‘Warlord’: A Discursive History of the Concept in British and American Imperialism, 1815-1914 and 1989-2006

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Abstract

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The renewed interest in empire, particularly in its British and American variants, has brought into sharper relief the difficulties both metropoles faced in projecting order in the global south. Far from cohesive entities, the British and American empires tried to manage territories that defied many of the political, economic, and legal systems, as well as normative and moral understandings, that enabled their imperial ascendancy. Despite a considerable literature about how metropoles comprehended these frustrated imperial plans, limited insights can be found into the way Britain and the United States coped with the influence of war in the uneven expansion of order.

This challenge is brought into focus by examining one of the most direct formulations of the relationship between war and order in US and British imperialism, namely the concept of warlord. The concept's history, it is argued, provides a glimpse into the far-reaching influence cultural constructions of war had in how US and British policymakers, journalists, and advocates conceived of and projected order in the non-European world. Such influential understandings also inspired overstated conclusions about the degree to which both imperial powers could realise their visions of order in the global south.

Drawing on discursive and historical methods, the dissertation develops a conceptual framework that distils the core features of 'warlords' in the US and British imperial imaginaries. This conceptual approach is used to revisit some of the most formative encounters with colonial and contemporary 'warlords', as captured in British and American policy debates, political commentary, and popular culture, during two highpoints in British and American imperial history, 1815-1914 and 1989-2006 respectively.

These arguments bring to the forefront how instead of an ancillary part of conclusions about the inferiority of non-European cultures, as suggested in much of the post-colonial literature, notions of war conditioned many of Britain and the United States' enduring conception of and strategies for managing the uneven development of order in the global south.

To be a warlord—that's a little boy's dream everywhere. Point a finger, say Bang, and thousands die. Most of these sharpshooters grow up to become dentists.

Margaret Atwood, 'Warlords' (2005)

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Abbreviations

ECOWAS—Economic Community of West African States

ICC—International Criminal Court

NPFL—National Patriotic Front of Liberia

RUF—Revolutionary United Front

UN—United Nations

UNITAF—Unified Task Force

UNOSOM I—United Nations Operation in Somalia

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1. Introduction

This is a study about how the Britain and the United States managed the uneven expansion of order across the non-European world. More specifically, it examines how, in their respective imperial traditions, Britain and the United States dealt with the ways in which war interrupted and interfered with their attempts to promote political, economic, and legal systems, as well as normative and moral understandings, that enabled their ascendancy over foreign territories and populations. This longstanding challenge is brought into focus by studying one of the most direct formulations of the relationship between war and order in US and British imperialism, namely the concept of warlord.[1] Drawing on discursive and historical approaches, the dissertation explores how the concept functioned across various parts of each imperial system, including elite policy debates, political commentary, and popular culture. It also considers how, as more than just imperial jargon, the idea of warlords held considerable sway over both metropoles. The concept's history, it is argued, provides a glimpse into the ways in which cultural understandings of war enabled Britain and the United States to devise multiple forms of intervention to establish or preserve order in foreign territories. This discursive history also reveals how, in coalescing evocative notions of war, 'warlords' emboldened both imperial powers' confidence in their potential realise their respective visions of order in the global south.

The recent surge of interest in empire, both as an abiding part of politics and object of study, serves as the starting point for this dissertation. Amid protracted debates about the nature of American power following the Cold War, especially in response to the Bush administration's unilateral and militarist actions after 2001, numerous scholars and commentators underscored the political, ideological, and cultural continuities between the United States and the British Empire, often to defend the merits of locating the former in an imperial frame.[2] However, these controversial comparisons did more

[1] Throughout the subsequent chapters the concept of warlord is distinguished from those non-European leaders deemed to be 'warlords' by enclosing the latter in quotations. This formality allows for a more precise discussion of the political concept and its application, while also recognising the degree of ambiguity that surrounds 'warlords' in US and British imperialism.

[2] Some of the most robust comparisons between imperial Britain and the United States can be found in Max Boot, 'The Case for American Empire', *Weekly Standard*, vol. 7, no. 5, October 2001, pp. 27-30; Craig Calhoun, Frederick Cooper, and Kevin W. Moore (eds.), *Lessons of Empire: Imperial Histories and American Power* (New York: New Press, 2006); John Darwin, *After Tamerlane: The Global History of Empire since 1405* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2008); Niall Ferguson, *Colossus* (New York: Penguin, 2004); Charles S. Maier, *Among Empires: American Ascendancy and Its Predecessors* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2006); Bernard Porter, *Empire and Superempire: Britain, America and the World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006).

than just provide a benchmark for the United States' overwhelming military, political, and economic power. They also brought into sharper relief the inconsistencies, variations, and failures within each imperial system. Some of the most instructive frailties, particularly for the study of empire, can be found in their attempts to promote order in the global south. Instead of establishing compliant proxies, like-minded democracies, or lasting political institutions, Britain and the United States often struggled with intransigent leaders or ambiguous forms of governance that defied their respective liberal agendas.[3] In numerous cases they encountered violent resistance that escalated to protracted imperial 'small wars', many of which had lasting consequences in the metropole.[4]

Few places illustrate the continuities between colonial Britain and the United States after the Cold War, as well as the violent and inconclusive nature of their repeated attempts to promote order in the global south, better than Afghanistan. At various moments during the last two centuries, both global powers collaborated with different armed leaders in the territory to project certain forms of order, whether by deposing hostile regimes, protecting trade routes, or occupying strategic territories, only to have their imperial designs fail.[5] For instance, after more than 16,000 British colonial soldiers and camp followers were killed in the First Anglo-Afghan War (1839-42), H.J. Baillie decried in Parliament that 'the resources of our Indian empire were being wasted in the vain attempt to subdue a race of men no less fierce and valiant, a country no less fitted by nature for defence, and so remote by its position as to render war on a large scale

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[3] Such conclusions can be found in James Laxer, *The Perils of Empire: America and its Imperial Predecessors* (Toronto: Viking, 2008); Sebastian Mallaby, 'The Reluctant Imperialist: Terrorism, Failed States, and the Case for American Empire', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 81, no. 2, March-April 2002, pp. 2-7; Michael Mann, 'The First Failed Empire of the 21st Century', *Review of International Studies*, vol. 30, no. 4, 2004, pp. 631-53; Andrew Hurrell, *On Global Order: Power, Values, and the Constitution of International Society* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), chap. 11; Karuna Mantena, *Alibis of Empire: Henry Maine and the Ends of Liberal Imperialism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), Coda.

[4] The geographic and temporal span of this history, as well as its reverberations in the metropole, are detailed in Andrew J. Bacevich, *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); Tarak Barkawi, 'On the Pedagogy of "Small Wars"', *International Affairs*, vol. 80, no. 1, January 2004, pp. 19-37; Randolf G. S. Cooper, *The Anglo-Maratha Campaigns and the Contest for India: The Struggle for Control of the South Asian Military Economy* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Saul David, *Victoria's Wars: The Rise of Empire* (London; New York: Viking, 2006); Mary Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

[5] The continuities between the history of US and British military interventions in Afghanistan are evident in Derek Gregory, *The Colonial Present: Afghanistan, Palestine, and Iraq* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), chap. 2-4; B.D. Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Karl Meyer, *The Dust of Empire: The Race for Mastery in the Asian Heartland* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2003).

almost a hopeless [undertaking]'.[6] The defeat heightened fears among British commentators that Imperial Russia would further encroach on British India. Decades later the failure to install a favourable regime contributed to the launch of another imperial small war in Afghanistan (1878-80) aimed at imposing a more acceptable order in the distant territory.

Analogous frustrations surfaced in the United States more than a century later. Amid growing scepticism about the Obama administration's military strategy in Operation Enduring Freedom (2001-), Senator Russ Feingold warned in a national op-ed published in 2009 that continued military operations in Afghanistan could compromise American national security.[7] He argued, 'dedicating a disproportionate amount of our resources to the military occupation of one country is not the most effective way to combat the terrorist threat we face. Even if we invest billions more dollars annually for the next 10 years and sacrifice hundreds more American lives, we are unlikely to get a credible government capable of governing all Afghan territory'.[8] The United States' inability to install a stable and legitimate government in Afghanistan compounded growing weariness among policy elites about the merits of the United States' longest war since Vietnam (1960-75).[9] Anglo-American frustrations in Afghanistan are a stark example of how the uneven development of order in the global south has long confounded both imperial powers and posed considerable challenges to the maintenance of their global dominions.

The violent history of intervention in Afghanistan and elsewhere in the global south has inspired considerable scholarship aiming to elucidate how Britain and the United States comprehended and responded to the irregular expansion of order. These kinds of frustrations, many post-colonial scholars contend, have to be situated within the larger imperial imaginaries that structured each metropole's conceptions of empire and attempts to preserve, as well as expand, their ascendancy over non-European

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[6] HC Deb 23 June 1842 vol 64 cc435-6.

[7] Russ Feingold, 'The Road Home From Afghanistan', *Wall Street Journal*, 28 August 2009, p. 13.

[8] The historical analogue between the British and American experience in Afghanistan underpins Feingold's subsequent warning about a continued American military presence in the territory: 'We also ignore the lessons of history by pursuing a drawn-out military mission in Afghanistan. The experiences of the Soviets and the British make it painfully clear just how elusive a military victory in Afghanistan can be. That alone should give us reason to rethink an open-ended military presence in Afghanistan'. Ibid.

[9] A compelling account of the legacy of Orientalist anxieties that connect these wars in the American imperial imagination, particularly surrounding the relationship between can order and disorder, can be found in Quynh N. Pham and Himadeep R. Muppidi, 'Colonial Wars, Postcolonial Specters: The Anxiety of Domination', in Tarak Barkawi and Keith Stanski (eds.), *Orientalism and War*, (London: Hurst & Co., 2012), chap. 6.

territories.[10] The significance of these systems of understanding is evident in two of the most pervasive US and British responses to frustrated interventions in the global south. First, to explain violent resistance to imperial order, many parts of the global south were cast as an 'Other', whether as a barbaric Africa unwilling to accept the *mission civilisatrice* of the British Empire or as a fanatic Orient that threatened American democracy.[11] This Self-Other logic contributed to the production of an imperial system comprised of opposing halves, each entwined to the point of being unintelligible in separation, but also one unable to reconcile their fundamental differences without the United States or Britain assuming a position of superiority. Second, a broad collection of strategies operate, to borrow the words of Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, according to various 'grammars of difference'.[12] These logics of inclusion and exclusion differentiate parts of the global south according to a series of overlapping social constructions, such as race[13], civilization[14], and ideology[15], that purportedly explain why some areas would be more receptive to—or ill-suited for—liberal democracies or market economies than others. For instance, legal understandings of *terra nullius* during British imperialism, much like post-Cold War American notions of 'ungoverned territories' or 'failed states', helped Britain and the United States dismiss unfamiliar forms of governance as

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[10] The place of resistance in accounts of the US and British imperial imaginaries can be seen in Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963); Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993).

[11] Perhaps the most famous study of this dynamic can found in Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978). More recent treatments of Othering in the production of US and British empires can be found in Roxanne Lynn Doty, *Imperial Encounters: The Politics of Representation in North-South Relations* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003); Lisa Lowe, *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalisms* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).

[12] Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, 'Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda', in Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (eds.), *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), p. 3.

[13] Eric Love, *Race over Empire: Racism and U.S. Imperialism, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Radhika Mohanram, *Imperial White Race, Diaspora, and the British Empire* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2007); Paul Rich, *Race and Empire in British Politics* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

[14] Gerrit Gong, *The Standard of 'Civilization' in International Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984); Edward Keene, *Beyond the Anarchical Society: Grotius, Colonialism and Order in World Politics* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Jennifer Pitts, 'Boundaries of Victorian International Law', in Duncan Bell (ed.), *Victorian Visions of Global Order: Empire and International Relations in Nineteenth-Century Political Thought*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 159-85.

[15] Frank Furedi, *The New Ideology of Imperialism: Renewing the Moral Imperative* (London; Boulder, CO: Pluto Press, 1994); Thomas Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Anthony Pagden, *Lords of all the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France c. 1500-c. 1800* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995).

irrelevant or non-existent.[16] Both of these broad imperial strategies, namely Othering and grammars of difference, enabled many of the social, political, and moral hierarchies that distinguish imperial relations.

Despite their enduring nature, the literature on these systems of understanding offers limited insights into how Britain and the United States coped with the influence of war in the expansion of order. In many cases war is treated as an ancillary part of wider conclusions about barbaric Others, uncivilised territories, or martial races found across the non-European world.[17] Subsumed within these stark concepts, it is easy to lose sight of how violent conflict structured many of the principal categories, ideologies, and worldviews that comprised the metropoles' conceptions of order. With only a nominal connection to war, recent scholarship has also encouraged limited reflection about how notions of savage Others or uncivilised territories were employed in both US and British imperialism to manage the contingencies of violent conflict, and the effect that these strategies had on the way each empire formed and functioned. Finally, little attention has been paid to the fate of US and British assumptions of superiority in the face of more or less successful armed resistance by non-European forces. Few insights can be found regarding how, in response to protracted hostility or sudden defeat, either imperial power has revised basic conclusions about the global south and the significance these revisions had on each empire.[18]

This dissertation aims to address these oversights by examining a series of questions that emerge from the tendency to overlook the importance of war in US and British attempts to cope with the convoluted nature of order in the global south: how did Britain and the United States manage the influence of war in the uneven development of order in global south? What effect did these strategies have on the kinds of order that have emerged in each empire?

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[16] See for example Maria C. Haims *et al.*, *Breaking the Failed-State Cycle* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2008); Bruce Kercher, 'Native Title in the Shadows: The Origins of the Myth of Terra Nullius in Early South Wale Courts', in Gregory Blue, Martin P. Bunton, and Ralph C. Croizier (eds.), *Colonialism and the Modern World: Selected Studies*, (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2002), pp. 100-19; Robert D. Lamb, *Ungoverned Areas and Threats from Safe Havens: Final Report of the Ungoverned Areas Project* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, January 2008).

[17] Notable exceptions include James Belich, *The Victorian Interpretation of Racial Conflict: the Maori, the British, and the New Zealand Wars* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989); Gautam Chakravarty, *The Indian Mutiny and the British Imagination* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Patrick Porter, *Military Orientalism: Eastern War Through Western Eyes* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

[18] The complex and contingent relationship between war, knowledge, and power is thoughtfully examined in Tarak Barkawi and Shane Brighton, 'Powers of War: Fighting, Knowledge, and Critique', *International Political Sociology*, vol. 5, no. 2, June 2011, pp. 126-43.

As noted above, to address these broad questions this dissertation explores the history of the concept of warlord in US and British imperialism. The longstanding concept is not only relevant because of the growing fascination in International Relations with 'warlords', which are understood, at least in broad terms, as armed leaders that use violence to control territory and populations in remote areas.[19] The concept can also shed light on how both metropoles dealt with the indefinite and often contradictory nature of order in non-European territories. As shown in subsequent chapters, many of the militia commanders and heads of state cast as 'warlords' were denounced for violating purportedly liberal precepts about violence, community, and popular support, while also simultaneously receiving acclaim for their capacity to forge some semblance of order amid seeming chaos. The ambivalence that emerged from this interplay between abhorrence and admiration offers valuable insights into how Britain and the United States tried to reconcile the ebbs and flows of order with their presumed superiority over the global south.

It will be argued that the concept of warlord can help reveal how Britain and the United States attempted to mange the relationship between war and order in the global south in the service of empire. Developed over centuries of encounters with non-European leaders, the concept has been ascribed a range of evocative cultural assumptions about the origin, nature, and consequences of war in non-European territories. Across a variety of contexts 'warlords' have been hailed into existence to invoke these constructions of war as a way to assert wider conclusions about the type and nature of order in particular parts of the non-European world. These culturally laden conclusions allowed policymakers, commentators, and advocates in Britain and the United States to devise and pursue varying modes of intervention in the global south, ranging from imperial classifications to the enforcement of international law to acts of conquest. The subsequent chapters trace the cumulative effect of 'warlords' on the US and British imperial imaginations, particularly with respect to how the concept inspired overstated conclusions in each metropole about its potential to reshape non-European political communities. The rudimentary order created by 'warlords' seemingly

[19] As argued in the subsequent chapters, much of this fascination derives from concern about the degree to which 'warlords' are indicative of the frailties of the Westphalian system. Varying degrees of alarmism can be found in Danielle Beswick, 'The Challenge of Warlordism to Post-Conflict State-Building: The Case of Laurent Nkunda in Eastern Congo', *The Roundtable*, vol. 98, no. 402, June 2009, pp. 333-46; Roger Charlton and Roy May, 'Warlords and Militarism in Chad', *Review of African Political Economy*, vol. 16, no. 45/46, Summer 1989, pp. 12-25; William Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1998); Troy S. Thomas, Stephen D. Kiser, and William D. Casebeer, *Warlords Rising: Confronting Violent Non-State Actors* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005).

heightened US and British beliefs about not only the sophistication of their modes of intervention, but also its far-reaching effects in the non-European world.

To examine the function and effect of 'warlords' in US and British imperialism this dissertation develops a discursive history of the political concept. This form of historical tracing, which examines the institutional patterns of thought where the concept operated, can be enriched by drawing conceptual and methodological insights from a range of disciplines. Several branches of political theory, particularly those concerned with the history of political concepts, can help identify the core elements that comprised Anglo-American understandings of 'warlords', as well as provide a way to study this concept across both imperial systems. Imperial history provides numerous examples of US and British encounters with non-European leaders that policymakers, commentators, and advocates cast as 'warlords'. Perhaps more importantly, it offers a frame of reference in which to compare how the political concept was employed in different political, normative, and cultural contexts in US and British imperialism. To trace the usage of the political concept, as well as its significance in shaping basic understandings of violent conflict and order, the dissertation can draw methodological insights from the broad field of discourse analysis. Such an approach makes it possible to understand the function and effect of the political concept in Anglo-American attempts to manage the relationship between war and order in the global south.

The proposed discursive methodology complements the overall conceptual approach to the study of Anglo-American imperialism. As suggested at the outset, amid a renewed fascination with empire, the dissertation begins from an understanding of the imperial nature of US and British attempts to promote order in the global south. Such an understanding has, for various reasons, been the subject of considerable contention in recent years. Numerous scholars question the degree to which empire mischaracterises American power after the Cold War, whether in overstating its reach or overlooking its service in expanding supposedly benign ideologies, such as liberal democracy and capitalism.[20] Others have challenged the degree to which comparisons between Britain and the United States elide key historical, cultural, and political differences that

[20] A range of commentators seemingly level such criticisms are across various media. See for example Arthur Schelsinger, Jr., 'The American Empire? Not So Fast', *World Policy Journal*, vol. 22, no. 1, Spring 2005, pp. 43-6; Hendrik Spruyt, '"American Empire" as an Analytic Question or a Rhetorical Move?', *International Studies Perspectives*, vol. 9, no. 3, August 2008, pp. 290-99; Michael Walzer, 'Is there an American Empire?', *Dissent*, Fall 2003, pp. 27-31.

distinguish the two global powers and their respective contexts, such that the comparisons confuse more than clarify the study of American power.[21]

For the purposes of this dissertation, the United States is treated as an empire not in admiration or revulsion of its considerable power. Arguably such knee-jerk approaches have undermined—and, somewhat ironically, also helped inspire—the growing literature on American Empire.[22] Instead, the United States is approached in these terms to draw insights about the repertoire of logics, ideologies, and modalities of control that numerous pre-eminent powers—Britain being one of the most studied modern examples—employed to acquire and preserve their global stature, in large part, by fostering deep, but fundamentally unequal, relationships with a collection of foreign populations. The rich theoretical and historical literature on empire—a portion of which can be found in International Relations—can help parse American power and its resistance into more accessible terms. With this conceptual approach, the proposed discursive history of 'warlords' offers more than just an opportunity to elaborate on the continuities between imperial Britain and United States after the Cold War: it also provides a chance to revisit the analytical value of approaching the United States and its relations with the global south through an imperial lens. Such a discussion stands to contribute to wider efforts to demonstrate the salience of empire in the study of international relations.[23]

Empire and order in International Relations

To examine the continuities between the US and British imperial traditions it is important to clarify some of the core concepts and attend to some of the methodological issues that structure the overarching inquiry. This task is complicated, at least to some

[21] See for example Eric Hobsbawm, *On Empire: America, War, and Global Supremacy* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2008), chap. IV; G. John Ikenberry, 'Illusions of Empire: Defining the New American Order', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 83, no. 2, March 2004, pp. 144-54; Anna Simons, 'The Death of Conquest', *National Interest*, vol. 71, Spring 2003, pp. 41-9.

[22] A thoughtful critique of the literature on American empire, particularly in relation to its treatment of the British Empire, can be found in Paul K. MacDonald, 'Those Who Forget Historiography are Doomed to Republish It: Empire, Imperialism and Contemporary Debates about American Power', *Review of International Studies*, vol. 35, no. 1, 2009, pp. 45-67.

[23] Notable recent examples include Tarak Barkawi and Mark Laffey, 'Retrieving the Imperial: Empire and International Relations', *Millennium*, vol. 31, no. 1, 2002, pp. 109-27; Alejandro Colás, *Empire* (Cambridge; Malden, MA: Polity, 2007); Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001); Daniel H. Nexon and Thomas Wright, 'What's at Stake in the American Empire Debate', *American Political Science Review*, vol. 101, no. 2, 2007, pp. 253-71.

degree, by the limited attention devoted to empire in International Relations.[24] Nonetheless, among the broad theoretical approaches in the field, it is possible to parse some key distinctions that help locate and account for this dissertation's conception of empire and order. In realist branches of international theory, for instance, empire is often conceived in particularly narrow terms. Many realists recognise empire as a large-scale, hierarchically coordinated system of political authority over formally annexed territories.[25] In a condition of anarchy, disparities in power are recognised to provide both opportunities and motives for predominant powers to pursue imperial policies.[26] By this account, order consists of the political institutions and military apparatus that metropoles use to impose and exercise sovereignty over annexed territories. Although such an approach may recognise some broad contours that characterise US and British imperialism, a strict focus on formal sovereignty may underestimate both the reach of each empire in the global south and the diverse ways it formed hierarchical relations. Furthermore, realism allows little discussion for how non-material factors, such as the concept of warlord, were part of the way both powers devised and pursued their respective interventions in the global south.

Liberalism offers a deeper, but also more convoluted, account of empire and order. A decisive departure from realism can be found in many liberal theorists' understanding of empire being defined by more than the exercise of formal sovereignty over a foreign territory. More 'indirect' and 'informal' modes of 'control', including market relationships or government cooperation, are also considered integral to metropoles' attempts to create inclusive political systems organized around a dominant state.[27] Although control is somewhat vague, it leads to a notion of order that further

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[24] As Tarak Barkawi argues, the field's fixation on states as the primary objects of study has foreclosed a more thoughtful engagement with the variety of political bodies and hierarchy characteristic of international relations. For more on the consequences of that omission see Tarak Barkawi, 'Empire and Order in International Relations and Security Studies', in Robert A. Denemark (ed.), *The International Studies Encyclopedia*, vol. III, (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 1360-79.

[25] Such accounts can be found in David A. Lake, 'The New American Empire?', *International Studies Perspectives*, vol. 9, no. 3, 2008, pp. 281-9; Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979). A similar summary of realist notions of empire can be found in Martin Shaw, 'Post-Imperial and Quasi-Imperial: State and Empire in the Global Era', *Millennium*, vol. 21, no. 2, 2002, p. 329.

[26] Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).

[27] See for instance Michael Doyle, *Empires* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986); G. John Ikenberry, 'Liberalism and Empire: Logics of Order in the American Unipolar Age', *Review of International Studies*, vol. 30, no. 4, 2004, pp. 609-30; Rey Koslowski and Friedrich V. Kratochwil, 'Understanding Change in International Politics: The Soviet Empire's Demise and the International System', *International Organization*, vol. 48, no. 2, Spring 1994, pp. 215-47; Hendrik Spruyt, *Ending Empire: Contested Sovereignty and Territorial Partition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005).

differentiates liberal understandings of empire. The control that metropoles exercise is often characterised as reproducing features of their domestic political systems in subordinate territories. As Michael Doyle argues, 'With domestic order societies in an empire share the characteristic of individuals effectively subject to a single sovereign—the imperial government'.[28] Liberalism is somewhat sensitive to the way US and British imperialism penetrates non-European political communities, and it hints at the different spatializations of power that follow from this kind of penetration. But, many liberal theorists seemingly disregard the extreme hierarchies that characterise US and British empires, as well as their more exploitive modes of control in the global south. Similarly, liberal approaches offer few clues about how war is part of the production—as well as destruction—of order in empires.

Other theoretical approaches to International Relations conceive of empire and order in less material terms. The few constructivist accounts of empire, for example, privilege the social nature of empire. In discussing 'informal empires', for instance, Alexander Wendt and Daniel Friedheim stress that inter-subjectivity and socially shared knowledge understandings give meaning to the authoritative structures that comprise the hierarchical systems.[29] More critical constructivists take these arguments further, suggesting that the social production of meaning and identities constituted the metropole, periphery, and hierarchy understood to comprise empire.[30] Taken together, such broad accounts suggest that order should be conceived as a collection of overlapping ideational factors that give meaning to the inequalities characteristic of empire. For the purposes of this project, such interpretations are valuable insofar as enduring ideas, including those embodied in political concepts, can be seen as part of the production of empire and order. However, the merits of this approach begin to diminish in the marginal place of power in constructivist notions of empire. Constructivism provides limited ways to approach how metropoles exercise influence over the development of meaning of empire or adapt it response to challenges to notions of order.

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[28] Doyle, *Empires*, p. 36.

[29] Alexander Wendt and Daniel Friedheim, 'Hierarchy under Anarchy: Informal Empire and the East German State', *International Organization*, vol. 49, no. 4, Autumn 1995, pp. 689-721.

[30] Some of the most sustained treatments can be found in Doty, *Imperial Encounters*; Steve Niva, 'Contested Sovereignties and Postcolonial Insecurities in the Middle East', in Jutta Weldes, Mark Laffey, Hugh Gusterson, and Raymond Duvall (eds.), *Cultures of Insecurity*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); Yongjin Zhang, 'System, Empire, and State in Chinese International Relations', *Review of International Studies*, vol. 27, no. 5, 2001, pp. 43-63.

Marxist theorists have developed some of the most robust accounts of empire and order in International Relations. Drawing from classical Marxist understandings of imperialism, perhaps above all those of Lenin, numerous scholars situate empire within the global operation of capitalism and accumulation of wealth.[31] Empire, in this context, has less to do with sovereignty and political authorities than hierarchical class relations that undergird the global north's political domination and economic exploitation of the global south. Various notions of order follow from this broad understanding of empire. In contrast to the ameliorative potential recognised by many liberals, some Marxists recognise order to be the overlapping ideational, ideological, and material devices used to co-opt populations in foreign territories into capitalist modes of production.[32] Dependency theorists stress how, in structuring unequal relations, empire draws the metropole and its periphery into an exploitive, but inseparable, form of order.[33] In a more radical interpretation of empire, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri advance a further claim, arguing that order should be understood as a form of bio-power exercised over subjugated individuals.[34] Marxist accounts underscore the deep social relations that characterize US and British empires. However, in situating order within class relations, as forged by global capitalism, this approach seemingly allows little space for discussion about the resistance of empire, particularly through violent means, which is key for this discussion about war and order in US and British imperialism.

These distinct theoretical traditions help locate this dissertation's approach to empire and order. A basic recognition of the hierarchical nature of empire, which is characterised by stark inequalities between a metropole and its periphery, can be found in Realist, Liberal, and, to some extent, Constructivist accounts. However, for the purposes of this dissertation, Marxist notions of the 'thick' set of social relations that span these gross inequalities seem particularly relevant.[35] Instead of fixating on annexed territories or vague notions of control, a broadly Marxist approach allows for a deeper discussion of the material, ideological, and social ties characteristics of British and American relations with and interventions in the global south. Perhaps more

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[31] A survey of these theories can be found in see Anthony Brewer, *Marxist Theories of Imperialism: A Critical Survey* (London; Boston, MA: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980).

[32] As Eric Hobsbawm argues, 'There is also an understandable temptation to exaggerate the benefits which the empire is said to have conferred on its subject while it existed, such as the laws and order within its territories'. Hobsbawm, *On Empire*, p. 7.

[33] Fernando Cardoso and Enzo Faletto, *Dependency and Development in Latin America* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1979).

[34] Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, chap. 1.2.

[35] Barkawi and Laffey, 'Retrieving the Imperial', p. 110.

importantly, in focusing on the social qualities of empire, a more Marxist conception brings the metropole and its periphery in the same analytical frame, as the two are considered distinct but inseparable. These kinds of social relationships, for instance, help account for why developments in one area are understood to have reverberations in the other, whether the celebration in London over military victories in colonial Africa or the political controversy surrounding corruption in Afghanistan. A Marxist-inspired conception of empire makes more accessible the unequal, but fundamentally intimate, nature of empire in ways that many approaches to IR cannot match.

A related conception of imperialism follows from this broad notion of empire. Imperialism is understood to be the theory, policies, and attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling distant territories.[36] This broad understanding affirms the complex and often overlapping ideational structures that guided, but also developed along with, US and British attempts to preserve and expand their respective empires across the globe. It also allows for wider examinations about how many of the features recognised as enduring parts of the imperial periphery, such as 'warlords', are inseparable parts of how imperial powers have conceived of and established their dominions over the global south.

A coherent notion of order can be devised from these loosely Marxist conceptions of empire and imperialism. To focus on the intimate, but fundamentally unequal, nature of empire does not foreclose many of the core insights about order found in other International Relations traditions. Some notion of imposed political institutions, ideologically driven social reproduction, and inter-subjective ideas that foster a sense of inclusion can be accommodated in Marxist notions of order. However, Marxist approaches provide a distinct conception of how these material and ideational features combine in the production of empire. Instead being a product of the inequalities between the metropole and its peripheries, as Realists and Liberals suggest, Marxists treat order as a constitutive part of empire. The sovereign borders, legal statutes, and models of fit political authorities that defined order in US and British dominions were not only a product of the metropoles ascendance: they also helped ensure US and British dominance over distant territories. Such material and ideational features rendered logical and legitimate the unequal relationships that comprise empire. Attention to the constitutive nature of order in empire affirms the dissertation's overarching question

[36] As Said argues, 'One of imperialism's achievements was to bring the world together, and although in the process the separation between Europeans and natives was an insidious and fundamentally unjust one, most of us should now regard the historical experience of empire as a common one'. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, pp. xxi-ii. See also Ibid., p. 8.

about how both empires tried to cope with the unsettling effects of the uneven of order in the global south.

Beyond these conceptions of empire and order, this study presents several methodological challenges inherent to the study of political concepts. Perhaps the most immediate one is how to avoid assuming that all non-European leaders were cast as 'warlords'. As detailed in the next chapter, a more robust understanding of 'warlords' can be developed by examining core logics, assumptions, and patterns of usage to identify the principal components that animated the concept in US and British imperial imaginations. A focus on Anglo-American conceptions does not suggest that 'warlords' are unique to Britain and United States. The French, Dutch, and Spanish empires, like the Ottoman, Russian, and Chinese ones, are likely to have conceived of and dealt with 'warlords', along many other reoccurring imperial ideal types, during this respective imperial expansion. However, differences among these empires would lead to key variations in the expression of the concept and its function and effect. The study of two empires with discernable political, social, and culturally continuities, which tried to impose order in some of the same parts of the non-European world, offers an ample historical context in which to trace the political concept's significance in the expansion of empire.

The mutable quality of political concepts poses a further challenge. Perhaps the most important one concerns the degree to which non-European leaders cast as 'warlords' have themselves influenced Anglo-American usage and understandings of the concept, such as by embracing the designation or constructing a counter-narrative. Although this is an intriguing line of inquiry, one that could provide a fuller understanding of power relations between the metropole and the periphery, it is beyond the scope of this dissertation for one major reason: little reliable data can be found about how non-European leaders, especially during the nineteenth century, responded to Anglo-American attempts to portray them as 'warlords'. Many of these individuals lacked access—or were excluded from—the policy debates, political commentary, and popular culture where US and British conceptions of 'warlords' developed or their contributions have not been preserved. In the absence of a meaningful way to explore how implicated leaders have responded to the concept of warlord, this dissertation focuses on how various Anglo-American actors historically employed the political concept and its influence in the production of both imperial systems. Such an approach offers a rich, but ultimately one-sided, history of the political concept.

A history of 'warlords' in US and British imperialism depends on establishing clear limits for the discursive study. If the notion of 'warlords' developed over centuries of encounters with non-European leaders, the political concept might be expected to

appear at numerous moments in the long arch of imperial history. To survey such a breadth would be difficult to accomplish in a dissertation of this length, and it could undermine the potential to assess the concept's wider function and effect. Instead of a an all encompassing history, this dissertation focuses on two analogous high points in the longer history of each empire, namely the Imperial Century in British history (1815-1914) and American ascendancy following the end of the Cold War (1989-2006). During each of these periods, it is possible to identify formative encounters with 'warlords' that are illustrative of the concept's significance in US and British attempts to manage the effects of war on order in parts of the global south. This comparison is facilitated by examining the concept in analogous contexts that were essential to the operation of each empire, including official documents, media commentary, and travel narratives.[37] However, to develop a fuller understanding of the concept, the project also considers the place of 'warlords' in US and British popular culture. It was arguably in films, fiction, and photographs that many of the most evocative qualities of Anglo-American conceptions of 'warlords' emerged and many of the ambiguities were minimised to create a coherent concept in US and British imperialism.

Outline of the dissertation

Chapter 2 draws on several related literatures to outline the dissertation's overarching theoretical and methodological framework. Based largely on the work of Michael Freeden and Reinhardt Koselleck, a case is made for examining 'warlord' as a political concept. A conceptual approach offers the most compelling way to identify many of the core features of Anglo-American notions of 'warlords' and trace the concept's different manifestations across time and place. However, to understand the wider function and effects of 'warlords' in US and British imperialism, theoretical and methodological insights must be incorporated from elsewhere. Discourse analysis, it will be argued, provides some of the most promising options. By situating the concept within the larger institutionalised patterns of thought that guided US and British imperialism, that is, their respective colonial discourses, it is possible to identify how cultural constructions of war influenced larger conclusions about the kinds of order found in the global south.

[37] The literature on empire has seen a growing inclusion of discursive methods, and along with it cultural and critical theory, over the past two decades. More on the merits, as well as drawbacks, of this shift can be found in Dane Kennedy, 'Imperial History and Post-Colonial Theory', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 24, no. 3, 1996, pp. 345-63; D.A. Washbrook, 'Orients and Occidents: Colonial Discourse Theory and the Historiography of the British Empire', in William Roger Louis, Robin W. Winks, and Alaine M Low (eds.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 5, Historiography, (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 596-611.

In doing so, a discursive approach can bring into sharper relief how the concept enabled—or in some cases foreclosed—certain modes of imperial intervention in the global south. Such an approach also allows for a wider discussion about the power of the 'warlord' over the US and British metropoles in bolstering confidence in their potential to establish and expand order in the global south. By bringing discourse analysis to the study of political concepts it is possible to devise a compelling way to study how 'warlords' helped Britain and the United States manipulate the relationship between war and order in the non-European world in the service of their respective imperial projects.

After detailing the overarching conceptual approach, the subsequent empirical chapters explore how the concept of warlord enabled Britain and the United States to deal with contingent nature of war and order in three principal modes through which both imperial powers intervened in the global south: systems of classification, international law, and conquest. The discussion begins in Chapter 3 with US and British attempts to parse the global south into more manageable political, social, economic units in accordance with overlapping systems of classification. It was through reoccurring imperial categories that Britain and the United States rendered more intelligible features of non-European communities, but also constituted many of the social, political, and economic hierarchies that comprised order in US and British empires. The chapter explores how *temporal assumptions about 'warlords' reified Anglo-American classifications of the non-European world*, most obviously by ascribing an unchanging, backward quality to areas under their control. Drawing examples from Britain's contact with King Bagyidaw in the early nineteenth century Burma and the longer history of US relations with various 'Afghan warlords', this process of attaching gross temporal characteristics to the global south is traced back to lingering assumptions about the antiquated nature of the violence that 'warlords' employ. Such understandings inspired reified classifications that often led to categorical understandings about the relative significance of areas of the global south for their imperial systems. The chapter concludes by showing how these definitive systems of knowledge made more natural Anglo-American claims about the potential for imperial interventions to introduce greater modernity in the global south.

At several moments in US and British imperialism, 'warlords' were at the forefront of Anglo-American imperial attempts to exercise a greater legal and normative influence over the global south. This is most evident in how the concept was invoked in political arguments about the reach of international law. Chapter 4 examines how, in an effort to manage the relationship between war and order, the *concept of warlord was used to debase the authority of non-European leaders*. Such a mode of debasement qualified their political authority, making the warlord-turn-king (or warlord-turn-president) both the cause and emblem of corrupt legal orders. As illustrated in Britain's encounter with

Theodore II in nineteenth century Abyssinia and the standoff between the United States and Charles Taylor in Liberia more than a century later, this debasement gave considerable imperative to Britain and the United States enforcing international legal conventions in non-European territories. The territories controlled by warlords came to exemplify gross legal affronts to international standards; to allow 'warlords' to defy international legal standards would allow entire territories to compromise the potential to bring greater order to the non-European world. Notions of brutal violence and debauched political order helped both imperial powers make the case that more of the global south should be subject to Western norms and legal precedent. The combination helped 'warlords' deepen Anglo-American confidence in its potential to use international law to help contain the excesses of war and promote more acceptable forms of order.

'Warlords' can be seen throughout the long history of conquest in US and British imperialism, often fighting alongside or on behalf of the imperial powers as each attempted to impose order in locations across the global south. However, as rich as this history may be, the concept arguably found its clearest expression in the depiction of adversaries that controlled corrupt and unstable dominions that could only be subdued through conquest. Chapter 5 examines how the concept enabled Britain and the United States to employ military force in the global south and mange its far-reaching consequences. It is argued that, as an expression of the relationship between war and order, *'warlords' often came to personify the most troublesome features in the global south*, which were often conceived as disorder, thereby supplanting hostile regimes or unstable territories as the very object that Britain and the United States sought to conquer. This argument develops by examining two of the most infamous 'warlord' adversaries found in US and British imperialism. The first, Abdullahi ibn Muhammad (widely referred to as the Khalifa), was the object of substantial fascination during the late nineteenth century, when Britain deployed its colonial army to re-conquer modern-day Sudan (1896-99). In the early 1990s, the second 'warlord', Mohammed Farrah Aidid, defied the United States and their UN-authorised Operation Restore Hope (1992-95), leading to one of the most humiliating retreats in US history. By giving rise to cogent understandings of disorder, the chapter concludes, 'warlords' had the effect of creating heightened confidence in the metropole about the potential for conquest to restore order in the global south.

Renewed interest in the continuities between colonial Britain and the United States after the Cold War has affirmed more than just the enduring significance of empire in the conduct and study of international relations. As exemplified in ongoing debates about the US-led intervention in Afghanistan, these controversial comparisons

have also made plain the violent and, in many cases, inconclusive nature of US and British attempts to promote order in the non-European world. As discussed in the conclusion, the appearance of 'warlords' throughout this convoluted legacy, whether as collaborators, rogue 'spoilers', or enemy leaders, provides insights into how both imperial powers attempted to manage war in the uneven expansion of order and its consequences for their respective imperial dominions. By looking beyond the alarmism that surrounds contemporary accounts of 'warlords', it is possible to appreciate how cultural constructions of war had a deep influence on US and British notions about the origin, nature, and development of order in the global south. Perhaps more importantly, these culturally laden truths about war and order were formative parts of the interventions each imperial power devised for the global south. The lasting significance of 'warlords' in US and British imperialism can be seen in the degree of confidence that the political concept inspired in each imperial system about the potential for global south to be remade to reflect their respective conceptions of order.

2. A Conceptual Approach to the Study of 'Warlords' in US and British Imperialism

As outlined in the previous chapter, this dissertation examines the significance of 'warlords' in US and British attempts to cope with the effects of war in the uneven expansion of order across the global south. The concept of warlord, it is argued, offers insights into how both imperial powers used cultural constructions of war to advance larger conclusions about the nature of order in non-European territories, and how the concept has encouraged overstated notions about the metropoles' potential to reshape non-European political communities. This kind of historical inquiry presents a number of theoretical and methodological challenges. With numerous non-European actors in the American and British imperial imaginations, ranging from barbarians to native princes to jihadists, the study requires a way not only to identify the broad contours of 'warlords' in US and British imperialism, but also a means to trace the concept's various formulations and meanings throughout history. The potential for US and British conceptions of 'warlords' to evolve over time further complicates this task. But, more than simply describing Anglo-American notions of 'warlords', this dissertation needs a way to set into motion the concept's wider function in and effect on US and British imperialism.

This chapter develops a theoretical and methodological approach that responds to these challenges by drawing insights from several literatures concerned with concepts, discourse, and imperial history. It begins by comparing different ways to conceptualise 'warlords' in US and British imperialism, including as an idea, discursive construct, and social scientific concept. The discussion focuses on the merits of using approaches to the study of political concepts to identify many of the core assumptions, arguments, and conclusions that animated Anglo-American notions of 'warlords'. However, to trace the concept's evolution throughout US and British imperial history, a case is also made for drawing insights from post-colonial theory by situating the political concept within the colonial discourses that structured each empire. A discursive history, as opposed to a contextual one common to the study of political concepts, facilitates a comparative discussion that accounts for the appearance of 'warlords' across not just US and British policy debates, but also other influential parts of each imperial system, such as media reports and popular culture. The proposed discursive approach provides a theoretical basis and methodological approach for studying the constitutive nature of the political concept. The analytic structure of political concepts, combined with the reach of post-colonial approaches to discourse analysis, offers a coherent framework for the study of 'warlords' in US and British imperialism.

The argument develops in four parts. The first one examines how 'warlord' can be examined as a political concept. The next part outlines the way discourse analysis can facilitate the study of 'warlords' by locating the concept in the broad colonial discourses that structured US and British imperial conceptions of war and order in the global south. The third section details how a discursive approach helps reveal the way the concept influenced the production of US and British empires. The conclusion draws together the overarching framework to identify the value of employing discursive methods to study political concepts.

Understanding 'warlords' in conceptual terms

Throughout centuries of contact with non-European communities, notions of brutal violence, political domination, and territorial control have combined to make 'warlords' an enduring part of the Anglo-American imperial visions of the global south. But, 'warlords' are by no mean a static entity found across time and place. To study the significance of 'warlords' in US and British imperialism, an account of the concept's core features must first be developed.

Drawing on the work of Michael Freeden and Reinhardt Koselleck, this section makes the case for studying 'warlords' as a political concept in US and British imperialism. It shows how many of the conceptual issues that limit the relevance of contemporary scholarship on 'warlords' for the study of US and British imperialism can be best resolved by adopting insights from the literature on the development, constitution, and study of political concepts.

Warlord as a political concept

'Warlords' have captured considerable attention since the end of the Cold War. Across several disciplines and policy debates, numerous commentators, policymakers, and scholars have used the concept to characterise various leaders in areas across the global south, ranging from militia commanders to intransigent heads of state. Despite this growing scrutiny, however, little consensus has developed about what constitutes a 'warlord'. Where some consensus has been reached, particularly in International Relations and American policy debates, broad definitions and narrow historiography limit its relevance for the study of US and British imperialism.

A common historical reference point guides much of the recent scholarship on 'warlords'. Several scholars trace the word back to China in the early-twentieth century, when a series of military commanders, *junfas*, claimed control over large swaths of

territory following the collapse of the Qing Empire.[1] As the transliteration of *junfa*, the word warlord is often used in contemporary debates to refer to armed leaders that exploit periods of unrest to forge dominion over a territory and its population.[2] Based on this etymological relationship, Alice Hill goes so far as to argue, 'An outline of the main characteristics of Chinese warlords thus provides criteria against which to measure more recent claimants to the title'.[3] Although the supposed relationship appears compelling, this argument may privilege an obscure, turbulent period of Chinese history at the expense of a longer legacy of violent encounters between the global north and global south that animated Anglo-American understandings of 'warlords'. By adopting a broader historical purview, particularly one that accounts for the far-reaching social relations characteristic of empire, it is possible to develop a richer understanding of the core features that distinguished 'warlords' in US and British imperialism.

Narrow historical accounts based on etymological reasoning have inspired several efforts to develop a more complete history of 'warlords'. Kimberly Marten, for instance, attempts in her words to devise a 'precise definition' of the phenomena of 'warlordism' based on four cases, medieval Europe, Republican China, Somalia, and Afghanistan.[4] She argues that an 'inductive definition of warlordism' can be derived based on the four characteristics found in each example: 1) armed men exploit the lack of a central authority to lay claim to portions of territory; 2) self-interest, as opposed to ideology, motive their actions; 3) charisma and patronage links armed leaders to their followers; and 4) 'personalistic rule' undermines normal political and economic activities.[5] Although the move towards a broader, more historical approach appears promising for the purposes of this dissertation, the search for a 'well delineated' and

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[1] See for example Wong Pak Nung, 'Towards a More Comprehensive Analysis of Warlord Politics: Constitutive Agency, Patron-Client Networks and Robust Action', *Asian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 16, no. 2, 2008, pp. 173-95; Paul B. Rich, 'Warlords, State Fragmentation and the Dilemma of Humanitarian Intervention', *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, vol. 10, no. 1, Spring 1999, pp. 78-96; Anthony Vinci, '"Like Worms in the Entrails of a Natural Man": A Conceptual Analysis of Warlords', *Review of African Political Economy*, vol. 34, no. 112, 2007, pp. 313-31. A challenge to this reasoning can be found in Arthur Waldron, 'The Warlord: Twentieth-Century Chinese Understandings of Violence, Militarism, and Imperialism', *The American Historical Review*, vol. 96, no. 4, October 1991, pp. 1073-1100.

[2] An alternate, but equally underdeveloped, argument about the term's origins has been made about the German notion of *Kriegsherr*. See Colin Darch, 'Are There Warlords in Provincial Mozambique? Questions of the Social Base of MNR Banditry', *Review of African Political Economy*, no. 45/46, 1989, pp. 34-49; Antonio Giustozzi, *The Debate on Warlordism: The Importance of Military Legitimacy* (Crisis State Programme: London School of Economics, October 2005).

[3] Alice Hills, 'Warlords, Militia and Conflict in Contemporary Africa: A Re-examination of Terms', *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, vol. 8, no. 1, 1997, p. 37.

[4] Kimberly Marten, 'Warlordism in Comparative Perspective', *International Security*, vol. 31, no. 3, Winter 2006, pp. 41-73. See also Kimberly Marten, 'Warlords', in Sibylle Scheipers and Hew Strachan (eds.), *The Changing Character of War*, (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 302-14; Kimberly Marten, 'The Danger of Tribal Militias in Afghanistan: Learning from the British Empire', *Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 63, no. 1, Fall/Winter 2009, pp. 157-74.

[5] Marten, 'Warlordism in Comparative Perspective', p. 48.

'rigorous' definition of 'warlordism' allows little space for the ambiguous quality of the concept and its ambivalent place in US and British imperialism. Perhaps more importantly, such an approach forecloses any inquiry into the political debates that cast non-European leaders as 'warlords' and their importance in the concept's wider function and effects in US and British relations with the global south. The search for strict definitions denies much of the political complexity that made 'warlords' such an important part of US and British imperialism.

More accommodating definitions contain other shortcomings that limit their utility for the study of US and British imperialism. Several accounts reproduce an uncritical adherence to present-day attitudes in assuming that 'warlords' are the armed actors that emerge when nation-states, as opposed to other forms of political order, such as kingdoms, colonies, or empires, retreat amid violent conflict or political unrest.[6] This tendency to situate 'warlords' in contrast to state structures can be seen in an argument made by Troy S. Thomas *et al.* that 'The warlord exists in an environment where state power is weak, or more likely, non-existent. Warlords in Central Asia, the Horn of Africa, and even Western Africa thrive in terminally ill states or in the absence of any sort of notion of statehood, state power, or state identity'.[7] Others identify purportedly core characteristics of 'warlords' by drawing sweeping comparisons, many of which have limited relevance to US and British imperialism. Sasha Lezhnev, for instance, argues, 'Warlords are powerful actors in weak states who base their control almost solely on rule by force for the overwhelming purpose of personal financial gain and glory rather than mass ideological struggle'.[8] The inclination to draw overstated conclusions about 'warlords' based on unqualified categories continues when Lezhnev contends, 'Conflicts between absolute warlords bear more resemblance to criminal battles than societal struggles, with the population generally viewing the warlords as thieves and murders rather than revolutionaries'.[9] More than a decade later, Paul B. Rich's observation about the academic and policy literature on 'warlords' remains apt: 'There has been growing interest among analysts in recent years in the activities of

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[6] This tendency can be seen to varying degrees in Mark R. Duffield, *Global Governance and the New Wars: the Merging of Development and Security* (London; New York: Zed Books, 2001); Antonio Giustozzi, *Empires of Mud: Wars and Warlords of Afghanistan* (London; New York: Columbia University Press and Hurst, 2009); Anthony Vinci, *Armed Groups and the Balance of Power: The International Relations of Terrorists, Warlords, and Insurgents* (London: Routledge, 2009).

[7] Troy S. Thomas, Stephen D. Kiser, and William D. Casebeer, *Warlords Rising: Confronting Violent Non-State Actors* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005), p. 124.

[8] Sasha Lezhnev, *Crafting Peace: Strategies to Deal with Warlords in Collapsing States* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005), p. 2.

[9] Ibid.

warlords, though the term as such has not as yet acquired any great analytical precision'.[10]

Historical circumstances further complicate the search for a coherent understanding of the core features that have made 'warlords' a fixture in US and British imperialism. Two related issues are perhaps most important. First, unlike the United States after the Cold War, the word warlord was far from ubiquitous during the British Imperial Century. Its earliest utterance, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, can be traced back to Ralph Waldo Emerson, who used the term in a passage about how, in the English aristocracy 'piracy and war gave place to trade, politics, and letters; the war-lord to the law-lord'.[11] In the absence of a more robust debate, this early appearance does not necessarily mean that Emerson—or others with closer ties to British imperialism that used the term at the time—were referring to 'warlords' as understood in British accounts of the global south. Without an explicit record of usage, clues about the concept's expression and meaning can only be discerned within the wider historical context of the British Empire during the Imperial Century. Second, in both US and British imperialism, the concept of warlord appeared in various forms. Indeed, a number of familiar terms were used interchangeably with 'warlord', including strongman, tyrant, and gangster, depending on the political and historical context.[12] To develop a discursive history of the concept requires a theoretical approach capable of locating the concept in its various formulations.

Three disciplines offer potential ways to examine 'warlords' in US and British imperialism. The first is the history of ideas. Inspired by the work of Arthur O. Lovejoy, scholars from a range of disciplines examine how distinct philosophical thoughts have been assembled in different combinations to form many of the core principles, ideologies, and doctrines that have shaped human history.[13] However, the ambivalent nature of the concept may require a more robust analytical structure through which to identify the primary assumptions and arguments that animated Anglo-American understandings of 'warlords'.

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[10] Paul B. Rich, 'Introduction', in Paul B. Rich (ed.), *Warlords in International Relations*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), p. xi.

[11] *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. 'war-lord'.

[12] For a summary of contemporary variations see T.P. Robinson, 'Twenty-First Century Warlords: Diagnosis and Treatment?', *Defence Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2001, p. 121.

[13] Some of Lovejoy's most influential works include Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936); Arthur O. Lovejoy, *Essays in the History of Ideas* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1948).

A second, more rigorous alternative, perhaps best exemplified in the work of Giovanni Sartori, could involve treating 'warlord' as a social scientific concept.[14] As employed in the study of comparative politics, this would involve examining the common usage of the term to determine a logical, coherent, and preferably parsimonious definition of 'warlords'. Although appropriate for more abstract reasoning, this approach may not be able to accommodate the historical specificity—and with it particular variations—of 'warlords' in US and British imperialism.

The third, and final, approach might focus on how 'warlords' are constructed in various strands of political discourse. As a discursive construct, the notion of warlord could be studied as the product of the various cultural assumptions, political ideologies, and social norms that defined each imperial system. Such a method, however, may introduce an overwhelming complexity to the study, as numerous competing understandings of the concept would have to be balanced across both empires. Nonetheless, as discussed below, a discursive approach can enrich other parts of the dissertation, namely how the concept of warlord has functioned in and affected US and British imperialism. The limits of these approaches illustrate the need for a theoretical approach that is rigorous enough to narrow on the essential parts of the concept without imposing a structure that denies its inherent variability and contrasting usage.

Such a balance can be found in the writing of two scholars interested in the history of political concepts and their wider importance in politics. Freeden and, to a lesser extent, Koselleck offer a way to study the concept of warlord as a coherent entity, one that can be identified in various forms throughout US and British imperialism.[15] Both scholars begin from a robust understanding of political concepts. Similar to Lovejoy, Freeden and Koselleck recognise political concepts to be an essential part of how human beings comprehend, organise, and forge their political realities. 'Concepts,' Freeden explains, 'are idea-artefacts that serve human convenience as a way of coming to terms with the world, [and] arguably this is how our mind makes sense of the world'.[16] By this account, warlord can be treated as a social construct that helped US and

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[14] Relevant work includes David Collier and John Gerring, *Concepts and Method in Social Science: The Tradition of Giovanni Sartori* (New York: Routledge, 2009); Giovanni Sartori, 'Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics', *American Political Science Review*, vol. LXIV, no. 4, 1970, pp. 1033-53; Giovanni Sartori, 'Comparing and Miscomparing', *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, vol. 3, no. 3, 1991, pp. 243-57.

[15] The portions of their scholarship relevant to this project include Michael Freeden, 'Political Concepts and Ideological Morphology', *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1994, pp. 140-164; Michael Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1996); Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985); Reinhart Koselleck and Todd Samuel Presner, *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002).

[16] Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory*, p. 65.

British policymakers, commentators, and advocates render intelligible and meaningful many of the political practices, institutions, and actors that comprised the global south.

As a constitutive part of politics, Freeden and Koselleck understand political concepts to contain larger insights about the contexts in which they appear. Instead of a fixed category, one that exists independent of larger patterns of political change, a political concept can be studied as a meaningful social construction that evolves throughout history. 'A concept,' Koselleck argues, 'binds a variety of historical experiences and a collection of theoretical and practical references into a relation that is, as such, only given and actually ascertainable through the concept'.[17] This understanding substantiates the study of not just how 'warlords' were part of the way Britain and the United States managed the uneven expansion of order. It also allows for the political concept to lead to wider reflection about the political, legal, and normative features of each imperial system. Such perspective is particularly helpful in drawing conclusions about the value of studying the United States following the Cold War as an empire.

The utility of this framework becomes more apparent when political concepts are distinguished from other parts of political discourse. As discussed above, given the capacity for 'warlords' to be described in a range of terms, perhaps the most important distinction for this dissertation is between political concepts and words. Both Freeden and Koselleck, like Quentin Skinner and the Cambridge School of political theory, see the two as deeply intertwined: words are understood to be the outward expression of the various assumptions, arguments, and images that are combined to form political concepts.[18] In contemporary US policy debates, for example, the word warlord can be treated as a signifier that unites a particular set of ideas about war, territorial control, and political authority. This close relationship does not mean that concepts and words can be conflated. As Felix E. Oppenheim notes, the two rarely have a 'one-to-one correspondence'.[19] A concept may be expressed by several words, as seen with the range of terms used to describe 'warlords'. In other cases the same word can be used to express two or more concepts. An example can be found in how the notion of 'state of war' can refer to a legally declared condition of hostilities between two entities as well as the phenomenon of two opposing forces caught in a 'struggle of wills'. The distinction

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[17] Koselleck, *Futures Past*, p. 84.

[18] Ibid., pp. 73-90; Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory*, pp. 76-7. Some of the most notable discussions about this issue in the Cambridge school include John Dunn, *The History of Political Theory and Other Essays* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); J.G.A. Pocock, *Politics, Language, and Time: Essays on Political Thought and History* (New York: Atheneum, 1971); Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1978).

[19] Felix E. Oppenheim, *Political Concepts, A Reconstruction* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 4. See also Koselleck, *Futures Past*, p. 76.

between political concepts and words introduces a degree of complexity into the study of 'warlords' in US and British imperialism insofar as it requires attention to the context and form in which the political concept appears. However, this requirement also leads to a richer mode of inquiry. An attention to the contingent relationship between words and concepts opens a wider inquiry into how different parts of US and British imperialism, whether policy circles, print media, or popular culture, employed the political concept to manage the uneven expansion of order in the global south.

The differentiation between words and concepts presents an important, but not entirely unique, challenge to this study. If the concept of warlord has been expressed in a number of forms, the dissertation must be able to identify the political concept in its various formulations throughout US and British imperialism. As Koselleck warns, 'the history of concepts expressed in words must have a basis that renders the expressions of "concepts" and "words" distinguishable'.[20] As discussed in the previous chapter, without a way to differentiate between these two parts of political discourse this study would be unable to make a meaningful argument about the function and effect of the concept of warlord in the history of US and British imperialism.

A solution to this challenge can be found in Freeden's conceptual approach to political ideologies. Although developed for a different object of study, his theoretical framework provides a useful taxonomy that can help frame the concept and its different expressions. The taxonomy is organised around two elements, the first being the ineliminable components.[21] These are the features, Freeden explains, that 'all known usages of the concept employ'.[22] They are not intrinsic to the meaning of the word that expresses the political concept; rather, as the product of the concept's common usage, these features are essential, such that their absence would render the concept unintelligible or incommunicable. An example of this can be seen in the place of hierarchy in empire. Without the recognition of some disparity of power, wealth, and influence between the metropole and its periphery, a political system cannot be described as an empire. This does not mean that political concepts can be reduced to their ineliminable parts: the components are necessary but not sufficient to delineate a given political concept.[23]

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[20] Ibid., p. 84.

[21] A detailed account and application of this approach can be found in Freeden, 'Political Concepts and Ideological Morphology'; Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory*.

[22] Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory*, p. 62.

[23] As Freeden explains, 'Political concepts are always richer and more sophisticated constructs than could be inferred from their ineliminable components alone'. Ibid., pp. 64-5.

The second components are the quasi-contingent features. These features help account for political concepts' diverse forms and intellectual complexity. Quasi-contingent components, like inelinable ones, are logically essential parts of political concepts, such that without them the de facto core of a political concept (i.e., the ineliminable parts) would 'remain vacuous, devoid of content and meaning'.[24] However, unlike ineliminable components, quasi-contingent parts can appear in varying forms, as a number of different formulations can serve the same logical function.[25] This pattern can be seen in imperial accounts of the periphery: various political-territorial units, ranging from a colony to nation-state to protectorate, can be found under the dominion of a metropole. The inter-changeability of quasi-contingent features helps explain the appearance of political concepts in different forms. In studying these non-random, diverse elements, the proposed conceptual approach can place in sharper relief the intellectual, historical, and social complexity that made 'warlords' such a provocative and long-standing part of US and British imperialism.

Compared to other possible approaches, the literature on the history of political concepts can be used to devise a rigorous, yet still accommodating, way to recognise Anglo-American notions of 'warlords' as a meaningful part of their respective imperial projects. The next step is to apply the framework of ineliminable and quasi-contingent components to develop the anatomy of the concept of warlord in US and British imperialism.

Anatomy of the concept of warlord

Freeden argues that two related sources can be examined to develop a better understanding of the ineliminable and quasi-contingent components that comprise political concepts. The first are the particular contexts in which the concept appears or, in his words, 'its location in a number of idea-environments'.[26] In this case, US and British imperialism can be understood, in broad terms, to constitute the principal political, historical, and normative circumstances in which various assumptions and logics were combined to form the concept of warlord. By examining these overlapping frames of references, particularly at comparable historical moments, it is possible to draw insights into how popular usage made certain components—for example, a degree of autonomy—ineliminable parts of Anglo-American notions of 'warlords', such that the political concept would be incommunicable or unintelligible without them. A similar

[24] Ibid., p. 66.

[25] Ibid., pp. 65-6.

[26] Ibid., p. 67.

approach can be taken with the quasi-contingent components. The influence of historical context, for instance, is evident in the locations where 'warlords' were recognised to flourish. Although 'warlords' were understood to operate outside the metropole, often in uncivilised territories and failed states, varying notions about what constitutes the imperial periphery conditioned how this component manifested in US and British imperialism. An appreciation of the different parts of US and British imperialism in which 'warlords' appeared can help reveal the broad contours of the concept's constitutive parts.

Second, Freeden contends that political concepts develop and operate alongside numerous other concepts. Although often difficult to separate, whether due to convoluted logics or similar expressions, these conceptual relationships offer additional insights into the anatomy of the concept of warlord.[27] Two distinct kinds of relationships can be identified among the political concepts.[28] The first kind is logical. Many of the ineliminable or quasi-contingent elements that comprised the concept of warlord were coherent political concepts themselves, each with their own logical relationships to other concepts. For instance, as detailed below, war constituted a quasi-contingent part of US and British conceptions of 'warlords'—without some engagement in armed conflict, a leader could not be characterised as a 'warlord'. However, war was necessarily tied to a number of related concepts, including combatants, victims, and hostility. Since these adjacent concepts were themselves variable and complex, it would be extraordinarily complicated to determine how each component influenced Anglo-American understandings of 'warlords'. Nonetheless, given their logical relationship, it is possible to conclude that some notion of combatants, victims, and hostilities was necessarily called on to develop any concept of warlord. By examining the logic that linked the concept of warlord with different concepts it is possible to develop a fuller understanding of the core components of Anglo-American notions of 'warlords'.

The other type of relationship among political concepts, cultural adjacency, is particularly useful for the study of 'warlords'. Cultural adjacency differs from logical relationships in that it brings concepts and the constitutive parts together not based on strict principles of validity so much as specific historical, social, and geographic circumstances.[29] These affinities limit the logical connections that could exist among political concepts. For example, the supposed similarities between post-Cold War

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[27] In making this point, Freeden stresses the potential, as well as the limits, of this kind of historical inquiry: 'In the analysis of the actual manifestations of political thinking we must take human thought-behaviour as we find it, to the best of our understanding'. Ibid., p. 67.

[28] Ibid., pp. 67-8.

[29] Freeden, 'Political Concepts and Ideological Morphology', p. 154.

'warlords' and gangsters were cited to justify conclusions that the former used war to acquire political and material benefits for a select community, as opposed to pursuing widespread political change.[30] The influence of the further cultural ties between 'warlords' and other violent figures can also be seen in the elements that, despite not following logically from the ineliminable components, were regarded in ordinary usage as legitimate—if not indispensable—parts of the political concept. The capacity for culture to condition reasoning, for instance, can be seen during Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan (2001-). As discussed in Chapter 3, allusions to barbarians and the Golden Horde bolstered claims that the Northern Alliance, a loose coalition of 'warlord' militias allied with the United States, were a throwback from centuries ago, even though much their weaponry could be dated back to the US-supported jihad against the Soviet forces decades earlier. The potential for culture to constrain and enable the elements that comprised Anglo-American notions of 'warlords' demonstrates the potential of studying the concept's constitutive parts in search of a fuller understanding of the political concept.

Drawing on these theoretical and methodological insights, it is possible to identify four distinct components, one ineliminable element and three quasi-contingent ones, that combined to shape Anglo-American notions of 'warlords' (see *Table 2.1*). A brief examination of each component and their various relationships can lead to a more robust understanding of the political concept and how it can be traced in its various formulations.

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Table 2.1—Anatomy of the concept of warlord in US and British imperialism

Type	Element	Description
Ineliminable	Autonomy	Near total authority over dominion Independence from external interference
Quasi-contingent	War	Primary source of autonomy Constitutive quality privileged Existential significance
	Imperial margins	Found in areas beyond the remit of empire Permissive environments helped explain the origins of and nature of autonomy Contextualizes degree of order brought by warlords
	Lack of popular support	Limited ties to existing political communities Suspicion about the nature of their motives and supposed agendas

[30] See for example Lezhnev, *Crafting Peace*, chap. 1.

Autonomy

Beneath evocative visions of brutal violence, charismatic leadership, and private fiefdoms, Anglo-American conceptions of 'warlords' developed around an ineliminable notion of autonomy. The singular importance of autonomy, as opposed to war or territorial control, becomes more apparent by examining two dimensions of the freedom of action characteristic of 'warlords'. The first concerns their near ultimate authority. A notion of unchecked political power, that is, an ability to operate with nominal restraint, suffuses the political concept. This feature is evident in the most common expression of the political concept in US political debates: the term warlord contains an explicit reference to an absolute form of political rule, namely a lordship. More substantive evidence can be found in the frequent contrasts drawn between 'warlords' and notable royal figures, including some of European descent. These historical comparisons reflect a common understanding that 'warlords' operate from a privileged position atop a social or political hierarchy. In late-1992, for instance, Meg Greenfield stressed the continuities between the scandalous British royal family and the 'warlords' responsible for the civil war in Somalia:

> For let us not be confused, snowed or sentimental: the Queen of England is descended from a bunch of butchers and brigands we might nowadays call "warlords"…This is an almost perfect vocabulary to describe the world of her feudal, medieval forebears.[31]

Less dramatic comparisons cast 'warlords' and their unfettered authority in a more favourable light. The degree of authority at the core of the political concept facilitated the portrayal of notable historical figures from King Arthur[32] to Wilhelm II[33] to Tamerlane[34] as 'warlords'. Frequent links between the political concept and various regal hierarchies are suggestive of the unfettered authority associated with 'warlords'.

This singular authority conditioned US and British conceptions of the political significance of 'warlords'. From a position of power, and without major constraints, 'warlords' were recognised to dominate the political landscape in their respective fiefdoms. To conceive of these territories was to locate the 'warlord' at the centre of social, economic, and institutional life. Frequent comparisons to feudalism confirm the

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[31] Meg Greenfield, 'The Uses of the Monarchy', *Newsweek*, 21 December 1992, p. 74.

[32] Jon Guttman, 'The Right Circumstances can Turn a Warlord into a Legend, ask King Arthur' *Military History*, vol. 17, no. 1, April 2000, p. 6.

[33] Miranda Seymour, 'We Three Kings', *New York Times*, 4 April 2010, p. 19.

[34] Austin Bay, 'Reinventing Iraq', *Weekly Standard*, vol. 8, no. 13, 9 December 2002, p. 17.

presumed political importance of 'warlords' in their respective dominions.[35] Although interpreted in various ways, numerous observers associated feudalism and the political concept to the extent that 'warlords' extorted wealth and personal prestige by granting land and promising security to tenants. Nineteenth century British colonial correspondence about Abyssinia presented such a scenario. During the 'Era of Princes', various commanders were recognized to carve the region into rival fiefdoms, each organised to enrich the ruling 'warlord'.[36] In other cases, the removal of 'warlords' was considered integral with the end of feudal systems. 'British and American bombardment,' Mark Helprin notes of nineteenth century Japan, 'impelled the Japanese to tame their warlords, do away with feudalism, restore central power, and begin to study the ways of the West with a vengeance'.[37] A freedom of action established a basic understanding of the far-reaching power associated with 'warlords'.

The political gravity derived from an unfettered authority contributed to the apparent resemblance between 'warlords' and the native princes found in British imperialism.[38] Although British conceptions of and relations with the native princes underwent stark shifts during the Imperial Century, particularly following the 'Indian Mutiny' (1857), analogous notions of authority shaped British understandings of this class of Indian rulers and their political importance.[39] Descendents of Mughal emperors, the majharajas and nawabs were recognised to lord over their respective native states, governing their subjects with nominal constraints. In a famous 1899 speech on native states, for example, Lord Curzon celebrated the capacity of native princes to forge coherent fiefdoms alongside British-controlled territories. 'Side by side with our own system,' the British Viceroy noted, 'and sometimes almost surrounded by British territory, there are found in this wonderful country the possessions, the administration, the proud authority, and unchallenged traditions of the native dynasties—a combination which…is, I believe, without parallel in the history of the world'.[40] Similar to 'warlords', the unquestioned authority enjoyed by native princes was recognised to define the political, legal, and moral order found in the native states. As Curzon continued, 'I

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[35] As discussed in Chapter 4, such understandings can be attributed to a series of temporal assumptions surrounding the political concept in US and British imperialism.

[36] See for example Walter Chichele Plowden, *Travels in Abyssinia and the Galla Country, with an Account of a Mission to Ras Ali in 1848* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1868).

[37] Mark Helprin, 'East Wind', *National Review*, vol. 52, no. 5, 20 March 2000, p. 37.

[38] Thanks to Edward Keene for noting this similarity.

[39] See Bernard S. Cohn, 'Representing Authority in Victorian India', in E.J. Hobsbawm and T.O. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*, (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 179.

[40] George Nathaniel Curzon, 'Chiefs and Princes of India', in Thomas Raleigh (ed.), *Lord Curzon in India: Being a Selection from his Speeches as Viceroy & Governor-General of India 1898-1905* (London; New York: Macmillan and Co., [1899] 1906), p. 217.

rejoice whenever I go to scrutinise the practical outcomes of this policy, to observe the States consolidated, the chiefs powerful, and their privileges unimpaired'.[41] The passing resemblance between 'warlords' and native princes can be traced back to a presumed unfettered authority found in both sets of actors. As discussed below, a second dimension of autonomy helped distinguish the two archetypical actors and their significance in US and British imperialism.

More than just a fascination with unfettered authority made autonomy an ineliminable component of US and British notions of 'warlords'. A second set of ideas about independence, that is, a freedom from external influence, made autonomy an abiding part of the political concept in US and British imperialism. The relationship between these two dimensions of autonomy can be understood in logical terms. The imposition of external demands by a foreign patron or political body—even around complementary objectives—would necessarily circumscribe the degree of authority 'warlords' exercised over their dominions. The feudal lord, by this account, would start to resemble the vassal. Furthermore, external influence might diminish the political importance recognised in 'warlords'. The political, economic, and social pre-eminence ascribed to 'warlords' allowed limited space for a differing set of interests in their territories. Notions of independence were a logical complement to the US and British sensitivities to the unfettered authority characteristic of 'warlords'.

A fundamental independence of action had particular resonance in US and British imperialism. The lack of robust external control was an essential part of the ambivalence that animated the political concept in US and British imperialism. 'Warlords' were admired, at least in some circles, for using their freedom to construct extravagant, highly personalised political orders. Such patterns contributed to the apparent continuities in British imperialism between 'warlords' and oriental despots: both seemingly exercised little constraint in ensuring their political authority.[42] This resemblance, for instance, can be seen in the decadence and cruelty described in a review of Lord Cromer's writings about Ismail Pacha, the famous Khedive of Egypt and Sudan:

> Ismail Pacha was an Oriental despot of the old thoroughbred type, not without the qualities of magnificence and good-nature, but absolutely indifferent to the conditions of the unhappy wretches whom the Sultan of Turkey had placed under his rule, except as objects of extortion.[43]

Many of the same features, by contrast, elicited considerable concerns about the potential to control 'warlord' behaviour. With nominal political constraints, either from

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[41] Ibid.

[42] Allusions to the commonality between these two figures can be found in Ariel I. Ahram and Charles King, 'The Warlord as Arbitraguer', *Theory and Society*, vol. 41 (2012), pp. 169-86; Bay, 'Reinventing Iraq', p. 17; Karma Nabulsi, 'Why we are Still Backing Arafat', *Guardian*, 2 November 2004, p. 24.

[43] 'Lord Cromer', *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science, and Art*, no. 103, 11 May 1907, p. 577.

internal or external actors, 'warlords' were seemingly free act shift allegiances at will. Ralph Peters warned that 'warlords' were among the duplicitous 'warriors' that 'US soldiers' would encounter in the near future:

> The third pool of warriors is made up of the monsters who smile and toast you with vodka. These are the opportunists, the entrepreneurs of conflict, whose great strength is their cynicism….These are the Saddams and Milosevics, the drug lords and the Russian gangsters in or out of government, *the warlords who change sides with ease*—and who agree to anything the president's special envoy demands until his back is turned.[44]

Nicholas Kristof drew on a notable 'Angolan warlord', Jonas Savimbi, to draw similar lessons about American mistakes in Africa. 'Lesson No. 1', he explained, was to 'Be wary of warlords who parrot back our own lines', as Savimbi 'was expert at saying what we wanted to hear, but in retrospect it's clear that he never believed in anything but power'.[45] Such suspicion underscored a clear risk that 'warlords' presented to Britain and the United States: despite their political authority and strategic importance, 'warlords' would necessarily be unreliable partners in any imperial project.

Conclusions about the inability to control 'warlords' accentuated the influence of more systemic racial conclusions about the duplicitous nature of non-European populations. Pejorative constructions about the untrustworthiness of Africa, Oriental, and Arab cultures helped make autonomy an essential part of the concept. British accounts of Ranjit Singh, the early nineteenth century Sikh emperor, whose independence resembled that of a 'warlord', illustrate this abiding suspicion. An 1839 article in the *Times* noted the foolishness of believing that his promises to protect British commercial interests were sincere, warning that 'Runajeet Singh will respect our treaties with him if he is sure of losing more than he can gain by breaking them; and consequently do precisely as he would have done had they never existed'.[46] Analogous conclusions can be found more than a century later. In an extended feature about Afghanistan after the overthrow of the Taliban regime, Michael Ignatieff noted that, similar to their British predecessors, the Bush administration struggled to control the 'Afghan warlords' that had allied with the United States at the outset of the war:

> the question of who is using whom is not easy to answer. Ever since the days of the British North-West Frontier, Afghan tribal leaders have been experts at exploiting imperial troops for their own purposes. It's no

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[44] Ralph Peters, 'Soldier vs. Warrior: The Modern Mismatch', *Washington Post*, 7 March 1999, p. B01. Emphasis added.

[45] Nicholas Kristof, 'Our own Terrorist' *New York Times*, 5 March 2002, p. 23.

[46] 'Runjeet Singh', *Times* (London), 8 February 1839, p. 6.

> different now.…Instead of controlling its warlord proxies, Washington is discovering that it can be manipulated by them.[47]

Culturally inflected doubts about the autonomous nature of 'warlords' extended beyond South and Central Asia.[48] An article about post-Cold War Myanmar, for instance, noted that the ruling junta's substantial legal and economic concessions to 'ethnic warlords' may not change their duplicitous behaviour. 'The warlords', the author explained, 'are now prospering as tycoons. But for the military junta, it may prove a Faustian bargain: it has gained control in the hinterlands, but the shadow of drug money now hangs over Rangoon'.[49] These doubts illustrate how essentialist cultural conclusions accentuated logical conclusions to make resistance to foreign control an enduring expression of Anglo-American conclusions about the autonomy of 'warlords'.

This logically based, culturally inflected suspicion differentiates 'warlords' from native princes found in British imperialism. Unlike 'warlords', native princes were recognised throughout much of the Imperial Century to be willing and, in many cases, capable administrative partners, ones well suited to use their autonomy to rule under the suzerainty of the British Crown. In the aftermath of the mutiny, for example, Governor-General Earl Canning declared, 'these patches of Native government served as a breakwater in the storm which would otherwise have swept over us in one great wave'.[50] Although the years following the mutiny may have represented a highpoint in this imperial confidence, British colonial administrators constructed an elaborate system of legal, social, and ceremonial recognition that located native princes within their imperial governance of British India.[51] 'The Indian princes,' Barbara A. Ramsuck argues, 'were to be subordinated to their imperial British suzerain while remaining influential, legitimate, even if despotic, rulers vis-à-vis their Indian subjects'.[52] Curzon captured this glorified subordination in his speech on native states, arguing, 'The native Chief has become, by our policy, an integral factor in the Imperial organisation of India….I claim him as my colleague and partner'.[53] British imperial confidence in native princes

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[47] Michael Ignatieff, 'Nation-Building Lite', *New York Times*, 28 July 2002, p. 29. See also 'Afghan Warlord Not Sure Which Side He Feels Like Helping Today', *The Onion*, vol. 46, no. 2, 12 January 2010.

[48] Although from a different cultural context, this deep-seated distrust can be found in a sarcastic *Guardian* article that asks, 'When is a warlord not a warlord? When he's pro-Western'. See 'Pass Notes—No. 177: The Warlords', *Guardian*, 17 June 1993, p. 3.

[49] Tony Emerson, 'Burma's Men of Gold', *Newsweek*, 20 April 2004, p. 24.

[50] Quoted in Ian Copland, *The Princes of India in the Endgame of Empire, 1917-1947* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 16.

[51] For example see Cohn, 'Representing Authority in Victorian India', pp. 178-209.

[52] Barbara Ramusack, *The Indian Princes and their States* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 164.

[53] Curzon, 'Chiefs and Princes of India', p. 216.

presents a sharp contrast from the deep-seated suspicion that pervades Anglo-American notions of 'warlords' and their autonomous nature.

Anglo-American notions of 'warlords' were grounded in a series of conclusions about autonomy. Over centuries of encounters with non-European leaders, a combination of near absolute authority and independence established the overarching political significance of 'warlords', both as masters of their territories and dubious collaborators.

War

Ineliminable notions of autonomy begin to develop greater meaning and clarity once situated relative to the three quasi-contingent features that animated US and British understandings of 'warlords'. This effect is perhaps most evident with war. Although defined in various terms, some notion of a violent conflict of wills between distinct political bodies was closely linked to the autonomy characteristic of 'warlords'.[54] As captured in the concept's most common post-Cold War expression, it was primarily through violent conflict—as opposed to charisma or a social contract—that 'warlords' were understood to establish, exercise, and expand their political authority. The privileged place of war, perhaps at the expense of other less formative and defining forms of coercion, including policing, crime, and terrorism, can be seen in many attempts to define 'warlords'. James C. O'Brien, for example, recognised the close relationship between violent conflict and autonomy to be at the core of the concept's utility following the Cold War. In characterising the 'local elites' that resisted foreign-led 'post-conflict missions', O'Brien stressed how violence conditioned the authority and independence of 'warlords':

> They can be called elites, hegemons, or obstructionists, but the most evocative and accurate label is "warlord." This term captures the essential quality of their resistance—a willingness to use coercion, even violence, to consolidate or expand their political and economic influence.[55]

Sasha Lezhnev drew a similar conclusion about the essential nature of war for the unfettered political authority of 'warlords'. In a text about 'strategies to deal with warlords', Lezhnev traces their considerable authority back to the use of violence: 'Warlords are powerful actors in weak states who base their control almost solely on rule

[54] For more on the ontological challenge of defining war see Tarak Barkawi and Shane Brighton, 'Powers of War: Fighting, Knowledge, and Critique', *International Political Sociology*, vol. 5, no. 2, June 2011, pp. 126-43.

[55] James C. O'Brien, 'Lawyers, Guns, and Money: Warlords and Reconstruction After Iraq', *U.C. Davis Journal of International Law and Policy*, vol. 11, no. 1, Fall 2004, p. 102.

by force'.[56] Alice Hills, by contrast, stressed the importance of war in the social hierarchy that 'warlords' ruled. 'The term [warlord],' she explained, 'has changed in recent years in that it is now applied to prominent clan and faction leaders using armed civilian followers to impose their policies and ambitions'.[57] Common policy formulations and cursory definitions provide some indication of the close relationship between war and autonomy in the political concept.

The value of framing this relationship as one between quasi-contingent and ineliminable components can be seen in US and British accounts about the modes of warfare 'warlords' perpetrated in the global south. Regardless of its particular form, whether suppressing dissent, fighting rival leaders, or assisting foreign patrons, US and British accounts of the different way 'warlords' engaged in violent conflict affirmed their presumed autonomy. This close logical and definitional relationship is evident in accounts of brutal, destructive tactics. Many observers abhorred 'warlords' for violating basic liberal precepts about the just conduct of war, particularly in attacking civilian targets. John MacKinlay offered an illustrative account of this response:

> The 1990s warlord…was still the hyena of conflict zone, lacking the courage or the long-term commitment to confront the strong and instead, preying off the weak and sickly, ensuring his survival by living within a territory that he could secure in a military sense.[58]

The gross exaggeration captures how war was marshalled to illustrate the degree of independence 'warlords' maintained from common moral precepts and concern for the welfare of others. Less explicit understandings about violence and the disregard for basic social or legal norms can be found in British colonial accounts. Following the overthrow of King Theebow, a Burmese monarch defeated during the Third Anglo-Burmese War (1885-86), one popular periodical noted his liberal interpretation of the royal prerogative of killing potential rivals. More than just removing potential heirs, it explained, the 'despotic ruler' waged a brutal war on his subjects to ensure their submission:

> The King, for example, can imprison, torture, and put to death at his won sweet will, and a monarch who began his reign with the murder of all his accessible kindred would be likely enough to keep his hand in the way with disagreeable subjects.[59]

Such violence against Burmese civilians illustrated the far-reaching political authority of the 'Burmese warlord' over his territory and its occupants. The logical ties illustrate how

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[56] Lezhnev, *Crafting Peace*, p. 4.

[57] Hills, 'Warlords, Militia and Conflict in Contemporary Africa', p. 36.

[58] John MacKinlay, 'Defining Warlords', *International Peacekeeping*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2000, p. 55.

[59] 'Another Empire Gone', *Bow Bells*, vol. 44, no. 1128, 10 March 1886, p. 283.

the quasi-contingent component of war gave greater meaning to the level of autonomy at the core of the concept of warlord.

The violence behind the autonomy of 'warlords' manifested in less deplorable or arbitrary forms of violent conflict. Indeed, war was also recognised to be a constitutive part of how 'warlords' established and exercised their near total autonomy in the global south. Their fiefdoms exemplified this power. Violent conflict enabled 'warlord' to establish, and often expand, their territorial dominions, often by carving these territories out from political authorities across the non-European world. One American journalist located 'warlords' as part of the cadre of violent actors responsible for recasting the post-Cold War political geography in the global south: 'new crises seem to involve emerging nations that aren't quite nations, ruled by thugs, warlords and micro-messiahs who desire nothing more than to "cleanse" the adjacent slivers and create a Great Whatever'.[60] These new fiefdoms were not necessarily derided as irrelevant or inconsequential. Paul Jackson, for instance, recognised a state-like quality to these territories arguing, 'Warlord culture tends to emerge as central control collapses, consequently warlords themselves have frequently taken over some functions of a 'government', notably tax and frequently infrastructure'.[61] Some commentators went so far as to lament that the United States failed to work more closely with various 'warlords' in its 'nation-building efforts'.[62]

The constitutive nature of war extended to the very being of 'warlords'. War was recognised to have an existential significance, such that its absence would not only render the concept incommunicable, it would make the 'warlord' himself inconceivable. As discussed below, with regards to the final quasi-contingent component, the lack of popular support, war conditioned the presumed political agenda of 'warlords' and, by extension, their dominions. This is evident in British accounts of King Theodore II. In the mid-nineteenth War was an essential part of his rise to the Abyssinian throne, but also his development as a 'warlord'. Following his death, one newspaper traced war throughout the long arch of his rise and fall in power:

> Gathering a number of banditti around him on the death of his uncle, [Theodore] soon became very formidable to the regnant powers, and as he was very successful in his wars, he aspired to be King of Abyssinia. A first he was under the restraint of two Englishmen, Mr. Bell and Mr. Plowden, who curbed his bloodthirsty designs….But on the death of these councillors his fortunes turned….it is stated that on one occasion he killed 3,000 people by fire and sword in six weeks.[63]

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[60] Joe Klein, 'When Everyone's an Amateur' *Newsweek*, 14 December 1992, p. 42.

[61] Paul Jackson, 'Warlords as Alternative Forms of Governance', *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, vol. 14, no. 2, p. 138.

[62] John C. Hulsman and Alexis Y. Debat, 'In Praise of Warlords', *National Interest*, Summer 2006.

[63] 'King Theodore of Abyssinia', *London Journal*, vol. 47, no. 1201, 15 February 1868, p. 124.

More than a century later, American critics scolded the Clinton administration for not doing more to stop 'warlords' from perpetuating the violent 'chaos' that plagued Africa given their explicit raison d'être. 'In Liberia, for example,' Jeffrey Goldberg argued, 'the warlord Charles Taylor made plain his intention to kill his way to power'.[64] Similar assumptions animated American notions of 'Somali warlords'. In a feature on lingering turmoil in post-cold war Somalia, one American writer conceived of violence as the lifeblood of 'Somali warlords':

> The northern regions of Somaliland and Puntland have stabilized under autonomous governments, but southern Somalia, with Mogadishu at its core, has remained a Mad Max zone carved up by warlords for whom fighting seems to be as necessary as oxygen.[65]

War and its spoils fuelled the chaotic destruction that 'warlords' personified disorder in post-Cold War Somalia. For the purposes of this dissertation, such cultural constructions of war, that is, portrayals violence as a source and expression of cultural particularities, are of particular interest. These understandings provide insight into how Britain and the United States coped with the uneven development of order in the global south.

The constitutive, even existential qualities ascribed to war differentiate 'warlords' from the other non-European leaders found in the Anglo-American imperial imaginations. Instead of being evidence of strength and political significance, many of the most martial non-European leaders were faulted for perpetrating particularly crude forms of war. In his famous *Household Words* editorial, for instance, Charles Dickens stressed that the noble savage was distinguished by his proclivity for and pleasure from some of the most abominable forms of warfare, including genocide. 'All the noble savage's wars with his fellow-savages (and he takes no pleasure in anything else),' he explained, 'are wars of extermination—which is the best thing I know of him, and the most comfortable to my mind when I look at him'.[66] Years earlier John Stuart Mill recognised war to reveal the irreconcilable differences between civilized populations and their retrograde counterparts, barbarians. The inability to defeat civilized nations confirmed the fundamental inadequacy of barbaric peoples. In his words,

> Look even at war, the most serious business of a barbarous people; see what a figure rude nations, or semi-civilized and enslaved nations, have made against civilized ones…Why? Because discipline is more powerful than numbers, and discipline, that is, perfect co-operation, is an attribute of civilization.[67]

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[64] Jeffrey Goldberg, 'A Continent's Chaos', *New York Times*, 21 May 2000, p. 13.

[65] Peter Maass, 'Ayn Rand Comes to Somalia', *Atlantic Monthly*, vol. 287, no. 5, May 2001, p. 31.

[66] Charles Dickens, 'The Noble Savage', in Charles Dickens (ed.), *Reprinted Pieces, The Lamplighter, To Be Read at Dusk, Sunday under Three Heads*, (London: Chapman & Hall, Ld., [1853] 1868), p. 123.

[67] J.S. Mill, 'Civilization', *London and Westminster Review*, vol. III, no. V, April 1836, p. 4.

Slightly different conclusions can be found more than a century later. Amid concerns about whether the United States would share the fate of other collapsed empires, numerous American commentators recognised war to be evidence of barbarians' inability to accept the order enshrined in Western capitalist democracies.[68] As David Tell explained in the days following the attacks of 9/11, 'in the present circumstances, we know with all necessary precision who the barbarians are, who their friends are, and where they live. Most of all, we know that they will conduct some future massacre—or massacres—unless we destroy them first'.[69] More than linking 'warlords' to other violent non-European actors, the importance of war to 'warlords' and their autonomous rule distinguished the political concept in US and British imperialism.

War was a multi-faceted, but logically and culturally essential, component of US and British understandings of the 'warlords'. Violent conflict makes more evident how 'warlords' maintained considerable authority over and independence in their respective dominions.

Imperial margins

Some notion of the imperial margins can be traced throughout US and British conceptions of 'warlords'. Similar to many archetypical non-European leaders, it was in the figurative and literal outer reaches of empire that 'warlords' were recognised to flourish. In establishing a broad political geography this quasi-contingent component had two lasting influences on the political concept. The first was to contextualise their violent autonomy. The imperial margins located 'warlords' in a permissive setting, one where war could enable a near total authority and independence from outside institutional, normative, or legal interference. Different referents conditioned what was imagined to exist in the permissive space beyond the reach of each imperial system: British colonial understandings of the limits of 'civilisation'[70] were based on ideas about the most advanced state of human and social development, and American notions of the Westphalian nation-state inspired fears about the unpredictable political order that emerged in the absence of a sovereign authority.[71] These differing referents were linked by a common assumption that 'warlords' were presumed to flourish in areas where

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[68] See for example Jakub Grygiel, 'Empires and Barbarians', *The American Interest*, vol. 2, no. 4, April 2007, pp. 13-22; Jennifer Medina, 'Lieberman Talks on Security Threat, but Sidesteps War in Iraq', *New York Times*, 16 September 2006, p. 4; Joseph Nye, 'The New Rome Meets the New Barbarians', *The Economist*, 21 March 2002, p. 24.

[69] David Tell, 'The End of Illusions', *Weekly Standard*, 24 September 2001, p. 10.

[70] Gerrit Gong, *The Standard of 'Civilization' in International Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984).

[71] One of the earliest and most influential treatments of failed states can be found in Gerald B. Helman and Steven R. Ratner, 'Saving Failed States', *Foreign Policy*, no. 89, Winter 1992-1993, pp. 3-20.

political apparatus common to the metropole gave way to more unstable, corrupt forms of politics. As Rich notes, in post-Cold War debates, the term warlord 'conjures up armed grouping operating for the most part outside any framework of law and in situations where the authority of legitimate government has mostly broken down'.[72] It is in these kinds of areas, where war was an adequate, even appropriate, device for establishing and maintaining an autonomous order, that 'warlords' were recognised to flourish.

Quasi-contingent notions of the imperial margins linked the concept of warlord to wider Anglo-American cultural understandings about what existed in the ambiguous spaces beyond the reach of empire.[73] This component, for example, contributed to the near ubiquity of 'warlords' in the broad fantasy genre.[74] Whether in comic books set in alternate realities, television shows about magical realms, or videogames pitting rival 'civilizations' against each other, 'warlords' were recognised in American popular culture to exist beyond the writ of any political authority, where war enabled them to operate independent of basic moral constraints or political patronage.[75] Analogous cultural allusions can be found in Victorian supernatural literature. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, for example, used Kubla Khan to explore war, tyranny, and inequality in the dreamlike world of Xanadu.[76] Decades later, the image of the 'warlord' could be found in H. Rider Haggard's *Ayesha* series, which centred around an all-powerful queen in the lost kingdom of Kôr on the colonial African continent.[77] The far-flung areas across which 'warlords' were identified in US and British imperialism are suggestive of a wider assumption about their capacity to thrive in the margins of imperial order.

The quasi-contingent component had a second influence on core notions of autonomy. The convoluted nature of unruly frontiers and weak states brought into

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[72] Rich, 'Warlords, State Fragmentation and the Dilemma of Humanitarian Intervention', p. 78.

[73] More on cultural underpinnings of imperial geography can be found in Derek Gregory, *The Colonial Present: Afghanistan, Palestine, and Iraq* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004); Ann Laura Stoler, 'Imperial Formations and the Opacities of Rule', in Craig Calhoun, Frederick Cooper, and Kevin W. Moore (eds.), *Lessons of Empire: Imperial Histories and American Power*, (New York: New Press, 2006), pp. 48-60.

[74] Detailed accounts about the links between the fantasy and US and British imperialism can be found in Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990); Karen Michalson, *Victorian Fantasy Literature: Literary Battles with Church and Empire* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990); John Carlos Rowe, *Literary Culture and U.S. Imperialism: From the Revolution to World War II* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), chap. 3.

[75] See for instance Paul Robert Coyle, 'Ten Little Warlords', *Xena: Warrior Princess*, Season 2, Episode 8, directed by Charles Siebert, aired 18 November 1996, 46 mins; Mike Grell *et al.*, *The Warlord: The Saga* (New York: DC Comics, 2010); Sid Meier, *Civilization IV: Warlords* (Sparks, MD: Firaxis Games, 2006).

[76] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Christabel, Kubla Khan: A vision, The Pains of Sleep* (London: W. Bulmer and Co., 1816).

[77] Perhaps the most famous instalment in this series is H. Rider Haggard, *She: A History of Adventure* (London; New York: Penguin Books, [1887] 2001).

perspective the degree of order 'warlords' maintained in their respective dominions. Although subject to the social ills endemic to the non-European world, including corruption, violence, and poverty, the fiefdoms that 'warlords' were recognised to forge and rule presented some contrast from the chaos recognised in surrounding troubled frontiers and collapsed states. This conclusion pervades an account of the unrest in post-apartheid South Africa. In the 'vast squatter settlements' outside of Durham, the author recognised various 'warlords' to have 'moved into the vacuum of law and accountable power' to create cohesive dominions:

> In their own fiefs they can tax and recruit, run protection rackets, hire hit men, and finance private militias by extorting tribute from their subjects, whether those are peasants or squatters.[78]

Such discernable examples of order seemingly separated 'warlords' from bandits, criminals, and gangsters, which were presumed to be unable or unwilling to consolidate their violent authority to create identifiable political units. Likewise, the terrestrial nature of this imperial geography distinguished 'warlords' from more territorial seaborne actors, including pirates, corsairs, and buccaneers. Although many US commentators drew comparisons, the relatively fixed quality of 'warlord' dominions suggested a degree of durability not found among seaborne actors.[79] The unrest considered endemic to areas beyond the remit of empire brought the degree of order found in 'warlord' dominions into sharper relief.

The capacity for 'warlords' to create identifiable political orders had particular resonance in US imperialism. Amid considerable uncertainty fears about the potential retreat of the Westphalian order in the global south, many American commentators recognised 'warlords' to create alternatives to the nation-states. Although often considered coherent political-territorial entities, little consensus emerged in the United States about the desirability of these dominions. William Reno, for instance, noted that many 'warlords' in post-Cold War Africa were able to forge shadow states or, in his words, 'quasi-state alternatives'. These territories filled voids created by weak states, delivering governance, tax systems, and connections to international marketplaces.[80] These alterative orders were also seen as threats to the Westphalian nation-state, particularly fragile ones. The threat of 'warlord' fiefdoms was particularly flagrant, but also urgent, following the overthrow of the Taliban in Afghanistan. In late 2011, after assisting coalition forces in toppling the regime, many members of the Northern Alliance

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[78] 'The Warlords of Natal' *Atlantic*, vol. 273, no. 3, March 1994, p. 87.

[79] Some examples from American popular culture can be found in Jeffrey H. Norwitz, 'Pirates, Terrorists, and Warlords: The History, Influence, and Future of Armed Groups around the World' (New York: Skyhorse Publishing 2009); Ben Thompson, *Badass: A Relentless Onslaught of the Toughest Warlords, Vikings, Samurai, Pirates, Gunfighters, and Military Commanders Ever to Live* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009).

[80] William Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1998), p. 20.

were more concerned with securing their personal spoils than charting Afghanistan's political future at the UN-convened Bonn Conference. 'Many key warlords,' Rod Nordland noted at the time, 'are so busy consolidating their gains at home that they won't be attending Tuesday's meeting in Bonn, which is intended to lay the interim groundwork for forming a badly needed multiethnic government'.[81] The potential for 'warlords' to create identifiable territorial orders speaks to the way in which the quasi-contingent imperial margins component provided a frame against which the autonomy of warlords was understood.

The quasi-contingent component's two features, a permissive environment and evidence of order, embedded 'warlords' in the perceived margins of US and British imperialism. 'Warlords' were distant but discernable features of the limits of empire. Yusef Komunyakaa captures the concept's geographic qualities in 'The Warlord's Garden'.[82] The poem begins by identifying an unnamed 'warlord' that commandeered natural and manmade modes of warfare to maintain a cohesive dominion, one organised in service of the global narcotics trade:

> He has bribed the thorns/to guard his poppies./They intoxicate the valley/with their forbidden scent/reddening the horizon/till it is almost as if they aren't there./Maybe the guns guard/only the notorious dreams in his head. [83]

The remote nature of this dominion comes into sharper relief as the harvested poppy travels 'cross the country/on horseback/on river rafts/following some falling star' to reach its foreign market. More importantly, in tracing this journey to the 'night streets of Europe', Komunyakaa illustrates the identifiable nature of this dominion. The sheer distance and ambiguous geographic clues only affirm the heightened sense that, regardless of the setting, 'warlord' fiefdoms stood out in otherwise convoluted political environments. Across the imperial margins, 'warlords' were understood to prosper in environments that are at once susceptible to their coercive autonomy, as well as conducive to their attempts to impose order.

Anglo-American understandings about the existence of 'warlords' in the imperial margins have considerable significance for the cultural constructions of war. Variation in the imperial margins in which the political concept was deployed, whether along social, political, or geographic lines, contributed to differing understandings of the kind of war perpetrated by 'warlords'. The relationship between these two quasi-contingent components, for example, can be seen in how 'warlords' located at the limits of the Islamic world were often portrayed as waging some violent form of religious fanaticism,

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[81] Rod Nordland, 'Warlord Nation', *Newsweek*, vol. 138, no. 12, 3 December 2001, p. 47.
[82] Yusef Komunyakaa, 'The Warlord's Garden', *Ploughshares*, Winter 2007/2008, vol. 33, no. 4, p. 103-4.
[83] Ibid., p. 103.

one in which fervour replaces fear in the warrior on the battlefield. As discussed in Chapter 4 with respect Charles Taylor and his National Patriotic Front of Liberia, 'warlords' located in sub-Saharan Africa were often inflected with deep-seated notions about the tribal—and therefore primitive—nature of their guerrilla warfare. The imperial margins component ties the concept of warlord to a range of cultural assumptions, images, and conclusions that animated Anglo-American notions about how war is conducted in the global south.

The Anglo-American imperial imaginary that 'warlords' populated was conceived in geographic terms. The irregular, unstable forms of politics found in the areas beyond margins of empire constituted more than just a permissive space for 'warlords' to exercise their autonomy. It also served as a backdrop against which their capacity to consolidate a degree of order in their respective fiefdoms became more evident.

Limited popular support

The final quasi-contingent component, limited popular support, followed from Anglo-American understandings about the coercive authority that 'warlords' wielded over their dominions. As both the principal source and expression of autonomy, war was recognised to condition all facets of the relationship between 'warlords' and civilians, institutions, and social groups located in their dominion. Other sources of authority, such as nepotism, charisma, or social contract, were derived from—and secondary to—the capacity of 'warlords' to wage violent conflict. The primacy of war departed from basic liberal precepts in US and British conclusions about just relations between leaders and their subjects.[84] As seen with other martial figures in the global south, including tyrants, dictators, and strongmen, the primacy of war contributed to an enduring suspicion about the degree of popular support that 'warlords' enjoyed in their dominions. 'Warlords' were seemingly defined by the absence of such support.

The importance of this quasi-contingent component can be seen in contemporary American debates about the illegitimacy of 'warlords'. In various formulations, a lack of popular support was seen as logically necessary, such that the existence of such relations would render the political concept unintelligible or incommunicable. Antonio Giustozzi, for instance, presented the lack of popular support in terms of the absence of legitimacy. The existence of this political legitimacy would recast the 'warlord' as a different political actor. 'Political legitimacy,' he contended, 'defines the warlord by its absence.

[84] Evidence of this assumption can be seen in several attempts to use game theory and formal modelling to make sense of how 'warlords' use violence. See for example Jean-Paul Azam, 'On Thugs and Heroes: Why Warlords Victimize their Own Civilians', *Economics of Governance*, vol. 7, no. 1, January 2006, pp. 53-73.

The warlord may develop it, but if a warlord succeeded in legitimising his political power, he would no longer be considered a warlord, but a king, a president, or at least as a political leader'.[85] Greater support for 'warlords', by this account, would make recast their autonomy to resemble that of more circumscribed political actors, ones without the freedom of action that define the political concept. T.P. Robinson gave equal significance to this feature, albeit by framing it in slightly different terms. He argued that the 'twenty-first century warlord' should be reserved for those leaders that lack popular support, as captured in a basic liberal democratic mechansisms. In his words, 'the warlord should also be operating without democratic mandate or reference to some form of electoral majority….an actor should only be deemed a warlord if he is operating without popular support'.[86] A lack of popular support was considered in US debates to be a logical outgrowth of the coercive acts that 'warlords' perpetrated in the global south.

This quasi-contingent component conditioned many US and British accounts about the kind of political life found in 'warlord' dominions. Although the imperial margins were recognised to be particularly unstable, where violence pervaded political life, war seemingly diminished the potential for any political community akin to those in the metropole to form in 'warlord' dominions. American human rights advocates warned after the Cold War about the fundamental threats 'warlords' posed to the core components of democratic life, such as free and fair elections, local leaders, and the all encompassing 'civil society' in areas across the global south.[87] The violent tendencies of 'warlords' raised considerable doubts about the nature of any political community that claimed to support this kind of armed actor. This suspicion, for instance, was at the forefront of British political debates about Sudan in the late nineteenth century, as British intelligence officers pushed for the launch of an imperial small war against the Khalifa. Successive volumes stressed how the 'Arab warlord' had perverted the religious state inherited from his predecessor, the Mahdi, and members of his tribe had displaced entire communities to claim the best land.[88] War seemingly corrupted any kind of political relationship, such that those individuals or communities supporting a 'warlord' were dismissed as either forced to submit to his will or corrupted by his patronage.

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[85] Giustozzi, *Empires of Mud*, p. 9.

[86] Robinson, 'Twenty-First Century Warlords', p. 126.

[87] See for example, Adam Hochschild, 'Congo: Heart of Sadness', *Amnesty International Magazine*, Fall 2005. Available at <http://www.amnestyusa.org/amnesty-magazine/fall-2003/congo-heart-of-sadness/page.do?id=1105142>. Accessed 10 January 2010; Human Rights Watch, *Somalia: Beyond the Warlords* (New York: Human Rights Watch, March 1993).

[88] Perhaps the most famous volume in the series edited by Colonel Francis Wingate was Rudolf C. Slatin, *Fire and Sword in the Sudan: A Personal Narrative of Fighting and Serving the Dervishes* (London; New York: Edward Arnold, 1896).

The presumed lack of popular support conditioned Anglo-American notions of the autonomy 'warlords' enjoyed across the global south. In the absence of a meaningful community, one that might endorse or even legitimise the use of war, US and British commentators, policymakers, and advocates were suspicious of the supposed political objectives of 'warlords'. Such doubts were especially pronounced in US policy debates about the changing character of war after the Cold War. Gettleman, for instance, implicated 'warlords' in the blurred reality between crime and war in the global south. 'In one country after another,' he argued, 'conflicts have morphed from idea- or cause-driven struggles to warlord-led drives whose essential goal is plunder. Because those new rebel movements are motivated and financed by crime, popular support becomes irrelevant. Those in control don't care about hearts and minds. They see the local population as prey'.[89] Marina Ottaway recognised the autonomy of 'warlords' as presenting an even more deplorable moral situation in many territories. In her words:

> It is the apparent aimlessness, the violence and pillaging for no clearly discernible purpose rather than in the pursuit of a goal, that give warlordism a particularly negative connotation….Violence without goals is not only unacceptable, but also incomprehensible. While it is at least possible to understand why liberation movements have recourse to violence and even acts of terrorism, it is beyond understanding why the Revolutionary Front in Sierra Leone maims children and adults for no reason.[90]

Unencumbered by the rule of law or political institutions, many of the leaders cast as 'warlords' were indicted for enriching themselves and their supporters at the expense of surrounding communities.

These deep-seated doubts distinguish 'warlords', at least to some degree, from many of the other non-European leaders recognised to use war to forge identifiable dominions in the global south. Few armed actors, perhaps even the most deplored ones, faced the degree of suspicion ascribed to 'warlords'. Throughout the *US Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, for example, readers were warned about the capacity for the insurgents to co-opt the support of surrounding populations by appealing to various forms of 'traditional authority'.[91] As the manual explained

> Many contemporary insurgencies involve mobilization based on clan, tribe, or ethnic group. These insurgencies are often led by traditional authority figures, such as sheikhs and religious leaders. Rather than being codified in impersonal rules, traditional authority is usually

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[89] Jeffrey Gettleman, 'The Perfect Weapon for the Meanest Wars', *New York Times*, 29 April 2007, p. 1.

[90] Marina Ottaway, 'Rethinking Warlords', *SAIS Review*, vol. 20, no. 2, Summer-Fall 2000, pp. 262-3.

[91] United States Department of the Army and United States Marine Corps, *The U.S. Army Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2006), pp. 3-9, 3-10, 3-14.

> invested in a hereditary line or invested in a particular office by a higher power.[92]

A related and equally timeless kind of armed leader, the revolutionary, is recognised to secure the support of political communities through different means. Following several nineteenth century revolts, including Jamaica (1831-32), India (1857), and Sudan (1885), British colonial commentators warned about the capacity for rebels to rally widespread popular support based on propagating ideological agendas.[93] Furthermore, not matter how cruel, oriental despots were recognised to have a lasting affinity with their subjects. As one pamphleteer noted, 'Oriental despotism is mitigated by the sympathy which a common origin and a common faith create between the ruler and his subjects'.[94] The coercive authority precluded 'warlords' from being ascribed with the political qualities found in other violent leaders in US and British imperialism.

Drawing on the work of Freeden and Koselleck, this section made the case for conceiving of 'warlord' as a political concept. The proposed approach helps brings into sharper relief the broad assumptions, logic, and arguments that made 'warlords' an enduring part of US and British imperialism. Based on this framework, the concept of warlord can be studied by identifying a core understanding of the autonomy that non-European leaders derived from the use of war to establish dominion over populations and territories. Further attention to the tendency to locate 'warlords' in the margins of empire and Anglo-American doubts about their capacity to garner meaningful popular support helps make the political concept a coherent object of study.

Evolution of 'warlords' in US and British imperialism

The proposed conceptual approach is valuable insofar as it can account for the evolution of the concept of warlord throughout the history of each empire. As a social construct, the political concept had the capacity to change, both in form and meaning, within each imperial system and vary in important ways across them. These contingencies mean a way to study the various influences that shaped US and British conceptions of 'warlords' and its expression is required before the discursive history of the political concept in each imperial system can be studied.

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[92] Ibid., p. 1-11.

[93] Evidence of the anxieties surrounding rebels encountered in each insurrection can be found in 'Insurrection in Jamaica', *Morning Chronicle*, 21 February 1832, pp. 2-3; 'Mutiny in India', *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 5 July 1857, p. 3; 'Position of Affairs in the Soudan', *Anti-Slavery Reporter and Aborigines' Friend*, vol. 3, no. 3, March 1883, pp. 87-8.

[94] John Dacosta, 'Essays on Indian Affairs, 1892-1895', *Bristol Selected Pamphlets*, 1895, p. 11.

Building on the scholarship about the history of political concepts, this section argues for studying the concept of warlord within the wider colonial discourses that have structured US and British imperialism. A discursive approach, particularly one based on post-colonial insights about discourse and empire, provides the analytic scope necessary to draw larger conclusions about the political concept from a variety of primary and secondary sources.

Political concepts and colonial discourse

Changes in meaning, expression, and political significance are an essential part of the history of political concepts. Koselleck captures the mutable nature of political concepts in noting, 'The original contexts of concepts change; so, too, does the original or subsequent meaning carried by concepts'.[95] Given this potential, he concludes, 'The record of how their [i.e., concepts'] uses were…maintained, altered, or transformed may properly be called the history of concepts'.[96] Despite the intuitive nature of this argument, the concept of warlord and its evolution present a number of challenges. Perhaps the most immediate one is how to account for the various influences that shaped US and British understandings of 'warlords'. As noted in the previous chapter, 'warlords' appeared throughout US and British imperialism: administrators detailed their limited popular support in colonial correspondence; Hollywood glorified their autonomous nature in television shows and blockbuster movies; and advocates deplored their coercive acts in the print media. To reconcile these various appearances requires a way to understand how different constructions of 'warlords' combined to shape the dominant meaning and most frequent expressions of the political concept. This task is complicated, to some degree, by the attempt to examine the concept in both US and British imperialism. The proposed discursive history requires a way not only to trace the concept's evolution across the different political contexts found in each empire, but also an analytical structure in which to compare this evolution across the two imperial systems.

These demands reveal the limits of Freeden's conceptual approach for the study of 'warlords' in US and British imperialism. As mentioned above, Freeden distinguishes between ineliminable and quasi-contingent components to parse many of the most influential ideologies found in Western politics into their constitutive political concepts. This conceptual approach helps make the changing form and nature of these ideologies

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[95] Reinhart Koselleck, 'A Response to Comments on the Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe', in Harmut Lehmann and Melvin Richter (eds.), *The Meaning of Historical Terms and Concepts: New Studies on Begriffsgeschichte*, (Washington, D.C.: German Historical Institute, 1996), p. 62.

[96] Ibid., pp. 62-3.

more apparent. Although this framework can be applied to the study of 'warlords', it is difficult to adapt the wider conceptual approach to the historical, political, and cultural registers found in US and British imperialism. The breadth of discursive settings in which 'warlords' appear, ranging from elite policy debates to popular culture, are not as cohesive as the canonical writings of political philosophers found in Freeden's work. A more robust way to reconcile the varied, competing, and ambiguous influences that shaped US and British imperialism must be found. To trace the evolution of 'warlords' in US and British imperial thought requires an approach able to accommodate the peculiarities of each imperial system and allows comparisons across them.

Despite these limitations, an underdeveloped dimension of the history of political concepts literature offers the beginnings of a solution. Several scholars interested in political concepts, including Freeden and Koselleck, recognise discourse, that is, bounded patterns of thought and speech, to be a relevant part of their field of inquiry to the extent that it comprises part of the wider historical and political contexts in which concepts develop and operate.[97] Despite this recognition, discourse remains a marginal part of the field of study. This could be because discourse raises too many cumbersome theoretical issues or, in other cases, more suitable alternatives, such as ideology or social history, seemingly subsume it.[98] Nonetheless, even in the limited discussion about discourse, it is possible to recognise how these structured patterns of thought can help bring into focus the concept of warlord's history. This possible contribution derives, in large part, from the basic relationship between political concepts and discourses. Concepts are recognised to be mutually constitutive with the institutionalised patterns of thought in which they appear—that is, changes in one are recognised to manifest in the other. Koselleck offers perhaps the most lucid summary of this close relationship:

> Although basic concepts always function within a discourse they are pivots around which all arguments turn….Each depends inescapably on the other. A discourse requires basic concepts in order to express what it is talking about. An analysis of concepts requires command of both linguistics and extra-linguistic contexts, including those provided by discourse. Only by such knowledge of context can the analyst determine what are a concept's multiple meanings, its content, importance, and the extent to which it is contested.[99]

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[97] See for example Terence Ball, *Transforming Political Discourse: Political Theory and Critical Conceptual History* (Oxford; New York: Blackwell, 1988); William E. Connolly, *The Terms of Political Discourse* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983); Melvin Richter, *The History of Political and Social Concepts: A Critical Introduction.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

[98] Such criticism can be found in J.G.A. Pocock, 'Concepts and Discourses: A Difference in Culture? Comment on a Paper by Melvin Richter', in Harmut Lehmann and Melvin Richter (eds.), *The Meaning of Historical Terms and Concepts: New Studies on Begriffsgeschichte*, (Washington, D.C.: German Historical Institute, 1996), pp. 47-58.

[99] Koselleck, 'A Response to Comments on the Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe', p. 65.

The evolution of the concept of warlord, by this account, can be studied by tracing the influence of larger shifts in the discourse within which the concept appeared. This may mean, for example, examining how, following the launch of the Global War on Terror, the US government re-conceptualised official notions of the imperial margins, which contributed to many 'Afghan' and 'Somali warlords' being recast from lingering menaces to reliable partners at the frontlines of the fight against terrorism.[100] Discourse provides a broad analytic framework through which the evolution of the concept of warlord can be studied.

To apply this basic insight requires a fuller understanding of discourse and its function in empire. Such an account can be found in the broad field of post-colonial theory. Drawing heavily on the work of post-structuralist theorists, various post-colonial scholars have devoted considerable attention to 'colonial discourse'.[101] Peter Hulme offers one of the more precise, and arguably influential, definitions in describing colonial discourse as 'an ensemble of linguistically-based practices unified in their common deployment in the management of colonial relationships'.[102] As with any discourse, colonial discourse necessarily contains a degree of ambiguity and contradiction; however, the rules and practices that structure it are grounded, in the most basic sense, in the assumed superiority of the metrople's culture, history, language, art, political institutions, and social conventions relative to those in the periphery. As David Spurr explains, 'There is no real center to this discourse, apart from the historically central motive that authority must be maintained'.[103] Colonial discourse thus emerges both in support and as a result of imperial projects. This system of knowledge casts imperialism in a framework that, above all else, protects the metropole's ascendancy: it tends to exclude statements about the exploitation of the resources of the colonised or the

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[100] For more on the convoluted place of 'warlords' in the Global War on Terror see Roland Marchal, 'Warlordism and Terrorism: How to Obscure an Already Confusing Crisis? The Case of Somalia', *International Affairs*, vol. 83, no. 6, 2007, pp. 1091-1106.

[101] Although most post-colonial scholars share a debt to Michel Foucault and his writings on discourse, a range of definitions about discourse pervade the various academic fields concerned with the history of imperialism. It is beyond the scope of this project to explore the nuances of the various interpretations of colonial discourse. However, this breadth can be seen in some of the most notable parts of the post-colonial canon, including Homi Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse', *October*, vol. 28, Spring 1984, pp. 125-33; Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993); Gayatri Spivak, *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

[102] Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492-1797* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 2. The influence of this definition can be seen in Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Sara Mills, *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

[103] David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration* (Durham, NC & London: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 11.

imperial power's accrued political status.[104] Instead, it conceals these benefits in statements about the inferiority of imperial subjects, the primitive nature of other races, and the barbaric depravity of the non-European world. These patterns leave the imperial power with a duty to introduce greater order in the periphery.

Based on Koselleck's argument about the mutually constitutive relationship between political concepts and discourse, it is possible to identify key shifts in the history of the political concept by examining the evolving place of 'warlords' in US and British colonial discourses. This involves recognising how wider discursive shifts, such as the imperial expansion during the 'Scramble for Africa' or the advent of the US-led Global War on Terror, altered the basic logical, political, and cultural parameters within which the concept operated. These discursive shifts bring into sharper relief how the various quasi-contingent components—namely, war, imperial margins, and lack of support—manifested in the political concept and the significance for the concept's wider meaning and expression. Furthermore, the changing political meaning of the concept becomes more evident by following how 'warlords' were cited in larger political debates in each imperial setting. The differing conclusions derived from the identification of 'warlords', such as the promise of military conquest or the debauched nature of order in the global south, provides greater perspective into the changing significance of the political concept in US and British imperialism.

Before such a discursive history can begin, it is paramount to identify the contours of a British and American colonial discourse. Such an understanding is essential if the political concept of warlord is to be located within US and British imperialism, as well as its history traced across both imperial traditions. This task is complicated by both the contrived nature of discourse in general and the sprawling nature of colonial discourse in particular. As numerous post-colonial scholars note, given the constructed nature of colonial discourse, it is necessarily too far-reaching and intricate to be understood in its entirety. 'In speaking of colonial discourse,' David Spurr warns, 'one necessarily treads on unstable ground; one seeks to identify the colonizing gestures in language while recognizing the impossibility of containing them within a bounded textual field'.[105] A careful—if ultimately incomplete—portrait can be devised by examining three features. First, reoccurring structural patterns, including longstanding assumptions, tropes, and conclusions, can reveal the surface rules and practices that underpinned each colonial discourse. Second, the adherence to these rules

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[104] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (London; New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 43-5.

[105] Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire*, p. 2. The implications of this for the study of discourse is examined in Jennifer Milliken, 'The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods', *European Journal of International Relations*, vol. 5, no. 2, 1999, pp. 225-54.

and practices across different texts, whether in government documents, travel narratives, or visual images, not only confirms the coherence of each discourse, but it also reveals how certain ideas acquire recognition as true or commonsense through repeated usage. Third, decisive shifts in the history of each empire provide a further context in which to identify the broad boundaries of US and British colonial discourse. By identifying recurring features of colonial debate and knowledge production, particularly across various mediums, it is possible to delineate the broad features of US and British colonial discourses.

The close relationship between political concepts and discourse provide the beginnings of a theoretical framework through which to study the evolution of the concept of warlord. The broad contours of each colonial discourse will be examined in turn, beginning with the British form.

Towards a British colonial discourse

The historical span encompassed in Britain's Imperial Century is captured in the evolving notion of empire that characterised British colonial discourse during this period. Following the end of the Napoleonic Wars (1799-1815), Britain emerged as the pre-eminent European global power, one able to use its considerable military reach to influence affairs in many parts of the non-European world. However, this power was understood among many political elites and popular commentators as evidence of Britain's moral duty to be an ameliorative influence across the globe.[106] This exceptional mission, one built around missionary ideals and humanitarian purposes, gave way to a more functional understanding of the British Empire as a colonial project. This shift can be seen in nationalist terms used to describe the British Empire, particularly during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Amid growing debate about the merits and lost principles of British imperialism, particularly in the wake of the 'Indian Mutiny' (1857), empire was treated as an essential way not only to preserve stability and order in subordinate territories, but also to ensure Britain's prestige as the pre-eminent global power.[107] At the start of the twentieth century, for instance, the viceroy of India, Lord Curzon, noted, 'As long as we rule India, we are the greatest power in the world. If we lose it, we shall drop straightway to a third-rate power'.[108] This anxiety about the risk of

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[106] See Karuna Mantena, *Alibis of Empire: Henry Maine and the Ends of Liberal Imperialism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).

[107] Perhaps the most noted radical treatment at the time can be found in J. A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (New York: Cosimo, [1902] 2006).

[108] Quoted in Denis Judd, *Empire: The British Imperial Experience from 1765 to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1998), p. 78.

losing dominion over imperial holdings reflected the deep-seated place of empire in British conceptions of the industrial nation's prosperity.

Deepening contact with a growing number of non-European societies spurred the development of more authoritative forms of colonial knowledge about the global south. Several overlapping systems of classification evolved throughout this period to become the principal frames through which the non-European world, including areas populated by 'warlords', was rendered an intelligible in the British metropole.[109] The binary of 'civilisation' and 'barbarism' constituted a principal spectrum against which wider racial, social, and political assumptions were organised.[110] It allowed, for instance, the construction of elaborate hierarchies of civilised states, as well as differentiations between types of 'barbarians' according to various criteria, including theology, technological superiority, and economic success, that justified imperial dominance. As John Stuart Mill famously declared, 'despotism is a legitimate mode of government in dealing with barbarians, provided the end be their improvement, and the means justified by actually effecting that end'.[111] Many of these notions about the uncivilised nature of the global south hardened throughout the Imperial Century, as racial categories became further entrenched in British colonial discourse. The development of more scientific forms of racism, many inspired by Charles Darwin's theories of evolution, lent further authority to longstanding conclusions about the inherent backwardness nature of 'traditional' societies and 'native' communities across the global south.[112]

A deepening belief in the intractable nature of the non-European world developed alongside a changing sense about the imperative of British imperial rule. The willed and purposive moral project of empire found early in the nineteenth century retreated in political significance during the Imperial Century, giving way to a more functionalist vision of imperial rule. The earliest inflections of British imperialism brought together fundamental liberal notions about the legitimacy of empire as a means to bridge cultural differences between people by spreading the benefits of civilisation. The place of Britain at the centre of this universalist project was captured in William Huskisson's declaration in 1828:

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[109] For an overview of major shifts in British accounts of the non-European world during this period see Duncan S. A. Bell, 'Empire and International Relations in Victorian Political Thought', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 49, no. 1, 2006, p. 284.

[110] See for example Mill, 'Civilization'.

[111] John Stuart Mill, 'On Liberty', in John M. Robson (ed.), *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, vol. 18, (Toronto: Univeristy of Toronto Press, 1977), p. 224.

[112] The most influential texts were Charles Darwin, *On the Origins of Species* (London: John Murray, 1859); Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man* (London: D. Appleton and Co., 1871).

> In every quarter of the globe we have planted the seeds of freedom, civilisation and Christianity. To every quarter of the globe we have carried the language, the free institutions, the systems of laws, which prevail in this country;—in every quarter they are fructifying and making progress.[113]

Such conclusions about the potential for British progress to bring order to exotic lands endured even the hardening of racial assumptions about the hierarchy of racial difference. This can be seen in Cecil Rhodes' famous remark that 'the British are the finest race in the world, and the more of the world they inhabit, the better it will be for mankind'.[114] However, amid repeated rebellions and instability in the colonies, perhaps most notably the 'Indian Mutiny' (1857), many of the liberal universalisms that predominated early calls for Britain to share the benefits of civilisation began to give way to more sober vision of empire. In a speech at the Royal Colonial Institute in 1897, for instance, Joseph Chamberlain noted that, while some of the British Empire's methods were 'beyond reproach', including wars of conquest, it did bring with it 'greater security to life, property, and a material improvement in the condition of the bulk of the population'.[115] As he continued

> In carrying out this work of civilization we are fulfilling what I believe to be our national mission, and we are finding scope for the exercise of those faculties and qualities which have made us a great governing race.[116]

The development of a more nationalist vision of imperialism, that is, with the empire as the fulfilling a political mission unique to the Britain, developed throughout British colonial discourse over the Imperial Century.

The pursuit of empire became a more varied process throughout the Imperial Century. The expanding reach of the British Empire, combined with increasing encounters with violent resistance, fostered increasingly complex conceptions about how the metropole could promote greater order in the non-European world. Early notions about enforcing broad normative and legal consensus, as exemplified in the abolition of slavery in British territories, gave way to more varied ideas about the influence Britain could exercise over the global south. The British government's nationalisation of the East India Company, for instance, marked the expansion of more indirect models of rule across the non-European world. The proliferation of different forms of dominions, whether protectorates, dominions, or colonies, did not diminish the order Britain

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[113] William Huskisson, 'Civil Government of Canada', in *The Speeches of the Right Honorable William Huskisson*, vol. 3, (London: J. Murray, [1828] 1831), p. 287.

[114] Reprinted in John Flint, *Cecil Rhodes* (Boston, MA: Little Brown, 1974), p. 248.

[115] Joseph Chamberlain, 'The True Conception of Empire', in Harriet Tuell and Roy W. Hatch (eds.), *Selected Readings in English History*, (Boston, MA: Ginn & Co., [1897] 1913), p. 485.

[116] Ibid.

brought to the global south. Instead, it reflected the capacity for Britain to curtail the tendency of even the most unruly or far-flung native societies towards dissolution by establishing viable governments and free trade. The establishment of British law in India, for example, was regarded by one of its most outspoken proponents, the Earl of Mayo, as a 'conquest more striking, more durable, and far more solid, than the physical conquest which renders it possible,' because law, 'the gospel of the English', brought order to a 'theatre of disorder'.[117] Amid the growing differentiation of non-European populations, the order of the British Empire stoked greater debate among many British observers about the possibility that the most advanced political groups could eventually govern themselves.

Towards an American colonial discourse

After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and with it the collapse of the Soviet Union, many celebrated the United States' entrance into an age of unrivalled global power, even if the nature of its new status remained somewhat ill defined. Beginning in the early 1990s, for instance, commentators and policy elites launched protracted debates about the nature of the post-Cold War global order. Competing accounts of 'American Hegemony'[118], the 'Lonely Superpower'[119], and its 'Unipolar Moment'[120] highlighted different facets of American power and advanced contrasting understanding of the United States' place in global politics. Similar tensions played out in militarised parts of American popular culture. Many of the iconic, all-purpose male heroes of the Cold War, including G.I. Joe action figures and Jack Ryan of the Tom Clancy franchise, were repurposed to continue defending the United States' global pre-eminence, even in the absence of their respective long-time enemies, including 'Communist agitators', Soviet spies, and the Red Army.[121] In contrast with British colonial discourse a century earlier, this unresolved debate about American pre-eminence was distinguished by a widespread reluctance to characterise the United States as an empire.[122] This aversion, as several scholars note, is a deep-seated feature of US political culture in which the

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[117] Quoted in Sandra den Otter, 'Rewriting the Utilitarian Market: Colonial Law and Custom in mid-Nineteenth-Century British India', *The European Legacy*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2001, p. 177.

[118] Christopher Layne and Benjamin Schwarz, 'American Hegemony: Without an Enemy', *Foreign Policy*, no. 92, Autumn 1993, pp. 5-23.

[119] Samuel P. Huntington, 'The Lonely Superpower', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 78, no. 2, April 1999, pp. 35-49.

[120] Charles Krauthammer, 'The Unipolar Moment', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 70, no. 1, 1990-91, pp. 23-33.

[121] For more on each see Tom Engelhardt, *The End of Victory Culture: Cold War America and the Disillusioning of a Nation* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), pp. 302-3; William Terdoslavich, *The Jack Ryan Agenda: Policy and Politics in the Novels of Tom Clancy: An Unauthorized Analysis* (New York: Forge, 2005).

[122] Notable exceptions include Robert Kagan, 'The Benevolent Empire', *Foreign Policy*, no. 111, Summer 1998, pp. 24-35.

country's democratic roots and anti-colonial heritage makes the notion of empire unpalatable.[123] The initial forms of American colonial discourse was characterised by an unresolved search for way to characterize the country's post-Cold War identity.

This supposed antipathy for empire began to ease after the attacks of 11 September. The launch of wars in Afghanistan and, perhaps even more so, Iraq (2003-), and the articulation of more unilateralist foreign policy principles, inspired greater debates about the degree to which the United States constituted an empire.[124] As the conservative columnist Charles Krauthammer noted in 2002, 'People are now coming out of the closet on the word "empire." The fact is no country has been as dominant culturally, economically, technologically and militarily in the history of the world since the Roman Empire'.[125] Officials in the Bush administration rejected charges that it was pursuing an American Empire. In an April 2003 interview, for example, Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld rebuffed a question about the United States' imperial nature, stating 'We don't seek empires. We're not imperialistic. We never have been. I can't imagine why you'd even ask the question'.[126] Regardless of such official challenges, many liberal and conservative commentators delved into the merits and implications of the United States' growing imperial stature, often drawing lessons from previous empires.[127] In some cases, enthusiasts of American Empire cited Britain and its exploits in spreading order in the global south to bolster calls for the United States to take up the burden of empire.[128] Max Boot, one of the most outspoken supporters of American imperialism, argued in the weeks after the attacks of 9/11, 'Afghanistan and other troubled lands today cry out for the sort of enlightened foreign administration once provided by self-confident Englishmen in spurs and pith helmets'.[129] An increasing

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[123] As William Appleman Williams noted decades ago, 'One of the central themes of American historiography is that there is no American empire'. See William Appleman Williams, 'The Frontier Thesis and American Foreign Policy', *The Pacific Historical Review*, vol. 24, no. 4, November 1955, p. 379.

[124] Examples include Michael Ignatieff, *Empire Lite* (London: Vintage, 2003); G. John Ikenberry, 'Illusions of Empire: Defining the New American Order', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 83, no. 2, March 2004, pp. 144-54; *Fahrenheit 9/11*, DVD, directed by Michael Moore (2004; Santa Monica, CA: Lions Gate Film and IFC, 2004).

[125] Quoted in Emily Eakin, 'All Roads Lead to D.C.', *New York Times*, 31 March 2002, p. 4.

[126] Quoted in Brett Bowden, *The Empire of Civilization: The Evolution of an Imperial Idea* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009), p. 203.

[127] The propensity for historical comparisons during this period is indicative of the cultural dimension of empire. As Sheldon Pollack aptly notes, 'it is only by looking at past empires that people have learned how to be imperial at all, since empire is a cultural practice and not some natural state'. Sheldon Pollack, 'Empire and Imitation', in Craig Calhoun, Frederick Cooper, and Kevin W. Moore (eds.), *Lessons of Empire: Imperial Histories and American Power*, (New York: New Press, 2006), p. 176.

[128] Such comparisons can be found in Niall Ferguson, *Colossus* (New York: Penguin, 2004); Edward Rothstein, 'Kipling Knew What the U.S. May Now Learn', *New York Times*, 26 January 2002, p. 7.

[129] Max Boot, 'The Case for American Empire', *Weekly Standard*, vol. 7, no. 5, October 2001, pp. 28-9.

recognition of the imperial nature of the United States and the scope of its empire distinguish American post-Cold War colonial discourse.

Growing anxieties about the changing nature of global politics compounded the search for a way to characterise American power. The triumphant moment that followed the end of the Cold War, captured in Francis Fukyama's declaration that the victory of liberal democracy marked the 'end of history', proved short-lived, as a various changes were recognised to possibly endanger American ascendancy.[130] Expanding social networks, deepening economic inter-dependence, and changing migratory flows—which were often lumped together as part of 'globalisation'—rendered obsolete longstanding visions of the 'Third World'. In its place emerged a more convoluted worldview: American colonial discourse contained a desperate attempt to make sense of the debauched political systems, economic structures, and normative systems that, by some accounts, threatened the future of the Westphalian nation-state in parts of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.[131] The proliferation of collapsed states, ungoverned spaces, and unstable frontiers, many of which contained 'warlords', raised considerable alarm about the potential for unrest and disorder to spill across international borders and inciting crises across the global south.[132] Perhaps the most alarming, but also influential, account of this change can be seen in Robert Kaplan's warning about the 'coming anarchy'. The protracted violence in West Africa, he argued in 1994, should be treated as a 'premonition of the future':

> Sierra Leone is a microcosm of what is occurring in West Africa and much of the under-developed world: the withering away of central governments, the rise of tribal and regional domains, the unchecked spread of disease, and the growing pervasiveness of war.[133]

These categories became even more salient in American policy debates about the changing character of war. With armed conflict between major powers seemingly obsolete, scholars and journalists searched for ways to characterise the outbreak of civil wars in Sub-Saharan Africa and parts of Central Asia, often describing them as acts of

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[130] See Francis Fukuyama, 'The End of History?', *The National Interest*, vol. 16, Summer 1989, pp. 3-18; Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

[131] Such themes can be found in influential texts such as Jared Diamond, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed* (New York: Viking, 2005); Ken□ichi O□mae, *The End of the Nation State: The Rise of Regional Economies* (New York: Free Press, 1995); James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999).

[132] Some of the most vivid portrayals of these dangers can be seen in several Hollywood adventure films during this period, including *Beyond Borders*, DVD, directed by Martin Campbell (2003, Hollywood, CA: Paramount, 2004); *Black Hawk Down*, DVD, directed by Ridley Scott (2001; Culver City: Columbia Pictures; Los Angeles, CA: Revolution Studies, 2002); *Blood Diamonds*, DVD, directed by Edward Zwick (2006; Burbank, CA: Warner Bros., 2007).

[133] Robert D. Kaplan, 'The Coming Anarchy', *The Atlantic*, February 1994, pp. 43-76.

'ethnic cleansing', 'new wars', and harbingers of an eventual 'clash of civilisations'.[134] Many of these related anxieties developed existential significance following 9/11. American military officials designated failed states to be a principal threat to American national security.[135] Concerns about other terrorists penetrating the American homeland led to the monumental legal changes authorized in the USA PATRIOT Act (2001), as well as its re-authorization five years later.[136] Bald Orientalist constructions about jihadists, terrorists, and their threat to purportedly core American values swept popular culture.[137]

Recognition of its global stature, combined with growing anxieties, contributed to formulation of more explicit understandings about the United States' purportedly special mission in the global south. As numerous scholars note, across the various elite and popular realms, longstanding beliefs in the exceptional nature of the United States acquired new significance after the Cold War.[138] The end of the ideological struggle, many argued at the time, presented a meta-historical opportunity for the United States to shape the course of world history, largely by continuing the growth of liberal democracy and capitalism across the global south.[139] Successive administrations stressed that the United States not only exemplified these purportedly liberal values, but it also possessed a responsibility to help defend and encourage them in foreign communities. This conviction was perhaps stated most clearly in President Clinton's first inaugural address:

> our greatest strength is the power of our ideas, which are still new in many lands. Across the world we see them embraced, and we rejoice.

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[134] The seminal account of the last, and perhaps most polemic, concept can be found in Samuel Huntington, 'The Clash of Civilizations?', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, no. 3, 1993, pp. 22-49; Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

[135] *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, February 2006).

[136] See for example Mark Purdy, 'Bush's New Rules to Fight Terror Transform the Legal Landscape', *New York Times*, 25 November 2001, p. 1; Jonathan Weisman, 'Congress Arrives at a Deal on Patriot Act', *Washington Post*, 17 November 2005, p. A01.

[137] This shift is captured in the move from Serbian terrorists in the first season of the critically acclaimed first season of '24', which was filmed before 9/11, to a Middle Eastern terrorist cell in the next one. See '24-Season 2', DVD, created by Joel Surnow and Robert Cochran, (2002; Los Angeles, CA: 20th Century Fox, 2003).

[138] See for example Donald E. Pease, *The New American Exceptionalism* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2009); Bernard Porter, *Empire and Superempire: Britain, America and the World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 167-8; Said, *Culture and Imperialism*.

[139] Some of the earliest accounts of this unprecedented moment can be found in Larry Diamond, 'Promoting Democracy', *Foreign Policy*, vol. 87, Summer 1992, pp. 25-46; John Lewis Gaddis, 'Toward the Post-Cold War World', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 70, no. 2, Spring 1991, pp. 102-22; Joshua Muravchik, *Exporting Democracy: Fulfilling America's Democracy* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1991).

> Our hopes, our hearts, our hands are with those on every continent who are building democracy and freedom. Their cause is America's cause.[140]

Such appeals to a distinct American experience, one rooted in the defence of supposedly liberal principles, animated repeated calls among advocates, commentators, and policymakers for the United States government to defend human rights and 'humanitarian' principles across the global south, even through the use of force. Such issues, many concluded, were vital to the United States' core national interests, as the spread of stable and likeminded states would help ensure more high-minded objectives, such as greater peace and prosperity.[141]

As with many colonial discourses, notions of exceptionalism endowed the United States with more than just a far-reaching purpose. It was also invoked to defend the prerogative of the metropole to operate outside of the international structures it helped establish. This could be seen in reoccurring contests over the United States' responsibilities towards many of the major international political and legal bodies, such as the UN Security Council, the NATO, and the International Criminal Court (ICC).[142] Several distinctive inflections to this tradition of extraordinary responsibility and rights developed after the launch of the Global War on Terror. President George W. Bush and his neo-conservative supporters made a concerted effort to forge a consensus—both in domestic and international circles—that the United States was left to lead a coalition against nothing less than evil. Following the attacks of 9/11, he explained, the extraordinary purpose of the United States acquired new importance: 'In a single instant, we realized that this will be a decisive decade in the history of liberty, that we've been called to a unique role in human events. Rarely has the world faced a choice more clear or consequential'.[143] An enduring conclusion about the benevolent and extraordinary nature of the United States can be traced throughout American colonial discourse after the Cold War.

Competing notions about how to fulfil this distinctly American mission spurred many of the core debates that animated American colonial discourse after the Cold War.

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[140] William J. Clinton, 'Inaugural Address', Washington, D.C., 20 January 1993. Available at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/i ndex.php?pid=46366> Accessed 10 January 2009.

[141] The linkage between the United States' defence of human rights and the pursuit of more far-reaching liberal ambitions across the globe can be found in Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide* (New York: Basic Books, 2002); William Schulz, *In Our Own Best Interest: How Defending Human Rights Benefits Us All* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2001). Challenges to such conclusions can be found in *America's National Interests* (Washington, D.C.: The Commission on America's National Interests, July 2000).

[142] One of the more thoughtful accounts of these contests can be found in Harold Hongju Koh, 'On American Exceptionalism', *Stanford Law Review*, vol. 55, no. 5, May 2003, pp. 1479-527.

[143] George W. Bush, 'Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union', Washington, D.C., 29 January 2002. Available at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29644&st =evil&st1=> Accessed 10 January 2009.

One of the most influential formulations concerned the degree to which the United States should allow prevailing legal, institutional, and political structures to circumscribe its activities. Often framed around the simple dichotomy between 'unilateralism' and 'multilateralism', this tension about the exercise of American power experienced several marked shifts through the post-Cold War era. The end of the Cold War seemingly offered renewed hope for the United States to lead a more cooperative approach to address worldwide issues, as embodied in George H. W. Bush's repeated calls for a 'New World Order'.[144] This early promise was, at best, only partially realised. Early successes in multi-lateral attempts to manage global affairs, as exemplified in the US-led Operation Desert Shield (1990-91), gave way to a more convoluted record: the aborted 'humanitarian' operation in Somalia (1992-95) and inaction during the Tutsi genocide in Rwanda (1994) sparked considerable doubts about the merits of US-led multinational military efforts. Critics of the Clinton administration charged that the United States had become mired in costly and pointless overseas ventures, many of which were derided as 'nation-building', yet many human rights advocates abhorred the government's reluctance to demonstrate greater resolve to protect such interests.[145] These debates bolstered the Bush administration's dogged efforts, which began before 9/11, to claim a new imperative for the United States to defend its national interest, regardless of international convention or opinion.[146] Even as this mandate would fray, particularly amid the mounting costs and loss of life in the military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, American officials continued to defend the merits and urgency of the United States' mission in the global south.[147]

Tracing the evolution of 'warlords' in US and British colonial discourses

These colonial discourses provide a historical framework within which to situate the various political, social, and cultural influences that shaped the evolution of 'warlords' in US and British imperialism. However, given the historical scope of this dissertation,

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[144] One of the most influential articulations can be found in George H.W. Bush, 'Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the Persian Gulf Crisis and the Federal Budget Deficit', Washington, D.C., 11 September 1990. Available at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=18820&st=new+world+order&st1=> Accessed 10 January 2009.

[145] A sample of these debates can be seen in George W. Bush, 'The Second Gore-Bush Presidential Debate', Winston-Salem, NC, October 2000. Available at <http://www.debates.org/index.php?page=october-11-2000-debate-transcript> Accessed 1 March 2010.

[146] In May 2001 Krauthammer celebrated the Bush administration's unilateral withdrawal from the ABM treaty and Kyoto Protocol as evidence of the 'Bush Doctrine'. See Charles Krauthammer, 'The Bush Doctrine', *Washington Post*, 4 May 2001, p. A25.

[147] Some of the most intimate accounts can be found in Bob Woodward, *State of Denial* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006).

some method is needed to trace the concept's evolution across each imperial system. Drawing from the literature on the history of political concepts, the evolution of the political concept can be studied by combining two complementary analytic approaches.[148] The first is synchronic analysis, the study of specific points in time. Political philosophers return to particular historical moments, as captured in treatises, debates, or polemics, to explore the abstract logic and reasoning actors employed in invoking specific concepts. Synchronic analysis helps bring into sharper relief how the concept's various constitutive elements—namely autonomy, war, imperial margins, lack of popular support—were invoked to cast certain non-European leaders as 'warlords'.

The second approach, diachronic analysis, introduces a more comparative dimension to the study. Diachronic analysis traces consistencies and discrepancies in how a specific concept was employed, understood, and articulated throughout history. In contrast to synchronic analysis, this approach focuses on larger patterns in how concepts appear in political debates and, in turn, situates these trends within a wider historical context. Diachronic analysis can operate on two levels in this study, both to compare various texts from the same imperial encounter and also to examine patterns across various imperial encounters. Both approaches can help reveal how the concept's older meanings, forms, and connotations changed over time and space. The close readings of synchronic analysis and the wider historical studies of diachronic analysis make it is possible to assess how shifts in both logic and context have influenced the changing place of 'warlords' in the Anglo-American imperial imaginations.

The nature of these US and British colonial discourses, combined with the complementary modes of synchronic and diachronic study, inform the kinds of sources that can be employed to develop a discursive history of 'warlords'. The project draws heavily on primary sources, such as newspapers, advocacy reports, public speeches, policy memos, and legal documents, to reconstruct the historical contexts in which Anglo-American policymakers, commentators, and military leaders conceived of—and responded to—'warlords'. These sources provide insights into pivotal debates that helped construct leaders as 'warlords' and, more importantly, how this political concept influenced particular practices in US and British imperialism. They also offer historical details otherwise absent from secondary accounts that help explain larger patterns in Britain and the United States' respective imperial projects.

Despite their considerable influence and breadth, it is insufficient to focus exclusively on elite primary and secondary sources. To understand the influence of 'warlords' on the Anglo-American imperial imaginations one must also attend to their

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[148] Koselleck, *Futures Past*, pp. 73-91.

production in popular political spaces.[149] It is in more widely circulated materials, including pamphlets, theatre, and electronic media, that public opinion about the global south, and particularly the violent actors that populate it, began to coalesce.[150] 'The realm of culture,' to borrow the words of Christina Klein, 'far from being wholly separate from the realm of politics, offers a privileged space in which politically salient meanings can be constructed and questioned, where social categories can be defined and delimited, where shared values can be affirmed and contested'.[151] By situating elite sources within a broader political and cultural climate it is possible to develop a fuller understanding of the evolution of US and British notions of 'warlords' and the political concept's wider significance.

This dissertation also examines sources that are often overlooked in many histories of political concepts. Post-colonial discursive studies of empire have made a compelling case for loosening prevailing conceptions of what qualifies as a political 'text'. Instead of privileging written sources, several scholars have drawn on semiotics, architecture, and art history to demonstrate the value of reading and interpreting visual and physical expressions of colonial discourse.[152] This development is particularly promising for the study of 'warlords'. Many of the evocative assumptions that animated Anglo-American understandings of these leaders, such as their autonomy and coercive tendencies, were captured most powerfully in paintings, photographs, and cinema.[153] Furthermore, by studying visual representations of 'warlords,' it is possible to appreciate the pervasive quality of this concept in Anglo-American conceptions of the global south. The circulation and reproduction of these images, in many cases, outpaced other modes of communicating this political concept.

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[149] For example see Sudhir Hazareesingh and Karma Nabulsi, 'Using Archival Sources to Theorize about Politics', in David Leopold and Marc Stears (eds.), *Political Theory: Methods and Approaches*, (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 150-70.

[150] This pattern has been demonstrated in the substantial literature on the place of 'Indians' in American popular culture. For a sample of this scholarship see S. Elizabeth Bird, *Dressing in Feathers: The Construction of the Indian in American Popular Culture* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996); Philip Joseph Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998); Richard Drinnon, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire-Building* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1980).

[151] Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), p. 210.

[152] The breadth of sources relevant for the study of colonial discourse can be seen in Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, and Margaret Iversen, *Colonial Discourse, Postcolonial Theory: A Reader* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996); Jill Beaulieu and Mary Roberts, *Orientalism's Interlocutors* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002); Abidin Kusno, *Behind the Postcolonial: Architecture, Urban Space, and Political Cultures in Indonesia* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

[153] The power of images in capturing and reproducing the mystic of 'warlords' can be seen in the acclaim that Cédric Gerbehaye received for his photographic series 'Congo in Limbo'. His black and white photograph of Laurent Nkunda, Eastern Congo's most infamous 'warlord', seated at a desk with two soldiers behind him was one of the iconic images of the series that earned him worldwide acclaim in 2008.

This section made the case for situating the concept of warlords within the colonial discourses that have structured US and British imperialism. The proposed approach involves examining the mutually constitutive relationship between the political concept and these far-reaching bounded patterns of thought to identify shifts in the expression, meaning, and political significance of the concept of warlord. By studying the concept of warlord at particular moments, as well as over a period of time, in these US and British colonial discourses, the project can develop a more careful account of its evolution across time and space.

'Warlords' and the discursive production of empire

The discursive history of 'warlords' in US and British imperialism can contribute to the study of empire by making more apparent how Britain and the United States used cultural constructions of war to manage the uneven development of order in the global south. However, to move from describing the concept of warlord to setting in motion its wider function and effect requires finding a way to explicate the constitutive nature of political concepts in the organisation and operation of empire.

This section develops such an understanding by returning to post-colonial theory to develop a fuller understanding of colonial discourse and its influence in the production of empire. It focuses on how the political concept can be studied as part of the larger patterns in American and British colonial discourses that enabled and constrained the way both powers managed the uneven development of order in the global south.

Concepts, discourse, and empire

The potential for post-colonial theory to help reveal the wider function and effects of 'warlords' in US and British imperialism derives from the theoretical tradition's understanding of the relationship between concepts, discourse, and empire. More specifically, political concepts and colonial discourse are conceived to be essential parts of how empire becomes a political reality, both in the metropole and its periphery. Similar to many of kinds of discursive analysis found in International Relations, post-colonial theorists recognise discourse to constitute more than just a language for speaking about the world: it is also studied as a system of understanding that makes possible certain ways of being in and acting towards the world, while excluding other

possibilities.[154] Discourse, by this account, provides a robust context in which to examine the formation and operation of the hierarchies and deep social relations characteristic of empire.

For post-colonial theorists, this commitment has particular salience, as it helps fulfil one of the core objectives that unify the broad theoretical tradition, that is, to destabilise how imperial metropoles have established and preserved their dominions over the non-European world. This purpose begins with the production of colonial knowledge. By revealing the influences behind core imperial categories, classifications, and worldviews, it is possible to demonstrate how forms of imperial knowledge were not natural formulations, but particular systems of understanding that foreclosed alternatives meanings in the service of empire. Post-colonial scholars also return to discursive productivity to explain how certain policies, political institutions, and social relations were rendered logical, and even necessary, based on these forms of imperial knowledge. By revealing the ways in which discourse shaped the ideational and material features of empire, post-colonial discursive histories help bring into sharper relief how empire conjoined the US and British metropolitan centres in intimate, but fundamentally unequal, relations with their imperial periphery.

This broad notion of discursive productivity can be adapted to examine the concept of warlord's constitutive function in US and British imperialism. Perhaps the most elementary example is the construction of particular non-European leaders as 'warlords'. The political concept can be studied as a frame through which armed leaders were rendered more intelligible in US and British imperialism. Certain features of these leaders, such as their autonomy or use of war, may have inspired—and even facilitated—their construction as a 'warlord'. Perhaps more importantly, the political concept also reveals how certain characteristics were ascribed to these individuals, whether by locating them in margins of empire or projecting their troubled relationship with surrounding communities, which helped foreclose other possible interpretations. This process of hailing 'warlords' into existence, to borrow the words of Louis Althusser from a different context, can be traced across various parts of US and British colonial discourses, including media accounts, policy debates, and popular culture.[155] Beginning with the earliest identification of a particular leader as a 'warlord', the discursive history

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[154] This focus can be seen in a range of prominent discursive studies, including constructivist, feminist, and post-structuralist ones, concerned with security, including Emanuel Adler and Michael N. Barnett, *Security Communities* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and The* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998); Hansen, *Security as Practice*. For more on discursive productivity as a basic commitment of any discursive study, see Milliken, 'The Study of Discourse in International Relations', p. 226.

[155] Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus', in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972), pp. 85-131.

can bring to perspective how the construction circulated in US and British discourse, acquiring greater recognition and authority as a feature of the non-European world.

These insights can be broadened to examine the wider function of the political concept in US and British attempts to manage the uneven development of order. One of the most important functions, particularly for this dissertation, is how 'warlords' were part of the way Anglo-American policymakers, commentators, and advocates comprehended war in the non-European world. The importance of war means that the concept of warlord was closely linked to a variety of cultural understandings about violence in the global south, especially its antiquated, brutal, and barbaric nature, as well as its prevalence across the imperial margins. By developing a discursive history of the concept in US and British colonial discourses, it is possible to examine how these wider cultural conclusions acquired greater significance in US and British imperialism. By situating the concept of warlord within the wider discursive patterns that underpinned US and British imperialism, it is possible to see the concept's significance for the Anglo-American understandings of war in the global south.

Similar approaches can be applied to understand the ways in which the political concept and related cultural constructions of war conditioned US and British notions of order. This form of discursive production can be traced back to a number of sources. For instance, core understandings about the location of 'warlords' in the imperial margins. The designation of certain leaders as 'warlords' imbued certain cultural conclusions about the corrupt political, legal, and normative structures in these areas. However, more important for the dissertation is the ways in which cultural notions of war inspires larger conclusions about the nature of order in these territories. Notions about the barbaric nature of war, for instance, inspired larger conclusions about the corrupt nature of the political, legal, and social structures in certain territories. In other cases, notions about the antiquated nature of war located entire territories in the global south in a backwards temporal setting, one in which the benefits of order would not be realised without outside intervention. Discursive productivity helps make more apparent the various factors that shaped understandings about war and order in the global south.

By explicating these understandings about war and order, it is possible to render more apparent how the concept influenced Britain and American interventions in the global south. This can be seen in the ways in which the existence of 'warlord' allies—or alternatively 'warlord' adversaries—helped render conquest not only a logical way to restore order in the global south, but also a necessary ways to ensure stability in the imperial periphery. However, as part of US and British colonial discourse, the political concept can also be examined as part of the way that authoritative positions foreclosed other possibilities. Refusals to enter into negotiations, for instance, can be illuminated by

examining how the political concept was invoked to render the global south a more hostile and unchanging area. The political concept of warlord can be studied as a vital part of how both imperial powers devised ways to realise their respective imperial visions.

Recognition of the constitutive nature of political concepts provides more than just a theoretical basis for examining the instrumental quality of the concept of warlord in US and British imperialism. Two related parts of the discursive history enable a close study of how the political concept's constitutive nature emboldened Anglo-American conclusions about their capacity to project order in the non-European world. The first is the mutually constitutive relationship between political concepts and discourse. At the same time that US and British colonial discourses influenced the expression and meaning of 'warlord', the political concept can also be understood to have influenced these structured patterns of thought. This can be seen in how antiquated kind of war waged by 'warlords' confirms longstanding Anglo-American confidence in the sophistication of their military technology.

The effect gains even greater salience when situated relative to the second feature, namely the intimate social relations characteristic of empire. This quality of empire helps explain why US and British encounters with 'warlords' in various parts of the imperial periphery resonated in the metropolitan centre. The close contact afforded by empire, whether as allies in an imperial small war or adversaries in a political standoff, contributed to 'warlords' capturing considerable attention in the metropole, as memorialised in evocative journalistic accounts, detailed personal memoirs, or graphic popular films.[156] These different forms of circulation allows for a more careful study of the power that 'warlords' wielded over the US and British metropoles.

This section outlined how a post-colonial discursive approach enables a wider examination of the function and effect of the concept of warlord in US and British imperialism. Such an inquiry develops from the post-colonial tradition's commitment to studying discourse as a way to reveal how certain features of and practices became logical, knowable, and appropriate parts of empire. By locating the concept of warlord within the larger discursive production of empire, it is possible to focus on not only how particular actors were cast as 'warlords', but also how the political concept contributed to the cultural construction of war and the implications for notions of order in the global south. This kind of discursive production allows for an examination of how 'warlords'

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[156] Edward Said notes the interconnected quality of imperialism in writing, 'Life in one subordinate realm of experience is imprinted by the fictions and follies of the dominant realm. But the reverse is true, too, as experience in the dominant society comes to depend uncritically on natives and their territories perceived as in need of *la mission civilisatrice*'. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. xix.

enabled and constrained certain forms of intervention in the global south, as well as the political concept's wider effects on emboldening US and British confidence in their capacity to project greater order in the global south.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined a conceptual approach for the study of 'warlords' in US and British imperialism. A case was made for examining warlord as a political concept because the theoretical literature provides a way to move beyond the narrow historiography, rigid conceptual definitions, and sweeping comparisons found in the existing scholarship and policy debates. Perhaps more importantly, this approach offers a rigorous way to identify the core components that animated the concept of warlord in US and British imperialism without imposing a structure that denies its variable usage and inherent ambiguity.

Drawing on the work of Michael Freeden, the concept can be studied in its various forms by focusing on four constitutive elements. At its core, US and British notions of 'warlords' developed around an ineliminable notion of autonomy. However, it is only in relation to the quasi-contingent features that this conceptual core gained any meaning or coherence. War, for instance, was recognised to be not only the primary means by which 'warlords' ensured and exercised their autonomy, but it was also treated as a near existential part of their being. The concentration of 'warlords' in the imperial margins reflected wider assumptions about how this kind of leader flourished in areas where irregular and unstable forms of politics prevailed. In the absence of meaningful constraints, lingering doubts about the degree of popular support for 'warlords' pervaded the political concept. By focusing on these four components and their close relationships, it is possible to bring greater coherence to the study of 'warlords' in US and British imperialism.

This conceptual framework provides a basis from which to study the concept's evolving form and meaning. Recognising the mutually constitutive relationship between political concepts and discourses, it is possible to situate the political concept within the wider colonial discourses that shaped US and British imperialism. The proposed post-colonial approach enables a fuller appreciation of how changing assumptions about the benevolent nature of empire, deprived nature of the global south, and extraordinary mandate of Britain and the United States influenced the expression and political significance of the concept in each imperial system. This discursive method also affirms the importance of tracing the political concept across a variety of imperial sources,

ranging from elite policy debates to popular culture to graphic depictions, to assess the far-reaching appearance of 'warlords' in the US and British imperial imaginations.

The wider significance of 'warlords' in US and British imperialism becomes more intelligible by drawing further insights from post-colonial theory about political concepts in the discursive production of empire. More than just a structured way to describe the world, post-colonial theorists treat discourse—and the political concepts in them—as a system of understanding that makes possible certain ways of being in and acting towards the world. Such an approach can be applied to the concept of warlord, as seen in the ways in which different leaders come to be recognised and treated as 'warlords'. However, as an expression of the relationship between war and order, the political concept can also be studied for insights into how war was conceived in cultural terms and its influence in how Britain and the United States identified and dealt with differing kinds of order. Discursive production also helps account for how 'warlords' emboldened US and British confidence in their respective potential to project greater order in the global south.

With this conceptual framework in place, the focus shifts to the history of the concept of warlord in US and British imperialism. The next chapter begins by examining how 'warlords' have long been implicated in US and British attempts to classify the kinds of order found in the global south according to a series of overlapping imperial categories.

3. 'Warlords' in US and British Classifications of Order in the Global South

Imperialism brought Britain and the United States into contact with seemingly some of the most perplexing parts of the non-European world. Beyond the remit of empire, in far-flung areas across the global south, both imperial powers encountered territories in which familiar legal systems, economic structures, and normative understandings often gave way to more irregular and unpredictable variants.[1] It was often in these so-called uncivilised territories, primitive lands, and fragile states that many US and British officials and commentators understood 'warlords' to flourish. In many cases, the political concept was used to encapsulate leaders recognised to use war to impose some semblance of order in volatile areas. Such abilities, for instance, earned Runjat Singh considerable acclaim. During the early nineteenth century, British travellers admired how the 'Sikh warlord' used his disciplined militias to rule over the secular Sikh Empire and help Britain colonial forces overthrow Dost Mohammed Khan in the First Anglo-Afghan War (1839-42).[2] More recently, American journalists underscored how, regardless of his notorious reputation, Laurent Nkunda employed taxes, police forces, and dispute resolution to impose 'alternative' forms of governance in otherwise ungoverned parts of Eastern Congo.[3] 'Warlords' were understood in US and British imperialism to introduce discernible—and sometimes even helpful—forms of order in many of the most turbulent parts of the global south.

In US and British imperialism, the close association between 'warlords' and unruly kinds of territory continues beyond the former's purported ameliorative influence. American and British policymakers, commentators, and advocates also cited several 'warlords' as exemplars of the corrupt, volatile nature of the global south, as well as evidence of the need for imperial intervention to promote greater order in unruly areas. In the late nineteenth century, for instance, British abolitionists were among the most outspoken supporters of the proposed overthrow the Khalifa, who had allowed slave trading to thrive in the impoverished Sudan.[4] Similar conclusions prevailed in

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[1] Edward Said touches on this enduring dynamic of empire in noting, 'the facts of empire are associated with sustained possession, with far-flung and sometimes unknown spaces, with eccentric or unacceptable human beings, with fortune-enhancing or fantasized activities like emigration, money-making, and sexual adventure'. Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993), p. 7.

[2] Some of the most famous accounts about Singh and his empire prior to the Afghan war can be found in Alexander Burnes, *Travels in Bokhara: Being the Account of a Journey from India to Cabool, Tartary, and Persia,* vol. 3 (London: John Murray, 1834), chap. 6.

[3] This ambivalence about the place of Nkunda in Congolese politics can be seen in Nicholas Kristof, 'Dinner with a Warlord', *New York Times*, 18 June 2007, p. 19; Stephanie McCrummen, 'For Tutsis of Eastern Congo, Protector, Exploiter or Both?', *Washington Post*, 6 August 2007, p. A01.

[4] Such support can be found in Edward Arnold, 'Review: 'Fire and Sword in the Sudan'', *Anti-Slavery Reporter and Aborigines' Friend*, vol. 16, no. 1, January-February 1896, pp. 52-8; 'Increase in the Slave-Trade in

American policy debates a century later. Steven Metz, for instance, testified to Congress in 1997 that 'In the African context "stability" has the narrow sense of absence of significant interstate or intrastate violence. Manifestations of instability include conflict between warlords in "failed states" (such as the Liberia or Somalia of the 1990s)'.[5] Several years later numerous commentators detailed the complicity of Foday Sankoh, Charles Taylor, and other 'African warlords' in the exportation of 'blood diamonds' from 'weak states' to bolster calls for the Bush administration to enact financial, trade, and diplomatic sanctions against Liberia and Sierra Leone.[6] 'Warlords' maintained a deep-seated, but fundamentally ambivalent, place in US and British conceptions of the kinds of unruly territories found across the non-European world.

This chapter examines why 'warlords' were part of the way Britain and the United States parsed some of the seemingly most troubled areas of the non-European world into more intelligible and manageable parts. More specifically, it examines how the political concept was invoked in classifications of order in the global south and its implications for Anglo-American imperial interventions. The concept's most far-reaching influence in US and British systems of knowledge, it is argued, derived from the presumed antiquated nature of the violence 'warlords' employed. Notions of war central to the political concept, combined with latent assumptions about the global south, encouraged 'warlords' to be seen as waging modes of warfare that resembled types seen centuries earlier, when war was defined less by sophisticated tactics or coherent strategy than brute force. The chapter explores how these temporal assumptions reified US and British classifications of the non-European world, that is, rendered abstract ideas more real and coherent, by ascribing an underdeveloped, backward quality to supposedly unstable territories.[7] These definitive systems of knowledge about the volatile nature of the global south helped make more logical—and even natural—US and British interventions in the global south. The concept of warlord,

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the Soudan Under Mahdiism', *Anti-Slavery Reporter and Aborigines' Friend*, vol. 12, no. 6, November-December 1892, pp. 342-5; Anti-Slavery Reporter and Aborigines' Friend, 'Slatin Pasha', *Anti-Slavery Reporter and Aborigines' Friend*, vol. 15, no. 2, June-August 1895, pp. 133-4.

[5] *Hearings about the Africa Crisis Response Initiative, Before the House International Relations Committee, Africa Subcommittee*, 105th Cong. (1997) (statement of Steven Metz, researcher at the Strategic Studies Institute)

[6] See for example 'Diamond Diplomacy', *New York Times*, 28 November 2001, p. 24; David R. Francis, 'Fueling War', *Christian Science Monitor*, 5 December 2002, p. 11; Duke Lynne, 'Diamond Trade's Tragic Flaw', *Washington Post*, 29 April 2001, p. H01. For a detailed account about Sankoh and Taylor in the West African political economy see William Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1998), chap. 3-4.

[7] This chapter draws insights about reification and its operation outside class consciousness from the recent post-Lukács writings, including Timothy Bewes, *Reification, or, The Anxiety of Late Capitalism* (London; New York: Verso, 2002); Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, 'Rethinking Reification', *Theory and Society*, vol. 16, no. 2, March 1987, pp. 263-93; Axel Honneth, *Reification: A New Look at an Old Idea* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

the chapter concludes, heightened Anglo-American conclusions about the potential for both metropoles to have a modernising influence in the global south. The antiquated nature of 'warlords' provided a vivid reference against which the purportedly sophisticated means and transformative effects of US and British interventions became more apparent.

The capacity for the concept of warlord to reify imperial classifications is illustrated by examining US and British categorisations of two areas recognised to be among the most distant, perplexing parts of the global south. The first is pre-colonial Burma under King Bagyidaw. After intermittent border tensions culminated in a protracted imperial small war, British administrators in India were left to account for the war that cost the metropole millions of pounds and killed thousands of colonial soldiers. The chapter examines how the construction of Bagyidaw as a retrograde 'Burmese warlord' following the war made the Burma's longstanding classification as a turbulent frontier a more objective part of British imperialism for decades to come. It also explores how in post-war debates the political concept bolstered conclusions among military officials about the British Empire's success in introducing a degree of modernity to the isolated kingdom.

Further examples of the reifying influence of 'warlords' in imperial classifications can be found in Afghanistan. Two are examined most in this chapter. First, following the attacks of 9/11, the United States' ad hoc collaboration with various 'Afghan warlords' helped the Bush administration turn the longstanding category of state sponsor of terrorism into a far-reaching political classification removed from its established legal protocol. A second example is identified in the Bush administration's subsequent reclassification of Afghanistan as a nascent democracy. After initially dismissing critics' concerns about 'warlords', senior US officials appropriated such criticisms, reducing democracy in Afghanistan to a contest between modernising elites and retrograde 'Afghan warlords'.

The chapter develops in four parts. The first section examines the classification of King Bagiydaw's Burmese Empire as forming a turbulent frontier with British India. The next section examines a more recent classification, that of a sponsor of terrorism, as applied to Afghanistan following the 9/11 attacks. This leads to the third part on the Bush administration's subsequent attempts to reclassify Afghanistan as a democratic state building project. The conclusion brings together these different imperial classifications to draw larger reflections about the capacity for the concept of warlord to make more absolute imperial systems of classification and its consequences for US and British interventions in the global south.

King Bagyidaw, the Turbulent Frontier, and the First Anglo-Burmese War (1824-26)

The prominence of 'warlords' in troubled areas can be seen in one of the most distant corners of the British Empire in the early nineteenth century. After decades of sporadic violence, British authorities in Bengal dismissed the unfamiliar empire as forming a turbulent frontier with British India. It was only after tensions escalated around 1823 that colonial officials began to cite the kingdom's new monarch, King Bagyidaw, as endangering the security of British India. The ensuing small war proved disastrous for the British Empire. To defend the unpopular war, several British military officers published influential military histories that cast Bagyidaw as a petulant 'Burmese warlord', one that waged an insolent, backwards warfare across the region. This portrayal ascribed greater objectivity to Burma's classification as turbulent frontier, which resonated in British imperial debates, particularly as commentators developed great confidence in Britain's ability to impose more modern political geography in the region.

This section focuses on how, in several influential war histories, British military officials cast Bagyidaw as a petulant 'Burmese warlord'. The development of this construction helps explain why the longstanding and obscure classification of Burma as a turbulent frontier developed into a fixture in British imperialism.

Early classification as a turbulent frontier

Decades before Burma was identified as the dominion of an insolent 'Burmese warlord', British officials classified the distant kingdom as forming a turbulent frontier with British India. This imperial classification developed, to borrow the words of Oliver B. Pollak, as the 'Burmese and British Indian empires collided' in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century following decades of intermittent contact.[8] During the reign of King Bodawpaya (1782-1819), the Burmese Empire began to encroach on the easternmost limits of British India, expanding northward after conquering several independent kingdoms, including Arakan in 1784, which gave the two empires a common territorial border. These acts of conquest forced thousands of refugees to flee into British India, which sparked repeated Burmese raids across the British border. After years of periodic flare-ups, the Governor-General of India, Lord Wellesley, dispatched a diplomatic mission to the Bodawpaya and the Court of Ava in 1795 in hopes of restoring trade relations, as well as collecting intelligence about French activities in the region.[9] The

[8] Oliver B. Pollak, *Empires in Collision: Anglo-Burmese Relations in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979), p. 3.

[9] D.G.E. Hall, *Burma* (London; New York: Hutchinson's University Library, 1950), p. 97.

mission seemingly strengthened diplomatic relations between the imperial powers without solving tensions in the border region.

Among the few British officials concerned with Burma, the tense relations with the isolated kingdom were envisaged as part of the wider challenge of consolidating Britain's imperial authority across India. It was within this context, namely administrators' attempts to forge a more coherent dominion, particularly amid the first Anglo-Martha Wars (1777-83, 1802-3), that Burma was first classified as a turbulent frontier.[10] Although the exact expression never appeared in colonial records, several reoccurring assumptions, enduring logics, and approximate formulations reflect the classification's importance in official accounts of Burma.[11] As several scholars note, British administrators recognised the isolated kingdom as one several unruly territories—albeit a minor one—scattered across the Indian subcontinent.[12] 'Calcutta was inclined to see Burma,' Anthony Webster explains, 'as yet another Indian land power, similar to the various Indian states with whom the British had been in conflict for several decades'.[13] The violence behind Burma's designation as an unruly territory became particularly urgent in 1812, when a rebellion against the Burmese occupation of Arakan. Led by a fugitive prince known in British circles as Kingberring, hundreds of fighters based in British territories launched periodic assaults on Burmese forces in Arakan. These attacks, by British accounts, prompted the Burmese to launch counter attacks against rebel forces: 'a part of the Burmahs who had driven back Kingberring, and destroyed his stockade…had entered the British territory in pursuit of fugitives and were committing acts of depredation and violence in villages in that quarter'.[14] This pattern of reprisal violence, as Minto described elsewhere, challenged British colonial

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[10] For more on the significance of this classification in nineteenth century British imperialism, particularly with respect to the governance of India, see John S. Galbraith, 'The "Turbulent Frontier" as a Factor in British Expansion', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 2, no. 2, January 1960, pp. 150-68. See also Pollak, *Empires in Collision*, chap. 2.

[11] Some of the most explicit expressions from this period include 'unhealthy frontier' and 'barbarous borderland'. See William Pitt Amherst, 'Extract from a Despatch from the Governor General in Council at Fort William in Bengal, to the Court of Directors of the East India Company', in H.H. Wilson (ed.), *Papers Relating to East India Affairs: viz. Discussions with the Burmese Government*, (London, [13 September 1823] 1825), p. 124; Hiram Cox, *Journal of a Residence in the Burmham Empire* (London: J. Warren, 1821), p. 330.

[12] For more on the place of Burma in British imperial political-geography see Anil Chandra Banerjee, *The Eastern Frontier of British India, 1784-1926* (Calcutta: A. Mukherjee & Co., 1964); George Bruce, *The Burma Wars, 1824-1886* (London: Hart-Davis MacGibbon, 1973); G.P. Ramachandra, 'The Outbreak of the First Anglo-Burmese War', *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 51, no. 2, December 1978, pp. 69-99.

[13] Anthony Webster, *Gentlemen Capitalists: British Imperialism in Southeast Asia, 1770-1890* (London; New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 1998), p. 135.

[14] Lord Minto *et al.*, 'Copy of a Despatch from the Governor General in Council at Fort William, in Bengal, to the Court of Directors of the East India Company', in H.H. Wilson (ed.), *Papers Relating to East India Affairs: viz. Discussions with the Burmese Government*, (London, [5 February 1813] 1825), p. 80.

officials to confront 'the evils of commotion and disorder on the frontier, and within the limits of its eastern territory'.[15] The British government ultimately refused to deliver Kingberring or any Arkanese refugees to Burmese authorities, citing concerns about Burma's aggression in the region and the safety of Arkanese rebels. As Minto concluded

> It has been indispensable to protect the province of Chittagong against the inroads of a barbarous race of men, whose incursions, openly and distinctly menaced, would have subjected the country to the extreme evils of devastation and outrage, and our government to affront and indignity.[16]

Endemic violence, both along and across the shared border, was at the forefront of British classifications of Burma as a troubled frontier.

The initial classification of Burma as a turbulent frontier derived from more than just a recognition of the violence endemic to the remote territory. The classification also reflected British officials' unease with the implications of this seeming unrest for the sanctity of the sovereign border that separated the two empires. As seen elsewhere in India and Southeast Asia, Pollak explains, Britain brought 'ideas of formal frontiers' to its imperial relations with the Burmese kingdom.[17] Instead of recognising the expansion and contraction of various kingdoms, British officials understood distinct geographic markers, such as specific rivers and valleys, as constituting fixed boundaries.[18] Some of the most influential expressions of this political view can be seen in the memoir of Michael Symes, who led the 1795 mission to the Court of Ava.[19] The colonial officer shared a glowing account of a British military officer's defence of British sovereign borders. Two years prior to his diplomatic mission, Symes explained, a Burmese commander occupied a remote part of Chittagong province, demanding that Britain deliver Arakanese fugitives hidden in the British-controlled territory. A British colonial officer stationed in the region, General Erskine, refused the commander's demands, citing his violation of British sovereignty. In Symes' words:

> General Erskine…assured [the Burmese commander], that it was far from the intention of the British government to screen delinquents, or sanction in their country an asylum for robbers; but as the manner in which the Birman troops had entered the Company's district was so

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[15] Lord Minto *et al.*, 'Copy of a Despatch from the Governor General in Council at Fort William, in Bengal, to the Court of Directors of the East India Company', in H.H. Wilson (ed.), *Papers Relating to East India Affairs: viz. Discussions with the Burmese Government*, (London, [1 August 1812] 1825), p. 60.

[16] Lord Minto *et al.*, 'Copy of a Despatch from the Governor General in Council at Fort William, in Bengal, to the Court of Directors of the East India Company', in H.H. Wilson (ed.), *Papers Relating to East India Affairs: viz. Discussions with the Burmese Government*, (London, [25 May 1812] 1825), p. 48.

[17] Pollak, *Empires in Collision*, p. 4.

[18] Ibid., pp. 4-5.

[19] Michael Symes, *An Account of an Embassy to the Kingdom of Ava in the Year 1795*, 2 vols (Edinburgh: Constable and Co., [1796] 1827).

> repugnant to the principles that ought to regulate the conduct of civilized nations.[20]

The commander, Symes explained, agreed to Erskine's terms and returned to Burmese territory. Recognition of the inviolable nature of imperial borders, even in the most remote of areas, made Burmese incursions into British territories particularly abhorrent. As discussed below, this conviction became more of an objective reality following the First Anglo-Burmese war, as the construction of Burma's king as a 'warlord' reified the imperial classification.

At the time, recognition of the Burma as a turbulent frontier did little to inspire colonial administrators to adopt a decisive stance towards the isolated kingdom or its encroachments on British India. Instead, the classification developed in colonial records, correspondence, and journals as shorthand for the sporadic unrest in the region more than as a source of alarm. As Laurence Kitzen explains, 'Anglo-Burmese relations drifted from crisis to crisis with the truly serious attention to the problem necessary for its solution never really granted, a measure of how peripheral Burma was in the context of British India'.[21] During the Arkanese rebellion, for instance, colonial administrators primarily responded by deploying more colonial forces along the frontier and sending an occasional diplomatic mission to the Court of Ava.[22] Similarly, according to Symes' memoir, the incursion by the Burmese commander was treated as a routine occurrence, one that was resolved after the British general investigated the matter. Throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Burma was a minor part of the wider British project of consolidating its colonial rule over unruly areas of India.

Amid ongoing efforts to consolidate colonial authority in the Indian subcontinent, British colonial officials recognised the obscure Burmese kingdom as constituting a troubled frontier. The broad understandings about the unrest in the region and the significance of the British sovereign borders would become more urgent in subsequent years.

Bagyidaw and the outbreak of war

Burma remained on the margins of British imperial debates throughout the early part of the Imperial Century. Indeed, after King Bodawpaya stepped aside in late 1819, allowing his grandson Prince Bagyidaw to assume the throne, the inner workings of the Burmese monarchy remained a mystery to colonial officials. In the absence of any permanent

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[20] Ibid., p. 145.

[21] Laurence Kitzan, 'Lord Amherst and the Declaration of War on Burma, 1824', *Journal of Asian History*, vol. 9, no. 2, 1975, pp. 102-3.

[22] The history of Britain's ambivalent response to Burmese expansion can be found in Maung Htin Aung, *The Stricken Peacock Anglo-Burmese Relations, 1752-1948* (Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1965).

diplomatic presence in the Burmese capital, or even regular contacts among traders, little specifics emerged about Burmese authorities, the Court of Ava, or King Bagyidaw. This unfamiliarity can be seen in one of the earliest discussions of the Burmese throne during Bagyidaw's reign. In early 1820, Lord Minto reported, a letter arrived from a Burmese official demanding on behalf of the King of Burma that Britain cede several Indian territories, including Chittagong and Dacca, 'on the alleged grounds of their being dependencies of the Burmese government'.[23] Minto and his administrators were in disbelief that the Burmese king would be brazen enough to demand the cessation of British territory. The Governor-General explained to another Burmese official that 'if the letter had really been written by the order to the king of Ava, his excellency [i.e., Minto] lamented that persons so incompetent to form a just notion of the state of power of the British nation in India should be able to practice on the king's judgement' and 'he hoped that a procedure so calculated to breed dissentions between two friendly states, would be visited by the king with the severe displeasure which it deserved'.[24] British officials had little insight into Bagyidaw or his command over Burma at the time of his accession.

Bagyidaw and the turbulent frontier with Burma only began to receive greater attention from British colonial officials following a resurgence of Burmese expansion. After inheriting the Burmese Empire at its height of power, Bagyidaw continued his predecessors' conquest of neighbouring territories, incursions into British territories, and defiance of East India Company officials' orders, the combination of which sparked a series of escalating crises along the border with British India. As John Cady notes about British-Burmese relations, 'During approximately a quarter century, border difficulties were settled amicably, but relations worsened after 1811 and eventually reached the breaking point in the mid-twenties'.[25] That rupture centred on an island in the Bay of Bengal, Sharpuri. Amid frequent clashes elsewhere in the frontier, Burmese soldiers stormed the small island in September 1823, killing several Indian sepoys only to withdraw hours later. Months following the incident, the newly appointed Governor-General of India, Lord Amherst, warned the East India Company's Secret Committee in London that war with King Bagyidaw was almost inevitable. After repeated incursions across the border, as well as failed attempts to negotiate with local Burmese authorities, Amherst argued that the Burmese monarch should be blamed for any further unrest:

> Any subsequent attack on the island, therefore, or any attempt on the part of the Burmese to execute their threats of invasion elsewhere, must

[23] Lord Minto *et al.*, 'Extract from a Despatch from the Governor General in Council at Fort William, in Bengal, to the Court of Directors of the East India Company', in H.H. Willson (ed.), *Papers Relating to East India Affairs: viz. Discussions with the Burmese Government*, (London, [17 March 1820] 1825), p. 120.

[24] Ibid., pp. 120, 121.

[25] John Cady, *A History of Modern Burma* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1958), p. 67.

> be considered hereafter as undertaken by the orders of the King of Ava, and must be treated accordingly as a declaration of war.[26]

The responsibility of the Burmese monarch, who was never explicitly named in colonial correspondence, for 'this system of encroachment and aggression' convinced Amherst that it would be difficult to restore stability to the turbulent frontier.[27] The only means of ensuring Britain's imperial sovereignty, he concluded, was to discipline the Burmese leader for testing the authority of the British Empire:

> no permanent security from the aggression of the Burmese, whether on the Chittagong frontier or to the Northward, can be safely calculated on, until that people shall have been made to feel the consequences of their provoking the British Government to depart from the pacific line of policy it has hitherto pursed.[28]

Amid continued violence and violation of British sovereign borders, British authorities began to make the case for punishing Bagyidaw for the escalating unrest along and across the trouble frontier.

On 5 March 1824 Amherst declared war on Bagyidaw and his Burmese Empire. In the public announcement, which reached Britain months later, the Governor-General drew an explicit connection between the turbulent frontier classification and the Burmese monarch.[29] 'For a time,' he explained, 'hopes were entertained…that the Burman Government would consent to the definition of such a boundary between the two countries as would obviate the future occurrence of disputes and misunderstandings on the South East frontier'.[30] However, following repeated incursions into British territory, punctuated by the incident in Shapuri, such an agreement was deemed impossible. As Amherst continued, British territories were 'violated, under circumstances of peculiar and aggravated insult, the language and proceedings of the Burmese on the North East frontier of Bengal have evinced more extensive and mischievous designs of aggression'.[31] These acts of aggression made it essential that Bagyidaw be prevented from threatening more of British India:

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[26] William Pitt Amherst, 'Extract from a Letter from the Governor-General in Council to the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors of the East India Company', in H.H. Wilson (ed.), *Papers Relating to the Burmese War*, (London, [21 November 1823] 1825), p. 6.

[27] Ibid., p. 1.

[28] Ibid., p. 6.

[29] Even the declaration of war did little to raise the profile of the Indian-Burmese border in the British metropole. As Woodman argues, 'Ignorant of the causes, and even more uninterested in Asian affairs than they are today, the British public scarcely reacted to the declaration of war'. Dorothy Woodman, *The Making of Burma* (London: Cresset Press, 1962), p. 68.

[30] George Swinton, 'Declaration of the Part of the Right Honourable the Governor-General in Council, dated Fort William, 24th February 1824', in H.H. Wilson (ed.), *Papers Relating to the Burmese War*, (London, [24 February 1824] 1825), p. 21.

[31] Ibid.

> At the same time the season for military operations is rapidly passing away, and it hence becomes indispensable, whilst an effort may yet be made, to adopt measures without delay *for repelling the dangers which menace the Eastern districts*, and *for placing the safety of our frontier beyond the reach of the caprice and violence of the Burman Monarch*.[32]

The public declaration of war indicted Bagyidaw as the principal cause of the escalating violence crisis throughout the troubled frontier. As explored below, this initial fixation on Bagyidaw became more resolute after the war, as military officials constructed him as an adolescent 'Burmese warlord'.

The ensuing war proved devastating for both sides. British colonial troops captured Rangoon in May 1824, months after the initial declaration, but they were unable to capitalise on their initial advantage before monsoon season arrived.[33] A combination of poor weather, lack of reinforcements, and sustained attack from Burmese forces prolonged the expensive imperial small war. As Myint-U explains, the First Anglo-Burmese war 'lasted nearly two years, cost the British exchequer 5 million pounds, and led to the death of 15,000 British and Indian soldiers'.[34] The nature of the British deaths compounded the disastrous nature of the war: malnutrition and various diseases were responsible for the overwhelming majority of deaths among the British colonial forces, not in combat against Burmese soldiers. 'It was for the army,' George Bruce argues, 'beyond argument the most miserable, wretched and badly managed of all the wars to date that had made the British Empire'.[35] Nonetheless, British forces were able to escape Rangoon and march inland towards the Bagyidaw's palace at Ava, eventually forcing the Burmese king to concede defeat. The British extracted a sizable indemnity and considerable land concessions in subsequent peace negotiations, formalised as the Treaty of Yandaboo (1827). However, possession of Arakan, Tenasserim, and a several other territories along the Burmese-Indian border amounted to little compensation for one of the most infamous imperial small wars during the period. As Webster concludes, 'the financial and human cost made it seem a rather pyrrhic victory'.[36]

Following years on the literal and figurative margins of empire, the obscure Burmese empire became the epicentre of one of the most costly imperial small wars in British history. However, the imperial military intervention would spark a new interest

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[32] Ibid., p. 23. Emphasis added.

[33] More detailed accounts of the imperial small war can be found in B.R. Pearn, 'Arakan and the First Anglo-Burmese War, 1824-25', *The Far Eastern Quarterly*, vol. 4, no. 1, November 1944, pp. 27-41.

[34] Myint-U Thant, *The Making of Modern Burma* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 18.

[35] Bruce, *The Burma Wars, 1824-1886*, p. 127.

[36] Webster, *Gentlemen Capitalists*, p. 142.

in Bagyidaw, Burma, and its classification as a turbulent frontier in the British metropole.

Construction of a 'warlord' in the aftermath of war

After decades of obscurity, during which only colonial administrators in Calcutta recognised Burma as a turbulent frontier, British commentators and policymakers in the metropole began to debate the merits of the war against the Court of Ava. As A.C. Banerjee notes, public opinion of the military intervention became increasingly critical over the course of the war.[37] In early 1825, following several weeks of acrimonious debate about Lord Amherst, the East India Company, and Britain's objectives in the region, Parliament ordered the release of official documents relating to the declaration of war.[38] However, it is only several years later, once senior military and colonial officials returned from Burma following the Treaty of Yandaboo, that the most sustained debate about King Bagyidaw, the Burmese Empire, and its classification as a turbulent frontier developed in Britain.[39] Perhaps more than just an attempt to offer a fuller understanding of the obscure region, as D.G.E. Hall argues, this genre of post-war memoirs emerged to defend the unpopular war from sustained public criticism.[40] These texts provided some of the most influential arguments in favour of the war and accounts of the belligerent nature of the Burmese king.[41]

The construction of Bagyidaw as a 'Burmese warlord' can be traced back to two of the most prominent texts that emerged in this post-war genre. In January 1827 John J. Snodgrass published a volume based on his experiences in Burma, *Narrative of the Burmese War*, which received considerable attention in literary and political magazines

[37] Banerjee, *The Eastern Frontier of British India, 1784-1926*, p. 320. See also Albert Fytche, *Burma Past and Present* (London: C.K. Paul & Co., 1878), p. 81.

[38] Webster, *Gentlemen Capitalists*, p. 135.

[39] The formative nature of the war for British understandings of Bagyidaw and his court is best captured in an excerpt of a letter from a British official: 'Fortunately, the war has given us an insight into [the Burmese court's] character beyond the power of any other mode of instruction'. Quoted in 'Mr Crawfurd's Mission to Ava', *Times* (London), 1 May 1827, p. 1.

[40] D.G.E. Hall, *Europe and Burma: A Study of European Relations with Burma to the Annexation of Thibaw's Kingdom, 1886* (London; New York: Oxford University Press, 1945), p. 108.

[41] Some of the most influential accounts about Burma published in the years following the war include James Alexander, *Travels from India to England: Comprehending a Visit to the Burman Empire, and a Journey through Persia, Asia Minor, European Turkey &c. in the Years 1825-26* (London: Parburgy Allen, 1827); John Crawfurd, *Journal of an Embassy from the Governor-General of India to the Court of Ava, in the Year 1827* (London: H. Colburn, 1829); Symes, *An Account of an Embassy to the Kingdom of Ava in the Year 1795*. A notable challenge to dominant conclusions that the Burmese were at fault for the war can be found in William White, *A Political History of the Extraordinary Events which led to the Burmese War* (London: W. Sams, 1827).

about the controversial war.[42] Three months later Thomas Abercrombie Trant released a longer volume, *Two Years in Ava*, that aimed to elaborate on Snodgrass' already authoritative account about, 'the unrestrained intercourse which took place between the British and Burmese'.[43] More importantly, after serving in Burma, both authors sought, to some degree, to challenge public criticism about the war.[44] Snodgrass was perhaps more explicit about the political designs of his text, explaining in the opening passage, 'The mis-statements and misrepresentations which had at different times appeared relative to the situation and operation of the army lately serving in Ava, under Major-general [*sic*] Sir Archibald Campbell, induced me…to draw up the following Narrative'.[45] The construction of Bagyidaw as a 'Burmese warlord' was at the forefront of a wider attempt to defend the merits of the unpopular First Anglo-Burmese War.

The concept of warlord served as a way to render more intelligible Bagyidaw and his volatile imperial dominion. The political concept helped accentuate established features of the Burmese monarch, as well as ascribe stereotypical ones, to create a more complete image of Britain's obscure former adversary.[46] Trant and Snodgrass presented Bagyidaw as the head of a convoluted bureaucratic structure that governed the Burmese Empire, beginning with the Court of Ava, which was characterised as a '[seat] of anarchy and confusion', and continuing to the 'despotic and mercenary chiefs' that ruled the various territories conquered by Burmese forces.[47] Nonetheless, in casting him as a 'Burmese warlord', both authors stressed the degree of autonomy that Bagyidaw exercised throughout his imperial dominions. The considerable authority invested in the

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[42] John J. Snodgrass, *Narrative of the Burmese War* (London: John Murray, 1827). Responses among elite magazines during this period include 'Art. X. Narrative of the Burmese War...', *Monthly Review*, vol. 4, no. 17, February 1827, pp. 195-212; 'Birmah', *London Magazine*, vol. 7, no. 26, February 1827, pp. 232-44; John Barrow, 'Art. VII. Narrative of the Burmese War...', *Quarterly Review*, vol. 35, no. 70, March 1827, pp. 481-517; 'Narrative of the Burmese War', *National Magazine*, vol. 1, no. 6, April 1827, pp. 373-6; Monthly Magazine, 'The Bhurmhese War, by Major Snodgrass', *Monthly Magazine*, vol. 3, no. 14, February 1827, pp. 193-4.

[43] Thomas Ambercrombie Trant, *Two Years in Ava: From May 1824 to May 1826* (London: John Murray, 1827). The prominence of the text can be seen in 'Two Years in Ava', *Literary Chronicle*, no. 426, July 1827, pp. 440-3; 'Two Years in Ava', *Literary Chronicle*, no. 425, July 1827, pp. 420-2; 'Two Years in Ava', *Monthly Magazine*, vol. 6, no. 32, August 1828, pp. 193-5.

[44] At the time, Snodgrass' history of the war was recognised to be the definitive work available, as seen in one review of Trant that suggested the former 'is to be regarded as the authorised, and almost official journal of the operations of the war'. 'Art. III. Two Years in Ava', *Monthly Review*, vol. 6, no. 27, November 1827, p. 311.

[45] Snodgrass, *Narrative of the Burmese War*, p. vii. Trant, by comparison, dedicated his volume to Campbell.

[46] As one review of Snodgrass' text noted, 'It is but yesterday, so to speak, that the very existence of a Burmese sovereignty was known to us'. 'Snodgrass's Narrative of the Burmese War', *Blackwoods Edinburgh Magazine*, vol. XXI, no. CXXII, February 1827, p. 123.

[47] Snodgrass, *Narrative of the Burmese War*, pp. 81, 17. As Trant explained, 'The form of government of Ava, though strictly despotic, is still not destitute of an appearance of deliberation and debate; and the…council of state, is well calculated to temper and modify the overbearing commands of a half-civilized tyrant'. Trant, *Two Years in Ava*, p. 241.

monarchy seemingly enabled Bagyidaw to reign over the empire with few constraints, even if he ruled through a corrupt bureaucracy. 'In despotic governments like this,' Trant explained, 'where unlimited power is vested in the sovereign, and he is difficult to access, his favourites become the only medium of communication between him and his people'.[48] The consequences of this unchecked autonomy were most evident when, during the early stages of the war, British colonial forces 'liberated' the region of Pegu, an area south of Rangoon.[49] As Snodgrass recounts, British rule 'relieved the people from a load of misery and oppression, and fully answered all the purposes for which it was intended, maintaining peace and quietness in the country'.[50] Perhaps more importantly, this occupation revealed the exploitive nature of Bagyidaw and his regime:

> it gradually and imperceptibly opened their eyes to the cruelties and tyranny of their iniquitous oppressors, and prepared them, it may be hoped, for the reception…of a more enlightened form of government.[51]

This kind of exploitation was considered endemic in Bagyidaw's dominion, and it had lasting consequences for the Burmese Empire. 'To this system of extortion,' Trant speculated, 'may, in great measure, be attributed the comparative backwardness of the Burman nation in wealth and civilization, compared to China and Hindostan'.[52] Such conclusions about the nature of Bagyidaw's uncheck power resonated in elite responses to the texts. A review of Trant's history stressed that the consequences of Bagyidaw's exploitive rule extended beyond material poverty: 'The influence of their wretched government, like that of all Asiatic despotism, can be productive only of perfidy, meanness, and cruelty'.[53] Recognition of Bagyidaw's far-reaching autonomy, even though mediated through a corrupt bureaucratic structure, underpinned his construction as a 'Burmese warlord'.

As with many 'warlords' in British imperialism, Bagyidaw's autonomy only became intelligible relative to his use of war. In the first instance the close relationship was established in accounts about the martial quality of the Burmese Empire. Under Bagyidaw's reign, the remote kingdom was seemingly built for a single purpose: the conquest of other territories and populations. Even before the First Anglo-Burmese War, Snodgrass explained, Bagyidaw's plans for war informed key facets of the empire, including its political economy, social hierarchies, and imperial agenda:

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[48] Trant, *Two Years in Ava*, p. 81.

[49] The influence of these arguments can be seen in 'Art. III. Two Years in Ava', p. 317.

[50] Snodgrass, *Narrative of the Burmese War*, pp. 202-3.

[51] Ibid., p. 203.

[52] Trant, *Two Years in Ava*, p. 249.

[53] 'Art. III. Two Years in Ava', p. 317.

> the warlike habits of the people and insatiable love of conquest in their rulers, leaving the Carians and cultivators in the fertile deltas of Pegu, to supply the nation with grain while the men of the less favoured districts were either engaged in, or obliged to be in constant readiness and training, for some new invasion of their ambition monarch.[54]

The king's coercive authority was even more far-reaching during moments of conquest. 'In Ava,' Trant explained, 'in times of war, the services of every subject are at the disposal of the sovereign, and the levies are raised in proportion to the population of the district'.[55] Autonomy and war seemingly melded together in Snodgrass and Trant's accounts about Bagyidaw as a 'Burmese warlord' ruling over his remote kingdom on the margins of the British Empire.

The focus on war in the Burmese Empire brought to the forefront the temporal assumptions that surrounded the construction of Bagyidaw as a 'Burmese warlord'. In ruling his corrupt dominion, Bagyidaw was presented as waging a primitive form of conquest across the troubled frontier, one that reflected a juvenile need to subjugate other territories. This adolescent tendency was credited, by Trant's account, to 'the thirst for conquest of the king'.[56] He explained how the 'Burmese warlord' and his advisors possessed an rudimentary desire to aggrandise their imperial dominions: 'their pride and ambition but suddenly brooked our being a bar to their design of western conquest'.[57] Snodgrass concurred with this assessment about Bagiydaw's insatiable need for conquest. However, he located this adolescent drive within a wider cultural legacy, one that seemingly united all Burmese sovereigns. In his words:

> A Burmese monarch has never been known to make war for any other object than that of conquest, and the aggrandisement of his kingdom; and no instance is on record of one of the race having relinquished a single acre of what he could retain.[58]

Bagyidaw seemingly exemplified the juvenile nature of this cultural legacy. Towards the end of the war, approaching British forces seemingly made the 'Burmese warlord' recognise that, without constant expansion his reign was destined to collapse. As Snodgrass recounted, 'the deluded Monarch…was undoubtedly prepared for flight into the woods, under an impression that his only chance of safety consisted in an active perseverance of hostility'.[59] The salience of war in the concept of warlord, combined with latent cultural understandings about Burmese sovereigns, inspired Trant and Snodgrass to cast Bagyidaw as waging an unsophisticated form of conquest across the region.

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[54] Snodgrass, *Narrative of the Burmese War*, pp. 290-1.

[55] Trant, *Two Years in Ava*, pp. 61-2.

[56] Ibid., p. 75.

[57] Ibid., p. 10.

[58] Snodgrass, *Narrative of the Burmese War*, p. 295.

[59] Ibid., p. 296.

This perceived insatiable need for conquest seemingly reflected an adolescent quality about the 'Burmese warlord'. Snodgrass and Trant deemed Bagyidaw's legacy of persistent conquest as indicative a form of insolence, that is, a flagrant disregard of the wider strategic, political, and moral context, that inspired his violence across the frontier. The 'Burmese warlord' seemingly refused to abide—or even acknowledge—his subordinate place in imperial politics. Perhaps the most flagrant example was the repeated encroachments on British India. '[Burmese forces] made constant marauding inroads on our territories,' Trant explained, 'our elephant-hunters were repeatedly attacked and carried off, and numerous petty insults seemed the prelude of declared hostilities'.[60] Such affronts were attributed to the 'Burmese warlord'. Contrary to accounts that Bagyidaw was unaware of the repeated incursions in British territory, Snodgrass argued, the 'Burmese warlord' had preordained plans to incite war with Britain:

> hostilities were not only sanctioned by his majesty, but that his resolution of attacking our south-east frontier had been publicly announced long previous to the invasion of his own territories; and there is every reason to believe that the country at large applauded the resolution and looked forward with confidence to the honour and riches that awaited them, in a war with their wealthy neighbours.[61]

Centuries of unchecked aggression seemingly deluded the adolescent 'Burmese warlord' about his place in regional politics, even in the face of British Empire and its colonial army. Reviews of Snodgrass' text elaborated on this conclusion about the insubordinate nature of Bagyidaw's provocations across the Indian-Burmese border, drawing similar conclusions about the entire Burmese population. As one reviewer agued

> A barbarous and restless people seated on our immediate frontier, had for years been trying our patience by a series of petty aggressions…and being unused to any distinction between forbearance and fear, they naturally, like true Asiatics, grew more insolent and intolerably arrogant in their pretensions.[62]

The place of war in the political concept evoked larger conclusions about Burma's flagrant immaturity towards basic diplomatic convention, strategic prudence, and political commonsense.

The portrayal of Bagyidaw as an immature 'Burmese warlord', one that waged a particularly restless form of warfare, was an integral part of how Trant and Snodgrass developed a more coherent vision of the origins of controversial war with Burma. It would become an inseparable part of how the authors tried to recover the origins and favourable outcome of the controversial war.

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[60] Trant, *Two Years in Ava*, p. 5.

[61] Snodgrass, *Narrative of the Burmese War*, p. 43.

[62] 'Art. X. Narrative of the Burmese War...', p. 199.

Reified notions of a turbulent frontier

The construction of Bagyidaw as a petulant 'Burmese warlord' served a clear function in Snodgrass and Trant's larger attempt to defend the merits of the expensive imperial small war. Both within and across the two texts, the construction and its temporal connotations remade the classification of Burma as a troubled frontier from shorthand for an obscure, unruly territory into an objective threat to the British Empire. This form of reification developed around accentuated understandings of the two primary components of the classification, beginning with the unrest throughout the region. Assumptions about the insolent, unsophisticated nature of Bagyidaw heightened conclusions about the violent unrest that plagued the territory. Snodgrass, for instance, introduced the Burma under Bagyidaw as an unwieldy empire that had subjugated all of its surrounding territories:

> their wars have been for many years a series of conquests…the Burmese government, at the time of our landing in Rangoon, had subdued and incorporated into their overgrown empires all the petty states by which it was surrounded, and stood confessedly feared and respected, even by the Chinese, as a powerful and warlike nation.[63]

Trant illustrated the endemic nature of the violence in the region by returning to the Bagyidaw's invasion of the island of Sharpuri. 'At the close of 1823,' he explained, 'a party of Burmah landed at Shapuree, during the night, expelled the Sepoys…and took possession of the island; whilst, about the same time, numerous predatory bands issued from Assam and Munnipoor, cutting off our elephant-hunters and plundering our villagers, but invariably retiring before the small detachments which were sent in pursuit of them'.[64] A review of Snodgrass' text noted how these kinds of simultaneous provocations did not bring the British Empire into contact with a few 'petty Rajahs, possessing neither the power nor the inclination to make encroachments'.[65] Instead, with Bagyidaw's constant encroachments, Britain was confronted with

> a people, flushed with conquest, ambitious to a degree, and too ignorant of our resources, as well as too confident in their own, to be at much pains, or to make any sacrifices, for the preservation of friendly relations.[66]

The reach of this violence seemingly bridged the physical and political divides that separated the two empires. 'Birmah,' one reviewer noted, 'is immediately contiguous to our territory, so near indeed, that one of the Burmese excursions excited no

[63] Snodgrass, *Narrative of the Burmese War*, pp. 21-2.

[64] Trant, *Two Years in Ava*, pp. 10-11.

[65] 'Snodgrass's Narrative of the Burmese War', p. 122.

[66] Ibid., p. 122.

inconsiderable alarm for the safety of Calcutta'.[67] The insolent nature of Bagyidaw's violence ascribed urgency to the unrest in the trouble frontier, as well as located it effects closer to the vital interests of British India.

The temporal assumptions surrounding Bagyidaw's construction as a 'Burmese warlord' ascribed a heightened importance to the second part of the classification, the sovereign border between Burma and British India. More than just asserting the existence of a political division between the two empires, the flagrant disregard that characterised the 'Burmese warlord' seemingly made the violence in the region a galling affront to British sovereignty. Trant, for instance, stressed how, in orchestrating repeated acts of conquest, Bagyidaw had encroached on British India, challenging its essential authority in the region. In his words:

> A nation which, urged by ambition, had succeeded in conquering every country opposed to it, was not likely to enter within the bounds of moderation merely through terror the British name; particularly as, on every occasion in which we had a dispute with the Burmas, we had shown so much forbearance, that a haughty and ignorant people might have deemed it the result of fear.[68]

The violent insolence displayed in Bagyidaw and his soldiers rendered irrelevant the remote nature of the troubled frontier. This conception of war perpetrated by Bagyidaw ascribed an importance to the political-territorial divide that made it an integral feature of Britain's sovereign authority across the empire.

Snodgrass made analogous conclusions about the violated borderland. The petulant violence of Bagyidaw, as seen in his repeated incursions across the frontier, violated the sanctity of British sovereignty. By his account, the 'arrogant pretensions and restless character' of Britain's 'warlike and ambitious neighbour in Burma…had so frequently interrupted relations of peace subsisting between the two countries'.[69] The consequences of this violence could be seen in how this troubled border kept 'the frontier provinces in constant dread and danger of invasion'.[70] In a review of Snodgrass' account, John Barrow reiterated how Bagyidaw had violated the rightful safety of populations in British India in arguing, 'Their restless character, their arrogant conduct, and unfounded pretensions had…in fact, long kept the frontier provinces of Bengal in constant dread of invasion'.[71] By heightening conclusions about the urgency of the violence, as well as linking the border to wider principles of sovereignty, cultural notions of the petulant nature of violent 'Burmese warlord' transformed the trouble

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[67] 'Birmah', p. 233.

[68] Trant, *Two Years in Ava*, p. 5.

[69] Snodgrass, *Narrative of the Burmese War*, p. 1.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Barrow, 'Art. VII. Narrative of the Burmese War...', p. 482.

frontier from an obscure classification into objective feature of the region's political geography.

This more resolute understanding of Burma as a troubled frontier provided a basis for recovering the merits of the controversial small war. Amid continued debates about the aftermath of the war, Snodgrass and Trant acknowledged the flagrant shortcomings of the military campaign. A lack of knowledge about Burma, inadequate supplies, and poor timing were all cited as underpinning the campaign against Bagyidaw.[72] However, despite these passing criticisms, both texts stressed how the violent unrest in the troubled frontier created a lasting strategic, political, and moral necessity for the unpopular imperial small war. Trant was perhaps most explicit about this conclusion. He noted how, in retrospect, the insolent nature of Bagyidaw's violence made a war almost inevitable. By his account:

> It required but little penetration to foresee that when once we came in collision with a powerful nation, never yet defeated by us, but on the contrary, supposing itself superior to the whole world, a trial, at least, would be made on its part to assert its superiority, and a war would, of course, be inevitable.[73]

Trant placed this imperative in even more urgent terms elsewhere in his text. Following decades of regular encroachments on British territory, the crisis over Sharpuri left British officials little option except war against the 'Burmese warlord'. 'After this disaster,' he explained, 'there was little doubt what line of policy the government would pursue; the affront was too galling, and no remedy remained by vigorous and active measures'.[74] Such conclusions were affirmed at the end of the history. As Trant concluded, 'In the instance of the Burman war, it was impossible for the British government to act otherwise than it did. It was absolutely necessary to break the haughty spirit of the court of Ava'.[75] The objective nature of the violence, as well as the violations of British sovereignty, characteristic of the reified category led Trant to recognise a clear imperative to the controversial small war.

These arguments about the merits of the unpopular imperial small war resonated to varying degrees in elite reviews of the texts. Several commentators employed reified notions of Burma as a troubled frontier to defend the launch of Britain's unpopular imperial war. One review, for instance, returned to the compromised nature of Britain's sovereign border, situating it relative to other affronts by non-European leaders, to underscore Bagyidaw's flagrant disrespect of basic diplomatic protocol:

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[72] See Trant, *Two Years in Ava*, chap. 3-6; Snodgrass, *Narrative of the Burmese War*, chap. 4-8, 10.

[73] Trant, *Two Years in Ava*, p. 5.

[74] Ibid., pp. 12-13.

[75] Ibid., p. 441.

> the [British] empire has been involved in war on a point of etiquette,—not indeed that any native prince has refused the customary salaams, koo-toos, or prostrations, whether of body or spirit; but that a tribe of semi-barbarians have committed trespass on our territory and refused an apology.[76]

Although such an account placed greater significance in Burmese response—or lack thereof—to the violation of British sovereignty, it was premised on the existence of a meaningful border and Bagyidaw's responsibility for fomenting the unrest that breached it. Another review recognised the troubled frontier as presenting more of a strategic liability for British India. As the commentator explained, despite appearing insignificant to observers in the British metropole, growing unrest across the border provoked considerable alarm for British officials in India:

> Not until the honour, the dignity, and even the safety of the British name in India were compromised in the contest, was it discovered, that the imminence of the crisis had been deplorably overlooked; and the very rumour of the advance of a Burmese army on our weakest frontier, was sufficient to plunge the great capital of British India into confusion and dismay.[77]

However, the reviewer noted that, in retrospect, this alarm may have been somewhat exaggerated. Although the objective existence of a border between the two empires was incontestable, the degree of violence in the frontier region may have been less urgent than Lord Amherst and his advisors suggested:

> The actual danger of Calcutta was, perhaps, never worth naming: but exaggerated as it was in the imagination of a timid people, it is certain that, by the close proximity of the Chittagong frontier, the metropolis and the whole empire lay very much exposed, and easily assailable from the quarter.[78]

Nonetheless, despite this tempered account, the reified troubled frontier classification seemingly affirmed the necessity of the war. The sanctity of the British sovereign border, combined with the violent nature of Burmese forces' transgressions, led several British commentators to recognise a compelling imperative for the controversial small war.

The portrayal of Bagyidaw as a 'Burmese warlord' culminated in an influential argument about the lasting importance of the costly imperial small war for the British Empire. The concept of warlord inspired Snodgrass and Trant's conclusions about how, despite the human and monetary losses, the British Empire introduced a degree of modernity in the remote part of Asia. This effect can be seen in conclusions about Britain's success in forcing the restless 'Burmese warlord' to abandon his affronts on diplomatic convention and respect the sovereign borders surrounding his empire. As Snodgrass argued, the peace treaty 'amply provides for the freedom from Burmese

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[76] London Magazine, 'Birmah', pp. 232-3.

[77] 'Art. X. Narrative of the Burmese War...', p. 195.

[78] Ibid.

interference with our Indian territories on that side: our troublesome neighbours are now confined within their ancient boundaries'.[79] Trant arrived at similar conclusions, albeit in more magnanimous terms. Without considerable wealth, he explained, Britain could only extract from Bagyidaw land concessions, which would force the 'Burmese warlord' to adhere to conventional sovereign boundaries:

> it became evident that the only mode of apparent indemnification to which we could resort, was, by demanding these dependencies of the Burman empire; thereby, though not much benefiting ourselves, yet reducing Ava to its proper limits, making it acknowledge its inferiority, and providing in some measure against future aggression.[80]

Deep-seated notions about the immature nature of the 'Burmese warlord' inspired Snodgrass and Trant to ascribe an enduring political significance to Britain's otherwise deplored imperial small war as a spirited defence of Britain's sovereign integrity.

The political concept inspired a more tempered confidence in Britain's success in imposing a related form of modernity in the remote Burmese Empire. Similar to Amherst's initial calls for Bagyidaw to be punished, both authors expressed hope that Britain's colonial army had convinced the 'Burmese warlord' to resist the immature impulses that had motivated his reckless violence across the frontier. Trant, for instance, suggested that Britain's victory could have a transformative effect on Burma's supreme leadership—presumably including its 'warlord' monarch—by impressing upon them the need to accept the core principles that dictated relations among imperial powers:

> it is…to be hoped that the severe lesson lately inculcated on the court of Ava [*sic*] will not be soon forgotten, but may tend to render its councils less sanguinary than formerly, and more open to the dictates of moderation and humanity.[81]

Snodgrass expressed more certain conclusions about the military intervention's instructive nature for Bagiydaw. Although the defeat may not humble the insolent 'Burmese warlord', the British captain argued that it would probably temper his willingness to disrupt the order in the region. As Snodgrass concluded that

> [Bagyidaw] may still use a high, and even insolent tone, pretend to treat us slightingly, and continue to style himself 'Lord or Earth and Air,' is to be expected; but many years will probably pass before we hear of another hostile threat from that quarter. Let him then vaunt and boast, and let us smile at his harmless vanity and arrogant imbecility.[82]

This heightened confidence in the transformative nature of the imperial small war resonated in elite reviews of the texts. One review of Snodgrass' history, for instance,

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[79] Ibid., p. 297. The influence of this particular argument can be seen in Josiah Conder, 'Art. XI Narrative of the Burmese War...', *Eclectic Review*, vol. 27, February 1827, p. 180.

[80] Trant, *Two Years in Ava*, p. 441.

[81] Ibid., p. 449.

[82] Snodgrass, *Narrative of the Burmese War*, p. 298.

opened with not only an affirmation of Bagyidaw and his leadership's responsibility for the unrest, but also a hope that the war had forced the Burmese Empire to accept its subordinate place in imperial politics:

> It was full time that these barbarians should be deterred, by a prompt and signal chastisement, from the continued or renewed indulgence of their dreams of ambition: that they should be…left with an indelible warning to their presumption, against the danger of trifling with such neighbours.[83]

Another affirmed the didactic nature of Britain's war, concluding, 'Whether the peace will be permanent or not, remains to be proved; but let this be as it may, his Golden-footed Majesty has doubtless received a lesson which he will not readily forget'.[84] The insolent violence perpetrated by Bagyidaw across the region bolstered British conclusions about the capacity of their war to force the 'Burmese warlord' to recognise his subordinate place in regional politics.

The construction of Bagyidaw as an adolescent 'Burmese warlord' helped British officials ascribe a new significance to an otherwise disastrous imperial small war in a remote corner of the global south. Cultural conclusions about the defiant, insufferable nature of his warfare helped turn Burma's longstanding classification as a turbulent frontier into an objective feature of the region's political geography. Despite its ill-advised nature, several influential British military officials concluded that only war protect the sanctity of the remote frontier. Assumptions about the adolescent nature of the 'Burmese warlord' also inspired hope that Britain's military intervention had taught King Bagyidaw a lesson about the nature of imperial geography and the sanctity of British sovereignty.

Sponsor of Terrorism and 'Afghan Warlord' Allies (2001-2002)

The United States encountered a collection of 'warlords' in an equally perplexing part of the global south more than a century later. Several years after being dismissed as a failed state, the attacks of 9/11 made Afghanistan an urgent political and strategic focus of US imperialism, particularly once the Bush administration launched an open-ended effort to oust the Taliban and create a modern democratic order. 'Afghan warlords' figured prominently throughout this intervention, albeit in contrasting roles. At the outset of the campaign, various 'warlords' and their hordes of fighters did more that just help US Special Forces overthrow the Taliban. The United States' unlikely allies also bolstered the Bush administration's efforts to cast Afghanistan as a sponsor of terror that required

[83] Conder, 'Art. XI Narrative of the Burmese War...', p. 179.

[84] 'Snodgrass's Narrative of the Burmese War', p. 133.

extraordinary measures to defeat. The gross temporal contrasts between these unlikely allies heightened American policymakers' conclusions about the social transformations of Afghanistan that followed the United States' military intervention.

In the first of two parts on American classifications of Afghanistan, this section traces how the Bush administration used the concept and its temporal assumptions to remove the state sponsor of terror designation from its political and legal origins to create a more expedient, far-reaching category. By examining American assumptions about the antiquated mode of warfare waged by their 'Afghan warlord' allies, it is possible to see how the political concept enhanced American conclusions about the degree of modernity the United States had delivered to Afghanistan in overthrowing the Taliban.

Classifying a state sponsor of terror

After more than a decade on the margins of US imperialism, largely disregarded as another failed state ridden with 'warlords', the 9/11 attacks forced Afghanistan back to the centre of American policy debates. Longstanding ties among Osama bin Laden, al-Qaeda, and the Taliban spurred an animated discussion among American policymakers and political commentators about the distant, volatile territory.[85] However, in the initial attempts to comprehend the attacks, little consensus emerged about how to conceive of the political order in Afghanistan and its threat to the United States. In a 12 September op-ed, for instance, Charles Krauthammer cast Afghanistan as not only a permissive space for terrorist activities, but also a co-conspirator in the 9/11 attacks that required immediate military action: 'The terrorists cannot exist in a vacuum. They need a territorial base of sovereign protection.…If bin Laden was behind this, then Afghanistan is our enemy. Any country that harbors and protects him is our enemy. We must carry their war to them'.[86] Other journalists recognised Afghanistan to be part of a more complex collection of threats that endangered the United States and other capitalist democracies. As two commentators argued at the time, the transnational nature of bin Laden's activities, combined with the desperate conditions in Afghanistan, suggested that America's search for retribution required something other than a state-centric worldview:

> The main problem is that bin Laden is the head not of a country, or even a fortress, but of a network of hard-to-find militants and cells in the

[85] A detailed history of this relationship, as well as sporadic American efforts to disrupt it, can be found in Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004), pt. 2-3.

[86] Charles Krauthammer, 'To War, Not to Court', *Washington Post*, 12 September 2001, p. A29.

> Middle East, Europe, Asia, and North America. The only nation that can be convincingly said to support him is Afghanistan, the war-torn, destitute country where he has lived since 1996.[87]

Yet, for other commentators, the grim reality that characterised Afghanistan's longstanding classification as a failed state seemingly tempered conclusions about its complicity in the attacks.[88] 'If there are Americans clamoring to bomb Afghanistan back to the Stone Age,' one journalist argued, 'they ought to know that this nation does not have so far to go. This is a post-apocalyptic place of felled cities, parched land and downtrodden people'.[89] The aftermath of 9/11, combined with the perplexing nature of Afghanistan, confounded American commentators in their attempts to make sense of the volatile territory.

In the days following the attacks, the Bush administration also struggled to place Afghanistan in the wider collection of terrorist threats facing the United States. This initial difficulty manifested most clearly in a high profile disagreement between two senior members over the appropriateness of a longstanding classification, that is, state sponsor of terror, for Afghanistan. In a press briefing on 13 September, Paul Wolfowitz, the Assistant Secretary of Defence, invoked the designation to encapsulate the place of Afghanistan among the various 'targets' that the United States planned to confront in the upcoming counterterrorism campaign. As Matthew J. Peed notes, since its creation in the late 1970s, the list of state sponsors of a terror had become a virtually unchanged group that, by virtue of their classification, was subject to an automatic set of financial and diplomatic sanctions.[90] By Wolfowitz's account, 9/11 proved that the United States had to adopt a more resolute stance against Afghanistan and other sponsors of terror:

> it's not just simply a matter of capturing people and holding them accountable, but removing the sanctuaries, removing the support systems, *ending states who sponsor terrorism*. And that's why it has to be a broad and sustained campaign. It's not going to stop if a few criminals are taken care of.[91]

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[87] Cameron W. Barr and Scott Peterson, 'Retaliation is Trickier than Afghan Terrain', *Christian Science Monitor*, 14 September 2001, p. 1.

[88] A thoughtful account of this period in Afghan history, particularly with respect to the failed state classification, can be found in Barnett Rubin, *The Search for Peace in Afghanistan: from Buffer State to Failed State* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995).

[89] Barry Bearak, 'Taliban Plead for Mercy to the Miserable in a Land of Nothing', *New York Times*, 13 September 2001, p. 18.

[90] Matthew J. Peed, 'Blacklisting as Foreign Policy: The Politics and Law of Listing Terror States', *Duke Law Journal*, vol. 54, no. 5, 2004, pp. 1321-54.

[91] 'Special Defense Briefing with Paul Wolfowitz, Deputy Secretary of Defense', Arlington, VA, 13 September 2001. Emphasis added. The influence of this argument can be seen in Elisabeth Bumiller and Jane Perlez, 'Bush and Top Aides Proclaim Policy of 'Ending' States that Back Terror', *New York Times*, 14 September 2001, p. 1.

Although the US Department of State had documented Afghanistan as a hub of terrorist activities, some members of the Bush administration tried to distance themselves from the classification, which lumped Afghanistan with several longstanding, legally recognised state sponsors of terror, such as Libya, Syria, and Cuba.[92] Asked about Wolfowitz's remarks, for instance, Colin Powell, the Secretary of State, rejected the classification, opting for a more vague account about the terrorist threats facing the United States:

> We're after ending terrorism. And if there are states and regimes, nations, that support terrorism, we hope to persuade them that it is in their interest to stop doing that. But I think 'ending terrorism' is where I would like to leave it, and let Mr. Wolfowitz speak for himself.[93]

Amid the uncertainty following 9/11, established legal classifications seemingly failed to capture the kind of order in Afghanistan and its urgent place in US imperialism.

Despite this initial disagreement, the Bush administration appropriated the state sponsor of terror classification to make Afghanistan the exemplar of global terrorism. However, as seen more in subsequent years, administration officials tried to remove this longstanding legal classification from its original context to create a more far-reaching, resolute category that enabled a variety of interventions across the global south.[94] This attempt to reify the state sponsor of terror classification began by drawing a stark distinction between the Afghan state and Afghan society. Instead of implicating all of Afghanistan in the attacks, as entailed in the state sponsor of terrorism list, the Bush administration stressed that the Taliban and its al-Qaeda allies—not Afghan civilians—were responsible. 'We condemn the Taliban regime,' Bush explained to a joint session of Congress a few days after the attack. 'It is not only repressing its own people; it is threatening people everywhere by sponsoring and sheltering and supplying terrorists.

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[92] As Paul R. Pillar explains, although considerable financial sanctions were enacted in July 1999, Afghanistan was not listed on the Department of State's list of state sponsors of terror list because the US government did not recognise the Taliban government. See Paul R. Pillar, *Terrorism and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2003), pp. 157-8. Nonetheless, the regime's support of al-Qaeda had most recently been detailed in Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, *Patterns of Global Terrorism* (Washington, D.C.: US Department of State, 30 April 2001).

[93] 'Press Conference with Secretary of State Colin Powell', Washington, D.C., 17 September 2001. The influence of this divergent account can be seen in Patrick E. Tyler and Elaine Sciolino, 'Bush's Advisers Split on Scope of Retaliation', *New York Times*, 20 September 2001, p. 1.

[94] The importance of this strategy in how the Bush administration circumvented domestic and international legal statutes is detailed in Rosemary Foot, 'Exceptionalism Again: The Bush Administration, the Global War on Terror and Human Rights', *Law and History Review*, vol. 26, no. 3, 2008, pp. 707-26; Mary Ellen O'Connell, 'Enhancing the Status of Non-State Actors through a Global War on Terror', *Columbia Journal of Transnational Law*, vol. 43, no. 1, 2004, pp. 435-58; Kenneth Roth, 'The Law of War in the War on Terror: Washington's Abuse of "Enemy Combatants"', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 83, no. 1, February 2004, pp. 2-7.

By aiding and abetting murder, the Taliban regime is committing murder'.[95] This separation between state and society was made more explicit in a subsequent speech at the Department of State. The contrasting reaction to the two affirmed the administration's attempt to narrow the legal classification's political referent, both in Afghanistan and elsewhere in the global south:

> We have no compassion for terrorists in this country. We have no compassion, nor will we have any compassion for any state that sponsors them….We have great compassion, however, for the millions around the world who are victims of hate, victims of oppressive government, including the people who live in Afghanistan.

As anticipation about the United States' response to the attacks grew President Bush made clear in subsequent days that, as a state sponsor of terror, the Taliban exemplified the kinds of 'targets' that the United States would have to destroy to prevent future terrorist attacks. As he explained during his weekly radio address in early October:

> Our enemy is the terrorists themselves and the regimes that shelter and sustain them. Afghanistan is a case in point. Its Taliban regime has made that nation into a sanctuary and training ground for international terrorists, terrorists who have killed innocent citizens of many nations, including our own.[96]

By drawing stark contrasts between the Afghan state and society, the Bush administration began to appropriate the state sponsor of terror classification, turning it into a more expedient classification of the order in Afghanistan that could be applied elsewhere in the global south.

Alongside the effort to narrow its political scope, the Bush administration attempted to separate the state sponsor of terror classification from its original legal context. Instead of invoking a set of financial and diplomatic sanctions, as legislated since the late-1970s, the administration used the classification to formulate a far-reaching, extra-legal military intervention in Afghanistan and elsewhere in the global south. On 7 October 2001, after the Taliban refused to deliver Osama bin Laden and members of al-Qaeda's leadership, President Bush announced the invasion of Afghanistan, describing it as the first stage of an open-ended war against terrorism. The administration defended Operation Enduring Freedom by citing the danger Afghanistan posed as a sponsor of terror. In Bush's words:

> On my orders, the United States military has begun strikes against Al Qaida terrorist training camps and military installations of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. These carefully targeted actions are designed to

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[95] George W. Bush, 'Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the United States Response to the Terrorist Attacks of September 11', Washington, D.C., 20 September 2001. Available at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=64731&st=joint+session&st1=> Accessed 10 May 2010.

[96] George W. Bush, 'The President's Radio Address', Washington, D.C., 6 October 2001. Available at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=24998&st=radio+address&st1=> Accessed 10 May 2010.

> disrupt the use of Afghanistan as a terrorist base of operations and to attack the military capabilities of the Taliban regime.[97]

However, in the same speech, the President warned that the classification made Afghanistan only the first part of a larger military campaign. Instead of a legal designation certified by the Department of State, Bush presented this category as possessing an existential quality, one that had implications for all states. As the President warned

> Today we focus on Afghanistan, but the battle is broader. Every nation has a choice to make. In this conflict, there is no neutral ground. If any government sponsors the outlaws and killers of innocents, they have become outlaws and murderers, themselves. And they will take that lonely path at their own peril.[98]

At the outset of Operation Enduring Freedom, the Bush administration appropriated a longstanding legal classification to use Afghanistan and its dangerous political order as an exemplar against which all states would be measured in its new extra-legal campaign against terrorism.

To render more intelligible the order in Afghanistan, and its place in international terrorism, the Bush administration co-opted the existing legal classification of a state sponsor of terror, removing the category from its original political and legal contexts. The reach and implications of this kind of reification would grow as Operation Enduring Freedom progressed in Afghanistan.

Allies in the war on terror

Early attempts to classify Afghanistan as a sponsor of terror developed in conjunction with a recasting of numerous 'Afghan warlords' as reliable partners in the war on terror. In the weeks preceding the invasion, CIA and US Special Forces partnered with several militias loosely organised under the banner of the Northern Alliance, an uneasy coalition of armed leaders that included notable 'warlords' from the Afghan civil war (1992-96), such as Abdul Rashid Dostum and Ishmael Khan.[99] More than bolstering an existing resistance movement, Antonio Giustozzi explains, many Northern Alliance commanders used weapons and cash provided by the United States to organise militias or re-mobilise

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[97] George W. Bush, 'Address to the Nation Announcing Strikes Against Al Qaida Training Camps and Taliban Military Installations in Afghanistan', Washington, D.C., 7 October 2001. Available at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=65088&st=training+camps&st1=> Accessed 10 May 2010.

[98] Ibid.

[99] A more detailed history of the Northern Alliance and its ties with the US government before 9/11 can be found in Coll, *Ghost Wars*, pp. 464-70, 499-520.

ones that had dispersed or been dormant under the Taliban.[100] This ad hoc partnership provoked considerable scepticism among American commentators, particularly about how the autonomous nature of the 'warlords' and their various rivalries would undermine the Northern Alliance's capacity to defeat the Taliban.[101] In the words of one reporter, the Northern Alliance resembled 'not so much an army as a collection of feudal barons who have banded together. There are no formal uniforms, no hierarchy or organization charts'.[102] The Bush administration evaded questions about the United States' newest Afghan allies at the early stages of Operation Enduring Freedom. Public officials eschewed the term warlord to characterise the Northern Alliance in favour of more ambiguous labels, such as 'one other group of people in Afghanistan'[103] or one of the 'groups that have an interest in securing an Afghanistan that's free from terrorism'.[104]

Anxieties about the United States' alliance with 'Afghan warlords' only grew at the outset of the war. Amid lingering debates about the scope of the American campaign in Afghanistan, several commentators questioned the adequacy of the Bush administration's strategy, particularly after several weeks passed without any major confrontation. As one reporter noted in early November, 'Northern Alliance forces have made no important gains against the Taliban despite claims that they were only a few days from reclaiming the northern city of Mazar-e Sharif'.[105] This seeming inactivity inspired considerable speculation among commentators about whether, even with US Special Forces and American bombing, the Northern Alliance and its 'warlord' commanders could defeat the Taliban. 'Perhaps the alliance's biggest problem,' Dexter Filkins and David Rohde suggested, 'is its own nature as a collection of warlords, many of them tough, uncompromising men with little vision beyond their own immediate self-interest'.[106] John J. Mearsheimer raised more general concerns about the adequacy of the

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[100] Antonio Giustozzi, *Empires of Mud: Wars and Warlords of Afghanistan* (London; New York: Columbia University Press and Hurst, 2009). p. 139.

[101] See for example Patricia Grossman, 'Tapping Afghanistan's Peacemakers', *Washington Post*, 27 September 2001, p. A27; David Rohde and John F. Burns, 'In New Glare, Questions Dog Afghan Rebels', *New York Times*, 7 October 2001, p. 1A; Thomas Omestad, Philip Smucker, and Lucian Kim, 'The Enemy of My Enemy. . .', *U.S. News & World Report*, vol. 131, no. 14, 8 October 2001. A notable defence of the Northern Alliance, and rejection of their characterisation as 'warlords', can be found in Roger L. Plunk, 'Afghanistan's Fighting Alliance', *Washington Times*, 17 October 2001, p. A19.

[102] Peter Baker, 'In Afghanistan, a Culture of War', *Washington Post*, 30 September 2001, p. A1.

[103] Philip Reeker, 'State Department Regular Briefing', Washington, D.C., 16 October 2001.

[104] Ari Fleischer, 'The White House Regular Briefing', Washington, D.C., 19 October 2001. Available at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=47603&st=northern+alliance&st1=> Accessed 11 May 2010.

[105] Molly Moore and Kamran Khan, 'Big Ground Force Seen as Necessary to Defeat Taliban', *Washington Post*, 2 November 2001, p. A21.

[106] Dexter Filkins and David Rohde, 'Afghan Rebels Seem a Reluctant Force So Far', *New York Times*, 4 November 2001, p. 1.

Northern Alliance leadership, arguing that they were unlikely 'to deliver victory' over the Taliban.[107] The lack of a decisive confrontation with the Taliban stoked lingered concerns about the United States' alliance with various 'Afghan warlords'.

These anxieties disappeared in early November 2001 after the Battle of Mazar-e-Sharif. Following weeks of anticipation, journalists fixated on the 'Afghan warlords' and their militias' attack on Taliban positions outside the city, presenting the assault as more than just a decisive victory against enemy forces. The Northern Alliance's offensive seemingly returned to a distant age, when fearsome warriors on horsebacks, descending on enemies in hordes, dominated the battlefield. Such romantic visions of the 'Afghan warlords' pervaded American media accounts of the battle. 'In the dead of night', one journalist recalled, 'horses poured from the hills. They came charging down from the craggy ridges in groups of 10, their riders dressed in flowing shalwar kameez and armed with AK-47s and grenade launchers'.[108] The evocative nature of these temporal assumptions seemingly allowed the battle to resonate in less relevant cultural contexts. Another commentator, for instance, noted how a viral recording of the battle resembled medieval warfare:

> One of the most vivid pieces of action footage from the war so far shows the Northern Alliance fighters galloping to battle, throwing up clouds of dust. When I say galloping I am not using a metaphor. They're on horses. I'm not sure, but I think they may plan on fighting with lances. They may at some point attempt to use some catapults.[109]

These spectacular scenes had, in the words of other journalists, a 'back-to-the-future feel' as sophisticated US forces supported the under-equipped, horseback fighters to attack enemy positions.[110] In their words:

> In the first land battle of the first war of the 21st century, horse cavalry led the charge against Soviet-era artillery. U.S. Special Forces directed laser beams to guide precision airstrikes [*sic*], while American cargo planes dropped horse feed and Kalashnikov rifles to advancing Afghan rebels.[111]

This confluence of US Special Forces and 'warlord' militias on horseback seemingly constituted one of the most unconventional pairings in modern imperial history. As one journalist concluded, 'The first land battle in the century's first war began with a

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[107] John J. Mearsheimer, 'Guns Won't Win the Afghan War', *New York Times*, 4 November 2001, p. 13.

[108] Romesh Ratnesar, 'The Afghan Way of War', *Time*, 19 November 2001, p. 32.

[109] Joel Achenbach, 'Weird War II: Another Conflict Becomes Surreal', *Washington Post*, 10 November 2001, p. C01.

[110] Mark Mazetti *et al.*, 'Now, It's Eyeball to Eyeball', *U.S. News & World Report*, vol. 131, no. 21, 19 November 2001, p. 14.

[111] Ibid.

showdown from a distant age: fearless men on horseback against modern artillery. America's money was on the ponies'.[112]

American officials exploited the ambivalent nature of the concept of warlord to defend the beleaguered military campaign in Afghanistan. During the Battle of Mazar, administration officials and military leaders returned to these cultural construction of war to underscore how, as a state sponsor of terror, Afghanistan constituted an enduring danger to Western civilisation that required an extraordinary response. An emphasis of the shared threat posed by the Taliban further reified the state sponsor of terror classification. For instance, in a press conference during the battle, General Peter Pace, the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, stressed that the intrepid attacks by the United States' 'warlord' allies testified to the urgency of defeating a collective enemy. The Northern Alliance fighters, he explained, were 'riding horseback into combat against tanks and armored personnel carriers. So these folks are aggressive. *They're taking the war to their enemy and ours*'.[113] The spectacle of the fight, by the General's account, affirmed the solidarity between US and Afghan forces against the Taliban. Vice-President Dick Cheney elaborated on these conclusions in a subsequent nationally syndicated interview.[114] Using the second person to emphasise Afghanistan's existence as a state sponsor of terror, he credited the Northern Alliance with dismantling a dangerous political-territorial space in which terrorist attacks could be launched around the globe:

> You've seen that area that you thought was a sanctuary inside Afghanistan, where you could hide and launch terror attacks outside the country, disappear as the Northern Alliance has moved in and the Taliban has lost control of the countryside, as people have risen up to overthrow the Taliban.[115]

Similar to Pace, Cheney also stressed that, despite their autonomous nature, the 'warlord' commanders in the Northern Alliance were leading a shared fight against a common enemy.[116] In his words:

> These are not American forces, you can't call 'em up and say, 'Take that hill,' or 'Don't go into that particular city' because, as I say, they're not

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[112] Ratnesar, 'The Afghan Way of War', p. 32.

[113] 'DoD News Briefing - ASD PA Clarke and Gen. Pace', Arlington, VA, 7 November 2001. Emphasis added. Available at <http://www.defense.gov/Transcripts/Transcript.aspx?TranscriptID=2314> Accessed 4 January 2008.

[114] 'Interview with the Vice President', CBS, *60 Minutes II*, 14 November 2004. Transcript available at <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2001/11/14/60II/main318102.shtml> Accessed 13 March 2011.

[115] Ibid.

[116] For more on the importance of Orientalist assumptions in US officials' attempts to deflect responsibility for human rights violations committed by the Northern Alliance see Keith Stanski, '"So These Folks are Aggressive": An Orientalist Reading of US Conceptions of "Afghan Warlords", 2001 – 2004', *Security Dialogue*, vol. 40, no. 1, 2009, pp. 73-94.

> our forces. They're allies for now, *we've got common interest in defeating the Taliban*.[117]

More than just attacking the Taliban, the United States' antiquated 'warlord' allies helped senior officials make more explicit the threat posed by Afghanistan. Such understandings about the enemy in Afghanistan further reified the Bush administration's designation of Afghanistan as a sponsor of terror.

Reified notions of Afghanistan as a state sponsor of terror were inseparable from a recasting of the 'Afghan warlords' that populated the country. Their antiquated tactics, combined with American military technology, seemingly affirmed the danger posed by and the heroic measures needed to defeat that kind of volatile territory.

Transformative warfare

In the weeks following the Northern Alliance's victory at Mazar-e-Sharif, the Taliban lost control of Kabul and the rest of Afghanistan, taking refuge with al-Qaeda leaders along the Afghan-Pakistan border. After the Taliban's collapse, the concept of warlord and its temporal assumptions continued to bolster the Bush administration's claims about Afghanistan's classification as the exemplar of a state sponsor of terror. Among the senior officials in the Bush administration, Donald Rumsfeld was one of most convinced about the wider significance of the United States' pairing with the Northern Alliance. A few weeks after the fall of Kabul, in a policy speech in Washington D.C., the Secretary of Defence praised the US military's capacity to combine tactics from several distinct epochs, each with varying levels of sophistication, to create a single effective fighting force. Despite the retrograde allies, Rumsfeld explained, American forces combined with 'Afghan warlords' to attack a common enemy: 'And they rode boldly—Americans, Afghans, towards the Taliban and al Qaeda fighters. It was the first cavalry attack of the 21st century'.[118] The improbable pairing affirmed the Bush administration's arguments about the widespread dangers posed by the state sponsor of terror, as well as the unprecedented measures needed to defeat it. As Rumsfeld argued

> the battle for Mazar was a transformational battle. Coalition forces took existing military capabilities from the most advanced laser-guided weapons to antique, 40-year-old B-52s…and also to the most rudimentary, a man on horseback. And they used them together in

[117] 'Interview with the Vice President'. Emphasis added.

[118] Donald Rumsfeld, 'Secretary Rumsfeld Speaks on "21st Century Transformation" of U.S. Armed Forces', National Defense University, Fort McNair, Washington D.C., 31 January 2002. Available at <http://www.defense.gov/Speeches/Speech.aspx?SpeechID=183> Accessed 26 January 2010. Emphasis added.

> unprecedented ways, *with devastating effect on enemy positions, on enemy morale, and this time, on the cause of evil in the world*.[119]

This counterintuitive coalition, which seemingly bridged vast temporal divides, combined to fight a state sponsor of terror that constituted not a hostile regime complicit in terrorist attacks, but nothing less than evil incarnate. Rumsfeld concluded that the Battle of Mazar constituted a convergence of seemingly divergent temporal and cultural spheres, which affirmed the definitive nature of the victory: 'That day on the plains of Afghanistan, the 19th century met the 21st century, and they defeated a dangerous and determined adversary, a remarkable achievement'.[120] Months removed from the battle, in the wake of the fall of the Taliban, the striking temporal differences seen between the United States and its 'warlord' allies at Mazar continued to illustrate the threat and unconventional acts required against state sponsors of terror.

The transformative effects of the Battle of Mazar received further acclaim in media accounts about the city following the collapse of the Taliban regime. American journalists returned to the northern city months after the initial assault to illustrate some of the striking changes that followed from the United States' victory. The collaboration with various 'warlords' seemingly introduced basic signs of modernity, particularly increased commerce and public life, in the once suppressed city. 'The novel strategy,' one journalist recalled, 'enabled the United States to topple the Taliban, install a friendly government and ensure that Al Qaeda could no longer use Afghanistan as a base for terrorism'.[121] This resurgence of activity manifested in a variety of ways. In the words of another reporter:

> In the months since the fall of Mazar, something resembling normal life has slowly returned. People watch TV, take photographs and listen to music. Children fly kites, a favorite pastime. Most women still wear burqas, but now with high-heeled sandals and painted toenails.[122]

Dexter Filkins presented a similar scene in noting, 'Today, Mazar-i-Sharif hums with the giddiness of a city set free. The music shops are jammed, the turbans are off, and the young women…are once again strolling the sidewalks of Balkh University'.[123] These

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[119] Ibid.

[120] Ibid. These conclusions would gain greater circulation in US imperialism once American soldiers embedded with the Northern Alliance returned from Afghanistan. Some of the more detailed accounts include Thom Shanker, 'Conduct of War is Redefined by Success of Special Forces', *New York Times*, 20 January 2002, p. 1; Doug Stanton, *Horse Soldiers: The Extraordinary Story of a Band of U.S. Soldiers who Rode to Victory in Afghanistan* (New York: Scribner, 2009); Ann Scott Tyson, 'Elite Air Force Scouts Brave Friendly Fire, Runaway Horses', *Christian Science Monitor*, 27 May 2002, p. 1.

[121] Michael R. Gordon, 'Gains and Limits in New Low-Risk War', *New York Times*, 29 December 2001, p. A1.

[122] Donatella Lorch, 'The Green Berets Up Close', *Newsweek*, 14 January 2002, p. 20.

[123] Dexter Filkins, 'Under Autumn Snow, Footnotes to Village's Sorrowful Decade', *New York Times*, 9 December 2001, p. 1.

small changes seemingly affirmed the capacity of the United States to use unconventional means to bring basic signs of modernity to places as perplexing and distant as Afghanistan.

The retrograde 'warlords' that joined US forces in liberating Mazar had a conspicuous place in the renewed modernity in Afghanistan following the defeat of the Taliban. Indeed, the continued presence of several Northern Alliance commanders cast as 'warlords', most notably Dostum and General Attah Mohammed, tempered conclusions among some journalists about the lasting changes in Mazar. Their antiquated war elicited some trepidation about the possibility for renewed fighting. As one journalist recounted

> Nearly two months after the Taliban were routed from the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif, the surrounding area is far from an oasis of peace…. skirmishes are reported several times a week. Many of the battles are between militias controlled by several powerful northern warlords. But in the complex web of Afghan rivalries, some of the fights are between local commanders who are members of the same factions.[124]

However, in many cases, the political concept was employed to underscore the improbable success achieved in Mazar. For instance, at the same time that the newly appointed transitional authority struggled to operate beyond Kabul, Dostum was credited with orchestrating the reopening of an Uzbek consulate in Mazar.[125] Others were lauded for trying to convince various other 'warlords' to disarm their militias.[126] Public pressure for Dostum and rival 'warlords' to respect human rights also elicited some hope that past animosities could be put aside for the welfare of Mazar.[127] As explored in the next section, these lingering reservations would gain greater support in subsequent months, inspiring a stark recasting of the United States' allies as several 'warlords' began to seize the Afghan state.

The United States' alliance with 'Afghan warlords', and its dramatic victories in northern Afghanistan, inspired considerable celebration among American military and policy elites about the potential for the United States to bring similar transformations elsewhere in the global south. Within weeks of the Taliban's flight from Kabul, many analysts dubbed this pairing of American airpower and 'warlord' militias as the 'Afghan

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[124] Ravi Nessman, 'Mazar-e-Sharif Skirmishes Continue', *Associated Press*, 31 December 2001.

[125] Examples can be found in Edward Cody, 'In Afghanistan, Most Politics is still Local', *Washington Post*, 16 January 2002, p. A01.

[126] Christian Caryl, 'The Ways of a Warlord', *Newsweek*, 11 February 2002, p. 20.

[127] See for example Ilene Prusher, 'Battling Warlords Try Civility', *Christian Science Monitor*, 9 May 2002, p. 1.

model', speculating that it could be applied in other troublesome areas, most notably Iraq.[128] As one journalist noted

> The ultimate success of the proxy-force approach has important implications beyond the war in Afghanistan, particularly since the Afghan model is being touted as a possible template for American military action against Iraq or other terrorist-supporting states.[129]

Although the Northern Alliance figured prominently in these academic and policy debates, few of their militia commanders were explicitly described as 'warlords'. Instead, the political concept was expressed in less controversial terms, including as 'proxy forces'[130] and 'indigenous fighters'.[131] Nonetheless, the experience of collaborating with antiquated 'warlords' heightened the confidence of many commentators about the United States' potential to transform territories elsewhere in the global south. This confidence can be seen most clearly in a James S. Robbins' lengthy 2002 survey about the prospects of the United States overthrowing the Saddam Hussein. 'The "Afghan model"', he explained, 'had more to do with a process, an approach to warfighting, than with any particular means of attack. It can be applied to Iraq not by mimicking everything done in Afghanistan but by adapting allied capabilities to Iraq's unique circumstances'.[132] The experience of fighting alongside retrograde 'Afghan warlords' provided a vivid example of the potential for the United States military to devise ingenious ways to defeat enemy forces with minimal cost. Robbins did not detail what kinds of social transformations would take place in Iraq after the deployment of the 'Afghan model'. Nonetheless, the underlying confidence in the United States' capacity to recast the global south was captured in his final remark about what would follow the overthrow of the Hussein regime in Iraq: 'Then the question is—who's next?'

'Warlords' served more than just a proxy force in American attempts to overthrow the Taliban and capture al-Qaeda leadership after the attacks of 9/11. During the early stages of Operation Enduring Freedom, the political concept helped divorce the state sponsor of terror classification from its legal and political origins. The classification

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[128] Some of the earliest discussion about the Afghan model include Eric Schmitt and James Dao, 'Use of Pinpoint Air Power Comes of Age in New War', *New York Times*, 24 December 2001, p. 1; Arnaud de Borchgrave, 'Uniting Mission and Coalition', *Washington Times*, 22 February 2002, p. A17; Michael Dobbs, 'Old Strategy on Iraq Sparks New Debate', *Washington Post*, 22 December 2001, p. A01. Notable exceptions include Stephen Biddle, *Afghanistan and the Future of Warfare: Implications for Army and Defense Policy* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, November 2002); Alan Sipress and Peter Slevin, 'Powell Wary of Iraq Move', *Washington Post*, 21 December 2001, p. A01.

[129] Bradley Graham, 'Unfinished Business in Proxy War', *Washington Post*, 6 January 2002, p. A01.

[130] See for example Ann Scott Tyson, 'US, Allies in a Riskier Kind of War', *Christian Science Monitor*, 5 March 2002, p. 1.

[131] Such expressions can be found in Mark Mazzetti and Kevin Whitelaw, 'After Saddam', *U.S. News & World Report*, vol. 133, no. 1, 1 July 2002, p. 21.

[132] James S. Robbins, 'Liberation', *National Review*, 22 February 2002.

came to encompass the existential threats terrorism posed to civilisation, one that required an unorthodox, open-ended military campaign, as exemplified by the pairing of US Special Forces and retrograde 'Afghan warlords'. Following the overthrow of the Taliban, the antiquated warfare waged the United States' improbable allies affirmed the potential for the United States to bring greater modernity to even the most remote parts of the global south. This confidence became more embattled in subsequent months after many of the United States' 'warlord' allies became the subject of considerable debate among American commentators and journalists.

Democratic State Building and 'Afghan Warlords' (2001-2004)

In the final days of the Taliban regime, US officials broadened the classification of Afghanistan to include a more promising outlook for the volatile territory by designating it a new democracy. This reclassification allowed the Bush administration to enlist the support of NATO allies to manage the country's political future without distracting from ongoing counterterrorism operations across the region. However, amid considerable domestic criticism about the unfulfilled promises of democracy in Afghanistan, as exemplified by the growing political influence of various 'Afghan warlords', the US government assumed a greater role in the democratic nation-building project. To rebuff mounting charges of failure, the Bush administration appropriated longstanding criticisms of many of its former 'warlord' allies by rationalising Afghanistan's democracy as a struggle between modernising and regressive influences.

This section examines how, in fixating on 'Afghan warlords' and their retrograde forms of warfare, numerous American commentators, advocates, and eventually policymakers diminished the social and political nature of Afghanistan's new classification by casting the nascent democracy as a struggle over whether the country would return to a violent past. In examining how this conflicted temporal condition developed throughout American political debates, it is possible to see the ambivalent place 'warlords' occupied in US imperialism and how the concept bolstered conclusions among US officials about the United States' success in introducing greater modernity in Afghanistan.

Democracy interrupted

As US Special Forces and various 'Afghan warlords' continued to search for al-Qaeda and Taliban leadership, the Bush administration increasingly turned to members of its international coalition to manage the political future of the Afghan state. At the outset of

Operation Enduring Freedom, as Barnett R. Rubin notes, the Bush administration made only vague promises to support the creation of a 'stable' Afghanistan, reiterating its position that, following the Clinton era, the United States should no longer undertake 'nation building'.[133] However, during the course of the military campaign, the Bush administration made a more explicit case for the political, strategic, and moral value of installing a democratic regime in Afghanistan. A degree of continuity underpinned the country's recasting as a new democracy. Even before the fall of the Taliban, the Bush administration presented democracy as the only force that could allow Afghanistan to escape the vicious past that made it a hub of terrorist activity.[134] The temporal assumptions behind this call for democracy were at the forefront of a November 2001 briefing by Ari Fleischer, the Bush administration's Press Secretary:

> fundamentally, this is an opportunity for Afghanistan to move the clock forward, while for so much of their past the clock has moved backwards in terms of respect for human rights, respect for individuals, respect for women. And this is an opportunity now for the people of Afghanistan to have a government that serves them broadly and multi-ethnically.[135]

Perhaps more important than an improved human rights situation, at least for the Bush administration, was the potential for democratic governance to prevent Afghanistan's relapse as a sponsor of terror. The continuity between the two classifications was explicit when Fleischer noted

> It's a difficult situation in Afghanistan, and always has been. And putting together this government presents a whole series of challenges. But those are challenges that the President believes are vital to securing a peaceful Afghanistan that's free from terrorism and that represents all.[136]

Numerous commentators endorsed the Bush administration's plans, comparing Afghanistan to some of the most celebrated democracy building projects in the twentieth century, including West Germany, Cambodia, and East Timor.[137] This designation, perhaps more importantly, resonated among the United States' foreign allies and

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[133] Barnett Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), p. xxxi.

[134] For more on the assumed modernizing influence of the democratization of Afghanistan see Giustozzi, *Empires of Mud*, pp. 89-91.

[135] Ari Fleischer, *Press Briefing by Ari Fleischer* (Washington, D.C., 19 November 2001). Available at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=47603&st=northern+alliance&st1=> Accessed 14 February 2010.

[136] Ibid.

[137] Such comparisons can be found in Michael McFaul, 'The Other Half of the Job', *Washington Post*, 5 February 2002, p. A15; R. James Woolsey, 'Objective: Democracy', *Washington Post*, 27 November 2001, p. A13; Fareed Zakaria, 'Don't Abandon Afghanistan', *Newsweek*, 17 December 2001, p. 28. This democracy project also prompted some of the earliest calls for the Bush administration to embrace a more imperial approach to democracy promotion. See for example Stanley Kurtz, 'Finishing the Job', *National Review*, 12 February 2002; Sebastian Mallaby, 'The Reluctant Imperialist: Terrorism, Failed States, and the Case for American Empire', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 81, no. 2, April 2002, pp. 2-7.

multilateral organisations, which would be responsible for overseeing the establishment of an interim government, planning elections, and creating new government institutions. As Tom Lansford notes, international support for the campaign in Afghanistan allowed the Bush administration to shift most of the burden of the ensuing nation-building operation to the UN and its NATO allies.[138] A decisive reclassification of Afghanistan enabled the Bush administration to enlist the assistance of various allies without diverting from its ongoing counterterrorism operations.

Once the UN and American allies started to organise a new political authority in Afghanistan, romantic accounts of ferocious warriors on horseback gave way to a more ambivalent view of 'Afghan warlords'. This vision was not necessarily new. Instead, by appropriating familiar assumptions about the retrograde warfare waged by 'Afghan warlords'—many of the ones that the senior US officials were using at the same time to celebrate the Battle of Mazar—journalists, policy commentators, and human rights advocates in the United States undercut the administration's confident visions of Afghanistan's transition into a modern democracy.[139] A number of commentators, for instance, questioned the supposed transformation of 'Afghan warlords' into 'civil politicians' in the months preceding the emergency Loya Jirga, a national political convention organised by the UN in June 2002.[140] Abdul Rashid Dostum was the subject of particular scrutiny. The 'carefully crafted transformation of Dostum,' in the words of one journalist, '…from one of Afghanistan's most controversial ethnic militia leaders into a glad-handing champion of modern, democratic values' was considered suspect.[141] Another commentator drew robust continuities between Dostum's violent legacyand his growing political influence to underscore the perilous future of Afghanistan as a democracy:

> Once the main warlord of northern Afghanistan and still the undisputed leader in the region, Dostum—whose name in the past has been linked to adjectives like ruthless, brutal and cruel—has traded his battle garb

[138] Tom Lansford, *A Bitter Harvest: US Foreign Policy and Afghanistan* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), p. 169.

[139] Bruce Fein was particularly explicit about the Bush administration's refusal to acknowledge the backwardness of 'Afghan warlords' in arguing, 'President George W. Bush's miraclelike quest to build a stable and democratic Afghanistan from the ramshackle pillars of indigenous lifelong warlords and political figures schooled in autocracy, AK-47s and treachery smacks of folly that is, wisdom retired at half pay'. Bruce Fein, 'In Search of a Finale', *Washington Times*, 29 January 2002, p. A17.

[140] See for example Christian Caryl, 'The Ways of a Warlord', *Newsweek*, 11 February 2002, p. 20; Ilene Prusher, 'Battling Warlords Try Civility', *Christian Science Monitor*, 5 May 2002, p. 1; Kevin Whitelaw, Philip Smucker, and Lucian Kim, 'Meet the New Boss', *U.S. News & World Report*, vol. 132, no. 4, 11 February 2002, p. 21.

[141] Pamela Constable, 'Operation Transformation For Afghan With a Dark Past', *Washington Post*, 29 May 2002, p. A11.

> for a business suit. He now talks more about budgets and construction projects than military strategy.[142]

Observers saw the sweeping political, rhetorical, and sartorial transformation of the 'Afghan warlord' to be as dubious as the notion that his brutal authority could somehow integrate into the new democratic order in Afghanistan. One journalist questioned at the time, 'Just how democratic politics will fare under a man whose portrait hangs in every office, shop and school across his fief remains to be seen'.[143] The antiquated and coercive nature of 'Afghan warlords', which had elicited such marvel months earlier, provoked considerable questions about the status of Afghanistan as an emerging democracy.

Amid these media accounts about Dostum and other 'warlords', American commentators began to stress the difficulty of reconciling the violent and regressive nature of 'Afghan warlords' with American visions of Afghanistan becoming a modern democracy. It is in these early warnings that the political concept and its temporal connotations were first used to reify Afghanistan's classification as a new democracy. The growing influence of 'Afghan warlords', many critics suggested, did not reflect the range of competing social, legal, and economic relations in Afghan's transition to democracy; rather, it was indicative of Afghanistan's relapse into a destructive and corrupt past. This conclusion pervaded a prominent Human Rights Watch report about 'the return of the warlords' in Afghan politics.[144] Published days before the Loya Jirga, the report detailed how, following the overthrow of the Taliban, various 'warlords' had claimed—or in some cases reclaimed—authority over much of the country. This pattern, the advocacy group argued, was indicative of Afghanistan's slide back into a brutal period in its recent history:

> In many ways Afghanistan today resembles Afghanistan in the early 1990s, when regional commanders were consolidating their power before the onset of the savage civil war that followed the fall of the Soviet-sponsored communist government.[145]

The supposed return to an era of 'warlord' dominance, marked by the fragmentation of the country into various retrograde fiefdoms, endangered the fledgling political institutions and social norms that characterised Afghanistan's new democratic order. Human Rights Watch detailed numerous transgressions committed by various

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[142] Bert Herman, 'In New Afghanistan, Dostum Trades Battle Garb for Business Suit and Turns to Politics', *Associated Press*, 28 April 2002.

[143] Anthony Davis, 'Makeover for a Warlord', *Time*, vol. 159, no. 22, 26 May 2002, p. 34.

[144] Human Rights Watch, *Afghanistan: Return of the Warlords* (New York: Human Rights Watch, June 2002). The report's wider political importance can be seen, to some degree, in David R. Sands, 'Council Faces Tough Balancing', *Washington Times*, 11 June 2002, p. A05; 'HRW Laments Return of Warlords to Afghanistan', *Agence France Presse*, 6 June 2002; Sam Zia-zarifi, 'The Warlords are Plotting a Comeback', *International Herald Tribune*, 10 June 2002, p. 8.

[145] Human Rights Watch, *Afghanistan*, p. 18.

'warlords' that suppressed democratic politics in southern Afghanistan, including 'extensive rigging of the process and intimidation of candidates, monitors, and local proponents of the loya jirga'.[146] 'Regardless of their ideology and the source of their power', the rights group warned, 'these warlords are creating a climate of repression that once again threatens the security and well-being of the Afghan people'.[147] This reified notion of Afghanistan's democracy, one defined by the juxtaposition of new political institutions with an unjust history, bolstered calls for action to circumscribe the growing authority of 'warlords', beginning with the end of US financial assistance to various militia commanders. 'Unless immediate steps are taken to counteract the growing power of the regional warlords,' Human Rights Watch concluded, 'Afghanistan will be at the mercy of essentially the same figures whose rule and warring devastated Afghanistan over the last decade'.[148]

More than a year after the overthrow of the Taliban, as the Bush administration launched another military intervention in Iraq (2003-), commentators and activists continued to point to 'Afghan warlords' as evidence of Afghanistan's steady regression into a violent political condition. In numerous op-eds and print articles, the political concept functioned as a way to disrupt the social and political progress assumed in Afghanistan's classification as a democracy, in large part, by underscoring the countervailing forces that located the country in an apolitical, unresolved temporal condition.[149] In a national op-ed, for instance, Sarah Chayes called on the US government to stop supporting various 'Afghan warlords', particularly those serving as governors in the new interim government.[150] The prominent American activist stressed that the exploitive nature of these commanders obstructed the free political exchange characteristic of democracies. 'But seeing warlords regain power,' she argued, 'is making people waver. I have found in my work that more and more Afghans are withdrawing to the sidelines, subtracting their life force from the battle to reconstruct Afghanistan'.[151] The capacity for 'warlords' to diminish the progressive social qualities of democracy derived from their unchanging and violent nature. As Chayes explained

> The problem is, no matter what they say, these warlords aren't going to behave. They are not reformable, because it is not in their interest to

[146] Ibid., p. 3.

[147] Ibid., p. 1.

[148] Ibid.

[149] For more on the wider historical contests in Afghan politics over the legacy of many of these 'warlords', particularly with respect to the mujahideen, see Michael Bhatia, 'The Future of the Mujahideen: Legitimacy, Legacy and Demobilization in Post-Bonn Afghanistan', *International Peacekeeping*, vol. 14, February 2007, pp. 90-107.

[150] Sarah Chayes, 'Afghanistan's Future, Lost in the Shuffle', *New York Times*, 1 July 2003, p. 23.

[151] Ibid.

> reform. The warlords' livelihood depends on extremism and lawlessness. That's how they draw their pay; that's what allows them to rule by the gun in an unofficial martial law, looting villages under the pretext of mopping-up operations, extracting taxes and bribes, crushing opponents.[152]

The inclusion of 'warlords' in the nascent Afghan state, and their continued operation outside it, called into question the United States' promise to establish a stable, democratic political order in the former state sponsor of terror. One journalist portrayed 'warlords' as creating a near deficit in the national government: 'The country has an interim government, but it is much less than the sum of its parts—and those parts are largely controlled by warlords'.[153] In similar terms, another national op-ed warned that Afghanistan was only a 'job half-done', in large part because the Bush administration had paid insufficient attention to internal security, which 'left most of the country under the control of feuding warlords'.[154] Instead of breaking from Afghanistan's legacy of barbaric, exploitive rulers, which for many American observers spanned centuries, the accession of 'warlords' to public office seemingly confirmed that Afghanistan was condemned to relive its grim history of political instability, competing loyalties, and protracted strife.[155] This reified classification of Afghanistan as an incomplete democracy divided across conflicting historical times heightened the urgency of critics' calls for the US government to become more invested in the future of the country.

Many officials in the US government dismissed public warnings about the fate of the Afghan democracy. After the appointment of the transitional authority, Seth G. Jones argues, the Bush administration remained hesitant to become too mired in the complexities of Afghan national politics, nation building, or peacekeeping.[156] It was only in August 2003, after months of negotiations among the UN and NATO members, that the Bush administration agreed to deploy a few thousand international peacekeepers beyond Kabul and into areas controlled by various 'warlords'.[157] After a similar delay, the United States began to pressure various 'warlords' to disarm their private militias across the country and expedite the development of the Afghan national security forces. 'During the first three to four years of the post-Taliban era,' Giustozzi notes, 'the

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[152] Ibid.

[153] Barry Bearak, 'Unreconstructed', *New York Times Magazine*, 1 July 2003, p. 40.

[154] 'A Job Half-Done in Afghanistan', *New York Times*, 15 May 2003, p. A34.

[155] Victor Davis Hanson illustrates the place of 'warlords' at the centre of this long historical gaze in arguing, 'We read stories about the pernicious warlords in Afghanistan—as if they appeared post October 7 [2001] and were not there 2,300 years ago when Alexander the Great arrived'. See Victor Davis Hanson, 'Roots of American Self-Doubt', *National Review*, 25 January 2002.

[156] Seth G. Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires: America's War in Afghanistan* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2009), chap. 7.

[157] Kimberly Zisk Marten, 'Defending Against Anarchy: From War to Peacekeeping in Afghanistan', *Washington Quarterly*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2002, pp. 35-52.

development of bureaucratised and institutionalised security services proceeded very slowly, a fact that prevented the central state from sufficiently increasing its leverage on regional players'.[158] Nonetheless, the Bush administration remained confident about Afghanistan and the ameliorative potential of democracy in the country. 'In Afghanistan', Condoleezza Rice, the National Security Advisor, explained in a July 2003 policy speech, 'people are rebuilding, writing a new constitution and moving beyond the culture of the warlord that has dominated their political life for a generation'.[159] The US government continued to downplay the political liabilities posed by 'Afghan warlords' by stressing the transformative nature of the democratic nation-building project in Afghanistan.

Irreconcilable temporal forces

The Bush administration's responsibility for the unsettled temporal condition became more contentious in subsequent months. By mid 2004, numerous US commentators, observers, and former policymakers blamed the administration for allowing 'warlords' to retard—or even reverse—Afghanistan's development as a democracy. Critics used the political concept to underscore how, instead of approaching the promised condition of modernity, Afghanistan was mired in an interrupted stage of development, one devoid of the social and political features of a democratic order. In the months preceding the already delayed presidential elections, for instance, a national editorial board warned, 'Afghanistan's coming elections are in jeopardy, and not just because of a revived Taliban'.[160] The primary threat posed to the country's first purportedly democratic elections derived in large part from the Bush administration's unwillingness to curtail the activities of various 'Afghan warlords':

> The warlord armies that Washington used to oust the Taliban in 2001 now pose an even greater danger….President Bush is largely responsible for this situation, having first decided to fight the war against the Taliban on the cheap and then leaving the job of nation-building undone while he diverted American forces to Iraq.[161]

The op-ed concluded that only the removal of retrograde forces, including 'warlords', from the Afghan political apparatus would allow the promised transformation to take place in Afghanistan: 'Ultimate victory in Afghanistan requires an effective national

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[158] Giustozzi, *Empires of Mud*, p. 90.

[159] Condoleezza Rice, 'Remarks by National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice at Town Hall Los Angeles Breakfast', Los Angeles, CA, 12 June 2003. Available at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=80412&st=town+hall&st1=> Accessed 10 August 2010.

[160] 'A Threatened Afghanistan', *New York Times*, 15 July 2004, p. 22.

[161] Ibid.

government, freed from both the Taliban and the warlords'.[162] Other criticisms accentuated the United States' complicity in the unresolved temporal condition by underscoring how unchanging 'warlords' had been a regressive influence in Afghanistan even before the Bush administration allied with the Northern Alliance. As Kathy Gannon argued

> The United States is betting that the same men who caused Afghanistan so much misery in the past will somehow lead it to democracy and stability in the future. The evidence, however, suggests that the opposite is happening. Opportunities have been lost, goodwill squandered, and lessons of history ignored.[163]

The prospects of a democratic ethos emerging in Afghanistan seemingly depended on the Bush administration cutting ties with these various 'warlords'.[164] The assumed regressive influence of 'warlords', as well as the Afghan democracy's capture in an undemocratic condition, was perhaps most clearly captured in the recommendations developed by the 9/11 Commission. The bipartisan panel commended the Bush administration for its efforts in Afghanistan, but it also noted that the long-term welfare of the country required not a change in national politics so much as an escape from the retrograde epoch of 'warlords'. To ensure the welfare of democracy in Afghanistan, the Commission explained, 'It would mean a redoubled effort to secure the country, disarm militias, and curtail the age of warlord rule'.[165] By enabling 'warlords' to flourish, critics argued, the Bush administration had allowed Afghanistan to be dragged back into a conflicted, seemingly apolitical temporal condition.

The Bush administration eventually responded to mounting pressures about the arrested development of Afghanistan as a democracy. In the months preceding the presidential elections in October 2004, the administration did more than just concede to longstanding criticisms about the regressive nature of 'warlords' and their threat to the country's future. Senior officials appropriated many of their critics' reified understandings of Afghanistan as a near apolitical democratic order by further reducing the classification to an irreconcilable struggle between a modern, just technocratic elite and a violent, backward collection of 'warlords'. This reified understanding pervaded the Bush administration's subsequent efforts to removed—or at least marginalised—

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[162] Ibid.

[163] Kathy Gannon, 'Afghanistan Unbound', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 83, no. 3, May/June 2004, p. 36. See also Barnett R. Rubin, '(Re)Building Afghanistan: The Folly of Stateless Democracy', *Current History*, vol. 103, no. 672, April 2004, pp. 165-70.

[164] Gannon concluded, 'If Washington really wants to help it must abandon its policy of working with the warlords and faction leaders of the Northern Alliance. Sayyaf, Fahim, and their men have nothing to offer Afghanistan that would help the country move forward'. Ibid., p. 44.

[165] National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States* (New York: Norton, 2004), p. 371.

various 'warlords' from the national government and distance itself from various former allies. After initially dismissing concerns from UN and NATO about the composition of the Karzai government, for instance, the Bush administration began to pressure President Karzai to remove key 'warlords' from his government. One of the most scrutinised removals was his Minister of Defence, Marshal Mohammed Fahim, who was dropped as Karzai's running mate in July 2004 after refusing to demobilise his private militia in Kabul.[166] After Karzai announced his candidacy, American Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad did not indict the Minister of Defence as a 'warlord'. However, he seemingly invoked the political concept by drawing on its temporal assumptions to make a stern warning to Fahim and other 'warlords' that the United States would not tolerate violence in the wake of the announcement. 'We expect everyone to do everything they can not to undermine stability here,' Khalilzad explained. 'Political competition is good, it's fine. That's the way of the future in Afghanistan. But the use of force to resolve political disputes is a thing of the past'.[167] There was seemingly little space for 'warlords' in the future of the Afghan democracy.

This conviction about the inability to reconcile the regressive influence of 'Afghanistan warlords' with the development of a democratic order enabled the US government to pursue a complementary intervention in Afghanistan. Instead of just excluding 'warlords' from the nascent government, American officials used the Afghan state as a device to recast and co-opt certain armed leaders. Ishmael Khan, a 'warlord' that served as the governor of Herat, was at the centre of one of the most noted examples. As Rajiv Chandrasekaran explains, in July 2004, following weeks of clashes between Khan's security forces and a rival militias, Khalilzad met with Khan in western Afghanistan, afterwards announcing that the former mujahideen commander would immediately move to Kabul to join Karzai's cabinet.[168] However, instead of a retrograde, coercive 'warlord' subverting the Afghan democracy, President Karzai and American officials received Khan as a hero of Afghanistan. Following the announcement, Khalilzad stressed that Khan had 'done a great deal for Afghanistan' and could continue

[166] British officials were particularly adamant about Fahim's removal, but most foreign officials, including from the United States, were wary of commenting publicly on the situation, in part for fear of appearing to interfere in the elections. For more on international pressure surrounding the move and other attempts to remove 'warlords' from the Karzai government see Andrew Reynolds, 'A Test for Afghan Democracy', *Washington Post*, 25 September 2004, p. A23; Keith B. Richburg, 'Karzai Replaces Top Deputy on Ticket', *Washington Post*, 27 July 2004, p. A01; 'Afghanistan's Gamble', *Washington Times*, 27 June 2004, p. A22.

[167] Quoted in Stephen Graham, 'U.S. Issues Veiled Warning to Warlords', *Associated Press*, 27 July 2004.

[168] Rajiv Chandrasekaran, 'Administration is Keeping Ally at Arm's Length', *Washington Post*, 6 May 2009, p. A01. For more on this period see Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires*, pp. 134-6.

his 'tradition of public service' in Kabul.[169] The inclusion of Khan in the national government seemingly absolved the longstanding 'warlord' from his corrupt past. As Khalilzad concluded in other discussions about bringing 'warlords' into the Afghan government, 'There must be a place of honor for those who cooperate'.[170] The stark divisions between the democratic Afghan government and 'Afghan warlords' enabled the Bush administration to pursue more far-reaching forms of intervention in Afghan politics.

The reifying function of the political concept became more flagrant around the presidential election. After considerable bureaucratic shuffling, much it designed to circumscribe various 'warlords', many American policymakers recognised the significance of the first 'free' election in Afghan history to be nominally in the contest among competing candidates and their respective political agendas. Instead, it was treated as a meta-historical turning point from which a new Afghanistan would emerge from a vicious past. Neoconservatives in the Bush administration, most notably Khalilzad, were among the most certain about the outcome of the supposed confrontation of 'Karzai vs. the warlords'.[171] The American ambassador stressed on several occasions that 'warlords' would have no place in the new Afghan democracy. In the weeks preceding the vote, for instance, Khalilzad was quoted as warning, '['Warlords''] days are numbered…They are forces of the past. If they want to be part of the future of Afghanistan, they will have to reform. Or end up in some hole, some jail somewhere'.[172] The scale of historical change expected to follow from the election only heightened the inevitable obsolescence that many 'warlords' faced as the presidential vote approached. In a national op-ed published on the day of the election, Khalilzad celebrated the vote as marking the emergence of a new order in Afghanistan:

> The days of those who have conducted themselves as warlords are numbered. The warlords know it. The sun is setting on their way of life….Those who do not reform ultimately will have no place of power or prestige in the new Afghanistan.[173]

This confidence in the fundamental historical changes that would follow from the president election only continued to grow in anticipation of the election results. During a speech in Washington Khalilzad remarked, 'In the old Afghanistan private militias were

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[169] Quoted in Pamela Constable, 'Karzai Fires Militia Leader Who Resisted His Authority', *Washington Post*, 12 September 2004, p. A24.

[170] Quoted in Pamela Constable, 'Karzai Attempts Diplomacy With Afghan Warlords', *Washington Post*, 19 May 2004, p. A12.

[171] See for example Esther Pan, *Afghanistan: Karzai vs. the Warlords* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, September 2004).

[172] Quoted in Maseeh Rahman, 'U.S. Envoy Criticizes 'Forces of the Past'', *Washington Times*, 28 September 2004, p. A15.

[173] Zalmay Khalilizad, 'A 5,000-Year First', *Wall Street Journal*, 9 October 2004, p. 18.

the coin of the realm. In the new Afghanistan, they are depreciating assets'.[174] This diminishing value derived from the changing historical logic—as opposed to new political or social qualities—that would characterise the new Afghanistan:

> Those leaders and commanders who cling to old ways, those who continue to conduct themselves as warlords, will not have positions of power and prestige in the new Afghanistan. Those who follow the logic of democracy by serving, rather than exploiting or abusing, the people may find their way into the new order.[175]

The gross temporal assumptions surrounding 'warlords' enabled the political concept to serve as a vivid benchmark against which US officials could substantiate the historical transformations expected to follow from Afghanistan's presidential election.

Outside the Bush administration, anticipation about the emergence of a new Afghanistan faded even before Karzai was announced as the winner of the Karzai the presidency. After several weeks of vote counting and fraud investigations in Afghanistan, many American commentators and journalists were more fixated on President Bush's re-election bid than news that the United States' longstanding client had won.[176] However, among prominent neo-conservative commentators, many of whom were writing in support of President Bush's re-election bid, the election result was of particular significance, but not just because of Karzai's victory. The electoral defeat of 'Afghan warlords' seemingly confirmed the United States' capacity to bring greater modernity to Afghanistan and, more importantly, other unstable areas across the global south.[177] Charles Krauthammer, for instance, noted that 'warlords' lingered in rural areas across Afghanistan. But, by his account, the election provided Karzai the necessary impetus to forge a democratic government across the rest of the country:

> Karzai controls Kabul, most of the major cities and much in between. And he is successfully leveraging his power to gradually extend his authority as he creates entirely new federal institutions and an entirely new military.[178]

The Bush administration's efforts to establish this new democratic apparatus in Afghanistan had far-reaching consequences. 'Afghanistan,' Krauthammer concluded, 'is

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[174] Zalmay Khalilizad, 'Remarks by Zalmay Khalilzad Regarding the Advance of Democracy in Afghanistan', Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, Washington, D.C., 27 October 2004.

[175] Ibid.

[176] This degree of apathy can be seen in one journalist's note: '[Karzai] will become the country's first elected leader, after rule by kings, Communists, warlords, and the fundamentalist Taliban. The question is whether he will now seize his mandate to move the country forward'. Bay Fang, 'After the Election, What?', *U.S. News & World Report*, vol. 137, no. 16, 8 November 2004, p. 38.

[177] See for example Victor Davis Hanson, 'The Real Humanists', *National Review*, 19 November 2004; Christopher Hitchens, 'Afghanistan's Dangerous Bet', *Vanity Fair*, no. 531, November 2004, p. 230; James S. Robbins, 'They Chose Freedom', *National Review*, 13 December 2004.

[178] Charles Krauthammer, 'The Afghan Miracle', *Washington Post*, 12 December 2004, p. A37.

the first graduate of the Bush Doctrine of spreading democracy in rather hostile places. A success so remarkable and an end so improbable merit at least a moment of celebration'.[179] Similar conclusions about the vindication of the Bush administration animated Charles H. Fairbanks' assessment about how the election had led to Afghanistan being 'reborn'.[180] In his estimation, 'President Bush's democratic objective in Afghanistan was, improbably, a precondition of success'.[181] As Fairbanks explained:

> In a very traditional society…inchoate yearnings may not add up to democracy as technically defined, but the prosperous West and its democratic ways represent the direction most people crave. Nor should we dismiss the longing of simple people to determine their own fate. The warlords, including the Northern Alliance, were unable to offer any hope for a better life, and they represented the antithesis of democracy.[182]

The emergence of a 'new' Afghanistan, one that broke with its violent history, with the assistance of the Bush administration, bolstered neoconservatives' confidence in the potential for the United States to inspire similar transformation elsewhere in the global south.

The Bush administration expressed similar confidence in the modernising influence of the US-led intervention in Afghanistan. As seen following the Battle of Mazar, the concept of warlord was not an explicit part of their celebration. Nonetheless, many of the concept's core assumptions and temporal connotations bolstered officials' confidence in the transformation of Afghanistan and the potential for similar meta-historical changes to take place elsewhere in the Middle East. On the day Karzai was announced as the election's winner, 'warlords' seemingly loomed in the background of President Bush's argument that 'Through this simple act of voting the Afghan people declared to the world their determination to move beyond a brutal legacy of oppression, terror, and fear to a future of hope, democracy, and freedom'.[183] Vice-President Cheney made a similar case during a speech to American troops in Afghanistan following President Karzai's inauguration. More than a month removed from the elections, he explained, the lasting significance of the Operation Enduring Freedom was evident not only in Afghanistan, but it inspired hope elsewhere in the global south:

> across Afghanistan, we see the real meaning behind these elections. For the first time, the people of this country are looking confident about a future of freedom and peace. Across the broader Middle East, people

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[179] Ibid.

[180] Charles H. Fairbanks Jr., 'Afghanistan Reborn', *Weekly Standard*, vol. 10, no. 8, November 2004.

[181] Ibid.

[182] Ibid.

[183] George W. Bush, 'Statement Congratulating President Hamid Karzai on His Election as President of Afghanistan', 4 November 2004. Available at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=72822&st=afghanistan&st1=election> Accessed 28 February 2011.

> look to Afghanistan and see something new and hopeful in the world's most troubled region. And a watching world has seen, once again, that the United States military is one of the greatest forces for good on this Earth.[184]

The modernising influence of the United States seemingly assured that Afghanistan would not regress to its previous state. As Cheney concluded, 'Because our nation has been strong and resolute in the cause of freedom, Afghanistan will never go back to the camp of tyranny and terror'.[185]

The place of 'warlords' in Afghanistan's halting transformation into a democracy after the Taliban reveals the capacity for the political concept to render abstract imperial classifications into more concrete parts of US imperialism. Amid promises of the transformative nature of democracy, critics stressed that 'warlords' constituted a regressive force—as opposed to a political or social influence—that had dragged Afghanistan and co-opted the new democratic apparatus into a violent condition last seen decades earlier. After rebuffing such charges, the Bush administration eventually appropriating these temporal claims in formulating a series of interventions in the Afghan state and national elections. The stand against retrograde 'Afghan warlords', which culminated in Karzai's victory in the 2004 presidential elections, bolstered conclusions among American officials about the United States' success in introducing greater modernity in Afghanistan and the potential for similar transformations to be achieved elsewhere in the global south.

Conclusion

Systems of classification were a fundamental part of US and British attempts to manage the diverse territories and populations encountered across the non-European world. Based on various overlapping criteria, these classifications assigned certain positions, regulated groups, and enforced many of the boundaries that constituted each empire's broad imperial imaginary and political structure. The enduring importance, as well as far-reaching function, of these classifications makes them essential to the history of 'warlords' in US and British imperialism. Indeed, the concentration of 'warlords' in unruly kinds of territories, such as failed states, troubled frontiers, and uncivilised territories, is indicative of how the political concept helped Britain and the United States parse some of the most troubled areas of the non-European world into more intelligible and manageable parts. To appreciate the political concept's importance in managing the

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[184] Richard B. Cheney, 'Vice President's Remarks at a Breakfast with U.S. Troops', 7 December 2004. Available at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=81498&st=karzai&st1=afghanistan> Accessed 3 March 2011.

[185] Ibid.

uneven development of order requires an understanding of how it influenced larger abstractions about kinds of territories and populations found in the global south.

The most fundamental influence of 'warlords' in these systems of classification derived from the temporal assumptions surrounding the concept. The coercive nature of 'warlords', combined with latent assumptions about the global south, inspired far-reaching conclusions about the retrograde nature of non-European territories. As seen in this chapter, these temporal assumptions assumed a variety of forms. Following the First Anglo-Burmese War, King Bagyidaw was cast in more developmental terms, that is, as a 'Burmese warlord' waging a particularly insolent, adolescent form of warfare. This unrelenting violence was recognised as further evidence of his empire's backward condition. The various 'Afghan warlords' that appeared after 9/11, by contrast, were at first portrayed in many American media accounts and policy speeches as an antiquated force reminiscent of the Golden Horde found during the Mongol Empire. Such conclusions accentuated the purported convergences of epochs that took place as Afghan warriors and US soldiers overthrew the Taliban. Many of the same violent leaders were later re-envisioned months later in less romantic terms, recast as a force responsible for the anarchy and chaos seen in Afghanistan decades earlier. These conclusions underscored both Afghanistan's arrested development as a nascent democracy and its eventual transformation as a new state following Karzai's victory in the first presidential elections.

Despite the contrasting referents, these cultural constructions of war had a seemingly common function in US and British classifications. The political concept reified prevailing understandings of both territories, that is, it diminished many of the ambiguities, inconsistencies, and redundancies found in US and British classifications, to create more cogent understandings of the global south. This form of reification appeared in various forms. In the case of pre-colonial Burma, the concept's temporal connotations accentuated notions of violent unrest and the sanctity of British sovereignty to transform the troubled frontier classification into a fixture of the region's political geography. In a similar fashion, the antiquated 'warlords' that allied with the United States against the Taliban helped invest new meaning of an old classification, state sponsor of terror. The temporal contrasts between US forces and their 'Afghan warlords' allies helped remove the classification from its political and legal context to create a more coherent category. Months later, the political concept was central to a differing kind of reification: the Bush administration and its supporters seized upon the temporal connotations surrounding many of the United States' one-time allies to deny the political and social qualities of Afghanistan's nascent democracy, reducing it to a contest between a modernising elite and retrograde 'warlords'. Each of these forms of reification made these imperial

classifications appear not as complex abstractions intended to further imperial hierarchies, but as logical—and even unchanging—features of the global south.

These reified classifications had considerable consequences for the nature of US and British interventions in the global south. By diminishing the inherent ambiguity of the non-European world, these systems of understanding made more natural imperial attempts to promote particular forms of order in otherwise perplexing territories. The projection of expedient meanings, such as urgent threats to core imperial interests, ascribed new significance to past imperial measures or, in other cases, enabled far-reaching modes of intervention. Perhaps more importantly, by turning abstract categories into concrete things, these reified classifications also enabled more exceptional forms of intervention. The launch of imperial wars in unfamiliar territories, for instance, became more appropriate for each metropole amid a categorical understanding of the origins of the unrest. Likewise, interference in Afghan national electoral politics was more acceptable as the expected outcome could be more readily envisioned. The production of more definitive, incontestable forms of knowledge helped not only make perplexing territories more intelligible, but also manageable for Britain and the United States.

The temporal assumptions surrounding the political concept were inseparable from the wider significance of 'warlords' in the US and British imperial imaginaries. The retrograde nature of 'warlords' bolstered US and British conclusions about their potential to transform unruly territories in the global south, in large part, by introducing staple features of modernity. In pre-colonial Burma and post-9/11 Afghanistan, these transformations ranged from defending sovereign borders to restoring commerce and public life in sequestered communities to escaping decades of tyranny. Despite their contrasting scale and contexts, each of these examples illustrates how 'warlords' constituted a vestige from a distant past. Such a flagrant temporal marker emboldened notions in Britain and the United States about the sophisticated nature of their modes of intervention, particularly their drilled colonial armies or precise air power. However, the concept also deepened Anglo-American conclusions about the transformative nature of their interventions in the global south, ones that could seemingly be brought to other unruly areas. The promise of military interventions or democracy promotion exceeded the imposition of order to become a change in the historical trajectory of these territories. Such temporal shifts affirm the lasting power of 'warlords' over US and British notions of intervention in the non-European world.

The concentration of 'warlords' in turbulent, unruly territories reflected the potential for war to challenge basic legal and moral structures found in the global south. The next chapter examines how the concept of warlord was part of US and British

attempts to use particular normative frameworks, namely the laws of war, to impose greater order in the non-European world.

4. 'Warlords' and Debasement in International Law

Over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, international law evolved into one of the primary normative and legal frameworks through which Britain and the United States managed the relationship between war and order in the global south. This development can be traced back to the mid-nineteenth century, when European jurists, publicists, and government officials began to formalise longstanding Western customs, treaties, and jurisprudence about relations between states, including during times of war (*jus in bello*).[1] The result was the emergence of an early body of public international law that embodied liberal notions about the potential to standardize and, in turn, stabilize international relations.[2]

The initial codification of this liberal normative project invited renewed scrutiny of longstanding cultural assumptions that had contributed to the exclusion of large swaths of the non-European world from the piecemeal body of international law. Once dismissed as beyond the reach of any moral constraint, particularly during times of war, the development of more varied notions about the kinds of social, political, and economic order found in the global south led British and, more than a century later, US leaders to project a wider array of norms and laws about the conduct of war on the non-European world.[3] International law functioned as a normative and legal framework through which both imperial powers recognised—or denied—the status of non-European political actors, validated their right to conduct war, and, perhaps most importantly, impose sanctions for perceived violations of Western standards about the use of force.[4]

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[1] For more on international law during this period of European imperialism see Anthony Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Edward Keene, *Beyond the Anarchical Society: Grotius, Colonialism and Order in World Politics* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), chap. 4; Jennifer Pitts, 'Boundaries of Victorian International Law', in Duncan Bell (ed.), *Victorian Visions of Global Order: Empire and International Relations in Nineteenth-Century Political Thought*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 159-85; Casper Sylvest, 'Our Passion for Legality: International Law and Imperialism in Late Nineteenth-Century Britain', *Review of International Studies*, vol. 34, no. 3, 2008, pp. 403-23.

[2] Compelling accounts of the liberal project of public international law and the laws of war can be found in Martti Koskenniemi, *The Gentle Civilizer of Nations: the Rise and Fall of International Law, 1870-1960* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Karma Nabulsi, *Traditions of War: Occupation, Resistance, and the Law* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[3] As examined in more detail below, the United States maintained a convoluted relationship with international law, particularly as many policymakers, commentators, and scholars challenged its applicability to American domestic and foreign policy after the Cold War. For more on some of the most important areas of contentions see Anthony Clark Arend, 'International Law and the Preemptive Use of Military Force', *The Washington Quarterly*, vol. 26, no. 2, 2003, pp. 89-103; Harold Hongju Koh, 'On American Exceptionalism', *Stanford Law Review*, vol. 55, no. 5, May 2003, pp. 1479-527; Sean D. Murphy, 'Contemporary Practice of the United States Relating to International Law', *The American Journal of International Law*, vol. 94, no. 1, January 2000, pp. 102-39.

[4] Paul Kennedy and George J. Andreopoulous capture the importance of order in determining the applicability of the laws of war to the non-European world in arguing, 'Who is included in, and who is

At various moments in the history of US and British imperialism 'warlords' were at the forefront of attempts to expand international law to include more of the non-European world. In the late nineteenth century, for example, the British press argued that, despite occurring in the independent country of Benin, the massacre of British forces and repeated human sacrifices constituted such a violation of humanitarian principles that the king, Oba Overami, should be captured and his capital destroyed.[5] More recently, human rights activists celebrated the indictment of Thomas Lubanga, Jean Pierre-Bemba, and several other 'Congolese warlords' at The Hague for crimes against humanity.[6] American advocates heralded the indictment as a major step towards holding African leaders 'accountable' for their actions and ending 'impunity' in the continent's longest war.

This chapter examines the significance 'warlords' in US and British debates about who in the global south is included and excluded from international law. It focuses on how US and British policymakers, advocates, and commentators employed the concept of warlord to debase non-European leaders.[7] More specifically, it is argued, the political concept degraded the standing of sovereign leaders by recasting their political authority in more objectionable terms. The concept diminished social, political, or legal claims to a recognised authority by ascribing greater primacy to culturally laden notions of war as the source of their autonomy. Such a mode of debasement qualified their political authority, making the warlord-turn-king (or warlord-turn-president) both the cause and emblem of corrupt legal orders. This mode of debasement gave considerable imperative to Britain and the United States enforcing international legal conventions, as the territories of warlords came to exemplify gross legal affronts to international standards. To allow 'warlords' to defy international legal standards, by this account, would allow entire territories to compromise the potential to bring greater order to the non-European world.

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excluded from the laws of war? In seeking to answer that apparently simple question, one gains insights into the social order, the political assumptions, and the economic structures of the group in question'. Paul Kennedy and George J. Andreopoulous, 'The Laws of War: Some Concluding Reflections', in Michael Howard, George J. Andreopoulos, and Mark R. Schulman (eds.), *The Laws of War: Constraints on Warfare in the Western World*, (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 214.

[5] Details of this political argument can be found in Robert Home, *City of Blood Revisited: A New Look at the Benin Expedition of 1897* (London: Rex Collings, 1982), chap. 3-4.

[6] This celebration can be found throughout *Africa and the ICC* (New York: International Center for Transitional Justice, May 2008); *ICC: Congo Ruling Victory for Justice* (New York: Human Rights Watch, November 2008); David J. Francis, ''Paper Protection' Mechanisms: Child Soldiers and the International Protection of Children in Africa's Conflict Zones', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 45, no. 2, 2007, pp. 207-31.

[7] This chapter's study of debasement draws on David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration* (Durham, NC & London: Duke University Press, 1993), chap. 5.

More than just deepening consensuses about the objectionable nature of non-European warfare and legal inadequacies of non-European territories, this kind of debasement heightened conclusions about the place of international law in US and British imperialism. Although both powers had a convoluted relationship with the international law during each period in question, the concept of warlord imparted a high-minded, principled quality to US and British attempts to enforce international law. The power of 'warlords' in US and British imperialism, it is concluded, can be seen in the emboldened conclusions among policymakers, commentators, and advocates about the efficacy of imperial attempts to employ the fragmented framework of international law to contain the excesses of war and promote more appropriate forms of order in the global south.

To develop this argument the chapter returns to US and British encounters with two 'African warlords', each sovereign leaders of their state, that were at the forefront of determining who was protected under and subject to international law. The first is King Theodore II (also referred to as Theodorus or Tewodros). In the mid-nineteenth century, the Abyssinian emperor became the topic of protracted debates about the custom of diplomatic immunity after detaining several British and European nationals. A concerted public campaign to cast him as an 'Abyssinian warlord', whose rule derived from a fanatic form of war, proved essential to shaping official debates about the gravity of his affront to international legal custom. The debasement of his political authority ascribed a newfound urgency and righteousness to Britain's mission to rescue the hostages and punish Theodore for violating international law.

The second example is Charles Taylor. Beginning in the early 1990s, Taylor emerged as one of the most infamous 'warlords' in US imperialism, as his militias waged a gruesome civil war that spanned much of West Africa. Several years later, following Taylor's election as president of Liberia, the barbarism associated with the 'Liberian warlord' inspired considerable speculation about whether he could claim immunity from prosecution for war crimes. Following Taylor's indictment, the Bush administration balked at delivering him to international authorities. However, by returning to the debasement of his sovereign authority imparted a lasting urgency to the case. The administration eventually reversed its support for Taylor's exile and went on to claim his delivery to international authorities as further evidence of its commitment to international law.

This chapter develop in three parts. The first section examines the political and normative arguments that reduced Theodore's rule to a fanatic violence. The following one examines the power of notions of barbarism in recasting the political authority of Charles Taylor following his election as president of Liberia. The chapter concludes with

the wider reflections about the significance of 'warlords' in how international law was used to mediate the relationship between war and order in US and British imperialism.

King Theodore and Fanatical Acts of War

King Theodore and his violent transgressions brought Abyssinia to the forefront of British political debates about the need to stop acts of cruelty and protect foreign nationals in the non-European world. This obscure emperor, who was first admired in colonial correspondence as a 'warlord' capable of bringing order to Abyssinia, became the subject of considerable scrutiny among activists and publishers after incarcerating dozens of British officials and European citizens. In debasing Theodore's rule, the concept of warlord was employed to bolster political arguments about the imperative for Britain to extend international law to protect diplomatic immunity and restrain violence in the non-European world. This tenuous legal framework seemingly offered Britain a coherent way to manage the contingent nature of war and order.

This section explores how the concept of warlord animated normative and political arguments about the illegality of Theodore's detention of several European officials and missionaries. The discussion focuses on the ways in which the political concept was employed to diminish Theodore's claims to sovereignty, and how it emboldened imperial confidence in the potential for Britain to use international law as a way to impose a more just order in Abyssinia.

The emergence of an 'Abyssinian warlord'

During the mid-nineteenth century Theodore first emerged as a 'warlord' in one of the most remote corners of colonial Africa. In the decades prior to the so-called European Scramble for Africa (1884-1914), Abyssinia remained on the margins of the Britain's imperial project, separated as much by physical as political divides.[8] Without a large commercial port, many officials in Lord Palmerston's government saw the Christian territory's only strategic significance to derive from its proximity to the main route to British India via the Red Sea.[9] Although Britain recognised an Emperor, Ras Ali, to be the principal leader of Abyssinia, colonial officials also doubted his power, particularly with numerous rival chiefs controlling separate fiefdoms across the country. This 'Era of

[8] This is not to suggest that Abyssinia was completely removed from imperial aspirations. Britain was concerned about the potential expansion of Ottoman Empire and, even more so, France into the region.

[9] Nini Rodgers, 'The Abyssinian Expedition of 1867-1868: Disareli's Imperialism or James Murray's War?', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 27, no. 1, March 1984, pp. 130-1.

Princes', as some scholars describe it, created a particularly bleak condition in Abyssinia. 'The absence of a strong central government, and the constant warring of the barons,' Darrell Bates explains, 'had their inevitable consequences in terms of misery, starvation, insecurity, and injustice'.[10] Prior to Theodore's arrival to power, Abyssinia was on the literal and figurative margins of British imperialism.

Anticipation of Theodore's capacity to bring a degree of order to Abyssinia, particularly one advantageous to British colonial interests, inspired accounts of his rise of power. The 'rebel Chief', then known as Kassa (or Dejaj Kasai in British circles), first registered as an 'Abyssinian warlord' in colonial correspondence drafted by Walter Powden, the British Consul in the port of Massawah, about the ongoing civil war between various chiefs.[11] A growing autonomy based on a capacity to wage war across larger swaths of the country animated his initial recognition as a 'warlord'. In a July 1853 despatch, Plowden reported to his superiors in London that Ras Ali was losing control of the country, but some hope could be found in the fact that Theodore 'appears to be a man of sufficient capacity to civilise and improve this distracted country'.[12] This potential derived from his civil mode of warfare. Theodore, Plowden explained, used his growing military strength to restrain abhorrent social practices in areas across northern Abyssinia:

> He has already, in his camp and territory, put a stop to several barbarous and disgusting practices, and in his reception of Europeans has shown that he values them and their arts far more highly than any other Abyssinian Chief has lately been disposed to do.[13]

The expanding political authority of Kasai boded well for British interests in Abyssinia. 'If Dejajmatch Kasai,' Plowden argued in a subsequent despatch, 'obtain [*sic*] a complete mastery over the whole country, as he is a man of talent, there will be some prospect of increasing our intercourse with Abyssinia'.[14] This initial optimism was reiterated in an October 1853 report, in which Plowden speculated, 'A few months will probably decide all, and if then Dejajmatch Kasai shall be powerful [*sic*] to unite the whole country under a vigorous Government, his character will be favourable to our views'.[15] The future of

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[10] Darrell Bates, *The Abyssinian Difficulty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 17.

[11] An edited volume on Plowden's early travels through Absyssinia, as well as a summary of his impressions of Theodore, can be found in Walter Chichele Plowden, *Travels in Abyssinia and the Galla Country, with an Account of a Mission to Ras Ali in 1848* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1868).

[12] Walter Chichele Plowden, 'No. 139. Consul Plowden to Lord J. Russell', in House of Commons (ed.), *Correspondence Respecting Abyssinia, 1846-68*, (London: Harrison and Sons, [28 July 1853] 1868), p. 77.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Walter Chichele Plowden, 'No. 144. Consul Plowden to the Earl of Clarendon', in House of Commons (ed.), *Correspondence Respecting Abyssinia, 1846-68*, (London: Harrison and Sons, [28 September 1853] 1868), p. 79.

[15] Walter Plowden, 'No. 147. Consul Plowden to the Earl of Clarendon', in House of Commons (ed.), *Correspondence Respecting Abyssinia, 1846-68*, (London: Harrison and Sons, [15 October 1853] 1868), p. 80.

Abyssinia, as well as British interests in the region, depended on the capacity of the 'warlord' to defeat rival chiefs, seize control of the country, and expand his growing autonomy. 'If, on the contrary, he fails,' Plowden concluded, 'there will be little prospect of doing any good for some time in the interior of the country, which will then present a scene of terrible confusion'.[16]

The civil war in Abyssinia continued for several more years. As Arnold Percy notes, Plowden's partisan letters about Theodore provoked more doubts from administrators in the Foreign Office about the British Consul's suitability for the post than admiration for the 'Abyssinian warlord'.[17] Nonetheless, during this period a more ambivalent picture of Theodore the 'Abyssinian warlord' began to emerge in Plowden's correspondence. As Theodore and his militia acquired control over larger swaths of the country, Plowden acknowledged some of the inadequacies of the 'rebel Chief' and the implications for his capacity to rule. These doubts were evident in a July 1854 report, which warned that Northern Abyssinia 'is fast lapsing from its former condition as [*sic*] Christian realm, governed by one absolute sovereign, into sub-divisions of small tribes, that will hereafter retain probably little of religion or civilization'.[18] In the absence of a central authority, Plowden contrasted the various chiefs competing for power, explaining that

> Dejaj Kasai is vigorous and subtle, daring to a fault, and perhaps more disposed to innovation than any. He has abolished in his army the practice of mutilating dead bodies, taught his soldiers some discipline, makes war without baggage or camp followers.[19]

As admirable as these reforms were, Plowden also stressed the excesses that surrounded Theodore's violence and his emerging autonomy. His tendency to use excessive force, whether with his soldiers or civilians, was indicative of larger frailties in his character. The British representative continued

> Though proud, his manner is all humility, he is severe, liberal, and usually just, but breaks out now and then into unaccountable acts of violence, which indicate a somewhat unsettled temperament; he commences enterprises with more vigour than he pursues them, and is much under the influence of prophets and fortune-tellers.[20]

A penchant for violence, iterant disposition, and questionable morality dampened the previously glowing accounts, casting him as an extravagant leader susceptible to

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[16] Ibid.

[17] Percy Arnold, *Prelude to Magdala: Emperor Theodore and of Ethiopia and British Diplomacy* (London: Bellew, 1978), p. 35.

[18] Walter Plowden, 'Inclosure in No. 184. Report', in House of Commons (ed.), *Correspondence Respecting Abyssinia, 1846-68*, (London: Harrison and Sons, [9 July 1854] 1868), p. 97.

[19] Ibid., p. 119.

[20] Ibid.

obsessive impulses. As discussed below, this increasingly ambivalent portrayal of Theodore as an 'Abyssinian warlord' not only reappeared in subsequent debates in the British metropole, but also animated efforts by commentators and policymakers to debase his sovereign rule as based on a fanatic form of warfare.

Following more than four years of civil war Theodore captured the Abyssinian throne. In a letter announcing his coronation as Theodore II, Plowden continued to laud the new emperor, albeit in ambivalent terms, remarking that 'The King is capable of great things, good or evil'.[21] This conclusion was developed further in a later report about Theodore and the future of his rule in Abyssinia.[22] Although at times excessive, his violent tendencies were cast as the only viable way to establish a more durable order in Abyssinia. In Plowden's words, '[Theodore] is unsparing in punishment—very necessary to restrain disorder, and to restore order in such a wilderness as Abyssinia'.[23] Yet, as effective as Theodore and his use of warfare may have been, Plowden expressed doubts about the degree to which the 'Abyssinian warlord' could maintain his dominion in the absence of popular support. By Plowden's estimate, Theodore's 'moral daring'

> is well proved by his severity towards his soldiers; more so even by his pressing reforms on a country so little used to any yoke, while engaged in unceasing hostilities, and his suppression of the powers of the great feudal Chiefs at a moment when any inferior man would have sought to conciliate them as the stepping-stones to Empire.[24]

Despite these reservations, the British Consul concluded the sympathetic report by stressing Thedore's unique nature:

> Some of his ideas may be imperfect, other impracticable; but a man who, rising from the clouds of Abyssinian ignorance and childishness without assistance and without advice, has done so much and contemplates such large designs, cannot be regarded as of an ordinary stamp.[25]

The flawed 'Abyssinian warlord', by Plowden's account, constituted the most promising—if only—chance for a degree of acceptable order to be forged in the hinterlands of Abyssinia.

Theodore emerged in British imperialism as a minor, albeit promising, ally in one of the most remote corner of Africa. This ambivalence would give way to a more debauched vision of the 'Abyssinian warlord' in subsequent years, as Theodore became

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[21] Walter Plowden, 'No. 212. Consul Plowden to the Earl of Clarendon', in House of Commons (ed.), *Correspondence Respecting Abyssinia, 1846-68*, (London: Harrison and Sons, [7 April 1855] 1868), p. 144.

[22] Walter Plowden, 'Inclosure in No. 227. Report', in House of Commons (ed.), *Correspondence Respecting Abyssinia, 1846-68*, (London: Harrison and Sons, [25 June 1855] 1868), pp. 149-54.

[23] Ibid., p. 150.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid., p. 151.

the subject of a far-reaching political debate about the need for Britain to enforce international law in Abyssinia.

Fanaticism, debasement, and international law

A protracted hostage crisis brought Theodore and the 'Abyssinian warlord' construction to the forefront of British imperialism. After several years of consolidating his rule over Abyssinia, as well as fighting rival chiefs, one of which killed Plowden, Theodore drafted a letter to Queen Victoria in April 1862 that requested diplomatic recognition and warned of a pending campaign to drive Muslim infidels from the land of his ancestors.[26] The Christian king, Sven Rubenson explains, was fearful that Ottoman activities along the Red Sea and Abyssinia's western frontier endangered his empire.[27] Although the new British Consul, Charles Cameron, relayed Theodore's letter to London, the British Foreign Office never replied. After two years of promises that a response would arrive, Theodore incarcerated Cameron, along with dozens of European missionaries, in his capital in Gondar. The Abyssinian emperor interpreted the lack of response as evidence that Britain and France were conspiring to support Ottoman encroachments on his northern territories.[28]

News of the detention elicited a modest response in the British metropole. In many elite policy circles Theodore was considered little more than an African despot liable to complicate regional politics.[29] In early 1864, once rumours of the detention were confirmed, the Foreign Office dispatched another representative to Abyssinia, Hormuzd Rassam, with gifts and a belated letter asking for the release of the European hostages. Rassam was instructed to conciliate Theodore and secure the hostages' freedom, but at the same time to, in the words of one British official, 'be especially careful not to place himself in a position which may cause embarrassment to Her Majesty's government'.[30] Commentators expressed only slightly more concern about the legality of Theodore's actions. The tendency to privilege imperial strategic interests over normative and legal precedent was perhaps most evident in the writings of Charles T. Beke, an outspoken geographer that published one of the first public appeals on behalf of the captives in

[26] A more detailed history about the origins of the captives crisis can be found in Philip Marsden, *The Barefoot Emperor: An Ethiopian Tragedy* (London: HarperPress, 2007).

[27] Sven Rubenson, *King of Kings: Tewodros of Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa: Haile Sellassie I University, 1966), pp. 83-4.

[28] Arnold, *Prelude to Magdala*, p. 73.

[29] Exceptions include 'The Wrongs of the Captives in Abyssinia Must Surely now be Avenged', *Times* (London), 25 May 1865, p. 10.

[30] Quoted in Bates, *The Abyssinian Difficulty*, p. 61.

February 1865.[31] Beke rationalised the hostage crisis not as the act of a violent Abyssinian Other or an uncivilized African tyrant, but as an ill-advised diplomatic manoeuvre by a desperate monarch attempting to protect his reign from domestic and foreign threats.[32] Beke speculated that, while not without these tendencies, 'Theodore's friendly feelings towards England were surely too strong to have allowed him to take the first hostile step without sufficient provocation'.[33] The real source of the crisis, he concluded, was that Abyssinia had been 'betrayed and abandoned' by the British government to preserve its commercial relationship with Egypt.[34] At first the strategic imperative of the hostage crisis seemingly overshadowed its normative and legal consequences in British imperialism.

Many of the earliest normative arguments about the cruelty of the incarceration derived from the accounts of those with the greatest proximity to Theodore. Amid a shortage of official information about the crisis—as well as a surplus of rumours about the hostages—relatives of several imprisoned missionaries began to publish portions of their letters in hopes that, to borrow the words of one family member, their 'sad case may excite a warmer sympathy in the public mind than it has hitherto done'.[35] Reverend Henry Stern's letters were among the most widely circulated.[36] Several British magazines and newspapers published excerpts that detailed the captives' sufferings and, perhaps more importantly, revealed the insatiable cruelty that Theodore exercised over the prisoners.[37] In a July 1865 letter reproduced in the *Times* Stern portrayed his captivity as an immersion into the worst of Abyssinia: 'Placed on a level with murders, robbers, and other great criminals, our days have rolled on in the usual sad monotony of savage prison life'.[38] This deplorable condition, he explained, was only interrupted by torture sessions sparked by Theodore's 'fresh outbursts of indignation' and 'His Majesty's feelings against the white prisoners'.[39] Stern recounted one case in which

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[31] Charles Tilstone Beke, *The British Captives in Abyssinia* (London: Longman & Co., 1865).

[32] A similar fixation on diplomatic developments reappeared throughout Beke's subsequent writings about Theodore and the hostages, including Charles Beke, 'The Captives in Abyssinia', *Times* (London), 26 May 1865, p. 5; Charles Beke, 'The English Captives in Abyssinia', *Times* (London), 26 June 1865, p. 9; Charles Beke, 'The Abyssinian Question', *Times* (London), 14 September 1865, p. 7.

[33] Beke, *The British Captives in Abyssinia*, p. 42.

[34] Ibid., p. 46.

[35] Charles Purday, 'The Abyssinian Captives', *Times* (London), 14 October 1865, p. 6.

[36] Stern stood out among the various captives as an authority on Theodore and Abyssinia in part because he had published a volume about his proselytizing in the region prior to his incarceration. See Henry Stern, *Wanderings among the Falashas in Abyssinia* (London: Wertheim Macintosh and Hunt, 1862).

[37] References to Stern's correspondence can be found in 'British Captives in Abyssinia', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 30 March 1865, pp. 3-4; 'Current Literature', *Reader*, 22 December 1866, p. 1015.

[38] Quoted in Purday, 'The Abyssinian Captives', p. 6.

[39] Ibid.

> The King, irritated at the desertion of another powerful prop of his throne, next morning executed all the Galla prisoners; then quarrelled with the bishop; and at last relieved his chafed spirits by giving all his Christian captives, besides foot, hand chains also. This art of tormenting…is a most cruel invention.[40]

Anecdotes about other Abyssinians that Stern encountered in prison affirmed Theodore's brutality. In one reprinted letter Stern noted, 'The Aboona [a bishop from the Abyssinian church] often told me that the king was more dreaded, and possessed more power, than any of the former sovereigns of Ethiopia; but that his ambition and cruelty ruined and depopulated the country'.[41] Families and select editorial boards published these sporadic stories in hopes that the gross moral indignation suffered in Abyssinia would spur greater action in the British metropole to end the protracted hostage crisis.

These culturally laden accounts about Theodore's cruelty developed greater political effect after the African emperor started to be recognised as an 'Abyssinian warlord' in the British metropole. This shift towards a more explicit normative and legal debate about the hostage crisis began around August 1866, when the new Conservative government responded to Theodore's incarceration of Rassam and growing accusations about their indifference to the hostage situation by publishing a collection of official documents about the so-called Abyssinian Question.[42] In the collection was a selection of Plowden's decade-old despatches about Theodore and his rise to power. Besides providing background information about the hostage crisis, Plowden's lengthy reports and partisan letters introduced the concept of warlord as a coherent way to comprehend Theodore's warfare and its significance for his authority in Abyssinia.[43]

The immediate influence of the political concept can be seen in more than just the reproduction of Plowden's ambivalent portrait of Theodore in the British press.[44] The concept also served as a way for journalists, editorial boards, and advocates to bolster existing normative arguments about the deplorable nature of the hostage crisis by debasing Theodore's sovereign authority. In casting him as a warlord-turn-emperor, these accounts located his political authority not in the support of an Abyssinian public

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[40] Ibid.

[41] Quoted in 'The Abyssinian Captives', *Sunday at Home*, no. 630, 26 May 1866, p. 328.

[42] House of Commons, *Further Correspondence Reflecting the British Captives in Abyssinia* (London: Harrison and Sons, August 1866). The volume was preceded by a shorter collection of more recent official letters about the crisis. See House of Commons, *Papers Relating to the Imprisonment of British Subjects in Abyssinia* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1865).

[43] The deference given to the Parliamentary Papers is captured in one periodical that noted, 'This report is, indeed, now, eleven years old, but it presents such a perfect picture of the man [Theodore], mentally and bodily, that it is as good as if it were drawn yesterday'. 'King Theodorus of Abyssinia', *Athenæum*, no. 2028, 8 September 1866, p. 303.

[44] For example see 'Amiable Theodorus', *All the Year Round*, vol. 18, no. 443, 19 October 1867, p. 1; 'The Captives in Abyssinia', *Morning Post*, 17 September 1867, p. 2; 'The Truth About Abyssinia', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 20 September 1867, p. 1.

or the consolidation of rival fiefdoms but in a fanatic form of warfare, one driven by excessive devotion to a cause or system of belief.[45] This form of debasement placed Theodore and his dominion outside the realm of political reason, where extreme passions trumped basic social and legal conventions.

A legacy of violence was perhaps the most fundamental part of this mode of debasement. Drawing heavily on Plowden's accounts, successive newspaper and magazine articles published between late-1866 and mid-1867 stressed how, despite his seemingly novel social reforms, a history of brutal warfare defined Theodore's rise to power in and rule over Abyssinia. One profile traced this legacy back to his adolescence. Although born into nobility, Theodore was forced to take up a life of highway robbery after a rival chief seized his family's land holdings:

> Returning to his own country, he found the tenure disputed, spear in hand, by his three cousins, and, having taken the part of the weak, he had to seek for refuge in the mountains, whence he issued forth after a time the head of about seventy followers, to carve his fortune on the highways.[46]

The apparent continuity between crime and rule in Abyssinia united this genealogy of violence. 'A change of operations,' the article continued, 'from plundering travellers and caravans to the capture of a province is a natural sequence in a country circumstanced as Abyssinia is'.[47] Even admiring portraits of Theodore diminished his political authority. In an 1866 profile, one journalist prefaced a glowing account of Theodore's political and strategic exploits with a disclaimer about the degree to which, following decades of warfare against various rival chiefs, violence had become an essential feature of his rule: 'There is some light, but a good deal of shade, in his character. Let us get over the unpleasant part first. His wrath is terrible: it is deadly; yet not that of a madman, for he has it under control. He is merciless in punishment'.[48] The concept of warlord brought to the forefront a legacy of warfare, as chronicled in Plowden's correspondence, in British debates about Theodore and his rule in Abyssinia.

In locating Theodore's authority within a violent legacy, the concept of warlord heightened the influence of cultural constructions of war in debates about Abyssinia. Excerpts from Plowden's despatches, often combined with updates about the captives, attributed Theodore's violent rule to a deep-seated irrationality, that is, a mode of

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[45] Similar to 'warlords', fanatics have long been part of various imperial imaginaries. More comprehensive studies of the concept's significance in imperial history can be found in Alberto Toscano, *Fanaticism: On the Uses of an Idea* (London: Verso, 2010), chap. 2; Andre Haynal, *Fanaticism: A Historical and Psychoanalytical Study* (New York: Schocken Books, 1983), chap. 3; Matthew Hughes and Gaynor Johnson (eds.), *Fanaticism and Conflict in the Modern Age* (London; New York: Frank Cass, 2005).

[46] 'Theodorus II., Emperor of Abyssinia', *New Monthly Magazine*, vol. 137, no. 547, July 1866, p. 256.

[47] Ibid.

[48] 'King Theodorus of Abyssinia', p. 303.

thought unconstrained by basic norms, laws, or reason. Competing explanations about the origins of Theodore's distorted worldview accentuated the deviant nature Abyssinia. Excessive Christian faith was one of the most common explanations. Several journalists credited Theodore's unrestrained modes of warfare to a vain confidence that he had special communication with a supreme being about the future of Abyssinia. As one writer explained

> His pride in his royal and divine right is excessive, and his fanatical religious zeal violent. His faith is of the strongest. Without Christ, he declares himself to be nothing; with His aid, he believes that nothing can stay him; he carries this belief to the point of indifference to external human aid or foreign alliance…he resolves to 'keep hammering away,' undaunted and undiscouraged, on his own account.[49]

A zealous belief in a debauched form of Christianity deluded Theodore into ignoring basic Western norms about the conduct of war—and even commonsense—in incarcerating the British diplomats. This irrational mode of warfare, other reports suggested, derived from more personal deficiencies. Several British journalists detailed how, at times unable to realise his delusional visions for Abyssinia, Theodore slipped into a depressed condition in which he demonstrated an indifference to the violence that pervaded his dominion. An article described this pattern in broad terms:

> This state of things so annoyed the King of Kings, who deemed himself to be all-powerful, yet whose attempts to organise the country were frustrated by this untameable spirit of revolt, that he became morose, suspicious, and vindictive. From being the friend, he became the tyrant of his realms….He allowed his soldiery, who were straitened for provisions, to commit all kinds of excesses, and to plunder whole provinces, under the pretext that the inhabitants or chiefs were ill disposed to him.[50]

Whether as an active participant or a complicit party, the construction of Theodore's fanatic violence inspired sweeping conjecture in the British press about the basic rationality of his rule. Such portrayals of the 'Abyssinian warlord' heightened concern about the fate of the European captives and the deviant nature of Abyssina.

Mounting public pressure, both from the captives' families and select editorial boards, prompted the reluctant Tory government in mid 1867 to address the standoff with Theodore. In sporadic debates during the summer session, several members acknowledged, at least to some degree, the growing recognition of Theodore as an 'Abyssinian warlord' and his debased authority as a sovereign leader.[51] An amendment proposed in the House of Commons in July 1867 by Henry Seymour sparked the most sustained debate. The Liberal member noted that, given his social reforms and

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[49] 'King Theodore', *Chamber's Journal of Popular Literature, Science, and Arts*, no. 151, 17 November 1866, p. 729.

[50] 'Theodorus II., Emperor of Abyssinia', p. 264.

[51] Some of the earliest debate can be found in HL Deb 21 June 1867 vol 188 cc239-43.

consolidation of the Abyssinia, 'King Theodore was a ruler who might, for bold original character, and dauntless courage, be compared to Mehemt Ali or even to Peter the Great'.[52] However, he explained, these favourable comparisons were irrelevant given Theodore's continued attempts to 'extend the limits of the Ethiopian kingdom', perhaps even to 'carry his conquests as far as Jerusalem'.[53] The ceaseless, irrational violence that underpinned Theodore's authority left Seymour with little hope in the potential to compromise with the 'Abyssinian warlord'. 'It would be seen,' he concluded, 'that we had to deal with a man of intense energy…who would exhaust the resources of his country to the utmost of his power before withdrawing from an object'.[54] This portrayal of an 'Abyssinian warlord', one with a far-reaching authority based on his use of war, strengthened Seymour's case that Theodore's defiance of international law placed all of Abyssinia in violation of legal custom:

> By all Governments, civilized and even uncivilized, the person of one holding the position of Ambassador was regarded as sacred. Abyssinia appeared to be a solitary instance to the contrary, and the circumstances of the case demanded that some notice should be taken of her infraction of the usages of all countries.[55]

Sir Henry Rawlinson seconded not only Seymour's motion, but also the portrayal of Theodore as a 'warlord'. In describing Theodore as a 'barbarian prince', Seymour cited the crude violence that underpinned his rule, diminishing his political authority. He suggested that the cruelty of the Theodore's transgression seemingly endangered the status of Britain as the premier global legal authority:

> Are we prepared, then, to admit that a barbarian prince like King Theodore…can set us, the greatest maritime Power in the world, at defiance? And are we prepared…*to abdicate our place among the nations of the earth*, for such must be the inevitable consequence if we sit down quietly in our shame, exposed to the scorn and pit of the East? No, Sir; I cannot believe in such pusillanimity.[56]

The concept of warlord and growing notions of his fanatical violence conditioned some parliamentarians' notions of Theodore's political authority in Abyssinia. Such understandings animated the earliest official arguments about Britain's imperative to extend the reach of international law to the deviant territory.

This debasement of Theodore's political authority failed to inspire a consensus in Parliament about Britain's legal imperative to punish the warlord-turn-emperor. Several issues divided the House of Commons. One Conservative member cast Theodore in different terms, arguing that he was not a 'warlord', emperor, or a warlord-turn-

[52] HC Deb 26 July 1867 vol 189 c232.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid.

[55] HC Deb 26 July 1867 vol 189 c232.

[56] HC Deb 26 July 1867 vol 189 c244. Emphasis added.

emperor; instead, as a barbarian, Theodore by his vary nature lacked the intelligence to understand 'the sanctity of an Ambassador or Envoy'.[57] Such a deficiency made it unjust for him to be 'dealt with in the matter as they would treat a European Sovereign'. Lord Stanley, by contrast, endorsed Theodore's portrayal as a warlord, with one noting the tragedy of British envoys being 'in the hands of a half-savage king, and exposed to any cruelty which his caprice may inflict'.[58] The Conservative leader dismissed any legal imperative to punish the 'barbarian chief' that might follow from this violation. He stressed that, before Britain accepts any legal obligation, it had to allow the Conservative government, War Office, and India Office to determine whether the British colonial could actually reach Theodore and enforce any legal mandate. As he explained, 'by acting in the dark we should be running the risk of involving ourselves in great calamities'.[59] Disagreement about the applicability of and potential to enforce international law in Abyssinia contributed to the Conservative government's reluctance to abandon negotiation efforts with Theodore in favour of a military intervention in Abyssinia.

A divided Parliament spurred further public debate about the need for the British government to free the hostages. 'The Government,' George Percy Badger reflected a few years later, 'has received more unsolicited advice upon what is commonly known as the "Abyssinian Difficulty" than upon any other question of politics which has engaged public attention for some time'.[60] Several parliamentarians, journalists, and commentators made a concerted effort to dispel ambivalent understandings of Theodore by using the concept to further debase his rule, particularly by publishing evocative accounts of the fanatic violence that underpinned his political authority. This continued debasement bolstered growing argument, as articulated in Seymour's argument in Parliament, that the 'Abyssinian warlord' reflected the corrupt political order in Abyssinia that must be held subject to international law.

Both strategies were evident in a series of letters from captives published in British newspapers and magazines during the summer of 1867. Similar to earlier attempts to draw attention to the hostage crisis, the letters illustrated Theodore's fanatic violence for readers in the metropole. Publishers used these accounts to confirm how his violent rule had devolved into the source of an increasingly debauched political order in Abyssinia. In August 1867, for instance, Beke supplied the *Times* with excerpts of letter

[57] HC Deb 26 July 1867 vol 189 c253.

[58] HC Deb 26 July 1867 vol 189 c251.

[59] HC Deb 26 July 1867 vol 189 c252.

[60] George Percy Badger, 'The Story of the British Captives in Abyssinia, 1863-4', in John Hotten (ed.), *Abyssinia and its People: or, Life in the Land of Prester John,* (London: Hotten, 1868), p. 306.

from Charles Cameron, one of the incarcerated British consuls, that located an increasingly irrational Theodore at the centre of a crumbling empire. The letter portrayed Theodore as both the cause and emblem of the unjust reality in Abyssinia:

> Complications have been thickening since I last wrote. The King has been playing devil at Debra Tabor, putting women and children in wax cloth and roasting them alive. The other day he butchered 600 of his most faithful soldiers because their relations were in rebellion. The consequence has been desertion on a large scale, a thousand at a time.[61]

Other letters implicated Theodore in even more desperate attempts to preserve his rebellious dominions. Based on 'the latest letters from the captives', an unnamed contributor provided a popular newspaper with further evidence of how the corrupt order created by Theodore's fanatic violence foreclosed any possibility of justice in Abyssinia: 'He is flogging old women and torturing the children to make them confess where grain and money are hid; he is sending his troops to plunder villages, and setting fire to the houses of the inhabitants'.[62] Another paper published a separate letter from Stern that recounted how, 'Only a week ago upwards of 200 prisoners, among whom are many persons of high rank, were ordered to be executed. This indiscriminate massacre…indicates no improvement in the tyrant's temper'.[63] These accounts of Theodore's violence debased more than just the warlord-turn-king's sovereignty over his increasingly hostile dominions: they affirmed how his political order lacked many of the purportedly liberal qualities, such as justice, rule of law, and respect for human life, that defined British understandings of acceptable forms of order. If justice were to be achieved, it would seemingly have to be delivered from outside Abyssinia, not from within the unjust and unruly areas under Theodore's control.

Frustration with the Conservative government's reluctance to confront the 'warlord' emboldened popular claims about Britain's normative and legal obligation to enforce international law in Abyssinia. Several commentators stressed that, given the violent autonomy Theodore maintained in Abyssinia, a military intervention was both a necessary and appropriate way to punish him for incarcerating and torturing British officials.[64] The failure of successive attempts to negotiate with the fanatical Abyssinian leader, one editorial argued, demonstrated that the British government had underestimated more than just his resolve. As a 'warlord'-turn-monarch Britain had to recognise the degree of autonomy provided by his fanatic warfare:

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[61] Quoted in Charles Beke, 'The British Captives in Abyssinia', *Times* (London), 20 August 1867, p. 7.

[62] Veritas, 'Abyssinian Christianity', London, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 28 June 1867, p. 4.

[63] Henry A. Stern, 'The Abyssinian Prisoners', London, *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 14 July 1867, p. 3.

[64] Notable exceptions include the *Times* editorial board, which was among the most reluctant during this time to support calls for a colonial military expedition.

> So we tried mildness first, and tempted the Abyssinian Sultan with soft words and rich gifts. But though we charmed ever so wisely, we failed in our attempts. King Theodore remains obdurate, and…we are reduced to the humiliating necessity of threatening him, like a naughty child, that if he will not be good, he shall not have all the pretty presents we are going to offer for his gracious acceptance.[65]

Instead of bending to Theodore's capricious demands, advocates made the case that the 'Abyssinian warlord' should be treated in proportional terms. A supporter of military intervention wrote that, with a near total sovereignty based on an irrational mode of violence, military invasion was the only way to demonstrate to the Theodore the severity of transgressions:

> It's not too late to send this would-be Christian King another messenger, but this time from an advancing column, charged with an ultimatum which shall clearly set before him the final price he must pay for his cruelty, obstinacy, and folly—viz., the occupation of his capital and the seizure of all available sources of his revenue.[66]

Similar arguments about Britain's rightful pursuit of retribution animated a widely reproduced cartoon entitled 'The Abyssinian Question' originally published in *Punch*, a satirical newsweekly.[67] The cartoon is set in an Abyssinian jail, with a pair of white hands belonging to the European missionaries, one holding a portion of bars in the form of a cross and another making a blessing, in the background. A stern Britannia is seen cornering a slender, trembling Theodore, who holds several prison keys, with the tip of her trident. The righteous British icon, clad in white flowing ropes, commands an authority absent from the 'Abyssinian warlord', whose undersized crown is stuffed with feathers and shotel sword remains in its sheath.[68] The caption furthers this disparity, with Britannia demanding, 'Now, then, King Theodore! How about those prisoners?' Military reprisal emerged in popular British colonial debates as the most appropriate way to enforce international law to the debauched areas controlled by the obstinate Abyssinian leader.

The construction of Theodore as a fanatic 'Abyssinian warlord' became a fixture in British colonial discourse in response to a growing disgust with his violation of various legal precedents, most notably diplomatic immunity. Debased notions of his political authority that followed from the political concept would become a vital part of the normative and legal justifications for Britain's attempt to rescue the hostages from Abyssinia.

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[65] 'The British Captives in Abyssinia', *Lancaster Gazette*, 25 May 1867, p. 3.

[66] H.L., 'The Abyssinian Captives', *The Times*, 2 July 1867, p. 11.

[67] John Tenniel, 'The Abyssinian Question', *Punch*, 10 August 1867, p. 57.

[68] This depiction was a sharp departure from many of the more regal portraits found in European accounts of Theodore. For a more detailed survey see Richard Pankhurst, 'Tewodros as Depicted in European Engravings', *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, vol. 20, no. 1, November 1987, pp. 75-97.

Launch of the Abyssinian Expedition

Following months of debate, the Conservative government launched a military expedition to punish Theodore for violating international law and defying British authority. The concept of warlord and related notions of his political standing were absent from the declarations of war. These formal declarations, on the contrary, affirmed his sovereign authority and the violation of basic legal customs about diplomatic immunity in his unruly territories.[69] In a speech to prorogue Parliament in late August 1867, the Lord Chancellor announced the expedition, reiterating Theodore's responsibility for the detention:

> The Communications which I have made to the reigning Monarch of Abyssinia, with a view to obtain the Release of the British Subjects whom he detains in his Dominions, have, I regret to say, thus far proved ineffectual. I have therefore found it necessary to address to him a peremptory Demand for their immediate Liberation, and to take Measures for supporting that Demand, should it ultimately be found necessary to resort to Force.[70]

The Conservative government validated the growing consensus about the illegality of Theodore's actions in subsequent Parliamentary debates. After several months of preparations, the Prime Minister reconvened Parliament in late November 1867 to authorise funds for a military expedition, as the Lord Chancellor explained, to 'relieve their Countrymen from an unjust Imprisonment, and to vindicate the Honour of My Crown'.[71] Speaking on behalf of the government, the Chancellor opened the session by noting

> The Sovereign of Abyssinia, *in violation of all international Law*, continues to hold in captivity several of My Subjects, some of whom have been especially accredited to him by Myself, and his persistent Disregard of friendly Representations *has left Me no Alternative but that of making a peremptory Demand for the Liberation of My Subjects, and supporting it by an adequate Force*.[72]

Following months of debate, conclusions about the illegality of Theodore's incarceration were at the forefront of the British government's claims about the necessity of an intervention.

A number of lingering disagreements divided the Parliament in subsequent debates about the scope and funding for the mission. Several Liberal leaders accused the

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[69] For more on the significance of the expedition in the law of nations see Stephen C. Neff, *War and the Law of Nations: A General History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 243-4.

[70] HL Deb 21 August 1867 vol 189 c1634.

[71] HL Deb 19 November 1867 vol 190 c3.

[72] Ibid. Emphasis added.

government of launching the expedition without the consent of the House of Commons, and misusing colonial forces beyond the Indian frontier. Others doubted the veracity—as well as the logic—of the Conservatives' plans only to capture Theodore, as opposed to occupying Abyssinia.[73] In the course of this debate, however, both parties agreed on more than just the fanatic violence that animated Theodore's portrayal as an 'Abyssinian warlord'—several members also stressed that his debased political authority left Britain with little alternative except military force to enforce international law in Abyssinia. The Earl of Hardwicke made perhaps the most explicit case. He stressed that, given the violent nature of Theodore's authority, Britain had little alternative except launching a military expedition in Abyssinia:

> for it must be borne in mind that we had not in his case to deal with a civilized Power like those of Europe, with whom our differences might be arranged by means of diplomacy, but with the head of a savage nation, who could be brought to do what was just and right only by an exhibition of warlike strength.[74]

James McGarel-Hogg presented a similar argument in the House of Commons. The debauched nature of Theodore's authority made military force the only possible way to reason with Theodore. 'It may possibly be urged by some,' the British Colonel argued, 'that the expedition is on an unnecessary large scale; to this I reply that these ample preparations afford the best hope of bringing King Theodore to reason without an actual collision'.[75] Following repeated attempts to negotiate with Theodore, Hogg explained, his fanatic violence against Cameron, Rassam, and other British nationals gave Britain the right to conquer the emperor:

> After three long years of conciliation and prolonged negotiation, during which time our captive countrymen have been kept languishing in chains and suffering every indignity at the caprice of a barbarian monarch, Her Majesty's Government were fully justified in sending out an armed force with an imperative demand for the immediate release of the captives.[76]

Elite debates about the nature and scope of the military intervention in Abyssinia reveal the reach of political concept and accompanying notions of his diminished standing as a sovereign leader.

The political concept and debased nature of Theodore's sovereignty imparted a high-minded quality to the military intervention. Amid further debates about the financial responsibility for the military expedition, visions of Theodore's corrupt authority bolstered the legal basis for and potential transformative effects of Britain's

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[73] As one opposition member, Darby Griffith, argued about the House of Common's debate in July, 'Had it been known then that an expedition was contemplated much more interest would certainly have been taken in the debate'. HC Deb 20 November 1867 vol 190 c94.

[74] HL Deb 19 November 1867 vol 190 c24.

[75] HC Deb 19 November 1867 vol 190 c63.

[76] HC Deb 19 November 1867 vol 190 c61.

enforcement of international law into Abyssinia. The concept's effect can be seen in various ways, including repeated conclusions that Britain had a just cause for war with Abyssinia. William Gladstone, for instance, argued that 'No doubt can be raised to the existence in the amplest form of what is called a *casus belli* between us and the Sovereign of Abyssinia'.[77] Earl Russell arrived at similar conclusions during a separate debate in arguing

> I consider the conduct of the Sovereign of Abyssinia to our fellow-subjects so outrageous, so contrary not only to every principle of International Law, but to every dictate of justice in regard to other nations, that it was impossible that Her Majesty's Government should not consider it a cause of war.[78]

The political concept also inspired a more consequentialist argument for the intervention. To have not launched the mission, the Earl of Derby argued, 'would have exposed us to well-grounded reproach, had we decided to leave Her Majesty's subject in unjust captivity, and left her Majesty's Crown and dignity to be insulted with impunity by a semi-barbarous Potentate'.[79] Perhaps the most explicit affirmation of Britain's authority to enforce international law can be found in a request by Benjamin Disraeli, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for the Select Committee to authorise a £2 million budget for mission to Abyssinia. In his words:

> I cannot help feeling also, when we are going to war not to obtain territory, not to secure commercial advantages, but for high moral causes—and high moral causes alone—that it is perhaps well in an age like the present, which certainly is distinguished by an almost absorbing love of wealth and power, that the country should feel, as I believe it does, that there is something more precious than power and wealth.[80]

Debased notions of Theodore's fanatic sovereignty emboldened British claims to be enforcing a legal and normative imperative by enforcing international law in the remote corner of the global south.

Conclusions about the high-minded nature of the intervention were affirmed in the British press following the Parliamentary debates. Several editorial boards, even many of which were initially ambivalent about the operation, defended Britain's legal and normative responsibility of rescue the hostages.[81] This imperative to preserve international law pervaded a letter submitted by Henry Bulwer, which explained, 'We are not engaging at this time in an audacious or needless adventure; we are simply fulfilling an onerous but imperative duty, and it is useless to engage upon the danger of

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[77] HC Deb 19 November 1867 vol 190 c67.

[78] HL Deb 19 November 1867 vol 190 c17.

[79] HL Deb 19 November 1867 vol 190 c36.

[80] HC Deb 26 November 1867 vol 190 c190.

[81] Notable exceptions include 'The Abyssinian Debate', *Examiner*, 30 November 1867, p. 1.

doing some thing, unless we are prepared to submit to the disgrace of doing nothing'.[82] This duty, Bulwer acknowledged, was punitive in nature: the Theodore had violated fundamental international customs and laws, and the mission would punish the debased sovereign until he recognised his error. The Liberal Member of Parliament continued

> But let it be clearly understood that we march to punish the mock monarch who has ill-treated our countrymen and defied our power! Let us alarm him as to his fate, and say that the weight of the blow that we prepare for him will depend on the fullness and timeliness of his submission.[83]

Several editorial boards reiterated the necessity of the mission. A poplar editorial board, for instance, noted, 'That the time had come when some display of force was a necessity is…so generally felt that nothing more need be said on that head'.[84] The debased political authority of the 'Abyssinian warlord' emboldened the supposedly principled nature of Britain's military intervention.

The British colonial army landed on the Abyssinian coast in January 1868. Led by General Robert Napier, the Bombay and Bengal Armies marched for the next three months, facing no resistance along the way from provincial chiefs, to Theodore's stronghold at Magdala, where the captives were held.[85] The encounter between Napier and Theodore proved brief: British colonial forces defeated Theodore's forces on 10 April 1868, a day after arriving in Magdala. The fanatic 'Abyssinian warlord' immediately called for a truce, agreeing to Napiers' demands for the safe release of all the hostages. However, Theodore refused to surrender himself, as official instructions required that he should be taken as a prisoner to Bombay.[86] After Abyssinian troops resumed fighting, British forces breached the fortress, only to find that Theodore had committed suicide. After plundering and destroying Theodore's fortress, Napier led the British military expedition back to the Abyssinian coast, where it disbanded for Britain and British India. In its wake emerged a renewed civil war in Abyssinia, as rival chiefs fought to determine who would succeed Theodore.

The launch of the Abyssinia Expedition culminated years of debate about the Theodore's violations of European legal protocol. His legacy as a 'Abyssinian warlord', one with an authority based on a fanatic form of violence, would be enshrined in the

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[82] H.L. Bulwer, 'Abyssinian Question', London, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 26 November 1867, p. 3.

[83] Ibid.

[84] 'Abyssinia', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 6 December 1867, p. 1.

[85] A more detailed history of the military intervention can be found in Rodgers, 'The Abyssinian Expedition of 1867-1868'; Marsden, *The Barefoot Emperor*; K.V. Ram, *The Barren Relationship, Britain and Ethiopia, 1805 to 1868: A Study of British Policy* (New Delhi: Concept, 1985).

[86] Ram, *The Barren Relationship, Britain and Ethiopia, 1805 to 1868*, p. 187.

subsequent debate about how Britain's colonial intervention in Abyssinia demonstrated how international law could be extended to unruly parts of Africa.

Legacy for Britain and international law

A telegraph about the release of the captives and fall of Magdala reached London on 25 April 1867. A 'moral satisfaction', Bates notes, animated the British public response in the popular press, which lauded Napier and the Bombay and Bengal armies for their exploits in Abyssinia.[87] However, amid this celebration emerged a stark divide over the extent to which Britain's encounter with the 'warlord'-turned-emperor confirmed Britain's legal and normative imperative to enforce international law in the global south. One popular newspaper, for instance, mimicked pre-war arguments for the intervention in arguing, 'Never, surely, in the history of war has there been an expedition undertaken with such reluctance, planned with such precision, and perfected with such despatch and completeness as that over the success of which England rejoices'.[88] Other publications questioned whether the extraordinary victory only underscored the inherent liabilities of attempting to apply European legal frameworks to contain the vulgarities of war and promote more just forms of order in the global south. 'Undoubtedly the best lesson the Abyssinian War can give us,' one editorial board wrote, 'is to avoid in the future those relations with semi-barbarous States which may at any time force on us the choice between war and dishonour'.[89] Another popular paper presented similar reservations. In an editorial, the publishers contended

> But we have learned a lesson for ourselves, as well as impressed one upon others. We have been taught by costly experience how necessary it is to keep ourselves clear from political contact with nations which are not yet sufficiently advanced in civilisation to confirm to the canons of international good faith and decorous demeanour.[90]

Theodore and his construction as an 'Abyssinian warlord' provoked fundamental questions in British imperialism about whether Britain should attempt to extend international law across the global south.

This dilemma began to resolve in subsequent months as Theodore and the Abyssinia Expedition was cast as proof of Britain's status as the premier defender of international law. Some of the earliest attempts to defend the international legal tradition were made in Parliament. Before the cost of the expedition became the subject

[87] Bates, *The Abyssinian Difficulty*, p. 212.

[88] 'Success of the Abyssinian Expedition', *Penny Illustrated Paper*, 2 May 1868, p. 276.

[89] 'n/a', *Times* (London), 19 May 1868, p. 9.

[90] 'End of the Abyssinian Expedition', *Illustrated London News*, 27 June 1868, p. 622.

of acrimonious debate, members in both houses celebrated the colonial intervention as a just act that adhered to established normative and legal standards. Benjamin Disraeli, the new Prime Minister, noted in the days following Theodore's death that, unlike other imperial missions, 'we did not enter Abyssinia to despoil the innocent but in a spirit of justice, humanity, religion and civilization, and that we are about to vacate the country in a manner which will prove to the world the purity of our purpose'.[91] Other members made similar appeals based on the righteousness of confronting the 'Abyssinian warlord' for subjecting British envoys to his fanatic violence. The Earl of Derby, for instance, stressed the narrow purpose that motivated the intervention:

> I will venture to say that never was a war undertaken more unwillingly by any Government, more with a sense of its inevitable necessity, or with purer motives—motives more entirely devoid of all feeling of ambition and all desire of political or military aggrandizement. The object for which we undertook the Expedition was, in the first place, to vindicate the honour of the country….In the second place we undertook it because of that feeling of humanity which was naturally excited by the sufferings of our countrymen and other Europeans who were kept in prison by the Emperor of Abyssinia.[92]

The measured launch of the war, as well as Britain's conduct in Abyssinia, seemingly testified to the robust nature of international law and its potential to manage even far-flung, uncivilised territory. The mission was seemingly guided by a coherent and consequential agenda larger than just imperial aggrandisement.

The coherence of a public international law was considered inseparable from the capacity of Britain to enforce it. Several members of Parliament stressed that, alongside the outrage for his cruel affront, Theodore also challenged Britain's status as a normative and legal authority in global politics. The Earl of Marlemesbury made this point at length:

> That is a long period for Englishmen to suffer under the cruelties of a barbarous savage; but, if anyone is ready to find fault with our forbearance during that long time, he must recollect that it is always the duty of the strong man to bear patiently with the weak, and, until his insolence becomes intolerable, to refrain from any violent measures. But, my Lords, at last this conduct on the part of King Theodore did become intolerable—intolerable to the feelings of humanity, and intolerable to our feelings of honour as an independent country.[93]

The inseparable relationship between moral righteousness and national pride in the Abyssinia Expedition helped establish a wider legal precedent. 'We have asserted the purity of our purpose,' Disareli explained. 'In an age accused, and perhaps not unjustly, of selfishness and a too great regard for material interests, it is something, in so striking and significant a manner, for a great nation to have vindicated the higher principles of

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[91] HC Deb 27 April 1868 vol 191 c1338.

[92] HL Deb 02 July 1868 vol 193 c491.

[93] Ibid., c474.

humanity'.[94] The effect of the imperial intervention was of such significance that the entire world stood to benefit from both the robust nature of international law, as well as an interventionist Britain. As the Prime Minister concluded, triumphs such as the one in Abyssinia 'will add lustre…to the name of this nation, and will beneficially influence the future history of the world'.[95]

The potential for Britain to enforce international law, even in the most remote of territories, was corroborated in the memoirs and histories that followed the Abyssinian Expedition. Upon returning from Abyssinia, many of the freed hostages published detailed accounts of their captivity, which, in turn, inspired numerous reviews and retrospectives in the British media about the legacy of the 'Abyssinian warlord' and his fanatic violence.[96] Across this genre emerged an explicit understanding that Theodore's violent excesses confirmed the existence of a robust, far-reaching legal standard that dictated the proper diplomatic relations, even in the global south. The writings of Henry Blanc inspired some of the most explicit affirmations of international law's lasting relevance. The British captive recounted many of the indignities he and the other hostages suffered at the hands of Theodore, including their placement in chains. In Blanc's words: 'The chains consisted of two heavy rings connected together by three small thick links, leaving just a span between one ring and the other; and these we wore for nearly twenty-one months!'.[97] The lasting effects of the chains confirmed Theodore's cruelty: 'Even since they have been removed, for months my legs were weaker than before, the ankles smaller, and the feet somewhat enlarged'.[98] Several British newspapers cited Blanc's account to underscore Theodore's responsibility for gross violations of basic legal customs and conventions. One review of Blanc's memoirs recounted that, 'Such remorseless infractions of all law and humanity excited the indignation of the civilised world, and provoked decisive measures for redressing the flagrant wrong'.[99]Another located this legal and normative standard in a related, albeit slightly different, realm of the European world:

> By the time British force had to deal with [Theodore] he had… become a ruffian of almost unexampled perfidy and cruelty—a monster of such hideous depravity that the Abyssinian Expedition, apart from its special

[94] HC Deb 02 July 1868 vol 193 c525.

[95] Ibid., c526.

[96] Some of the former captives' most prominent accounts include Henry Blanc, *A Narrative of Captivity in Abyssinia: With Some Account of the Late Emperor Theodore, His Country and People* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1868); Henry Aaron Stern, *The Captive Missionary: Being an Account of the Country and People of Abyssinia* (London: Cassell, Petter, and Galpin, 1868); Hormuzd Rassam, *Narrative of the British Mission to Theodore, King of Abyssinia*, vol. 2 (London: John Murray, 1869).

[97] Blanc, *A Narrative of Captivity in Abyssinia*, p. 196.

[98] Ibid., p. 197.

[99] 'Dr. Henry Blanc's Captivity in Abyssinia', p. 3.

> objects, might almost have undertaken as a matter of duty by any nation of Christians, merely to rid the earth of him.[100]

The fanatical actions of the 'Abyssinian warlord' were memorialised in British colonial discourse as gross violations of a durable normative, legal, and perhaps even moral standard.

The capacity for Britain to enforce international law was integral to its perceived relevance in the global south. Several of the hostages' retrospectives, as well as the ensuing media coverage, stressed how the colonial small war demonstrated not only Britain's potential to impose a legal constraint on violence, but also to model more appropriate modes of warfare. 'The expedition,' Stern concluded in his memoir, 'undertaken in the cause of humanity, and followed by the prayers of thousands, had achieved a most notable, glorious, and bloodless triumph'.[101] Rassam offered related conclusions about Britain's triumph. 'Of the rescuing army,' he argued, '…through which that intervention was wrought out, England may justly feel proud. Bloodless as was the campaign on our side, it was, nevertheless, signalized by a display of the noblest qualities which can adorn the true warrior—self-restraint, patient endurance, and indomitable perseverance'.[102] These conclusions about Britain's judicious use of force found greater resonance in the popular press. An article published following a lecture Stern delivered about his book underscored Britain's moderating influence in the global south:

> As to the expedition, [Stern] would simply say that if every war was carried on in such a merciful and compassionate manner, it would not retard progress or civilisation, but, on the contrary, the soldier would become indirectly a kind of missionary, and would assist in helping forward that happy day when such dark places as Abyssinia would become habitations of mercy, knowledge, and love of truth.[103]

The benefits of this normative authority were even more evident in the metropole. A review of Rassam's memoir opened with the observation about the improbable nature of this victory over the 'warlord': 'A triumph so complete and one adding so much to our military and political prestige could scarcely have been anticipated even by the most sanguine'.[104] The outcome of the war against the fanatic Theodore affirmed Britain's lasting influence as a legal arbiter of just acts of war and sovereign forms of order in even the most remote parts of the global south.

At a time when international law was in the midst of significant changes, the concept of warlord was at the forefront of a concerted effort in the British metropole to

[100] 'Captivity in Abyssinia', *Times* (London), 8 September 1868, p. 4.
[101] Stern, *The Captive Missionary*, p. 397.
[102] Rassam, *Narrative of the British Mission to Theodore, King of Abyssinia*, p. 341.
[103] 'King Theodore and His Prisoners', *Morning Post*, 17 December 1868, p. 3.
[104] 'Narrative of the British Mission to Theodore, King of Abyssinia', p. 299.

enforce legal standards in a remote corner of the global south. Based on decade-old correspondence, the portrayal of Theodore as an 'Abyssinian warlord' debased the African leader's authority, reducing his sovereignty to a debauched violent rule. This diminished sovereignty accentuated longstanding normative argument about his cruelty and the imperative of Britain punishing him for violating customs of diplomatic protection. The influence of this argument was enshrined in the subsequent British military intervention in Abyssinia, as well as the growing confidence in Britain's capacity and, by some accounts, obligation to manage the relationship between war and order in the global south through international law.

Charles Taylor and Barbaric Acts of War

More than a century after the Abyssinia Expedition, the concept of warlord was integral to American debates about prosecuting another notorious African leader under international law. Charles Taylor first captured the American imperial imagination as a 'Liberian warlord', one responsible for the barbarism seen during the First Liberian Civil War (1989-1996). His subsequent election as a President of Liberia inspired considerable controversy about whether he would gain immunity from international prosecution for war crimes. The concept of warlord and accompanying notions of his barbaric violence later inspired a far-reaching debasement of Taylor's sovereign authority that proved key to US government's decision to remove him from office and, after several months, its efforts to arrest him for war crimes. The eventual arraignment of the 'Liberian warlord' helped temper longstanding criticisms of the Bush administration's limited commitment to international law.

This section examines the lasting influence of Taylor's designation as a 'Liberian warlord' in political debates about his prosecution for war crimes. It focuses on how the political concept, combined with notions of barbaric violence, inspired a concerted debasement of his political authority as the elected leader of Liberia, which was integral to US-led attempts to prosecute him for war crimes.

'Warlords' and barbarism

Charles Taylor brought Liberia and much of West Africa to the forefront of American debates about the remit of international law after starting one of the most destructive civil wars seen following the Cold War. In late December 1989, with the assistance of several African governments, Taylor and his National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) militia invaded Liberia from Côte d'Ivoire in an attempt to overthrow President Samuel Doe. Similar to many areas of Africa, the end of the Cold War rendered Liberia to the

margins of the US policy agenda, particularly after the US Congress had discontinued bilateral aid years earlier amid concerns about the corrupt Doe regime.[105] Without US support, Doe's patronage networks quickly collapsed once political and economic elites deserted the president in favour of the security offered by Taylor.[106] Although the US government evacuated Americans and European nationals from Monrovia in August 1990, it was reluctant to intervene in the remote armed conflict, particularly after the launch of the Gulf War (1990-91). In search of new ways to maintain order, Stephen Ellis explains, the Bush administration encouraged the regional power, Nigeria, to assume responsibility for policing activities its own sub-region by launching a peacekeeping mission under the aegis of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).[107] Taylor and the Liberian civil war began as a secondary issue in post-Cold War US imperialism.

A few years passed before Taylor began to register as a 'warlord' in American debates about Africa. After Taylor refused to recognise a peace settlement, which created an interim government backed by ECOWAS, the few American journalists that followed the obscure armed conflict continued to cast him as a 'rebel'[108] or 'guerrilla leader'.[109] This portrayal changed around mid-1991, as Taylor started to be recognised as a threat to the establishment of a stable civilian government.[110] Although still described as a 'rebel leader', many of the core elements that distinguished 'warlords' in the American imperial imaginary helped journalists to draw attention to Liberia and, in some cases, urge the White House to lead a more concerted international response to the escalating violence. Several articles about the war, for instance, expressed concern about how Taylor's autonomy, which was seen as rooted in his coercive acts around the region, could undermine the fragile peace process.[111] As one reporter noted, 'Taylor controls

[105] At one point the US aid comprised more than a third of Liberia's national budget under Doe. For more on the history of this 'special' relationship, which dates back to arrival of the Liberian Republic's founders from the United States during colonial times, see D. Elwood Dunn, *Liberia and the United States during the Cold War: Limits of Reciprocity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), chap. 4.

[106] William Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1998), p. 91.

[107] Stephen Ellis, 'Liberia's Warlord Insurgency', in Christopher Clapham (ed.), *African Guerrillas*, (Oxford: James Currey, 1998), p. 156. See also Mary Moran, *Liberia: The Violence of Democracy* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), p. 9.

[108] This notion frames several accounts of the war, including Michelle Faul, 'West African Troops Head to Countryside to Disarm Rebel Troops', *Associated Press*, 15 November 1991; Gus Constantine, 'Liberian Strife Far from Over', *Washington Times*, 12 April 1991, p. A7; Peter Grier, 'Rebel Leader Taylor Key to Reconciliation in War-Torn Nation', *Christian Science Monitor*, 22 March 1991, p. 4.

[109] See for example Kenneth B. Noble, '2 Rivals in Liberia Move Toward Peace', *New York Times*, 1 July 1991, p. 3; 'Liberia Disarms', *Washington Post*, 16 November 1991, p. A23.

[110] For further details about the early stages of the armed conflict see Stephen Ellis, 'Liberia 1989-1994: A Study of Ethnic and Spiritual Violence', *African Affairs*, vol. 94, no. 375, April 1995, pp. 165-97; Stephen Ellis, *The Mask of Anarchy: The Destruction of Liberia and the Religious Dimension of an African Civil War* (New York: New York University Press, 1999).

[111] See for example 'Liberia—New Stumbling Blocks', *Washington Post*, 15 April 1991, p. A8; Grier, 'Rebel Leader Taylor Key to Reconciliation in War-Torn Nation', p. 4.

most of Liberia, although many people have fled to neighboring countries or to Monrovia….Taylor, who sees the ECOWAS plan to sponsor elections as a Nigerian ploy to bar him from power, insists he either head the interim government or share power'.[112] After peace negotiations between the various factions failed in late 1991, one editorial board lamented that

> Mr. Taylor continues clinging to his troops, their guns and most of the territory they captured through the imposition of widespread mayhem and terror….So once again Liberia's West African neighbors and the international community are being forced to look on as that nation's stability and the peace process are jeopardized by more of Mr. Taylor's machinations.[113]

The editors concluded in a separate editorial that the US government should dissuade Taylor from using his violent authority to claim greater power over Liberia: 'Mr. Taylor needs to hear unequivocally that the United States will not support or participate in Liberia's reconstruction and development if he or any other presidential contender reaches power at the point of a gun'.[114] A concern about the nature and reach of Taylor's authority in Liberia animated his initial recognition as a 'Liberian warlord'.

After Taylor and number of rival militia commanders resumed fighting in late 1992, a more explicit relationship between the 'Liberian warlord' and the violence across West Africa began to develop in American debates about the region. The concept increasingly functioned as a way for journalists, advocates, and some American government officials to portray Taylor's warfare as a form of barbarism, that is, a cruelty alien to basic forms of order and humanity.[115] This form of violence was beyond the remit of normal politics, namely where purportedly liberal conventions constrained the use of force.[116] Perhaps more importantly, it also cast him as liable to pervert—and perhaps even destroy—many of the core political, legal, and normative institutions that comprised order in West Africa. As detailed below, the lasting influence of this evocative cultural construction of war would be evident years later, as it underpinned the

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[112] Reed Kramer, 'Liberia Peace Moves Gain Impetus', *Christian Science Monitor*, 12 June 1991, p. 4.

[113] 'Straining the West African Accord', *Washington Post*, 27 December 1991, p. A20.

[114] 'Building a New Liberia', *Washington Post*, 23 March 1991, p. A20.

[115] Perhaps even more so than fanatics and fanaticism, barbarians and barbarism are staple constructions in the history of empire. A fuller account of both in Anglo-American imperialism can be found in Matthew Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000); J.G.A. Pocock, *Barbarians, Savages and Empires*, Vol. 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Mark B. Salter, *Barbarians and Civilization in International Relations* (London; Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 2002).

[116] Similar patterns underpinned arguments developed at the time about the tendency for African wars to be cast as primitive or anarchic. As illustrated below, this chapter departs from the 'new barbarism thesis' by focusing on how imperial notions of barbarians and barbarity shaped American conceptions of not only the violence in West Africa, but also the political order in the region. For more on this argument see Paul Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest: War, Youth & Resources in Sierra Leone* (The International African Institute, James Currey, 1996); Moran, *Liberia*, chap. 1.

debasement of Taylor's authority as a sovereign leader following his election as president.

Graphic accounts of the escalating fight made Taylor's barbaric rebellion more apparent for American observers. At a time when wars in Somalia (1991-) and the Balkans (1991-95) dominated US policy debates, intense periods of fighting in Liberia, evoked widespread exasperation from American commentators and policymakers for the years of destruction and human suffering caused by the barbarous 'Liberian warlord'.[117] In June 1993, for instance, Taylor and his NPLF militia—much of which was comprised of 'child soldiers'—were accused of massacring more than 400 Liberian refugees near an abandoned rubber plantation outside of Monrovia.[118] The aftermath seemingly confirmed that Taylor's violence not only caused widespread death in Liberia, but also the destruction of the human form.[119] 'Strewn through the camp,' one reporter recounted, 'were babies with crushed skulls, mothers hacked by machetes, elderly people butchered like livestock'.[120] Another syndicated report presented the scene in even more grotesque terms: 'Some of the corpses had their heads split open….Women lay dead with their murdered children still strapped to their backs, cut down as they had tried to flee'.[121] A national editorial cited these reports as confirmation of Liberia's waning humanity in the face of escalating violence:

> Anyone who's followed Liberia's 3 1/2-year-old civil war knows that the chaotic West African country is no stranger to sadistic cruelty. But this latest orgy of killing…has caused Liberia to descend to perhaps its lowest level of inhumanity.[122]

Unlike the UN Security Council and several Western governments, the Bush administration refrained from misattributing the attack to Taylor and the NPFL. Nonetheless, it did condemn the massacre as 'senseless killings' and the 'reprehensible slaughter of displaced persons, including women and children'.[123] Detailed accounts of

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[117] A columnist in the *Washington Post* provides an apt account of Liberia's relative obscurity in American policy debates during this period: 'It's hard to remember Liberia when our attention has only just fastened on Somalia, for whose starving masses we had demanded media attention equal to that accorded the starving masses in Bosnia. With our national preoccupation with the campaign, even South Africa had been moved to a back burner, along with Haiti and Ethiopia and the Sudan. Liberia had fallen behind the stove'. William Raspberry, 'Touched by Suffering', *Washington Post*, 4 November 1992, p. A19.

[118] The NPLF's use of 'child soldiers' was seemingly further evidence of the capacity for the barbaric 'warlord' to degrade basic social distinctions, including the difference between victims and perpetrators. See *Easy Prey: Child Soldiers in Liberia* (New York: Human Rights Watch, September 1994).

[119] A subsequent UN investigation determined that forces from the Liberian Government, not Taylor's NPFL, were responsible for the attack.

[120] Nyenati Allison, 'The Horror: Women and Children Singled Out for Slaughter', *Associated Press*, 7 June 1993.

[121] 'Survivors Tell of Massacre of More than 300 Refugees', *Agence France Presse*, 7 June 1993.

[122] 'The Sickening Massacre in Liberia', *Washington Post*, 9 June 1993, p. A18.

[123] Richard Boucher, 'US Condemns Killing of Nuns', U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C., 31 October 1992.

the war in Liberia inspired provocative conclusions among American journalists about the dehumanising quality of the violence perpetrated by Taylor and his militia.

This barbaric mode of war extended beyond Liberia. As early as 1991 Taylor was recognised to undermine the political establishment not only in Liberia, but also across West Africa.[124] American officials found his contributions to the political devolution of Sierra Leone most alarming. In late 1991 Taylor helped establish the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), a rebel movement comprised of Sierra Leonean and NPLF fighters, in a bid to punish President Joseph Saidu Momoh and political elites that opposed him. American officials traced the RUF's brutal form of violence back to Taylor. During a Congressional briefing, for instance, Andrew W. Natsios, a senior official in the US Agency for International Development, credited Taylor with exporting a distinct mode of barbaric warfare to Sierra Leone:

> As you may know, the forces of Charles Taylor invaded southern Sierra Leone and they're occupying a substantial portion of the country….the Charles Taylor rebel force method of taking over territory, wherever they are, in Liberia or Sierra Leone, is to go and burn the village down and shoot a few people just to show their authority first, so that people are really at risk.[125]

More oblique attributions of the violence in Sierra Leone to Taylor continued after Momoh was overthrown in 1992. The RUF, several State Department reports noted, perpetrated in gross atrocities against civilians reminiscent of those committed in Liberia.[126] As detailed in a 1995 human rights report about Sierra Leone, 'In July, an armed group of men reportedly mutilated more than 100 villagers in Southern province, and there were numerous reports throughout the year that the rebels massacred civilians, and looted and destroyed their villages'.[127] Despite protracted violence across Sierra Leone, and in other parts of the region, the Clinton administration was reluctant to become too involved in the violence, opting instead to provide financial support for ECOWAS forces in Liberia. As explored below, Taylor's involvement in the Sierra Leone civil war (1991-2002) would lead to his indictment on multiple charges of war crimes.

Protracted warfare inspired Taylor to be likened in US policy debates to a barbaric, dehumanising force that afflicted large swaths of West Africa. This cultural construction

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[124] Some of the earliest accounts about ties Taylor's interventions in Sierra Leone can be found in Kenneth B. Noble, 'Liberian Conflict Engulfs Neighbor', *New York Times*, 16 April 1991, p. 7; Peter Grier, 'Libyan Hand Seen in Liberian Raids Against Sierra Leone', *Christian Science Monitor*, 29 April 1991, p. 9.

[125] *The Decades of Disasters: The United Nations' Response, Before House Select Comm. on Hunger*, 102nd Cong. (1991) (statement by Andrew Natsios, Director of Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance, U.S. Agency for International Development).

[126] See for example US Department of State, *Sierra Leone Human Rights Practices, 1993* (Washington, D.C.: US Department of State, 31 January 1994).

[127] US Department of State, *Sierra Leone Human Rights Practices, 1994* (Washington, D.C.: US Department of State, February 1995).

of war grew in prominence as the 'Liberian warlord' was recognised to expand his influence across the region.

Emergence of 'Taylorland'

Years of barbaric violence rendered obsolete American visions of the order in West Africa. Many of the core political institutions that had distinguished sovereign nation-states had been corrupted or destroyed in the Liberian civil war. 'Liberia,' one journalist remarked, 'has come to bear little resemblance to a modern state, becoming instead a tribal caldron governed less by commonly understood rules than at any time since it became Africa's first republic in 1847 under freed American slaves'.[128] This apparent regression into a condition of protracted human suffering derived, many American commentators concluded, from an interminable cycle caused by Taylor's barbaric violence. One reporter described this degenerative pattern as a sequence of unending suffering:

> Liberia seems caught in a vortex of violence and human suffering: a civil war fuels a refugee crisis, as civilians displaced by violence flee to the presumed safety of the cities; the cities, in turn, collapse under the violence and pressure of burgeoning populations that lack food, water, medical care and the essentials of sanitation.[129]

This pattern caused the virtual destruction of the Liberian nation-state. 'Despite its small size,' one reporter explained, 'Liberia's civil war has broken the country into countless factions organized along tribal lines, breeding warlords whose proliferation has always managed to remain at least one step ahead of peace efforts'.[130] Cultural understandings about the barbaric nature of the violence further confounded American attempts to make sense of order in the region.

The barbaric 'Liberian warlord' was responsible for more than corrupting or destroying the Liberian nation-state. During the war American print media outlets recognised Taylor as forging a perverted political order across northern Liberia and parts of neighbouring countries, one that mimicked many of the features of a sovereign nation state, but lacked basic liberal qualities that distinguished civil forms of politics. This aberrant political entity, which was often referred to as 'Greater Liberia' or 'Taylorland', resembled a modern sovereign nation-state.[131] 'Already nearly 95 percent of

[128] Howard W. French, 'As War Factions Shatter, Liberia Falls Into Chaos', *New York Times*, 22 October 1994, p. 4.
[129] Keith B. Richburg, 'Liberia's Surreal Civil War: The Sequel', *Washington Post*, November 1992, p. A1.
[130] Howard W. French, 'Liberia's War Refugees Now United in Misery', *New York Times*, 17 September 1994, p. 3.
[131] The development and operation of Taylor's shadow state are detailed in Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States*, chap. 3.

Liberia,' one journalist reported, 'is in effect run from Gbarnga by Mr. Taylor's forces. The area has its own currency and banking system, an international airfield, a thriving export trade in diamonds, gold, rubber and timber—even its own radio and television network'.[132] Despite these features, the nature of the ruling authority made many American commentators dubious of the order found in Taylor's dominion. As the same journalist concluded

> The Taylor government, which now calls itself the National Patriotic Reconstruction Assembly, has spent lavishly to create a version of a well-planned bureaucracy. On nearly every corner, signs direct visitors to ministry offices. But often, these are little more than one-room shacks staffed by untrained and illiterate people.[133]

The illusion of a capable, sovereign government only made the excesses of Taylorland more egregious. With the help of various foreign firms, Taylor exported vast amounts of Liberia's natural wealth to global markets.[134] This illicit economy not only enriched Taylor, who collected taxes on all exports, but it also funded his barbaric militia. As one reporter summarised, 'Taylor has no political program or guiding ideology, but he does have natural resources such as timber and iron ore that he has sold to buy weapons and to provide military training for his men and for the NPFL's infamous "Small Boy Units"'.[135] The barbaric violence that underpinned Taylor's dominion made his political and economic project all the more reprehensible for American commentators.

This perversion of order continued beyond the putative borders of Taylorland. Rampant violence, both in Liberia and surrounding territories, was blamed for undermining the coherence of states across West Africa. This conclusion animated perhaps the most influential account of the changing order in the global south in post-Cold War US imperialism, Robert Kaplan's article 'The Coming Anarchy'. In the February 1994 piece, Kaplan announced the demise of nation-states and emergence of more varied forms of order across the global south amid a variety of social, political, and economic scourges.[136] Charles Taylor was not mentioned in the alarmist reportage, and Liberia only received only passing mention. However, the violence in Sierra Leone and the surrounding areas served, in Kaplan's words, as the 'point of departure for my

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[132] Kenneth B. Noble, 'In Liberia's Illusory Peace, Rebel Leader Rules Empire of His Own Design', *New York Times*, 14 April 1992, p. 3.

[133] Ibid.

[134] See for example Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States*, chap. 3; Morton Bøås, 'Liberia and Sierra Leone—Dead Ringers? The Logic of Neopatrimonial Rule', *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 22, no. 5, 2001, pp. 697-723; William Reno, *Corruption and State Politics in Sierra Leone* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), chap. 8.

[135] Eric Ransdell, 'The New Africa vs. the Old', *U.S. News & World Report*, vol. 113, no. 20, 23 November 1992, p. 54.

[136] Robert D. Kaplan, 'The Coming Anarchy', *Atlantic*, February 1994, pp. 43-76. The significance of the article in American policy circles can be seen in Charles Fenyvesi, 'Washington Whisper', *U.S. News & World Report*, vol. 117, no. 3, 18 July 1994, p. 21; Jeremy Rosner, 'Is Chaos America's Real Enemy? The Foreign Policy Idea Splitting Clinton's Team', *Washington Post*, 14 August 1994, p. C1.

report on what the political character of our planet is likely to be in the twenty-first century'.[137] As Kaplan explained

> West Africa is becoming *the* symbol of worldwide demographic, environmental, and societal stress, in which criminal anarchy emerges as the real 'strategic' danger. Disease, overpopulation, unprovoked crime, scarcity of resources, refugee migrations, the increasing erosion of nation-states and international borders, and the empowerment of private armies, security firms, and international drug cartels are now most tellingly demonstrated through a West African prism.[138]

The cumulative effect of these changes was deemed staggering. 'Sierra Leone,' Kaplan concluded, 'is a microcosm of what is occurring, albeit in a more tempered and gradual manner, throughout West Africa and much of the underdeveloped world: the withering away of central governments, the rise of tribal and regional domains, the unchecked spread of disease, and the growing pervasiveness of war'.[139] The spread of barbaric violence and perverted forms of political order stood to render obsolete established visions of order in the global south.

Years of crude violence led American commentators and advocates to cast Charles Taylor as a barbaric 'Liberian warlord' responsible for destroying the political order in Western Africa. This construction would propel subsequent attempts to prosecute Taylor for war crimes, even after his election as president of Liberia.

Election and immunity

The official end of the Liberian Civil War tempered many American conclusions about the barbaric nature of Charles Taylor. In August 1995, following months of negotiations, various armed factions agreed to a peace deal, formalised in the Abuja Accord, which culminated two years later with Taylor's election as president of Liberia.[140] The result elicited a tepid reaction from the Clinton administration, which was reluctant to support Taylor, but also hopeful that the election would ease years of violent conflict.[141] This mixed response was evident even before the vote, when a State Department official acknowledged that, 'If Charles Taylor will agree to run freely and fairly and to accept the results of the elections, then I think we are in no position to argue against that. As to who should win, that's for the Liberian people to decide, not the United States'.[142] The

[137] Kaplan, 'The Coming Anarchy', p. 45.

[138] Ibid., p. 46. Original emphasis.

[139] Ibid., p. 47.

[140] David Harris, 'From to President: How Charles Taylor Won the 1997 Liberian Elections', *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 37, no. 3, 1999, pp. 431-55.

[141] George Gedda, 'U.S. Weighs Options for Dealing with Leader with Tainted Past', *Associated Press*, 9 September 1997.

[142] Nicholas Burns, 'Regular Briefing', US Department of State, Washington, D.C., 10 July 1997.

election of Taylor as president marked a sufficient end to the brutal armed conflict that the US government could avoid becoming mired in the region, particularly with protracted armed conflicts elsewhere in West Africa and across the global south.

More ambivalent notions of Taylor emerged in the American print media in the months following his electoral victory. Journalists highlighted the many paradoxes surrounding the new head of state. After years of destroying Liberia, and sowing unrest across the region, the barbaric 'warlord' had somehow acquired a privileged place in Liberian politics that required political compromise. One journalist noted that, 'as an elected leader trying to rebuild the state he helped destroy', Taylor was forced to collaborate with other political elites, but also ensure that his political power did not diminish.[143] 'Taylor,' the journalist continued, 'appears to be responding to appeals for administrative reforms to restore the state's finances and permit resuscitation of the economy. And he seems to be groping for a reconciliation with old foes, while keeping firm control of political and military power'.[144] The paradox of a 'warlord' overseeing a national bureaucracy was heightened by acceptance Taylor enjoyed from international elites.[145] As John Lee Anderson noted

> Despite the fact that during the civil war Charles Taylor commanded one of the most vicious armies of modern times, and is widely believed to have abused his power for personal enrichment on a grand scale, he has an impressive roster of liberal American friends and acquaintances that includes the Reverend Jesse Jackson and former United States Attorney General Ramsey Clark.[146]

The irony that, despite a legacy of virulent, anti-establishment attacks on the Liberian state, Taylor enjoyed privileged place among the domestic and international elite animated more mixed conceptions of Taylor in American policy debates.

The presidential election and growing public embrace raised considerable concern about whether Taylor would ever be held accountable for the barbaric violence in West Africa. As a sovereign leader, some American commentators suggested, the new president could avoid prosecution for war crimes and crimes against humanity.[147] Several advocacy groups expressed concern that Taylor's new political status would

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[143] James Rupert, 'Liberian President Rebuilding Nation He Helped Destroy', *Washington Post*, 1 March 1998, p. A21.

[144] Ibid.

[145] Congressman Donald M. Payne, for instance, was one of Taylor's most outspoken supporters, as seen in a 1998 op-ed: 'It is not inconceivable that a rebel leader in Africa can put down the gun and become a peacetime leader such as Jerry Rawlings in Ghana. It is about time the U.S. drop its old grudge against Mr. Taylor, who had the temerity to oppose our "client", the ruthless Doe'. Donald M. Payne, 'What Liberia Deserves', *Washington Times*, 27 February 1998, p. A21.

[146] John Lee Anderson, 'The Devil They Know', *New Yorker*, 27 July 1998, pp. 34-42.

[147] See for example Gus Constatine, 'Liberians Face Reconciliation after Elections', *Washington Times*, 24 July 1997, p. A10; Mary Fitzpatrick, 'Liberia's Tenuous Election', *Christian Science Monitor*, 1 August 1997, p. 20; Marcus Mabry and Kirk Troy, 'President Taylor?', *Newsweek*, 28 July 1997, p. 30.

deter or perhaps legally prevent prosecutors from charging the barbaric 'Liberian warlord' with gross violations to international law.[148] Kenneth Cain authored one of the more influential—and certainly most determined—calls for Taylor to be prosecuted for a litany of war crimes and human rights abuses.[149] Before analysing Taylor's numerous of abuses, the former UN human rights official acknowledged the mounting ambivalence that surrounded the 'Liberian warlord', noting that 'Taylor has latterly mutated into an elected president and currently enjoys status as the Head of State of a recognized government'.[150] This new status heightened the importance of acknowledging the normative and legal significance of Taylor's past abuses. As Cain reminded

> With alarming alacrity Taylor's bid precipitated a descent into a seven-year civil war characterized by total state collapse and a relentless campaign of sadistic, wanton violence unimaginable to those unfamiliar with the details of man's capacity to visit the abyss.[151]

The cruelty of this violence, the political obscurity of Liberia, and Taylor's status as head of state presented a considerable test to international law. At the same time that special tribunals were underway in the Balkans, largely with the support of international donors, Cain deplored the United States and other Western states for shirking the responsibility to enforce the same bodies of international law in Liberia. As he concluded, 'The principle at stake, however, is profound. One overly fecund laboratory for inquiry into the international community's sincerity in undertaking to act upon the principle of the universality of human rights is the oldest republic on the African continent'.[152] Unpunished abuses made Taylor's election as president an even more urgent challenge for international law.

The Liberian presidential election, combined with an increasingly ambivalence towards the 'Liberian warlord', sparked greater concern among American human rights activists about Taylor's possible immunity from prosecution. The concept of warlord would become a pivotal part of subsequent attempts to debase his political authority and calls for Taylor to be brought to account on charges of war crimes.

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[148] See for example *Liberia: Time to Take Human Rights Seriously—Placing Human Rights on the National Agenda* (Washington, D.C.: Amnesty International USA, September 1997); *Emerging from the Destruction: Human Rights Challenges Facing the New Liberian Government*, Vol. 9, No. 7(A) (New York: Human Rights Watch, November 1997).

[149] Kenneth L. Cain, 'The Rape of Dinah: Human Rights, Civil War in Liberia, and Evil Triumphant', *Human Rights Quarterly*, vol. 21, no. 2, May 1999, pp. 265-307. The influence of the article can be seen in Ken Silverstein, 'Good Press for Dictators', *The American Prospect*, 9 April 2001, p. 17.

[150] Cain, 'The Rape of Dinah', p. 269.

[151] Ibid., p. 268.

[152] Ibid., p. 307.

Debasement of political authority

The Liberian presidency did little to earn Taylor a meaningful acceptance in the United States. The ambivalent account that followed his election gave way to a concerted effort to debase Taylor's political authority as not rooted in an electoral mandate or the presidential office. Instead, amid greater scrutiny about his activities in the West African diamond trade, Taylor's political authority as President was portrayed in various media outlets as being inseparable from the violence that animated his construction as a 'Liberian warlord'. Some commentators made explicit reference to this legacy, calling him a 'warlord-president'[153], a 'companion warlord'[154] to neighbouring 'warlords', or a 'barbaric leader'.[155]

More substantive forms of debasement returned to the barbaric violence that defined his designation as a 'warlord' years earlier. Tom Masland prefaced a feature on Taylor by recounting his violent rise to power, including his 'recruiting children as soldiers, hooking them on heroin and training them to commit atrocities with routine efficiency'.[156] This spectre of this violent legacy, Masland continued, pervaded the presidential election, as his campaign 'terrified the electorate, people who knew Taylor's methods' particularly since he had only 'made a superficial transition from rebel to statesman'. Others noted the continuity in Taylor's violent barbarism. One report detailed how Taylor's 'vacillates between presenting himself as a democratic political leader and operating much as the military commandant he was during the war'.[157] This continuity with the latter, the journalist explained, could be seen in the summary execution hundreds of ethnic rivals, leaving 'bodies stacked like cordwood', as some were 'slain execution-style, with their hands bound'.[158] The barbarous nature of violence, and its lasting consequences, could still be seen in Liberia under the Taylor presidency. At sunset, a journalist noted, 'all of Monrovia is plunged into darkness—except one short block, where a huge house sits surrounded by a white wall that extends almost to the side of the road,' which has two street lamps operating through the night.[159] The one electrified house 'belongs to Charles Taylor, the president of this country, the warlord who destroyed Liberia in one of the most barbaric civil wars in Africa's recent history, and who terrorized its people into electing him in 1997'. Familiar accounts of barbaric

[153] 'Second Chance in Sierra Leone', *New York Times*, 14 August 2000, p. A20.
[154] Jane Perlez, 'A Chance to Give Evil its Rewards', *New York Times*, 21 May 2000, p. 4.
[155] 'Passive Peacekeepers', *New York Times*, 9 May 2000, p. A30.
[156] Tom Masland, 'A Bully and His Pulpit', *Newsweek*, 28 August 2000, p. 32.
[157] James Rupert, 'Liberia's Nervous Leader', *Washington Post*, 14 January 1999, p. A21.
[158] Ibid.
[159] Norimitsu Onishi, 'In Ruined Liberia, its Despoiler Sits Pretty', *New York Times*, 7 December 2000, p. 1.

violence, both as a dehumanizing and unjust force, provided a new basis for understanding Taylor's authority in Liberia.

Efforts to isolate Taylor in diplomatic relations furthered his debasement as a sovereign leader. Reports about the sale of arms to the RUF in exchange for 'blood diamonds' from Sierra Leone elicited the most far-reaching response.[160] After repeated consultations, the Clinton administration worked with the UN Security Council to impose a series of sanctions on the Taylor regime, including several on the sale of arms, export of diamonds, and travel for senior officials.[161] These sanctions were explained as a response to barbaric violence still perpetrated by the warlord-turn-president. As Susan E. Rice, the Under Secretary for African Affairs, explained to Congress in October 2000, 'There should be no mistaking our position: we recognize the corrosive role that Taylor is playing in the tragedy of Sierra Leone and the spreading instability in the region, and we are committed to bringing his destructive influence to an end'.[162] The diplomatic measures punished the already embattled Taylor regime without miring the US government in the distant African country.

This diplomatic isolation inspired more explicit calls for Taylor to be denied immunity and face prosecution for violations of international law. The concept of warlord, and accompanying debasement of his political authority, inspired early calls for him to be indicted for war crimes. In a 2002 hearing on 'failed states', for instance, Senator Russ Feingold opened the preceding by dismissing Taylor's authority as a sovereign leader: 'Let me be very clear at the outset. I think that the current President of Liberia is a war criminal, and I hope to see him held accountable for his actions in a court of law'.[163] Another Democrat, Congressman Ed Royce, applauded Feingold's earlier characterisation of Taylor, stressing in a hearing about 'blood diamonds' the compromised authority that the warlord-turn-president had in Western Africa:

> Charles Taylor is a plague on the region. Senator Feingold…called Taylor a war criminal during a recent trip to the region. Considering what Taylor has been doing to his country and region…the Liberian President should live with that tag day and night.[164]

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[160] A UN report published in December 2000 confirmed longstanding rumours about Taylor's continued interference in Sierra Leone. See Panel of Experts on Sierra Leone Diamonds and Arms, *Report of the Panel of Experts Appointed Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1306 (2000), Paragraph 19, in relation to Sierra Leone* (New York: United Nations, December 2000). Available at <http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1132/pdf/sclet11951e.pdf> Accessed 10 February 2011.

[161] Amos Perlmutter, 'Chaos, Kleptocracy and gems', *Washington Times*, 16 May 2000, p. A18.

[162] *U.S. Policy Towards Sierra Leone, Before Senate Comm. on Foreign Relations, Subcomm. on African Affairs*, 106th Cong. (2000) (statement of Susan E. Rice, Assistant Secretary, African Affairs).

[163] *Weak States in Africa: U.S. Policy in Liberia, Senate Comm. on Foreign Relations, Subcomm. on African Affairs*, 107th Cong. (2002) (statement of Russell Feingold, Senator from Wisconsin).

[164] *Testimony Liberia/Conflict Diamonds, Before House Comm. on International Relations,* 107th Cong. (2001) (statement of Ed Royce, Congressman from California).

These calls gained greater following with the establishment of new international legal institutions. One of those institutions was the International Criminal Court (ICC). As Tom Malinowski argued, 'So how will the ICC be used?...Thugs, like Liberia's Charles Taylor, may be exposed for atrocities committed on the territory of neighbors'.[165] Several other commentators speculated about the potential for Taylor to be prosecuted for war crimes in the Special Court for Sierra Leone, a tribunal established by the UN and Sierra Leonean government, with the support of the United States.[166] The debasement of Taylor's authority contributed to speculation about the potential for him to be prosecuted for war crimes.

After years of anticipation Taylor was indicted on multiple charges of war crimes. On 4 June 2003, the Special Court made public that Taylor had been indicted on 17 charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including unlawful killings, sexual violence, and forced labor.[167] David Crane, an American prosecutor in charge of the tribunal, announced that Taylor had been charged with 'bearing the greatest responsibility for war crimes, crimes against humanity and serious violations of international law'.[168] Hours after the indictment was unsealed, Taylor fled a peace conference in Ghana to return to Liberia.

Taylor's escape elicited some criticism in the United States. Nonetheless, the indictment was widely celebrated as a pivotal development in international law, not only because his past atrocities. It also gave hope that Taylor would not be able to use the presidency to claim immunity from prosecution under international law. One commentator concluded at the time that, after disregarding growing diplomatic pressure, 'the long arm of international law reached out and tapped Mr. Taylor on the shoulder'.[169] Another national op-ed found solace in the potential for the indictment to forge a more robust conclusion about Taylor's reprehensible nature: 'Mr. Taylor may temporarily elude the warrant, but he cannot escape judgment….Indicted as a war

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[165] Tom Malinowski, 'The ICC: An Alliance for Justice', *Washington Post*, 9 June 2001, p. A17.

[166] These rumours appeared in several settings, including 'Justice for Sierra Leone', *New York Times*, 17 April 2001, p. 17; Tom Masland, 'Voices of the Children: "We Beat and Killed People..."', *Newsweek*, 13 May 2002, p. 24.

[167] The influence of the United States on the court was clear from the outset. The US government provided more than $20 million for the court, $5 million more than originally pledged. See 'Case No. SCSL – 03 – I: The Prosecutor Against Charles Ghankay Taylor', Special Court for Sierra Leone, 3 March 2003. Available at <http://www.sc-sl.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=5glkIHnmPYM=&tabid=159> Accessed 7 February 2011.

[168] Quoted in Douglas Farah, 'Tribunal Indicts Liberia's Leader', *Washington Post*, 5 June 2003, p. A22. For more on the importance of the political concept in the indictment see David M. Crane, 'Dancing with the Devil: Prosecuting West Africa's Warlords: Building Initial Prosecutorial Strategy for an International Tribunal after Third World Armed Conflicts', *Case Western Reserve Journal of International Law*, vol. 37, no. 1, 2005, pp. 1-10.

[169] Mike Crawley, 'UN Indicts Liberian Leader for War Crimes', Boston, MA, *Christian Science Monitor*, 5 June 2003, p. 7.

criminal, Charles Taylor today is nothing more than a wanted man'.[170] The Special Court's indictment offered hope that, despite acquiring the Liberian presidency, Taylor would be punished for perpetrating years of barbaric violence and political unrest in West Africa.

After years of anticipation, Taylor's indictment at the Special Court for Sierra Leone was celebrated in the United States as pivotal step in the development of international law. However, the same expectations that made the 'Liberian warlord' and his debased presidency a pivotal case gave particular importance to his ensuing diplomatic standoff.

Diplomatic standoff

Following the release of the indictment, Taylor defied repeated calls from domestic and international critics for his to surrender. Amid surge of violence in Liberia, the impasse gave new urgency to unresolved legal and political questions about whether, by virtue of his standing as president of Liberia, Taylor could claim immunity from the international prosecution for war crimes and crimes against humanity.[171] As some journalists noted, it was unclear that, if Taylor was to leave Liberia again, he could be arrested since, 'Mr. Taylor's status as a head of state grants him automatic immunity from such actions, under various international treaties'.[172] Others noted that a de facto immunity would be granted if the Bush administration did not press for the 'Liberian warlord' to submit to arrest. Richard W. Carlson lamented that, even in the absence of legal immunity, the possibility of debased leaders such as Taylor avoiding the Special Court was all too familiar because 'that is the way it has long been done—democracies in the West turn a blind eye to Criminals in Chief and rescue them from the vengeful payback of their citizens'.[173] The anticipation surrounding Taylor's defiance of an international arrest warrant brought the 'Liberian warlord' to the forefront of questions about international immunity.

The justifications marshalled for greater American intervention demonstrate how the political concept gave considerable imperative for the United States to help enforce international law in West Africa. The gravity of the social ills Taylor represented, commentators and human rights activists argued, seemingly trumped any claim to

[170] 'Charles Taylor, Indicted', *Washington Post*, 5 June 2003, p. A32.

[171] For more on the legal dimensions of this question see Micaela Frulli, 'The Question of Charles Taylor's Immunity', *Journal of International Criminal Justice*, vol. 2, no. 4, 2004, pp. 1118-29.

[172] Felicity Barringer and Somini Sengupta, 'War Crimes Indictment of Liberian President is Disclosed', *New York Times*, 5 June 2003, p. 12.

[173] Richard W. Carlson, 'A Retirement Plan for Tyrants', *Weekly Standard*, vol. 8, no. 44, July 2003.

immunity from international prosecution, regardless of his official status. In a plea for the United States to send troops to Liberia, Human Rights Watch reiterated that 'Charles Taylor gained international notoriety for the brutal abuses of civilians perpetrated by his forces in Liberia, and for his use of child soldiers'.[174] In light of this brutality, Janet Fleichman concluded, a failure to prosecute the warlord-turn-president would undermine recovery efforts across the region: 'Letting Charles Taylor off the hook would make it harder, not easier, to bring lasting peace to Liberia'.[175] Two other advocates, Chris Hennemeyer and John Prendergast, made a related case. The barbaric nature of the Taylor's violence, as well as its widespread nature, exceeded what the United States had tolerated elsewhere in Africa. '[Taylor] and his militias,' they argued, 'are responsible for all manner of crimes, well documented by human rights groups, including killings, rapes and various forms of slavery. The inaction so far of the United States…is remarkable in comparison with the strong action it has taken in other trouble spots outside Africa'.[176] International law provided, many concluded, the best chance to contain the barbaric violence and prevent further unrest in West Africa.

More than just notions of barbaric violence and Taylor's corrupt political authority inspired calls for the US government to help deliver him to the Special Court. The concept and debased notions of his political authority also emboldened conclusions about the potential for international law to 'save' Liberia—and perhaps even all of West Africa—from the corrupt order that the barbaric 'Liberian warlord' had forged over the years. One national editorial, for instance, stressed that 'What [Liberia] needs in the longer term is an end to warlordism—beginning with the capture of its president, Charles Taylor, an indicted war criminal, Africa's Slobodan Milosevic'.[177] This comparison to another infamous 'warlord' in liminal Europe, seemingly confirmed the significance of Taylor's prosecution, both for Liberia and the rest of West Africa: 'His capture and trial,' the editorial board concluded, 'are the only way to protect Liberia and its neighbors'.[178] The prosecution of Taylor before the Special Court, Hennemeyer and Predergast argued, offered the best chance to restore Liberia's normative standing and political coherence as a sovereign state: 'It's time to bring Liberia back into the community of nations. Seizing this opportunity will prevent the Liberian people from suffering many more years of violence, predation and misery'.[179] The debasement of

[174] *Liberia: No Immunity for Taylor* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 3 July 2003), p. 1.

[175] Ibid.

[176] Chris Hennemeyer and John Prendergast, 'An End to Liberia's Misery', *Washington Post*, 17 June 2003, p. A21. Similar calls can were made in David J. Scheffer, 'No Asylum for Atrocity Lords', *Washington Post*, 10 July 2003, p. A23.

[177] 'Saving Liberia', *New York Times*, 17 June 2003, p. 26.

[178] Ibid.

[179] Hennemeyer and Prendergast, 'An End to Liberia's Misery', p. A21.

Taylor's political authority ascribed a conflicted quality to the order found across West Africa.

The Bush administration balked at calls for the United States to deliver Taylor to the Special Court. As Gilles Wiggleworth notes, despite some support among senior leaders, the administration was reluctant to endorse the Special Court's indictment of Taylor or commit American soldiers to a military intervention in Africa, particularly amid the wars in Afghanistan (2001-) and Iraq.[180] Instead, the government reiterated familiar accounts about how Taylor remained a source of unrest and human suffering in Western Africa without demanding more than his departure from public office. In a July 2003 briefing, for example, Condoleezza Rice, the National Security Advisor, stressed the danger Taylor posed to West Africa:

> the President calls them as he sees them. There wasn't any doubt that Saddam Hussein was a menace in the region, not to mention a menace to his own people. And Charles Taylor is a menace to his own people…there are lots of regional leader [*sic*] who are also very concerned about Charles Taylor—and not just his activities in Liberia, which have been heinous and have driven the country into the situation that it's in now.[181]

Later in the briefing Rice affirmed Taylor's legacy as barbaric 'warlord', whose violence underpinned his political authority and the bleak condition in Liberia and surrounding territories. However, as seen with other calls for Taylor to relinquish power, no insights were offered into what would happen if the warlord-turn-president did not comply with the United States' demands:

> I think people know the history of how Charles Taylor came to power. I also think people know the history of what Charles Taylor has done to his people. And I think everybody knows that Liberia, for instance, since 1990, has basically had no infrastructure….This is somebody who has murdered and looted and really put the country in extremis. So the President I simply voicing what a lot of people in Liberia are voicing, not to mention most of the political movements in Liberia are voicing, which is that it's time for Charles Taylor to go.[182]

After months of speculation, fuelled by evasive policy announcements and increased US military activities in West Africa, the Pentagon announced that the United States would limit its military involvement in Liberia to advising the UN in peacekeeping operations. As discussed below, this reluctance would be ease years later, when the United States pressured regional powers to deliver Taylor to international custody.

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[180] Gill Wigglesworth, 'The End of Impunity? Lessons from Sierra Leone', *International Affairs*, vol. 84, no. 4, 2008, p. 810.

[181] Condoleezza Rice, 'Press Briefing by Dr. Condoleezza Rice, National Security Advisor, on the President's Trip to Africa', Washington, D.C., 3 July 2003. Available at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=61120&st=charles+taylor&st1=#axzz1IubiOcPV> Accessed 11 February 2011.

[182] Ibid.

The standoff ended in August 2003 after Taylor agreed to go into exile in Nigeria. The arrangement, which was negotiated by the Bush administration, along with the British and Nigerian governments, allowed Taylor to avoid appearing before the Special Court, as well as flee a rebel insurrection in the Liberian capital, Monrovia.[183] At the time there was no indication whether, despite the Special Court's ruling that Taylor was subject to its jurisdiction, the exile deal provided him immunity from future prosecution.

The deal sparked considerable outrage among commentators and advocates in the United States. The failure to deliver Taylor, one of the global south's most destructive 'warlord', was treated as a grave indictment of the Bush administration and the future of international law. As Charles Miglin explains, 'Charles Taylor appeared to be yet another brutal warlord allowed to decompose into the archives of history without ever answering for his alleged crimes'.[184] A range of commentators criticised President Bush for endorsing Taylor's exile, claiming that it allowed him to continue corrupting the region[185], undermined the prospects of lasting peace in West Africa[186], and confirmed the government's inability to improve the welfare of Africa.[187] However, for many American commentators, the implications for international law, particularly the custom of immunity, were equally alarming.[188] 'Allowing Taylor to escape responsibility', Michelle Greene argued, 'defies international law, undermines Sierra Leone's Special Court, and sets a troubling precedent'.[189] Other legal scholars warned that, given the inability to deliver Taylor to the Special Court, his case illustrated the inadequate means to enforce international law.[190] The widespread reaction to the exile bargain confirmed the significance of the case of the barbaric 'Liberian warlord' for the United States' ability and willingness to extend international law over the most volatile parts of the global south.

Debased notions of Taylor's political authority heightened the significance of his indictment in the development of international law, as well as a setback when he was

[183] U.S. Marines subsequently landed in Monrovia to help secure the capital and prepare for the arrival of a UN-authorised peacekeeping force from Nigeria.

[184] James L. Miglin, 'From Immunity to Impunity: Charles Taylor and the Special Court for Sierra Leone', *Dalhousie Journal of Legal Studies*, no. 16, 2007, p. 21.

[185] See for example Somini Sengupta, 'Lessons from Africa: War Crimes Without End', *New York Times*, 21 December 2003, p. 5; Douglas Farah, 'Taylor May Be Gone, but His Influence Remains', *Washington Post*, 12 August 2003, p. A10.

[186] Examples include Tom Malinowski, 'Broken Promises to Liberia', *Washington Post*, 24 September 2003, p. A29; 'When Exile is the Lesser Evil', *USA Today*, 18 August 2003, p. 11A.

[187] This argument is developed in Peter Beinart, 'Armies of Compassion?', *New Republic*, 18 August 2003, p. 6; 'Offshore', *New Republic*, 18 August 2003, p. 7; Raymond C. Offenheiser and Kenneth H. Bacon, 'Our Mission in Liberia', *Washington Post*, 9 August 2003, p. A15.

[188] See for example 'After Charles Taylor', *Washington Post*, 13 August 2003, p. A26.

[189] Michelle Greene, 'Keep the Heat on Taylor', *Christian Science Monitor*, 22 August 2003, p. 11.

[190] Morton Abramowitz and Paul Williams, 'Peace Before Prosecution?', *Washington Post*, 25 August 2003, p. A17.

went into exile. The political concept would be at the forefront of enduring calls for the Bush administration to deliver Taylor to the Special Court.

Arrest and prosecution

Charles Taylor's claim to diplomatic immunity ended after the Special Court affirmed its jurisdiction over Liberia in 2004.[191] Nonetheless, after going to into exile, critics continued to assert that, with limited political will to reverse his exile, only the Bush administration was capable of bringing the 'warlord' to before the Special Court. Years of debasement gave a lasting urgency to several Congressmen's calls for the Bush administration to help prosecute Taylor. Less than a year after Taylor went into exile, for instance, Senators Patrick Leahy and Judd Gregg argued that the United States still had an obligation to help prosecute Taylor. 'We owe the Nigerians,' the two senators argued, 'a debt of gratitude for helping remove Mr. Taylor from power, but the job of promoting peace and reconciliation cannot be completed unless Mr. Taylor answers to the grave charges brought by the court'.[192] Congressman Ed Royce made more explicit calls in May 2005 prior to a meeting between Bush and Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo. In his words, 'Sending Mr. Taylor to the Special Court is right and sensible. Mr. Bush, who has spoken so purposefully on other occasions about the need for freedom, justice and accountability, can make those same points about one of Africa's worst warlords'. The barbaric nature of Taylor made the arrangement untenable in the long term. 'But so far the United States,' Royce concluded, 'has yet to press President Obasanjo for rendition. Why the United States continues to coddle Charles Taylor is something of a mystery'.[193] The Bush administration confronted not only public calls from Congress for Taylor's prosecution, but also several pieces of legislation, including bills that offered a $2 million reward for the capture of anyone indicted by the Special Court and another that called for Nigeria to handover Taylor to the Special Court.

More explicit appeals for Taylor's extradition appeared in the American print media. Commentators, editorial boards, and advocates further debased Taylor as a barbaric 'warlord' to stress the importance of the United States enforcing international law in West Africa. The brutal violence, combined with his debauched rule, seemingly placed the 'Liberian warlord' among most infamous threats to order the post-Cold War global south. Such comparisons were used to stress how, amid precedent of

[191] See Frulli, 'The Question of Charles Taylor's Immunity'.
[192] Patrick Leahy and Judd Gregg, 'Ex-despot to the Dock', *Washington Times*, 4 August 2004, p. A15.
[193] Ed Royce, 'Bring Charles Taylor to Justice', *New York Times*, 5 May 2005, p. 35.

incarcerating obstinate heads of state for similar crimes, the Bush administration's lack of support for Taylor's arrest was increasingly conspicuous. As one critic argued

> Slobodan Milosevic sits in a cell at The Hague. Saddam Hussein is jailed in Iraq. It is only in West Africa that the international community, with the approval of the Bush administration, has allowed a war criminal of such scale to live untouched by the law.[194]

The tendency to locate Taylor among the most depraved figures in the global south led commentators to stress the wider legal and normative precedent involved in his case. On the second anniversary of the exile deal, Kenneth Roth, the Executive Director of Human Rights Watch, stressed that, besides encouraging impunity, the Taylor case had implications for other leaders that violate international law:

> This sweetheart deal has so far deprived Taylor's many victims and Sierra Leone's people of the opportunity to see one of their prime persecutors brought to justice. It also risks emboldening other would-be tyrants to carry out similar atrocities, since they might calculate that, if their crimes catch up with them, they, too, can opt for exile over imprisonment.[195]

Familiar notions of barbarism facilitated far-reaching comparisons between Taylor and other violent leaders from across the global south that accentuated the significance of the Bush administration's refusal to arrest the 'Liberian warlord'.

The Bush administration eventually relented. Following several years of criticism, as well as growing international scepticism towards American imperial power amid the deteriorating wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, administration officials announced that the US government would help deliver Taylor to the Special Court. Over the next few months, the Bush administration and State Department officials began to press regional leaders to agree that Taylor should be sent for trial in Sierra Leone. In March 2006, following the election of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf as President of Liberia, the Bush administration pushed the new Liberian government to demand Nigeria to extradite Taylor. Prior to a March 2006 visit to the White House, President Obasanjo finally agreed to the deal, which prompted Taylor to flee his compound. He was captured less than a day later at the Nigerian-Cameroon border, and Nigerian authorities sent him to Sierra Leone, where the 'Liberian warlord' was remanded to UN-custody.

The delivery of Taylor to international authorities sparked widespread celebration in the United States. The arrest marked the end of a longstanding barbaric threat to order in West Africa. Perhaps more importantly, it constituted a decisive example of the potential for the international law to be enforced in the global south. In the words of one journalist:

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[194] Ryan Lizza, 'Charles at Large', *New Republic*, 25 April 2005, p. 10.

[195] Ken Roth, 'It's Worth Bringing Tyrants to Justice', *International Herald Tribune*, 10 August 2005, p. 6.

> For a man who was once among the most feared in Africa, it was an unceremonious end. As Liberia's ruler from 1997 to 2003, when a rebel revolt and international pressure forced him to resign and go into exile in Nigeria, Taylor…had brutalized his country and the region, fomenting wars in three countries that left as many as 300,000 people dead and thousands more raped and maimed. Following the likes of Slobodan Milosevic and Saddam Hussein, Taylor is the latest strongman to face a reckoning in a court of law.[196]

Amid a growing consensus about the importance of bringing notorious non-European leaders to trial, Taylor's arrest established further precedent that international law could be enforced in even the most unruly parts of Africa. 'The world,' one commentator speculated, 'has seen how international interventions have put Yugoslavia's Slobodan Milosevic and Iraq's Saddam Hussein on trial (and, maybe soon, Cambodia's former Khmer Rouge leaders). Africa's despots cannot remain immune to a global trend toward making sure war atrocities don't go unanswered in court'.[197] Another commentator bolstered this optimistic outlook, arguing that Taylor's case 'could be the beginning of the end for Africa's long era of impunity, during which awful deeds committed by presidents, dictators, and warlords have gone largely unpunished'.[198] After years of deploring Taylor's barbaric violence and the lack of will to prosecute him for war crimes, the arrest of the 'Liberian warlord' inspired a new optimism among American commentators and advocates about the potential for international law to constrain the excesses of war and promote a more just order in the global south.

The arrest of the 'Liberian warlord' had more immediate significance for the Bush administration. Following years of criticism, particularly from policymakers, advocates, or commentators, many officials treated him as evidence of the United States' commitment to greater justice across the global south. In the days following the arrest, administration officials pointed to the Taylor case to deflect criticism of their tepid response to another protracted conflict in Africa, the genocide in Darfur. At a press conference on the day of Taylor's arrest, Bush recounted his conversation with Nigerian President Obasanjo, mentioning in vague terms how 'We talked and strategized about how to move forward, how to make it clear to the Sudanese Government that there will be a international response in working toward a peace'.[199] The vagueness of these discussions was rendered irrelevant given the affirmation of the Bush administration's collaboration with Obasanjo in arresting Taylor. 'The fact that Charles Taylor,' Bush concluded, 'will be brought to justice in a court of law will help Liberia and is a signal,

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[196] Simon Robinson, 'Snaring a Strongman', *Time*, 2 April 2006, p. 49.

[197] 'Africa Mustn't Stop with Charles Taylor', *Christian Science Monitor*, 4 April 2006, p. 8.

[198] Abraham McLaughlin, 'Era of Impunity Wanes for African Leaders', *Christian Science Monitor*, 31 March 2006, p. 1.

[199] George W. Bush, 'Remarks Following Discussions With President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria', Washington, D.C., 29 March 2006. Available at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=67056&st=obasanjo&st1=#axzz1IubiOcPV> Accessed 11 February 2011.

Mr. President, of your deep desire for there to be peace in your neighborhood'.[200] During the same month, Condoleezza Rice, then the Secretary of State, cast the arrest of the barbaric 'Liberian warlord' in similar terms. She cited Taylor's arrest to defend the Bush administration's record of encouraging a stable and just political order Liberia, even when 'when Charles Taylor was rampaging in the country'.[201] Despite reservations with the jurisdiction of various international legal bodies, most notably the ICC, Rice reminded that the Bush administration 'would be prepared to cooperate because we've always stood on the side of bringing perpetrators of injustice to justice. And we've done it with Charles Taylor. I think you would say we're trying to do it with Sudan'.[202] The arrest and prosecution of Taylor helped the Bush administration atone for its previous reluctance to heed calls for the 'Liberian warlord' to be brought to justice or subscribe to many of the core principles of international law.

After years of barbaric violence and seeming political chaos, Charles Taylor came to exemplify the need for the United States to use international law to promoted more measured modes of war and just forms of order in the global south. The concept of warlord helped debase Taylor's governance as rooted in barbarism, the effects of which plagued West Africa. The influence of this debasement was seen in the urgency American advocates and commentators ascribed to his prosecution on charges of war crimes and, perhaps even more so, in the sustained criticism that the Bush administration faced after Taylor was exiled to Nigeria. Following years of criticism, both from policymakers and political commentators, the Bush administration relented by arranging Taylor's extradition to the Special Court. The prosecution of the 'Liberian warlord' helped bolster the United States' supposed credentials as a protector of Western standards of war, and affirm the potential for international law to temper the excess of war and promote more just order.

Conclusion

At various moments in US and British imperial history, 'warlords' were at the forefront of attempts to expand the reach of international law to include more of the global south. The coercive nature of their authority, as well as their prevalence on the margins of empire, seemingly implicated 'warlords' in testing both the regulative function and geographic reach of international law in US and British imperialism. This chapter argued

[200] Ibid.

[201] Condoleezza Rice, 'Secretary of State Speaks at Centennial Annual Meeting of American Society of International Law', Washington, D.C., 29 March 2006.

[202] Ibid.

that the prominence of 'warlords' in debates about the reach of international law derived from the political concept's capacity to debase the political authority non-European leaders. More specifically, given the logical and cultural importance of war in Anglo-American notions of 'warlords', the political concept served as a way to reduce their political authority to more reprehensible terms. These afflictions seemingly appeared in a variety of forms. As seen in the case of Theodore, notions of fanaticism were derived from a legacy of unrelenting violence against civilians and rivals. Charles Taylor, by contrast, was cast as waging a particularly barbaric form of warfare, one that corrupted and destroyed all semblances of order—political institutions, market economies, and even the morality of children. These cultural constructions of war helped forge a greater consensus among policymakers, commentators, and advocates about the abhorrent nature of their exploits and provoked alarm about its far-reaching consequences for recasting political order in the global south.

Debasement involved more than just developing a consensus about the brutal nature of war in the global south. It recast basic understandings about the kind of political authority that leaders maintained in their dominions, diminishing any legitimate claim of authority. As seen with Theodore, the notions of his fanatic violence accentuated the perceived absence of fundamental liberal qualities in Abyssinia, such as justice, community, and consent. Similar patterns held for Charles Taylor after claiming the Liberian presidency, as the source of his authority was deemed to be in his legacy of barbaric violence, not an elected mandate. In both cases, these ill-liberal forms of authority left both these 'warlords' at once sovereign entities, but also one in which some semblance of justice could never be found. It was seemingly only by outside intervention, namely through the enforcement of the laws of war, that many US and British commentators, advocates, and even policymakers understood some semblance of order could be created in these territories.

US and British confrontations with 'warlords' emboldened the standing of both imperial powers as not only enforcers of Western standards of warfare, but as promoters of more civil forms of order in the non-European world. This affirmation of empire can be seen in the presumed righteousness of Britain's colonial intervention in Abyssinia, which culminated in the rescue of the European hostages and end of Theodore's violent reign. Analogous conclusions, albeit in slightly less grand terms, followed the Bush administration's support for the arrest of Charles Taylor on charges of crimes against humanity. Amid considerable conflict surrounding the administration's compliance with key facets of international law, senior officials treated the prosecution as compelling evidence of the United States' commitment to abstract notions of 'peace' and 'justice' in the global south. These interventions seemingly confirmed that, in the absence of external involvement, desperate areas of the global south would be left to the misery and

suffering wrought by their debauched violent leaders. Perhaps more importantly, by reducing non-European leaders to that of a basic social ill, debased notions of 'warlords' inspired greater confidence in the potential for Britain and the United States to protect boundaries of Western cultural values. The international law seemingly functioned as a coherent and far-reaching means to manage the contingent relationship between war and order in the global south.

Beyond the expansion of normative and legal frameworks, 'warlords' have a long history in more martial attempts by Britain and the United States to manage the relationship between war and order, particularly as the target of US and British wars of conquest. This is the subject of the next chapter.

5. 'Warlords', Conquest, and the Personification of Disorder

Conquest is an essential part of the history of empire. Similar to numerous other imperial powers, Britain and the United States used force to acquire and subjugate foreign territories as a way to impose various forms of order in the global south, whether by installing proxy rulers, civilising uncivilized territories, or establishing new trade regimes.[1] 'Warlords' exist throughout this long history of conquest. Some revisionist accounts suggest they can be found fighting alongside the British during World War I, when T.E. Lawrence collaborated with various Hashemite 'warlords'—most notably Emir Faisal—to stage the 'Arab Revolt' against the Ottoman Empire.[2] Various 'warlords' have also fought for the metropoles. As discussed in Chapter 3, during the initial stages of Operation Enduring Freedom (2001-), General Rashid Dostum, Mohammed Qasim Fahim, and numerous other 'Afghan warlords' mobilised militias and launched a ground assault against the Taliban and al-Qaeda on behalf of the United States and its international coalition. These examples are indicative of how, at various moments in US and British imperial history, 'warlords' have been an essential part of how both metropoles have deployed force in service of their respective empires.

As rich as this history may be, 'warlords' appear most prominently as something other than an ally or proxy in US and British attempts to conquer parts of the global south. The political concept was employed most readily—and perhaps most frequently—in attempts to depict adversaries, ranging from intransigent tribal elders to obstinate heads of state, as brutal, autonomous leaders that commanded retrograde fiefdoms. The defeat of several such 'warlords' marked highpoints in each metropoles' expansion of order. For instance, many in the British Parliament acknowledged the defeat of Raja Lal Singh and acquisition of the Punjab during the First Anglo-Sikh War (1845-6) was an important step towards the subjugation one of the last and most corrupt independent kingdoms in the Indian subcontinent.[3] More than a century later, after the American public came to recognise General Manuel Noriega as a malicious 'warlord' responsible for a litany of crimes, the invasion of Panama (1989) was celebrated as

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[1] Michael Cox, 'Empire, Imperialism, and the Bush Doctrine', *Review of International Studies*, vol. 30, no. 4, 2004, pp. 585-608; Martin Meredith, *Diamonds, Gold, and War: The British, the Boers, and the Making of South Africa* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2007); Stuart Miller, *"Benevolent Assimilation": The American Conquest of the Philippines, 1899-1903* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982); Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: Norton, 1987); Bruce Vandervort, *Wars of Imperial Conquest in Africa, 1830-1914* (London: UCL Press, 1998).

[2] For a glowing account of Faisal and his value as a 'warlord' ally see John C. Hulsman and Alexis Y. Debat, 'In Praise of Warlords', *National Interest*, no. 84, Summer 2006, pp. 50-7.

[3] See for example HC Deb 2 March 1846 vol 84 cc385-421.

evidence of the United States' capacity to take unilateral measures to enforce international justice.[4]

Despite the triumphant nature of such moments of conquest, Britain and the United States also failed to subdue numerous 'warlords' across the global south. These defeats raised lingering doubts about their capacity to curtail disorder in the global south, that is, the most chaotic political systems, illegal economies, and corrupt moral systems. The inability of British colonial forces to capture Nana Sahib, a leader in the 'Indian Mutiny' (1857) responsible for several massacres, inspired lingering anxieties about his potential to provoke further unrest in British India.[5] Muqtada al-Sadr gave rise to similar concerns more than a century later, as the United States struggled to defeat Shia insurgents and establish a national government in Iraq.[6] The clarity with which 'warlords' appear during US and British attempts to impose order in the global south raises questions about how the political concept enabled both imperial powers to employ force and manage its far-reaching consequences.

This chapter examines how the concept of warlord was invoked in US and British attempts to use conquest to restore order in parts of the global south. It focuses on how cultural constructions of war, as well as related notions about autonomy and a lack of popular support, enabled the political concept to render more intelligible, as well as more manageable, many of the most troublesome features of the global south. 'Warlords', it is argued, were often hailed into existence to embody a range of abstract and uncontrollable political, economic, and moral features of the global south that the metropoles found most worrisome. This personification of disorder is important as the 'warlord'—not the tyrannical regime or failed state—became the very object that had to be conquered if order was to be restored in troubled areas of the global south. By appreciating this fixation on 'warlords' in US and British imperialism, it is possible to see how the political concept led many in Britain and the United States to conclude that some of the most unsavoury patterns in the parts of global south could be mitigated, if not eliminated, through war. The durability of this logic, both in moments of victory and

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[4] Such arguments can be found in Michael Oreskes, 'President Wins Bipartisan Praise For Solution of Crisis Over Noriega', *New York Times*, 4 January 1990, p. A1; Geyelin Philip, 'The John Wayne Way', *Washington Post*, 19 January 1990, p. A21; John Dinges, *Our Man in Panama: The Shrewd Rise and Brutal Fall of Manuel Noriega* (New York: Times Books/Random House, 1991).

[5] The anxieties surrounding Sahib are detailed in R. Mukherjee, '"Satan Let Loose Upon Earth": The Kanpur Massacres in India in the Revolt of 1857', *Past & Present*, no. 128, 1990, pp. 92-116; Jules Verne, *The Steam House, Part I: The Demon of Cawnpore* (London: Sampson, Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1885).

[6] A study of the competing conceptions of al-Sadr can be found in Peter W. Klein, 'Defining Muqtada', *Colombia Journalism Review*, vol. 46, no. 2, August 2007, pp. 11-12.

defeat, testify to its significance in US and British attempts to manage the uneven development of order in the global south.

Two notable, but also contrasting, examples of conquest in US and British imperialism are examined to develop this argument about how 'warlords' personify disorder. In the first, British political commentators and policymakers fixated on Abdullahi ibn Muhammad (commonly referred to as 'the Khalifa') in late nineteenth century debates about the merits of 're-conquering' Sudan. During this period, the Khalifa came to personify the cruelty, tyranny, and injustice that made Britain's subsequent invasion (1896-8) such a righteous, and ultimately monumental, act in British imperialism. Analogous patterns can be found in the United States' encounter with the second 'warlord', Mohammed Farrah Aidid, in the early 1990s. More than just exacerbating the crisis in Somalia, Aidid epitomised the very suffering, injustice, and violence in Somalia that US officials sought to diminish in leading one of its first post-Cold War multinational 'humanitarian interventions', Operation Restore Hope (1992-95). However, the United States' inability to capture Aidid and, even more so, its hasty withdrawal from Somalia provoked lingering doubts about its capacity to promote order in the global south, particularly through the use of force.

The chapter develops in three sections. The first examines Britain's encounter with the Khalifa in the late nineteenth century. It traces his construction as an 'Arab warlord' and its reproduction before, during, and after Britain's imperial campaign in Sudan. The second section builds on this discussion by exploring the United States' confrontation with Aidid shortly after the end of the Cold War. This section examines how Aidid came to personify disorder in Somalia, and the importance of this pattern in American attempts to cope with the failed intervention in Somalia. Finally, the conclusion identifies some of the larger patterns about the relationship between war and order that emerge from these contrasting attempts to conquer two of the more infamous 'warlords' in US and British imperialism.

The Khalifa and the 'Reconquest of Sudan'

The construction of the Khalifa as a 'warlord' originates from a troubled period in late nineteenth century British imperial history. Years after suffering an ignoble defeat at the Battle of Khartoum (1884-85), British colonial intelligence officers in the region launched a concerted campaign for Britain to reconquer the 'uncivilised territory'. At the centre of this case was the argument that the Khalifa constituted a reprehensible 'Arab warlord', one that had to be destroyed to prevent him from endangering the Nile region. The portrayal of the Khalifa as the personification of disorder was integral to establishing the

merits and objectives of the ensuing imperial small war and, perhaps even more so, in shaping its historical accounts that memorialised the imperial campaign for generations.

This section examines how the Khalifa was cast as an 'Arab warlord' that personified disorder and its lasting significance in Britain's conquest of Sudan. It focuses on how the political concept contributed to the British metropole's persistent confidence in its capacity to use conquest to impose greater political, social, and moral order across the region.

Constructing the Khalifa as a 'warlord'

The Khalifa began as a relatively marginal figure in late nineteenth century British imperialism. During much of this period, British political debates about Sudan focused not on him, but his religious mentor and political predecessor, Muhammed Ahmed. The self-proclaimed Mahdi attracted considerable scrutiny in British popular and elite accounts about colonial Africa, particularly as his rebellion against Ottoman rule expanded across Sudan in the early 1880s. As Edward Spiers demonstrates, the Mahdi's capacity to inspire, and more importantly harness, the seemingly unquestioned loyalty of his 'Dervishes' animated British notions of Sudan, leading to considerable debate about the so-called False Prophet and the fanaticism he provoked among his followers.[7] The Mahdi's pre-eminence became even more real for Britain following his victory at the Battle of Khartoum (1884-85), which forced British colonial forces to withdraw from Sudan.[8] It was only after the Mahdi died unexpectedly in late 1885 that the Khalifa started to register in British political debates. The Khalifa's rise as the head of the newly formed Mahdist state, or the Mahdiya, was noted in British press.[9] The succession was

[7] Edward W. Spiers, 'Dervish Fanaticism: Perception and Impact', in Matthew Hughes and Gaynor Johnson (eds.), *Fanaticism and Conflict in the Modern Age*, (London; New York: Frank Cass, 2005), pp. 19-32.

[8] One commentator captured the surprise provoked by the Mahdi among British commentators and policymakers in writing, 'The Mahdi's revolt, hitherto looked on, if looked on at all, as a dim insurrection in an obscure country, and too remote to excite apprehension, suddenly grew to the dimensions of the genie when the fisherman uncorked the bottle, and became portentous'. Edward Hamley, 'The Slaughters in the Soudan', *Blackwoods Edinburgh Magazine*, vol. 135, March 1884, p. 403.

[9] Based on a telegram from Cairo, one of the earliest references to the succession makes only passing reference to the Khalifa, describing him as the heir to the Madihist Empire by virtue of defeating other rivals and securing 'the support of the majority'. See 'The Late Mahdi and His Successor', *Daily News*, 25 August 1885, p. 5.

also acknowledged in British parliamentary debates.[10] Nonetheless, even after his death, the Mahdi continued to dominate the British imperial imagination about Sudan: he was routinely portrayed as the true guiding force behind the Mahdist movement.[11] The Khalifa emerged in British imperial debates as a minor character in a region that many policymakers and military officials wished to forget.

This began to change near the end of the century. Between 1891 and 1896 three celebrated political treatises about the Khalifa, Sudan, and the future of the Nile region were published in Britain.[12] Although the popularity and circulation of these texts varied, the collection had an indelible influence on British conceptions of the Sudanese leader and, later, the conquest of Sudan.[13] Their collective popularity stemmed, in the first instance, from the authors' experience in the Mahdiya. Francis R. Wingate's text was based on his service as a British colonial intelligence officer in the region. The other two authors, Father Joseph Ohrwalder and Rudolf Carl von Slatin, had more heroic stories: both escaped from Sudan after each spent more than a decade in Mahdist captivity. However, as several scholars argue, the true political, strategic, and moral significance of these texts in British imperialism followed from their collective argument about corrupt nature of the Mahdiya and the risk it posed to British interests in Egypt.[14] This continuity was not by chance. All three texts were written, edited, and published under the supervision of Wingate during his tenure as a British colonial intelligence officer. In the words of Norman Daniel, Wingate was the 'chief architect of the British legend of the Mahdiya'.[15] He approached these texts as a way not only to advance his career in the

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[10] The first mention of the Abdullahi Ibn-Muhammad in British Parliamentary record was in 1888, when several members discussed the possibility of securing the release of European administrators and missionaries from his captivity. See HC Deb 17 December 1888 vol 332 cc468-9.

[11] As one article warned, his lack of spiritual leadership undermined the capacity of the Mahdist state to unify the diverse tribal groups in Sudan: 'Until some strong central authority comes into existence, like that exercised by the Mahdi, inter-tribal rivalries and hatreds will keep the unfortunate country in anarchy and bloodshed'. 'The Mahdi's Position', *Graphic*, 2 February 1889, p. 102.

[12] Joseph Ohrwalder, *Ten Years' Captivity in the Mahdi's Camp, 1882-1892* (London: S. Low, Marston & Company, 1893); Rudolf C. Slatin, *Fire and Sword in the Sudan: A Personal Narrative of Fighting and Serving the Dervishes* (London; New York: Edward Arnold, 1896); F. R. Wingate, *Mahdiism and the Egyptian Sudan: Being an Account of the Rise and Progress of Mahdiism, and of Subsequent Events in the Sudan to the Present Time*, 2nd ed. (London: Cass, [1891] 1968).

[13] Scholars agree that Slatin's book, *Fire and the Sword*, was the most critically acclaimed and cited text of the three. An account of the considerable attention created by Slatin's book can be found in M.W. Daly, *The Sirdar: Sir Reginald Wingate and the British Empire in the Middle East* (Philadelphia, PA: American Philosophical Society, 1997), p. 43.

[14] P. M. Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan, 1881-1898* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), p. 107; Thomas Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa, 1876-1912* (New York: Random House, 1991); Daly, *The Sirdar*.

[15] Norman Daniel, *Islam, Europe and Empire* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1966), p. 426.

British Empire, but also as a platform from which to convince an audience of citizens, commentators, and officials that the British colonial army should atone for its defeat at the hands of the Mahdi by reconquering Sudan.[16] This objective was made plain at the outset of each book. Wingate wrote in his volume that 'To make this complex subject [i.e., Mahdist controlled Sudan] comprehensible to the general public has been [the author's] earnest desire'.[17] Even more ambitious introductions appeared in the subsequent texts. Ohrwalder explained in the preface to Slatin's book:

> I will add an earnest hope that this book will arouse a deep and wide-spread [*sic*] interest in the fate of the unhappy Sudan, and will help those concerned to come to a right and just decision as to the steps which should be taken to restore to civilisation this once happy and prosperous country.[18]

Wingate crafted these texts with the explicit goal of guiding British—and perhaps even European—public conceptions about and policy towards the Mahdiya. His evocative account of the desperate situation in Sudan, as well as the merits of British conquest of the region, had a lasting influence on how and when the Khalifa reappeared in British colonial discourse.

The concept of warlord was at the core of Wingate's case for the reconquest of Sudan. Across all three texts the Khalifa is depicted as more than just a cruel dictator or selfish authoritarian. Wingate and his collaborators cast him as a supreme leader that, in waging a particularly brutal form of war, personified the social, political, and economic disorder that plagued his hostile dominion in Sudan and endangered the British protectorate in Egypt. This construction of the Khalifa as an 'Arab warlord' was premised on vivid accounts of the desperate conditions in Sudan, many of which resonated in other parts of British colonial discourse. Any semblance of civilisation that had existed in Sudan, as well as whatever social, spiritual, and moral betterment the Mahdists promised in their rise to power, had been vanquished under the Khalifa. 'In place of a religious kingdom,' Wingate argued, 'where the inhabitants would live in peace, when there should be a communism of property, and poverty should be unknown, they found the country drifting into a state of anarchy. Rapine, bloodshed,

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[16] This intention is appears most explicitly at the conclusion of Wingate's book, where he wrote, 'That a new and better Sudan will be raised up over the ashes of Gordon [the British commander killed at Khartoum], and all those brave officers and men who have perished in the loyal performance of their duty, is the fervent hope of every well-wisher for the prosperity of Egypt'. Wingate, *Mahdiism and the Egyptian Sudan*, p. 491. See also P.M. Holt, 'Introduction to the Second Edition', in R. R. Wingate (ed.), *Mahdiism and the Egyptian Sudan: Being an Account of the Rise and Progress of Mahdiism, and of Subsequent Events in the Sudan to the Present Time*, 2nd ed. (London: Cass, [1891] 1968), pp. v-xix.

[17] Wingate, *Mahdiism and the Egyptian Sudan*, p. xxi.

[18] Slatin, *Fire and Sword in the Sudan*, pp. xi-xii.

and horrors filled the lands'.[19] Evidence of this disorder filled each text and, in turn, many popular accounts of Sudan. Continual wars and inadequate infrastructure exacerbated the 1888 famine, causing life-or-death struggles among citizens.[20] Well-established land tenure systems were destroyed as Arab settlers hoarded the most valuable farmland along the Nile.[21] Only the slave trade brought significant capital into the country.[22]

This disorder took on greater significance when situated relative to Egypt. Wingate warned on several occasions that, despite an ailing economy and defeat in various border skirmishes, the Khalifa could still fulfil the Mahdists' longstanding ambition of invading Egypt.[23] Several elite British newspapers and magazines at the time heeded Wingate's warnings, suggesting that a Mahdist invasion of Egypt would spread the growing disorder across the Nile region and endanger the British protectorate. In a lengthy review of Slatin's text, one commentator noted

> his testimony on the present power of the Khalifa...contributes valuable information towards the appreciation and solution of the great Sudan problem which the author does not conceal his conviction will still have to be settled for the security and legitimate satisfaction of the rulers of Egypt. No one can dispute the weight that must be attach to the deliberate and fixed opinion of Slatin on this subject.[24]

These accounts of the disorder in the Mahdiya established the context in which Wingate and his collaborators portrayed the Khalifa as a brutal 'Arab warlord' that could only be managed through conquest.

The Khalifa was more than just complicit in the barbarism witnessed in Sudan. Wingate and his associates presented this disorder as an organic part of the Khalifa's rule. The inextricable relationship between the 'Arab warlord' and disorder was

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[19] Wingate, *Mahdiism and the Egyptian Sudan*, p. 467.

[20] Ohrwalder, *Ten Years' Captivity in the Mahdi's Camp*, pp. 308-9. The influence of these accounts can be seen most readily in 'The Real Ruler of the Soudan', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 1 January 1892, p. 6.

[21] Slatin, *Fire and Sword in the Sudan*, p. 532. These examples were widely cited in several features on the Khalifa in popular and elite British newspapers, including Press Association, 'Arrival of Slatin Pasha in London', *Glasgow Herald*, 26 July 1895, p. 4.

[22] Ohrwalder, *Ten Years' Captivity in the Mahdi's Camp*, p. 456. See also Wingate, *Mahdiism and the Egyptian Sudan*, pp. 466-7. These accounts inspired a number of articles in abolitionist and popular newspapers, such as 'Increase in the Slave-Trade in the Soudan Under Mahdiism', *Anti-Slavery Reporter and Aborigines' Friend*, vol. 12, no. 6, December 1892, pp. 342-5; 'Slatin Pasha', *Anti-Slavery Reporter and Aborigines' Friend*, vol. 15, no. 2, August 1895, pp. 133-4; 'The Slave Trade in the Soudan', *Daily News*, 3 October 1895, p. 6.

[23] This alarmist outlook appeared in different forms and intensities throughout all three texts. For a sample of these attempts to extrapolate the dangers of the Khalifa for the imperial geopolitics see Wingate, *Mahdiism and the Egyptian Sudan*, chap. 10.

[24] 'Slatin Pasha's Story', *Times* (London), 3 February 1896, p. 3.

established through a number of loose examples, one of the most prominent being his corrupt tribal patronage. The Khalifa, they argued, renounced any principle of equality or justice that may have existed in Sudan by granting special land rights, scarce foodstuffs, and positions of power to members of his notoriously brutal tribe, the Baggaras. 'The Khalifa,' Slatin argued, 'has surrounded himself with hordes of strangers who have ousted the rightful owners of the soil, and have made themselves absolute masters of the situation. All offices and important situations are filled by them, and by his own relatives'.[25] More than rewarding tribal allies, these acts of patronage were cast as part of the Khalifa's attempts to ensure his autonomy by asserting a near ultimate authority throughout the Mahdiya. Wingate and his collaborators convinced many in the British metropole that, by violating one of the core features of civilization, that is, the right to private property, the privileged hordes of Baggara tribesmen functioned as a natural extension of the Khalifa himself.[26] Following a syndicated interview with Slatin one journalist recounted

> [the Khalifa] gained the whole of the country through the western Arabs. You will thus see that the Soudan has now changed hands from the Egyptians to the Western Arabs, while the Soudanese themselves are living on the banks of the Nile, under the most tyrannical and despotic domination of the Khalifa.[27]

The social inequality, turmoil, and injustice considered endemic in the Khalifa's dominion were more than just a troublesome feature of the Mahdiya. This rampant disorder was considered an expression of the 'Arab warlord' and his destructive rule.

The disorder was traced back to the coercive nature of the Khalifa's near total political authority. All three texts stressed how the 'Arab warlord' depended on violence, more specifically, war against his rivals and various tribes, to ensure his authority in Sudan. Slatin, for instance, detailed how a willingness to wage war against civilians denied any possible civil exchange between the Khalifa and his opposition:

> Whenever it is a question between himself and his opponents, the Khalifa invariably relies upon his arms, which are far more than sufficient to overcome with ease any attempt to dispute his authority, whether it be in Omdurman itself or in any other part of the country. Within the Sudan, therefore, he is all-powerful.[28]

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[25] Slatin, *Fire and Sword in the Sudan*, p. 532.

[26] Thomas Patterson, *Inventing Western Civilization* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1997), p. 101.

[27] 'The Khalifa's Position: Interview with Slatin Pacha', *Daily News*, 27 July 1895, p. 3.

[28] Slatin, *Fire and Sword in the Sudan*, p. 535.

Wingate presented the destructive nature of the Khalifa's war against rivals in even more evocative terms. He invoked various forms of imagery, ranging from Greek mythology to corporal metaphors, to illustrate the inescapable nature of this violence:

> Tribe after tribe attempted to shake itself free from the Nessus shirt which clung round it; but the power they had unwittingly raise had now become a huge spectre which overawed and crushed them. The more they tried to drive off the horrible nightmare, the more closely and heavily did it press upon them.[29]

This kind of brutal warfare led several newspapers to embrace Wingate's speculation about the destructive consequences of the continued reign of the Khalifa. As one article argued, if the Khalifa was able to sustain his rule in Sudan, it 'will mean the further desolation of the country. Wars of conquest will be undertaken, fresh provinces will be laid to waste, and whole tribes enslaved or blotted out'.[30] Many of the most destructive patterns in Sudan became more intelligible by tracing them back to the Khalifa. The human suffering, economic depression, and corrupt politics were deemed a deliberate part of the Khalifa's violent efforts to ensure his command over the Nile region.

The degree to which the Khalifa personified disorder ran even deeper. Wingate and his collaborators made the case that the desperate conditions in Sudan reflected his depraved nature. Similar to the British captives discussed in Chapter 4, following several years in the Khalifa's court, Slatin claimed to have an intimate familiarity with his true being. 'At times,' he explained, 'the expression of his face is one of charming amiability'.[31] However, this likeable appearance was a rouse because, as Slatin contintued, 'more generally it is one of dark sternness, in which tyranny and unscrupulous resolution are unmistakably visible'.[32] Elsewhere Slatin stressed ideas of war and autonomy to establish a clear connection between the ambivalent personality of the 'Arab warlord' and the desperate conditions in Sudan:

> His character is a strange mixture of malice and cruelty. He delights to annoy and cause disappointment; and he is never happier than when he has brought people to complete destitution by confiscating their property, throwing them into chains, robbing families wholesale, seizing and executing all persons of tribal influence and authority, and reducing entire races to a condition of powerless impotence.[33]

Other equally abstract examples of human suffering became intelligible by tracing them back to the Khalifa's supposedly true character. The separation of women from their

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[29] Wingate, *Mahdiism and the Egyptian Sudan*, pp. 466-7.

[30] 'Father Ohrwalder's Captivity', *Graphic*, 22 November 1892, p. 502.

[31] Slatin, *Fire and Sword in the Sudan*, p. 514.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid., pp. 516-7.

children, for instance, was deemed to be 'his principal delight'.[34] The lack of civil rule was, to some degree, the product of the Khalifa being 'utterly ignorant and regardless of all recognized laws and forms of government'.[35] These were the most intimate examples of how, in constructing the Mahdist leader as a 'warlord', Wingate rendered the Khalifa as the human form of the disorder witnessed throughout Sudan. The brutal forms of war and autonomy ascribed to the 'Arab warlord' made Sudan, in all its chaos, suffering, and violence, inextricably linked to his being.

Case for conquest

The case for the reconquest of Sudan involved more than just casting the Khalifa as a powerful and cruel 'warlord'. Indeed, Wingate and, to a lesser extent, his fellow authors stressed that, as formidable and popular as the Khalifa may have been immediately after succeeding the Mahdi, his grip over Sudan had started to wane during the early 1890s. The regime faced a litany of challenges, both from within and beyond its borders. Alienated tribal leaders revolted throughout the territory, which left the Mahdist Empire in a state of turmoil.[36] Furthermore, defeats in the frontiers with Abyssinia, Darfur, and the Nile demonstrated the weakness of Mahdist forces under the Khalifa's command.[37] These repeated examples of the chaotic order in the Mahdiya did more than just affirm his lack of popular support: they also made the Khalifa a more suitable adversary for Britain. Instead of an indomitable enemy, one that could possibly lead another victory over British colonial forces, Wingate reintroduced the Khalifa to the British popular and elite audiences as an urgent, but increasingly vulnerable, opponent of the British Empire. Newspapers at the time embraced this portrayal of the Khalifa as a 'warlord' overseeing a defunct Islamic empire. 'Fanaticism is dead,' one journalist wrote, 'and the power of Mahdism, as such, is much less than in former times. True the Khalifa upholds and enforces the tenets of Mahdism, but it is a mere lifeless form'.[38] Another noted that, despite the popularity of the Mahdists years earlier under the Mahdi, 'the discontented [in Sudan] have long since discovered that they have gained nothing by the change of masters, and that the religious enthusiasm on which the Mahdi and his successors played was only the mask for self-seeking'.[39] Amid the domestic turmoil in his territory,

[34] Ibid., p. 1.

[35] Wingate, *Mahdiism and the Egyptian Sudan*, p. 469.

[36] Ibid., pp. 466-7.

[37] Ibid., pp. 435-7.

[38] 'The Khalifa's Position: Interview with Slatin Pacha', p. 3.

[39] 'The International Geographical Congress', *Times* (London), 1 August 1895, p. 9.

the once powerful leader was portrayed in many parts of British colonial discourse as an increasingly vulnerable 'Arab warlord'.

The desperate conditions, combined with the precarious nature of the Khalifa's once formidable rule, made conquest the most—and perhaps only—viable way to impose a degree of order in Sudan and ensure the long-term safety of Egypt. Wingate and his collaborators were responsible for some of the most influential calls in British colonial discourse for the reconquest of Sudan. Wingate contended that the absence of civilisation in the Mahdist Empire precluded the use of traditional modes of diplomacy with the 'Arab warlord'. For example, 'well-intentioned efforts' to negotiate with the Khalifa according to European diplomatic protocol were dismissed as 'hopeless', given that the 'consuls of the greatest nations [had] been murdered, their flags torn down, their agents kept in slavery'.[40] More importantly, the very nature of being a 'warlord' made the Khalifa especially susceptible to foreign military intervention because, by exercising near complete autonomy and forsaking popular support, the Khalifa would be unable to rally tribes to defend the Mahdiya. Slatin made this case most in the most ardent of terms:

> His leaders are neither capable nor sufficiently instructed to ensure victory. His men are not loyal enough to fight with that determination which early fanaticism inspired. They have little or no faith in the cause for which they are supposed to be fighting; and there is little doubt that the Khalifa's forces could not resist the advance of a foreign power bent on re-occupying the Sudan.[41]

This supposed vulnerability fostered a degree of confidence in the British metropole about the potential to depose the Khalifa. As one commentator argued, 'The truth is that the recovery of the Soudan is perfectly feasible without any risk being run by this country, or any loss occasioned to another'.[42] 'It is evident', another reviewer wrote about Ohrwalder's text, 'that when the time is ripe there need be no difficulty in rescuing the Soudan'.[43] Wingate and his collaborators helped forge a growing consensus in Britain's popular and elite circles during the early 1890s about the necessity and promise of conquering the Khalifa. The construction of the Khalifa as an 'Arab warlord' made conquest a fitting, perhaps even necessary, response to the growing disorder in Sudan.

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[40] Ohrwalder, *Ten Years' Captivity in the Mahdi's Camp*, p. 543.

[41] Slatin, *Fire and Sword in the Sudan*, p. 535.

[42] 'The Recovery of the Soudan', *Blackwoods Edinburgh Magazine*, vol. 152, no. 926, 1 December 1892, p. 886.

[43] 'The Present Condition of the Soudan', *Times* (London), 15 February 1892, p. 3.

These calls for the reconquest of Sudan were somewhat deceptive. In casting the Khalifa as an 'Arab warlord', Wingate and his collaborators instilled in British colonial discourse the notion that it was the Khalifa—not Sudan—that had to be conquered. This subtle but all-important switch derived from the degree to which 'warlords' personified disorder in British imperialism. As the embodiment of many of the most troublesome patterns in Sudan, Wingate argued, rampant disorder would persist in the region as long as the Khalifa lived. Of all three authors, Slatin was perhaps most dogmatic about this conclusion:

> all the measures taken by the Khalifa to render his position secure against his internal enemies have been most thoroughly effective, and, assuming that his authority is not threatened by external influences, I see no cause why, as long as he is alive, he should not maintain his ascendancy.[44]

By this logic, as the core of the Mahdiya, the Khalifa would have to be killed to end the turmoil that plagued Sudan and, perhaps more importantly, endangered Egypt. The conflation of the Khalifa and Sudan in Wingate's calls for conquest was also expressed in more physical terms. As the embodiment of disorder, the Khalifa was cast as an obstruction that blanketed Sudan and cordoned it off from the civilised world. In Slatin's words:

> The once comparatively civilised Sudan is now occupied by a barbaric power hostile to both European and Ottoman influence. It blocks the way from the central plateaus along the Nile valley to the Mediterranean; it seals up districts which were at one time fairly tranquil, and open to the influences of commerce and civilisation.[45]

To allow the 'onward march of civilising forces', he continued, would require the 'whole empire of the Khalifa...[to] crumble and collapse'.[46] The Khalifa supplanted the Mahidya as the impediment that would have to be removed if civilization was to expand across the Nile region.

This metaphor of the Khalifa as a physical obstruction to Sudan's access to civilizing influences was reproduced in different forms in popular accounts of Sudan. One journalist noted that 'the time shall come for the reconquest of the Egyptian Soudan' as it had been 'dragged...into almost indescribable conditions of religious and moral decadence by despotic and barbarous tyrants'.[47] In even more explicit terms, an earlier article suggested that Ohrwalder's text would fall short of its overarching goal unless it

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[44] Slatin, *Fire and Sword in the Sudan*, p. 624.

[45] Ibid., pp. 624-5.

[46] Ibid., p. 626.

[47] 'Slatin Pasha's Book', *Graphic*, 15 February 1896, p. 202.

'hasten[s] the day when the Soudan shall again be thrown open to the blessed influences of Christianity and the benignant spirit of civilization'.[48] The construction of the Khalifa as a 'warlord' functioned as a compelling way to conjoin various troublesome patterns in Sudan by constructing a single violent figure that constituted a corporeal threat to entire the Nile region. His destruction would remove the principal obstacle that prevented, what Harald Fischer-Tiné and Michael Mann call, the natural spread of Christianity and civilisation to penetrate and, in turn, introduce a degree of order long absent in Sudan.[49] The capacity for the 'Arab warlord' to embody the various patterns of disorder made him the core of Wingate's appeal for the reconquest of Sudan.

The reconquest of Sudan

After several years of speculation, the reconquest of Sudan came at an unexpected time. On 16 March 1896, Lord Salisbury, the recently elected Conservative Prime Minister, announced that his Cabinet had ordered General Herbert Kitchener to lead British and Egyptian forces on an 'expedition' to the Mahdist controlled city of Dongola. The decision was so unexpected that, as Roger Owens notes, even the British Consul-General in Egypt, Lord Cromer, was surprised at the news.[50] The Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, George Curzon, described the 'Dongola Expedition' to the House of Commons as being in pursuit of two broad objectives: the first was to divert attention from the Italian colonial forces at Kassala in northeast Sudan, which were considered vulnerable to Mahdist attack following their defeat by Abyssinian forces in the Battle of Adowa (1896) weeks earlier.[51] The second objective, Curzon explained, was to 'save Egypt from a menace which, if left alone, would grow and swell, and before long might reach most formidable dimensions'.[52] This stated objective reflected more than just the prominence of Wingate's account in British policy debates: it also illustrated how the construction of the Khalifa as a 'warlord' had influenced the Conservative government's conception of the new military intervention. The notion that, as a brutal 'warlord', the Khalifa

[48] 'The Recovery of the Soudan', p. 886.

[49] The intimate relationship between conquest and the spread of ameliorative influences, such as Christianity and civilization, in colonial India is well captured in Harald Fischer-Tiné and Michael Mann, *Colonialism as Civilizing Mission: Cultural Ideology in British India* (London: Anthem Press, 2004).

[50] Roger Owen, *Lord Cromer: Victorian Imperialist, Edwardian Proconsul* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 287.

[51] HC Deb 16 March 1896 vol 38 cc1027-60.

[52] Ibid., c1029.

personified disorder helped render more logical and even necessary conquest as the only way remove the growing disorder in Sudan.

The surprise announcement sparked immediate debate across the metropole about all facets of the campaign. Everything from who was to pay for the intervention to its potential strategic, diplomatic, and legal consequences were the subject of contention.[53] It is in this debate, particularly in the days following the announcement, that Wingate's construction of the Khalifa as an 'Arab warlord' gained a new significance in British imperialism. The political concept became one of the core parts through which observers, commentators, and policymakers across the metropole conceived of the campaign to quell the threat emanating from Mahdist-controlled Sudan. A front-page opinion, for instance, returned to the coercive nature of the Khalifa to question the sequence of the Conservative government's stated objectives.[54] 'We intend,' the editors argued, 'first and foremost, to smash up the aggressive Emirs of the Khalifa, and if, in so doing, we indirectly weaken attack on Kassala, so much the better. But the Government cannot intend to place the rescue of that fortress on the same footing as the clearance of the borderline'.[55] The political concept's new prominence continued beyond bellicose editorials; it was also invoked in more sceptical accounts of the new imperial small war. This can be seen in an editorial that acknowledged that the Khalifa 'rules with a rod of iron, and grinds his people to poverty to keep them submissive' and 'his government is a despotism which to all appearances an assassin's knife could slash to ribbons'.[56] Nonetheless, without explicitly referencing Wingate, the editorial board questioned whether a more ambivalent conception of the 'Arab warlord' was appropriate and, perhaps even, a more restrained policy should be pursued:

> the Khalifa Abdullah is a hero…for in all the vast region stretching from Wady Halfa to the Bahr-El-Gazal and from the Red Sea to Darfur, he has maintained his right to rule by might for half a score of years and still wields a power which…would strain the resources of Aldershot to break down.[57]

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[53] The scope of issues up for debate in both Parliament and the press can be found in Henry W. Lucy, 'The Sorrowful Soudan', *The Graphic*, 21 March 1896, p. 339; HC Deb 20 March 1896 vol 38 cc1478-574; HC Deb 30 March 1896 vol 39 cc484-96; 'London, Saturday, March 14, 1896', *The Morning Post*, 14 March 1896, pp. 4-5; 'Conquest by Progression', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 21 March 1896, p. 1.

[54] 'The Security of Egypt', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 18 March 1896, p. 1.

[55] Ibid. The editorial went on to argue, 'The Italians are pleasant people enough, but they must eat the macaroni that they have cooked'.

[56] 'The Ruler of the Soudan', *Glasgow Herald*, 21 March 1896, p. 4.

[57] Ibid.

The prominence of the construction of the Khalifa as an 'Arab warlord', both in arguments in support and against the proposed invasion, was suggestive of the political concept's growing importance in British political debates.

In the continued debate about the intervention, the political concept was invoked to impart a more abstract urgency to the recent invasion. Instead of being 'The Expedition to nobody-knows-where for nobody-knows what', as one popular newspaper described it, the concept of warlord not only helped remind British constituents of past injustices wrought by the Mahdist regime, but also the wider moral imperative of destroying the threat that the Khalifa posed to civilisation.[58] In a forum with his constituents Curzon made plain both conclusions in arguing

> ever since [Britain's abandonment of Sudan] it has been certain, sooner or later, and that this stigma upon civilization must be removed, that this province must be relieved from the oppression of a fierce and cruel barbarian misrule, and that some effort would have to be made for the recovery of the Sudan for civilization. (Cheers).[59]

Popular newspapers advanced similar arguments about the righteousness of destroying the Khalifa. As one editorial argued, 'For over eleven years the Soudan has been left to the dervishes and disorder. Now once more an Anglo-Egyptian Expedition is starting to recover some of the lost ground, and bring those fanatical disturbers of the peace to reason'.[60] The pervasiveness of the notion that the overthrow of the Khalifa constituted a defence of core principles of the British Empire was even recognised by more sceptical commentators. A letter to the editor, which was published a few days after the announced invasion, expressed considerable doubt about the strategic prospects of the mission.[61] Nonetheless, the author recognised the ultimate righteousness of the intervention, concluding, 'To restore order to this great territory and bring peace to the wretched population, which has cruelly suffered from British impolicy, would be a worthy achievement'.[62] The construction of the Khalifa as an 'Arab warlord' deepened the conviction among many in the metropole about the moral imperative of the imperial small war.

The political concept began to disappear from British colonial discourse as the long and tedious campaign unfolded. The 'Arab warlord' was seemingly supplanted, particularly in popular newspapers, by a number of other dramatic features of the

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[58] 'Dongola Expedition', *Daily News*, 21 March 1896, p. 3.

[59] Quoted in 'Mr. Curzon on Foreign Politics', *Times* (London), 30 March 1896, p. 7.

[60] 'The New Soudan Expedition', *Graphic*, 21 March 1896, p. 347.

[61] 'The Sudan Advance', *Times* (London), 16 March 1896, p. 10.

[62] Ibid.

expedition: the difficult terrain in Sudan; logistical achievements light railways and steam launches; and, perhaps above all else, the martial qualities of Dervish fighters.[63] The declining profile of the concept of warlord could be explained by a number of related factors. As Hugh Cecil argues, a host of journalists, illustrators, and soldiers replaced Wingate and his collaborators as the primary interpreters of Sudan in the British print media.[64] Their access to the imperial campaign gave rise to new authoritative accounts about the previously obscure region. The logistics of reporting from Kitchener's campaign also restricted the content that could be transmitted from the battlefield back to the metropole. The British commander was sceptical about journalists travelling with his troops, and he took deliberate efforts to impinge on their capacity to report from the battlefront.[65] Furthermore, the enlistment of Wingate and Slatin in the British war effort as intelligence analysts diminished their public profile and widely circulated arguments about the Khalifa.

This decline of the concept of warlord would only be temporary. Indeed, the imperial small war affirmed the lasting presence of 'warlords' in the global south, as well as their evocative quality, in the British imperial imagination. The reappearance of the Khalfia coincided with the build up to a decisive confrontation at the Mahdist capital of Omdurman. 'Slowly, but very surely,' one journalist wrote from the campaign, 'the forces of civilisation are moving toward the great natural fortress where ferocious barbarism, with a mask of religion on its face, purposes to make a final desperate stand'.[66] The Battle in Omdurman (1899) promised the closest contact to the Khalifa, who had previously depended on Osman Dinga and other generals to lead the Dervish fighters. As another journalist noted in anticipation of the battle:

> To do our old foe justice, the Khalifa shows no sign of an intention to throw up the sponge yet by an abandonment of his great stronghold in the Egyptian Soudan. Possibly there are about him among the 70,000 warriors he is said to command a great body of fanatical believers.[67]

This anticipation was only to be partially fulfilled. Although the Anglo-Egyptian colonial army destroyed the Dervish forces at Omdurman—and much of the city after

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[63] A number of travelogues published during the war offer a sense of how these themes dominated public debate and reportage about the campaign. For example see G.W. Steevens, *With Kitchener to Khartum* (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1898); G. A. Henty, *With Kitchener in the Soudan: a Story of Atbara and Omdurman* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1902).

[64] Hugh Cecil, 'British Correspondents and the Sudan Campaign of 1896-98', in Edward W. Spiers (ed.), *Sudan: The Reconquest Reappraised*, (Portland, OR; London: Frank Cass, 1998), pp. 102-27.

[65] Ibid.

[66] 'Topics of the Week', *Graphic*, 27 August 1898, p. 282.

[67] Henry H.S. Pearse, 'Nearing Khartoum', *Daily News*, 29 August 1898, p. 5.

the battle—the Khalifa escaped during the fight, fleeing with thousands of soldiers to Kordofan in the west. Celebrations in the metropole continued for several months, as new stories about the heroism of colonial soldiers, spectacle of the Mahdist capital, and destruction of the Mahdi's tomb in Omdurman filled popular and elite accounts. But, with the fugitive 'Arab warlord' at large, the mission was incomplete.

The continued fixation on the Khalifa affirms the degree to which 'warlords' can become the object of conquest in British imperialism. After the Khalifa escaped at Omdurman, Kitchener launched a search for the Mahdist leader and his remaining forces throughout Sudan. The operation ended in late November 1899, when colonial forces killed the Khalifa and captured thousands of his troops at Gedid. His death sparked an outpouring of celebration in the British metropole. As opposed to the capture of Omdurman or the desecration of the Mahdi's tomb, both of which took place a year earlier, the killing of the Khalifa marked for many in the metropole the successful conclusion of Britain's reconquest of Sudan. This conclusion is apparent in the reports that filled newspapers at the time. After congratulating Wingate's Intelligence Department for locating the Khalifa, one journalist noted that their efforts were responsible for 'the downfall of perhaps the most cruel and contemptible villain that ever held sway over a miserable and maligned people, and whose extermination must be viewed with relief by the entire human race'.[68] Another paper remarked that the Khalifa 'was a wild beast with the power of fanaticism and the ingenuity of a fiend, and never has a man rid the earth of a greater plague than the Sirdar [Kitchner, the commander of Anglo-Egyptian forces] has done'.[69] The killing of the Khalifa seemingly fulfilled the initial promise of the imperial small war. In the words of one commentator, 'The Soudan will be thrown open to civilization, and its inhabitants will reap the blessings of a peace which must have remained unknown while the Khalifa was at large'.[70] The death of the 'Arab warlord' marked the successful conclusion of the reconquest of Sudan in the British imperial imagination.

Legacy of the Khalifa as a 'warlord'

The death of the Khalifa and collapse of the Mahdiya spurred a renewed fascination in the British metropole with Sudan. Even amid several other colonial wars, most notably

[68] 'Great Victory in the Soudan', *Daily News*, 27 November 1899, p. 7.

[69] 'The End of the Dervish Empire', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 27 November 1899, p. 1.

[70] 'Great Victory in the Soudan', p. 7.

the Boer War (1899-1902), Wingate's texts found a new relevance in many of the travelogues, war memoirs, and political commentaries that appeared after the conquest of Sudan.[71] However, the legacy of the Khalifa's construction as an 'Arab warlord' in British imperialism perhaps can be most readily assessed not by surveying this vast literature, but by examining the more critical historical accounts that contained some of the more influential interpretations of the imperial small war. One such work arguably became the most noted of this genre, Winston Churchill's *The River War*.[72] In late 1899, after spending several months as a professional soldier in Kitchener's forces and a war correspondent for a British newspaper, Churchill published one of the authoritative nineteenth century studies of rise and fall of the Mahdist state.[73] Churchill, in contrast to many of his contemporaries, developed more than just a blow-by-blow account of the campaign or a tribute to Britain's recovery of Sudan. Removed from the excitement surrounding the war, the historical text contained wider, often more moderate, conclusions about the Khalifa, the British conquest of Sudan, and its significance for the British Empire.[74] By examining the construction of the Khalifa as an 'Arab warlord' in the text it is possible to appreciate more fully the lasting influence of the political concept and how it inspired greater confidence in Britain's capacity to use war to impose order in the non-European world.

A distinct account of the Khalifa and his 'warlord' qualities developed throughout the historical study. Churchill employed familiar descriptions of the Khalifa's brutality, but also advanced more sober accounts of his rule, to create an ambivalent portrait of the 'Arab warlord' that avoided the alarmism that made him such an evocative figure in British imperialism years earlier. The Khalifa's violent reign, for

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[71] The influence of Wingate's work is evident in many of the prominent texts published following the war. For example see Henry Stamford Alford and W. Dennistoun Sword, *The Egyptian Soudan, its Loss and Recovery* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1898); Bennet Burleigh, *Sirdar and Khalifa* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1898); Charles Neufeld, *A Prisoner of the Khaleefa: Twelve Years' Captivity at Omdurman* (London: G. Bell, 1899).

[72] The importance of Churchill's *The River War* can be seen in various ways. Three editions and multiple reprints were published during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The text was also cited as an authoritative source in other studies about the Khalifa, including Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan, 1881-1898*; Daly, *The Sirdar*.

[73] Winston Churchill, *The River War: An Account of the Reconquest of the Sudan* (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, [1899] 2006).

[74] The history of this volume is suggestive of how embedded the portrayal of the Khalifa as a brutal 'warlord' was in British colonial discourse about Sudan. The first edition of the text, which was published as a two volume set, contained sharp criticism of European portrayals of the Khalifa in British press, their significance in the launch of the invasion, and the brutality of the British war against Mahdist forces. Many, if not all, of the most indicting passages were removed in the subsequent edition, which was released in 1902. This abridged version became the standard version that would be reprinted several times over the next century.

instance, was introduced in somewhat admiring terms. Following his tumultuous rise to power, Churchill credited the Khalifa for managing various domestic and foreign threats during his rule:

> the Khalifa triumphed over nearly all his enemies; and the greatest spectacle which the Soudan presented from 1885 to 1898 was of this strong, capable ruler bearing up against all reverses, meeting each danger, overcoming each difficulty, and offering a firm front to every foe.[75]

This ability to manage multiple threats allowed the Khalifa to impose an improbable degree of order in the unruly Sudan. 'Several millions of warlike and savage people,' Churchill explained, 'owning scarcely any law but that of might, and scattered about a vast roadless territory, were brought into the firm grip of a single man'.[76] Despite the esteem engendered in these accounts, particularly of the Khalifa's ability to forge a crude dominion in Sudan, Churchill refrained from disparaging the 'Arab warlord' for employing brutal modes of war to 'fortify [his] perilous sovereignty'.[77] Contrary to many prevailing accounts, Churchill recognised the brutal rule of the 'warlord' to be wearisome insofar as its outcomes were predictable. As Churchill explained

> Yet even the Khalifa's methods were oppressively monotonous. For although the nature or course of the revolts might differ with the occasion, the results were invariable; and the heads of all his chief enemies, of many of his generals, of most of his councillors, met in the capacious pit which yawned in Omdurman.[78]

The entirety of the Khalifa's rule, by this account, could be reduced to a simple doctrine: 'Self-preservation was the guiding principle of his policy, his first object and his only excuse'.[79] Churchill memorialised the Khalifa as an 'Arab warlord' without subscribing to the more exotic accounts about his violent excesses.[80]

This ambivalent notion of the Khalifa did not prevent Churchill from casting him as the personification of disorder in Sudan. Although less explicit than Wingate in his calls for the reconquest of Sudan, Churchill still portrayed the Sudanese leader as an

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[75] Churchill, *The River War*, p. 73.

[76] Ibid., p. 76.

[77] Ibid., p. 73.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Despite adopting several familiar images of the Khalifa and his rule, Churchill on several occasions also critiqued the tendency in Britain to vilify the Sudanese leader and deny his standing in Sudan. This is perhaps most obvious in his account of the Khalifa's escape at the Battle of Omdurman, when Churchill writes, 'The tyrant, the oppressor, the scourge of the Soudan, the hypocrite, the abominable Khalifa; the embodiment, as he has been depicted to European eyes, of all the vice; the object, as he was believed in England, of his people's bitter hatred, found safety and welcome among his flying soldiers'. Ibid., p. 307.

'Arab warlord' to render more intelligible the abstract notions of human suffering, social injustice, and economic depravation in the Mahdiya. This enduring function was evident in accounts about the tribal corruption under the Khalifa. Churchill cast the Baggara tribesmen, whom the Khalifa allowed to claim the most desirable land, as a near extension of the 'warlord' himself. In welcoming his fellow tribesmen, Churchill explained, the Khalifa

> created a class in Omdurman who were indissolubly attached to him. Like him, they were detested by the local tribes. Like him, they were foreigners in the land. But, like him, they were fierce and brave and strong. His dangers, his enemies, his interests were their own. Their lives depended on their loyalty.[81]

The privileged place of the Baggara reflected the deep injustice that pervaded Sudan under the Khalifa. However, in comparison with Wingate and other contemporaries, Churchill was somewhat understated in accounts for the disorder in the Mahdiya. The high-minded moral imperatives that animated earlier debates were absent, as the Khalifa appeared in somewhat less evocative terms. This was made evident in his survey of 'the statecraft of [the] savage from Kordofan'. Instead of fixating on the injustices of the Mahdist Empire, Churchill also acknowledged some of the regularities that the Khalifa brought to Sudan, such as a strong standing army, wars of conquest in Abyssinia, and balancing rival tribal leaders.[82] Furthermore, the Mahdist capital at Omdurman testified to the Khalifa's creation of a political institution larger than himself. Despite numerous plagues and widespread poverty, Churchill explained, 'the gloomy city of blood, mud, and filth that arose by the confluence of the Niles deserves a final glance while still in the pride of independent barbarism'.[83] These acts of statesmanship tempered, but did not refute, the degree to which the Khalifa was remembered as the epitome of the injustice found throughout Sudan.

The tempered recognition of the Khalifa as the personification of disorder did little to diminish Churchill's commemoration of the lasting significance of the reconquest of Sudan. Although the history did not reproduce many of the high-minded celebrations and embellished pronouncements that filled the British press after the death of the Khalifa, it did uphold much of the core logic and reasoning that first inspired the conquest of the 'Arab warlord'. In the closing remarks, Churchill began by suggesting that, despite the considerable cost incurred during the war, the ultimate success of the imperial military intervention was undeniable:

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[81] Ibid., p. 76.

[82] Ibid., pp. 75-81.

[83] Ibid., p. 86.

> The long story now approaches its conclusion. The River War is over. In its varied course, which extended over fourteen years and involved the untimely destruction of perhaps 300,000 lives, many extremes and contrasts have been displayed....But the result is at length achieved, and the flags of England and Egypt wave unchallenged over the valley of the Nile.[84]

This confidence in the success of the mission derived from the longstanding conclusion that, as the personification of disorder, the Khalifa constituted an entrenched obstacle that separated Sudan from the civilised world and impeded the expansion of order across the Nile region. Churchill reiterated this conclusion with little reservation in arguing

> Here, then, is a plain and honest reason for the River War. To unite territories that could not indefinitely have continued divided; to combine peoples whose future welfare is inseparably intermingled; to collect energies which, concentrated, may promote a common interest; to join together what could not improve apart—these are the object which, history will pronounce, have justified the enterprise.[85]

This promise of an expanding order across the region, Churchill concluded, could only have been achieved through the conquest of the Khalifa. This conclusion underpinned his closing remark about how, in the absence of the 'Arab warlord', previously interrupted natural, man-made, and trans-historical flows would deepen Britain's ties with its colonial periphery and enriched both realms. In his words:

> in the valley of the Nile England may develop a trade which, passing up and down the river and its complement railway, shall exchange the manufactures of the Temperate Zone for the products of the Tropic of Cancer, and may use the north wind to drive civilisation and prosperity to the south and the stream of the Nile to bear wealth and commerce to the sea.[86]

The lasting significance of Britain's imperial small war in Sudan, even in Churchill's more measured history, was inseparable from the enduring portrayal of the Khalifa as an 'Arab warlord' and the derived logic about the need for conquest to restore order to the region.

This section traced the construction of the Khalifa as a 'warlord' in late nineteenth century British colonial discourse and its significance in the Britain's subsequent conquest of Sudan. Detailed accounts about the brutal nature of the Khalifa's use of war, both against local enemies and foreign rivals, rendered more intelligible many of the abstract forms of human suffering recognised to be endemic in Sudan. The portrait of the Khailifa as the personification of disorder resonated in British

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[84] Ibid., p. 360.

[85] Ibid., pp. 363-4.

[86] Ibid., p. 364.

policymakers' attempts to formulate and justify the 'reconquest of Sudan' in that it gave a moral imperative and strategic logic for the imperial military intervention. This wider function contributed to a shifting understanding of the imperial mission, such that the conquest of the Khalifa—and not Sudan—became the paramount objective, as seen in the celebration that followed his death. The enduring influence of the concept of warlord and, perhaps more importantly, its effect in bolstering British confidence in the potential for the metropole to use war to impose order in unruly parts of the global south persisted in even more moderate commemorations of the imperial small war.

Mohammed Farrah Aidid and the US-led Intervention in Somalia

The capacity for 'warlords' to personify disorder can be seen in one of the United States' earliest, and perhaps most notorious, post-Cold War acts of conquest. The political concept became a fixture in American policy debates about Somalia in the early 1990s, after a handful of journalists began to depict several rebel leaders, most notably, Mohammed Farrah Aidid, as 'warlords' in an attempt to draw attention to the country's escalating civil war. Aidid emerged in these accounts as the face of the expanding anarchy that pervaded Somalia. Emboldened by notions of 'a new military humanism', the Bush administration deployed military forces to eastern Africa in late 1992 with promises of restoring order in the turbulent region. These promises would never be fulfilled, as the escalating small war became preoccupied with capturing the 'Somali warlord'. After months of failed attempts, the Clinton administration was forced to withdraw troops from Somalia following a botched operation that killed numerous US soldiers and hundreds of Somali citizens. The 'Somali warlord' provoked lingering anxiety in American policy debates about use of military force to restore order until a critically acclaimed account of the small war reaffirmed the logic of conquering Aidid and the prestige of the operation.

This section examines how the recognition of Aidid as the personification of disorder contributed to the United States' escalating 'humanitarian intervention' in Somalia. The evolution of the mission, as well as American attempts to cope with its aftermath, underscore the powerful logic of conquest tied to the concept of warlord.

Emerging 'humanitarian crisis'

Similar to Sudan in late nineteenth century British imperialism, Somalia was on the margins of American imperialism prior to the launch of its 'humanitarian intervention'. At the height of the Cold War the east African state was one of several ideological

flashpoints between the United States and its Soviet enemies. Billions of dollars worth of arms flowed into the country from both superpowers throughout the Cold War, making Somalia one of the countries in the global south with the greatest concentrations of light weapons.[87] However, as Odd Arne Westad argues, even before East-West hostilities eased, Somalia—and the Horn of Africa more generally—disappeared from the United States' agenda, once the Middle East and Eastern Europe became the centre of more important strategic concern.[88] The demise of superpower patronage left Somalia's long-time dictator, Mohammed Siad Barre, in a precarious situation: without foreign support, he struggled to maintain the combination of fear, patronage, and ideological programming that underpinned his more than two decades in power. The weakening of the Barre regime prompted the country's largest rebel movements to bolster their existing insurgency, leading to unprecedented levels of violence and destruction.[89] The outbreak of civil war, however, did little to raise the profile of Somalia in US policy debates. Amid the US-led Operation Desert Storm (1990-1) and several 'ethnic' conflicts, including Rwanda (1990-1993), Sierra Leone (1991-2002), and Croatia (1991-1995), Somalia remained a forgotten area at the end of the Cold War.

The obscure nature of the escalating civil war spurred a collection of groups to make a concerted effort to draw greater attention to Somalia in US policy debates. Several journalists and national editorial boards, often in conjunction with foreign aid and human rights organisations working in Africa, urged the Bush administration to exercise its post-Cold War authority and ambitions for a 'New World Order' by leading a global response to the escalating violence in Somalia.[90] This appeal became more

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[87] For a decade from 1978, the United States poured more than $800 million into Somalia, over a quarter of which was in the form of 'military aid'. This stream of money, combined with the influx of an estimated $500 million in arms from Somalia's former colonial ruler Italy, left Somalia awash in weapons during this period. See Scott Peterson, *Me Against My Brother: At War in Somalia, Sudan, and Rwanda* (New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 13.

[88] Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of our Times* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), chap. 7.

[89] Ioan Lewis and James Mayall, 'Somalia', in James Mayall (ed.), *The New Interventionism, 1991-1994: United Nations Experience in Cambodia, former Yugoslavia, and Somalia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[90] The US media was essential in shaping American conceptions of Somalia and, as many scholars argue, the Bush administration's decision to intervene in December 1992. As such, this chapter draws heavily on newspaper and periodical coverage to understand how Aidid was constructed as a 'Somali warlord' and its significance for the United States' intervention in the region. For a sense of the debate about the role of the US media in the operation See Jonathan Mermin, 'Television News and American Intervention in Somalia: The Myth of a Media-Driven Foreign Policy', *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 112, no. 3, Autumn 1997, pp. 385-403; Adam Roberts, 'Humanitarian War: Military Intervention and Human Rights', *International Affairs*, vol. 69, no. 3, 1993, pp. 429-49; Piers Robinson, 'The CNN Effect: Can the News Media Drive Foreign Policy?', *Review of International Studies*, vol. 25, no. 2, 1999, pp. 301-9.

explicit in January 1991, when fighting among rebel groups and security forces still loyal to the ousted Barre prompted diplomats and aid workers to flee Mogadishu. The handful of journalists stationed in the region drew upon aid workers' accounts in Somalia to highlight the growing political, economic, and social disorder. Somalia was cast, to borrow the words of one prominent journalist, as a country 'abandoned to its own civil war with others' weapons' leftover from the Cold War.[91] Graphic accounts about refugees 'pouring out of Somalia into both Ethiopia and Kenya',[92] how 'mothers clutch their hungry babies at a temporary hospital',[93] and 'the faint ubiquitous stench of death that fouls the air'[94] demonstrated not only the lasting consequences of the United States' Cold War policy in the region, but also the importance of the unquestioned global power leading a response to the budding 'humanitarian crisis'.[95] The situation seemingly begged for the United States to apply its unmatched military strength to protect human life in Somalia and prevent unrest from spreading across the region. Several editorial boards were explicit about this conviction. One editorial, for instance, argued, 'Yes, it is illusory to think America can resolve Somalia's political problems. But its human tragedies surely deserve the outside world's attention'.[96] Members of the US media, in collaboration with various international aid agencies, were among the first to cast Somalia as the scene of an urgent 'humanitarian crisis' that required outside intervention, particularly from the globe's pre-eminent power.

These appeals resurfaced periodically for more than a year. Cycles of violence in Mogadishu inspired sporadic reports in various US newspapers and magazines, many urging for greater international response to the dire situation. At first 'warlords' were not part of the concerted attempt to portray Somalia as an urgent 'humanitarian crisis'; the suffering was seemingly wrought by more banal armed actors, including rebel leaders and military commanders, most fighting out 'ancient clan hatreds'. This began to change around June 1992. Following the release of increasingly alarmed estimates about the potential for widespread famine and force migration, American journalists started to

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[91] Jane Perlez, 'Insurgents Claiming Victory in Somalia', *New York Times*, 28 January 1991, p. A3.

[92] Jane Perlez, 'Somalia, Abandoned To Its Own Civil War with Others' Weapons', *New York Times*, 6 January 1991, p. 2.

[93] Robert M. Press, 'Somalia Tries to Pick Up the Postwar Pieces', *Christian Science Monitor*, 19 February 1991, p. 12.

[94] Neil Henry, 'War Guts Capital of Somalia', *Washington Post*, 30 January 1991, p. A7.

[95] These dramatic accounts triggered some debate, particularly among former US officials in the region, about the degree to which the United States was complicit in violence in Somalia. For a sample of this debate see T. Frank Crigler, 'The Policy We Pursued in Somalia', *Washington Post*, 12 January 1991, p. A19.

[96] 'Who Cares About Somalia?', *New York Times*, 8 January 1991, p. A20.

reinterpret some of the major figures in Somali politics, recasting several major political officials, faction leaders, and crime bosses as 'Somali warlords'.[97] Mohammed Farrah Aidid, the self-declared chairman of the United Somali Congress, one of the main rebel groups, was among the first to be cast a 'warlord'.[98] This shift was more than just recognition of Aidid's coercive autonomy across much of the country: it also reflected a deepening consensus about how, in forging his own retrograde fiefdom, Aidid corrupted many of the basic features of a neo-liberal state. As Nicholas Wheeler notes, Aidid's private militias were the only semi-functioning security apparatus in many parts of the country, including where most embassies and relief agencies were headquartered in Mogadishu.[99] The free flow of goods was mediated by his control over the city's principal sea and airports.[100] Weapons and stolen foodstuffs flooded the capital's few remaining marketplaces.[101] In an effort to draw more attention to the crisis, Aidid was singled out as a 'warlord' as much because of his free reign over most of Mogadishu as because his growing dominion seemingly rendered Somalia further to the imperial margins, where more volatile and corrupt forms of politics prevailed. As the country slipped further into seeming chaos, with regular outbreaks of fighting, starvation, and force migration, Aidid emerged in the US media as one of the figures increasingly driving the country away from any semblance of order.

In subsequent months Aidid would dominate the anarchic landscape of Somalia in the American imperial imagination. More than just exacerbating, or even causing, the country's disorder, the 'Somali warlord' came to personify many of the most troublesome paradoxes in Somalia, which a growing number of commentators, relief workers, and US government officials deemed to be nothing less than 'hell on earth'.[102]

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[97] Some of the most cited reports about Somalia during this period include Africa Watch and Physicians for Human Rights, *Somalia: No Mercy in Mogadishu* (New York; Boston: Africa Watch and Physicians for Human Rights, March 1992); Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *The Situation in Somalia* (New York: United Nations, March 1992); Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *The Situation in Somalia* (New York: United Nations, April 1992).

[98] The term surfaced a few times in earlier newswires and reportage about the violence in Somalia. However, as evidenced by the burst of policy debate about 'warlords' in Somalia, it was not until mid-1992 that the concept became a fixture in US colonial debates about Somalia. For one of the earliest formulations of Aidid as a 'warlord' see Didrikke Schanche, 'Situation in Somalia's Capital Worsening Daily', *Associated Press*, 20 December 1991.

[99] Nicholas Wheeler, *Saving Strangers: Humanitarian Intervention in International Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 176.

[100] Keith B. Richburg, 'Solutions for Somalia Complicated by Chaos', *Washington Post*, 30 August 1992, p. A1.

[101] Jane Perlez, 'Theft of Food Aid is a Business in Starving Somalia', *New York Times*, 4 September 1992, p. 1.

[102] 'Death and Starvation in Somalia', *Washington Times*, 3 August 1992, p. E2. These references to the infernal nature of Somalia were an essential part of the demonization of Aidid and other 'warlords'. More examples of this construction can be found in Smith Hempstone, 'A Day in Hell', US State Department Cable, Nairobi,

The depraved nature of his political warfare against rivals was particularly flagrant. Ongoing fighting confirmed that Aidid should be feared for his influence over loose bands of well-armed militias across the country. However, as the famine deepened, stories about the 'Somali warlord' fixated on how one of his greatest weapons was not guns, money, or soldiers, but access to food.[103] In a state of famine, one journalist concluded, 'food becomes power'.[104] Basic foodstuffs enabled the Aidid to pay his militia, attack enemies, and maintain patronage networks across the country. The banal source of Aidid's political authority seemingly reflected the ruthless form of warfare that had exacerbated the crisis in Somalia. Furthermore, the 'Somali warlord' underscored the stark injustices that pervaded the country. Amid acute famine, Aidid and his militias were admonished for not only denying food to hundreds of thousands of individuals, but also securing a regular supply for themselves. After visiting a feeding centre in a remote village, where Aidid's 'well-fed militiamen kept watch', one reporter lamented that, 'Perhaps nowhere in Somalia is the gap more evident between the powerful and the powerless, between those with guns and those without even a grain of rice'.[105] The gross contradictions in Somalia were revealed in sharpest relief through the cruel nature of the country's most powerful 'Somali warlord'.

This budding cult of personality gained even greater resonance in American media accounts and policy debates when contrasted with the near anonymity of Somali citizens. At the same time that Aidid emerged as the 'Somali warlord', civilians were increasingly reduced to an inhuman condition, lacking basic sustenance as well as a basic humanity. 'Glassy-eyed people with heads too big for their bodies,' one reporter wrote, 'lie in the streets, waiting to die. Mothers, children and old people make up most of that group, which is fast disappearing'.[106] As with many portrayals of human atrocities, the anonymity of the famine victims derived as much from their deformed condition as their sheer quantity.[107] This combination was evident in one account of desperation witnessed at a feeding centre:

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10 July 1992; 'The Hell Called Somalia', *New York Times*, 23 July 1992, p. A22; 'U.N. Opens Effort to Boost Aid for Somalia', *Associated Press*, 12 October 1992.

[103] Keith B. Richburg, 'Aideed: Warlord in a Famished Land', *Washington Post*, 8 September 1992, p. A1.

[104] Keith B. Richburg, 'Warlord's Well-Fed Forces Rule Starving Somali Town', *Washington Post*, 3 September 1992, p. A1.

[105] Ibid.

[106] Marilyn Greene, 'Death, Despair Unravel Fabric of Somalia', *USA Today*, 21 September 1992, p. 8A.

[107] For more on the visual aesthetics of famine see David Campbell, D.J. Clark, and Kate Manzo, *Imaging Famine*, 2005. Available at <http://www.imaging-famine.org/>. Accessed 9 September 2009.

> In the damp, gray dawn in this remote Somali bush town, 25,000 men, women and children, their rib cages protruding, their eyes listless, shuffled with their last bit of strength today toward outdoor kitchens for a scoop of food.[108]

The desolate quality of famine became even more profound as images of skeletal children, many too weak to reach food aid, filled print media and television screens in the United States. With the exception of images of feeding lines or bodies lined up to be buried, Susan Moeller argues, editors often cropped photos of Somali children, presenting them as alone in their struggle for survival.[109] This anonymous portrayal of Somalis created a sharp contrast with the intensely personal construct of Aidid as a 'Somali warlord' that pervaded US media accounts of Somalia. The scale and intensity of suffering witnessed in Somalia only accentuated the degree to which Aidid the 'Somali warlord' came to embody disorder in the American imperial imagination.

The deepening consensus about the urgent condition created by Aidid and other 'Somali warlords' reached the highest policy circles. In August 1992 regional and international leaders turned to the United Nations to devote more resources to mitigate the situation in Somalia. A few months after authorizing an assistance mission under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM I), which was responsible for monitoring a temporary ceasefire and assist in relief efforts, the UN Security Council approved the deployment of an additional 3,500 peacekeepers to protect emergency aid operations.[110] The inadequacy of the multilateral force was apparent from the outset.[111] The situation in Somalia only deteriorated after the deployment of UN forces: militias adopted more violent tactics in their bid to prevent the delivery and dispersal of food.[112] Thousands of famine victims continued to die each day. Fighting among newly splinted groups continued across the country. The growing concern in the United Nations about 'warlords' and the urgent conditions in Somalia failed to translate into a meaningful improvement.

The shortcomings of UNOSOM I, combined with continued news reports, placed considerable pressure on the US government to make a greater commitment to help

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[108] Jane Perlez, 'Deaths in Somalia Outpace Delivery of Food', *New York Times*, 19 July 1992, p. 1.

[109] Susan Moeller, *Compassion Fatigue: How the Media Sell Disease, Famine, War, and Death* (New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 139.

[110] Wheeler, *Saving Strangers*, p. 177.

[111] Samuel M. Makinda, *Seeking Peace from Chaos: Humanitarian Intervention in Somalia* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1993), pp. 66-9.

[112] For a more detailed history of this mission and its shortcoming see Ken Rutherford, *Humanitarianism Under Fire: The US and UN Intervention in Somalia* (Sterling, VA: Kumarian Press, 2008).

alleviate the crisis.[113] After months of criticism, particularly about the United States' ineffective airlifts and half-hearted response, as well the administration's reluctance to become entangled in the simultaneous 'humanitarian crisis' in Yugoslavia, President George H. W. Bush eventually agreed to intervene in Somalia.[114] In early December 1992, just weeks after being defeated by Bill Clinton in the national election, President Bush announced the deployment of US troops, in a mission called Operation Restore Hope, to support ailing relief operations.[115] Emboldened by the decisive victory in the Persian Gulf War and a sustained confidence in the merits of militarised forms of 'humanitarianism', the announcement contained imperial undertones that imbued a sense of righteousness to the United States' newest military mission. Similar to Lord Curzon's declaration prior to the reconquest of Sudan, Bush stressed during a prime-time television address that the 'humanitarian' mission derived from a political, social, and moral imperative that only the United States could meet. After invoking familiar images of warehouses of food unable to be distributed, Bush reminded the American audience that 'relief groups called for outside troops to provide security so they could feed people. It's now clear that military support is necessary to ensure the safe delivery of the food Somalis need to survive'. Moreover, the desperate situation suffered by the most vulnerable populations in Somalia created even greater urgency:

> The people of Somalia, especially the children of Somalia, need our help. We're able to ease their suffering. We must help them live. We must give them hope. America must act.

This 'humanitarian' imperative was inseparable from the administration's deep-seated confidence in the United States' unique capacity to have a transformational influence on the far-flung territory where, in Bush's words, 'Anarchy prevails'. 'I want to emphasize,' he acknowledged, 'that I understand the United States alone cannot right the world's wrongs'. Nonetheless, he went on to explain

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[113] Peterson notes that the writings of Jane Perlez, a *New York Times* special contributor was especially influential in drawing attention to the situation in Somalia. The former US ambassador and special envoy to Somalia, Robert Oakley, shares the conclusion, noting the influence of the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*'s coverage of the armed conflict. Robert B. Oakley, 'Special State Department Briefing', Washington, D.C., 5 January 1993.

[114] A sample of this criticism can be seen in Holly Burkhalter, 'What Took Us So Long in Somalia?', *Washington Post*, 6 September 1992, p. C6; 'Help Needed for Forsaken Somalia', *New York Times*, 9 February 1992, p. 16; 'Don't Forsake Somalia', *New York Times*, 4 November 1992, p. A30. The importance of the Bush administration's reluctance to intervene in Yugoslavia in the decision to send troops to Somalia is stressed in Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), pp. 12-13.

[115] George H.W. Bush, 'Address to the Nation on the Situation in Somalia', Washington, D.C., 4 December 1992. Available at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=21758>. Accessed 10 September 2009.

> But we also know that some crises in the world cannot be resolved without American involvement, that American action is often necessary as a catalyst for broader involvement of the community of nations. Only the United States has the global reach to place a large security force on the ground in such a distant place quickly and efficiently and thus save thousands of innocents.

In responding to these imperatives, Bush reassured the American audience that the United States was ready to 'answer the call' and do 'God's Work' by helping 'save thousands of innocents from death'.[116]

The high-minded nature of the 'humanitarian mission' did little to obscure the militaristic nature of the United States' pending intervention in Somalia. Despite promises to adhere to a limited political mandate, President Bush stressed that US forces would use whatever means necessary to accomplish their mission. Midway through the speech, the President interrupted his announcement to address 'Somali citizens' about the purportedly limited scope of the 'humanitarian mission':

> To the people of Somalia I promise this: We do not plan to dictate political outcomes. We respect your sovereignty and independence….I can state with confidence: We come to your country for one reason only, to enable the starving to be fed.

This promise of impartiality was seemingly of limited consequence amid the repeated warnings about the United States' determination to restore order in Somalia, namely by preventing further fighting, crime, and death. With 'law and order...broken down', Bush declared that US forces had 'the authority to take whatever military action is necessary to safeguard the lives of our troops and the lives of Somalia's people'. Aidid and other Somali faction leaders were never named in the prime-time address. Instead vague labels, such as 'outlaw elements' and 'armed gangs', substituted for the already commonplace term of 'warlords'.[117] Regardless, Bush seemingly addressed them directly in stating

> Let me be very clear: Our mission is humanitarian but we will not tolerate armed gangs ripping off their own people, condemning them to death by starvation....We will accomplish our mission.[118]

The resolute speech marked the start of the United States' most infamous attempt to defeat a 'warlord' and restore order in the post-Cold War era.

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[116] Ibid.

[117] The penetration of the political concept in American colonial discourse during this period is exemplified in the interest linguists, such as William Safire, began to express in its origins and usage. See William Safire, 'On Language: Warlords, Bandits, Thugs, and Regional Leaders', *New York Times Magazine*, 27 December 1992, p. 6.

[118] Bush, 'Address to the Nation on the Situation in Somalia'.

'Humanitarian operation' becomes a manhunt

The scale of the initial deployment seemingly foretold the considerable reach of the US-led intervention in Somali politics. Amid considerable anticipation, both from within Somalia and abroad, US forces landed on the beaches of Mogadishu on 9 December 1992. Deployed as part of the Unified Task Force (UNITAF) the US military initially contributed 25,000 of the estimated 37,000 personnel that formed the 20-country contingent operating in Somalia and oversaw all facets of the mission.[119] US forces took control of the sea and airports in Mogadishu days after the invasion, establishing supply corridors through which more than 18,000 tons of aid would be delivered to the interior of the country in the next three months.[120] Following regular protests and clashes with various militias, UNITAF officials facilitated several peace conferences that included clan leaders and other members of 'civil society', as well as Aidid and other 'warlords'.[121] The support of the 'Somali warlords', Wheeler argues, was considered crucial to US and UN efforts to 'establish a new framework for rebuilding the institutions of the Somali state'.[122] Indeed, the sustained bargaining between UNITAF officials and various 'warlords', including Aidid, was indicative of how, despite President Bush's initial promises, the US-led mission adopted a sweeping understanding of its 'humanitarian' objectives in Somalia.[123] 'The terms "peacemaking" and "peacekeeping",' Ioan Lewis and James Mayall argue, 'no longer adequately covered the range of activities undertaken' in the months that followed the initial invasion.[124] The United States became involved not only in brokering ceasefire deals between various 'warlords', but also enforcing them, as well as designing the provisional state institutions that would eventually govern the Somali state.[125]

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[119] Official US Marine statistics quoted in John L. Hirsch and Robert B. Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope: Reflections on Peacemaking and Peacekeeping* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1995), p. 63.

[120] Scott Peterson, 'Anti-West Mood Imperils Security As Somalia Operation Shifts to UN', *Christian Science Monitor*, 18 March 1993, p. 7.

[121] Terrence Lyons and Ahmed I. Samatar, *Somalia: State Collapse, Multilateral Intervention, and Strategies for Political Reconstruction* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1995).

[122] Wheeler, *Saving Strangers*, p. 191.

[123] As several scholars note, the United Nations leadership, particularly the Office of the Secretary General, pushed for a deeper intervention into Somali politics, particularly following the publication of Secretary General Boutros-Boutros Ghali's *An Agenda for Peace*. For more on the role of the United Nations reach of the intervention see Wheeler, *Saving Strangers*, chap. 6.

[124] Lewis and Mayall, 'Somalia', p. 114.

[125] Ibid.

A few months after succeeding the Bush administration, President Bill Clinton tried to remould the intervention. His administration tried not only to limit political liabilities posed by the inherited military operation, but also to reflect his administration's doctrine of 'assertive multilateralism'. More specifically, the Clinton administration approached the intervention as an opportunity to demonstrate the potential for the United States to legitimise its power by leading international coalitions to enforce international consensus, even in confrontations with figures as abhorrent as 'Somali warlords'.[126] The resulting political bargain reduced the American presence in Somalia, but it also deepened the Clinton administration's intervention. Under UN Security Council Resolution 814 (1993), the transfer of authority from UNITAF to UNISOM II allowed the Clinton administration to redeploy tens of thousands of US troops from Somalia.[127] However, this redeployment was accompanied by an even greater commitment to the mission: the United States was responsible for many of the logistical, tactical, and political activities in the UN operation.[128] In response to the new mandate, US Ambassador Madeleine Albright declared that the new mission 'aimed at nothing less than the restoration of an entire country as a proud, functioning, and viable member of the community of nations. This is an historical undertaking. We are excited to join it and we will vigorously support it'.[129]

This optimism would be short-lived. A few months after the transfer of command, the United States abandoned its 'humanitarian' role in Somalia in favour of a controversial and increasingly violent campaign against Aidid that made the 'Somali warlord' one of the most notorious figures in US post-Cold War imperialism. The mission in Somalia began to deteriorate on 5 June 1993, when Somali gunmen ambushed and killed 24 Pakistani peacekeepers during an inspection mission at Radio Mogadishu, a radio station controlled by Aidid. The attack sparked international outrage and, as Scott Peterson notes, even before responsibility could be confirmed, many in the United States and its UN allies blamed Aidid.[130] In the days that followed, the US-sponsored UN Security Council Resolution 837, which ordered the 'arrest, and detention for

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[126] The origins and paradoxical nature of this doctrine is developed more fully in Jennifer Sterling-Folker, 'Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Assertive Multilateralism and Post-Cold War U.S. Foreign Policy Making', in James M. Scott (ed.), *After the End: Making U.S. Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War World*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), pp. 277-304.

[127] United Nations Security Council, Resolution 814, 23 March 1993. Available at <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N93/226/18/IMG/N9322618.pdf?OpenElement> Accessed 14 January 2011.

[128] Wheeler, *Saving Strangers*, p. 194.

[129] Quoted in Paul Lewis, 'U.N. will Increase Troops in Somalia', *New York Times*, 27 March 1993, p. 3.

[130] Peterson, *Me Against My Brother*, p. 68.

prosecution, trial, and punishment' of 'those responsible for the armed attacks...including those responsible for inciting such attacks'.[131] The resolution did not name Aidid or mention 'warlords'.[132] However, it did transform the United States' mission into an unrestrained manhunt for Aidid.[133] Within days of the resolution the United States began to use helicopter gunships to attack Aidid's compounds, caches of weapons, and areas hostile to UN forces, killing dozens of Somalis in the process. A $20,000 bounty for the capture of Aidid was also announced.[134] Thousands of yellow wanted posters, each with a crude drawing of Aidid the 'Somali warlord', were dropped from American helicopters across Mogadishu.[135] In a matter of weeks Aidid supplanted Somalia as the target of the United States' conquest.[136]

The ensuing manhunt for Aidid launched the Somali leader to new heights of infamy. Perhaps more than just enforcing international law, the US-led search for Aidid inspired more vivid accounts about the 'Somali warlord' and his personification of disorder. The 'Warlord No. 1', who was described in one magazine article 'as a real-life version' of the Hollywood blockbuster *The Fugitive*, was never seen by US forces during the manhunt.[137] Nonetheless, American officials, journalists, and commentators traced many of the most hostile features of Somalia back to the elusive 'warlord'. Aidid was credited with inspiring anti-American and anti-UN mobs across Mogadishu.[138] His network of militias continued to control much of central and southern Somalia.[139] Growing numbers of Somali casualties were attributed as much to US attacks as to Aidid's disregard for human life. 'We are facing a particularly cunning and callous enemy,' one US commander is quoted as explaining, 'who uses women and children as

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[131] United Nations Security Council, Resolution 837, 6 June 1993. Available at <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N93/332/32/IMG/N9333232.pdf?OpenElement> Accessed 14 September 2009.

[132] The resolution did mention his new faction, the Somali National Alliance (SNA).

[133] Roberts, 'Humanitarian War', p. 448.

[134] Lewis and Mayall, 'Somalia', pp. 116-7.

[135] Peterson, *Me Against My Brother*, p. 93.

[136] At the same time that the United States was trying to capture Aidid they were also supposedly trying to enter into political negotiations with him. For details about the incoherent strategy at the time see Rutherford, *Humanitarianism Under Fire*, p. 153.

[137] Joshua Hammer and Douglas Waller, 'A Starring Role in the "The Fugitive"', *Newsweek*, 6 September 1993, p. 29; Andrew Purvis, 'Wanted: Warlord No. 1', *Time*, 28 June 1993.

[138] Richard Bernstein, 'Against New Odds, The U.N. Insists on Helping in Somalia', *New York Times*, 18 July 1993, p. 4.

[139] Donatella Lorch, 'U.N. Still Struggling With Somali General's Militia', *New York Times*, 14 September 1993, p. A3.

pawns'.[140] The growing stature of Aidid inspired some commentators to draw comparisons between him and Mohamed Abdullah Hassan (commonly referred to as the 'Mad Mullah'), a Somali cleric that evaded and harassed British colonial officials for more than two decades at the turn of the twentieth century.[141] The defiant 'Somali warlord', observers speculated, might acquire a degree of mythical lore that could incite another uprising against foreign occupiers, as seen nearly a century earlier. Aidid reached greater stature as the embodiment of disorder while defying American attempts to capture him.

The Clinton administration and its domestic supporters defended the mission, particularly as US and allied casualties began to mount, by reviving many of the most evocative constructions of Aidid as a 'Somali warlord'. This revival did not involve amending the already familiar notions of Aidid as a 'Somali warlord'. Instead, similar to the Khalifa a century earlier, it entailed an unprecedented validation of popular notions that, given the brutality of his violence, Aidid personified the disorder witnessed in Somalia, and only by conquering him could order be restored in the region. Many senior US officials appropriated the political concept in defence of the manhunt for Aidid. As John R. Butler notes, President Clinton was perhaps the most prominent figure to embrace the political concept.[142] After Resolution 837 was approved, Clinton routinely described Aidid as not only a 'warlord', but he also indicted him as part of 'a small but dangerous minority of Somalis who are determined to provoke terror and chaos' in the country.[143] Other administration officials made an even greater effort to demonstrate how the 'Somali warlord' was the embodiment of disorder in Somalia. Les Aspin, the US Secretary of Defence, stressed at the outset of a policy speech in June 1993 that the suffering caused by Aidid made the label of warlord especially appropriate:

> let's not forget who we're dealing with here. It was Aidid who played the major role in the devastation of Somalia's society, peace, and order. It was Aidid's forces that kept the UN forces pinned down at the airport during the first phase of this humanitarian mission, and it was Aidid's forces who tried to prevent food and aid from getting to starving and desperate Somalis. It is Aidid's forces that seem to be—have no qualms

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[140] Quoted in Keith B. Richburg, 'Somali Warlord's Tactics Confound U.N.', *Washington Post*, 15 June 1993, p. A1.

[141] Abdul Abdi, 'Somalia's Clans will Fight On, Until the Bitter End', *Washington Times*, 30 September 1993, p. A21. See also Keith B. Richburg, 'Aideed's Hit-and-Run Campaign Against U.N. Recalls "Mad Mullah"', *Washington Post*, 12 September 1993, p. A33.

[142] John R. Butler, 'Somalia and the Imperial Savage: Continuities in the Rhetoric of War', *Western Journal of Communication*, vol. 66, no. 1, 2002, pp. 1-24.

[143] William J. Clinton, 'The President's Radio Address', Washington, D.C., 12 June 1993. Available at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=46681&st=somalia&st1=> Accessed 15 October 2009.

about using women and children as human shields to launch attacks on peacekeeping forces. *Aidid certainly has earned the title of war lord* [*sic*].[144]

The concept of warlord served as a compelling way for the Clinton administration to establish the urgency of capturing Aidid for the welfare of Somalia. Albright made perhaps the most compelling case for Aidid's capture and its significance for the future of Somalia. 'The famine of 1991-92,' the US Ambassador explained in a national editorial in August 1993, 'did not result from the laws of nature but from the lawlessness of men like Mr. Aidid. Warlords used thugs who terrorized their fellow citizens, disrupting economic activity and forcing thousands from their homes'.[145] She went on to draw even deeper connections between Aidid and the endemic disorder in Somalia, arguing, 'For him, piracy meant prosperity. His aim is to return Somalia to anarchy'.[146] This relationship only heightened the importance of the United States' escalating small war in Somalia: the capture of Aidid was the only way to prevent even more of Somalia from becoming enveloped in his expanding disorder. 'The decision we must make,' Albright concluded, 'is whether to pull up stakes and allow Somalia to fall back into the abyss or to stay the course and help lift the country and its people from the category of a failed state into that of an emerging democracy'.[147] The political concept developed new levels of significance as senior government officials acknowledged that ensuring the future stability of Somalia required conquering its most infamous and powerful 'warlord'.

The escalating confrontation, combined with the official sanctioning of the concept of warlord, provoked the already growing domestic opposition to the United States' conquest of Somalia. As US security forces struggled to capture Aidid, critics in and out of the government questioned the logic that US military forces needed to—or even could—conquer the 'Somali warlord'. Congressional leaders expressed concern about the growing fixation on Aidid, at one point threatening to cut off funding for military operations in Somalia unless the administration promised greater oversight of operation.[148] Senator Robert C. Byrd, one of the most vocal opponents of the manhunt, declared, 'Clearly, the humanitarian mission in Somalia has now been totally eclipsed by a gang war in which the U.S. is taking sides under the U.N. umbrella'.[149] Numerous

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[144] Les Aspin, 'Remarks by Secretary of Defense Les Aspin to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC)', Park Hyatt Hotel, Washington, D.C., 14 June 1993. Emphasis added.

[145] Madeleine K. Albright, 'Yes, There is a Reason to Be in Somalia', *New York Times*, August 1993, p. A19.

[146] Ibid.

[147] Ibid.

[148] Rutherford, *Humanitarianism Under Fire*, pp. 154-5.

[149] Quoted in Helen Dewar, 'Senate Debates U.S. Role in Somalia', *Washington Post*, 9 September 1993, p. A35.

commentators argued that, in narrowing on Aidid the 'warlord', the Clinton administration and its UN allies had lost sight of its original mission in and the political complexity of Somalia.[150] To make 'martyrs out of thugs', as one critic argued, risked compromising future stability in Somalia and possibly emboldening other violent leaders to defy the United States' authority.[151] The concept of warlord and its related logic about the ameliorative potential for conquest compounded the controversy surrounding the Clinton administration's deepening involvement in Somalia.

The manhunt for Aidid proved disastrous. After several high profile blunders and incoherent efforts to move towards a negotiated settlement with Aidid, the United States suffered one of its most humiliating defeats in the global south. On 3 October 1993, US Rangers and Special Forces tried to capture members of Aidid's so-called cabinet in the Olympic Hotel in Mogadishu, only to be caught in a battle that lasted more than 16 hours. By the end of the fight 18 American soldiers were also killed, another 75 injured during the battle. An estimated 500 Somalis were killed and at least 800 wounded.[152] Scenes of a US helicopter pilot, Michael Durant, held in captivity and the dead body another pilot being dragged through the streets by a Somali mob were replayed on American televisions for months. The mission was, at the time, the deadliest for US forces since the Vietnam War.

The domestic uproar forced the Clinton administration to abandon its manhunt for Aidid, and with it the war in Somalia. On 7 October 1993, less than a year after Bush's initial speech on Operation Restore Hope, President Clinton announced during a televised address that, additional ground troops would be immediately dispatched to Somalia, but their mandate would be narrowed to only 'humanitarian' measures and all US combat forces would be redeployed from the Horn of Africa within six months. In his words, 'Obviously, even then there is no guarantee that Somalia will rid itself of violence and suffering. But at least we will have given Somalia a reasonable chance'.[153] The announcement marked the beginning of the end of the United States' most infamous encounter with 'warlords' in the global south.

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[150] See for example 'Realism in Somalia', *Christian Science Monitor*, 15 July 1993, p. 18; Jim Hoagland, 'Beware "Mission Creep" in Somalia', *Washington Post*, 20 July 1993, p. A17; Samuel Francis, 'Redefining Moment', *Washington Times*, 7 September 1993, p. E1.

[151] Jennifer Parmelee, 'Waltzing with Warlords', *Washington Post*, 20 June 1993, p. C1.

[152] C. Kenneth Allard, *Somalia Operations Lessons Learned* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1995).

[153] William J. Clinton, 'Address to the Nation on Somalia', Washington, D.C., 7 October 1993. Available at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=47180&st=somalia&st1=> Accessed 26 January 2010.

Aidid in the aftermath of Somalia

The prominence of Aidid in American understandings of Somalia made his construction as a 'Somali warlord' an obstacle for the Clinton administration's attempts to cope with the aftermath of the small war. After validating the construction in numerous policy speeches, press conferences, and national op-eds, officials went to considerable lengths to recast him as a responsible Somali leader capable of contributing to the resolution of the violent conflict. The administration's Press Secretary, Dee Dee Myers, for instance, stressed Aidid's ties with the Habar Gidir sub-clan in characterising him as a 'clan leader with a substantial constituency in Somalia'.[154] In a subsequent press conference Myers introduced the one-time 'warlord' as one of the 'Somali leaders of the factions' responsible for reaching a peace agreement.[155] These accounts tried to recast Aidid as one of the pivotal—and perhaps even legitimate—actors responsible for determining the future of the country. They also allowed the administration to divest from the outcome of the ongoing political negotiations. Instead of a determination to restore order in the region, as articulated in Albright's op-ed months earlier, the location of Aidid among the various powerbrokers in Somali politics introduced a greater uncertainty about the country's fate. As Clinton explained in a televised interview, 'In the end, the international community will have to broker political resolutions within countries. Our ability to stop people within national boundaries from killing each other is somewhat limited and will be for the foreseeable future'.[156] The best hope, Clinton concluded, was 'to get these African nations…in trying to work out a political solution'.[157]

Despite these concerted efforts, critics continued to deplore the Clinton administration's handling of Somalia. In these relentless attacks, the lingering conclusions about Aidid as a brutal 'warlord' posed considerable political liabilities to the White House and its claims to be able to manage American foreign affairs. Weeks after President Clinton announced the withdrawal of US forces, for instance, members of the Republican party and several national media outlets ridiculed his administration for

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[154] Dee Dee Myers, 'Press Briefing by Dee Dee Myers', Washington, D.C., 19 October 1993. Available at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=60105&st=somalia&st1=> Accessed 10 September 2009.

[155] Dee Dee Myers, 'Press Briefing by Dee Dee Myers', Washington, D.C., 8 November 1993. Available at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=60020&st=somalia&st1=> Accessed 10 September 2009.

[156] William J. Clinton, 'Interview With Timothy Russert and Tom Brokaw on "Meet the Press"', Washington, D.C., 7 November 1993. Available at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=46080&st=somalia&st1=> Accessed 26 January 2011.

[157] Ibid.

allowing the 'Somali warlord' to fly to peace talks in Ethiopia on an American military aircraft. A Republican Congressman, Representative Curt Weldon, was quoted as saying, 'We should be ashamed of ourselves. Aidid is a tyrant and a thug. He should be captured and arrested, not coddled and protected'.[158] Perhaps more than just underscoring the administration's inability to manage the complexities of the military operation, Aidid and the kind of disorder that he exemplified was at the centre of a wider debate about the appropriate use of US military power in the global south. Many commentators, scholars, and members of Congress questioned whether the Clinton administration was capable of using American pre-eminence to deepen cooperation with the United Nations, as outlined in its calls for a more 'assertive multilateralism'.[159] John R. Bolton, for instance, argued that, 'whatever the real meaning of "assertive multilateralism," that policy died an early death in Somalia. U.S. experience there demonstrated the hard truth that the United Nations works only when the United States leads the organization to a final conclusion'.[160] The Clinton administration eventually relented to mounting criticism. In May 1994, months after the withdrawal of US combat forces in Somalia, the administration issued Presidential Decision Directive 25, which stated that the United States' support for peacekeeping operations would be contingent on a conflict's threat to international peace and security or on a determination that the operations 'serve US interests'.[161] The United States' encounter with the 'Somali warlord' cast a considerable shadow over the imperial hubris witnessed following the end of the Cold War.

As seen near the end of the Cold War, Somalia disappeared from the United States imperial agenda after the United Nations mission concluded in 1995. Many policymakers, commentators, and journalists in the United States concluded that the country would be mired in anarchy until a 'warlord', whether Aidid or one his rivals, triumphed over their ongoing civil war. A national editorial marked the end of the mission with an especially grim prognosis:

> The withdrawal of United Nations peacekeepers from Somalia this month marks it as a casualty beyond saving. Warring Somali clans will

[158] Quoted in Rowan Scarborough, 'Once-Targeted Somali Warlord gets U.S. Escort', *Washington Times*, 3 December 1993, p. A1.

[159] A.J. Bacevich, 'Learning from Aidid', *Commentary*, vol. 9, no. 6, December 1993, pp. 30-3; Richard K. Betts, 'The Delusion of Impartial Intervention', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 73, no. 6, November/December 1994, pp. 20-33; Thomas L. Friedman, 'U.S. Pays Dearly for an Education in Somalia', *New York Times*, 10 October 1993, p. 1; Alex Shoumatoff, 'The "Warlord" Speaks', *The Nation*, 4 April 1994, pp. 442-50.

[160] John R. Bolton, 'Wrong Turn in Somalia', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 73, no. 1, February 1994, p. 66.

[161] Bureau of International Organizational Affairs, US Department of State, 'Clinton Administration Policy on Reforming Multilateral Peace Operations (PDD 25)', Washington, D.C., 3 May 1994.

> be left to fight it out. The most vicious, or perhaps just the most efficient, thugs among them will emerge to claim a U.N. seat.[162]

However, while the political future of Somalia became an afterthought, the construction of Aidid as a 'Somali warlord' lingered as a troubled part of the American imperial imagination. Aidid resurfaced perhaps most frequently in unresolved policy debates about how the US should use military force to project order in the global south, particularly amid a growing number of 'ethnic conflicts' and 'humanitarian crises' across the global south.[163] The concept was invoked for varying purposes. Several commentators rehashed detailed stories about Aidid and the failed manhunt to substantiate their doubts about the prospects of future multilateral military operations.[164] More clinical accounts attempted to distil key 'lessons learned' for future 'humanitarian interventions', including many about, in the words of two authors, 'working with the warlords'.[165] Others cited Aidid the 'warlord' to defend the need for seemingly more moderate forms of interventions, such as 'nation-building' or 'peace enforcement', that might avoid protracted military confrontations.[166] Even as Somalia became a nominal part of US imperialism, the 'Somali warlord' remained an ominous reminder of the United States' glaring defeat at the end of the Cold War.

The anxieties surrounding Aidid, American power, and the small war in Somalia persisted in US post-Cold War imperialism until a popular film reclaimed the logic and prestige of the infamous act of conquest. The 'Somali warlord' was at the centre of one of the most heroic portrayals of American Empire in Hollywood films, *Black Hawk Down*.[167]

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[162] 'We Aren't the World', *Washington Post*, 2 February 1995, p. A27.

[163] Aidid and Somalia were for various reasons most pressing in regards to the violent conflicts in Haiti (1994), Rwanda (1994), and Kosovo (1999).

[164] Jonathan Stevenson, for instance, blamed the United Nations for turning 'Aidid into an outlaw folk hero', as well criticised the United States government for estranging Somali citizens: 'In demonizing Aidid, Washington mad the United States even more alien to the Somalis and Aidid even more powerful'. Jonathan Stevenson, *Losing Mogadishu: Testing U.S. Policy in Somalia* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1995), pp. xiii, 113.

[165] Walter Clarke and Jeffrey Herbst, 'Somalia and the Future of Humanitarian Intervention', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 75, no. 2, April 1996, p. 78. See also Hirsch and Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope*.

[166] See for example Marina Ottaway, 'Nation Building', *Foreign Policy*, September/October 2002, pp. 16-24.

[167] Dennis Showalter, for instance, concluded that *Black Hawk Down* should be situated within the larger tradition of imperial cinematography in arguing, 'As the United States moves towards realizing hyperpower status by unilaterally initiating what it defines as antiterrorist operations on a global scale, *Black Hawk Down* may prove the first statement of a new American myth'. See Dennis Showalter, 'Imagery and Realism: The Two Faces of Black Hawk Down', *Diplomatic History*, vol. 26, no. 4, Fall 2002, pp. 649-51. For more on the significance of the film as an expression of American Empire see Andreas Behnke, 'The Re-enchantment of War in Popular Culture', *Millennium*, vol. 34, no. 3, 2006, pp. 937-49; Simon Dalby, 'Warrior Geopolitics: Gladiator, Black Hawk Down and the Kingdom of Heaven', *Political Geography*, vol. 28, no. 4, 2006, pp. 439-

Released in the wake of the attacks of 9/11, some eight years after the small war, the critically acclaimed film retold the ill-fated operation at the Olympic Hotel in October 1993.[168] Aidid never appeared in the film; the dramatised account focused on several of the US Rangers and Special Forces involved in the mission. Nonetheless, from the beginning of the story, Aidid and his construction as a 'Somali warlord' were located at the centre of the disorder in Somalia. In the brief prologue, green tinted scenes of gutted clinics, malnourished children, and slow moving Red Cross relief trucks situated the film within an alien, near apocalyptic reality. Overlaid text identified the hostile environment, explaining that in 1992 Somalia had experienced 'years of warfare among rival clans causes famine on a biblical scale' from which '300,000 civilians die of starvation'.[169] However, it was not until the subsequent text, which stated, 'Mohamed Farrah Aidid, the most powerful of the warlords, rules the capital Mogadishu', that the origins of the dire conditions were established. Similar to newspapers reports discussed above, by locating Aidid amid a landscape of anonymous suffering, the 'Somali warlord' made more intelligible the dystopian reality displayed on the screen. The degree to which Aidid personified this disorder was confirmed by the subsequent explanation that, after his militias killed 24 Pakistani soldiers and targeted American personnel, elite teams of US security forces were sent to Mogadishu with two clear objectives: 'to remove Aidid and restore order'. Furthermore, this evocative introduction reasserted a virtuous quality to the infamous US mission in Somalia. By casting Aidid as the epitome of the suffering in Somalia, the film presented his capture as more than a noble mission, but also as an expedient one that was intended to have ameliorative effects in Somalia. As Melani McAlister argues, 'this refusal to develop the political background to the action in Somalia…reproduced an American tendency to assume that good motives are enough to justify any action'.[170] From the outset, the film employed powerful imagery, calculated text, and the concept of warlord to restore the core logic that justified the conquest the infamous Somali leader.

55; Debbie Lisle and Andrew Pepper, 'The New Face of Global Hollywood: Black Hawk Down and the Politics of Meta-Sovereignty', *Cultural Politics*, vol. 1, no. 2, April 2005, pp. 165-92.

[168] The film's release was expedited to capitalise on the surge of nationalism following the attacks of 9/11. *Black Hawk Down*, DVD, directed by Ridley Scott (2001; Culver City, CA: Columbia Pictures; Los Angeles, CA: Revolution Studios, 2002). See also Mark Bowden, *Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1999).

[169] *Black Hawk Down*.

[170] Melani McAlister, 'A Cultural History of the War without End', *The Journal of American History*, vol. 89, no. 2, September 2002, p. 454.

The narrow historical framing helped the film reclaim the lasting significance of the United States' failed attempt to restore order in Somalia. Instead of imposing a clumsy revisionist reading about the politics of intervention, the filmmakers used Aidid and the endemic disorder that he personified to defend a feature of the small war that had been overlooked in the ensuing policy debates, namely, American military heroism. Retold from an American gaze, the bulk of the film followed various teams of US soldiers in their fight through the streets of Mogadishu to recover fellow soldiers involved in the botched capture mission. Each of the principal adversaries that American soldiers encountered revealed different facets of this lauded American virtue. Mobs of barbarous, undifferentiated Somalis affirmed the country's slide into a condition of sheer anarchy under Aidid. More importantly, their waves of assaults provided repeated opportunities for the retelling of American soldiers sacrificing themselves to fulfil their mission or protect injured comrades that were lost in debates about the humiliating outcome of the 'humanitarian intervention' and lingering turmoil in Somalia. The overwhelming challenges that US forces encountered in Somalia were even more explicit during one of the few moments of dialogue between the Americans and their Somali adversaries. An unidentified militia leader confronted a captured helicopter pilot, Michael Durant, about the purpose of their mission in Somalia. The militia leader explained

> In Somalia, killing is negotiation. Do you really think if you get General Aidid, we will simply put down our weapons and adopt American democracy? That the killing will stop? We know this: without victory, there can be no peace. There will always be killing, you see? That is how things are in our world.[171]

The ensuing violence, which culminated in American helicopters strafing mobs of Somali fighters, supported the militia leader's bleak outlook on the potential for order to be restored in Somalia. However, this argument was rendered moot by the end of the film. After finally reaching a UN base, several soldiers refused rest and assistance in favour of returning to the streets to help other US personnel still caught in fighting. Although such heroism would do little to restore order in Somalia, it demonstrated a commitment and determination that was seemingly absent from debates about the United States' aborted mission in Somalia. The film succeeded in recovering the triumph in one of its most angst-filled acts of conquest in US post-Cold War imperialism.

This section revisited the history of the United States' encounter with Mohameed Farrah Aidid and the lasting significance of his construction as a 'Somali warlord' in US post-Cold War imperialism. Even before the launch of Operation Restore Hope, Aidid

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[171] *Black Hawk Down*.

began to exemplify the social, political, and economic disorder that brought the obscure East African country to the forefront of American policy debates. This degree of personification culminated in a stark shift in the US military intervention, such that his capture was deemed the only way to restore order to Somalia. The failed manhunt not only derailed the United States' 'humanitarian' mission in Somalia, but it also undermined American confidence in its potential to use force to restore in the global south. This lingering anxiety persisted until after the attacks of 9/11, when popular reinterpretations of the conquest of Somalia reaffirmed the merits of the imperial small war and with it the United States' capacity to impose order in even the most hostile of territories.

Conclusion

Conquest was an essential part of how Britain and the United States attempted to impose order in the global south. It was arguably during times of conquest, when both metropoles prepared, launched, and celebrated their respective imperial wars, that the ambivalent figure of the 'warlord' appeared in sharpest relief, most often as a cruel and violent enemy. This tendency to conceive of non-European adversaries as 'warlords' derived, it was argued, from the political concept's capacity to personify disorder. As seen in colonial Sudan and post-Cold War Somalia, culturally laden conclusions about brutal forms of warfare led the Khalifa and Aidid to be cast as more than just the cause of the failed political institutions, corrupt legal systems, and impoverished societies in their respective territories. Both 'warlords' were understood to embody the very forms of disorder that Britain and the United States found most troublesome. Their unchecked political authority typified how violence had destroyed any semblance of civil politics. The crude nature of their warfare, whether in the slaughter of civilians or hoarding of food aid, exemplified the gross injustices that pervaded each fiefdom. Cruel forms of exploitation and torture were, at times, deemed an expression of their inner beings. Across various parts of US and British colonial discourses, this mode of personification allowed each 'warlord' to render more intelligible abstract notions of human suffering, social injustice, and systemic corruption in remote, unfamiliar areas along the imperial margins. Such resolute understandings helped both imperial powers establish the urgency of projecting greater order in parts of the non-European world.

The capacity for the political concept to personify disorder was significant because 'warlords' often supplanted the failed state or corrupt regime as the target of US and British acts of conquest. This shift derived, in large part, from the importance ascribed to war in US and British conceptions of 'warlords'. It was seemingly by

challenging the primary source of 'warlords'' political authority, namely their use of warfare, that British and American officials, commentators, and journalists concluded that many of the most unsavoury patterns in the global south could be mitigated, if not eliminated. In the absence of any domestic threats, as well as any means of diplomatic exchange, foreign military intervention was recognised as the only way to free Sudan from the Khalifa's depraved rule. Without his tyranny, commentators and policymakers promised, Sudan would be reconnected with the civilised world, and its ameliorative influence would reverse the decades of political, economic, and social decay suffered under the 'Arab warlord'. Officials in the Clinton administration arrived at analogous conclusions, stressing that Aidid's destructive influence would only expand unless checked by an outside force. His capture was deemed essential to prevent Somalia's regression into perpetual anarchy and begin its transformation into an emerging democracy. By embodying the most deplorable features of the global south, 'warlords' encouraged facile, but highly persuasive, conclusions about the necessity and potential for Anglo-American military force to enable the expansion of order in the non-European world.

The importance of this logic in US and British imperialism can be seen in its continued influence after acts of conquest. The capacity for 'warlords' to epitomise many of the most troublesome features of the global south, particularly ones that affront purportedly liberal notions of community, governance, and justice, helped ease some of the inherent liabilities posed by war. During times of victory, as seen in the case of the Khalifa, personification seemingly heightened the momentous nature of imperial warfare. Even more moderate accounts of Britain's imperial small war demonstrated how the corrosive nature of 'warlords' could be invoked to affirm the righteousness of imperial conquest. Perhaps more importantly for this dissertation, similar effects can be found in moments of defeat. Although the failed 'humanitarian intervention' in Somalia unmoored fundamental notions of American superiority, popular accounts of the small war helped recover the merits of intervention by returning to the core logic that underpinned the intervention years earlier. It provided a framework through which to reclaim the heroism of American soldiers, even during defeat at the hands of non-European warriors. Such enduring logic provided a powerful way for US and British to manage the influence of war on the uneven expansion of order in the global south.

The previous three chapters examined how the concept of warlord was employed in US and British imperialism to deal with the uneven development of order in the global south and its effects on each imperial power. Several of the larger arguments from this discursive history, particularly about the assumptions that animated the political concept, war and order in US and British imperialism, and the

value of examining the United States after the Cold War as an empire, are drawn together in the concluding chapter.

6. Conclusion

The renewed interest in the British and American empires has brought into sharper relief how, in their respective imperial traditions, both imperial powers encountered territories that defied familiar patterns of order. This dissertation examined how each managed the way war interrupted the expansion of the political, economic, and moral structures that constituted order in the global south. It did so by returning to arguably the most direct formulation of the relationship between war and order in US and British imperialism, the concept of warlord. Several conclusions emerged across the concept's discursive history: 1) cultural constructions of war inspired more resolute understandings of the different types of order found in the global south, especially in the seemingly most foreign and troubled areas; 2) the destructive qualities of war served as a compelling way for commentators, policymakers, and military officials to draw larger conclusions about the purportedly illiberal and unjust nature of non-European territories; 3) these constructions of war had an indelible influence on the formulation of US and British interventions to promote order in the global south; and 4) these unequivocal conceptions rendered more natural and, in many cases, urgent US and British interventions in the global south. Instead of an ancillary part of uncivilised territories or failed states, as many post-colonial scholars suggest, the history of 'warlords' in US and British imperialism brings into perspective how cultural constructions of war conditioned many core features of and responses to order in each imperial system.

Besides focusing on the political concept's function, this dissertation highlighted the effect of 'warlords' on US and British interventions to promote order in the global south. A few themes developed across each of the encounters with 'warlords' recounted in the preceding chapters: 1) rather than a source of anxiety, 'warlords' and their coercive authority bolstered the confidence of many in Britain and the United States about the potential to remake the global south to reflect more closely their respective conceptions of order; 2) this confidence extended to the possibility of altering elementary features of the global south, including its temporal, legal, and moral conditions; 3) the importance of war for 'warlords' and their dominions emboldened Anglo-American conclusions about the potential for Britain and the United States to use war to restore order to the global south; and 4) the coercive nature of 'warlords' minimised the inherent liabilities and heightened the purported success of US and British small wars. The effects of 'warlords' on each empire underscore the far-reaching influence of war in how Britain and the United States attempted to manage the inconsistent and inconclusive expansion of order.

This argument about the influence of cultural constructions of war on notions of order has wider implications for the study of US and British imperialism. The creation of

favourable political, economic, and moral institutions is seemingly inseparable from the cultural terms in which war is understood and conducted. To overlook this close relationship risks underestimating the epistemological and ontological importance of war in structuring imperial relations. More importantly, it risks misconstruing how various social and political structures were recognised to constitute order in both empires. By this account, the weak and failed states that created such anxiety in American post-Cold War imperialism—like the uncivilized territories in British imperialism a century earlier—are only intelligible when situated relative to the barbaric forms of war that were assumed to destroy the state apparatus, legal orders, and capitalist markets that characterised stable, functioning states. If conceived in separate terms, the political features that underpinned these classifications would obscure the underlying assumptions that conditioned the category and its usage in US and British imperial policy debates. In broader terms, such arguments suggests that, while the growing post-colonial literature on empire identifies a number of reoccurring features that shape imperial conceptions of order, war should not only be a more prominent part of this discussion. It should be approached as a far-reaching cultural field that mediated many of the core elements of the global south in US and British understandings of the global south.

This discursive history brought to the forefront a number of related issues. Perhaps the most immediate ones concern 'warlords'. It is somewhat unconventional to locate 'warlords' in imperial history. In much of the academic and policy literature, the concept is most readily found in alarmist accounts about the potential demise of the Westphalian system in the global south, particularly amid the proliferation of so-called new wars, fragile states, and crimes against humanity. This dissertation departed from these accounts in three major respects. First, the political concept was traced across multiple discursive settings in US and British imperialism, ranging from colonial correspondence to elite policy debates to Hollywood movies. This wider register helps reveal the various influences that made 'warlords' such a prominent and longstanding part of US and British accounts of the global south. Second, instead of reproducing evocative accounts of 'warlords', particularly those that reduced them to reprehensible villains, an effort was made to underscore the ambivalence that surrounds the concept. It is arguably only by recognizing how 'warlords' were alternately admired and abhorred in British and American policy debates that the concept's wider function and effects can be assessed. Third, and perhaps more importantly, 'warlord' was approached in conceptual terms. By drawing insights from the study of political concepts, this dissertation developed a theoretical framework that was rigorous enough to narrow on the essential parts of US and British understandings of 'warlords', particularly its underlying notion of autonomy, without imposing a structure that denied the concept's

inherent variability and changing meaning. Such an approach helps account for varying expressions of the concept of warlord, as well as its evolution in form and meaning, throughout the history of each empire.

This history of 'warlords' in US and British imperialism provided additional methodological insights about the value discourse in the study of political concepts. As noted in Chapter 2, many political theorists recognise discourse to be a nominal part of the study of political concepts, that is, a secondary field either subsumed within or overshadowed by more literary and historical approaches. However, by situating political concepts within their larger discursive contexts, it is possible to appreciate their fuller influence, particularly as a constitutive force in politics, society, and culture. For the concept of warlord, this means recognising how underlying assumptions about war and a lack of popular support emboldened US and British conclusions about their pre-eminence and capacity to reshape order in the global south, particularly through war. A discursive approach to political concepts, it has been shown, offers a compelling way to develop a greater understanding of enduring components of political life, as well as establish their wider consequence in the conduct of politics.

Finally, the history of 'warlords' in US and British imperialism provided an opportunity to reflect on continued debates about the extent to which the United States after the Cold War can be characterised as an empire. American preoccupation—as well as fascination—with 'warlords' may be dismissed as the product of sensationalised accounts about the global south or further evidence of how non-European leaders were often lumped into crude categories. However, such conclusions overlook the degree to which the concept revealed the United States' deep, but fundamentally unequal, social relations with the global south. Beginning with Mohammed Farah Aidid in Somalia, and continuing with Charles Taylor in Western Africa and various commanders across Afghanistan, each of the 'warlords' examined in this dissertation resonated in the American metropole, inspiring widespread debate about the need to subdue distant territories and populations. Furthermore, the political concept provoked considerable reflection about many of the purportedly essential features of the United States following the Cold War, including its exceptional mandate to defend humanitarian principles, unmatched military sophistication, and commitment to international justice. 'Warlords' tested many of the defining assumptions of US imperialism. The political concept illustrates how, by situating the imperial power and its subjects in the same analytic field, empire enables a fuller appreciation of the close relations between the United States and the global south. Such far-reaching insights underscore why, even with continued debate about the imperial nature of contemporary American power, empire remains a salient object of study in International Relations.

7. Bibliography

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