transfer of security authority to locally operating ANSF. Albeit the Focal Paper thus allowed for a localized population-centric counterinsurgency approach, its fundamental flaw was that the Focal Areas had been primarily determined on the basis of geographical features which did not necessarily correspond to the ethnographic reality on the ground. Despite this mistake in its design the Focal Paper was a descent campaign plan that not only introduced counterinsurgency as the predominant campaign theme, but also adopted realistic objectives in order to establish an underpinning for long-term stability.

In addition to these conceptual changes an increase of the civil capacity and ANA presence boosted the TFU’s capability to conduct counterinsurgency operations in Uruzgan’s complicated operational environment. With regard to the former the appointment of two dedicated CULADs as well as the augmentation of the team of POLADs and OSADs, all under the leadership of the CIVREP, turned out to be a true force multiplier; it greatly augmented the process of gathering and processing population-centric intelligence and brought a capacity for dispatching civilian officials on patrols together with the soldiers of the PRT and BG. Most important was the decision that command of the TFU from now on would be shared by a duumvirate consisting of the military commander and the CIVREP. This civil surge not only served to enhance the integration between civil and military assets within the TFU, it also encompassed an increase in NGOs which were attracted by the ‘civilianization’ of the development effort. Thus, in addition to the Focal Paper, the strengthening of the civil contribution was a key factor in the TFU’s adaption to counterinsurgency warfare. Next to these more or less internal changes, an external factor contributing to the ability to conduct counterinsurgency operations was the deployment of the ANA’s fourth brigade to the province. The arrival of 1,700 relatively well-trained troops during 2008 finally provided
a capability for establishing permanent presence in areas cleared from the Taliban. But how were all these changes put into action for obtaining results on the ground?

Even before the completion of the Focal Paper TFU-4 was seeking to rebalance the kinetic and non-kinetic efforts of the task force. As part of this action KLE was introduced at the task force level as a quintessential tool for influencing the local population. This initiative successfully incorporated KLE in the staff process used for the planning, execution, and evaluation of all task force activities. However, due to a lack of coordination with the ‘Track 2’ program and troubles with the integration with kinetic targeting, TFU-4 did not succeed in establishing a full-fledged KLE program for the TFU as a whole. Yet, when combined with the Focal Paper, the increased civil capacity and the expansion of ANSF personnel, the engagement of local leaders materialized in a localized counterinsurgency approach that addressed the populace of each specific Focal Area. This systematic approach, known by the acronym USECT, was based on a thorough understanding of the societal landscape in the target area in order to formulate a comprehensive plan for establishing, enhancing, and transferring control over its population (the understand and shape phases). The actual engagement concerned strengthening the connection between the people and the government through local leaders who for that purpose were allocated development projects and actively involved in governmental affairs. Of course security was conditional in stepping up the people’s collaboration, and typically TFU as well as ANSF forces were operating together to create and maintain a secure area. The latter would gradually become more important, establish a permanent presence, and take over the responsibility over security in the Focal Area - freeing TFU soldiers for operations in another area. These activities (all part of the engagement and consolidation phases) would ultimately lead to a full transfer of authority to the local administration (transfer phase). Thus, a localized population-centric counterinsurgency approach for establishing control over the population at the grassroots level emerged as a consequence of the revision of the TFU campaign plan, the increase of civilian capacity, the influx of additional ANSF personnel, and initiatives by the TFU-4 staff to rebalance the task force’s kinetic and non-kinetic efforts.

The new approach effectively consolidated the TFU’s previous gains in the province and led to a tremendous expansion of control in Deh Rawud district. At the provincial level the position of the Barakzai/Achekzai power block was firmly entrenched when Rozi Khan was officially installed as Chora’s district chief after winning elections for that position. Governor Hamdam’s support for the Barakzai leader strengthened the connection between the provincial administration and this powerful alliance representing a majority of Uruzgan’s population. The Dutch also continued their cooperation with the Tokhi of Mohammed Nabi, a previously marginalized faction that now was actively participating in governmental affairs. The results of the new population-centric counterinsurgency approach, however, were most visible on the ground in Deh Dawud district where, based on the insights obtained during operation Pathan Ghar, a permanent security presence was established in the most important Focal Areas of the ADZ and a coordinated effort was launched to alter the political balance.
Soldiers of locally operating BG and PRT units mutually engaged local power-holders in order to curtail Popalzai influence and empower the Nurzai and Babozai majority. This effort was closely guided by the civil experts of the TFU staff who had designed the policy to reshuffle Deh Rawud’s political marketplace and synchronized all assets involved in its implementation, including the Dutch embassy in Kabul. The political engagement soon bore fruit as an independent outsider, ANA officer Said Usman, was installed as acting district chief and a new shura of local leaders was instituted to decide upon security and development projects, with the role of the old Popalzai-dominated shura being limited to advises only. In addition to the allocation of development aid and advancing security at the grassroots level, the Dutch also empowered the new district administration by paying Usman an allowance (from budget of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs). Furthermore the civil experts at the TFU staff pushed Governor Hamdam to appeal with the IDLG for Usman’s permanent appointment, while the Dutch embassy in Kabul was also lobbying to achieve this. Thus, in addition to consolidating the results in Tirin Kot and Chora, the TFU expanded its control in Deh Rawud by increasing Babozai and Nurzai influence and simultaneously curtailing Popalzai power.

The comprehensive and synchronized approach for the engagement of local power-holders that had emerged during the TFU-4 rotation was continued by TFU-5, the first staff effectively acting under dual civil-military control. Consequently, when Jan Mohammed Khan launched an attempt to re-establish his position in Uruzgan by using his influence in the province as well as his position in Kabul (and especially his close ties with IDLG director Popal) to replace Hamdam and appoint new district chiefs, this was effectively countered through a concerted multi-level engagement that even involved officials of the Dutch government. TFU empowerment had not only secured Governor Hamdam’s position, it had also preserved district chiefs Said Usman and Mohammed Daud (who had succeed his perished father Rozi Khan), both capable of connecting the people in their districts to the provincial government. Thus, Jan Mohammed was effectively thwarted while at the same time the influence of the local administration had been augmented. Equally important was that this episode paved the way for permanently embedding KLE at the task force level.

TFU-5 designed and implemented a fully integrated comprehensive KLE program based on the afore mentioned experience and the efforts of its predecessors. The program succeeded in definitely anchoring KLE as a standard component of the TFU staff’s tool kit for establishing, consolidating, and enhancing control over the local population. In addition to political empowerment and allocation of development projects, methods for the containment of spoilers were also included. Whereas lower-level leaders could be relatively easily removed from official positions, more powerful spoilers could only be touched by a more subtle indirect method. This concerned the capability to conduct synchronized multi-level engagements which often empowered rivals at the grassroots level, but also sought to limit a spoiler’s influence in Kabul. Additionally ‘Track 2’ was also linked to the KLE program in order to bolster the TFU’s ability to withstand the powerful spoilers active in Uruzgan province. Another feature of the new program was combining kinetic targeting with non-
kinetic engagement in order to turn susceptible insurgent commanders. Furthermore KLE was generically applied in the preparation, execution, and exploitation of operations. Operation Tura Ghar in January 2009 epitomized this approach as tribal leaders were engaged in order to enhance the understanding of the local population and shape the operational environment as well as adjust the plan of the operation. The exploitation of this operation not only encompassed establishing a permanent security presence, but also setting up (or strengthening) a connection with the provincial government through the allocation of development projects to local leaders. The engagement of local actors for influencing Uruzgan's political marketplace as well as in support of operations illustrates that by early 2009 the Dutch task force generically applied KLE throughout the full spectrum of its activities.

The adaptation to counterinsurgency during 2008, including the embedding of KLE, greatly enhanced the TFU's and local government's grip over Uruzgan's population. First TFU-4 had successfully established control over the most important Focal Areas of all three ADZs, and consecutively TFU-5 had managed to consolidate this result and even had started to expand the task force's influence sphere to increase those Focal Areas connecting the ADZs. Yet, there were still significant obstacles to clear for advancing the local situation as far as possible in order to provide an underpinning for long-term development after the 2010 end of the TFU campaign. A key insight resulting from the actions in 2008 was that while the TFU was conducting a counterinsurgency campaign against the Taliban, former governor Jan Mohammed Khan was actually the most formidable antagonist in the struggle for control over Uruzgan's populace. The Taliban had become relevant in the province as a consequence of the predatory and oppressive behavior of Jan Mohammed and his Popalzai-dominated network. In order to prevent a renewed relevance of the insurgency, the Dutch envisioned a sustainable inclusive political order that through its connection with the local administration would provide a stable platform for wider development. It was pivotal, therefore, that the remainder of the TFU campaign would not only enhance governmental control by strengthening the ties between the government and local leaders, but also would focus at obstructing a return to dominance of Jan Mohammed and his associates.

At the time of TFU-6's deployment it had become clear that the political climate in The Netherlands deemed a post-2010 extension of the campaign highly unlikely. This prompted another revision of the campaign plan in order to achieve the end goal of transferring a secure and politically stable situation to the local government and succeeding ISAF forces. With regard to security a separate plan, the USP, was developed to transfer leadership over security operations in the three ADZs to the ANSF by August 2010 (with coalition forces remaining in support). The all-important political stability was to be achieved by enhancing the unity of effort among all international and local actors active in Uruzgan. In order to create common ground the revised campaign plan, the UCP, discerned disabling and enabling factors that could affect the progress of the international effort in Uruzgan. It should be mentioned that, among others, both the spoiling influence of some local leaders
as well as the positive influence of other key leaders were emphasized. Thusly the importance of KLE became anchored in the TFU campaign plan. Furthermore the UCP was based on a set of universal principles of which propagating tribal balance and Afghan ownership were most relevant to the situation in Uruzgan. Based on this underpinning, activities in the fields of governance, socio-economic development, and security were delivered in a coordinated manner ‘to contribute to a reliable and effective government that can bring the government and the people closer together, and is able to provide a stable and secure environment and development progress in Uruzgan, in due course without ISAF support’. This objective and the continued relevance of the three major lines of operations clearly indicate that the UCP was a logical next step in the evolution of the TFU strategy as it adjusted the population-centric approach adopted by its predecessors, the 2006 TFU Master Plan and the 2008 Focal Paper, to the operational reality dictated by the approaching end of the Dutch campaign.

The introduction of the UCP also brought a change in the way the conceptual approach was delivered at the grassroots level. First the Focal Areas were abandoned in favor of so-called ‘areas of influence’. These new areas were primarily identified by use of socio-economical and demographic characteristics to allow for an optimal engagement of societal segments. This was a significant improvement over the geographically defined Focal Areas. Additionally the USECT methodology was replaced by the ‘shape, clear, hold, build’ phased approach for counterinsurgency operations that had gradually become more popular within the wider ISAF mission. The latter approach encompassed acquiring a thorough understanding of the environment (the shaping phase) in order to launch a military effort to deny insurgents direct influence over the local population (the clearing stage). Once a locale had been sufficiently secured, socio-economic development and political measures would be deployed to consolidate the situation and start with the transfer of security leadership to locally operating ANSF (the holding phase). In the building stage the actual transfer of security responsibility as well as the transfer of control to the local government would take place. According to this classification the three main ADZs in Uruzgan could be largely categorized as in the building phase, which corresponded to the objective for the TFU campaign. The main challenge for the remainder of the Dutch mission was enhancing control over the strategic areas connecting the three key districts that could be typified as in an incipient holding stage at best. Thus, in addition to advancing the ADZs as far as possible towards the transfer of authority to the provincial administration, the TFU also had to focus on increasing control in the areas of influence between these districts.

Albeit the UCP intended to boost the final stage of the TFU campaign by increasing the unity of effort among the kaleidoscope of civil and military actors operating in Uruzgan province, its implementation was hampered because of conflicting views, both within the Dutch task force as well as externally. Internally the introduction of the UCP coincided

with the PRT’s transfer of command from military to civil authority. Due to a lack of communication and unclarity with regard to the new chain of command the UCP was initially not well explained to the PRT, which prevented it from sharing the new approach with NGOs and other development partners. A related problem was that increased civil-military cooperation triggered a bureaucratic reaction at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to halt its contribution to the small CIMIC budget. Albeit this was eventually solved after two months, it damaged the task force’s capability to deliver non-kinetic effects at the grassroots level within the TFU ink spot as projects had to be prioritized and even a temporarily stop was announced. The last internal factor hampering the implementation of the UCP was the emphasis on kinetic actions of some key officers within the TFU-6 staff. Despite repeated statements by senior TFU officials that the Taliban were not the main enemy in Uruzgan, a series of missile attacks at Kamp Holland caused a relapse to the military default mode that was not linked to a thorough understanding of the societal dynamics underlying the insurgency. Combined with the problems experienced by the PRT this preference caused an imbalance between kinetic and non-kinetic activities that further hampered the introduction of the UCP.

The main external interference with the UCP’s implementation was caused by a deep rift between the Dutch policy and the US and Australian views concerning Matiullah Khan. Since 2008 this Popalzai strongman had increased his power through the exploitation of his monopoly on securing the Kandahar-Tirin Kot highway. Whereas the Dutch considered him a powerful spoiler who had participated in the brutal oppression of Ghilzai tribes under the regime of his uncle Jan Mohammed, the US and Australian Special forces had been actively cooperating with him for years. Moreover, his recent ascent in power also led to a review of higher level policy of these important allies who now came to accept the view of Matiullah as a key security provider. Of course this directly opposed the Dutch policy to avoid cooperation with Matiullah as much as possible in order to prevent the idea of an association that would be unacceptable to the Ghilzai as well as to the Barakzai/Achekzai block, the main Dutch allies in Uruzgan’s societal landscape. Yet, it was true that the Dutch mission had become heavily dependent on the Popalzai strongman as all logistical contractors made use of Matiullah’s services for the protection of their supply convoys. The Americans and Australians, consequently, argued that cooperation with Matiullah was a logical outcome of the reality on the ground. Furthermore, Matiullah had launched his own ‘hearts and minds’ campaign among the local population, which gave the US and Australian additional arguments to plead for collaboration with this powerful agent. The Dutch, however, maintained their view of Matiullah as a spoiler, whose power had to be restrained in order to establish a new political order in which formerly marginalized societal segments -which had been oppressed by Matiullah- were also represented. This difference in views between the most important coalition partners active in Uruzgan would haunt the TFU campaign until its end.
Despite the afore mentioned internal and external interferences, TFU-6 ultimately succeeded in enhancing the unity of effort among the various actors operating in Uruzgan. The task force regained its balance when the organizational problems were solved. The resulting civil-military interface was capable of delivering non-kinetic effects as well as coordinating with NGOs operating in the province. The task force had yielded good progress by continuing its support to Governor Hamdam and district chiefs Mohammed Daud and Said Usman and overall governmental control at this time was estimated at 80% for Tirin Kot district, 90% for Deh Rawud, and 50-60% in Chora. Equally important was the commencement of the construction Tirin Kot-Chora road. This project would not only secure the geographical connection between these ADZs, but also functioned to strengthen the government’s ties with previously marginalized Ghilzai tribesmen, to whom the construction also opened a road to economical and political participation. Another important result was that the USP began to bear fruits and that the ANSF were ready to assume responsibility for the security of the presidential elections of August 2009, with TFU forces in a back up role.

TFU-7 fully benefitted from the work of the preceding rotation. First, it witnessed how the ANSF indeed proved capable of securing the presidential elections. This success could be largely attributed to the ANA, which performed far better than the ANP led by the corrupt Juma Gul, a protégé of Jan Mohammed. By now the ANA’s fourth brigade had evolved into a trustworthy partner and its forces were pivotal for conducting counterinsurgency operations in the troublesome areas connecting the three ADZs. Consequently, the provincial security situation reached an acceptable level -despite a conflict between ANA and ANP-, and the TFU increasingly focused on development and governance activities in preparation of the upcoming transfer of authority. Some 54 different actors were now cooperating with the Dutch to promote the socio-economic development of the province and the TFU initiated the first steps in guiding the joint effort towards long-term development. With regard to governance the Dutch continued their policy to bolster the local administration to create a representative platform capable of connecting with all different societal segments in the province. This meant a continuation of the empowering of Governor Hamdam and his district chiefs Mohammed Daud and Said Usman, who by now either had proven their will to accommodate previously irrelevant or marginalized political actors or represented societal segments which had suffered from Jan Mohammed’s divide and rule policy. As a consequence these three actors had become well-respected and legitimate authorities and even youngster Mohammed Daud had earned respect through his personal deeds -which often resulted from TFU empowerment- rather than from his father’s heritage. Thus, at the beginning of 2010 it seemed that the TFU was succeeding in its plan to leave behind a representative government capable of exerting control over the three key districts relatively autonomously.

This overall success was overshadowed by the sudden removal of Said Usman as Deh Rawud’s district chief as well as the outcome of the provincial council elections (coinciding with the presidential vote), which had resulted in a council dominated by members linked to either Jan Mohammed Khan or Matiullah Khan. Both incidents demonstrated the remaining
influence of the Popalzai strongmen in the province; the new Deh Rawud district chief, Khalifa Sadaat, was associated with Jan Mohammed and the Popalzai dominance of the provincial council was a result of a disappointing voter turnout of other societal segments, which could be attributed to doubts concerning the fair character of the elections. Another indicator for the remaining influence of the Popalzai strongmen was that early 2010 the local power-holders of the Barakzai/Achekzai block started to echo their worries about the ramifications of the upcoming Dutch retreat for the tribal balance in the province. It was feared that a loss of TFU empowerment would inevitably lead to a decline of their position and a full re-emergence of the Popalzai-dominated network.

TFU-8 was almost immediately confronted with this grim reality when following the announcement of the definite withdrawal of Dutch troops from Uruzgan, Governor Hamdam was suddenly sacked and replaced by acting Governor Khudai Rahim, a relative of both Popalzai strongmen (most closely associated with Matiullah Khan). Although the independent Hamdam was officially removed on allegations of corruption, it seems highly likely that his removal was the consequence of Jan Mohammed’s influence in the central government. With the definite end of the TFU campaign in sight Kabul apparently felt free to act against the policy of the Dutch, a decision that might also have been prompted by the fact that most probably the US, who favoured a more powerful position for both Popalzai strongmen, would take over the lead in Uruzgan. Thus, the Dutch were losing leverage even before their actual withdrawal had begun. How could they preserve the so-carefully fostered tribal balance under these circumstances?

The crisis in Uruzgan’s political landscape revealed that young Barakzai-leader Mohammed Daud had grown to prominence as a well-respected authority capable of unifying an alliance of Barakzai, Achekzai, and Tokhi in defense of their shared interest; the preservation of power vis-à-vis the Popalzai strongmen. Daud became the main antagonist of Jan Mohammed and Matiullah, who subsequently launched an effort to erode his position. The Dutch, on their turn, continued their empowerment of Daud and sought a way to secure his position beyond their stay in the province. Whereas the TFU had mainly been supporting Daud through his official position of district chief, this shifted to delivering aid through a more informal channel outside the structure of the Afghan state. Together with Tokhi leader Mohammed Nabi Khan, Mohammed Daud was accepted as main security provider for the construction of the Tirin Kot-Chora road. Propping up the counter-balancing faction this way not only gave its leaders revenues and a share in power, it also secured these benefits for the immediate future as it was expected that the project would certainly wind on for another year. Together with the Australian (who would remain in the province as the key US partner) commitment to his case this served to keep Mohammed Daud from giving up his official position as district chief and, even more important, to stay in Uruzgan as the leader of the counter-balancing faction.

Thus, by the end of the campaign in August 2010 the TFU had secured the position of the alliance led by Mohammed Daud. At the same time it had become clear that any permanent
solution for a stable political order would need to incorporate the Popalzai strongmen, who had managed to keep their influence in the province despite the Dutch policy to curtail their power. How should we consider this when assessing the TFU campaign? Of course, the TFU could certainly look back at a successful campaign as since 2006 the provincial security situation had tremendously increased, there had been significant progress in socio-economic development, and the local government had become far more effective, was in control of the three ADZs, and even held significant influence in the areas connecting these districts. In ISAF’s counterinsurgency terminology most areas that had been the focus of TFU operations could be classified as firmly in the build phase, which rendered them ready for a transfer of control to the local government. Yet, such a transfer did not occur, and the very reason for this was -again- the remaining influence of Jan Mohammed Khan and Matiullah Khan. Whereas the Dutch had righteously aimed at enhancing governmental control by connecting a balanced political order to a government equally representing this order, the removal of Governor Hamdam had revealed that the Popalzai strongmen held significant leverage over the provincial administration. Consequently, at this time the (provincial) government favoured the Popalzai-dominated network, which led to a decline of its legitimacy in the eyes of the people at the grassroots level. The major flaw of the TFU campaign, therefore, was that while it did much to obtain the collaboration of previously marginalized or politically sidelined societal segments -as prescribed by population-centric counterinsurgency doctrine-, it did too less to contain the influence of the spoilers that had driven these segments towards the Taliban. At best the Popalzai-network had been temporarily outmanoeuvered for the duration of the Dutch mission, but now the Dutch troops were leaving it was quickly re-emerging as the dominant factor in the provincial political marketplace. This raises questions about the sustainability of the power of the counter-faction once it would definitely lose the benefit of Dutch support.

Initially it seemed the Popalzai strongmen would crush their opponents as, in spite of a reconciliation dialogue initiated in the last month of the TFU campaign, the effort to weaken the position of the counter-faction was continued in a rapid pace. Among others, Mohammed Daud was removed as Chora’s district chief and Malem Sadiq was killed. Before the end of 2010 the political balance had shifted in favour of the Popalzai. During 2011 the Taliban re-emerged in unprecedented strength, which led to a huge deterioration of the provincial security situation. Moreover, the assassination of Jan Mohammed as part of the Taliban’s targeted killing campaign rendered Matiullah the dominant political actor in Uruzgan. The latter’s *de facto* power was now finally formalized as he was appointed provincial chief of police. At the same time the counter-faction received a huge blow when in rapid succession it lost its last source of Dutch support (the construction of the Tirin Kot-Chora road was finished) and its leader Mohammed Daud, who was murdered by a friend with a Popalzai background. Thusly Matiullah became the uncontested political leader of Uruzgan, and remarkably most people gradually came to approve his authority. Matiullah’s ‘hearts and minds’ campaign was partly responsible for this fact, but more important was that the departure of the international
forces unintentionally urged the leaders of the Barakzai, Achekzai, and Ghilzai to cooperate with Matiullah and vice versa. While Matiullah lost his main source of income and power, the societal segments of the counter-faction lost their main guarantee of security. Consequently, the ultimate -and unplanned- result of the international intervention in Uruzgan was an inclusive political order in which all societal segments were connected to the most dominant local power-holder -whose power the TFU had sought to curtail- through ties of mutual dependency. Although Matiullah’s assassination in 2015 made an end to this situation and triggered a renewed violent power struggle, the resulting political order still echoes the remnants of the international intervention as up to today his well-equipped and equally organized militia gives the Popalzai a cutting edge in securing a significant share of political power. Furthermore, the factions of the block that once with help of foreign powers stood up against Jan Mohammed Khan are now supported by the Afghan government in Kabul. Thus ultimately a tribally balanced new order has emerged in Uruzgan -exactly what the Dutch were aiming for. Yet, it remains to be seen whether or not this will suffice as a platform for long-term development.
Chapter 11
Chapter 11: The Uruzgan campaign as a case study of co-option of local power-holders in modern counterinsurgency warfare

11.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters we have scrutinized the Dutch experiences with co-option of local power-holders during the 2006-2010 TFU campaign in Afghanistan’s Uruzgan province. In this chapter we will discuss the thusly obtained insights in the light of this book’s analytical framework for understanding co-option in order to obtain a profound understanding of the role and utility of co-option in the reality of contemporary counterinsurgency campaigns. Moreover, by use of the more general findings on co-option in modern counterinsurgency warfare resulting from the theoretical and historical analyses in the first part of this book, we will draw conclusions on the application of co-option in contemporary counterinsurgency warfare. Combined with the conclusions from our case study on the Aceh War this will ultimately (in this book’s conclusion) allow us to answer the question of how counterinsurgents have co-opted local power-holders in order to obtain control over the population in a weblike society. Thus, this chapter provides a robust understanding of co-option in the practical reality of modern counterinsurgency warfare by use of Dutch experiences during the Uruzgan campaign.

Whereas modern counterinsurgency originally embraced classical counterinsurgency’s imperatives of modernization and the advance of liberal democracy -it might be remembered here that modern counterinsurgency emerged under the label neo-classical counterinsurgency-, it has gradually adopted cultural legitimation as its main prerequisite for establishing control over the population at the grassroots level (see Chapter Three, section 3.5). This adaptation from rational/legal legitimation to local patterns of legitimacy was the consequence of the experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan where Western forces faced the challenge of establishing control over highly fragmented weblike societies with limited resources and within a limited amount of time. While modernization and democratization remain long-term objectives -albeit this is still the subject of discussion-, the counterinsurgency effort focuses on providing an underpinning for such long-term stabilization as it seeks to establish, consolidate, and ultimately transfer (to the host-nation) control over the population at the grassroots level through the provision of security as well as through socio-economical and political measures. Co-option of local power-holders has become a pivotal feature of this approach as it allows the counterinsurgents to connect to the various societal segments under control of local leaders. Thus, as a consequence of the societal environment in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as the need to establish control over the population with limited resources and time, cultural legitimation has become firmly embedded in contemporary counterinsurgency.
The second fundamental mechanism through which co-option establishes control over the population, the mobilization of resources at the grassroots level, is also fully embraced in modern counterinsurgency warfare. This is not only triggered by the intervening forces’ lack of capabilities and time, but also by the fact that in a weak or failed state the host-nation’s security apparatus is only weakly developed. Although the state’s top-down mobilization process will be augmented as part of wider stabilization measures that already start during the counterinsurgency phase, the counterinsurgency effort itself focuses on rallying local (self-defense) militias in order to create a secure environment and win the fight for control over the population on the short term. Western reluctance to work with such militias has largely disappeared as a consequence of the reality on the ground that has revealed that any serious attempt at success necessitates collaboration with local armed groups. However, in order to control negative effects such as predatory behavior or marginalization of other societal segments and to provide an underpinning for long-term development, proper institutionalization of mobilized armed groups within the framework of the host-nation government is essential. Especially in Afghanistan where large warlord militias dominated the scene after the 2001 US-led invasion this proved difficult, and consequently lower-level armed groups that are more susceptible to state control have become the preferred partners for grassroots mobilization in contemporary counterinsurgency warfare.

Of course this latter point influences the overall co-option strategy as it hugely affects the practical issue of whom to co-opt. Modern counterinsurgency clearly prefers co-option of local power-holders at the lowest societal levels as this not only enhances the ability to control co-optees, but it also allows for co-option of leaders of marginalized societal segments. Such an approach, however, is impossible without also addressing dominant local power-holders whose power might have secured them significant influence over the local administration and alienated less powerful factions - a situation commonly met in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Consequently modern counterinsurgents find themselves co-opting and mitigating spoiler effects of dominant local power-holders, collaborating with local administrative officials in order to secure governmental independence, and reaching out to lower-level local power-holders for connecting to the various (alienated) societal segments. The answer to the question of whom to co-opt in contemporary counterinsurgency, therefore, typically depends on a thorough understanding of the local societal landscape that includes the interests and motives of all local power-holders as well as the relationships between various (competing) societal factions. In terms of the spectrum of co-option this mix of dominant and lower-level local power-holders potentially covers the complete range, but tries to focus as low as possible.

The ultimate challenge faced by contemporary counterinsurgents is to link both dominant and marginalized local power-holders to the local government without allowing the former to become too dominant and capture the government. Thus, the methods of co-option in modern counterinsurgency warfare seek to guarantee governmental independency and strengthen the connection between all power-holders in a locale’s societal landscape.
and the local administration. Typically co-option materializes in a KLE program that allows a shift between the coercive and persuasive methods of the co-option continuum. The emphasis, however, is on the persuasive side as empowerment and allocation of resources are the primary tools used in KLE, while the coercive side mainly depends on soft coercion either through replacement (from official positions) and deprivation of resources. The use (or threat) of force is restricted to extremist agents marked as unsuitable for co-option. Consequently, the capability for co-option domination in modern counterinsurgency warfare is severely limited, as replacement or deprivation of resources can certainly harm a local power-holder’s interest, but do not form an absolute guarantee for compliance. As today’s insurgents do not suffer from similar limitations with regard to the use of force, they hold an advantage in the struggle for collaboration. Protection of co-optees—either by the counterinsurgents or their own militias—therefore, is a prerequisite for establishing durable co-optive relationship that are controlled through allocation and withdrawal of resources or empowerment and replacement. Therefore, the provision of security, soft coercion, and persuasive methods are the main tools of KLE that serve to establish, augment, and consolidate control by connecting both dominant and less powerful local power-holders to the local government.

In this part we have seen how all these matters came together when the Dutch TFU struggled to establish and augment Uruzgan’s provincial government’s control over the highly fragmented societal landscape by mitigating the influence of Jan Mohammed’s Popalzai network and advancing the position of other factions such as the Barakzai/Achekzai block and the previously marginalized Ghilzai sub-tribes. While there were significant difficulties in implementing this approach as a consequence of the TFU’s need to adapt to its mission and operational environment, it eventually succeeded to re-establish the tribal balance in the local political marketplace. This final chapter provides an analysis of these difficulties by scrutinizing the evolution of co-option throughout the Dutch Uruzgan campaign. Yet, a definite conclusion on co-option in the reality of contemporary counterinsurgency warfare as experienced by the TFU should also include the rapid decline of results that was the consequence of the political decision to end the mission and the consecutive withdrawal from Uruzgan. This is of pivotal importance as modern counterinsurgency not only aims to establish control on the short term, but also serves as an underpinning for long-term stabilization. Therefore we will also critically delve into the faltering durability of the TFU campaign’s effects. In order to draw a definite conclusion this chapter follows the logic of the framework for understanding co-option and will consecutively address the fundamental issues of cultural legitimation and mobilization as well as the way these were operationalized by addressing the questions of whom exactly and how to co-opt.
11.2 Cultural legitimation

Collaboration with legitimate local power-holders has gradually become a key feature of contemporary counterinsurgency warfare. As aforementioned the reality on the ground triggered a shift from a rational/legal approach that sought to impose democracy and centralized government to an approach that first focuses on exploiting local patterns of legitimacy. In Chapter Three (section 3.5.1) we have seen that in Iraq, for instance, tribal authorities were first considered an anachronism, but were later acknowledged as the key agents for establishing control over Iraq’s weblike society. Moreover, it even became accepted that local traditional tribal politics temporarily put a halt to the introduction of democracy in a locale. In Afghanistan the light footprint adopted by US forces during and after the 2001 invasion urged those forces to rely on local power-holders as force multipliers. Despite this dependency, the Western intervention in Afghanistan developed into a ‘liberal project’ that emphasized centralization and democratization as laid down in the Bonn-agreement. This ambiguous situation de facto resulted in an Afghan state ruled by a weak central government backed up by foreign support and heavily dependent on strongmen in control of the country’s numerous locales. Although co-option of local power-holders has been a key feature of the Afghan state since the days of the Durrani empire, the political order that arose in the wake of the 2001 intervention was too much dominated by local strongmen who even held considerable leverage over governmental institutions. Even worse, due to their powerful position dominant local power-holders often reverted to ‘dark side’ practices such as predatory behavior and repression of competing factions. Five years into the Afghan campaign this situation had created sufficient ground for the re-emergence of the Taliban, which culminated in a violent insurgent offensive in the spring of 2006. Thus it became clear that in order to counter the revived insurgency Western forces needed to intervene in the local political marketplaces and establish co-optive relationships with legitimate local power-holders of all societal segments that -equally important- could be effectively controlled by the Afghan state.

Especially in southern Afghanistan the behavior of warlord-like Pashtun tribal entrepreneurs well-connected to President Karzai had produced fertile soil for the Taliban. The individual countries deploying as part of ISAF’s stage III expansion experienced a huge mismatch between the overarching national strategy (ANDS) that was formulated in concurrence with the ideas of the ‘liberal project’ and the situation on the ground. Consequently, national contingents found themselves formulating a localized strategy for fighting the insurgency and establishing control in the locales under their responsibility. A first sign that cultural legitimation was included in various of these individual strategies (notably the British and the Dutch) was the removal of several of Karzai’s trustees from positions as governors, chiefs of police or other important offices at the provincial level. This move was intended to create an independent government at the local level that could effectively connect to all societal segments and thus it shaped the conditions to exploit
the local pattern of legitimacy. The removal of office of Uruzgan’s Popalzai powerbroker Jan Mohammed Khan is a case in point as the Dutch considered this a prerequisite for any attempt to enhance the connection between the provincial government and the various societal segments that make up Uruzgan's fragmented societal landscape.

With regard to the Dutch campaign in Uruzgan the removal of Jan Mohammed, the continuous struggle to guarantee an independent provincial administration, as well as the reach out to the Ghilzai, and collaboration with the leaders of the Barakzai and Achekzai, seemingly leave no doubt that the TFU was practicing cultural legitimation. Yet, if we consider the Dutch campaign as a whole we have to conclude that the answer is not as clear-cut as it seems; the TFU encountered some severe difficulties in exploiting the pattern of legitimacy of its target society. Benefitting from our analysis of the Uruzgan campaign, these difficulties can be attributed to issues caused by the adaptation to a population-centric approach and the implementation of co-option as well as to more fundamental issues, which, as we will argue below, can be partly related to a lack of will to fully embrace cultural legitimation. As the latter point predominantly revealed itself after the Dutch campaign had gained momentum by successfully establishing co-optive ties with local power-holders such as Rozi Khan, Abdul Khaleq, and Mohammed Nabi Khan, we will now first address the problems with practicing cultural legitimation that resulted from the TFU’s adaptation to population-centric counterinsurgency warfare.

Whereas the diplomatic and political offensive to sack Governor Jan Mohammed Khan that started in the latter part of 2005 suggests that the Dutch were well-informed on socio-politico circumstances in Uruzgan even before the start of their campaign, the soldiers who deployed to Uruzgan as part of the DTF and first TFU rotation generally had a poor understanding of the local society. The fine-grained intelligence provided by the civil assessment and its context analysis (which was presented to the Dutch embassy in Kabul in July 2006) only became available to the TFU when it was already deployed, and even after the report’s release it proved difficult for military units to gain access to this information (as was experienced by PRT-2 when it sought to incorporate the civil assessment in its pre-deployment training, see 9.2.2). While the reasons for this late and limited availability of the civil assessment’s intelligence are unknown, it fits in a pattern in which information on the local population and power dynamics was only sparsely available to the military units of the first TFU deployment, whereas there was abundant classic military intelligence on Uruzgan’s challenging terrain and the OMF. This situation changed after a dedicated tribal advisor had been appointed in the fall of 2006. In conjunction with insights from the PRT this gradually led to an enhanced understanding of the conflict ecosystem in Uruzgan as multi-faceted and consisting of multiple layers. Under TFU-2 this understanding was linked to a population-centric approach for establishing control, which, among others, resulted in the co-option of Rozi Khan. Yet, this successful approach was abandoned by the TFU-3 staff that emphasized an enemy-centric approach. While this might be understandable, as these soldiers had witnessed how TFU-2 had been engaged in some heavy fighting with the Taliban during
and after the battle of Chora and traditionally kinetic actions against the enemy are the core business of the army, this change in mindset and policy led to a loss of understanding of the societal landscape at the task force level. However, the population-centric approach and intelligence were preserved by the PRT and picked up again by the TFU-4 staff, which had benefitted from pre-deployment training by TFU-2 as well as the official acknowledgement that the Dutch soldiers were conducting a counterinsurgency campaign. Although there remained differences in the way the various TFU rotations exactly executed their mission, the Uruzgan campaign henceforth essentially was a population-centric counterinsurgency campaign that fully subscribed to the importance of a proper understanding of the societal landscape in order to link legitimate local power-holders to the provincial administration.

Exploiting the pattern of legitimacy of the target society during this adaptation process was hampered by the not yet fully developed understanding of Uruzgan’s societal landscape, unfamiliarity with co-option, and the variations in approach between different TFU staff rotations. This rendered the removal of Jan Mohammed largely unexploited as both DTF and TFU failed to seize this opportunity for containing the influence of his network while simultaneously empowering previously sidelined legitimate local power-holders. Furthermore, within the TFU there was a lack of unity of effort as initially BG, PRT, and civil staff were engaging various local power-holders independently. The coordination problems between BG and PRT were quickly solved when the staff of TFU-1 decided that the PRT should be leading in the engagement of local leaders with the BG in a supporting role. Synchronization of the civil and military effort proved more troublesome as the civilian ‘Track 2’ program was not communicated with the military TFU staff and was even considered ‘a war within the war’ (by the military staff). Although this improved after the introduction of dual civil-military command and the embedding of KLE at the task force level (as of TFU-5), it is remarkable that civil and military efforts could become so separated during the first years. This can be largely attributed to personalities such as for instance the OSTAD who did not share information in order to protect what he considered high value collaborators. Another problem that resulted from the not yet fully developed understanding of Uruzgan’s human terrain and the search for a proper approach was a lack of consistence in co-option strategy. At first Tokhi leader Mohammed Nabi Khan became the TFU’s main asset, but under influence of the incidents in Chora and an increasing awareness on the societal landscape Rozi Khan as the leader of the Barakzai and Achekzai power block became the main ally. Moreover, whereas Matiullah was initially informally engaged in order to contain his influence, he was later ignored, and then once more carefully approached by TFU-3 (as was Jan Mohammed). Ultimately the TFU developed a strategy that aimed at restoring Uruzgan’s tribal balance by empowering the Barakzai, Achekzai, Ghilzai, (and the Nurzai and Babozai at the grassroots level in Deh Rawud), while curtailling the influence of Jan Mohammed’s network by coldshouldering both Jan Mohammed and Matiullah. Thus, the implementation of co-option was hindered by a lacking exploitation of the removal of Jan Mohammed and subsequent problems with unity of effort and consistence of the strategy.
While the afore mentioned problems were internally dealt with as the TFU gained more experience in conducting a population-centric campaign in Uruzgan’s highly fragmented societal landscape, there remained some more fundamental issues that troubled the Dutch task force’s ability to exploit the local pattern of legitimacy. First there was the remaining difference in insight between the TFU on one hand and the locally operating US Special Forces (and to a lesser extent also the Australians) concerning the Popalzai-dominated network and the reach-out to the previously marginalized Ghilzai tribes. Despite the fact that US POLADs sometimes openly agreed with the Dutch course, the American operators favored collaboration with Jan Mohammed and especially with Matiullah, whom they considered a highly proficient Taliban-hunter. Moreover, the US Special Forces considered the Ghilzai as intimately related to the Taliban. As we have seen in the previous chapters this different appreciation of the societal landscape led to some fierce clashes between the TFU and US allies as the latter deliberately disobeyed orders from the Dutch commanders who nominally held authority over the whole of Uruzgan. Most of the times this concerned a ban on the use of Matiullah’s fighters in Ghilzai or Panjpai areas. Although the first clashes during TFU-1 had invited an intervention by senior commanders at the RC-S level, such incidents occurred throughout the TFU campaign. However, they proved manageable as the US Special Forces reluctantly accepted the Dutch stance. Yet, with the end of the Dutch mission in sight the US made clear that it considered a more powerful position for both Popalzai strongmen essential for stability in Uruzgan. This, among others, made it extremely difficult for the Dutch to preserve the tribally balanced order that was successfully established during the TFU campaign. Thus, the differences in insight between the US and Dutch allies not only triggered incidents that interfered with the practice of cultural legitimation during the TFU campaign, they also severely affected the results of the Dutch intervention as the US opted not to continue the policy of tribal balance, but again favored Popalzai dominance.

This brings us to a second issue that fundamentally hampered the practice of cultural legitimation by Dutch forces, namely restrictions with regard to the engagement of both Popalzai strongmen. Of course, Jan Mohammed’s removal was necessary to ameliorate the situation in Uruzgan as this predatory powerbroker was the very reason that the Taliban once again had become relevant in the province. However, as aforementioned, this move was rendered largely unexploited and de facto Jan Mohammed’s network held considerable influence in the provincial political marketplace. While initially only Matiullah was carefully approached, TFU-3 decided to engage both Popalzai leaders as it was deemed necessary to gain some leverage over these dominant local power-holders in order to contain their spoiling influences. TFU-4 officials, however, received no further permission from The Hague to continue the engagement of Jan Mohammed and for the remainder of the TFU campaign the former governor was ignored by the Dutch. Matiullah was brushed aside in a similar way as the informal contact was ceased and never restored during the Dutch mission. This of course heavily contradicted the reality on the ground, where Jan Mohammed kept on trying to re-establish his position and Matiullah’s commercial activities quickly turned him into the most
powerful actor in the province. Moreover, indirectly the TFU itself became largely dependent on Matiullah as the task force’s logistical sub-contractors could not operate without his assistance -consequently Matiullah was unintentionally paid by the Dutch through their sub-contractors. Even with the benefit of hindsight it seems unintelligible why The Hague adopted this ostrichism as its official policy; a more active engagement aimed at containing the Popalzai strongmen’s influence could have benefitted the tribal balance strategy as it would have captured the reality of remaining Popalzai power. This possibly could have led to a more durable result, and to speculate a bit further, it could have provided a better ground for finding concurrence with US and Australian allies (and successors). The only plausible explanation for the Dutch decision not to engage Jan Mohammed and Matiullah is a reluctance -mainly for domestic reasons- to be associated with such warlord-like characters, which corresponds with the political caveat that banned any form of cooperation with militias (which we will discuss in the next section). Thus, it can be concluded that while the TFU certainly practiced cultural legitimation, it did not fully embrace the concept as it had to deal with a lack of will to face the full consequences of implementing such a strategy in the murky reality of counterinsurgency warfare in Afghanistan’s weblike society.

A last issue that added to the lack of will to fully embrace cultural legitimation is provided by the ambiguous attitude adopted by the Dutch government towards the Kabul government. While the TFU (assisted by the embassy in Kabul, and sometimes also by higher levels within the Dutch government) repeatedly found itself fighting the central government in order to guarantee an independent provincial administration capable of connecting to the legitimate local power-holders of Uruzgan’s various societal segments, the Dutch government simultaneously strengthened the position of Hamid Karzai’s government. It might be remembered that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs spent €126 million on development aid, of which a significant part was channeled through the central government in Kabul (see Chapter Nine, section 9.2.2). Much to their dismay civilian officials and military officers at the grassroots levels in Uruzgan witnessed how on one side this policy enhanced Kabul’s leverage over provincial matters, while on the other side they were struggling to limit the central government’s interference and establish stable co-optive relationships with local power-holders. In the reality of the Uruzgan campaign this proved even more counterproductive as Jan Mohammed Khan as presidential advisor held influence over the central government’s decisions on Uruzgan. An explanation for this ambivalent policy can be found in the fact that whereas the TFU adapted its strategy for establishing control at the local level in Uruzgan, the overarching development policy of the Dutch government remained focused on the ultimate goal of building a modern, centralized Afghan state. The bulk of Dutch development aid was still provided according the top-down state-building rationale of the Bonn process and the ANDS, while the Afghan campaign at that time was predominantly fought at the local level and therefore focused on bottom-up state building of a more hybrid entity. Thus, on one hand the Dutch government through its TFU mission

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1 See for instance Willem Vogelsang, ‘Wat opmerkingen over de Nederlandse betrokkenheid in Uruzgan’. 
was practicing cultural legitimation, while on the other hand its development policy still followed the logic of ‘the liberal project’ and sought to strengthen the position of the Kabul government. This fundamental contradiction in Dutch policy prevented a full acceptation of cultural legitimation and hampered its practical implementation in the field.

In the end we can conclude that the Dutch counterinsurgents of the TFU truly sought to practice cultural legitimation, but were severely hampered by the afore mentioned problems related to the adaptation process, international contradictions, and a lack of will to fully embrace the concept. Yet, we can speak of cultural legitimation as the predominant underpinning of the Dutch strategy for establishing control over the local populace in Uruzgan province. Co-option of legitimate local power-holders was the key to a tribally balanced political order that would function as a platform for a stable al-inclusive local government. It should also be mentioned here that the Afghan state’s rational/legal framework was either used to strengthen the position of co-optees (as was for instance the case with Rozi Khan’s election and the official appointment of Said Usman and Mohammed Daud as district chief), or was actively opposed in order to protect the interests of local allies (for instance the actions that led to the withdrawal of Haji Zaher Popalzai’s appointment as Deh Rawud district chief). A particular strong case in point for the importance adhered to cultural legitimation in the TFU campaign is provided by the fact that the Dutch proved willing to empower the legitimate local power-holders of the Barakzai, Achekzai, and Tokhi through non-official channels when renewed marginalization loomed as a consequence of their decision to withdraw. To sum up, the TFU campaign can be regarded as a population-centric counterinsurgency campaign that sought to obtain the people’s collaboration through cultural legitimation, albeit it encountered several difficulties and did not fully embrace the concept as the Dutch refused to engage dominant warlord-like local power-holders.

11.3 Mobilization

In modern counterinsurgency warfare the limited resources available to intervening counterinsurgents as well as the lack of competent host-nation security forces necessitate mobilization of means from within the target society. While the build up of military and police institutions -that ultimately should guarantee security on the long term- through top-down mobilization typically starts during the counterinsurgency phase, these incipient forces do not provide sufficient additional capacity for securing the population and fighting the insurgents. Consequently grass-roots mobilization that seeks to formalize existing local militias as part of the governmental security infrastructure in a specific locale has become a pivotal trait of contemporary counterinsurgency (see Chapter Three, section 3.5.2). The experiences in Iraq during the Anbar awakening and with the SOI program have revealed how the use of militias under command of legitimate local power-holders not only greatly
enhances security, but also adds to the government’s legitimacy as this collaboration strengthens the ties between co-optees and the administration. In Afghanistan, however, warlord militias proved to be uncontrollable by the government, even when institutionalized as part of the official security forces. Furthermore such militias greatly contributed to ‘dark side’ activities of dominant local power-holders as they were regularly used for predatory actions or marginalization of competitors (and their societal segments). Therefore, contemporary counterinsurgency preferably seeks to mobilize militias at the lowest societal level, as these armed groups are more susceptible to state control. Hence the Afghan campaign after its revision emphasized the village level as the primary level for grassroots mobilization.

The TFU campaign coincided in time with the full embracement of co-option and mobilization in Iraq and the first attempts in Afghanistan to limit the influence of warlord militias and mobilize armed groups at lower societal levels. Unsurprisingly, therefore, the TFU’s mobilization policy followed the pattern sketched afore and focused on sub-tribal militias, while Matiullah Khan’s militia (also representing Jan Mohammed Khan) was sidelined because of its history of predatory actions and violent repression. While the Dutch were fully aware of the infamous reputation of Matiullah’s Popalzai fighters and therefore soon started to reach out to less powerful sub-tribal factions, it has to be mentioned that not much was done to contain or demobilize this militia representing Uruzgan’s dominant local power-holders. Attempts to limit Matiullah’s involvement in the Ghilzai and Panjpai areas were thwarted by US Special Forces (as was for instance the case end 2007 in Deh Rawud) who sometimes acted against explicit Dutch orders. Furthermore Matiullah’s fighters were formally institutionalized within the Afghan security apparatus and tasked with securing the Kandahar-Tirin Kot highway. Due to this position the Dutch unwillingly became dependent on ‘the lord of the highway’ as their logistical sub-contractors could not supply the TFU without Matiullah’s support. In the end, however, it is highly unlikely whether something actually could have been done to contain this well organized and equipped local force as the task force’s lack of influence was a direct consequence of the Dutch policy not to engage warlord-like local power-holders, which we have discussed already and to which we will also refer in the next section dealing with the issue of whom to co-opt. At this place we will first analyze the way the Dutch actually practiced mobilization and therefore we will focus on how the collaboration with sub-tribal militias materialized during the TFU campaign.

At first it has to be mentioned that cooperation between Dutch forces and sub-tribal militias seems a logical consequence of the sum of limited TFU troop numbers and the dynamics of the conflict in Uruzgan. The decision to make use of such armed factions, however, was not as obvious as it seems as the political strategic level in The Hague had imposed a caveat that banned any cooperation with such entities. While Western troops in the field had been learning about the perils of warlord militias and the benefits of working with lower-level militias, and most countries had accepted the necessity to work with locally armed groups as ‘they are part of a strategy of local rule and state building’, the Dutch government concluded
that in Afghanistan the use of militias was a formidable threat to stability on the longer term. In The Hague’s view militias could only be used when properly institutionalized (in order to minimize local influences) and subjected to ‘democratic control’, which once more stresses that ‘the liberal project’ still influenced the minds of Dutch politicians and decision-makers. Whereas the notion of democratic control in the 2006-2010 Afghan context seems ridiculous because of the nature of the Karzai government, the premise of institutionalization at least partly concurred with the -at that time still emerging- ideas and practice of grassroots mobilization in modern counterinsurgency campaigns, be it that the Dutch policy called for a more strict minimization of local influences. Yet, this principle of formalizing militias as part of the Afghan security apparatus offered an opportunity for the soldiers of the TFU to match the reality they encountered on the ground in Uruzgan with the reality of the honchos in The Hague, as they quickly adopted the practice of utilizing sub-tribal militias by nominally embedding them within the Afghan police forces. This explains why, despite a political caveat that prohibited cooperation with militias, Dutch soldiers cooperated with fighters of sub-tribal armed groups during the TFU campaign.

The practice of drafting militias as police auxiliaries (ANAP) commenced under TFU-1 when the first BG implemented its idea to build a local counter-organization capable of providing security to the people at the grassroots level. Assisted by Fazil, a militia commander from northern Tirin Kot district who held ties with Matiullah, the TFU quickly established a rapidly expanding self-defense force. When Fazil was killed (most probably by Matiullah as Fazil’s position as a key TFU collaborator turned him into a powerful competitor) Tokhi leader Mohammed Nabi Khan became the most important local power-holder contributing to Uruzgan’s auxiliary police force. Although the TFU had initially overestimated Mohammed Nabi’s influence in the province, he proved a pivotal agent for reaching out to the previously marginalized Ghilzai tribes and remained a crucial participant of the ANAP program, much to the benefit of the security situation in his native area on the Deh Rafshan’s west bank. Responsibility over the program itself was soon transferred to the PRT and members of the Dutch military police were deployed in order to provide the militiamen a short training in policing. In 2008 the ANAP ceased to exist and nation-wide local self-defense forces were integrated within locally operating ANP branches. This not only enhanced the connection between a significant part of Uruzgan’s Ghilzai and the provincial administration, it also perfectly addressed -at least nominally- the Dutch government’s prerequisite of proper institutionalization. The ANAP program, therefore, proved a valuable tool that allowed Dutch soldiers operating in the field to circumvent a rather unrealistic political caveat imposed by The Hague.

The need to mobilize local militias in order to protect the population became even more obvious as a consequence of the 2007 battle of Chora. The support of Rozi Khan’s militia of Achekzai and Barakzai fighters was instrumental in defying the Taliban attack. In this

3 See, among others, Tweede Kamer, *Dossier 27925*, no. 221.
regard the TFU-2 and PRT staff and especially commander Van Griensven, who personally considered the use of sub-tribal militias acceptable because they were an essential part of local political culture, deserve to receive credit as they boldly acted against the caveat and joined forces with an *ad hoc* militia that was not part of the official government forces. The political and military leaders in The Hague took over Van Griensven’s reasoning as they informed parliament that in order to protect Chora’s population the TFU had cooperated with a militia that was an unorganized self-defense force consisting of ‘home guards’ operating according to ‘ancient customs in (southern) Afghanistan’ -one could argue that the honchos were practicing cultural legitimation in their own way. Yet, they also emphasized that there would be no structural cooperation with such informal armed groups, which indeed was the case as the Barakzai/Achekzai militia no longer was an ‘informal armed group’ when it was loosely institutionalized within the structure of the local government as a consequence of Rozi Khan’s appointment as Chora district chief. Thereby the Barakzai and Achekzai became the TFU’s key collaborators, which greatly increased Dutch influence over the populace, as this was Uruzgan’s largest faction. This case demonstrates that the political caveat was less strict than it seemed, as Dutch politicians were willing to accept cooperation with militias in certain circumstances, as they were perceived to be a traditional form of self-defense.

During the remainder of the TFU campaign the militias of the Barakzai, Achekzai and Tokhi remained the most important local armed groups mobilized by the Dutch. They provided security in Chora and northern Tirin Kot district as part of the locally operating ANSF, and increased governmental control as this cooperation strengthened the connection between the respective sub-tribal leaders and the provincial administration. However, as we have seen the loss of leverage over the Afghan government at the end of the TFU campaign and the threat of a decline of the tribal balance in Uruzgan immediately after the withdrawal of their troops brought the Dutch to secure the support to their main allies through non-governmental channels; the militias of the Barakzai, Achekzai and Tokhi were awarded a contract for securing the construction of the Tirin Kot-Chora highway. With the end of the mission in sight the Dutch continued their cooperation with militias without placing them within the formal security structures of the Afghan government. Thus, the political caveat crumbled as the Dutch made an ultimate attempt to preserve the tribal balance they had so carefully restored and which was to serve as a platform for long-term stability in the province.

In the end we certainly can conclude that the TFU during its campaign successfully practiced mobilization of sub-tribal militias under the command of legitimate local power-holders and that this process not only enhanced security at the grassroots level, but also strengthened the connection between the involved societal segments and the provincial administration. Yet, just like with cultural legitimation, the full-fledged implementation of mobilization was hampered by restrictions; a political caveat that prohibited cooperation with militias unless under democratic control and strictly institutionalized rendered it seemingly impossible to establish ties with local armed groups capable of providing security
at the grassroots level. Ingenuity, and a healthy dose of boldness to bend official policy, allowed the TFU’s soldiers to circumvent this caveat and ultimately it was abandoned under pressure of the reality on the ground. It should again be mentioned here that whereas the Dutch task force deliberately opted not to cooperate with Matiullah’s militia because of its ill reputation, it failed to take measures to contain the spoiling influence of Uruzgan’s most powerful armed group. This, of course, can be linked to the lack of will to collaborate with warlord-like local power-holders as direct engagement of Matiullah was the only way to establish some influence over his well organized and equipped force. Thus, we also have to conclude at this place that while both fundamental underpinnings of a co-option strategy were successfully practiced by the TFU, the full implementation of these principles suffered from self-imposed political restrictions. If we also take into account that the most pivotal result of the TFU campaign, the restoration of Uruzgan’s tribal balance, evaporated within four months after the Dutch withdrawal due to Matiullah’s and Jan Mohammed’s remaining influence, the application of co-option by the TFU raises serious questions about the feasibility of co-option strategy in modern counterinsurgency warfare conducted by Western countries. However, we should not forget that the TFU campaign in time coincided with the reinvention of co-option as the main tool for establishing control over the population in counterinsurgency warfare. In Afghanistan the use of co-option was only optimized after the revision of the Afghan campaign that took effect when the Dutch troops had already redeployed. Yet, it is important to obtain the insight from the TFU campaign that the implementation of co-option in order to provide an underpinning for long-term stability should not be hampered by unrealistic – from the perspective of the local situation – domestic political restrictions as this might prove counterproductive for the end goal. As fine-grained information on local circumstances is typically not available at the time political decisions on deployment of troops are made, this requires the will not only to adapt in the field, but also to adapt strategic guidelines to fit the reality at the grassroots level. Let us now delve further into the practical and political ramifications of the way the Dutch put cultural legitimation and mobilization into practice.

11.4 Whom to co-opt?

Naturally the answer to the question of whom exactly to co-opt heavily depends on the locale counterinsurgents find themselves operating in. Despite this need to tailor the choice of co-optees to local circumstances a general trend that involves a mix of dominant and lower-level local power-holders as well as governmental officials can be discerned in modern counterinsurgency warfare (see Chapter Three, section 3.5.3). Although lower-level local power-holders are the preferred agents of co-option because of their direct connection to (marginalized) societal segments, experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq have revealed that it is impossible to engage such agents without also addressing dominant
local power-holders. Moreover, as such dominant agents in weblike societies typically negatively affect the state’s ability to deploy an independent local administration capable of reconciling various factions, counterinsurgents should also take measures to foster this independence. Consequently, contemporary counterinsurgency typically seeks to co-opt and mitigate spoiler effects of dominant local power-holders, collaborate with local government officials in order to guarantee impartiality, and reach out to lower-level agents for appeasing alienated or marginalized societal segments. This latter group might include leaders linked to an insurgency who are ready to reconcile with the government—whether or not as a consequence of the counterinsurgent’s actions. The exact composition of the mix of local power-holders and governmental officials singled out for co-option in a specific locale will typically follow from a thorough intelligence analysis of the local societal landscape and therefore contemporary counterinsurgency emphasizes the importance of gathering intelligence at the grassroots level. How do the TFU experiences correspond to this general trend?

Interestingly, the civil assessment’s context analysis provided the Dutch with exactly the kind of fine-grained intelligence needed to select their co-optees. As aforementioned, however, this information, which was available to the Dutch embassy in Kabul as early as July 2006, did only percolate to the TFU after its deployment, and even then it was difficult for military units to access. Moreover, as the TFU was gradually adapting to population-centric warfare, the importance of intelligence about the local population was at first not fully realized by most soldiers, despite the appointment of a dedicated tribal advisor. Consequently, the ties that were established with some key co-optees during the first part of the TFU campaign were not so much the result of a systematic analysis of Uruzgan’s societal landscape, but resulted from incidents in which individual officers—sometimes unwittingly—took the initiative to engage legitimate local power-holders of previously marginalized or sidelined segments. Key allies such as Rozi Khan, Abdul Khaleq, and Mohammed Nabi Khan were co-opted far before the Dutch mission had gained momentum as a full-fledged counterinsurgency campaign with population-centric intelligence anchored at the task force level.

Since the start of the TFU campaign, however, it had been clear that Jan Mohammed Khan’s spoiling influence had to be contained as much as possible—despite the faltering exploitation of his removal during the DTF period. If we take this as a starting point of our analysis of the TFU’s choice of co-optees it is clear that while the emergence of the relationships with respectively Tokhi leader Mohammed Nabi Khan and the leaders of the Barakzai/Achekzai block might not have been the result of a systematic analysis of population-centric intelligence, those relationships were neither a coincidence as these men were Jan Mohammed’s fiercest rivals in Uruzgan’s political marketplace and therefore natural allies for the Dutch. Mohammed Nabi Khan, for instance, was first co-opted when BG-1 sought to establish a counter-organization, but his star within the TFU quickly rose when the staff realized that he was a leader of Uruzgan’s heavily marginalized tribes of the Ghilzai
confederation who might be capable of realigning these tribesmen with the provincial government now Jan Mohammed had been sacked. Albeit the lack of proper intelligence initially led to an overestimation of Mohammed Nabi’s influence, he certainly was a pivotal agent for reach out to the Ghilzai -Governor Munib (himself a Ghilzai) also deemed him the right person for this task- and in this capacity he would remain a key ally of the TFU for the rest of its campaign. With regard to the leaders of the Barakzai/Achekzai block a similar pattern -here cultural legitimation also initially followed mobilization- can be discerned as co-optive relationships with Rozi Khan and Abdul Khaleq (predominantly through his brother Malem Sadiq) emerged as a consequence of the Dutch need to rally local self-defense forces when the Taliban threatened to overrun Chora district in 2007. As the TFU suspected Jan Mohammed’s involvement in the Taliban offensive in a guile attempt to increase his influence in the province, they refused to cooperate with Matiullah Khan’s militia and thus ended up working with the Barakzai and Achekzai fighters under command of Rozi Khan. This paved the way for a durable connection between the TFU and Jan Mohammed’s most formidable competitors, who enjoyed the respect of many people in Uruzgan and now also grew to prominence in the provincial administrative institutions. Furthermore it should be mentioned that when population-centric intelligence and KLE were embedded at the task force level after the full-fledged embracement of counterinsurgency as the TFU’s campaign theme (unsuccessful) attempts were made to reach out to local power-holders still actively affiliated with the Taliban. Thus the TFU’s policy to restore the tribal balance by propping up sub-tribal leaders representing previously marginalized or sidelined societal factions predominantly emerged as a consequence of the guideline to contain the influence of former governor and Popalzai powerbroker Jan Mohammed Khan. But as we have seen contemporary counterinsurgency experiences have revealed that the successful engagement of lower-level local power-holders is impossible without also addressing the dominant agents of a locale. For Uruzgan this meant that the Dutch had to answer the question of how to deal further with Jan Mohammed and his influential network.

As aforementioned the removal of Jan Mohammed Khan had certainly not ended his influence in the province. In fact his new position as presidential advisor combined with a Popalzai-dominated network of local henchmen, of which Matiullah Khan was the most prominent, rendered him sufficient options to maintain leverage over affairs at the grassroots level. Curtailing Jan Mohammed’s remaining power, thus, required limiting his influence in Kabul and simultaneously addressing his allies in the province; but how to put this into practice? Although we will discuss the methods of co-option employed by the TFU in the next section, this matter deserves attention here as it touches a distinctive feature of the Dutch campaign, namely the issue of whom not to co-opt. Whereas it had been clear from the very beginning of the TFU campaign that Jan Mohammed’s influence had to be contained in order to win the collaboration of the bulk of Uruzgan’s population, it was less clear which attitude should be adopted vis-à-vis the former governor and his locally operating agents. This lack of clarity led to an oscillating policy of low-key engagement and disengagement
that was most visible in the case of Matiullah, but could also be observed with regard to Jan Mohammed himself. The former was initially carefully engaged by BG-1 to establish a co-optive relationship that would obtain the TFU some leverage over the commander of Uruzgan’s most well-organized and equipped militia. During TFU-2 relations soured as a consequence of the Dutch refusal to support Matiullah’s appointment as provincial chief of police only to be restored by TFU-3 commander Geerts who observed how US and Australian forces undermined the Dutch position by freely cooperating with him. In an effort to not only establish some influence over the most important man of the Popalzai-dominated network on the ground but also over Jan Mohammed himself, the latter was also carefully engaged on the initiative of TFU-3. With the benefit of hindsight we can state that this rapprochement was the TFU’s closest attempt to establish a co-optive relationship with both Popalzai strongmen as soon afterwards it was decided not to continue this engagement; as of TFU-4 The Hague ordered that the position of Jan Mohammed and Matiullah should be weakened by isolating both strongmen which materialized in a policy of ignoring these dominant local power-holders. For the remainder of the campaign the TFU, thus, made no new attempt to establish ties with either Jan Mohammed or Matiullah as it was believed that co-optive relationships with these infamous warlord-like leaders would more harm the Dutch effort to enhance governmental control by establishing a tribally balanced political order than it would help them to contain the spoiling influences of both dominant local power-holders. As we have seen this decision not to co-opt the Popalzai leaders turned quite counter-productive as Matiullah only grew stronger, while Jan Mohammed’s leverage in Kabul rendered him sufficient power to launch repeated attempts to re-establish his position by influencing the provincial administration.

With the removal of Jan Mohammed in February 2006 the Dutch launched their effort to increase the independence of Uruzgan’s provincial administration even before the start of the TFU campaign. Albeit outsider Munib seemed the right person to establish an inclusive local administration by reaching out to Uruzgan’s previously marginalized and sidelined factions, this new governor soon found himself caught in a precious balancing act between the local level and Kabul. While during the DTF period not much was undertaken to exploit Jan Mohammed’s removal, the TFU at once began to empower Munib in order to increase his legitimacy with the local population. Yet, this was insufficient to guarantee impartiality as in 2007 it became clear that Munib had come under increased influence of Jan Mohammed in Kabul. When another outsider, Hamdam, was named as Munib’s successor the TFU immediately started to closely nurture and guide this new governor. In combination with continuous Dutch support this delivered a huge boost to governmental impartiality, as the independent Hamdam by early 2010 had become a well-respected authority capable of reaching out to all factions of Uruzgan’s political marketplace. A large part of this success can be attributed to the empowerment of district chiefs Mohammed Daud (and of course his father and predecessor Rozi Khan) and Said Usman. The former represented the previously sidelined Barakzai/Achekzai block and as a consequence of Dutch support and personal
actions also gained the respect of other factions, among which Mohammed Nabi Khan’s qawm. Therefore this appointment hugely added to the inclusive character of the provincial administration. Outsider Usman fulfilled a similar role as finally managed to bridge the gap between the ill-represented Nurzai and Babozai sub-tribes of Deh Rawud district and the provincial government. Instrumental to this increase in governmental independence at the local level, however, was the effort to limit the interference of Kabul in provincial affairs. This became most evident during the fall of 2008 when an attempt by Jan Mohammed to re-establish his influence through official channels (predominantly the IDLG) was successfully thwarted through a combination of local empowerment and engagement of relevant actors in Kabul by the Dutch embassy and high-level governmental officials. Similarly, the loss of leverage over the central government in Kabul that resulted from the Dutch decision to withdraw ushered the decline of governmental independence in Uruzgan as Hamdam was suddenly recalled and replaced by Khudai Rahim, a relative of both Jan Mohammed and Matiullah. Thus, before the end of the TFU campaign the Popalzai-dominated network (which during this four years had retained considerable influence in governmental institutions, but no longer had the upper hand) again had started to dominate the local administration, spoiling the results of the Dutch effort to guarantee governmental impartiality.

In sum, it is clear that while the TFU succeeded in co-opting a mix of sub-tribal local power-holders and administrative officials capable of enhancing governmental independency, it failed to establish ties with the dominant local power-holders Jan Mohammed Khan and Matiullah Khan. Although the Dutch course with regard to the former had been clear even before the start of the TFU mission, the policy concerning this warlord-like Popalzai strongman suffered from a lack of consistency as he was approached by TFU-3, only to be completely ignored for the remainder of the campaign as of TFU-4. The TFU’s stance vis-à-vis Matiullah suffered from similar oscillations as at first Dutch soldiers took the initiative to carefully engage this local power-holder, then ignored him as a consequence of a souring relationship, consequently re-engaged him in order to mitigate his spoiling influences, and ultimately decided to ignore him despite his growing influence in the province and along the Tirin Kot-Kandahar highway. This coldshouldering of both Popalzai strongmen proved to be a fatal mistake as the campaign’s overall goal of a balanced political order connected to an inclusive independent local government quickly faded when the Dutch lost their leverage in the spring of 2010 as a consequence of the announcement of the TFU’s withdrawal as of August 1 that year. Ultimately the persons who were deliberately not co-opted, thus, mattered more for the results of the Dutch campaign than those who were actually co-opted.

11.5 The methods of co-option

Uruzgan’s sub-tribal local leaders and governmental officials were predominantly co-opted through the use of persuasive methods. Furthermore soft coercion was used in order to
contain spoiling influences of local power-holders. The use of force, however, was restricted to irreconcilable, hostile actors, despite attempts to link targeting to the TFU’s KLE program in order to allow for shifting between kinetic and non-kinetic engagement. Thus, in terms of our framework for understanding co-option, the task force’s ability to shift between the full range of methods of the co-option continuum lacked the use of violent coercive methods. Consequently, the TFU’s capability for co-option domination was only weakly developed, as it had to rely on soft coercion for this purpose. While this corresponds to our findings on the general trend of co-option methods in modern counterinsurgency warfare (Chapter Three, section 3.5.4), the combination of a hampering mechanism for co-option domination with the Dutch refusal to engage in co-optive relationships with Uruzgan’s dominant local power-holders - as opposed to the general trend - ultimately proved disastrous for the establishment of an inclusive local administration that could serve as a platform for long-term stability. Yet, it should be noted that the TFU at least temporarily succeeded in restoring the tribal balance in the province and connecting this new political order to a more or less independent government under Governor Hamdam by use of the above mentioned co-optive methods that are typical of modern counterinsurgency warfare. In order to enhance our insight in the application of co-option in the reality of modern counterinsurgency warfare we will now analyze the way these methods were (complementary) used to establish co-optive ties with Uruzgan’s sub-tribal leaders and governmental officials as well as to temporarily outmaneuver the province’s dominant local power-holders.

On the coercive side of the co-option continuum the removal of local power-holders from official positions in order to curtail their access to state resources (such as money, development aid, weapons, governmental offices, et cetera) constituted the most direct measure employed by the Dutch. Although the sacking of Jan Mohammed Khan as provincial governor is the most notorious example of this method, it also is the least effective illustration of removal as a method for enforcing compliance; whereas this warlord-like power-holder suffered some decline of influence as a consequence of this action, his powerbase and distribution network, the Popalzai-dominated web of clients tied to him, was left unimpaired due to a lack of Dutch follow-up actions. Moreover, as aforementioned, Jan Mohammed hugely benefited from his new appointment in Kabul which, together with his personal bond with President Karzai, firmly secured his access to state resources. Only when the Dutch as part of their synchronized KLE effort took active measures to manipulate the local political marketplace and simultaneously thwarted Jan Mohammed’s position as a tribal entrepreneur (which we will discuss below), he suffered a serious decline of influence and was effectively outmaneuvered for the moment. More successful was the utilization of removal vis-à-vis lower-level local power-holders whose power was to a huge degree connected to their official position that granted access to resources. A case in point is Barakzai sub-tribal commander and ANP officer Toor Jan who after repeated warnings was sacked as he had abused his official position to enrich himself at the expense of Mirabad’s Hotak tribesmen. Negative empowerment through removal of individual lower-level local power-holders from
official positions, thus, was an effective measure that became a quintessential part of the TFU’s KLE toolkit.

An indirect way of applying soft coercion was provided by manipulation of Uruzgan’s political marketplace. While the Dutch policy to politically isolate Jan Mohammed and Matiullah Khan by ignoring them was as naïve as it was desperate, the afore mentioned effort to limit the spoiling interference of Kabul with Uruzgan’s local affairs proved to be a rather strong tool for containing the influence of the Popalzai strongmen and their network of local supporters. With the benefit of hindsight we can even state that this feature brought the TFU temporarily co-option domination - without actually co-opting the dominant local power-holders – as both Jan Mohammed and Matiullah were pushed into the background of local politics – yet it has to be mentioned that Matiullah during this period succeeded in augmenting his powerbase due to his monopolization of access to foreign protection money. Moreover, the re-emergence of these dominant local power-holders was a direct consequence of the loss of leverage over Kabul following the Dutch decision to withdraw. As we have seen in the previous section the TFU’s choice of co-optees predominantly unfolded as a consequence of the Dutch policy to disassociate themselves from the Popalzai establishment. Manipulation of the politico-societal landscape through empowerment of previously marginalized or sidelined rivals, consequently became a signature of the four-year TFU campaign. During the early stages of the campaign this led to alliances with Tokhi leader Mohammed Nabi Khan and with the Popalzai-dominated network’s most formidable competitors, Rozi Khan and Abdul Khaleq of the Barakzai/Achekzai faction. However, it was only after the synchronization of all KLE efforts in 2008 that this method spawned its best results as since then it could benefit from the Dutch engagement of authorities in Kabul, which especially rendered Jan Mohammed’s counter-actions ineffective. This allowed for the restoration of a tribally balanced political order connected to the provincial administration of independent Governor Hamdam during the second stage of the TFU campaign – whereas previously Governor Munib had increasingly come under Jan Mohammed’s influence which thwarted the further exploitation of the TFU’s alliances with the Popalzai strongmen’s rivals. The combination of high level engagement of the government in Kabul with empowerment of competitors at the grassroots level in Kabul thus guaranteed effective manipulation of Uruzgan’s political marketplace in order to temporarily break the dominance of the Popalzai faction and allow for the emergence of an inclusive provincial administration. As empowerment of local power-holders was a key element of this approach, we will now turn to the persuasive methods of co-option that were used to establish collaborative ties with these agents.

A first prerequisite for building stable co-optive relationships is the provision of security to co-optees (and their followers). This can be achieved through either bolstering an agent’s capability for self-defense or military actions by the counterinsurgency force. In Uruzgan both methods were employed as the TFU typically allowed allied local power-holders to maintain their militias as formalized forces and even provided additional training, while
The Course of Co-option

Chapter 11

Dutch soldiers also provided protection to co-optees and the local population if the situation demanded so. Moreover, the task force’s will to provide security to its allies was instrumental in establishing a foothold in Uruzgan’s societal landscape as such actions during the initial phase of the campaign brought the Dutch credibility vis-à-vis local sub-tribal leaders. TFU-1 commander Vleugels’ decision to extract Tokhi-leader and (at that time) key TFU-collaborator Mohammed Nabi Khan from the Baluchi valley in September 2006, therefore, was crucial as it immediately demonstrated the task force’s commitment towards its co-optees. Of course the 2007 battle for Chora epitomized the Dutch will to stand and fight for the local population, and as such it served to establish a solid tie with the Barakzai and Achekzai majority in the province (it might be remembered that Rozi Khan afterwards confessed he had never expected that the Dutch would actually fight). Despite Rozi Khan’s accidental death at the hands of Australian Special Forces in September 2008, the TFU generally succeeded in effectively securing its co-optees as for instance Mohammed Daud repeatedly echoed concerns over his personal security after the Dutch withdrawal -which would prove right. Thus, it can be concluded that the TFU successfully addressed the prerequisite of guaranteeing security in order to allow for the emergence and keeping of stable co-optive relationships with Uruzgan’s sub-tribal local power-holders.

The allocation of resources such as development projects, money, military assistance and training was the most important method for forging and maintaining alliances with Uruzgan’s local power-holders. This increased a sub-tribal leader’s ability to address the strategies of survival of his faction’s members and therefore strengthened his personal position. The necessary means were mostly provided through Dutch funds for civil-military cooperation or development aid. Yet, -as aforementioned- here a fundamental flaw of the overall Dutch policy reveal itself as the bulk of the 126 million Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ budget was channeled through Kabul or used for murky ‘Track 2’ activities, which rendered the relatively small 4 million PRT budget the most important tool for establishing and maintaining co-optive relationships within the task force’s ink spot. A better balance between those funds would have allowed for increased leverage at the grassroots level. Furthermore, there was a tremendous difference in accountability culture between the military and civilian officials; whereas the former had to overcome arduous, inflexible procedures in order to gain permission to spend money on development projects or other goods, the latter lacked such formal control. While it can be urged that the expense of government money should always be accounted for, the strict military control procedures were an unnecessary and frustrating obstacle that hampered the task force’s ability to address urgent needs. Nevertheless, the TFU successfully empowered its most important allies as for instance Mohammed Nabi Khan’s Surkh Murgab area and the zone of influence of the Barakzai/Achekzai block benefitted from increased access to Dutch resources. Additionally training and military support increased a local power-holder’s capability to protect his people and thereby also enhanced his position. It should be mentioned that creativity of individual officials also played a large role as was for instance demonstrated by TFU-2 commander Van Griensven who, fully aware of the
local dynamics, even went as far as deliberately diverting a weapons supply from the Kabul government to Chora district. All in all, despite their internal problems, the Dutch certainly produced a credible capability for allocating resources that served to establish and maintain co-optive relationships as it provided a capability for bolstering the position of Uruzgan’s sub-tribal leaders.

During the first two years of the TFU campaign the provision of security and allocation of resources were mainly used to enhance the position of the previously alienated and sidelined local power-holders of Uruzgan’s Ghilzai, Achekzai and Barakzai sub-tribes. While this meant a return to prominence for the latter two communities, for the significant Ghilzai minority this finally brought some influence on Uruzgan’s political marketplace. If this new tribal balance was to be consolidated and preserved, it had to be connected to an inclusive local administration that would ultimately take over from the Dutch and therefore had to be capable of maintaining co-optive ties with local power-holders representing Uruzgan’s various societal factions. This materialized not only in the empowerment of co-optees in formal governmental positions such as for instance Rozi Khan’s appointment as district chief, it also led to empowerment of independent governmental officials such as Governor Hamdam and Deh Rawud district chief Said Usman. In addition to immaterial support, which most importantly encompassed the Dutch lobby in Kabul, these latter cases also required establishing a capacity for dominating co-optive bargains with local power-holders in order to establish a durable level of control under authority of the local administration. TFU-5 commander Matthijssen clearly sketched the way the Dutch tackled this challenge when he explained Mirabad’s Ghilzai leaders that the TFU would allocate development projects as a consequence of Governor Hamdam’s decisions, and therefore the local leaders were urged to establish ties with the provincial administration. While at the provincial level this collaboration succeeded in augmenting governmental authority and control, probably the biggest success was achieved in Deh Rawud where under Said Usman an inclusive district government was established, which in addition to the old establishment, finally saw the previously ill-represented Panjpai Durrani represented in administrative affairs. The empowerment (with use of immaterial support and allocation of resources) of local power-holders and independent officials in formal government positions thusly was a pivotal method for establishing a durable connection between the new political order and the provincial administration that could serve as an underpinning for long-term stability.

Yet, as already mentioned, the Dutch lost their crucial leverage when they announced their withdrawal and consequently they ended their interference with Uruzgan’s socio-politico environment by propping up their key allies through informal channels (i.e. the Tirin Kot-Chora road construction security contract).

This brings us to the last method employed, pure persuasion. Albeit that conducting talks with local power-holders was the essence of the daily practice of the TFU’s co-option policy, the materialization of such talks in concrete actions contributing to governmental control was mostly the result of some kind of (im-)material incentive allotted during the
conversation. However, sometimes pure persuasion sufficed to make local leaders comply as it was obvious their self-interest was best served in doing so. This, for example, was the case when the TFU advised Mohammed Daud to overcome his faction’s reluctance and embrace the US-Australian idea of a reconciliation dialogue with Matiullah Khan as this offered the best chance to consolidate his position. This example, however, also illustrates the limited use of pure persuasion as typically it could only be used to steer the behavior of an agent who was already subjected to a firm co-optive tie and thus it was of little relevance for establishing and maintaining a co-optive relationship.

To conclude, the temporarily success in Uruzgan was achieved by restoring the tribal balance and connecting it to an independent local administration by use of a mix of soft coercion and persuasive methods that functioned to establish co-optive relationships with Uruzgan’s sub-tribal leaders, while simultaneously outmaneuvering the dominant local power-holders (for the moment). The methods used correspond with our earlier findings about the co-option continuum in modern counterinsurgency warfare, in which the use of force is excluded for establishing and maintaining co-optive relationships. Although a weak capacity to dominate co-optive bargains is inherent to this concept, the Dutch succeeded in provisionally achieving dominance when they started to manipulate the political marketplace and curtail the influence of the central government in Kabul. Surprisingly, this indirect method proved a stronger tool than removal, as it allowed the Dutch to contain spoiling influences of the dominant warlord-like local power-holders. Removal, however, was successfully used against lower-level leaders who were dependent on their official position for access to resources. Empowerment of previously marginalized and sidelined sub-tribal leaders through allocation of resources and immaterial support served to erode the power of the dominant local power-holders at the grassroots level and established a more balanced political order, while it also enhanced governmental control, as these co-optees were connected to the local administration. With regard to the latter the Dutch emphasized formal empowerment with immaterial support and through the allocation of resources as they sought to establish an inclusive government capable of maintaining co-optive relationships with local power-holders of all societal segments. However, when ultimately it became clear that the TFU’s success was of an unsustainable nature, as it did not include the Popalzai strongmen, the Dutch did not refrain from informal empowerment outside governmental channels in an ultimate attempt to secure the position of their key co-optees after the task force’s withdrawal. Thus, while the Dutch creatively and successfully had employed a mix of methods for co-opting sub-tribal leaders and independent governmental officials, this all appeared of a rather temporary nature due to a lack of will to fully embrace cultural legitimation which had triggered a policy not to engage in co-optive relationships with both warlord-like Popalzai strongmen Jan Mohammed Khan and Matiullah Khan.
11.6 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the use of co-option during the Dutch TFU campaign in the light of our broader findings on co-option in contemporary counterinsurgency campaigns. The resulting analysis allows us to draw a final conclusion on the Uruzgan campaign as a case study of co-option in the reality of modern counterinsurgency warfare and thereby contributes to our understanding of the utility and applicability of co-option for establishing control over highly fragmented societies. In the next chapter we will combine the resulting insights with the findings of our theoretical analysis and the Aceh case in order to answer this book’s central question of how counterinsurgents have co-opted local power-holders in order to attain control over the population in a weblike society. Let us now take the last step towards this answer by first formulating our definite conclusions on the Uruzgan case.

Although cultural legitimation and mobilization were originally not incorporated in the newly emerging neo-classical counterinsurgency concept, the reality on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan triggered the adoption of these two underlying principles of co-option in order to provide a stable underpinning for long-term development in these complicated weblike societies with use of limited resources (especially intervening forces) and within a reduced period of time. The first part of the Dutch Uruzgan campaign coincided in time with the groundbreaking Anbar awakening that still epitomizes the full-fledged embracement of co-option in modern counterinsurgency warfare. Moreover, in the overall Afghan campaign co-option as a tool for establishing control in counterinsurgency was only anchored after the redeployment of the TFU. Therefore, the Uruzgan case should be regarded as an early example of a co-option strategy in modern counterinsurgency. Albeit that there was an emerging awareness of the importance of local power-holders, previous experiences had revealed that the Afghan government was incapable of controlling warlord-like actors, who were often using their militias for predatory activities. Consequently, the Dutch government adopted a co-option policy that excluded such local leaders from collaboration and imposed an explicit caveat on cooperation with militias. With regard to the latter it can be stated that Dutch soldiers in the field circumvented the caveat by formalizing local armed groups as part of the official security apparatus and that Dutch politicians ultimately proved willing to accept mobilization of such groups as a means for self-defense if necessary. This not only enhanced security at the grass level, but also strengthened the connection between local power-holders and the provincial administration. Regarding cultural legitimation, the TFU mission certainly can be characterized as a population-centric campaign as, after suffering inevitable adaptation problems such as obtaining an appropriate intelligence picture of the societal landscape, it sought to establish control over the population by exploiting the local pattern of legitimacy and re-establishing the tribal balance. Yet, the Dutch lacked the will to fully embrace cultural legitimation as the ban on co-option with the two dominant warlord-like actors was maintained until the end of the campaign, mainly for domestic reasons. Furthermore the Dutch government adopted an ambiguous policy that on one side
emphasized a decentralized effort in Uruzgan, while on the other hand it also focused on establishing a strong central state according the agenda of ‘the liberal project’. The fact that the bulk of development aid was channeled through Kabul increased the Karzai government’s leverage and frustrated attempts to strengthen the local administration by linking it to legitimate sub-tribal leaders. Additionally, international differences thwarted the TFU’s co-option policy as US and Australian forces continued to work with the warlord-like dominant local power-holders and especially with Matiullah’s well-organized and equipped militia. In the end all these matters had a disastrous effect on the results of the TFU campaign when the Dutch as a consequence of their announced withdrawal lost their leverage over the government in Kabul, which quickly led to a re-emergence of the dominant warlord-like Popalzai strongmen with support of the US and Australian successors of the Dutch forces. Therefore, the key insight to be obtained from the way the TFU implemented cultural legitimation and mobilization is that in order to provide an underpinning for long-term stability a co-option strategy should not be hampered by unrealistic political restrictions -from the perspective of the local situation- as this might prove highly counterproductive for the end goal. This requires the will not only to adapt in the field, but also to adapt political-strategic guidelines in case the cultural legitimation and mobilization policies do not fit to local circumstance in the operational environment.

The shortcomings in the way the Dutch fulfilled the underlying principles echoed in the practical issues of co-option, especially in the matter of whom to co-opt. While the TFU succeeded in co-opting a mix of sub-tribal local power-holders and independent administrative officials, it failed to establish ties with Uruzgan’s dominant local power-holders. After an initially inconsistent course the Dutch even decided to coldshoulder these powerful players, which left them no direct influence over both warlord-like strongmen. Albeit compensated by indirect influence when the Dutch successfully managed to curtail the influence of Kabul -the Karzai government preferred to rule through personalized ties with warlord-like strongmen-, the re-emergence of both Jan Mohammed Khan and Matiullah Khan after the Dutch withdrawal was inevitable. It should also be noted that the latter actor’s power saw a tremendous increase as a consequence of his monopoly on securing the TFU’s logistical supply route. *De facto* the Dutch task force thus depended on a warlord-like actor over whom they held no direct influence. With the benefit of hindsight we can conclude that it does not come as a surprise that this all rendered the so carefully constructed tribal balance unsustainable. Ultimately, therefore, in the TFU case it were not so much the successfully co-opted (and previously sidelined or marginalized) sub-tribal leaders or governmental officials who were relevant to the campaign’s outcome; what mattered more was the deliberate decision not to co-opt Uruzgan’s dominant local power-holders.

Is the Uruzgan case after all, then, a successful example of the application of co-option in order to establish control over the population in a counterinsurgency campaign? If we adopt the view that the shortcomings -most notably the lack of sustainability- of the co-option strategy can be mainly attributed to the lack of will to fully embrace cultural legitimation,
we have to conclude that despite this fundamental flaw the TFU at least temporarily managed to establish control over the population living within the task force’s oil spot. This seemingly contradictive short-term success can be fully explained by the effective use of a mix of soft coercion and persuasive methods for co-opting Uruzgan’s sub-tribal leaders and governmental officials and mitigating the spoiling influences of the dominant local power-holders. On the coercive side of the co-option continuum removal was effectively used against lower-level leaders whose powerbase depended on their official position. Of course removal was also used to sack Jan Mohammed, but the most effective method to curtail the influence of both Popalzai tribal entrepreneurs was provided by manipulating the local political marketplace and simultaneously containing Kabul’s interference.

Empowerment of before sidelined and marginalized sub-tribal leaders -notably those of the Barakzai, Achekzai, and Ghilzai- through the allocation of resources and immaterial support brought about a more balanced political order that was connected to the provincial administration. For that purpose independent governmental officials such as Governor Hamdam were empowered, and members of previously ill-represented factions were also appointed in governmental offices. While the Dutch emphasized the formalization of local power-structures by strengthening the connection between the local administration and the various sub-tribal leaders, they were also quick to convert to informal empowerment when it became clear that their attempt to establish an inclusive provincial government was doomed. Consequently, the TFU ended its campaign with an ultimate attempt to preserve the carefully established tribal balance by empowering its allies outside governmental channels. Thus, the TFU achieved its temporarily success thanks to the deployment of a mix of soft coercive and persuasive methods that effectively established co-optive ties with sub-tribal leaders and independent governmental officials, while also mitigating the influence of the dominant Popalzai strongmen for a considerable part of its campaign. Albeit successful on the short term, this created a problem for the long term, as any durable solution for stabilizing Uruzgan’s societal landscape needed to incorporate both dominant local power-holders and their network. More immediately, the return of the Popalzai strongmen not only led to a loss of governmental independence, and a return to intra-factional feuding, but also triggered a violent re-emergence of the Taliban in the province. In this insecure situation former TFU co-optees who now were left without Dutch protection were vulnerable to assassination attempts by rival factions or the Taliban, as was demonstrated by the untimely death of Mohammed Daud and Malem Sadiq. Thus, the temporarily Dutch success came at a heavy prize in terms of stability, security, and even lives of former allies.

In terms of this book’s framework for understanding co-option the Uruzgan campaign predominantly addressed lower-level local power-holders through an approach that emphasized persuasion (see figure 6). The sub-tribal leaders and local administrators are positioned in the lower middle of the co-option spectrum as they were well-respected authorities at the local level, but only held limited influence over larger segments of the target society and never exceeded the provincial level -contrary to tribal entrepreneurs Jan
Mohammed Khan and Matiullah Khan who were capable of exerting influence at the regional and even national level. The co-option continuum of the TFU ranged from soft coercion to pure persuasion, but mainly encompassed empowerment through allocation of (im-)material resources such as development aid, money, official positions, and military assistance and training. It should be mentioned, however, that one of the drivers beyond this approach was the objective to curtail the influence of the dominant local power-holders by strengthening the position of the lower-level leaders. This manipulation of the local political marketplace indeed succeeded when the Dutch started to limit Kabul’s interference, which for the moment gave them a capability to mitigate the spoiling influences of the Popalzai strongmen without actually co-opting them. Yet, in the daily practice of co-option at the grassroots level empowerment constituted the main tool of the TFU’s co-optive toolkit and therefore the overall emphasize clearly lies with persuasive side of the co-option continuum.

Figure 6: The Uruzgan campaign depicted in the analytical framework of co-option in weblike societies

Compared to the general trend in neo-classical counterinsurgency the Uruzgan campaign deviates in its choice of co-optees (depicted as $\Delta y$ in figure 6). Whereas modern counterinsurgency warfare aims at co-opting a mix of dominant and lower-level local
power-holders as well as independent governmental officials at the grassroots level, the TFU excluded Uruzgan’s dominant local power-holders. As explained this was the consequence of a political decision not to engage in co-optive relationships with warlord-like agents, which prevented a full-fledged embrace of cultural legitimation. Considering the problems with warlords in the Afghan state-building project and the fact that the Taliban in Uruzgan had once again become relevant because of Jan Mohammed’s and Matiullah’s misbehavior this ban on co-option with dominant local power-holders might be understandable, but simultaneously the increased awareness on the societal landscape should have triggered an adaptation of this policy as it became clear that both men still held considerable influence and de facto the TFU even was totally dependent on Matiullah for its logistical supplies. With the benefit of hindsight, therefore, we have concluded that it would have been better if the TFU had launched an attempt to establish direct influence over the Popalzai strongmen, but how to tackle this problem; how can modern counterinsurgents establish and control co-optive relationships with warlord-like dominant local power-holders?

Interestingly this problem touches upon the two propositions formulated at the end of part I (Chapter Three, section 3.6), namely that neo-classical counterinsurgents cannot co-opt a mix of dominant and lower local power-holders in a locale as they lack the resources for such an approach and that the limited (soft) coercive capability is insufficient for controlling co-optive relationships. The Uruzgan case has revealed that it is rather unwise to exclude dominant local power-holders from co-option as a consequence of domestic political considerations. Yet, the provisional dominance that resulted from the synchronized effort to manipulate the local political marketplace and to contain the interference of the strongmen through the Kabul government demonstrates that at least temporarily success can be achieved without actually co-opting dominant local power-holders and with limited (coercive) resources only. This hints at a solution as the issue at stake is how to consolidate such temporarily success in order to translate it into durable success. Therefore, the key insight that can be obtained from the Dutch Uruzgan campaign is not only that dominant local power-holders should be incorporated in any attempt to reshape the local balance of power, but even more important, that manipulation of the local political marketplace, while simultaneously diminishing a dominant local power-holder’s access to state resources at the national level, requires sufficient commitment to persevere this dominance until a self-sustainable, and therefore viable political order has emerged. The Uruzgan case easily demonstrates the lack of such commitment since in the first place the Dutch withdrew before the sub-tribal leaders were capable of autonomously maintaining their position vis-à-vis the dominant tribal entrepreneurs, while the task force’s US and Australian successors opted for a policy that favored the strongmen. Furthermore, Dutch informal empowerment beyond the TFU campaign was of a rather limited nature and with their protection gone, former co-optees were prone to assassination. Dutch interference with Uruzgan’s local politics effectively ceased in October 2011 when the construction of the Tirin Kot-Chora road was completed and the road security contract of the Barakzai, Achekzai, and Ghilzai terminated;
the main Dutch co-optee, Mohammed Daud Khan, was killed before the end of that very month. Thus, in addition to lower-level local power-holders even warlord-like dominant local power-holders might be co-opted with limited means as the resources available in modern counterinsurgency campaigns suffice for establishing provisional dominance. In order to achieve a sustainable result, however, this requires either the will to extend the intervener's commitment until a sufficiently stable political order is established, or a continuation of the adopted co-option strategy by succeeding forces of a coalition partner.

Seemingly modern counterinsurgency addresses these matters as it calls for an additional long-term stabilization effort once the initial counterinsurgency campaign has provided a stable underpinning for such wider development activities. This case has illustrated that both are hard to realize in the reality of modern counterinsurgency warfare. Whereas our analysis of the Uruzgan campaign concerns an early example of co-option in modern counterinsurgency and mainly has focused on the difficulties of establishing a sufficiently stable political order at the grassroots level, the current situation in Iraq epitomizes the disastrous macro level ramifications of a faltering long-term follow-up; after a successful counterinsurgency phase the country has destabilized triggering the emergence of the Islamic State. If intervention in states with weblike societies is to succeed, Western decision makers should not only show sufficient will to establish an acceptable level of control in the various locales of such a society during the counterinsurgency phase, but also prepare for the long run - the wider stabilization phase - in order to forge a hybrid state capable of effectively controlling the grassroots level through the previously created local political orders. Only when such commitment is adopted modern counterinsurgents can successfully establish a local political order that consecutively will function as a sufficiently stable underpinning for long-term development with use of limited resources only.
Conclusion
Conclusion: The course of co-option in theory and reality

Introduction

This book has sought to study the challenge of co-opting local power-holders in weblike societies through both the theory and reality of counterinsurgency warfare by first constructing an analytical framework for understanding co-option in such a societal environment, and subsequently by scrutinizing Dutch experiences during the colonial Aceh War and the contemporary Uruzgan campaign. In this concluding chapter we will provide a synthesis of the findings of the three separate parts of this book, allowing us to draw a definite conclusion on co-option as a tool for counterinsurgency within a highly fragmented societal landscape. To that end, this chapter will first discuss the theoretical and historiographical insights of the analytic framework, and then will deal with the findings of both case studies before merging them to formulate a final answer to our main question of how counterinsurgents have co-opted local power-holders in order to attain control over the population in a weblike society.

Theoretical and historiographical insights

The assumption underlying this study’s main question is that in counterinsurgency campaigns in weblike societies a strategy of collaborative relationships with local power-holders is instrumental in obtaining control over the population. As the logic of control through collaboration is subject to an ongoing debate, this book’s theoretical exploration has assessed the validity of this underpinning by unraveling the mechanism through which collaboration spawns control. It was found that a strategy of collaboration offers a potential path to control as it bolsters both the government’s legitimacy and resources, and consequently leads to a stable condition of control. The successful application of such a strategy requires the government to address two fundamental issues: cultural legitimation, and consecutive mobilization. Cultural legitimation encompasses the exploitation of a target society’s pattern of legitimacy in order to augment the populace’s acceptance of the government’s authority. This might vary, from the use of rational-legal means to co-option of traditional or charismatic power structures, depending on the local population’s perception of legitimacy. An increase of the government’s legitimate authority sparks the people’s will to collaborate, and consequently the government can further exploit this by mobilizing much-needed resources (like self-defense militias and intelligence) from within the population. Additionally, mobilization and cultural legitimation are mutually reinforcing as they both enhance collaboration with the government and thereby increase governmental control. Contrary to this approach, the application of a ‘control-first’ strategy in a counterinsurgency
setting typically delivers an unstable condition of control as it depends upon a vast number of security forces facing an identification problem. Such a situation is highly likely to trigger indiscriminate use of force and repression. Consequently, collaboration is not only a valid strategy for obtaining control, it is also the preferred strategy in Western population-centric counterinsurgency as it enhances the government’s legitimate authority, rallies additional resources from within the target population, and leads to a stable condition of control.

The theoretical analysis of control through collaboration also revealed that a successful collaboration strategy requires the government (including assisting forces) to secure its collaborators effectively against insurgent violence, and other types of counter-collaboration actions. Furthermore, it became clear that counterinsurgents involved in a strategy of collaboration through co-option might find themselves confronted with local power-holders who possess considerably more resources at the grassroots level than the government itself. In order to dominate such agents without alienating them, the government should seek to carefully formalize them within and absorb them into its institutions. This is echoed in the practice of grassroots mobilization that seeks to formalize existing militias as part of the state’s security apparatus. The need to control local power-holders in a highly dynamic environment that is characterized by an ongoing struggle for control (in which all parties seek collaborative ties with these agents) also spawned the insight that the government and its counterinsurgency forces not only should be the dominant actor, but also should be the most attractive partner for collaboration. This demands a flexible strategy that is heavily dependent on the structure of the target society, which brings us to the practical implementation of co-option. While the theoretical analysis has demonstrated that co-option provides a possible path to control in counterinsurgency warfare through cultural legitimation and mobilization, the next step is to test whether co-option of local power-holders can be practiced in a weblike society. Who exactly should be co-opted in order to establish control? How can the government ensure that it becomes the dominant and the preferable partner in such a highly fragmented societal landscape?

Tailoring a collaboration strategy to local circumstances requires a profound understanding of the target society in order to ensure cultural legitimation. A weblike society is a common form of societal organization in developing countries around the world. This type of society is characterized by a high degree of political, social, and cultural fragmentation, and can consist of fairly autonomous local units. The political structure and its intimately related pattern of legitimacy reflect this fragmentation as control is typically obtained at the local level. Consequently, local power-holders, who compete for control within the various locales of such a society, dominate the political structure and therefore co-option of these agents is key to obtaining control over the population as a whole. While this reveals the validity of co-opting local power-holders as a path to control, this is insufficient for understanding the actual application of a co-option strategy in a weblike society as it still leaves unclear the question who, exactly, should be co-opted.
A further analysis of the political structure of weblike societies has provided the insight that a local power-holder’s legitimate authority is typically derived from access to resources that accommodate the population’s strategies for survival. Political power comes from the ability to distribute these resources along the mesh of kinship, economic, and religious networks. Those local power-holders capable of maintaining multi-stranded patron-client relationships through these intertwined networks, dominate the political marketplace at the local level. In some cases such authorities might even rule over several autonomous societal fragments. Next to these dominant agents, a variation of lower-level power-holders is also commonly met at the local political marketplace. These grassroots leaders are at the very least capable of providing security to their followers (typically organized as kin-groups). This can help to resist marginalization by more powerful agents, such as when dominant local power holders engage in self-interested predatory behavior (e.g. coercion, economic exploitation) towards less powerful social groups. Such exploitation could otherwise lead to alienation of these grassroots factions, which in turn could give motivation to join or support an insurgency. Consequently, a co-option strategy in a weblike society should not only address dominant local power-holders, but should also seek to involve (marginalized) lower-level leaders. Since the composition of the political marketplace typically varies for each specific locale, there is no standard answer to the question of whom to co-opt. Therefore, we have identified a spectrum of co-option that ranges from dominant local power-holders at one end, to security providing kin-group authorities at the other. Any co-option strategy that seeks to obtain control over the population of a weblike society should aim to collaborate with local power-holders within this spectrum.

Solving the puzzle of how the government can be the preferred as well as the dominant agent for co-option of local power-holders in weblike societies first necessitated a more profound exploration of the state-society nexus in countries where such societies are present. Whereas states typically seek to accumulate centralized power and resources, weblike societies are notoriously decentralized. Hybrid states that have implemented a policy of cultural legitimation that respects the authority of local power-holders while simultaneously seeking to enhance centralization have been the ones most successful in establishing control over their weblike societies. The dialectic of control in this state-society system is such that co-opted local power-holders remain in control at the local level, while through themselves they enhance the state’s legitimacy and overall control. This immediately reveals the strong position of local power-holders vis-à-vis the state, and why it is that obtaining dominance in co-optive relationships is the major challenge for the government. The colonial states that emerged in the mid-nineteenth century were the first hybrid entities to successfully address this challenge by creating (and dominating) relationships of mutual dependency between the government and local power-holders, by providing, withholding, or withdrawing resources. Colonial administrators actively interfered in local politics in order to secure state dominance over local power-holders. Similarly, today’s states with weblike societies in the developing world seek to tip the balance of the collaboration equation by engaging in a
bargaining process at the grassroots level. While this has increased the dependency of local power-holders on state resources, contemporary states often fail to establish dominance, and consequently suffer capture at the local level as they are incapable of projecting state power into local politics. Strengthening the state at the local level, therefore, is pivotal for obtaining dominance in co-optive relationships. But how can this be achieved, and how can this be combined with the state’s need to be the preferred partner for co-option?

The successful implementation of co-option requires the state to establish an independent local administration capable of interfering with grassroots politics, and bargaining with local power-holders. Whereas administrators with a profound knowledge of local circumstances fulfilled this role in the colonial states, contemporary states with weblike societies often lack such a capacity as their administrative apparatus is typically dominated by local power-holders whose interests do not necessarily align with those of the state. The actual methods that can be deployed by local administrators to establish and maintain co-optive relationships vary from the use of force to pure persuasion. Typically, however, soft coercion and persuasive measures that seek to punish or reward local power-holders by withholding, withdrawing, or allocating state resources are the predominant tools of co-option. The clever use of these methods allows the state to manipulate the local political marketplace and empower marginalized actors while simultaneously curtailing the influence of dominant local power-holders. Most importantly, however, the analysis of the methods of co-option revealed that the local administration should possess what we have labeled co-option domination, which guarantees enforced compliance of even the most powerful local power-holder. This not only requires control over the provisioning of state resources, but also, if necessary, the use (or threat) of force -the ultimate coercive tool to ensure compliance. Yet, force should be used carefully as too much emphasis on force alienates local power-holders -and consequently might lead to their collaboration with insurgents. Forging and maintaining co-optive relationships thus requires an independent local administration capable of adopting a flexible approach that allows shifting between coercive and persuasive methods as deemed necessary for dominating the co-optive bargain with individual local power-holders. The methods of co-option, consequently, constitute a continuum from force on the coercive side, to pure persuasion on the persuasive side.

By this point, our theoretical analysis has clarified all facets for understanding co-option as a strategy for obtaining control over the population within a weblike society: co-option spawns control through the fundamental mechanisms of cultural legitimation and consecutive mobilization. These mechanisms can be implemented by co-opting local power-holders, as identified within the spectrum of co-option, through a continuum of methods applied by an independent local administration. Ultimately, however, this book’s main question can only be appropriately answered by comparing theory with evidence from the actual practice of co-option during counterinsurgency warfare in weblike societies. Our exploration has, therefore, bridged the gap between theory and reality through an analysis of the facets of co-option, as identified within the conceptual framework underlying Western
population-centric counterinsurgency campaigns. As the roots of modern counterinsurgency harken back to the very colonial states where co-option embodied the state of the art of enhancing governmental control over highly fragmented societies, a historiographical tour d’horizon of co-option throughout the three evolutionary stages of counterinsurgency was adopted to reach a deeper understanding of the utility and place of co-option in counterinsurgency. While there are significant differences in purpose and environment of colonial, classical, and modern neo-classical campaigns, they nevertheless all share the imperative of obtaining control through the population’s collaboration. Moreover, historical variations in the utility and role of co-option provide additional insights that can be used as directions for the analysis of co-option in the reality of counterinsurgency warfare. In this way, our exploration of co-option in counterinsurgency from a historiographical perspective has provided the analytical background for this book’s case studies.

The historiographical analysis brought forward the insight that (of the three historical counterinsurgency concepts) colonial warfare and modern neo-classical counterinsurgency are best suited for establishing control over weblike societies. Both concepts have acknowledged the importance of cultural legitimation and mobilization through co-option of local power-holders as the basis for establishing control over highly fragmented societies. The importance of the locale as the primary arena for establishing an acceptable level of governmental control characterizes colonial warfare as well as modern counterinsurgency. An equally important similarity is the scarce capability of resources—especially security forces—for the conduct of a campaign. The concept of classical counterinsurgency, on the other hand, emphasizes the importance of establishing a strong, modern state endowed with extensive resources. In this concept, co-option is only practiced in support of the modernization process that seeks to establish a centralized state. Furthermore, classical counterinsurgency was specifically designed for transitional societies and consequently lacks the underpinnings necessary for obtaining control over a weblike society. This was further supported by an analysis of the two practical facets of co-option. It was concluded that classical counterinsurgency exclusively seeks to co-opt lower-level local power-holders by use of extensive resources, whereas colonial warfare and modern counterinsurgency aim at co-opting dominant as well as lower-level societal agents with limited resources only. Thus, only colonial warfare and modern counterinsurgency are relevant for studying our problem of co-option as a tool for counterinsurgency in weblike societies.

Our finding that the fundamental role of co-option in both colonial warfare and contemporary counterinsurgency is almost equal provides a preliminary answer to our main question. Yet, historical variations brought to light significant differences in the practical facets of co-option. With regard to the fundamental role of co-option, both colonial warfare and modern neo-classical counterinsurgency consider co-option instrumental in establishing an acceptable level of control to achieve stability on the short term. This approach acts as an underpinning for long-term development and stability since additional state building takes place after the initial pacification or counterinsurgency phase. As a strategy that seeks
to exploit the local pattern of legitimacy and to mobilize additional resources in highly fragmented societies, it emphasizes the local level, which constitutes the dominant political marketplace. Thus, both colonial warfare and neo-classical counterinsurgency adhere to a ‘local-first’ strategy in which control is obtained and consolidated at the grassroots level with only a secondary role for the state’s centre. This materializes in accommodations between local power-holders and the local administration; accommodations which are the result of a bargaining process that seeks to establish co-optive relationships in order to encapsulate local power-holders and their resources within the localized framework of the state.

Let us now turn from the similarities to look at the differences. Colonial warfare and modern counterinsurgency differ considerably in the way they seek to practice co-option. Colonial warfare placed emphasis on co-opting dominant local power-holders, whereas co-opting lower-level agents was done only if necessary. In contrast neo-classical counterinsurgency places emphasis on co-opting lower-level local power-holders, but co-opting dominant local power-holders should also be pursued because a stable condition of control requires the collaboration of the dominant agents. An even greater difference concerns the issue of how to co-opt. In colonial warfare the bargaining process was conducted by colonial administrators employing a mix of coercive and persuasive methods backed up by a credible threat of force. This often sufficed for dominating even the most powerful local agent. The contemporary situation, by contrast, has seen local power-holders co-opted into a local administration under supervision of the counterinsurgents using predominantly persuasive methods. Moreover, (the threat of ) force is largely absent in contemporary co-option, and soft coercion is therefore virtually the only option for achieving compliance of unwilling actors.

These differences raise questions about the application of co-option in the reality of counterinsurgency warfare. While an explanation for colonial warfare’s preference for co-option of dominant local power-holders can be found in the scarcity of resources available to the colonial state, neo-classical counterinsurgency, which suffers from a similar scarcity, prefers to co-opt both lower-level and dominant local power-holders. This has informed the proposition that modern counterinsurgents cannot co-opt a mix of dominant and lower local power-holders as they lack the resources for such an approach. Equally important is the matter of limited coercive capability for co-option in contemporary counterinsurgency. How does this affect the ability of today’s counterinsurgents to field a flexible strategy that provides them with enough leverage to be the dominant, as well as, to be seen as the preferable partner for co-option? Since both the analysis of colonial warfare and our theoretical exploration have revealed that a credible coercive stick is instrumental in achieving co-option dominance, this has led to the proposition that neo-classical’s limited coercive capability is insufficient for controlling co-optive relationships. A thorough understanding of co-option as a tool for counterinsurgency in weblike societies, however, requires us to mirror these matters with regard to colonial warfare. It needs to be explored how, exactly, colonial warfare achieved a co-option of dominant, and (if necessary) lower

530
local power-holders with limited resources using a mix of persuasive and coercive methods. A true understanding of co-option in counterinsurgency, consequently, can only be acquired through an analysis of both colonial and contemporary experiences, as this will enhance our insight in the dynamics surrounding the practical issues of whom and how to co-opt. Therefore, a more robust answer to this book’s main question can only be given after scrutinizing the application of co-option in the quotidian reality of the colonial Aceh War and the contemporary Uruzgan campaign.

Insights from the Aceh War

Cultural legitimation and mobilization were key features of colonial pacification campaigns. The scarcity of resources available to colonial states typically necessitated the use of local power-holders and their militias for establishing control over the target society’s population. Although the Dutch had gained considerable experience in practicing these underlying mechanisms of a co-option strategy since the early days of their presence in the Indonesian archipelago, they encountered severe difficulties in implementing these principles during the Aceh War. Due to a poor understanding of Acehnese society it took the Dutch more than two decades to formulate the first beginning of what would become a successful co-option strategy. During the first period of the war subsequent commanders remarkably failed to establish or accept a proper understanding of Aceh’s highly fragmented society and its pattern of legitimacy as an underpinning of their approach. Consequently, despite all previous experiences with co-option as a strategy for obtaining control, the first part of the war was characterized by a diffuse, if not completely absent, practicing of cultural legitimation and mobilization.

The failure to adopt an appropriate co-option strategy during the first two decades is obvious from the choice of local allies as well as the way these relationships were forged and maintained. Consistent with the general trend in colonial warfare the Dutch first sought co-option of a dominant local power-holder. The political structure of Acehnese society, however, was dominated by the uléëbalang who were the legitimate authorities ruling the more than 100 locales of this highly fragmented society. The Sultan, who was initially the centre of gravity of the faltering Dutch co-option strategy held merely symbolic authority, and therefore was incapable of controlling Acehnese society as a whole. Similarly, the warlord-like Teuku Uma did not prove the key to control over the Acehnese as he only held influence over the west coast and the adjacent part of Great Aceh. These false assessments were the result of a lack of knowledge on local affairs that prevented the effective use of the limited resources. Moreover, the resulting quest for an appropriate strategy triggered a series of policy changes that rendered the Dutch a notoriously unreliable partner for collaboration; during the first part of the war the colonial administration never managed to become the preferred as well as the dominant agent. At best the Dutch became either only the dominant
partner (in the vicinity of their Kutradja bridgehead) or temporarily the preferred agent, as was the case with Teuku Uma. The co-option of the latter resulted in a debacle that effectively illustrates the importance of fine-grained intelligence and a capability for co-option domination; the administrators in Kutradja were highly ignorant of Uma’s duplicity and self-convinced that they controlled Uma through the allocation or withdrawal of rewards. Moreover, it also clarified that the true legitimate power-holders had to be engaged and that the Dutch had to create a vested interest that would render them the preferred as well as the dominant partner for co-option.

The Aceh strategy that ultimately brought the colonial administration control by co-opting the ulêébalang emerged in 1898 when Snouck Hurgronje’s 1892 report on Acehnese society was accepted as the underpinning for the Dutch war policy. Thus, cultural legitimation became finally embedded in the colonial administration’s strategy as the question of whom exactly to co-opt now was answered through a proper analysis of the target society’s pattern of legitimacy. Although mobilization was initially reluctantly practiced due to the experience with Uma’s legion, the use of self-defense militias gradually became a key feature of the new approach. All of this was made possible by the so called Korte Verklaring, a system which allowed colonial administrators, the ‘officers-civil authorities’, at the grassroots level to engage the leading ulêébalang of a locale with a tailored package of co-optive methods based on knowledge of the local circumstances. This KV-system, however, was only introduced after the colonial administration had secured its reputation as the dominant partner for collaboration through a series of firm actions against the most defiant statelets of Aceh’s Dependencies. These actions demonstrated the Dutch willingness to deploy force at the local level. Thus, exemplary force created a credible threat of force and thereby yielded co-option domination. Backed up by this potent coercive stick the local colonial officials managed to establish and maintain a system of co-option in which the Dutch created a vested interest for the ulêébalang to co-opt; non-compliance was severely punished, while compliance was generously awarded. The methods employed for establishing and maintaining co-optive relationships directly addressed a local power-holder’s personal interest. They typically encompassed economical rewards as well as soft coercion such as fines and the withdrawal or withholding of economical incentives. Thus, the Aceh strategy finally established the Dutch as the dominant as well as the preferred partner for collaboration.

In terms of this study’s analytical framework the Aceh strategy won control over the local population as it successfully implemented cultural legitimation and mobilization by co-opting dominant local power-holders at the grassroots level through a flexible approach that consisted of a balanced use of coercive and persuasive methods. While the ulêébalang were the dominant agents of their own locale at a lower societal level (where they controlled, various segments of predominantly villagers) they only held limited influence over the wider society. Consequently, these local power-holders can be positioned in the middle of the spectrum of co-option. With regard to the co-option continuum the Aceh strategy represented a balanced mix as it mainly relied on soft coercion and persuasive methods
for establishing co-optive relationships, but also depended on a credible threat of force. As always in colonial warfare, the use of force against the population was never far away. Yet it should be noted that according to standards of that day the Aceh strategy might have been a genuine example of limited force. Compared to the estimated total of casualties of the Aceh War or those of for instance the earlier Java War, the more than 12,000 Acehnese that perished as a consequence of the Aceh strategy are a relatively limited number. Yet, this number also demonstrates that it goes without doubt that brutal force was inherently part of the reality of colonial pacification as even exemplary force included mass casualties. While totally unacceptable to today’s standards we have to conclude that lethal force was a key trait of co-option in colonial warfare as it was pivotal for setting the collaborative equation to the administration’s advantage.

 Compared to the commonly observed pattern in colonial warfare the Aceh strategy deviates from the standard practice of co-opting dominant local power-holders capable of exerting influence over the wider population. However, this was not an uncommon exception in pacification campaigns, as the need to address the target society’s specific pattern of legitimacy would often prescribe co-option of lower-level societal leaders. Typically, the colonial administration would first seek to co-opt a single dominant local power-holder as such an agent could be controlled with relatively limited resources. When this proved insufficient more intensive co-option of lower-level local power-holders became an option. Clearly, the evolution of co-option as part of the Dutch war strategy corresponds to this pattern as Aceh could not be controlled through (seemingly) dominant local power-holders such as the Sultan or Teuku Uma, but only by co-opting the ulëëbalang, the legitimate authorities in charge of the various locales of this highly fragmented society. While this seems logical considering the need to practice cultural legitimation, we should not forget that it took the Dutch more than twenty years to reach this conclusion. This once more stresses the pivotal importance of a proper understanding of the target society for formulating a successful co-option strategy. Preferably fine-grained intelligence on the local societal landscape should be available before the start of the campaign, but due to the complicated nature of highly fragmented, weblike societies this is often not the case. Therefore counterinsurgents should strive to develop a clear picture of the human terrain as soon as possible and exploit this understanding in order to adapt their campaign design.

 Once again, it has to be stressed that during the heydays of the colonial époque, in which co-option was a well-known standard practice for controlling fragmented indigenous societies, it took the Dutch war authorities almost twenty years to develop an appropriate awareness on the societal dynamics of Aceh, and another six years to accept this as the basis of their strategy. When this strategy was ultimately implemented, the colonial administration established control over the Acehnese by co-opting the legitimate local power-holders who ruled over the more than 100 various locales through a combination of exemplary -yet brutal- force and a locally applied mix of soft coercion and persuasive methods. Additionally, however, it has to be mentioned that this result was squandered in the decades following
Aceh’s pacification as the Dutch failed to adopt a proper follow up strategy that enhanced the connection between state and target society and therefore could not transform the acceptable level of control into durable control over the population. Instead the ulêëbalang were wrongly empowered in the role of colonial administrators, as they were attributed almost absolute powers in the fields of law and religion at the expense of the villagers and ulama. In the long run this delegitimized Aceh’s chiefs and inspired a renewed uprising of the ulama-led resistance. Thus, in addition to our insights on the implementation of co-option in the reality of a colonial pacification campaign, the Aceh case also stresses the importance of an appropriate follow up strategy that consolidates and exploits the gains of the pacification phase. As aforementioned, control in Aceh proved particularly hard to establish and when pacification was achieved at last, it was not to last.

Insights from the Uruzgan Campaign

Cultural legitimation and mobilization were originally not incorporated in the newly emerging neo-classical counterinsurgency concept as it embraced classical counterinsurgency’s imperatives of modernization and the advance of liberal democracy. The reality on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan, however, triggered the adoption of these two underlying principles of co-option in order to provide an underpinning for long-term stabilization with use of limited resources and within a limited amount of time. The Uruzgan campaign embodies an early example of the embrace of co-option in modern counterinsurgency. It coincided with the full-fledged acceptance of this method in Iraq and preceded the formal introduction of co-option as part of the overall Afghan campaign. Although at this time (2005-2006) there was a growing awareness of the importance of local power-holders, earlier experiences in Afghanistan had revealed the Afghan state’s inability to control warlord-like agents and their militias. Consequently, the Dutch government, under influence of domestic political pressure, excluded such local power-holders from collaboration and imposed an explicit caveat on cooperation with militias. While soldiers on the ground circumvented the latter restriction as they succeeded in institutionalizing such armed groups within the Afghan state’s security infrastructure and Dutch politicians ultimately proved willing to accept mobilization for urgent self-defense purposes, the ban on co-option of warlord-like local power-holders proved more problematic. This severely hampered practicing cultural legitimation as it prevented the TFU from establishing influence over Uruzgan’s dominant local power-holders, Jan Mohammed Khan and Matiullah Khan. Thereby it limited the exploitation of the pattern of legitimacy to lower-level, sub-tribal leaders who were empowered in order to establish a tribally balanced political order that could provide a stable platform for further development. Thus, whereas the mobilization issue was pragmatically solved during the TFU campaign, the Dutch demonstrated a lack of will to fully embrace cultural legitimation.
Further evidence in support of this conclusion on the Dutch government’s faltering will is provided by the rather ambiguous policy of emphasizing the importance of a decentralized effort in Uruzgan, whilst simultaneously also focusing on establishing a modern, centralized state ruled from Kabul -as opposed to the hybrid entity capable of controlling the local fragments of weblike societies. This not only frustrated attempts to strengthen the local administration by linking it to Uruzgan’s legitimate sub-tribal leaders, but also benefitted the dominant local power-holders who were well-connected to the Karzai government. These problems were further augmented as a consequence of different views of US and Australian allies (who favored cooperation with both warlord-like agents) and who would ultimately provide the forces succeeding the TFU. In the end all these matters had disastrous effects on the results of the Dutch campaign as the carefully nurtured tribal balance quickly vaporized within months of the TFU’s withdrawal and the dominant local power-holders again could exert their power unobstructed. A key insight provided by the Uruzgan campaign, therefore, is that in order to provide an underpinning for long-term stability a co-option strategy should not be hampered by unrealistic political restrictions that might prove counterproductive for the end state. This not only requires the will to adapt in the field, but also the will to adapt political-strategic guidelines in case adopted cultural legitimation and mobilization policies do not fit the circumstances in the operational environment.

Despite the shortcomings in the way the Dutch sought to implement the underlying mechanisms of co-option, the TFU campaign can be considered a genuine example of a population-centric counterinsurgency campaign. It sought to establish control by exploiting the local pattern of legitimacy and mobilizing resources from within the target population. After overcoming -inevitable- initial adaption problems (such as obtaining a proper understanding of the local societal landscape and gearing its mindset, strategy, organization and operations for war amongst the people), the task force adopted a proper counterinsurgency approach in order to provide an underpinning for long-term stability. The failure to fully embrace cultural legitimation limited the choice of co-optees to lower-level sub-tribal leaders and independent governmental officials. This has to be considered the fundamental flaw of the Uruzgan campaign as our theoretical and exploration has revealed that co-option of dominant local power-holders is pivotal for establishing a stable condition of control. Considering the powerful position of the dominant Popalzai strongmen, it seems a miracle that the TFU succeeded in establishing temporarily control over the population by co-opting (previously marginalized or sidelined) sub-tribal leaders and independent governmental officials. Consequently, the way the TFU managed to establish control during its mission offers interesting insights that further contribute to our understanding of co-option.

The Dutch short-term success can be fully explained by the effective use of a mix of soft coercion and persuasive methods. Until the announcement of the TFU’s withdrawal this mix sufficed for co-opting Uruzgan’s sub-tribal leaders and independent governmental officials, while also mitigating the spoiling influence of the dominant local power-holders.
Removal was effectively used as the ultimate coercive measure against lower-level local power-holders whose powerbase depended on an official position. In the case of Jan Mohammed, however, removal proved ineffective. Similarly, the coldshouldering of both Popalzai strongmen did not contain their influence. The most effective tool for curtailing the influence of both warlord-like tribal entrepreneurs was provided by manipulating the local political marketplace and simultaneously containing Kabul’s interference with local affairs in Uruzgan. Empowerment of previously sidelined or marginalized sub-tribal leaders of most notably the Barakzai, Achekzai, and Tokhi through the allocation of resources (such as for instance development aid, military support and training, and money) and immaterial support led to a more balanced political order that was connected to the provincial administration. In addition to empowerment of independent governmental officials such as Governor Hamdam, members of formerly ill-represented factions were also appointed in official positions in order to establish an inclusive local government. Yet, it has to be mentioned that the TFU was also quick to change to informal empowerment outside governmental channels when (after the announcement of its withdrawal) it became clear that its attempt to establish an independent, inclusive local administration was doomed. Thus, the TFU achieved its temporarily success thanks to the deployment of a mix of soft coercion and persuasive methods that not only effectively established co-optive ties with sub-tribal leaders and independent governmental officials, but also mitigated the influence of the dominant local power-holders for a considerable part of its campaign.

Whilst successful on the short term, the Dutch approach created a problem for the long term as any durable solution for stabilizing Uruzgan’s societal landscape necessitated the incorporation of both dominant local power-holders and their network of followers. More immediately, the return of the Popalzai strongmen after the Dutch withdrawal not only led to a decrease of governmental independence, but also renewed intra-factional feuding. This triggered a violent re-emergence of the Taliban in the province. Former Dutch co-optees were now left without protection and therefore vulnerable to assassination attempts. A grim illustration is provided by the untimely death of key Dutch allies such as Barakzai authority Mohammed Daud and Achekzai leader Malem Sadiq. Thus, the short lived Dutch success came at a high prize in terms of long-term stability, security, and even the lives of some of their former co-optees. Consequently, the ultimate insight that should be obtained from the Uruzgan campaign is how to prevent this contradiction of short-term success and long-term consequences to occur again and instead achieve a more durable result.

In terms of this book’s framework for understanding co-option the Uruzgan campaign predominantly addressed lower-level local power-holders through an approach that emphasized the persuasive side of the co-option continuum. Additionally, provisional dominance was obtained through manipulation of the political marketplace (through empowerment of sub-tribal authorities) and limiting interference from the Kabul government. Uruzgan’s sub-tribal leaders and independent administrators were well-respected authorities at the local level, but only held limited influence over other societal
segments. In contrast to the warlord-like strongmen their influence did not exceed the provincial political marketplace. Consequently, these agents can be placed in the lower middle of the co-option spectrum. At this point the Uruzgan campaign deviates from the general trend of co-option in modern counterinsurgency as typically a mix of dominant and lower-level local power-holders as well as independent governmental officials is preferred. As repeatedly stated this difference was caused by the political decision not to engage in co-optive relationships with warlord-like local power-holders that prevented a full-fledged embrace of cultural legitimation. At the start of the mission (2006) this position made sense considering the previous problems with warlords in the Afghan state-building project and the fact that the Taliban in Uruzgan had again become relevant as a consequence of actions from both Popalzai strongmen. Yet, the task force’s increased awareness on the target society should have triggered a revision of this policy as it became clear that both actors still held considerable influence. With the benefit of hindsight we even can conclude that it would have been better if the TFU had launched a serious attempt to establish direct influence over these dominant warlord-like agents. Consequently, if we want to learn from the Uruzgan campaign’s rupture between short-term success and long-term results, it is pivotal to develop an understanding of the way modern counterinsurgents can establish and control co-optive relationships with warlord-like dominant local power-holders.

This challenge directly refers to the two propositions formulated as a consequence of our theoretical and historiographical exploration; today’s counterinsurgents lack the resources for co-opting a mix of dominant and lower local power-holders, and their limited coercive capacity is insufficient for controlling co-optive relationships. Interestingly, the Uruzgan campaign reveals that while the Dutch deliberately opted not to co-opt the dominant agents, they managed to outmaneuver those actors and for the time being even succeeded to become the dominant as well as the preferable partner for co-option (for lower-level local power-holders). This remarkable provisional co-option domination that was achieved without a credible coercive stick and with limited resources only, offers some final insights on the application of co-option in the reality of modern counterinsurgency. As aforementioned manipulation of the local political marketplace combined with simultaneous engagement of the central government in Kabul in order to limit the dominant actors’ exploitation of state resources were instrumental in achieving temporarily dominance at the grassroots level in Uruzgan. As this method sufficed for containing the spoiling influence of both dominant local power-holders, it also offered a potential path for forging co-optive relationships with these agents. Therefore, the TFU could have co-opted a mix of dominant and lower local power-holders with limited resources and without a capability to enforce compliance by use of force. Yet, this requires the will to engage such warlord-like agents and we have seen that the Dutch government lacked this will. Thus, the Dutch should have also attempted to co-opt Uruzgan’s dominant local power-holders as they could do so.

This conclusion might be considered rather obvious as it concurs with the standard practice in modern counterinsurgency, which prescribes co-opting a mix of dominant and
lower-level local power-holders as well as independent governmental officials. A second insight, however, is of a more fundamental nature as it concerns the matter of transforming temporarily success in durable success. The Uruzgan case has demonstrated that whereas the Dutch achieved provisional dominance and managed to establish a tribally balanced order connected to an inclusive local government, their results started to evaporate as soon as their withdrawal was announced. The most important insight that can be obtained from the TFU campaign is that in modern counterinsurgency sufficient commitment is required to persevere dominance until a self-sustainable political order has emerged that can act as a stable platform for long-term development. The Uruzgan campaign clearly shows a lack of such commitment: the Dutch withdrew before the sub-tribal leaders were capable of autonomously maintaining their position vis-à-vis the dominant local power-holders. The course of the US and Australian successors was also unhelpful as both contingents favored the Popalzai strongmen. Moreover, Dutch empowerment of co-optees beyond the TFU campaign was of a rather limited nature and those agents proved vulnerable to assassination. Achieving a sustainable result, thus, either requires the will to extend the intervener’s commitment until a sufficiently stable political order has been established, or demands a continuation of the adopted co-option strategy by succeeding coalition forces.

In sum, our analysis of the Uruzgan campaign has enhanced our understanding of co-option in contemporary counterinsurgency. It revealed that in addition to lower-level local power-holders and governmental officials, warlord-like dominant agents might also be co-opted since the limited resources available suffice for establishing temporarily dominance without use of force. Yet, a durable result requires the commitment to persevere this approach until a self-sustainable, and therefore viable political order has been established. Ultimately both matters come down to the intervening counterinsurgent’s political will to establish an acceptable level of control over the population in a weblike society through a co-option strategy and encapsulate this result in a hybrid state capable of controlling the various locales through the newly-created local political orders. The Uruzgan case has demonstrated that the Dutch government lacked the will to fully implement co-option as part of its counterinsurgency effort and neither was prepared to extend its commitment until a stable political order had been established. Even more worrying is that a similar lack of will nowadays has protruded the Western attitude towards interventions in weblike societies. This has triggered a disconnect between the counterinsurgency phase and the long-term follow-up for wider stabilization as epitomized by the current situation in Iraq which allowed for the emergence of the Islamic State. While modern counterinsurgency might successfully implement a co-option strategy in order to provide an underpinning for long-term development, the achieved results will quickly fade away and even prove counterproductive if such an approach is executed without sufficient political will to do so.
Conclusion

How have counterinsurgents co-opted local power-holders in order to attain control over the population in a weblike society? Theoretically, a successful strategy that delivers a stable condition of control requires the counterinsurgent to honor two fundamental and two practical principles of co-option for controlling the populace under such conditions. First, cultural legitimation and mobilization allow for the exploitation of the target society’s pattern of legitimate authority, and the rallying of additional resources from within that society. The former encompasses formulating a tailored collaboration strategy based on an appropriate understanding of the local societal landscape in order to connect legitimate authorities to the state, thereby enhancing governmental control. Typically, a local perception of legitimacy based on traditional or charismatic leadership (or the combination of both) necessitates a co-option strategy in which the state exploits such agents to enhance its own legitimacy and control. Mobilization of resources from within the target society allows the state to overcome a scarcity of resources. This, in turn, also sparks further collaboration as it strengthens the connection between the people and the government, thereby enhancing the state’s legitimacy. Cultural legitimation and mobilization are thus mutually reinforcing mechanisms. As local power-holders might be capable of fielding more resources than the government at the local level, grassroots mobilization also functions to carefully institutionalize these agents in order to enhance governmental control. Moreover, in an environment of dynamic contention for control between two or more parties, the government needs to secure a position as the dominant as well as the preferred partner for collaboration in order to practice cultural legitimation and mobilization successfully. In addition to an accurate understanding of the societal landscape, this requires the adoption of a tailored, flexible strategy that encompasses a capacity to both enforce and reward compliance.

The practice of co-option involves the actual selection of co-optees, and the methods used to establish and maintain relationships with these agents. In weblike societies, co-optees are selected from a spectrum of legitimate authorities ranging from security focused (kin-)group leaders with authority over small societal segments (as low as the village level), to dominant local power-holders keeping multi-stranded (economic, security, religious) ties with their followers and capable of influencing the wider society, even ruling over multiple locales. The exact choice of co-optees, however, heavily depends on the circumstances in each specific locale and might also be influenced by the counterinsurgent’s preference (as long as the principle of cultural legitimation is followed). With regard to the methods of co-option, a continuum was identified varying from the use of force on the coercive side to pure persuasion on the persuasive side. Shifting between the methods of the continuum allows for solving the need to be both the preferable, and the dominant partner for co-option. While (the threat of) force provides the ultimate guarantee to dominating co-optive relationships, and therefore provides a credible capability for co-option domination, the emphasis
typically lies on a mix of soft coercion and persuasive methods, such as the withdrawal and allocation of resources. Since dominant local power-holders in weblike societies typically permeate governmental institutions, and such agents often also engage in shady practices (like predatory behavior towards less powerful societal segments), an independent local administration is a prerequisite for fielding such a flexible strategy capable of linking local power-holders that represent various societal segments to the government. Furthermore, durable preservation of state control through local power-holders requires a hybrid state in which local power-holders are the respected agents of control at the grassroots level, while at the same time the state dominates those agents from the centre without becoming too centralized. This again reveals the importance of a flexible strategy that allows the government to dominate while also being the preferred partner for co-option.

In both colonial warfare and contemporary neo-classical counterinsurgency, co-option based on cultural legitimation and mobilization is acknowledged as key to establishing control over a highly fragmented society (see also table 2). In addition to a shared recognition of the grassroots level as the primary locale for establishing control, both concepts aim to achieve this with limited resources. They also emphasize that the pacification or counterinsurgency effort should achieve a sufficiently stable, acceptable level of control, while a durable level of control will follow as a result of additional state building. With regard to the practical issues of whom to co-opt and the methods of co-option, however, colonial warfare and modern counterinsurgency differ considerably. Due to the limited availability of resources colonial pacification campaigns primarily focused on co-opting dominant local power-holders from the upper part of the spectrum of co-option, and only referred to lower-level leaders if the situation required so. Force fulfilled a pivotal role in such campaigns as it provided colonial administrators with a capacity for dominating even the most powerful indigenous actors. Contemporary counterinsurgency campaigns emphasize the importance of local power-holders at the lowest societal levels and only incorporate dominant agents because a stable level of control requires the collaboration of these agents. Further, soft coercion in the form of withdrawal of resources or removal from official positions embodies the penultimate coercive tool for co-option in modern campaigns, as the use of force is restricted to insurgents. These conceptual differences have fueled the propositions that contemporary counterinsurgency lacks the capability to co-opt a mix of dominant and lower local power-holders since it suffers from a similar shortage of resources as colonial campaigns; and that today’s limited coercive capacity is insufficient for dominating co-optive relationships.
Interestingly, the similarities between colonial warfare and modern neo-classical counterinsurgency provide a preliminary answer to our main question. A profound understanding of co-option in counterinsurgency and the practical differences between colonial and contemporary campaigns, however, necessitates a more thorough investigation into how such a strategy materializes in the reality of counterinsurgency warfare at the grassroots level in a highly fragmented society. Therefore, we will now merge the findings of the Aceh and Uruzgan case in order to draw a definite conclusion.

While both colonial warfare and contemporary counterinsurgency acknowledge the importance of co-option and its underlying principles of cultural legitimation and mobilization, the case studies have brought to light that implementing these principles have met severe difficulties. During the Aceh War the colonial war authorities failed to accept a proper understanding of the Acehnese pattern of legitimacy during the first part of the war, for the central authority structures of the Sultanate were considered the key to establishing control over the Acehnese. Consequently, the Dutch strategy was flawed and subject to various changes in strategic choices. This effort was also compounded by the ever-present political-strategic imperative to limit the war’s expenses. Moreover, this also prevented the effective mobilization of local armed groups, and even led to the Teuku Uma debacle in which a key ally defected from the Dutch side. Only after more than twenty years was a proper strategy finally formulated that aimed at co-opting the ulëëbalang, the legitimate authorities of this highly fragmented society. Yet even at this time, the exact nature of ulëëbalang legitimacy was misunderstood. The problems with cultural legitimation and mobilization during the Aceh War, therefore, were ramifications of faltering adaptation of the Dutch to population-centric warfare in Aceh’s specific circumstances. This is even more remarkable given that the Dutch colonial state held a track-record of successful pacification campaigns, and co-option of local power-holders was a time-honored practice in the Dutch East Indies.

The Uruzgan campaign also suffered from adaptation problems in acquiring an appropriate understanding of the target society. Yet, considering the limited experience of
modern Dutch forces with population-centric counterinsurgency in weblike societies, these problems were solved relatively quickly. After only two years, an effective counterinsurgency strategy was adopted and implemented. More important, however, was that political restrictions prevented a full-fledged adoption of the principle of cultural legitimation by excluding the province’s dominant warlord-like local power-holders from collaboration. The will to adopt cultural legitimation fully was absent, as became clear from the ambiguous policy that, on one hand, emphasized a modern centralized state, while on the other it focused on pursuing a localized approach in Uruzgan. Similarly, mobilization of local militias during the TFU campaign was hampered by a political caveat that prohibited collaboration with armed non-state actors. However, in reality, this caveat was effectively circumvented as a consequence of ingenuity of soldiers on the ground, who adopted a practice of formalizing militias within the official security structures of the Afghan state. Yet, cooperation with the most well-equipped and organized armed group remained out of bounds as this was commanded by the Popalzai strongmen. In the Uruzgan case, therefore, adaptation problems were not so much encountered in the field as they were at the political-strategic level, where politicians and policy makers lacked the will to match their guidelines to the reality in the field. Thus, the case studies demonstrate that even if the importance of co-option is recognized, success is hard to achieve as formulating and implementing an appropriate strategy based on cultural legitimation and mobilization might be hampered by adaptation problems at both the political-strategic and operational levels.

In both Aceh and Uruzgan (see table 3), the hampered implementation of cultural legitimation and mobilization was echoed in the practical issues of co-option. This influenced most significantly the choice of whom to co-opt. The selection of co-optees during the Aceh War deviated from the standard in colonial warfare, which is to co-opt dominant local power-holders. However, they also adopted an often-used alternative approach, which is to seek collaboration of lower-level agents. Yet, it took the Dutch far too long to identify the ulëëbalang ruling over the various locales of Acehnese society as the prime agents of co-option. While the selection process was severely hindered by inaccurate assumptions held by Dutch authorities about Acehnese political organization, and by their preoccupation with the Sultan as a central authority, the situation on the ground should have informed a more appropriate approach. The failure to develop sufficient awareness on the societal landscape again stresses the need to commit an adequate capability for gathering and analyzing fine-grained population-centric intelligence. This, however, remained somewhat problematic during the Aceh War; for although the ulëëbalang were rightly acknowledged as the legitimate authorities in Acehnese society, the exact nature of their legitimacy remained misunderstood. Whereas these chiefs predominantly based their power on their position as economical entrepreneurs, the Dutch mistakenly perceived them as feudal lords. This had severe consequences in the long run: the colonial administration inadvertently empowered the ulëëbalang as feudal lords into the period after the pacification campaign, which resulted in the alienation of other societal segments, and thereby delegitimized Aceh’s chiefs.
In Uruzgan the selection of co-optees was limited to lower-level local power-holders and independent governmental officials. The dominant agents were excluded due to political restrictions such as the aforementioned ban on collaboration with the Popalzai strongmen. Ultimately the campaign’s achievements proved short-lived, as the actors who were purposefully not co-opted ended up mattering more in the post-mission landscape than those who were. For these reasons, the Uruzgan case offers the insight that it is better to establish influence over dominant agents than to keep them at bay. During the mission, however, the TFU’s choice of co-optees sufficed for establishing a tribally balanced political order, for previously sidelined or marginalized leaders were re-installed in the provincial political marketplace. Initially, however, this was not so much the consequence of an appropriate intelligence assessment but more a consequence of the Dutch stance *vis-à-vis* the dominant strongmen, which rendered the TFU a natural ally for those strongmen’s rivals. Population-centric intelligence later confirmed this course. Consequently, the policy of establishing a balanced political order by co-opting lower-level local power-holders and incorporating these agents into the provincial government became strongly embedded in the TFU’s strategy.

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<th>Mobilization</th>
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<th>Methods of co-option</th>
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*Table 3: Co-option in Aceh and Uruzgan*

It has to be noted here that the societal landscape analyzed in the two case studies differed considerably. Uruzgan is just one locale of Afghan society, while the Aceh case studied Acehnese society as a whole. Moreover, whilst both societies can be characterized as weblike societies sharing a high degree of fragmentation and fairly autonomous local fragments, the distribution of power in these societies also varied considerably. In Aceh legitimate political power rested mainly with the *ulêébalang*, who ruled over relatively small autonomous locales and without wider influence. By contrast, in Uruzgan the provincial marketplace was made up of a mix of dominant agents capable of influencing the greater Kandahar region (even up to the national level), as well as lower-level leaders whose leverage was restricted to their own societal segment or the wider province at best. Consequently, the difference in choice of co-optees (\(\Delta y\) in figure 7) in both cases also reflects the unique structure of each society. An even more important observation is that the successful Aceh strategy deviates from the standard
of colonial warfare as it sought to address the specific pattern of legitimacy, whereas the Uruzgan campaign differs from the standard in neo-classical counterinsurgency because of the Dutch refusal to co-opt dominant local power-holders. As the latter intervention failed to produce a sufficiently stable level of control due to this failure to incorporate the dominant agents, the case studies reveal that, ultimately, regardless of the intervener’s preferences, the local societal circumstances should dictate the answer to the question of whom exactly to co-opt. Both case studies have demonstrated that an appropriate intelligence picture of the local societal landscape is pivotal in this matter. Preferably such information should be available before the onset of a mission as it allows for a campaign design that is tailored to local circumstances. However, in reality planners are working with an incomplete picture. Therefore, counterinsurgents should develop an awareness of the unique features of the target society as soon as possible in order to adjust their co-option strategy and make the right selection of co-optees: societal context is king.

![Figure 7: The Aceh Strategy and Uruzgan Campaign depicted in the analytical framework of co-option in weblike societies](image)

We have seen in both cases that the methods of co-option concurred with the prevailing counterinsurgency concept at their respective times. The Acehnese were ultimately controlled
through a balanced mix of soft coercion and persuasive methods utilized by colonial officials who aimed to create a vested interest for individual local power-holders. Instrumental within this approach, however, was a credible coercive stick that was established through exemplary force. As was common in pacification campaigns during the colonial period, lethal force was part of the sum of elements that had to tip the collaborative equation in the colonial administration’s advantage. The Aceh strategy caused significantly less casualties among the local population in comparison to earlier stages of the war, or Dutch campaigns in other parts of the archipelago. In essence, however, brutal force remained an inherent part of this approach, and was even necessary for its success. The Uruzgan campaign, by contrast, illustrates that such use of force has totally disappeared in the co-option continuum available to modern counterinsurgents. Instead, removal of local power-holders was the ultimate coercive act. Whereas this was sufficient for dominating co-optive relationships with lower-level leaders, it proved insufficient for containing dominant local power-holders and their network of clients who were determined to act as spoilers. Although these agents were excluded from co-option as a consequence of aforementioned political guidelines, the Dutch had remarkable success in temporarily curtailing the influence of warlord-like actors. This was made possible through a combination of soft coercion and persuasive methods that encompassed manipulation of the political marketplace by empowering rival agents, while simultaneously engaging the national level in Kabul in order to prevent interference through governmental channels. That led to a balanced political order that was linked to a more independent provincial administration (nurtured by the TFU) that now also included representatives of previously sidelined or marginalized societal segments. Even so, this tremendous achievement started to collapse as soon as the Dutch announced their withdrawal and consequently lost their leverage in Kabul—and therefore also their dominance. Despite an attempt to preserve the newly-created political order through informal empowerment (outside governmental institutions) of these lower-level leaders, the results of the Dutch engagement faded away rather quickly. Therefore, the mix of soft coercion and persuasive methods employed by the TFU brought only transient control.

While the difference between the methods of co-option applied in both case studies (Δx in figure 7) does not differ significantly from the theoretical and historiographical findings, the insights from the case studies can nevertheless be used to deal with the two propositions that resulted from that same exploration. First, the TFU experiences demonstrate that co-option domination vis-à-vis lower-level local power-holder can be established by employing soft coercion. Even more important, however, is the finding that such a limited coercive capability also suffices for dominating dominant local power-holders. This requires a clever combination of coercive measures aimed at limiting the influence of such agents, and persuasive methods that empower (lower-level) competitors in order to manipulate the local political marketplace. Yet, in Uruzgan this only lasted as long as the Dutch commitment was uncontested. That amount of time was not long enough to establish an acceptable level of control that encompassed a self-sustainable political order in which lower-level local power-
holders were capable of autonomously maintaining their position while also defying the shady behavior of dominant agents. Equally important, such a stable situation cannot be created without also involving dominant local power-holders - a feature that was notoriously absent in the Dutch approach in Uruzgan. This leads us to the second proposition concerning contemporary counterinsurgency’s preference to co-opt a mix of dominant and lower local power-holders with limited resources. While the Dutch in Uruzgan did not co-opt the dominant agents because of the lack of political will to embrace cultural legitimation fully, they could have done so if they wished because their temporarily dominance would have allowed them to establish ties with warlord-like local power-holders. Therefore, this case demonstrates that even with limited resources a mix of local power-holders could be co-opted. The findings of the Aceh case support this insight in a numerical way as the Dutch colonial administration managed to co-opt an extensive range of local power-holders (all dominating a specific small locale) without extensive resources. Thus, as long as co-option domination is achieved, local power-holders could be co-opted as required. Consequently, if we combine the insights on both propositions, it can be concluded that today’s limited capability for co-option domination suffices for co-opting a mix of dominant and lower-level local power-holders in order to yield an acceptable level of control. Be that as it may, the key issue underlying such an approach is the political will to embrace co-option fully, and to persist until a sufficiently stable situation has been created that can function as an underpinning for long-term stability. Moreover, the Aceh case, as well as the current situations in Iraq and Afghanistan, have all revealed the importance of an appropriate long-term follow up strategy. The stamina required for practicing a co-option strategy extends beyond the counterinsurgency phase of an intervention, and therefore requires a political will and determination to settle for the long term; something that has rarely occurred in contemporary Western interventions.

To conclude, we have seen that counterinsurgents can obtain an acceptable level of control over the population of a weblike society by adopting a tailored, localized strategy based on the principles of cultural legitimation and mobilization. These principles enable them to co-opt both dominant and lower-level local power-holders, depending on the societal context, through a mix of methods that renders the counterinsurgents’ side the dominant as well as the preferred partner for collaboration. In modern counterinsurgency these methods typically encompass soft coercion and persuasive methods that can be effectively employed to achieve provisional co-option domination. They ensure an acceptable level of control if the counterinsurgent is sufficiently committed to establishing a sustainable political order that incorporates dominant and lower-level local power-holders who are linked to an inclusive government at the grassroots level. While such a self-sustainable local order remains the ultimate goal of the counterinsurgency phase of contemporary interventions, the sustainability of these local achievements in the long run requires commitment beyond this phase. Only in this way can the various locales of a weblike society be incorporated into a viable hybrid state.
Although significant insights and rich evidence have been uncovered in this research, it does not presume to have exhausted all available knowledge on the subject. Therefore additional case studies are needed to assess and extend our findings. Yet, it has to be mentioned explicitly that both the theory and reality of co-option in counterinsurgency warfare have revealed that an acceptable level of control can be obtained through a tailored collaboration strategy. As mentioned in this book’s introduction the logic of control through collaboration has been the subject of an academic debate. Critics like Stathis Kalyvas have even even urged scholars to study violent contention from ‘the baseline control-collaboration model’ by use of predominantly quantitative data.1 Our findings, however, suggest that detailed analysis of historical case studies provides an alternative approach that offers a profound insight into the dynamics of control and collaboration at the local level. Moreover, the empirical evidence has even supported the theoretical finding that collaboration provides a potential path to an acceptable level of control. Although the limited scope of this research does not entitle us to make more general claims regarding this matter, it seeks to contribute to the ongoing debate by offering an avenue for further research into the dynamics of control and collaboration at the grass roots level.

This book has predominantly studied the counterinsurgency phase of Western intervention, and therefore the subsequent stage of stabilization also provides a starting point for further research, which needs to explore the long-term effects and possibilities of the course of co-option (including the exact character and functioning of hybrid states in which co-option can be practiced). Moreover, as studying the long-term effects also requires a further understanding of the relationship between counterinsurgency and state building, this suggestion concerns a well-known lacuna in modern counterinsurgency thinking that requires clarification.2 Ideally, therefore, such research should blend with efforts from the community of state-building scholars who also seek to enhance their understanding of the sustainability of short-term results on the long term.3

The present situations in Iraq and Afghanistan leave little doubt about the generalization of our conclusion that governments of Western states intervening in countries with weblike societies that are undergoing insurgencies should not only adopt the political will to implement co-option completely, but also must commit themselves for the long term. Without this stamina any attempt to intervene and stabilize such a country is doomed to failure. The reality, however, is that Western intervention politics today are dominated by a deficient political will that has characterized the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as the rather limited interference in Syria.

This brings us to our final point concerning the role of insurgents in the contest for control over the population. In this study we have focused on the relationships between

1 See Stathis N. Kalyvas, ‘Micro-Level Studies of Violence in Civil War: Refining and Extending the Control-Collaboration Model’, Terrorism and Political Violence 24:4 (2012), 665-666. The model is based upon Kalyvas’ theory of irregular war (see Chapter One, section 1.2), which considers collaboration endogenous to control.


counterinsurgents and local power-holders, and insurgents have played only a minor role. The counterinsurgents either managed to thwart insurgent counter-collaboration, or succeeded in (temporarily) outmaneuvering a local insurgency. The insurgents, therefore, were unable to set up an effective system of competitive control. Currently, however, a reversal of roles has occurred as insurgents have started to duly exploit the effects of a faltering Western will to intervene by, for example, forging co-optive ties with local power-holders. The first issue of the Islamic State’s *Dabiq* magazine aptly describes how a dedicated office for tribal affairs has been set up to co-opt tribal leaders using a blend of persuasive and coercive methods, including violent force, ‘in an effort to strengthen the ranks of the Muslims, unite them under one imam, and work together towards the establishment of the prophetic Khilafa’.

So, whereas Western interventions or sponsored states have failed to adopt effective (long-term) co-option strategies for controlling weblike societies, today’s insurgents are demonstrating that they will not hesitate to practice such a strategy in a more violent manner. Therefore, a full-fledged adoption of co-option as a tool for counterinsurgency, as well as for long-term stabilization, is more urgent than ever before.

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Conclusion

The course of co-option
Acronyms
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADZ</td>
<td>Afghan Development Zone</td>
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<tr>
<td>AHP</td>
<td>Afghan Highway Police</td>
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<tr>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Afghan Local Police</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANA</td>
<td>Afghan National Army</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANAP</td>
<td>Afghan National Auxiliary Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANDS</td>
<td>Afghanistan National Development Strategy</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANP</td>
<td>Afghan National Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANSF</td>
<td>Afghan National Security Forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASG</td>
<td>Afghan Security Guard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AQI</td>
<td>Al-Qaeda in Iraq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AQT</td>
<td>Al-Qaeda/Taliban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BG</td>
<td>Battle Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDA</td>
<td><em>Christen-Democratisch Appèl</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CERP</td>
<td>Commander’s Emergency Response Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIA</td>
<td>Central Intelligence Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIMIC</td>
<td>Civil-Military Cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIVREP</td>
<td>Civilian Representative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CULAD</td>
<td><em>Cultureel adviseur</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<td>---------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTU</td>
<td>Combined Team Uruzgan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCU</td>
<td>Dutch Consortium for Uruzgan</td>
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<tr>
<td>DFID</td>
<td>(UK) Department for International Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DTF</td>
<td>Deployment Task Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EBAO</td>
<td>Effects-Based Approach to Operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EOD</td>
<td>Explosive Ordnance Disposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLN</td>
<td>Front de Libération Nationale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAM</td>
<td>Geraka Aceh Merdaka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIROA</td>
<td>Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GTZ</td>
<td>Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOTO</td>
<td>Hand-Over-Take-Over</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDLG</td>
<td>Independent Directorate of Local Governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEC</td>
<td>Independent Election Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IED</td>
<td>Improvised Explosive Device</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IS</td>
<td>Islamic State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISAF</td>
<td>International Security Assistance Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISTAR</td>
<td>Intelligence Surveillance Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAM</td>
<td>Jaysh al-Mahdi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JMK</td>
<td>Jan Mohammed Khan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPEL</td>
<td>Joint Prioritized Effects List</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<td>---------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAU</td>
<td>Kandak-e Amniant-e Uruzgan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KLE</td>
<td>Key Leader Engagement</td>
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<tr>
<td>KLEP</td>
<td>Key Leader Engagement Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KV</td>
<td>Korte Verklaring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCP</td>
<td>Malayan Communist Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIVD</td>
<td>Militaire Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoI</td>
<td>(Afghan) Ministry of Interior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>NDS</td>
<td>Afghan National Directorate of Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRF</td>
<td>NATO Response Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCC-P</td>
<td>Operational Coordination Centre-Provincial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OEF</td>
<td>Operation Enduring Freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OMF</td>
<td>Opposing Militant Forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OMLT</td>
<td>Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSAD</td>
<td>Ontwikkelingssamenwerking adviseur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSTAD</td>
<td>Ontwikkelingssamenwerking/tribaal adviseur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDPA</td>
<td>People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POLAD</td>
<td>Political Advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRT</td>
<td>Provincial Reconstruction Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSE</td>
<td>Psychological Operations Support Element</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUSA</td>
<td>Persatuan Ulama Seluruh Aceh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PvdA</td>
<td>Partij van de Arbeid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QVP</td>
<td>Quick and Visible Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RC-S</td>
<td>Regional Command South</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPG</td>
<td>Rocket-Propelled Grenade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SF</td>
<td>Special Forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOI</td>
<td>Sons of Iraq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S/G/J-2</td>
<td>Intelligence officer within a staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TFU</td>
<td>Task Force Uruzgan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TF-55</td>
<td>Task Force-55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TLO</td>
<td>The Liaison Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TNI</td>
<td>Tentara Nasional Indonesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCP</td>
<td>Uruzgan Campaign Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USP</td>
<td>Uruzgan Security Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNAMA</td>
<td>United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPDP</td>
<td>Uruzgan Provincial Development Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USECT</td>
<td>Understand, Shape, Engage, Consolidate, Transfer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VOC  Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie
VSO  Village Stability Operations
Glossary
**Glossary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adat</td>
<td>traditional, customary law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkabai</td>
<td>traditional Afghan tribal militia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dayah</td>
<td>religious school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imeum</td>
<td>Spiritual and administrative leader of a mukim (imam)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jirga</td>
<td>tribal council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kafir</td>
<td>non-believer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khan</td>
<td>(tribal) chief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kandak</td>
<td>ANSF battalion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kompeuni</td>
<td>Acehnese name for the Dutch (referring to the VOC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loya Jirga</td>
<td>tribal meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madrassa</td>
<td>religious school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main perang</td>
<td>playing at war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malik</td>
<td>junior (village-level) tribal chief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meshrano Jirga</td>
<td>upper house of the Afghan parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mujahideen</td>
<td>those fighting a Jihad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mukim</td>
<td>village parish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mullah</td>
<td>religious leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanngrou</td>
<td>area ruled by ulêêbalang</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Onthouding  abstention

Orang muslimin  ulama-led resistance (muslim people)

Panglima  Acehnese title for lord

Panglima Perang Besar  Title for great warlord

Pashtunwali  Pashtun code of honor

Perang sabil  holy war, Jihad

Pir  Sufi spiritual guide

Qala  walled house typical for rural Afghanistan

Qawm  solidarity group

Rakan  followers of an ulèëbalang

Sagi  federation of chiefs in Aceh Besar

Sarakata  letters patent

Sayyad  descendant of the Prophet

Shura  meeting of important local leaders

Talib  religious student

Teungku  title for distinguished ulama

Teuku  title for a male descent of an ulèëbalang's family

Tuanku  title for member of the Sultan dynasty

Ulama  religious scholar

Uläëbalang  Acehnese chief (from the Malay hulubalang or war-leader)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wasé</td>
<td>duty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolesi Jirga</td>
<td>lower house of the Afghan parliament</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Maps

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2. Great Aceh (J.C. Pabst, *Oost-Indische Krijgsgeschiedenis X.*)
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Note: The Popalzai (spelled as Popolzai) are depicted as a separate entity, outside the tribal confederations. This is probably due to their dominant position. DR and TK are acronyms for Deh Rawud and Tirin Kot.
Annexes
Annexes

I. Uruzgan’s predominant Pashtun tribes and their most influential power-holders as appearing in this book

```
Pashtun
  └── Durrani Confederation
      └── Achekzai
          ├── Malem Abdul Khaleq
          │     └── Malem Sadiq
          └── Barakzai
              └── Rozi Khan
                  └── Mohammed Daud
  └── Panjpa Durrani Confederation
      └── Babozai
          └── Tokhi
              └── Mohammed Nabi Khan
  └── Ghilzai Confederation
      └── Nurzai
          └── Hotak
              └── Mullah Shafiq (Taliban)
```
II. TFU staff rotations

TFU-1, colonel Theo Vleugels
1 August 2006-24 January 2007

TFU-2, colonel Hans van Griensven
24 January 2007-1 August 2007

TFU-3, colonel Nico Geerts
1 August 2007-30 January 2008

TFU-4, colonel Richard van Harskamp,
30 January 2008-31 July 2008

TFU-5, colonel Kees Matthijssen, CIVREP Peter Mollema (start of dual civil-military command)
31 July 2008-2 February 2009

TFU-6, brigadier Tom Middendorp, CIVREP Joep Wijnands
2 February 2009-3 August 2009

TFU-7, brigadier Marc van Uhm, CIVREP Michel Rentenaar
3 August 2009-1 February 2010

TFU-8, brigadier Kees van den Heuvel, CIVREP Jennes de Mol
1 February 2010-1 August 2010
Summary
Summary

The course of co-option: co-option of local power-holders as a tool for obtaining control over the population in counterinsurgency campaigns in weblike societies - with case studies on Dutch experiences during the Aceh War (1873-c. 1912) and the Uruzgan campaign (2006-2010)

During the counterinsurgency campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan Western soldiers found themselves operating as foreign interveners in highly fragmented indigenous societies. The high ground of the human terrain in these so-called weblike societies is dominated by local authorities such as tribal elders, religious leaders, and warlords, who control the population at the grassroots level. Co-opting these local power-holders is instrumental in stepping up the collaboration between the local population and the counterinsurgents, while simultaneously diminishing support for the insurgency. Thereby this concept, which was successfully implemented in both Iraq and Afghanistan, offers a seemingly obvious approach for obtaining control over the population in highly fragmented societies. Yet, the recent emergence of co-option as a predominant tool for counterinsurgency in weblike societies has revealed a number of fundamental and practical complications. These complications have rendered the utility of this tool less straightforward than it seems; at worst the concept might be fundamentally flawed and incapable of delivering long-term success, while at best it appears rather complicated to practice and only effective for obtaining an acceptable result on the short term. This controversy urges for a better understanding of co-option in counterinsurgency warfare.

At the heart of this book is the question of how counterinsurgents have co-opted local power-holders in order to attain control over the population in a weblike society. A profound understanding of the course of co-option requires us to answer this question by studying both the theory and reality of counterinsurgency warfare in such societies. First, a theoretical exploration of the logic of control through collaboration and the dynamics of co-option in the specific setting of a weblike society serves to unravel the concept’s underpinning. Moreover, this also allows to construct an analytical framework for understanding the application of co-option in the reality of counterinsurgency campaigns. Next, a historiographical analysis bridges the gap between theory and reality by providing an insight in the way co-option has been incorporated in different concepts throughout the evolution of Western counterinsurgency. This analysis offers further guidance for studying co-option as it reveals that colonial warfare and modern counterinsurgency are best suited for practicing co-option in weblike societies. Consequently, a profound understanding of the course of co-option requires an insight in the reality of both colonial pacification and modern counterinsurgency campaigns. Therefore this book scrutinizes Dutch experiences during the colonial Aceh War (1873-c. 1912) and the contemporary Uruzgan campaign (2006-2010). Ultimately our main
The question is answered by merging the theoretical and historiographical insights with the findings of both these case studies.

Part One consists of the theoretical and historiographical explorations of the course of co-option. The former has spawned the insight that co-option of local power-holders is a potential path to control over the population as it bolsters both the government’s legitimacy and resources, and consequently leads to a stable condition of control. The successful application of such a strategy requires the government to address two fundamental issues, cultural legitimation and consecutive mobilization. Cultural legitimation encompasses the exploitation of a target society’s pattern of legitimacy in order to augment the populace’s acceptance of the government’s authority. This functions to spark the people’s will to collaborate, which can be further exploited by mobilizing resources, such as self-defense militias and intelligence, from within the population. The theoretical analysis also revealed that an effective strategy requires the government and its counterinsurgency forces to be the dominant as well as the preferable partner for collaboration. This demands a flexible strategy tailored to the specifics of the target society by addressing the practical issues of whom to co-opt and how to co-opt.

The political structure of a weblike society is dominated by local power-holders who compete for control within the various locales of such a society. Co-option of these agents, therefore, is instrumental in establishing control over the population. Yet, the choice of co-optees is more complicated as commonly a mix of dominant and lower-level local power-holders exerts control over the population at the grassroots level. Since the composition of the political marketplace varies for each specific locale, there is no standard answer to the question of whom to co-opt. Any co-option strategy that seeks control over the population in a weblike society should aim at collaborating local power-holders in a spectrum that ranges from dominant local power-holders to lower-level legitimate leaders (typically kin-group authorities). The methods of co-option constitute a continuum varying from the use of force to persuasion. When deployed by an independent -i.e. free from local influences-local administration this so-called co-option continuum allows to dominate the co-optive bargaining process with local power-holders by shifting between coercion and persuasion as deemed necessary. The theoretical analysis, thus, provides the insight that co-option is a valid method for establishing control over the population in a weblike society; it spawns control through cultural legitimation and consecutive mobilization which can be implemented by co-opting local power-holders that are part of a spectrum of co-option through a continuum of methods deployed by an independent administration.

The gap between theory and reality is bridged by studying the conceptual embedment of the facets of co-option (cultural legitimation, mobilization, whom to co-opt and the methods of co-option) during the different evolutionary stages of Western population-centric counterinsurgency. This historiographical analysis brought to light that (of the compared historical counterinsurgency concepts) colonial warfare and modern counterinsurgency are best suited for establishing control over weblike societies. Both concepts acknowledge the
importance of cultural legitimation and mobilization through co-option of local power-holders. In both cases this materializes in a ‘local-first’ approach that seeks to establish an acceptable level of control at the grassroots level with limited resources only. Achieving stability at the short term acts as an underpinning for long-term development and stability since additional state building takes place after the initial pacification or counterinsurgency phase. Yet, colonial warfare and modern counterinsurgency differ considerably in the way they seek to practice co-option. The former emphasizes co-option of dominant local power-holders, whereas lower-level leaders are only co-opted if necessary. In contrast today’s counterinsurgency places emphasis on co-option of lower-level local power-holders, but dominant agents should also be engaged as their collaboration is necessary for establishing a stable level of control. An even bigger difference concerns the matter of how to co-opt. In colonial warfare the bargaining process was conducted by administrators employing a mix of coercive and persuasive methods backed up by a credible threat of force. This often sufficed for dominating even the most powerful local agent. The contemporary situation, by contrast, has seen local power-holders co-opted into a local administration under supervision of the counterinsurgents using predominantly persuasive methods. Moreover, (the threat of) force is largely absent in contemporary co-option, and soft coercion – withdrawing or withholding resources – is therefore virtually the only option for achieving compliance of unwilling actors. A thorough understanding of the course of co-option requires us to study these differences and similarities in the actual use of co-option as this will enhance our insight in the dynamics surrounding such an approach. Therefore, a robust answer to this book’s main question can only be given by scrutinizing the application of co-option in the daily reality of the colonial Aceh War and the contemporary Uruzgan campaign.

Part Two discusses the Dutch experiences in the almost forty-year Aceh War. During the heydays of the colonial époque, in which co-option was a well-known standard practice for controlling indigenous societies, it took the Dutch more than twenty years to develop an appropriate understanding of Acehnese society. Consequently, the first period of the war was characterized by various unsuccessful attempts to augment colonial control. Especially the infamous Teuku Uma policy that rendered the colonial administration totally dependent on a single dominant local power-holder proved a debacle when their main local ally switched sides leaving the Dutch with empty hands. This case revealed that the Dutch lacked a capability to dominate their co-optees and also demonstrated the importance of a thorough understanding of local societal dynamics. These insights opened the door for the introduction of an approach that successfully implemented cultural legitimation and mobilization. This so-called Aceh strategy aimed at co-opting the uléëbalang, the legitimate local power-holders within Acehnese society, through a flexible approach that consisted of a balanced use of coercive and persuasive methods. While the uléëbalang were the dominant agents of their own locale at a lower societal level they only held limited influence over the wider society. Consequently, these local power-holders can be positioned in the middle of the spectrum of co-option. With regard to the co-option continuum the Aceh strategy
The Course of Co-option

Summary

represented a balanced mix as it mainly relied on soft coercion and persuasive methods for establishing co-optive relationships, backed up by a credible threat of force. As always in colonial warfare, the use of force against the population was never far away, and even exemplary force included mass casualties. While totally unacceptable to today's standards such lethal force was a key trait of co-option in colonial warfare as it was pivotal for setting the collaborative equation to the administration's advantage.

The Aceh strategy ultimately brought the colonial administration control over the Acehnese by co-opting the legitimate local power-holders ruling over the more than 100 various locales. Yet, it should be mentioned that this result was squandered in the decades following Aceh's pacification as the Dutch failed to adopt a proper follow up strategy that enhanced the connection between state and target society. The colonial administration, thus, could not transform the acceptable level of control into durable control over the population. Moreover, the uléëbalang were wrongly empowered in the role of colonial administrators, which delegitimized these chiefs in the long term and inspired a renewed uprising of the resistance. In addition to our insights on the implementation of co-option in the reality of a colonial pacification campaign the Aceh case, therefore, also stresses the importance of an appropriate follow up strategy that consolidates and exploits the gains of the pacification phase. Control in Aceh proved particularly hard to establish and when pacification was achieved at last, it was not to last.

Part Three deals with the Dutch forces' four-year Uruzgan campaign that provides an early example of co-option in modern counterinsurgency. Under influence of domestic political pressure the Dutch government excluded dominant local power-holders from collaboration and initially imposed an explicit caveat on cooperation with militias. While soldiers on the ground circumvented the latter restriction and Dutch politicians ultimately proved willing to accept mobilization for urgent self-defense purposes, the ban on co-option of warlord-like local power-holders proved more problematic; it severely hampered practicing cultural legitimation as it prevented the Dutch task force from establishing influence over Uruzgan's dominant local power-holders. The exploitation of the pattern of legitimacy, therefore, was limited to lower-level, sub-tribal leaders. Despite this focus on the lower middle of the spectrum of co-option, the approach proved successful in the short term; empowerment of previously sidelined or marginalized sub-tribal leaders led to a more balanced political order that was connected to the provincial administration. This was accomplished through the effective use of a mix of soft coercion and persuasive methods that sufficed for co-opting Uruzgan's sub-tribal leaders and independent governmental officials, while also mitigating the spoiling influence of the dominant local power-holders. Overall the Dutch mainly relied on persuasive methods for empowering their allies and soft coercion for curtailing the influence of powerful agents. Due to the absence of force in the collaborative equation soft coercion was used for establishing provisional co-option domination, which proved sufficient for the duration of the campaign.
The main result of the campaign, a tribally balanced political order that was intended to serve as an underpinning for long-term stability, however, started to evaporate as soon as the Dutch announced their withdrawal. The reason for this was the failure to fully embrace cultural legitimation which had prevented co-option of the dominant local power-holders; this proved the fundamental flaw of the Dutch campaign as a durable result could not be achieved without the cooperation of the most powerful actors in the local political marketplace. The empowered sub-tribal leaders were incapable of autonomously maintaining their position vis-à-vis the dominant strongmen. The most important insight that can be obtained from the Dutch campaign, therefore, is that in modern counterinsurgency sufficient commitment is required to persevere dominance until a self-sustainable political order has emerged that can act as a stable platform for long-term development. The Uruzgan campaign clearly shows a lack of such commitment as the Dutch withdrew before this was the case. Thus, achieving a sustainable result, either requires the will to extend the intervener’s commitment until a sufficiently stable political order has been established, or demands a continuation of the adopted co-option strategy by succeeding coalition forces –which was not the case in Uruzgan.

So, to conclude, how have counterinsurgents co-opted local power-holders in order to attain control over the population in a weblike society? Theoretically, a successful co-option strategy is based upon the principles of cultural legitimation and mobilization. This allows for the exploitation of the target society’s pattern of legitimacy and the rallying of additional resources from within that society. These principles materialize in a practical approach that selects the appropriate societal agents within the spectrum of co-option and implements a flexible strategy that renders the government (through the counterinsurgents) the dominant as well as the preferable partner for collaboration by use of a mix of coercive and persuasive methods of the co-option continuum. Both colonial warfare and modern counterinsurgency have subscribed to this course of co-option as key to establishing an acceptable level of control with limited resources only. The achieved result is intended to serve as an underpinning for durable control and long-term stability that is to be established through additional state building. The reality of counterinsurgency warfare in weblike societies has revealed that practicing the course of co-option might meet severe difficulties; it not only requires a proper adaptation to the specifics of a population-centric counterinsurgency campaign, but also a thorough understanding of highly complicated local societal dynamics. Moreover, embracing co-option might also require adaptation at a higher level in order to match political-strategic guidelines to the reality in the field. Yet, both case studies have demonstrated that while such problems might cause serious difficulties, they are not insuperable; soldiers will adjust to population-centric counterinsurgency and sooner or later they will also acquire a proper understanding of the target society. Similarly, political-strategic guidelines are either interpreted pragmatically or adjusted to the local situation. Even in modern counterinsurgency with its emphasis on co-option of lower-level local power-holders with limited resources, and without the use of force, the course of co-option
has provided a path to an acceptable level of control. Both case studies, however, have also revealed that the transformation of this acceptable level of control into *durable control* has been problematic either as a consequence of an inappropriate follow-up strategy or a lack of political commitment. Since this study has predominantly focused on the counterinsurgency phase of an intervention in a weblike society, this finding offers an avenue for further research into the subsequent stabilization phase that should bring long-term stability. This book, therefore, has not only provided a profound understanding of co-option as a tool for counterinsurgency warfare in weblike societies, but in the end also urges for a similar understanding of the state building effort in the wake of such a campaign.
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Summary
Samenvatting
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Het pad van coöpteren: samenwerking met lokale machthebbers als methode voor het verkrijgen van controle over de bevolking als onderdeel van counterinsurgency campagnes in sterk gefragmenteerde samenlevingen – met case studies naar Nederlandse ervaringen tijdens de Atjeh Oorlog (1873-ca. 1912) en de campagne in Uruzgan (2006-2010)

Tijdens de counterinsurgency campagnes Irak en Afghanistan bestreden Westerse soldaten opstandelingen die zich schuil hielden onder de bevolking in sterk gefragmenteerde niet-Westerse samenlevingen. In zulke zogenaamde weblike societies rust het gezag bij lokale machthebbers zoals bijvoorbeeld stamoudsten, geestelijk leiders en krijgsheren. Het coöpteren van deze machthebbers is dan ook cruciaal om de lokale bevolking voor de counterinsurgents te winnen en tegelijkertijd de steun voor de opstandelingen te verminderen. Zowel in Irak als Afghanistan werd deze methode met succes toegepast. Dit concept lijkt daarmee een logische aanpak te bieden om controle te krijgen over de bevolking in weblike societies. Toch heeft de recente opkomst van coöpteren als onderdeel van counterinsurgency campagnes in zulke verdeelde samenleving ook een flink aantal fundamentele en praktische complicaties aan het licht gebracht. Deze complicaties maken deze aanpak heel wat minder voor de hand liggend; op zijn slechtst lijkt het concept namelijk te berusten op fundamentele misvattingen en leidt het niet tot succes op de lange termijn, terwijl het op zijn best nogal lastig in de praktijk te brengen blijkt en slechts effectief is om op de korte termijn een acceptabel resultaat te bereiken. Deze controverse vraagt om een beter begrip van coöpteren als onderdeel van counterinsurgency.

Dit boek draait om de vraag hoe counterinsurgents lokale machthebbers hebben gecoöpteerd om zo controle te krijgen over de bevolking in een weblike society. Een goed begrip van coöpteren kan pas worden verkregen door zowel de theorie als de realiteit van counterinsurgency in dit soort samenlevingen te bestuderen. Een theoretische verkenning van de logica van het controleren van de bevolking door middel van collaboratie en de dynamiek van het coöpteren in weblike societies biedt een beter inzicht in de fundamentele aspecten van het concept. Bovendien kunnen we op basis van dit inzicht een analytisch raamwerk opstellen dat ons helpt de praktijk van het coöpteren in de realiteit van counterinsurgency campagnes beter te begrijpen. Het gat tussen theorie en werkelijkheid wordt vervolgens overbrugd door een historiografische analyse van de manier waarop coöpteren is ingebed in de verschillende concepten waarlangs de evolutie van Westerse counterinsurgency heeft plaatsgevonden. Deze analyse leidt tot het inzicht dat koloniale oorlogvoering en moderne counterinsurgency het best voldoen aan de vereisten om lokale leiders in weblike societies te coöpteren. Om de realiteit beter te begrijpen zullen we dus een beter beeld moeten krijgen van de praktijk van het coöpteren in koloniale pacificatie en hedendaagse counterinsurgency campagnes. Daarom analyseert dit boek Nederlandse ervaringen tijdens de koloniale Atjeh

Het eerste deel bestaat uit de theoretische en historiografische verkenning. Dit leidt tot het inzicht dat het coöperen van lokale machthebbers in theorie een geschikte aanpak is om controle over de bevolkingen te verkrijgen; het brengt de regering legitimiteit en aanvullende middelen en leidt zo tot een stabiel resultaat. Het in de praktijk brengen van deze aanpak vraagt een tegemoetkoming aan twee fundamentele zaken, culturele legitimering en daaropvolgende mobilisatie. Culturele legitimering betreft het vermogen het patroon van legitiem gezag in de lokale samenleving te exploiteren om zo het draagvlak voor de regering te vergroten. Hiermee wordt de wil tot collaboreren onder de bevolking vergroot, wat ertoe leidt dat aanvullende middelen, zoals zelfverdedigingsmilities en inlichtingen, vanuit die bevolking gemobiliseerd kunnen worden. De theoretische analyse laat ook zien dat een effectieve aanpak vereist dat de regering en haar counterinsurgency-macht niet alleen de dominante partij moet zijn, maar ook de beste partner om mee samen te werken. Dat vraagt om een flexibele strategie die is afgestemd op de lokale samenleving door de praktische vraagstukken betreffende de selectie van bondgenoten en de methodes om deze leaders te coöperen te beantwoorden.

De politieke structuur van een weblike society wordt beheerst door lokale machthebbers die met elkaar concurreren voor de macht over de vele verschillende lokale entiteiten die zo’n samenleving rijk is. Het coöperen van deze spelers is instrumenteel om controle over de bevolking te krijgen. De keuze van bondgenoten wordt gecompliceerd door het feit dat op lokaal niveau de macht meestal wordt uitgeoefend door een gemengd gezelschap van dominante en lagere lokale machthebbers. Aangezien de precieze verdeling van de politieke macht binnen iedere lokale entiteit varieert, is er geen standaard antwoord op de vraag wie er nu precies gecoöpteerd moeten worden. Iedere strategie die als doel heeft controle te verkrijgen over de bevolking in een weblike society dient zich te richten op een spectrum van lokale machthebbers dat reikt van dominante lokale machthebbers aan de ene kant tot de lagere leaders (typisch van verwantschapsgroepen) aan de andere. De methodes van coöpereren beslaan een continuüm variërend van het gebruik van geweld tot en met overreding (eventueel met behulp van goederen of diensten). In handen van een onafhankelijke lokale overheid zorgen de methodes van dit continuüm ervoor dat lokale machthebbers gecoöpteerd kunnen worden vanuit de sterkst mogelijke positie; zij bieden de flexibiliteit om met behulp van dwangmiddelen de dominante partij te zijn, maar ook door middel van beloningen de beste partner voor samenwerking te zijn. De theoretische analyse levert zo dus het inzicht dat coöpereren een valide methode is om de bevolking in een weblike society te controleren. Culturele legitimering en daaropvolgende mobilisatie kunnen effectief in de praktijk worden gebracht door lokale machthebbers die deel zijn van het voor weblike societies geïdentificeerde spectrum met behulp van de methodes van het continuüm te coöperen.
Vervolgens slaat het eerste deel van het boek een brug tussen theorie en werkelijkheid door de conceptuele inbedding van culturele legitimering, mobilisatie, het vraagstuk wie te coöpteren en de methodes van coöpteren in de verschillende evolutionaire fases van Westerse *population-centric counterinsurgency* te bestuderen. Deze historiografische analyse heeft aan het licht gebracht dat (van de met elkaar vergeleken concepten) koloniale oorlogvoering en moderne *counterinsurgency* het best geschikt zijn om een *weblike society* te controleren. Beide concepten erkennen het belang van culturele legitimering en mobilisatie door het coöpteren van lokale machthebbers. In beide gevallen leidt dat tot een strategie die het lokaal niveau voorop stelt om daar met beperkte middelen tot een acceptabel resultaat te komen. Dit resultaat op de korte termijn dient als basis voor ontwikkeling en stabiliteit op de lange termijn. Dat zal moeten plaatsvinden met behulp van aanvullende *state building* maatregelen na de pacificatie of *counterinsurgency* fase van de interventie. Er zijn echter ook belangrijke verschillen in de manier waarop koloniale oorlogvoering en hedendaagse *counterinsurgency* invulling geven aan het coöpteren van lokale leiders. In het eerste geval ligt de nadruk op dominante lokale machthebbers en worden lagere leiders alleen benaderd indien dat noodzakelijk blijkt. Hedendaagse *counterinsurgency*, daarentegen, benadrukt juist het coöpteren van lagere lokale machthebbers. Dominante spelers moeten echter ook worden gecoöpteerd omdat zonder hun medewerking geen stabiel resultaat kan worden bereikt. Een nog groter verschil is te vinden in de gebruikte methodes. In koloniale oorlogvoering coöpteerden bestuurders lokale leiders met behulp van een gebalanceerde mix van dwangmaatregelen en beloningen ondersteund door een geloofwaardige dreiging van geweld. Dat was vaak genoeg om zelfs de meest machtige lokale speler aan de kant van het koloniale gezag te krijgen. In de huidige situatie worden lokale leiders meestal gecoöpteerdd door een lokale overheid onder supervisie van de *counterinsurgents* en met gebruik van beloningsmaatregelen. De dreiging of daadwerkelijke toepassing van geweld als ondersteuning van het coöpteren is grotendeels afwezig. Zogenaamde zachte dwang –het terugtrekken of onthouden van steun- is vrijwel de enige manier om onwillige bondgenoten tot gehoorzaamheid te bewegen. Een grondig begrip van coöpteren vraagt om nadere bestudering van deze verschillen en overeenkomsten in de praktijk van *counterinsurgency* oorlogvoering, omdat dat ons inzicht in de dynamiek van deze aanpak verder vergroot. Een volwaardig antwoord op onze hoofdvraag valt daarom pas te geven nadat we het coöpteren van lokale leiders in de realiteit van de koloniale oorlog in Atjeh en de hedendaagse campagne in Uruzgan nauwkeurig hebben bestudeerd.

Het tweede gedeelte van dit boek gaat in op de Nederlandse ervaringen tijdens de bijna 40-jarige Atjeh Oorlog. Op het hoogtepunt van het koloniale tijdperk, waarin het coöpteren van lokale machthebbers een standaardmethode was om controle te verkrijgen over inlandse samenlevingen, kostte het de Nederlanders meer dan twintig jaar om de complexe Atjehsche samenleving te begrijpen. De eerste periode van de oorlog werd daarom gekenmerkt door verschillende onsuccesvolle pogingen de Atjehers te onderwerpen. Van al die pogingen bleek de Teukoe Oemar politiek het meest berucht debacle. Het koloniale gezag maakte zichzelf
volledig afhankelijk van een enkele dominante machthebber, die toen de samenwerking voor hem niet meer loonde overliep naar het verzet. Daarbij liet hij de Nederlanders met lege handen achter. Deze affaire laat duidelijk zien dat het koloniale gezag in Atjeh niet in staat was gecoopteerde leiders te domineren en ze wees ook op het belang van een grondig begrip van de lokale sociale dynamiek. Die inzichten maakten de invoer van een nieuwe strategie mogelijk die gebaseerd was op culturele legitimering en mobilisatie. Deze zogenaamde Atjeh strategie richtte zich op het coöperen van de oelèëbalang, de legitieme machthebbers in de Atjehsche samenleving, door middel van een flexibele aanpak die gebruik maakte van dwang en beloning. De oelèëbalang waren weliswaar de dominante leiders binnen hun eigen invloedsfeer, maar hadden slechts beperkte macht over de rest van de samenleving. Daarom kunnen deze leiders in het midden van het spectrum van te coöperen machthebbers worden geplaatst. Met betrekking tot het continuüm van methodes maakte de Atjeh strategie gebruik van een gebalanceerde mix van met name zachte dwang en beloningen om bondgenootschappen met lokale leiders aan te gaan en te onderhouden. Dit werd echter ondersteund door afschrikwekkend geweld waarmee het koloniale gezag haar dominantie duidelijk maakte. Zoals vrijwel altijd in koloniale oorlogvoering bestond er een reële dreiging van geweld tegenover de lokale bevolking. Zelfs afschrikwekkend geweld betekende dat er massaal slachtoffers vielen onder de Atjehers. Vanuit hedendaags oogpunt is dit natuurlijk totaal onaanvaardbaar, maar in koloniale oorlogvoering was zulk dodelijk geweld een geaccepteerd en belangrijk middel om lokale machthebbers te coöperen en domineren.

De Atjeh strategie bracht de Nederlanders uiteindelijk controle over de Atjehers door de legitieme gezaghebbers van de meer dan 100 verschillende lokale entiteiten van die samenleving te coöperen. Toch moet hier ook vermeld worden dat dit resultaat in de dertig jaar na het einde van de oorlog grotendeels werd verspeeld doordat de Nederlanders er niet in slaagden een goede vervolgaanpak te introduceren die de band tussen lokale samenleving en koloniale staat kon versterken. Het koloniale gezag kon het acceptabele resultaat van de Atjeh strategie dus niet omzetten in een duurzaam resultaat voor de lange termijn. Erger nog, door de macht van de oelèëbalang te versterken en ze de rol van koloniale bestuurders te geven, raakten deze lokale hoofden langzaam hun legitimiteit kwijt. Dat maakte het mogelijk dat het verzet weer oplaaide. De Atjeh Oorlog leert ons daarom niet alleen iets over de praktijk van het coöperen, maar benadrukt ook het belang van een goede vervolgaanpak die de resultaten van de pacificatie consolideert en verder uitbouwt. De Atjehers bleken moeilijk onder controle van het koloniale gezag te brengen en toen dat uiteindelijk toch lukte duurde het minder lang om dit resultaat weer te verspelen dan het had gekost om dit te bereiken.

Het derde deel van dit boek behandelt de vierjarige campagne van de Nederlandse strijdkrachten in Uruzgan. Deze campagne kan worden beschouwd als een vroeg voorbeeld van het coöperen van lokale leiders in moderne counterinsurgency. Onder invloed van de politiek in Nederland besloot de regering dat er niet mocht worden samengewerkt met de dominante lokale machthebbers en ook kwam er initieel een verbod op samenwerking met
milities. De soldaten op de grond zagen zich genoodzaakt deze laatste beperking te omzeilen en de Nederlandse politici stonden uiteindelijk ook samenwerking met lokale strijdgroepen toe (in het kader van het beschermen van de bevolking). Het verbod op samenwerking met de krijgsheerachtige dominante machthebbers was een groter probleem; het voorkwam dat de Nederlandse strijdmacht ongehinderd culturele legitimering kon toepassen en vat kregen op Uruzgan’s machtigste leiders. Het exploiteren van het lokale patroon van legitiem gezag beperkte zich daarom tot lagere, sub-tribale hoofden. Ondanks deze nadruk op het lagere middengedeelte van het spectrum van te coöperen leiders, bleek deze aanpak succesvol op de korte termijn; het versterken van de positie van (door de dominante spelers) aan de kant geschoven of gemarginaliseerde sub-tribale leiders leidde tot een evenwichtig politiek bestel. Dit werd bereikt door effectief gebruik te maken van een mix van zachte dwang en beloningsmaatregelen die volstond om de sub-tribale leiders en onafhankelijke overheidsfunctionarissen te coöperen. Tegelijkertijd bleek het ook mogelijk met behulp van deze methodes de verstorende invloed van de dominante spelers te beperken. Globaal genomen maakten de Nederlanders vooral gebruik van beloningsmaatregelen om de positie van hun bondgenoten te versterken, terwijl zachte dwang werd ingezet om de macht van de dominante machthebbers in te perken. Aangezien geweld geen rol speelde bij het coöpereren van lokale leiders, waren de Nederlanders voor hun dominantie afhankelijk van het effectief gebruik van zachte dwang. Voor de duur van de campagne bleek dit ook te volstaan.

Toen de Nederlanders hun terugtrekking aankondigden bleek het resultaat van hun inspanningen allesbehalve duurzaam; het evenwichtig politieke bestel begon meteen in te storten. De belangrijkste oorzaak hiervan was de beperking op het gebied van culturele legitimering die het onmogelijk maakte om met de machtigste lokale leiders samen te werken. Zonder deze dominante machthebbers kon er simpelweg geen duurzaam resultaat worden bereikt. De door Nederland versterkte sub-tribale leiders waren niet in staat om zonder hulp hun nieuwe positie te behouden. De krijgsheerachtige leiders trokken weer alle macht naar zich toe. Daarmee biedt de Uruzgan campagne ons het inzicht dat in moderne counterinsurgency voldoende engagement nodig is om op lokaal niveau te blijven domineren totdat een zelfstandig houdbaar politiek bestel is ontstaan dat kan fungeren als een platform voor stabiliteit op de lange termijn. Uruzgan laat duidelijk zien dat dit niet het geval was. Een duurzaam resultaat vergt de politieke wil om voldoende lang betrokken te blijven tot er een stabiele politiek bestel is ontstaan of internationale coalitiegenoten de relaties met lokale bondgenoten voortzetten – in Uruzgan kozen de Amerikaanse en Australische opvolgers juist voor een radicaal andere koers.

Om af te sluiten, hoe hebben counterinsurgents lokale machthebbers gecoöpteerd om zo controle te krijgen over de bevolking in een weblike society? Theoretisch gezien is een succesvolle strategie gebaseerd op culturele legitimering en mobilisatie. Dat maakt het mogelijk het patroon van legitiem gezag in een samenleving te gebruiken en aanvullende middelen vanuit de bevolking te werven. In de praktijk vertaalt zich dit in een aanpak die
de juiste lokale machthebbers uit het spectrum van te coöpteren leiders selecteert en deze benadert met behulp van een flexibele gebruik van methodes uit een continuüm dat varieert van dwang tot overtuiging. Dat maakt het mogelijk dat de regering (in de vorm de counterinsurgents) niet alleen de dominante partij is, maar ook de beste partner om mee samen te werken. Zowel in koloniale oorlogvoering als in hedendaagse counterinsurgency is deze aanpak instrumenteel om een acceptabel resultaat te kunnen bereiken met relatief weinig eigen middelen. Dit resultaat dient als basis voor verdere ontwikkeling en state building na de counterinsurgency fase en vormt daarmee een fundamenteel voor stabiliteit op de lange termijn. De realiteit van counterinsurgency optreden in weblike societies heeft laten zien dat het coöpteren van lokale leiders lastig in de praktijk is te brengen. Deze aanpak vergt niet alleen dat militairen zich aanpassen aan population-centric counterinsurgency, maar ook een goed begrip van complexe lokale sociale dynamieken. Daarbovenop kan het nodig zijn dat het hogere politiek-strategische niveau zijn richtlijnen bijstelt, zodat deze beter aansluiten bij de situatie in het veld. Beide case studies hebben laten zien dat zulke problemen voor serieuze moeilijkheden kunnen zorgen, maar zeker niet onoverkomelijk zijn. Militairen zullen zich aanpassen aan de vereisten van counterinsurgency optreden en vroeg of laat zullen ze ook een vergaand inzicht in de lokale samenleving ontwikkelen. Voor politiek-strategische richtlijnen geldt min of meer hetzelfde: ze worden of pragmatisch geïnterpreteerd of aangepast aan de situatie in het inzetgebied. Zelfs in hedendaagse counterinsurgency, waarin de nadruk ligt op het coöpteren van lagere leiders met beperkte middelen en zonder gebruik van geweld, bleek het coöpteren van lokale machthebbers een goede aanpak om een acceptabel resultaat neer te zetten. Beide case studies hebben echter ook aangetoond dat het problematisch is dit acceptabel resultaat om te zetten in een duurzaam resultaat doordat er geen juiste vervolgaanpak was of omdat de politieke wil ontbrak. Aangezien dit boek zich vooral heeft gericht op de counterinsurgency fase van een interventie in een weblike society, geeft dit inzicht een aanzet tot verder onderzoek naar de stabilisatie fase die daarop volgt en voor stabiliteit op de lange termijn moet zorgen. Daarmee biedt dit boek niet alleen een diepgaand begrip van het coöpteren van lokale machthebbers als deel van counterinsurgency optreden in weblike societies, maar dringt het ook aan op een soortgelijk begrip van de state building inspanningen die hierop volgen.