

## BOOK REVIEWS

**SASHA LEZHNEV, CRAFTING PEACE: STRATEGIES TO DEAL WITH WARLORDS IN COLLAPSING STATES (LANHAM, MARYLAND: LEXINGTON BOOKS, 2006, 119 PP., PBK.).**

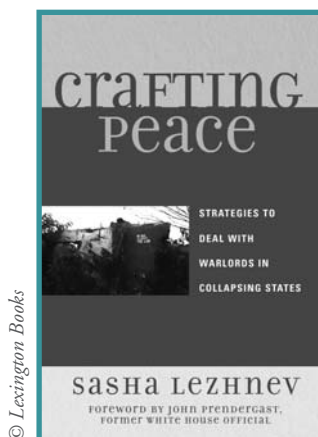
In recent years, warlords have played major roles in sparking and perpetuating conflicts in societies as diverse as Afghanistan, Colombia and Somalia. Premised on the notion that traditional conflict resolution tools such as negotiated settlements and power-sharing agreements are ineffective at building peace in states with significant warlord problems, Sasha Lezhnev's *Crafting Peace: Strategies to Deal with Warlords in Collapsing States* analyzes alternative tools for address the phenomenon of "warlordism." The result is a brief volume that covers an enormous amount of material and makes a significant contribution to the fields of conflict resolution, peace-building and rule of law.

*Crafting Peace* is divided into four main chapters. The first defines warlordism and discusses the context in which warlords operate. The middle two chapters comprise case studies of Sierra Leone and Tajikistan, focusing on the characteristics and roles of warlords in those conflicts and the various approaches taken to eliminate warlords in the two states' respective peace-building process. The fourth chapter analyzes lessons learned from the case studies (and from various other conflicts) to come up with a series of strategies for combating warlords and warlordism in collapsing states.

Lezhnev's case studies are compelling and well-researched, drawing upon extensive interviews with policymakers, practitioners and on-the-ground observers. Shedding light not only on the role of warlords in the two conflicts, they also provide succinct and excellent overviews of the conflicts themselves — a particularly important attribute in dealing with the rarely discussed Tajikistan conflict. The real strengths of *Crafting Peace*, however, are its first and final chapters.

In his introductory chapter, Lezhnev defines both warlord and the larger concept of warlordism, attempting to clarify the somewhat cursory definitions offered by his predecessors. He touches on warlords' backgrounds, motivations, ideologies (or lack thereof), the circumstances under which they operate, and the role that globalization plays

in supporting their development. Perhaps most interestingly, he develops a "spectrum" to illustrate the motivations of armed factions, drawing distinctions between ideological movements, ethnic rights groups, "ethnic/ideological 'entrepreneur' factions" — hybrid factions with elements of both warlordism and ideology — and "pure warlordism," in which warlords exercise power and oppress populations in quests for self-aggrandizement. These concepts are crucial to understanding Lezhnev's characterization of warlords in his case studies and his final recommendations. Applying these definitions, he identifies the situation in Sierra Leone as



"very close to absolute warlordism," but sees Tajikistan's warlords as ostensibly organized around concepts of ethnicity or ideology. Unfortunately, his analysis of some of the issues presented by the "ethnic/ideological 'entrepreneur' factions" is insufficient. Further research is needed to clarify how warlord factions utilize ethnicity and ideology to gain popular support to maintain power, and the difficulties that this phenomenon presents in overcoming this type of hybrid warlordism.

*Crafting Peace's* last chapter embodies the crux of Lezhnev's research. It presents a variety of policies for combating warlordism. The strategies are broken into coercive and incentivizing methods for both short- and long-term time solutions. The long-term recommendations are innovative in conceptually tying strategies aimed at eliminating warlordism to more overarching state goals related to rule of law, peace-building and even fighting terrorism. Lezhnev stresses the importance of careful conflict analysis to the development of effective strategies. None of the

recommendations presented are definitive, but he emphasizes the importance of tailoring each strategy to each specific regional context, giving concrete examples of policies that effectively demonstrate this practice. For example, he discusses the timber sanctions on Liberia that proved instrumental in ousting Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front (RUF) leader Charles Taylor to illustrate appropriately targeting sanctions to those — sometimes surprising — resources that finance warlords.

In this final chapter Lezhnev briefly addresses judicial mechanisms, a topic of particular interest to an audience of human rights lawyers and practitioners. He highlights the success of the Special Court in Sierra Leone but also notes war crimes tribunals' potential to entrench conflict by acting as deterrents to peace. This is not the typical "peace versus justice" discussion often found in conflict resolution literature, however, because Lezhnev puts effort into qualifying those circumstances under which tribunals do and do not work as anti-warlord strategies. His treatment appropriately fits into the final chapter's overall emphasis on the importance of context in developing winning strategies.

Discouragingly, but probably realistically, one of the book's major lessons is that a state faces little chance of successfully dealing with a warlord problem without international support. Almost none of the proposed recommendations — whether they be targeted sanctions, use of military force or even disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programs (DDR) — can be implemented in the collapsing states Lezhnev writes about without some international financing or assistance. This leaves the reader with little hope of reform regarding the fate of the future Tajikistans of the world.

Lezhnev is a young author, a quality that is sometimes visible in his work, as earlier chapters read somewhat academically and contain extensive endnotes. This drawback does not detract from Lezhnev's approachable book, however, which deals with complex and timely issues. *Crafting Peace* is a fine choice for anyone with an interest in warlordism, conflict resolution, or the rule of law. **HRB**

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