

displace warlords gives little enticement for warlords to genuinely take part in peace negotiations or to respect fundamental human rights.

Joe Leberer from Médecins Sans Frontières, having worked as a humanitarian worker in warlord-controlled areas, drew upon his firsthand experience to describe the drawbacks of working where warlords reign, identifying three main challenges. Chief among these is the lack of access to vulnerable populations because of the inability or unwillingness of warlords to ensure the physical safety of humanitarian workers. Secondly, while certain short-term gains could be achieved by accommodating warlords, he cautioned that in doing so, humanitarian agencies also risk becoming part of the problem by conferring legitimacy upon warlords, both locally and internationally. Thirdly, humanitarian organizations play a delicate game of maintaining both real and perceived impartiality and neutrality in order to operate freely and securely in volatile contexts. For this reason, the responsibility to tackle the problem of warlords cannot be found at the humanitarian level. Instead, Leberer stressed that political action must be taken both in the short-term, to create the necessary "humanitarian space" for agencies to operate, and in the longer-term as effective solutions to the problem of warlords. The humanitarian crises produced by warlords are ultimately political and require political responses.

Lt. Col. Gaston Côté, from the Department of National Defence, drew upon his peacekeeping experiences in the former Yugoslavia, Somalia and Congo. Côté noted how peacekeepers are routinely confronted with the reality of warlords. The degree to which warlords pose a challenge to peacekeeping operations is largely contingent upon rules of engagement. Côté remarked that peacekeeping operations under UN auspices in the former Yugoslavia could be halted by something as trivial as a roadblock. By contrast, warlords found themselves at the short end of the stick once peacekeeping operations were transferred over to NATO. Côté said that as one speaks to locals it becomes clear that the legitimacy of warlords is artificial; those at the mercy of warlords do not support the status quo. He therefore dismissed allegations of the West imposing its values in this regard. When one scratches the surface, one realises that there is always a more legitimate, though often latent, political structure. Côté argued that such structures, wherever possible, must be activated. Finally, he asserted that co-opting warlords only serves to entrench an already difficult problem.

Several key issues and challenges were noted. Firstly, the fact that warlords in Afghanistan are being co-opted and backed by the international community for the sake of expediency. This risks undermining the legitimacy of the new government in the eyes of the Afghani people. Secondly, the question was raised whether the phenomenon of warlords can be understood as a process of social transformation; an intermediate stage between colonialism and emerging political structures and thus whether parallels can be drawn between feudalism in Europe and modern day warlords.

Thirdly, it was noted that warlords are not simply local problems, but are products of a broader international context. The West's military/industrial complex (resources, e.g. oil, arms industry) may have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. Fourthly, seeing warlords as a problem that can be best addressed by strengthening the powers of the state was questioned. This approach does not readily translate into greater human security, as states in some instances can