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)

Kitzen, M.W.M.

Citation for published version (APA):
Kitzen, M. W. M. (2016). 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).
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


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

---

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.

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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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’.\textsuperscript{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

\textsuperscript{12} Clearly the Russian example in Chechnya is an exception.
\textsuperscript{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.
\textsuperscript{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.
\textsuperscript{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 collaborate 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 refer 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

---

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
depicted as a 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-authoritarian 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 afore mentioned 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
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. The second type of legitimate authority is based on traditional grounds. This encompasses authority based on traditional belief in the

---

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. David Galula’s *Counter-Insurgency Warfare, Theory and Practice*, which has heavily influenced the current United States Army and Marine Corps counterinsurgency manual, 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. 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. 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). 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. 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 implementations 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 rightfulnes 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 webleke 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 webleke 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 ‘bolsel 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 deflect in order to maintain the violent conditions that require his unique capabilities. Of course this is directly opposed to the government’s aim.

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 \textit{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 \textbf{72-3} (2007).


\(^{64}\) Antonio Giustozzi, \textit{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 legitimation 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.

---

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,

68 Joe Quinn and Mario A. Fumerton, Counterinsurgency from Below: The Afghan Local Police in Theoretical and Comparative Perspective
(Kabul: ISAF CAAT, 2010), 32.
69 Dennis H. Wrong, Power, Its Forms, Bases, and Uses, 148.
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

---

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,

---

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.\textsuperscript{82} 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’.\textsuperscript{83} 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.

\textsuperscript{82} Robert Thompson, Defeating Communist Insurgency, 51
\textsuperscript{83} Nathan Leites and Charles Wolf Jr., Rebellion and Authority: An Analytic Essay on Insurgent Conflicts (Chicago: Markham Publishing Company, 1970), 126.
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 consequently 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-option 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 -before immerging 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.1 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’.2 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.3 Understanding this institutional system traditionally requires the study of the relations between the four most important societal institutions; economics, politics, religion, and kinship.4 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’.\(^5\) 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.\(^6\) 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’.\(^7\) 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’.\(^8\) 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


\(^7\) Anthony Giddens, The Constitution of Society, 165.

\(^8\) 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

---

12 Antonio Giustozzi, Empires of Mud, 33.
as the notion of legitimacy is not centralized. 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. 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. 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:

‘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.’

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’. 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

15 Joel S. Migdal, Strong Societies and Weak States, 39.
17 Joel S. Migdal, Strong Societies and Weak States, 257.
18 Ibid., 27, italics in original.
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

25 Jonathan Haas, ‘Warfare and the evolution of tribal polities in the prehistoric Southwest’, in The Anthropology of War, ed. Haas,
voluntary behind him, he is little more than a figure-head, an empty symbol’.  

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. 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 weblike 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 weblike 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’. 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. 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’. 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 weblike 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. 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. 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’. 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. 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. 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. 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.
such as lands, goods, and money.\textsuperscript{40} 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.\textsuperscript{41} 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.\textsuperscript{42} 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.\textsuperscript{43} 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.\textsuperscript{44} A Pashtun chief, most commonly known by the title \textit{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 \textit{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 \textit{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 \textit{hujra} is created in which a chief can publicly demonstrate his capability as a benefactor.\textsuperscript{45} The ties that are created by this form of patronage are such that followers even become dependent of a \textit{khan} as a supplier of food as they regularly join the

\textsuperscript{44} Frederik Barth, \textit{Political Leadership Among Swat Pathans} (Oxford: Berg, 2004), 72-81.
\textsuperscript{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 possess 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

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


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 legitimacy 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. 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. 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
the institutions of kinship, economy, and religion. Such 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

---


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. 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.

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

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 societies.

Chapter 2 The Course of Co-optation

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 developed countries during the twentieth century. The states and societies we seek to study typically are part of the 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, Power and the State, 90.
68 Ibid., 91, see also Max Weber, 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.

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 legitimacy 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 weblink 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 weblink 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 weblink 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 weblink 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 weblink 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.
88 Antonio Giustozzi, Empires of Mud, 10-12.
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.’

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. 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’. 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.
The Course of Co-option

Chapter 2

The Course of Co-option Chapter 2

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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.’\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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


\textsuperscript{98} Ronald Robinson, ‘Non-European foundations of European Imperialism: sketch for a theory of collaboration’, 134, Joel S. Migdal, Strong Societies and Weak States, 140-141.

\textsuperscript{99} Joel S. Migdal, Strong Societies and Weak States, 141.

\textsuperscript{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.101

The privileged access to new resources to address the population’s strategies of survival has strengthened the position of local power-holders 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.102 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 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.103 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

101 Ibid., 54.
102 Joel S. Migdal, Strong Societies and Weak States, 206-207.
103 Ibid., 247-256.
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 \(\text{vis-à-vis}\) 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.


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’.

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.

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. 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 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.\textsuperscript{111} The prerequisites for the successful application of coercion are the identification of a local power-holder’s weak points, the so-called \textit{pressure points}, and the state’s ability to achieve \textit{escalation domination} - i.e. the ability to increase the threatened costs while denying local power-holders the ability to neutralize or counter those costs.\textsuperscript{112} 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 \textit{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.\textsuperscript{113} 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’.\textsuperscript{114} 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

\textsuperscript{111} Charles Tilly, \textit{Trust and Rule}, 30.
\textsuperscript{112} Although Byman and Waxman discuss the use of coercion as a tool for international politics, the theory of coercion as sketched in their work \textit{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, \textit{The Dynamics of Coercion, American Foreign Policy and the Limits of Military Might} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 30-47.
\textsuperscript{113} Dennis H. Wrong, \textit{Power, Its Forms, Bases, and Uses}, 27.
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.\(^{115}\) Of course today’s states seeking control over weblike societies cannot - neither 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.\(^{116}\) 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.\(^{117}\)

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

\(^{115}\) Cor J. Lammers, *Vreemde Overheersing*, 253.


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 perse, 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.\textsuperscript{118} 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

\textsuperscript{118} Ronald Robinson, ’Non-European foundations of European Imperialism: sketch for a theory of collaboration’, 133.
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.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.121 After manipulation of the political structure of Pashtun nomads, the local power-holders, the 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 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

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.\(^\text{122}\) 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.\(^\text{123}\) 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.

\(^{122}\) Dennis H. Wrong, Power, Its Forms, Bases, and Uses, 32-33.
\(^{123}\) Charles Tilly, Trust and Rule, 31-32.
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 it 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 dominates 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.

![Figure 3: An analytical framework of co-option in weblike societies](image-url)
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
reality of counterinsurgency warfare as we will explore how counterinsurgency conceptually facilitates the requirements for obtaining population control in weblike societies. This encompasses the fundamental issues of cultural legitimation (including the role of the state) and consecutive mobilization as well as the specific demands for the application of co-option in weblike societies. These latter issues, of course, include the identification of relevant local power-holders, and the establishment of an independent local administration as well as the actual methods to be used for co-option.

As mentioned in this book’s introduction the utility of co-option was re-invented in contemporary counterinsurgency campaigns. The roots of today’s concept of population-centric counterinsurgency, however, lie in the very colonial states where co-option embodied the state of the art of enhancing governmental control over highly fragmented societies. Although the purpose and environment of colonial campaigns differ tremendously from those of today’s counterinsurgency campaigns, the key to success in both campaigns is obtaining control over the target population. Consequently, studying the application of co-option in colonial warfare augments our understanding of co-option in counterinsurgency. Moreover, the evolution of Western population-centric counterinsurgency from colonial warfare to contemporary counterinsurgency offers an interesting perspective for exploring the utility and position of co-option in counterinsurgency. Thus this chapter’s analysis of the embedment of co-option in counterinsurgency adopts a historiographical perspective which studies the different facets of co-option throughout counterinsurgency’s evolution.

A critical review of the findings of this historiographical analysis with use of the analytical framework constructed in the previous chapter provides an understanding of how co-option has been embedded in the different historical counterinsurgency concepts. We will highlight historical variations in the utility of co-option as this brings interesting insights for answering the question of how counterinsurgents have actually co-opted local power-holders. Moreover, these findings also provide directions for the analysis of the application of co-option in the reality of counterinsurgency warfare in weblike societies. Thereby this chapter’s conceptual exploration of co-option in counterinsurgency in historiographical perspective sketches the background for the case studies conducted in this book. Let us now start this exploration by immersing in the historical evolution of counter-insurgency.

### 3.2 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

---

4 Charles Gwynn, Imperial Policing, 14.
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

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 embrace 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,

---

12 See also Ian Beckett, *Modern Insurgencies and Counter-Insurgencies*, 107, and Thijs Brocades Zaalberg, “’Hearts and minds’ of ‘search and destroy’? Leren van klassieke counter-insurgency”, *Militaire Spectator* 176:7/8 (2007), 295. Thompson also stresses the importance of intelligence, but does not include this as a distinctive principle.

13 David Kilcullen, ‘Counterinsurgency Redux’, 111, 125.


17 Although the two schools are sometimes presented as contrasting this study adopts the view that they are complementary as will be demonstrated below.
which is considered a campaign against a post-Maoist, globalized Islamist insurgency.\textsuperscript{18} 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’.\textsuperscript{19}

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.\textsuperscript{20} 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.\textsuperscript{21}

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.\textsuperscript{22} 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.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{19} John A. Nagl, Brian M. Burton, ‘Thinking Globally and Acting Locally: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Modern Wars – A Reply to Jones and Smiths’, Journal of Strategic Studies 33:1 (February 2010), 136-137.
\item \textsuperscript{20} See, for example, Frank Hoffman, ‘Neo-Classical Counterinsurgency?’, David Kilcullen, ‘Counterinsurgency Redux’, David Martin Jones, M.L.R. Smith, ‘Whose Hearts and Whose Minds?’.
\item \textsuperscript{21} David Martin Jones, M.L.R. Smith, ‘Grammar but No Logic: Technique is Not Enough – A Response to Nagl and Burton’, Journal of Strategic Studies 33:3 (June 2010), Frank Hoffman, ‘Neo-Classical Counterinsurgency?’.
\end{itemize}
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 to 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)successful 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.
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’huille 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.

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.33 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.34 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.35 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’.36 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.37 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’.39

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’.40 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’.41 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

38 Ibid., 81.
40 C.E. Callwell, Small Wars, 34-42.
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 toptdown 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. 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. 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. 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. The French bureau des affaires indigènes -indeed the successor of the bureaux arabes- clearly illustrates this
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 could therefore not allow a means and time consuming process that sought to replace the chiefs who led the uprising by lower-level power-holders. Another example is provided by the French politique des grand caïds as practiced in the Southern Atlas region during the 1920s. Due to a concentration of

---

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.56 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 1924.57 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

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’.58 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

Chapter 3 The Course of Co-option

and certainly 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 followings. 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

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 *politique 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.
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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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.\textsuperscript{70} 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.\textsuperscript{71} 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.\textsuperscript{72} 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.\textsuperscript{73} 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.\textsuperscript{74} Reportedly as a result of a misunderstanding with a subaltern officer Rabezavana was exiled to Réunion.\textsuperscript{75} 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.\textsuperscript{76} 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 \textit{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.’\textsuperscript{77}

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 \textit{politique des races}, which mainly was implemented through the allocation

\textsuperscript{74} See, for example, Robert B. Asprey, \textit{War in the Shadows}, 153. Francis Toase, ‘The French Experience’, 47.
\textsuperscript{75} Louis H.G. Lyautey, \textit{Lettres du Tonkin et de Madagascar}, 204.
\textsuperscript{77} Jacques Bernhard, \textit{Gallieni, Le destin 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’.  

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.  

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. 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’. 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’. 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.\(^84\) 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’.\(^85\) 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


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’.

87 Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, 111-115.
90 Ibid.
91 Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, 80.
Chapter 3

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-option 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). 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’. 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. 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. 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’. 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. 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’.


99 Riley Sunderland, Organizing Counterinsurgency in Malaya, 4.

100 Ibid.


102 Riley Sunderland, Organizing Counterinsurgency in Malaya, 6, see also Karl Hack, ‘The Malayan Emergency as Counter-Insurgency Paradigm’, 388.

103 Riley Sunderland, Resettlement and Food Control in Malaya (Santa Monica: RAND, 1964), vi-vii.
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 gampongs. 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.
Chapter 3 The Course of Co-option

and communities are willing to risk their live in order to organise resistance’. 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 gampong guards in order to prevent insurgent attacks and infiltration.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.112 The government also benefitted 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.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.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.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

113 See, for example, John J. McCuen, The Art of Counter-Revolutionary War, 164-165, Benjamin Grob-Fitzgibbon, Imperial Endgame, 195-196.
115 Benjamin Grob-Fitzgibbon, 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). 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. 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 penghulus was abandoned in 1956.118 Yet the institutionalization of the sub-district was successful as even in contemporary Malaysia penghulus play a key role in the administration at the sub-district level.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 authors 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.120 In

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.\(^\text{126}\) 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’.\(^\text{127}\) 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’.\(^\text{128}\) 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.\(^\text{129}\) 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’.\(^\text{130}\) 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.\(^\text{131}\) 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.\(^\text{132}\) The communists, on the contrary, subscribed to a mix of traditional and modern

\(^{126}\) Mark T. Berger, ‘Decolonisation, Modernisation and Nation-Building’, 441. See also, D. Michael Shafer, Deadly Paradigms, 79-85.
\(^{129}\) 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

level and enhanced its control as the gampons 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.\(^1\) 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’.\(^2\) 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.\(^3\)

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’.\(^4\) 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.\(^5\) 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

---

\(^1\) See, for example, Alex Marshall, ‘Imperial nostalgia, the liberal lie, and the perils of postmodern counterinsurgency’, 244.


\(^4\) Frank Hoffman, ‘Neo-Classical Counterinsurgency?’, 78.

today's campaigns. 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. 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’.

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), et cetera. 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.

The state of the art Afghan campaign, which included the field innovations of accelerated counterinsurgency, was designed by use of neo-classical counterinsurgency principles. 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-classical counterinsurgency.

---


147 See, for example, David H. Ucko, ‘Whither counterinsurgency, the state of a controversial art’, 141-143.

148 See, for example, David H. Ucko, ‘Whither counterinsurgency, the rise and fall of a divisive concept’, 70.


classical FM 3-24.\textsuperscript{152} 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’.\textsuperscript{152}

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.\textsuperscript{153} 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.\textsuperscript{154} 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.\textsuperscript{155} 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.\textsuperscript{156} Whereas counterinsurgency serves to

\textsuperscript{151} Ministry of Defence, \textit{British Army Field Manual Volume 1 Part 10 Countering Insurgency}, 3-22.
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

---

157 See also David Kilcullen, ‘Counterinsurgency: the state of a controversial art’, 143.
159 David Kilcullen, ‘Counterinsurgency: the state of a controversial art’, 141.
161 See, among others, Philip M. Zeman, ‘Report from the Field, Tribalism and Terror’, Small Wars & Insurgencies 20:3 (2009), 681-682. Lane V. Packwood, ‘Popular Support as the Objective in Counterinsurgency, What Are We Really After?’, 70.
162 Montgomery McFate, Andrea V. Jackson, ‘The Object Beyond War: Counterinsurgency and the Four Tools of Political Competition’, 23.
to cut co-optive deals, this approach was rudimentary and in most cases collaboration of
the tribes was limited.\textsuperscript{163} 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’.\textsuperscript{164} 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.\textsuperscript{165} 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.\textsuperscript{166} 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

\textsuperscript{163} Ibid., see also Austin Long, ‘The Anbar Awakening’, 77, Daniel R. Green, ‘The Fallujah awakening: a case study in counter-
insurgency’, 593.
\textsuperscript{164} Glen Rangwala, ‘Counter-Insurgency amid Fragmentation: The British in Southern Iraq’, 511.
\textsuperscript{165} Carter Malkasian, ‘Counterinsurgency in Iraq’, 255.
\textsuperscript{166} Richard L. Taylor, \textit{Tribal alliances: Ways, Means, And Ends To Successful Strategy} (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2005), 4.10.
AQI. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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.

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. 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 Counterinsurgency

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营收_In Anbar-Patriquin(06Dec06).pp
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 -\textit{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 \textit{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, \textit{One Tribe at a Time, A Strategy for Success in Afghanistan} (Los Angeles: Nine Sisters Import, 2009), 11, see also Carter Malkasian, Jerry Meyerle, \textit{How is Afghanistan Different from AlAnbar?} (Alexandria: Centre for Naval Analysis, 2009), 5.
\(^{176}\) Stanley A. McChrystal, \textit{ISAF Commander’s Counterinsurgency Guidance} (Kabul: ISAF, 2009), 5.
\(^{177}\) Department of the Army, \textit{FM 3-24, Counterinsurgency}, 2-4, 2-7-2-8.
\(^{178}\) Ibid., 1-14.
\(^{180}\) 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 legitimation 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.\footnote{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).}

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’.

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’.\footnote{Robert M. Cassidy, \textit{Counterinsurgency and the Global War on Terror, Military Culture and Irregular War} (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2006), 161.} 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 Bagdad 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.\footnote{Niel Smith and Sean MacFarland, ‘Anbar Awakens, The Tipping Point’, \textit{Military Review} (March-April 2008), 43-44.} 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
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

189 The following fragment is based on Joe Quinn’s eye witness account of the emergence of the SOI program as part of the measures of the Iraqi surge as described in Joe Quinn and Mario A. Fumerton, Counterinsurgency from Below, 15-16.
The country was again balancing on the brink of civil war. 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. 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, arkbabi, under command of village elders. 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’.

Through supporting the council of village leaders, the 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. 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.

193 Michael Weiss, Hassan Hassan, *ISIS, Inside the Army of Terror*, 93-98.
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 khangave significant larger followings and possess vast resources for addressing

---


199 Antonio Giustozzi, Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop, 46-69.
the people’s strategies of survival.\textsuperscript{200} Co-opting village authorities without paying attention to the khans 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 weblike 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 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.\textsuperscript{201} 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’.\textsuperscript{202} 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.\textsuperscript{203} 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’.\textsuperscript{204} The Sunni community in Bagdad was further marginalized by Shi’a extremists of Muqtada Al-Sadr’s Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM, the Mahdi Army) and Shi’a government officials whom withheld them health, electricity, sewage, and other essential services.\textsuperscript{205}

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

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[201] Jeanne F. Hull, Iraq: Strategic Reconciliation, Targeting and Key Leader Engagement (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2009), 1-2.
\item[202] David Kilcullen, ‘Counterinsurgency: the state of a controversial art’, 141.
\item[205] David Kilcullen, The Accidental Guerrilla, 126-127.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
AQI extremists. The 2007 surge acknowledged this sectarian divide as the main reason for the deterioration of the situation in Baghdad and sought to reach out to the alienated Sunni leaders in order to enhance control and achieve reconciliation between the opposing communities.\(^{206}\) Such reconciliation, however, could not have been achieved without mitigating the negative influence of the Shi’a. The American counterinsurgents accomplished this first in Baghdad’s Ameriyah district, a Sunni neighborhood.\(^{207}\) 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 Baghdad’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.\(^{208}\) 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

\(^{206}\) Ibid., 143, 151.


\(^{208}\) Antonio Giustozzi, Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop, 16-17.
The Course of Co-option

Chapter 3

The 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.
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.
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 hostile, 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.

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-holders mostly 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

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 protégées 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. This lesson was learned the hard

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 resources.
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 evolutional 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,
and a complicated operational environment, compelled the counterinsurgency effort to focus on obtaining control over the population in the short term in order to create a stable condition for further development in the long run. Co-option of local power-holders thus became pivotal for obtaining an acceptable level of control over the population of Iraq’s and Afghanistan’s weblike societies.

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 weblike 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.
Chapter 3 The Course of Co-option

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.244 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.

Table 1: The historical variations in the fundamental and practical issues of co-option throughout the evolution of counterinsurgency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></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-</td>
<td>No</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>insurgency</td>
<td>modernization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neo-classical</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes blended institutionalization</td>
<td>Lower-level also dominant because necessary</td>
<td>Mainly persuasive soft coercion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>counterinsurgency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.

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 as 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.