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Reassessing Russian Warlordism: The Case for a New Paradigm

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REASSESSING RUSSIAN WARLORDISM:
THE CASE FOR A NEW PARADIGM

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	iv
CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND.....	1
CHAPTER TWO: SOUTHERN WHITES.....	12
CHAPTER THREE: KOLCHAK’S WHITES	39
CHAPTER FOUR: EASTERN WHITES	46
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION.....	72
Bibliography	77
Biographical Sketch	83

ABSTRACT

The Russian Civil War is an incredibly complex topic that is frequently oversimplified to a Red vs White framework, where the Bolshevik forces face a perceived monolithic ‘White’ opposition. While this conceptualization can be useful, the reality is much more complex; various factions, some controlling far-flung territories or even no territory, formed and broke alliances with each other and fought furiously to achieve their ends. The ‘White’ forces are frequently presented as an amalgamation of different factions and armies that had differing, sometimes opposing, views. The typical view of the Russian civil war is clearly oversimplified, but recent scholarship attempting to reassess the Civil War has brought new insight and understanding to the conflict. In particular, the designation of certain White elements as ‘warlords’ has become more common. The warlord argument provides an alternative to the older, more traditional view of monolithic ‘White’ against ‘Red’ by showing that not all White commanders fought for the same ends, and many were motivated by selfish desires or goals. Similarly, since warlords tend not to work well together, it helps explain the disunity of the White movement. The warlord paradigm has its flaws, namely that the warlords of the Civil War were not common; in fact, the only commanders which truly qualified for the moniker were in the Far East, and barely participated in the Civil War. The warlord framework proves to be quite useless when applied to individual commanders of the White movement, and therefore a better means of reclassification is required. To that end, the White forces, after careful assessment of whether they are warlords, should instead be classified by new criteria. The result is a new dichotomy within the White movement: Western Whites and Eastern Whites. The dichotomy offered is based on orientation, rather than geography. Western White forces were focused on capturing Western Russia, specifically Moscow and Petrograd, while the Eastern Whites were

more interested in consolidating their own power base in the Far East. The Western and Eastern White forces were nominally allies and anti-Bolshevik, but practically had very different goals and worked to achieve different ends. The Western Whites were the remnants of the Tsarist military elites, fighting to restore Russia and defeat Bolshevism, while the Eastern Whites were warlords in the employ of foreign powers primarily concerned with their own selfish ends. The main thesis of this work is that the warlord paradigm does not apply to most White commanders, and should be abandoned in favor of a broader Western/Eastern dichotomy.

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND

The term ‘warlord’ must be defined carefully in order to be useful; problematically, the definition of a warlord varies greatly and therefore must be explained in each instance of its use. James Sheridan, in his *Chinese Warlord: the Career of Feng Yu-Hsiang*, defined a warlord as “an actor who exercised effective governmental control over a fairly well-defined region by means of a military organization that obeyed no higher authority than himself.”¹ This definition has often served as the basis for subsequent definitions and will serve as the definition of warlord for the purposes of this work. While other definitions have been offered by many different scholars, few are as concise and useful as Sheridan’s.

In order to understand how the warlords came to power, it is crucial to first establish the process by which warlordism arises. “Several preconditions would have to be met before the political system could change from statism to warlordism. The fundamental precondition was state failure. In some fashion, civilian bureaucratic institutions would have to lose legitimacy, authority and effectiveness – lose power, in other words – for warlords to emerge. (...) When states collapsed, it was usually the result of other pressures, often external ones.”² The Imperial Russian state, which had long been incredibly highly centralized, was governed by the Tsar alone. The apparatuses of the state, including the military and bureaucracy, were effectively controlled by one man. The abdication of Tsar Nicholas II left a vacancy in the only position that had effective control of the Imperial Russian state. The Provisional Government, headed by Kerensky, briefly filled the autocrat’s role, but ultimately crumbled. The Bolsheviks, eager to

¹ Sheridan, *Chinese Warlord*, 1

² Sanborn, *Genesis of Russian Warlordism*, 197

pounce on Kerensky's failure, organized a coup and seized power. The Bolsheviks, by controlling Petrograd and Moscow, held sway over the vast majority of the former state's functionaries. Thus the Bolsheviks can be seen as a sort of continuation of the highly-centralized state that they sought to replace.

The second precondition to the rise of warlordism is regionalism. Regionalism in China allowed warlords to rise in the power vacuum that followed the collapse of the central state.³ The rise of warlords in China parallels their rise in Russia: a weakened centralized empire fractures into smaller, regional factions. In Russia, regionalism was not as pronounced as Chinese regionalism, in part due to the highly-centralized governance of the Tsar. Regionalism, however, was certainly not absent; nascent nationalism was stirring in subject nationalities, and certain regions had already begun to experience movements for greater autonomy. The Decembrists, who had been exiled to Siberia, created an intelligentsia that became increasingly revolutionary.⁴ Siberian regionalism, therefore, helps explain why governments would rise in Siberia to challenge Bolshevik rule. Additionally, regionalism exploded after the collapse of the highly-centralized Tsarist state; in his memoirs, General Anton Denikin wrote that the collapse of the central government of Russia and subsequent seizure of power by the Bolsheviks caused the "Balkanization of Russia".⁵ This Balkanization, while obviously an effect of the power vacuum left after the collapse of the Tsarist state, can be seen as an expression of latent regionalism. The Balkanization of Russia largely occurred in several ways: subject nationalities breaking away and uprisings of peasants and Cossacks against the Bolsheviks. Denikin explains that "in its entire first period, i.e. the year 1918, passed under *the sign of the German invasion*

³ Sheridan, *Chinese Warlord*, 1

⁴ Pereira, *White Siberia*, 18

⁵ Denikin, *White Army*, 109

and occupation. The will of the German conquerors and fear of Bolshevism, no less than the nationalist chauvinism of her component peoples, were responsible for the cutting up of Russia's political map."⁶ The fracturing of the centralized Russian Imperial state caused a wave of 'statelets' to form. While Ukraine is much too large to be termed a 'statelet', it was one of many polities that emerged after the collapse of Imperial Russia. Numerous other polities attempted to break away from the remains of Imperial Russia, though only the Baltic states and Finland were successful in their bids for independence. The Balkanization that Denikin described demonstrates that regionalism, while not necessarily as well-developed as it was in China during the warlord period, nevertheless existed to some extent.

In addition to the regionalism of subject nationalities, the Cossacks demonstrated that regionalism existed within the heartland of Russia. The Cossacks were organized into hosts and were named after the in particular regions in which they were situated, i.e. the Don Cossacks of the Don region. The Cossacks were a hybrid social, political and cultural group, and shared commonalities among their given host that were not present in the general population. The Cossacks of a region held a meeting, or *krug*, to elect their ataman without including civilians of the cities that existed in their region or peasants of the nearby countryside; the Cossacks were a relatively exclusive group that generally followed the will of their ataman, and confined their interests to their region. "The Cossacks of the Ural territory rose in a body, mobilized all the male population between nineteen and fifty years old and turned out twenty regiments. (...) The Orenburg Cossacks rose also."⁷ The Cossack uprisings, which originated and largely confined their operations to their geographic 'homeland', can be seen as an expression of regionalism.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 111

⁷ *Ibid.*, 122

Regionalism existed, to some degree, in many areas in Russia. The extent and expression of this regionalism, however, varied greatly from one area to another; Cossack ‘regionalism’ can hardly be compared to that of Siberia. Nevertheless, many areas saw expressions of regionalism that were utilized by White forces in order to garner a power base. The Don region of southern Russia, with its largely ethnic Russian population, provided a solid foundation upon which to create a state to rival the Bolshevik-led government. Siberia similarly presented a large region, albeit with a comparatively smaller population, of predominately ethnic Russians with which to establish a power base. However, the underdeveloped nature of Russian regionalism prior to the collapse of the state can arguably be seen as part of the reason for the failure of the White forces. The lack of well-developed infrastructure outside of Moscow and Petrograd, which both belonged to the Bolsheviks, presented serious obstacles to any White forces attempting a counter-revolution.

With the preconditions of state collapse and regionalism met, warlordism seemed inevitable. The only requirement left is candidates to become warlords: “men with military experience, sufficient individual authority to inspire obedience on the part of their men at arms, political ambition, interest in civilian affairs and a high tolerance for risk.”⁸ These characteristics provide a useful, though not definitive, means of assessing which White commanders could potentially arise as warlords; many Tsarist officers had some of these characteristics, but few had all of them. Sanborn named Lavr Kornilov and Baron Roman Nikolai Maximilian von Ungern-Sternberg as the most notable warlords of the period.⁹ Since these characteristics are subjective, they will be treated as suggestive rather than definitive; a commander can fit some of the criteria

⁸ Sanborn, *Genesis of Russian Warlordism*, 198

⁹ Sanborn, *Genesis of Russian Warlordism*, 197

and still be considered a warlord, or conversely meet all of the criteria and still not be classified as a warlord.

Warlordism can be a reductive assessment and risks oversimplifying a complex situation. An effort should be made, when possible, to assess how a candidate viewed themselves and whether their self-perception could impact an assessment of warlordism. Attempting to label any commander as a warlord runs the risk of oversimplification; “by simply calling the leader of any armed group a warlord, we not only lose [sic] analytical thoroughness, but also potentially lose effectiveness in our responses to these actors. (...) Moreover, much of our understanding about warlords is one-sided; for instance, it only focuses on their economic interactions or is based on assumptions about identity.”¹⁰ While the warlord definition clearly limits who qualifies as a warlord, the act of labelling can be reductive and detrimental to scholarship on the subject. Therefore any attempt to label a commander as a warlord should follow an assessment of how the commander viewed himself. The reason for this differentiation is that warlordism is usually seen as selfish or self-serving. A White commander may be fighting for democracy or even the restoration of the Romanov dynasty and still be classified as a warlord due to the technical definition being applied incorrectly. Thus the mentality of the commanders should be taken into account in order to mitigate the problem of misclassification. Assessing the mentality of White commanders is quite difficult, since it requires the reconstruction of both individual and popular mentalities of the time. The mentality of any commander is hard to reconstruct; their memoirs are frequently written with an eye on the future and therefore cannot be completely reliable,

¹⁰ Vinci, *Entrails Natural Man*, 313–31.

meaning they should be viewed with a critical eye unless outside or corroborating material is available.

Popular mentalities are also difficult to assess afterwards, though several works exist which attempt to do this. Figes and Kolonitskii describe the popular mentality among peasants and its relationship to the cults of personality that existed at the time; “if the monarchy was dead politically, it was still alive in a broader sense. The Russian people, or at least the peasants, conceived of politics in monarchical terms. This ‘monarchical psychology’ did not make them monarchists politically. But it did mean that they were receptive to authoritarian or patriarchal leaders, whose power was projected in either kingly or quasi-religious forms. Here were the roots of the cults of Kerensky, Kornilov and Lenin, all of which were attempts to fill the missing space of the deposed Tsar, or perhaps the vacuum left by the myth of the Tsar as the people’s saviour and liberator.”¹¹ Clearly the idea of a warlord will be difficult to differentiate from the ‘cult of personality’ of any given commander. Similarly, there existed another popular conception that could further complicate assessments: the ‘Napoleonic’ ideal; “although the idea of a ‘Russian Napoleon’ had started to materialize by the late spring of 1917, the idea of military dictatorship had been on the minds of the Russian military since the incipient stages of the revolution. Some monarchists and representatives of the elite, even some leaders of the opposition, shared the idea that a military coup was the only way to win the war and prevent the regime’s violent collapse. Indeed, even before the collapse of czarism, there was a longing for a Napoleon of a sort, one who would be strong yet enlightened.”¹² The ideas of a ‘Russian Napoleon’ and the ‘cult of personality’ are complimentary, since both provide a strong leader with the means to exert their

¹¹ Figes and Kolonitskii, *Interpreting the Russian Revolution*, 72

¹² Shlapentokh, *Counter-Revolution in Revolution*, 31

will over the people; they involve on a powerful leader who could lead the Russian people out of the quagmire that the country had entered. The desire for a strong leader was well known, however, even before the abdication of the Tsar. Since the Tsar was often thought to be under the malign influence of his German wife, he was viewed as too weak or ineffective to win the war; “since the tsar persisted in submitting to his spouse’s influence, they were now willing to contemplate his removal by force. Among the higher officers, particularly of the General Staff, the possibility of a coup was frequently discussed, sometimes quite openly, not to speak of actual plots to which a number of highly placed generals and admirals were privy. These sentiments are well documented in an Okhrana memorandum drawn up for the Council of Ministers, based on the reports of surveillance organs on the Northern and Western fronts. It acknowledges the broad support, even in the high command, for the Duma and the idea of a responsible ministry, and expresses the fear that should the Duma be dissolved, even moderate circles in the Army would support the idea of a coup d’état.”¹³ The widespread support for a charismatic leader and potential Napoleonic-style dictatorship undermine the ease of applying the ‘warlord’ label, since any attempts to ascribe warlord-like characteristics could also apply to a Napoleonic figure.

The Napoleonic ideal must be understood within the context of the Russian mentality of the time. The Russian military had little intellectual drive prior to the outbreak of World War I.¹⁴ “Military science was poorly developed and its dominant mood was anti-intellectual. It existed only within the walls of the Academy of the General Staff, a small oasis in the intellectual desert of the Russian army. But even the Academy did not keep up with modern developments.”¹⁵ Similarly, many Russian peasants and soldiers had trouble understanding the nature and

¹³ Wildman, *Russian Imperial Army 1917*, 111

¹⁴ Kenez, *Russian Officer Corps*, 226

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 227

significance of the new political system; “the peasants, it appears, found it difficult to distinguish between the person of the monarch (*gosudar*’) and the abstract institutions of the state (*gosudarstvo*). Their conception of the democratic order was similarly couched in personalized terms. It was for this reason that many peasant soldiers refused to swear an oath of loyalty to the Provisional Government: the mention of ‘the state’ (*gosudarstvo*) in the text of the oath was seen by them as a counter-revolutionary attempt to restore the old monarch (*gosudar*’).”¹⁶ The Napoleonic idea is quite simplistic, which explains why it appears in so many seemingly diverse circles; military officers, common soldiers, and peasants alike hoped for a strong and capable leader that could guide Russia through its troubles.

Assessing warlordism in the White movement is complicated further by the military’s role in governance at the beginning of the Civil War. Governance in Imperial Russia had been the prerogative of the Tsar, though some aspects of governance had been delegated to the bureaucracy. The majority of government functionaries resided in Moscow and Petrograd. While there were some in the provincial capitals, the number of bureaucratic officials was perpetually insufficient to administer the vast territories under their jurisdiction, even before the outbreak of World War I. At the beginning of the war, however, the civilian administration was usurped by military administration in much of the western part of the empire. “One of the most striking features of the new regulations was the creation of an extensive theater of military operations, the territory of which was subordinated directly and exclusively to the army. Originally, this theater was composed of all Russian territory west of a line running from St. Petersburg south to Smolensk and thence along the line of the Dnieper River. It included not only Finland, but the capital of the Empire, the Baltic provinces, the Kingdom of Poland, and much of the Ukraine.

¹⁶ Figes and Kolonitskii, *Interpreting the Russian Revolution*, 73

Other strategically-important locations, most notably the ports of Archangel and Vladivostok, were also placed under military administration.”¹⁷ The military suddenly became the governing force behind increasingly large swaths of territory, which forced some officers into seemingly civilian administrative roles. Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolayevich was ultimately placed in charge of conducting the war and, by extension, civil administration. “In addition to overwhelming military duties, the grand duke was forced to assume civil responsibilities analogous to the task shared by the dozen-odd members of the Council of Ministers in the interior of the Empire. And he had little assistance. The only other officer at the Stavka authorized by the regulations to deal with civil administration was the chief of staff, who was to assist the supreme commander in both his military and civil capacities.”¹⁸ The military administration was almost complete in its scope; “it should be noted that all corps and division commanders received authority, under the *Polozhenie*, to assume administrative jurisdiction in the territory where their units were deployed approximating the powers granted to the army commander.”¹⁹ The military, therefore, was responsible for administration from the top almost to the very bottom.

The reason why military administration is so important to describe is how it relates to the definition of warlord. According to Sheridan’s definition, a warlord ‘exercised effective governmental control over a fairly well-defined region by means of a military organization.’ Since the military was in control of fairly well-defined territories even before the Tsar’s abdication, the administration of territory by military organizations should not necessarily be seen as an anomaly or as disconnected from previous means of governance; it is, more accurately, the continuation of a policy of which White commanders had been a part. While the

¹⁷ Graf, *Reign of Generals*, 10

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 16-17

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 27

commander in charge may have varied, the structure of military administration had been in place for several years.

The crucial difference between Tsarist military administration and White military administration was legitimacy. Simply put, military administration under the Tsar was legal, while the military administration of the Whites was not; legitimacy can be the defining difference between a military governor and a warlord. Since military governance is part of the definition of warlord, it is important to note that while the Whites were similar to the Tsarist regime, the former lacked the legitimacy of the latter. The illegitimacy of the White administration does not automatically make them warlords, but it does open up the possibility.

Given its disunity, the White movement is difficult to classify as a whole, and must be investigated through its constituent parts. This work divides the Western Whites into two basic groups: the 'Southern Whites' and 'Kolchak's Whites'. The Southern Whites are composed of the Volunteer Army and Krasnov's forces, which were both situated in southern Russia. Kolchak's Whites, conversely, refers to Admiral Kolchak and his subordinate Yudenich. The Southern Whites were not particularly unified initially, but they eventually merged into the Armed Forces of South Russia; due to this merger, it makes more sense to assess these two groups together. Kolchak and Yudenich, who had little impact on the affairs of the Southern Whites, can be loosely grouped together, since the latter was appointed by the former.

Finally, the Volunteer Army, since it did not always have one single leader, cannot be easily characterized with the warlord terminology used so far. "Even though the term warlord is usually applied to a single individual, it more rightly refers to a cohesive group. This is the same way that we treat a state run by a dictator as a single group even though we refer to the individual dictator as being the instigator of policy. Accordingly, we should treat the warlord as in fact

being part of a ‘warlord organisation’”.²⁰ The concept of a ‘warlord organization’ proves to be more useful for describing the Volunteer Army as a whole, while its individual leaders can still be assessed as potential warlords. Therefore, the Volunteer Army can potentially be considered a warlord organization, but only if its given leader is assessed as a warlord.

²⁰ Vinci, *Entrails Natural Man* ,318

CHAPTER TWO

SOUTHERN WHITES

The Volunteer Army, headed by a succession of former Tsarist officers, was one of the largest factions that fought the Bolsheviks for control of Russia. The Volunteer Army was originally organized by Alekseyev; “there was but little money; its organizers were always in want of funds. But the colossal energy of General Alexeiev (he worked eighteen hours a day for what he often called “my last task on earth”), the iron will of Kornilov, coupled with the witchery of his name, did their work. In spite of obstacles, an army was formed.”²¹ The army was led by Lavr Kornilov, while Alekseyev headed the financial and political side of the endeavor; this division of power was to be characteristic of the Volunteer Army until Alekseyev’s death, whereupon a “Special Council” was established²². The army’s formative stage was tumultuous, and the army very nearly disbanded. The initial leader during this period was Lavr Kornilov, whose charisma and leadership allowed the Volunteer Army to survive its difficult inception.

Even before joining the Volunteer Army, Kornilov appears to have inspired a cult of personality about himself. Kornilov came from a family of Siberian Cossacks. His father had been a smallholder and had risen from a mere soldier to a low-ranking officer, while his mother was Kirghiz. His democratic upbringing had an enchanting effect on the soldiers under his command; He even gained titles such as “the first people’s Commander-in-Chief” and “the people’s general.”²³ Additionally, Kornilov had already achieved notoriety and fame, in equal

²¹ Volkonskii, *Volunteer Army Alexeiev Denikin*, 6

²² *Ibid.*, 29

²³ Figes and Kolonitskii, *Reinterpreting the Russian Revolution*, 98

measure, from the so-called “Kornilov affair”. Many right-wing groups perceived him as a sort of national savior, despite lacking personal links to the Romanov court.²⁴ These two factors combined to create a cult of personality; a powerful tool that he could use to increase his own power, and potentially seize absolute power. Kornilov gained political backing from high-ranking members of Russian society, such as War Minister Guchkov.²⁵ Kornilov’s potential to seize power as a warlord was evident.

Kornilov demonstrated many of the personality traits suggestive of warlordism. Kornilov certainly had the ‘high tolerance for risk’ described by Sanborn; Kornilov had the habit of marching “at the head of the leading column, covering dozens of versts with his confident stride; thousands of times, like the other fighters, he stood amidst a hail of bullets and of bursting shells. But he went on alert and bold, instilling his confidence into each and all.”²⁶ Kornilov possessed the requisite military experience, tolerance for risk and clearly inspired obedience among his followers.

Kornilov’s reputation was semi-legendary, which he certainly earned. Volkonskii describes an incident which demonstrates both Kornilov’s attitude and the obedience of his men, “an officer sent by General Bogayevsky, commanding the rear-guard, galloped up to report that the Bolsheviks had received strong reinforcements to the number of eight to ten thousand men from Tikhoretskaya on the east and Ekaterinodar on the west, that they were advancing in dense masses, and that large reinforcements were necessary. General Kornilov sent a reinforcement of twenty men. When the messenger replied that this was not enough, General Kornilov answered: “It is enough, against this band it is enough.” At the same time he gave orders to silence the

²⁴ Ibid., 96

²⁵ Ibid., 97

²⁶ Volkonskii, *Volunteer Army Alexeiev Denikin*, 12

battery which was covering the advance of the Bolsheviks, but allowed only ten shells to be used for this purpose. The result was the silencing of the battery and the flight of the Bolshevik hordes before a handful of daring men. The bullets were still whistling through the streets of the stanitsa when Kornilov went in to receive bread and salt from the inhabitants.”²⁷ The story itself is difficult to corroborate, as neither Bogaevskii nor Denikin mention it, but the depiction of Kornilov that Volkonskii presents is consistent with other accounts. Since Volkonskii’s account was originally published in November 1918, it seems likely that the heroic aspects of Kornilov were emphasized in order to make him into a martyr for the patriotic cause and rally support for the Volunteer Army. Additionally, General Alekseyev, the chief political and financial head of the Volunteer Army, had died in September of 1918, making this conclusion more even likely. Nevertheless, Kornilov clearly displays the personal attributes necessary to designate him as a warlord.

Despite having some characteristics that suggest his potential as a warlord, Kornilov displayed tendencies that would seemingly disqualify him from the role. Kornilov, as Bruce Lockhart describes, was “a gallant commander in the field, was totally ignorant of politics and in the hour of a crisis created by himself showed none of the attributes of a man of action, let alone a dictator.”²⁸ Kornilov lacked political experience and despised politicians.²⁹ While clearly an effective military commander, Kornilov lacked the political skill necessary to seize power and become a warlord outright. His lack of interest in political matters, while understandable in a military setting, would preclude him from being a warlord, since a warlord must possess at least some level of political cunning in order to maintain control.

²⁷ Ibid., 14

²⁸ Lockhart, *Two Revolutions*, 101

²⁹ Shlapentokh, *Counter-Revolution in Revolution*, 64

Kornilov certainly appears to be worthy of the title of warlord, but he doesn't actually fit the role. While this may seem paradoxical, the reason for his disqualification stems from the definition of warlord; Kornilov is clearly 'an actor who exercised effective governmental control over a fairly well-defined region by means of a military organization', but he did 'obey a higher authority than himself'. From the very beginning of his time with the Volunteer Army, Kornilov was not an absolutist leader. Kornilov was the military commander of the Volunteer Army, while Alekseyev was the political and financial leader; this power-sharing agreement like this necessarily precludes him from being a warlord. Denikin explains, "its leadership was entrusted to General Kornilov, recently arrived from Bykhov. General Alexeyev, already suffering from a grave disease, took over control of external relations and finance."³⁰ Denikin explains that the power sharing as a necessary evil, since the fragile Volunteer Army could not have survived the departure of either individual from the cause; "relations between the two were none too cordial, owing to a long-standing mutual antipathy. But both knew how to place the national cause above personal disagreements."³¹ The fragility of the Volunteer Army, which was tested almost immediately with the infamous Ice March, was the primary reason for this power sharing arrangement. While he could have easily become a warlord, he never held the requisite position or power. Kornilov's animosity toward Alekseyev could have led to Kornilov seizing total power, but Kornilov died before he could perform this hypothetical coup. Since the definition of warlord requires unparalleled authority, Kornilov cannot be classified as a warlord.

Kornilov may not have been a warlord, but the Volunteer Army may nevertheless have been a sort of warlord organization. Warlord organizations "are an emergent entity made up of

³⁰ Denikin, *White Army*, 23

³¹ *Ibid.*, 23

the sum of its individuals and these individuals combine together into a cohesive unit, which can, for theoretical purpose, be treated as a single actor. In this sense the warlord organisation – which itself is an ‘armed group’ – exists as a separate definable entity. Even though the term warlord is usually applied to a single individual, it more rightly refers to a cohesive group.”³² Any given warlord organization “is made up of those who are specifically initiated. In effect, this usually means those that have undergone some sort of recruitment process and are part of the patronage system. (...) Initiation into membership can be achieved other ways, such as forceful conscription.”³³ The Volunteer Army, known for its conscription, seemingly fits this description.³⁴

The biggest problem with describing the Volunteer Army as a warlord organization is that it controlled no territory. The Volunteer Army did not have a ‘capital’ or any true base of support, rather it simply conquered territory as it went along. The soldiers that were recruited from the *stanitsas* were not particularly loyal; “At every *stanitsa* General Kornilov called a general meeting of the landowners, made a speech, explained the aim of the army and the purpose of the campaign, and tried to persuade the Cossacks to join. Some did so, but very few, and even those dropped out afterwards.”³⁵ Moreover, the Volunteer Army was too small at the time to adequately administer any territory that it had conquered; “one *stanitsa* after another passed into the hands of the Volunteers.”³⁶ The army, after ‘taking’ a *stanitsa*, moved on and left no reserve force to hold the territory. It hardly seems surprising, given the limited forces available to the Volunteer Army, but it is important that they had no territory of their own. Since

³² Vinci, *Entrails Natural Man*, 318

³³ *Ibid.*, 319

³⁴ Mawdsley, *Russian Civil War*, 95

³⁵ Volkonskii, *Volunteer Army Alexeiev Denikin*, 11

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 17

a prerequisite of warlordism requires territorial control, it seems doubtful that the Volunteer Army could qualify as a warlord organization. Only after Kornilov's death was the Volunteer Army able to seize and maintain control of territory.

The Volunteer Army, already in dire condition, was rattled by the death of Kornilov in 1918. Denikin relates that "the ship seemed to be sinking; and down below in the moral 'hold' grew ominous whispers of desertion."³⁷ The death of Kornilov dealt the Volunteer Army a significant blow, and it was unclear whether the army would remain together afterwards. Denikin and Alekseyev, however, managed to keep the army from disintegrating. Denikin assumed military command, while Alekseyev continued as political leader. Under Denikin, the Volunteer Army conquered some territory, meaning that it could potentially qualify as a warlord organization, provided it had a warlord to lead it.

Prior to Alekseyev's death, the Volunteer Army had conquered Tikhoretskaia and Ekaterinodar, along with some swaths of the surrounding Kuban region. Denikin writes, "I, personally, exercised absolute authority over the army. In civil administration, however, General Alexeyev's and my functions were not clearly defined, and our relations rested mainly on my consideration of him and recognition of his seniority. Neither did we differ concerning the principles of the task before us: without infringing fundamental Russian law, to establish conditions enabling the Russian people to live more or less peacefully till the overthrow of the Bolsheviks and the re-instatement of legal All-Russian government. Although we enjoyed practically absolute power over the territories occupied by the Volunteer Army, we never laid claim to represent an All-Russian Government."³⁸ It was Alekseyev who negotiated with various

³⁷ Denikin, *White Army*, 82

³⁸ Denikin, 163

outside groups, such as Pyotr Krasnov and the Don Cossacks, effectively limiting Denikin's power. Since Denikin, like Kornilov, couldn't become a warlord while sharing power, he didn't immediately qualify as a warlord.

Despite the apparent separation of powers, Denikin did exercise tremendous power, even before Alekseyev's death. As a result of the Ice March, Alekseyev's health deteriorated and he was less able to complete the same amount of work he could earlier. While most Russians still believed Alekseyev led the army, it was actually Denikin who did; there was, however, no competition between the two and they worked together well.³⁹ Denikin, unlike Kornilov, appeared to have no ill-will toward Alekseyev and treated him with respect.⁴⁰ As summer wore on, Alekseyev's power slowly ebbed and Denikin's increased. Alekseyev moved to Novocherkassk in June, in part because of his health, and his absence was felt in Mechetinskaia.⁴¹ Since Alekseyev was absent as well as increasingly indecisive, Denikin's choices became more forceful, which resulted in his policies being supported.⁴² Alekseyev's death provided Denikin the opportunity to seize total power and effectively become a warlord at the head of a warlord organization.

Given how the Volunteer Army was structured, Denikin's ascendance to warlord seems likely following Alekseyev's death. Denikin explains, "General Alexeyev's death was received with profound sorrow by the Volunteer Army. In consequence of our heavy loss, I assumed the title of 'Commander-in-Chief', uniting the dual functions of military and civil administration."⁴³ By combining the military and political roles into one single position, Denikin appears to have

³⁹ Kenez, *Civil War 1918*, 150

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 150

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 150-151

⁴² *Ibid.*, 150-151

⁴³ Denikin, *White Army*, 164

become a warlord overnight. The position, however, was not necessarily as drastically altered as it appears to have been; the tactical structure of the Volunteer Army remained essentially unchanged.⁴⁴ Additionally, Denikin's consolidation of power undermined attempts to bring Grand Duke Nicholas into a position of power.⁴⁵ Since the overall structure of the Volunteer Army remained unchanged, Denikin simply absorbed the responsibilities of Alekseyev. Therefore the requirement for an individual who did not share authority was met when Denikin assumed total control.

Denikin, by controlling territory and answering to no higher authority than himself, could be classified as a warlord upon the death of Alekseyev. However, merely classifying him as such grossly oversimplifies the situation that existed as well as Denikin himself. In order to determine whether he was a warlord, Denikin's character must be analyzed carefully. He certainly fit some of Sanborn's requirements for being a warlord: he had military experience, a healthy amount of tolerance for risk, and he inspired loyalty from his men. Denikin's early service was unusual for Tsarist Generals, since he had risen from humble beginnings into the higher echelons of command. During the First World War, he had attempted to improve the conditions for the common soldier by pressuring the senior generals through the press.⁴⁶ Denikin's concern for the common soldier likely inspired obedience in his subordinates. Thus Denikin seems to possess some of the requisite characteristics for being a warlord.

Denikin's coup d'etat in Ekaterinodar in 1919 certainly provides the strongest evidence that Denikin was, in fact, a warlord. The political maelstrom of the Kuban and Don had long been a thorn in the Volunteer Army's side, hindering them from focusing on fighting the Red

⁴⁴ Lockett, *White Generals*, 190

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 190

⁴⁶ Lockett, 175

Army. Denikin, a far better soldier than politician, was perpetually frustrated with the politicians in the Kuban government and the Cossack hosts. The coup originated with Denikin's attempt to resolve the issue "in the rear" once and for all by producing a constitutional reform plan.⁴⁷ The draft was doomed from the start, owing to the animosity of the rada, as well as a secret treaty between the rada and Chechen and Ingush elements that had been resisting the Volunteer Army.⁴⁸ Denikin responded by declaring martial and appointing General Pokrovskii as military governor.⁴⁹ The suspension of the Kuban Government in late 1919 is indicative of his being somewhat dictatorial, but his appointment of a military governor is more reminiscent of Tsarist traditions than warlordism. The Caucasus Viceroy, which had only been abolished a few years earlier following the abdication of the Tsar, had wielded administrative and political authority in the same area that Denikin placed under martial law.

Despite the evidence suggesting Denikin was a warlord, ample evidence exists that disqualify him from such a moniker. Generally speaking, warlords require a certain level of ambition, political skill or at least some desire to rule, none of which Denikin appears to have had. After Kornilov's death, Denikin seemed hesitant to assume command, implying a lack of ambition that undermines his designation as a warlord; Denikin explains, "In my official capacity of 'Assistant Army Commander', it behoved [*sic*] me to take up the duties of the deceased. I had no moral right to shirk the heavy burden which fell to my lot at a moment when the army was threatened with annihilation. This, however, could be but a temporary measure on the field of battle because, though the Volunteer Army had no written status, I acknowledged General Alexeyev's natural right as head of the organization to nominate a permanent successor to our

⁴⁷ Kenez, *Civil War 1919-1920*, 134

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 134-135

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 136

fallen Commander.”⁵⁰ Denikin’s hesitancy toward assuming additional power can also be seen in his relationship with the Kuban Government after the fall of Ekaterinodar; Denikin writes, “We could have easily overthrown the Government by means of the Kuban officers themselves. Neither General Alexeyev nor I wished, however, to begin the task of the Kuban’s regeneration by an act of violence. Moreover, another display of internecine strife would bode no good.”⁵¹ Denikin typically deferred political decisions to his advisors, with the notable exception being his subordination to Kolchak.

Denikin’s decision to accept Kolchak as Supreme Ruler further demonstrates Denikin’s lack of political ambition. When a delegation arrived to convince him to accept Kolchak as his superior, Denikin, unlike his advisors, was quite receptive; he writes, “Both my Government and the political organizations of the south treated this proposal either with extreme reserve or absolute disfavour. My own personal decision had been made long since. I intended at our projected meeting (which then seemed near), to proclaim to the armies unconditionally and without any bargaining, our subordination to the ‘Supreme Authority of the Supreme Ruler’, as the natural outcome of our having joined territories. The decision was further facilitated by the fact that although I was not personally acquainted with Kolchak, I knew him to be a man of honour, intelligence, and great nobility of character. The question, therefore, was reduced to whether such an act was justified by existing circumstances. The prospect of our joining territories, however, seemed to be fading. The possible Allied recognition of Admiral Kolchak as the head of an All-Russian Government seemed a factor of the supreme importance for raising the new Russia’s international prestige. It was therefore incumbent upon us all to give the

⁵⁰ Denikin, *White Army*, 84

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 162

Admiral political and moral support.”⁵² Denikin’s decision proved to be foolhardy, given Kolchak’s swift demise, but his lack of political ambition clearly undermines attempts to label him as a warlord.

Since he eschewed usurping power from others, Denikin did not seem to be interested in political affairs at all. Far from being power-hungry, he appears to have preferred military matters to political ones. He was generally a serious person and placed great emphasis on his own honor, making him quite inflexible.⁵³ Denikin’s lack of political skill was evident in his dealings with the Kuban government. Kuban politicians sought autonomy, even complete independence, which Denikin was unwilling to grant; additionally, the Cossacks, who could have provided a counter-balance to the Kuban government, were also treated as poorly.⁵⁴ Had Denikin been a more adept politician, he may have been able to grant limited autonomy to either or both groups in exchange for support. He was a military man, and not a politician, since he lacked subtlety and cunning.⁵⁵ Denikin’s lack of political guile may prove useful to a military organization that had no need of politics, such as the Tsar’s army in the First World War; however, as the military and political leader of the Volunteer Army, Denikin’s political naiveté proved disastrous.

In addition to being an inept politician, Denikin lacked the moral flexibility that a warlord typically needs. In his dealings with Krasnov, Denikin proved to be too intransigent to negotiate well.⁵⁶ Friction between the two was also evident during an incident where Denikin became

⁵² Ibid., 231

⁵³ Lockett, 175

⁵⁴ Kenez, *Civil War 1919-1920*, 405

⁵⁵ Lockett, *White Generals*, 176

⁵⁶ Ibid., 176

visibly angry when Krasnov attempted to suggest a strategy.⁵⁷ In addition to his friction with Krasnov and the Cossacks, Denikin alienated other potential allies with his rigidity. During his time in Ukraine, Denikin proved less than tactful; he was unwilling to use the phrase “Ukrainian Russia” when an agent reported popular discontent with the term “Little Russia”.⁵⁸ Denikin’s inflexibility and lack of diplomacy was to prove a perpetual obstacle to the Volunteer Army’s success and demonstrable proof that Denikin’s temperament was ill-suited to being a warlord. Given his obstinacy, he likely couldn’t have held power without the aid of Alekseyev or the Special Council.

The Special Council, also known as the Special Conference, was a political body designed to aid Denikin after Alekseyev’s death. Volkonskii writes that “after Alexeiev’s death the supreme command of the army passed to General Denikin, while questions of a political nature and those concerning civil administration were referred to a “Special Council attached to the Commander-in-Chief,” which had been formed at Ekaterinodar during Alexeiev’s life-time, under the presidency of General A. M. Dragomirov.”⁵⁹ Denikin explains that Alekseyev “set up a ‘Special Conference’, at first a consultative body, but which later became invested with the functions of a normal government. The difficulties confronting the new government were appalling. A ruined administrative apparatus, a convulsing economic system, an empty exchequer, acute social strife and boundless class exactions, a general decline of morale – such was the outcome of four years of war, revolution and mob-and-soldier law, etc.”⁶⁰ The power-sharing arrangement that Denikin and Alekseyev had appears to have continued after the latter’s

⁵⁷ Kenez, *Civil War 1918*, 167

⁵⁸ Kenez, *Civil War 1919-1920*, 151

⁵⁹ Volkonskii, *Volunteer Army Alexeiev Denikin*, 29

⁶⁰ Denikin, *White Army*, 162-163

death; however, Denikin clearly lacked interest in political matters and delegated such responsibilities to the Special Council, even though he technically could have managed them himself. As self-appointed military and political head of the Volunteer Army, Denikin could have seized power and installed himself as warlord or dictator. The fact that he didn't clearly indicates that he lacked the desire for such a role.

Denikin personally did not fit the warlord moniker, and neither the Volunteer Army. The Volunteer Army had the Special Council, to which Denikin delegated political tasks, which effectively meant that it was not a warlord organization. The splitting of power means that the group should not be viewed as a cohesive whole, but as a dichotomy between military and political halves. Additionally, the Volunteer Army had some international recognition and backing. The British and French both sent supplies to the Volunteer Army, as well as some diplomatic missions. When lieutenant-colonel Albemarle Blackwood arrived as part of an official British delegation to Denikin's Volunteer army, the White authorities utilized the delegation's presence as propaganda to boost morale.⁶¹ By receiving an official delegation from a foreign power, the Volunteer Army, and by extension Denikin, cannot be perceived as a warlord organization. Until its integration into the larger Armed Forces of South Russia, the Volunteer Army was never a warlord organization, since neither Denikin nor Kornilov were never truly classifiable as warlords.

Much like the Volunteer Army, the Armed Forces of South Russia, also commanded by Denikin, cannot be classified as a warlord organization for numerous reasons. First and foremost, it shouldn't be classified as a warlord organization because Denikin, despite outward

⁶¹ Ainsworth, *Blackwood Report*, 624

appearances, was not a warlord. He had dictatorial control, but willingly devolved his own power. The political power that Denikin had no interest in wielding was traded off to his subordinates, which heavily undermines attempts to classify him as a warlord. Additionally, international recognition by the Allied powers provides a level of legitimacy that warlords normally lack. The recognition of foreign powers was bolstered by that of Admiral Kolchak; Denikin explains, “By decrees of the Supreme Ruler, dated 24th June and 15th December 1919, ‘in the event of (his) illness or death’, I was appointed by the first, Supreme Commander-in-Chief, and by the second, Supreme Ruler.”⁶² While the official transfer of power occurred too late to make any real difference, the decrees nevertheless added further legitimacy to Denikin. The legitimacy that Denikin possessed clearly disqualifies him as a simple warlord, and therefore the Armed Forces of South Russia from being a warlord organization.

After Denikin’s resignation in 1920, leadership of the Armed Forces of South Russia passed to Baron Peter Nikolayevich Wrangel. Wrangel and Denikin stand in stark contrast to each other; Wrangel was an adept diplomat and politician, while Denikin was thoroughly unqualified for either role. The circumstances may derive from the fact that Wrangel was born into nobility, while Denikin was the grandson of a serf. Wrangel had an aristocratic bearing and attitude which tended to polarize those who came into contact with him; he was seen as a promising young officer or, alternatively, as overly ambitious and too concerned with social aspects.⁶³ Given his background, Wrangel likely had a better grasp of political maneuvering and diplomacy, since they were the forte of the nobility in Imperial Russia. Regardless, Wrangel demonstrably proved his capabilities as the Volunteer Army’s final leader. Wrangel was an

⁶² Denikin, *White Army*, 272

⁶³ Lockett, *White Generals*, 358

important figure in the Volunteer Army even before Denikin's resignation, but his influence had not always been positive. The rivalry and friction between Wrangel and Denikin proved greatly detrimental to the White movement.⁶⁴ This rivalry was no longer an issue upon Denikin's resignation. Like Denikin, Wrangel is often labelled as a warlord, though the moniker fits him poorly as well.

Wrangel, a skilled commander, had been with the Volunteer Army since 1918, and had been given a position of command almost immediately upon joining the Volunteer Army. The particular unit he was given was not especially combat worthy, but his skill turned the group into an effective force.⁶⁵ Wrangel had long been known as a courageous commander, so his assumption of command likely brought some sense of renewal to the beleaguered troops. The task to restore the army, however, was almost impossibly difficult. Wrangel knew how demoralized his soldiers were, as well as the danger of the British withdrawing support.⁶⁶ The situation was dire, yet he handled the problem quite well considering. Wrangel summarized both the position he was in and his proposed course of action; “‘The English have decided to withdraw from the game,’ I said. ‘If we reject their mediation, our refusal will give them a pretext for washing their hands of us and withdrawing altogether. I will most certainly never countenance negotiation between ourselves and the Bolsheviks. But I think the most important thing is to avoid giving England an opportunity to leave us in the lurch. We must throw the odium of these negotiations upon England, and prolong them until we have attended to our fortifications, put the Army and the rear in order, secured coal and oil for the Fleet in case of an

⁶⁴ Kenez, *Civil War 1919-1920*, 25

⁶⁵ Lockett, *White Generals*, 189-190

⁶⁶ Kenez, *Civil War 1919-1920*, 260

evacuation.”⁶⁷ Wrangel’s grasp of his strategic position demonstrated his skill as a leader. By playing for time, Wrangel hedged his bets that the Bolsheviks could be outlasted. The possibility still existed at the time that the Bolsheviks could be defeated by an outside force or domestic upheaval; moreover, the only alternative for the White forces was exile.⁶⁸ Wrangel appeared to understand that his position was incredibly precarious and didn’t attempt any major offensives, instead focusing on rebuilding his forces.⁶⁹

Wrangel’s leadership proved to be adept enough to change the course of his armed forces, but the biggest boost he received was the intervention of the Poles in the Civil War. Nevertheless, Wrangel lacked the strength to mount a major offensive, and didn’t want to risk British aid by openly defying their expectations. He decided to announce a minor offensive into the Northern Tauride that would result in a better strategic position as well as capture an area capable of feeding his troops; a move, he argued, that had the added benefit of giving the British leverage over Moscow.⁷⁰ Wrangel’s foreign relations demonstrate his adept leadership, since he was able to successfully persuade the British to allow his offensive. He was far more flexible in his diplomacy than Denikin or Kolchak, who were both quite stubborn.⁷¹ He could also understand international actors far better, particularly the French and the Poles.⁷² Wrangel chose two seemingly contradictory approaches in order to deal with the Western Allies and the Poles at the same time. He negotiated with the Poles in order to recruit Russians on Polish territory into his army; simultaneously, in order to demonstrate to the British and French that he was not hostile to their negotiations, he planned an evacuation from the Crimea, if negotiations with the

⁶⁷ Wrangel, *Always with Honour*, 144

⁶⁸ Kenez, *Civil War 1919-1920*, 262

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 264-265

⁷⁰ Kenez, *Civil War 1919-1920*, 267

⁷¹ Lockett, *White Generals*, 366

⁷² *Ibid.*, 366

Bolsheviks were to fail.⁷³ Wrangel's tactful manipulation of the tactical and diplomatic situation demonstrates his skill as a leader, and proving that he certainly fits many of the criteria for being a warlord.

Wrangel may have fit the warlord criteria better than Denikin, despite his short tenure in office. At the very least, Wrangel's personality fits Sanborn's criteria for a warlord better than Denikin did. He had charisma and was able to implement policies in an effective manner.⁷⁴ Wrangel's political leadership was considerably more adept than that of Denikin. He established the rule of law in his domain, which helped legitimize his rule and fostered support for his regime among the people.⁷⁵ Since Wrangel was already a renowned military commander, his demonstration of adept political leadership proves that he fit Sanborn's prerequisite attributes of military experience, political ambition, and interest in civilian affairs. He also met the requirement for inspiring confidence in the men under his command. He tended to polarize those he encountered into two groups: those who loved him and those who hated him.⁷⁶ His arrogance repelled some, but he had many loyal followers as well. While Wrangel may not have won everyone to his side, he clearly inspired obedience in many of his subordinates. Wrangel, therefore, had the prerequisite character traits that could indicate that he was a warlord.

Unlike those under Denikin, the White forces under Wrangel lacked civilian governance infrastructure. The transplantation of the organs of governance from Ekaterinodar to the Crimea abolished almost all means of control that had been cultivated over the previous years; Wrangel himself writes, "Governmental machinery was almost non-existent."⁷⁷ The lack of non-military

⁷³ Ibid., 366

⁷⁴ Kenez, *Civil War 1919-1920*, 259

⁷⁵ Lockett, *White Generals*, 359

⁷⁶ Kenez, *Civil War 1919-1920*, 25-26

⁷⁷ Wrangel, *Always with Honour*, 149

government is important because it fulfills the requirement of warlordism that the warlord rules through military structures. Additionally, the governmental structures that existed were severely overwhelmed by the tasks with which they were charged. Wrangel writes, “the inefficient financial policy, General Denikin’s obstinate refusal to use the enormous natural wealth of South Russia to attract foreign capital, and the inadequacy of the tax-collecting machinery, all led to a financial system which was summarized by its policy of issuing paper money. Even these issues, coming one after another, could not supply the demand for money, which became more and more pressing as the paper money depreciated.”⁷⁸ The military, therefore, proved to be the only effective means of exercising power for Wrangel.

The forces initially under his command, despite being unable to wage an effective war against the Red forces, was still capable of pacifying the local population in the Crimea. The soldiers themselves, however, were far from a disciplined fighting force. Wrangel describes the forces under his command, “the troops were completely out of hand, for the confused retreat had been going on for several months. Drunkenness, abuse of authority, pillaging, and even assassination had become frequent at the centres where the units were stationed.”⁷⁹ The condition of his forces, however, was improved significantly through Wrangel’s reforms and leadership. He was quite successful in his endeavors, and soon his forces were superior to anything the Whites had possessed since the beginning of the struggle.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, in spite of his success, Wrangel was still unable to mount a large offensive.

Since he exercised power through the military, Wrangel meets the definition of a warlord. His civil governmental structures were in shambles, leaving only military means to exercise

⁷⁸ Ibid., 150

⁷⁹ Ibid., 151

⁸⁰ Kenez, *Civil War 1919-1920*, 265

power. Moreover, Wrangel certainly appears to have ruled as supreme authority. His cabinet, which he had organized, could do nothing more than advise, and was not a governing body.⁸¹ The power that Wrangel wielded was essentially absolute, since the cabinet was charged with executing his orders rather than implementing its own. He had kept the vast majority of power for himself and, unlike Denikin, devolved very little of it.⁸² Since Wrangel had no higher authority above him, he fits the definition of a warlord perfectly. Wrangel exercised effective control over the Crimea, a well-defined region, through the military and was the highest authority.

In spite of evidence to the contrary, there are aspects of Wrangel's rule that undermine attempts to designate him a warlord. The first aspect that prevents this designation is that Wrangel was elected to his position. While not a democratic election in the typical sense, he was chosen for the position by the Council of War, which was the successor body to the earlier Special Council. The Council elected Wrangel, but Denikin himself appointed him.⁸³ As Roger Charlton and Roy May argue, "'warlords' relied upon their personal politico-military skills to establish first, their control over a regional power-base."⁸⁴ Since he didn't seize power of his own accord and instead was invited to lead, Wrangel doesn't appear to be a warlord. The second aspect is the legacy of legitimacy that Wrangel inherited. International recognition of Denikin, in addition to its material benefits, had granted legitimacy to the White movement. The British and the French had sent aid to the Armed Forces of South Russia, as well as increasing the prestige of the movement in the domestic and international circles. Wrangel, therefore, had at least tacit

⁸¹ Lockett, *White Generals*, 360

⁸² Kenez, *Civil War 1919-1920*, 268

⁸³ Lockett, *White Generals*, 354

⁸⁴ Charlton and May, *Warlords Militarism Chad*, 17

approval of the British and French in his endeavors, lending credibility to his regime and undermining attempts to label him a warlord. In addition to international recognition, the southern White movement had domestic recognition. Among his final acts as Supreme Ruler, Kolchak granted Denikin further legitimacy by making him official successor in case of Kolchak's death. Wrangel, as Denikin's appointed successor, also inherited that title and the legitimacy it granted. Thus Wrangel appears to have far more legitimacy than a simple warlord would have had, making it difficult to label him as such.

Self-perception is another important aspect preventing Wrangel from being designated a warlord. Wrangel did not see himself as a warlord, but instead as a dictator.⁸⁵ Wrangel's identity as a dictator shares a common thread with both Denikin and Kolchak. Denikin and Kolchak had attempted to establish themselves as dictators, possessing all power and sharing it with no one; however, neither had been able to effectively rule as dictators, since they both lacked the structures with which to wield absolute power. Wrangel, among his first acts as Denikin's successor, disseminated a statute that described his authority. Wrangel writes, "On March 29th I promulgated a Statute for the administration of the territories occupied by the Armed Forces of South Russia; the Regent and Commander-in-Chief was to exercise the fullest civil and military powers, without any limitations whatsoever. The Cossack territories were to keep their internal autonomy, but the Cossack troops were to be subject to the Commander-in-Chief. From this time on, the Commander-in-Chief had full authority over the Cossack troops; a term was put to the existence of separate regulation for different troops in the same army. This act state the principle of dictatorship clearly and openly for the first time."⁸⁶ Wrangel, therefore, saw himself as a

⁸⁵ Kenez, *Civil War 1919-1920*, 270

⁸⁶ Wrangel, *Always with Honour*, 162-163

dictator, and not a warlord. Wrangel's use of dictatorship could be best understood in this context by Shlapentokh's 'Russian Napoleon' paradigm. The ideal of a strong military leader, or in this case dictator, who could lead Russia through this dark time was a prevalent idea at the time. Wrangel appears to have desired to meet this ideal or, at least, he was inspired by it. Wrangel's notorious black Cossack cherkesska, matching papakha and ceremonial shashka were all clearly an attempt to give an immediate visual impression of military prowess. Since Wrangel was born into a Baltic German noble family nearer the Baltic than the Black sea, his adoption of the garb of the Cossacks was obviously for outward appearances, rather than any cultural importance. His bearing and attire contribute to his image as a military leader, which is in keeping with the Napoleonic leader ideal; thus Wrangel appears to be emulating a warrior-king, rather than a simple warlord.

The Volunteer Army, later the Armed Forces of South Russia, and its respective leaders demonstrate some aspects of warlordism, but the moniker don't describe them very well. Since they were operating with international recognition and had some degree of domestic legitimacy, labelling the White forces as warlords is a mischaracterization of their organization and intentions. It is possible to describe Kornilov, Denikin and Wrangel as warlords, since they fit the technical definition; however, the designation oversimplifies them and ultimately renders it useless.

When the Russian Civil War is discussed, the term of 'warlord' is most frequently ascribed to one of the numerous Cossack atamans. This designation derives, in part, from the vicious reputation of the Cossacks themselves. From the earliest accounts onwards, the Cossacks were usually as bandits and raiders; Tsars often called upon the Cossacks as cavalry and auxiliaries capable of harrying enemy positions. The Cossacks themselves cultivated their image

with flamboyant costumes and reckless behavior. By the advent of the First World War, the Cossacks were feared throughout Central and Eastern Europe, and even in Russia, since they were frequently called upon by the Tsar to suppress revolts and rebellions. Russia's warrior class was reviled throughout 'civilized' society for their perceived barbarity. The Cossacks were difficult to control under ideal conditions, and the Russian Civil War allowed them to run amok, particularly in the far reaches of the collapsing empire.

Accusations of warlordism against Cossack atamans during the Russian Civil War are unsurprising. The Cossacks were organized in a manner that easily facilitated the rise of warlordism, given the military nature of their society. The Cossacks were organized into various 'hosts', *voisko* in Russian; the very word 'host', demonstrates both their militarism and their ancient roots. Additionally, the Cossacks were frequently motivated by the promise of plunder. During the Russian Civil War, some of the worst cases of looting were perpetrated by the Cossacks, who tended to view the act as tradition.⁸⁷ The instances of looting were well-documented in Southern Russia, since Denikin had trouble controlling the Don, Kuban and Terek Cossacks serving under the Volunteer Army. Ataman Krasnov, leader of the Don Cossacks in the early days of the Civil War, has had accusations of warlordism against him.

Pyotr Krasnov was an influential figure even before the outbreak of the Russian Civil War. Kerensky appointed him commander of the army during the October Revolution, though he was unable to depose the Bolsheviks and was taken prisoner. Krasnov, after being paroled by Trotsky, fled south to the Don, his homeland.⁸⁸ The Don region was among the first to overthrow Bolshevik rule, and had established friendly relations with nearby German military units.⁸⁹ Upon

⁸⁷ Kenez, *Civil War 1919-1920*, 27

⁸⁸ Lockett, *White Generals*, 93

⁸⁹ Kenez, *Civil War 1919-1920*, 138-139

his arrival in the Don region, the Don Provisional Government was organizing what would become known as the 'krug for the Salvation of the Don.' The krug was meant to organize the anti-Bolshevik resistance and, to this end, ordered the mobilization of Cossacks for six years, gave stanitsa atamans extraordinary power and established one-man rule.⁹⁰ The rules established by the krug allowed for one man to ascend to dominance. The krug then voted on which man to elect to such an office. Krasnov addressed the krug on May 14; "The General, an excellent speaker, well understood the mood of his listeners and his speech made a profound impression. He called for the preservation of Cossack economic and political privileges, the construction of a strong army, and the creation of a strong central authority in the hands of the Ataman. Perhaps as a result of seeing the enthusiastic response of the delegates to his speech, Krasnov decided to become a candidate. On May 16 the *krug* elected him with a great majority (107 for Krasnov, 10 against, and 13 abstentions)."⁹¹ The overwhelming support for Krasnov demonstrates his personal charisma and leadership potential. Krasnov proved to be an adept leader. He, unlike his predecessor Kaledin, typically acted in tandem with the wishes of his supporters and, unlike Ataman Filimonov, was not boring and uninspiring.⁹² Additionally, he proved capable of maintaining the dignity of his office when conducting negotiations with non-Cossacks.⁹³ Krasnov's popularity and charisma proved invaluable for improving the conditions of the Don Cossack Host.

The situation that Krasnov inherited was chaotic, but not unmanageably so. The Bolsheviks had 70,000 troops, far more than Krasnov's 17,000, but the Bolshevik troops were

⁹⁰ Ibid., 139

⁹¹ Kenez, *Civil War 1918*, 140

⁹² Ibid., 141

⁹³ Ibid., 141

disorganized on hostile territory and constantly harried by Cossack guerillas.⁹⁴ The Don Cossack Host began to liberate its homeland, which gave Krasnov leverage when he decided to negotiate with Germany for additional resources.⁹⁵ Since he controlled the territory himself, he could bargain more effectively. The situation continued to improve when the Germans agreed to supply weapons in exchange for grain; “From the Germans Krasnov received at least eleven thousand rifles, forty-six field-guns, and eighty-eight machine-guns.”⁹⁶ These weapons would improve Krasnov’s army into a formidable force, with which he could begin to counterattack the Bolsheviks. The Don Cossack Host began to liberate larger sections of the Don area and increase in strength as it did so, reaching a peak strength of 40,000 men. As the Don Cossack Host peaked in strength, Krasnov’s popularity also reached its apex. He was receiving material support from the Germans and his armies were finding success in the field; he gave an optimistic speech at the opening of the *krug* in late August, and the *krug* promoted him to General of the Cavalry.⁹⁷ Krasnov had achieved much, but knew that more had to be done to protect the Don region from the Bolsheviks.

Krasnov knew that the Bolsheviks would not leave the Don alone forever and had to be deposed. The Cossacks, however, did not want to fight to claim territory outside of their perceived homeland; “Krasnov succeeded in persuading the *krug* that cities bordering on the *voisko* – Tsaritsyn, Kamyshin, Balashov, Povorino, Novokhopersk, Kalach, and Boguchar – must be occupied; no formal decision of the *krug*, however, could do much about the Cossacks’ lack of desire to fight.”⁹⁸ The attitudes of the common soldier were largely mirrored in the upper

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 141-142

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 144

⁹⁶ Lockett, 159-160

⁹⁷ Kenez, *Civil War 1918*, 230

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 175

command of the army.⁹⁹ Additionally, only Krasnov appeared to have understood the magnitude of the conflict in which they were embroiled.¹⁰⁰ While Krasnov understood the wider implications and importance of the struggle, the majority of his followers simply lacked that level of awareness; “Krasnov’s army had been on the furthest boundaries of the territory that the average Cossack was likely to construe as belonging to the Don, and his troops saw no reason for going any further. Krasnov himself realized that the long-term security of the Don demanded further advances, but it was another matter to persuade his Cossacks of this.”¹⁰¹ Krasnov’s successful military campaigns, even into territory that had previously been outside of the hegemony of the Don Cossack Host, proved his capability as a commander.

Given the territory and military means of administration, Krasnov appears to be a warlord. Krasnov’s Cossack Host was his military, and partially fulfilled the role of civil governance as well. Denikin asserts that Krasnov “exercised sole and absolute power” and “governed autocratically;”¹⁰² this assertion indicates that Krasnov answered to no higher authority than himself during his time as ataman, further strengthening the assertion that he was a warlord. However, he doesn’t truly fit the moniker of warlord.

Krasnov, despite fitting the technical definition, was not a warlord for several reasons. Denikin’s assertion about Krasnov’s absolute power may be correct, but Krasnov still had to answer to the krug that elected him. He was elected and could easily be voted out. He owed a lot of his support to the prestige he garnered from his numerous successes, however he could also lose that prestige just as easily. Krasnov’s attempts to capture areas outside of the Don region

⁹⁹ Ibid., 175

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 175

¹⁰¹ Lockett, *White Generals*, 248

¹⁰² Denikin, *White Armies*, 128

had been met with resistance from Red Army Cossacks, led by Mironov.¹⁰³ The failure of these offensives, as well as Mironov's popularity among Krasnov's Cossacks, had led to desertions, undermining the morale of Krasnov's army.¹⁰⁴ In this situation and at the urging of other anti-Bolshevik forces, Krasnov turned to Denikin for support.¹⁰⁵ Turning to Denikin demonstrates not only Krasnov's desperation, but also that he clearly was not a warlord. Typically, warlords answer only to themselves, yet sometimes a warlord may defer to stronger warlords.¹⁰⁶ However, it seems unlikely that Krasnov would have deferred to Denikin, given their mutual antipathy. Once Krasnov turned to Denikin, there was a quick succession of events that fundamentally undermined Krasnov's power: the army of the Don Cossacks was united with the Volunteer Army and Germany was defeated. The withdrawal of the Germans from Ukraine also opened the western borders of Krasnov's territory, leaving him unprotected.¹⁰⁷ This desperate situation proved to be Krasnov's undoing.

His failures left him open to criticism, with which he was ill-equipped to contend. Krasnov, despite his charisma, was not an adept politician; "Krasnov had even less patience with political opponents than an average army officer turned politician. He used the terms politician and intellectual interchangeably, and he had nothing but contempt for both. Almost all military leaders of the anti-Bolshevik movement disliked politics, and tended to equate intellectuals, politicians, and socialists, but Krasnov's denunciations of intellectuals were notable for their shrillness."¹⁰⁸ Krasnov's reversals in the field and the necessity of his subservience to the Volunteer Army emboldened his critics. Previously, his rivals and enemies had not publically

¹⁰³ Starikov & Medvedev, *Philip Mironov*, 80-81

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 81

¹⁰⁵ Lockett, *White Generals*, 195

¹⁰⁶ Jackson, *Warlords Alternative Governance*, 134

¹⁰⁷ Kenez, *Civil War 1919-1920*, 19

¹⁰⁸ Kenez, *Civil War 1918*, 231

agitated against him, but soon they became increasingly open and vocal. They circulated the letter he had sent to Kaiser Wilhelm, which hurt his popularity. Additionally, they began lambasting him for his ties to Germany, his monarchism, his conservatism and blaming him for the unsatisfactory relationship with the Volunteer Army.¹⁰⁹ Given his lack of political savvy, Krasnov was not able to maintain his position; “It was the virtual collapse of the Army of the Don – and the realisation that, if it was to be re-organized, this would have to be done by the Volunteers – that precipitated the resignation of Krasnov on 14 February. A vote of censure was passed by the Krug on the commander of the Army of the Don, and Krasnov, rightly, interpreted this as an indication that it was time for him to leave.”¹¹⁰ The final proof that Krasnov is not a warlord is that he resigned and fled abroad. He did not wait for another election, nor did he attempt to seize power, both of which seem more likely paths for a warlord to take. Therefore Krasnov clearly does not fit the moniker of warlord.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 231

¹¹⁰ Lockett, *White Generals*, 254

CHAPTER THREE

KOLCHAK'S WHITES

In Siberia, the Bolsheviks were not particularly strong; the major population centers largely lacked an urban working class and the peasants in the countryside were mostly independent and had no oppressive noble landlords. The Bolsheviks, therefore, had no natural base to strengthen their position or draw additional support. When the Bolsheviks were ejected from power in Siberia, no clear successor existed to consolidate existing anti-Bolshevik sentiment into a unified movement. The political atmosphere was chaotic and had several major divisions.¹¹¹ The fractured populace was represented by several competing political bodies, which harbored varying levels of antipathy toward each other; however, these competing bodies understood the need for unity against the Bolsheviks.¹¹² The unification of the various and frequently competing groups was not, however, very effective. The Czechoslovaks, who had thrown out the Bolsheviks initially, allowed for a conference at Ufa in order to establish a unified government. At this conference, the competing interests coalesced into a compromise coalition government called the Provisional All-Russian Government, also known as the Directory.¹¹³ The Directory would ultimately prove to be an ineffectual government.

The Directory, based initially in Ufa, was moved to Omsk soon after its formation. The government was in dire condition from the beginning, since it lacked everything necessary to govern from buildings to equipment to people; the Directory, which was essentially a government in name only, needed tools of governance.¹¹⁴ The weakness of the Directory,

¹¹¹ Berk, *Coup of Admiral Kolchak*, 224

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 336

¹¹³ Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, 10

¹¹⁴ Berk, *Coup of Admiral Kolchak*, 407

especially after its move to Omsk, was well-known by its members, who immediately sought to resolve the problem. It relied on the Czech Legion to pressure the Siberian Provisional Government, which finally agreed to dissolve itself in favor of the Directory in exchange for certain concessions.¹¹⁵ The friction between the Siberian Provisional Government and the Directory manifested through delays in implementation of the agreement. Kolchak's arrival created one more problem for the already embattled Directory. Despite establishing itself as the sole legitimate authority in Siberia, the Directory faced increasing pressure from right-wing elements that refused to recognize its authority. These right-wing forces, primarily Kadets and Cossacks, planned a coup to overthrow the Directory.¹¹⁶ Kolchak had apparently not been party to preparations for the coup, and, while he had heard rumors, he only learned about it afterwards. In his testimony, Kolchak explained, "I learned of the accomplished overturn in my apartment at four o'clock in the morning. (...) I asked: 'What units made the arrest?' He replied that he didn't know."¹¹⁷ In a subsequent meeting of the remains of the Directory, Kolchak was chosen to become dictator.

The outcome of the coup may have been a surprise to Kolchak himself, but it appears that others had been pushing for a similar situation beforehand. Allied representatives, notably the British, believed that a military dictatorship was necessary to stop Bolshevism and opposed the Directory.¹¹⁸ Allied silence on the coup was construed as tacit approval, which emboldened the conspirators.¹¹⁹ If the Allies had truly desired, Kolchak could have been pressured into

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 407-409

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 399

¹¹⁷ Varneck and Fisher, 170

¹¹⁸ Berk, *Coup of Admiral Kolchak*, 400

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 400

relinquishing his authority. Since this never materialized, however, Allied powers appear to have preferred Kolchak to the Directory.

The actions of military elements, namely Cossacks, resulted in Kolchak's supremacy and granted him control of a vast swath of territory. Thus Kolchak meets the requirements for being a warlord, or at least it appears to be the case. Kolchak, despite gaining power through military means, actually ruled through civil means. Kolchak seems to have understood his role as a military dictator, rather than as a warlord. In his testimony, he explains, "we have a code of war-time rules and regulations for governing the army, a work of extraordinary profound thought, taken from foreign sources and checked against all similar works in Germany, England, and France. It is really a code of dictatorship, a code of purely military administration. This was clear to me, as I know this statute very well, have spent much time over it, and consider it to be one of the profoundest and best-pondered military codes of all that we possessed. It was clear to me that, properly speaking, it was essentially impossible to govern the country on the basis of this statute, as it lacks a number of necessary provisions, such as provisions for financial matters, questions of trade and industrial relations; it does not provide for a number of functions of state which a government must perform. For these the war-time code of army government does not provide. It seemed to me therefore that uni-personal power, just like military power, must also be connected with some sort of civil authority, which would act in subordination to the military power outside the theater of war. This would achieve unity in striving for the single aim of carrying on the war. Thus uni-personal power is the sum of two component functions: supreme military command plus supreme civil power acting according to civil routine, by means of which government can be exercised in the territory outside the theater of war."¹²⁰ Kolchak himself

¹²⁰ Fisher and Varneck, *Testimony of Kolchak*, 152

believed that he was a dictator whose primary purpose was conducting the anti-Bolshevik war. Additionally, Kolchak doesn't appear to have a personality suited to warlordism.

Kolchak's personality is similar to many other Russian officers of his time. He is frequently described as having a strong sense of honor and duty. When the Bolshevik Revolution occurred, Kolchak initially offered his services to the British, who turned him down; he claimed that Russian obligations were his obligations, even if the Bolsheviks had concluded peace.¹²¹ Kolchak's sense of duty likely compelled him to accept the responsibilities thrust upon him by the remaining members of the Directory. Similarly, he doesn't appear to have much desire for power. When he was first recruited by the Directory, he was hesitant; he was invited to become Minister of War, which he did not initially wish to accept.¹²² Kolchak's hesitation suggests that he was not power hungry or otherwise inclined toward dictatorial or warlord tendencies.

Kolchak, in a speech in Omsk on April 19, clearly demonstrated his intentions for the future of Russia and his own lack of desire for extended dictatorship. He declared, "The future Russia will be a democratic Russia. The Government, of which I have the honor to be the head, believes in universal suffrage, in the autonomous development of the nationalities comprising Russia, in a democratic solution of the main Russian problems: the land problem and the labor problem."¹²³ He elaborated, "After the menace of Bolshevism is destroyed, the people of Russia, through a freely chosen Constituent Assembly, will express their supreme will and will define the structure of the State, will solve the main political, social and national problems. The Government and myself will consider it our duty to transfer to the Constituent Assembly all the

¹²¹ Fleming, *Fate of Admiral Kolchak*, 33

¹²² Lockett, *White Generals*, 218

¹²³ Wade, *Triumph of Bolshevism*, 184

power which now belongs to the Government.”¹²⁴ Given Kolchak’s stated aims, it seems impossible to describe him as a warlord.

Kolchak, despite fitting many of the criteria of being a warlord, does not appear to earn the moniker. His character, while certainly martial in spirit, is not ambitious or power hungry, and accepted his appointment as dictator out of a sense of duty. Similarly, his understanding of how war was conducted was predicated upon the existence of a certain order, with a military leader at the top of both military and civil governance structures. He received international support when he declared himself Supreme Ruler, which granted him legitimacy. His dictatorship, which is what he himself called it, was also publically declared to be temporary; if Kolchak had truly been a warlord, it seems unlikely that he would relinquish power, let alone publicly declare his ultimate intention to do so. Kolchak, therefore, is not a warlord.

Nikolai Yudenich appears to be an unlikely candidate for warlord, despite potentially meeting some of the requirements for the designation. In early 1919, Yudenich assumed command of the White Northern Corps, based in Estonia at the time. He was commissioned by Kolchak to be Commander-in-Chief of the Baltic area.¹²⁵ Yudenich took command of both Estonian and Russian forces, which controlled little territory initially. The Estonians had agreed to aid the White forces for primarily selfish reasons; the Estonians sought to acquire as much territory as necessary to bargain away to either the Bolsheviks or the Whites in exchange for their independence.¹²⁶ Bolshevik policy toward the Estonians had been one of non-aggression; the Estonian Communist Party Central Committee had told the Russian Central Committee that only an internal revolution would work in Estonia, and therefore peace should be sought between

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 185

¹²⁵ Lockett, *White Generals*, 270

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 300

the Bolsheviks and the Estonian government.¹²⁷ This policy would eventually push Estonians away from the Whites and toward the Bolsheviks.

The indecisiveness and incompetence of the White forces in Estonia perpetually impeded their own interests, making it impossible for Yudenich to mount an offensive against the Bolsheviks. The Estonian demand for independence, which they said had to come from a legitimate government and not Yudenich, caused some chaos in White circles.¹²⁸ The Northwestern Russian Government was created and issued a vague declaration, which Yudenich was pressured into signing and almost immediately repudiated.¹²⁹ The Estonians, who didn't believe the Whites were trustworthy, made aid to Yudenich contingent on western recognition of their independence, to which the Allies would not agree; therefore the Estonians did not provide sufficient aid to Yudenich.¹³⁰ The friction between the parties was never properly resolved, and would partially undermine Yudenich's attempted offensive.

The White Russians were intent on recapturing their own territory, which would allow them to cease their reliance on the Estonians. As the early months of 1919 passed, the White army slowly advanced into Bolshevik-controlled Russia, capturing Pskov in May. With the capture of Pskov, Yudenich suddenly meets the requirements of a warlord, since he controlled territory and ruled through military means. Yudenich controlled a swath of territory east of Lake Peipus, including Pskov, which he intended to control. After capturing this territory, Yudenich wanted to consolidate his gains, establish new bases and not push forward.¹³¹ The territory

¹²⁷ Debo, *Survival and Consolidation*, 124

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 125-126

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 126

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 126

¹³¹ Lockett, *White Generals*, 300-301

captured was not controlled for long, however, as Yudenich's failed offensive resulted in the White forces retreat back into Estonia.

While Yudenich initially appears to fit the criteria of a warlord, he cannot be classified as such. Yudenich's subservience to Kolchak means that he does not fit the requirement of answering to no higher authority than himself. While it is obvious that Kolchak did not issue orders to Yudenich on a regular basis, he himself affirmed his subservience when he took command, and therefore ultimately cannot be classified as a warlord. Additionally, having been officially condoned by Kolchak, Yudenich derives much of his authority through association, rather than through any personal means. Furthermore, Yudenich was very heavily reliant on outside assistance, and lacked the independence of means that a warlord would typically be expected to maintain. Yudenich's army was organized with the aid of the British and Estonians.¹³² Yudenich received supplies, such as tanks, from Britain, meaning that he had to at least partially defer to the British if he wished to continue receiving supplies. While the British never imposed any particular demands on Yudenich, he included British officers, most notably Lt Col Hope Carson, in his planning sessions.¹³³ The Estonians, for their part, eventually captured and interned the remains of Yudenich's forces when they retreated back over the border into Estonia. Clearly the Estonians were not subservient to Yudenich to any great degree. Therefore, given Yudenich's lack of independence from domestic and international forces, he cannot be classified as a warlord.

¹³² Kenez, *Civil War 1919-1920*, 214

¹³³ Parrott, *Hope Carson Estonia*, 143

CHAPTER FOUR

EASTERN WHITES

The accusations of warlordism that have the evidence behind them are against the Eastern Whites. The Eastern Whites were, primarily, Cossack atamans who acted largely independently in the Civil War. Cossacks were known for their independence and jealously protected their autonomy. This coveted autonomy was especially pronounced east of the Ural Mountains, where the Tsar's authority was at its nadir and civil society was still in its infancy. The further away from Moscow, the more independent the Cossacks tended to become; during the Civil War, this trend almost became a rule. When Kolchak declared himself Supreme Ruler, Cossack hosts should have owed loyalty to him, at least theoretically. The reality of the situation was more complex. Siberia was nominally ruled by Kolchak, though his influence was minimal in many areas. The leaders that truly held sway were the atamans of the Cossack hosts. The relationship between Kolchak and the atamans was troubled from the beginning; "The reason for Kolchak's relative powerlessness over the atamans was as simple question of carrots and sticks: he had little to offer to keep them in line and was too far away to make them pay when they defied his instructions. Moreover, virtually his entire was effort depended on supplies coming to Western Siberia from the east along the Trans-Siberian, that is, through the atamans' domains, which meant that he needed them more than they needed him. As a result, the Cossack leaders formally deferred to Omsk but in practice did largely as they pleased. Often they barely even bothered deferring."¹³⁴ In theory, the Cossack atamans were loyal to Kolchak, however, in practice they were only loyal to themselves. The Cossacks had almost free reign to do as they wished, which

¹³⁴ Sunderland, *Baron's Cloak*, 153

many of them took advantage of through robbery or extortion. It is hard to separate the activities of one ataman or Cossack band from the others, as they are frequently lumped together under the term bandit or warlord, but the cultural proclivities of the Cossacks toward this sort of behavior is clear. It is important to understand this background before assessing which atamans truly deserve the title of warlord.

Grigori Semenov was a Cossack born in the Transbaikalia region and was of mixed Russian and Buryat descent. From the start, Semenov was not a typical Russian officer. Wrangel, who served as Semenov's commanding officer during the First World War, describes him, "Semenov was a Transbaikalian Cossack – dark and thick-set, and of the rather alert Mongolian type. His intelligence was of a specifically Cossack caliber, and he was an exemplary soldier, especially courageous when under the eye of his superior. He knew how to make himself popular with Cossacks and officers alike, but he had his weaknesses – a love of intrigue and indifference to the means by which he achieved his ends. Though capable and ingenious, he had received no education and his outlook was narrow."¹³⁵ Though Semenov had, in fact, received an education, he was clearly not seen as a normal Tsarist officer; he had a certain coarseness of character that put him at odds with most other Tsarist officers and, later, White forces during the Civil War.¹³⁶ Semenov was vehemently anti-Bolshevik, as many Cossacks were, and he was relatively successful in purging them from his homeland. He was openly committed to resisting the Bolsheviks from as early as 1917; though the Bolsheviks had taken control of Trans-Baikalia, Semenov was able to wrest control from them by August of the following year.¹³⁷ He took

¹³⁵ Wrangel, *Always with Honour*, 6

¹³⁶ Bisher, *White Terror*, 27

¹³⁷ Sunderland, *Baron's Cloak*, 153

control of the city of Chita, and made it his capital.¹³⁸ In October of 1918, Semenov was chosen by Ivanov-Rinov to be supreme commandant of Priamurskii krai, which enhanced his legitimacy greatly.¹³⁹

Semenov's rise to power was relatively surprising, given his background. Wrangel himself expressed "I have never been able to understand how he came to play a leading role."¹⁴⁰ Semenov's service to the Tsar's military likely gave him enough legitimacy to gather an army, which he then used to impose order on the chaos. Semenov's initial successes utilized the instability of the frontier to his own advantage and he gained additional legitimacy through the order he imposed.¹⁴¹ Despite this restoration of order, his means of achieving his ends were frequently brutal; Dmitri Vladimirovich Filatev wrote that Semenov, "was a man absolutely without principles, did not disdain any means, including robbery and killings."¹⁴² This quote demonstrates both Semenov's unscrupulous means, as well as the scorn that many officers felt towards him. Filatev's disdain for Semenov is likely due to the latter's perpetual disruption of Kolchak's operations.

Semenov's relationship with Kolchak was troubled from the start, due in large part to their personalities as both men were quite stubborn and capable of holding a grudge. Semenov's first encounter with Kolchak occurred in Harbin, and their initial hostility proved to be lasting.¹⁴³ Semenov described Kolchak as neurotic and short-tempered, as well as claiming that he was not well informed about the situation in the Far East.¹⁴⁴ Kolchak, according to Semenov, talked

¹³⁸ Ibid., 153

¹³⁹ Eiche, *Optokinutyi Tyl*, 59

¹⁴⁰ Wrangel, *Always with Honour*, 6

¹⁴¹ Sunderland, *Baron's Cloak*, 156

¹⁴² Filatev, *Katastrofa Belogo*, 37

¹⁴³ Petroff, *Remembering Forgotten War*, 143

¹⁴⁴ Semenov, *O Sebe*, 150

down to him and dismissed his role in the conflict.¹⁴⁵ Their relationship was off to a rocky start, though Semenov claimed that he would be willing to subordinate his command to a superior officer; the reason he gives for not having done so was that Horvath did not accept his offer ‘on time’ and no other officer had accepted ‘on time’ either.¹⁴⁶ Filatev describes an incident that highlights both their mutual antipathy and the overall absurdity of their feud: Semenov sent one of his men to arrest one of Kolchak’s officers; Kolchak, having learned of the plot, arrested Semenov’s man instead. Semenov was so offended that later he refused to aid Kolchak against the Bolsheviks.¹⁴⁷ Semenov’s refusal to aid against the Bolsheviks became outright mutiny when he refused to accept Kolchak as Supreme Ruler; Semenov was pressured by other Cossack leaders to recognize Kolchak, but Semenov resisted.¹⁴⁸ The reaction from Kolchak was to issue Order No. 61, in which he officially threatened to rescind Semenov’s rank and strip him of all his awards and decorations.¹⁴⁹ Semenov remained obstinate and proceeded to cut off the Russian Far East from the rest of Siberia. He began stopping trains at the Dauria station, searching eastbound passengers and confiscating property, as well as westbound trains to seize military equipment and supplies.¹⁵⁰ Kolchak sent an army to remove Semenov, but his army was stopped by the Japanese, who said that they wouldn’t allow military actions on their territory.¹⁵¹ Suddenly, Semenov’s insubordination becomes easier to understand: he had a foreign backer.

Japan, which had designs on parts of East Asia, was supporting Semenov in order to undermine Kolchak’s authority. During Semenov’s meeting with the soon-to-be Supreme Ruler

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 150

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 150

¹⁴⁷ Filatev, *Katastrofa Belogo*, 37-38

¹⁴⁸ Petroff, *Remembering Forgotten War*, 143

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 143

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 143-144

¹⁵¹ Filatev, *Katastrofa Belogo*, 39

in Harbin, Kolchak mentioned that he did not trust the Japanese, whom he believed were only interested in helping in the Civil War so that they could claim territory; Semenov dismissed Kolchak's distrust as merely antipathy toward the Japanese.¹⁵² The Japanese, for their part, knew that Semenov was much easier to manipulate and preferred to work with him, since they knew he would rather play an important role in East Asia than a minor role in Russia.¹⁵³ Additionally, Japanese interests in the area ran counter to the interests of the other Allied nations; "The Western powers wanted a stable government in Siberia in order to resurrect the Russian army and reconstitute the Eastern Front against the Central Powers. But the Japanese, who had ambitions to annex Russia's Far East, wanted, on the contrary, instability."¹⁵⁴

The international situation, however, changed when Kolchak began to achieve success. As a result, the Japanese decided to reverse their earlier policy towards Kolchak, and attempted to broker a truce between Semenov and Kolchak.¹⁵⁵ Semenov finally pledged his support to Kolchak, whereupon he was promoted to general.¹⁵⁶ Semenov also pledged to stop obstructing trains moving through his territory, though this proved to be a short-lived pledge.¹⁵⁷

Semenov's insubordination continued, even after supposedly pledging loyalty to Kolchak. In October 1919, Kolchak had shipped gold to Vladivostok in an attempt to purchase arms and supplies from the Allies. The gold, all 36 tons of it, was intercepted by Semenov in Chita.¹⁵⁸ Semenov's acquisition of the gold was illegal, since he clearly took it without permission from Omsk; "In his published memoir, D.I. Abrikosov (Abrikossow), chargé of the

¹⁵² Semenov, *O Sebe*, 150-151

¹⁵³ Paine, *Imperial Rivals*, 316

¹⁵⁴ Figes, *People's Tragedy*, 651

¹⁵⁵ Petroff, *Remembering Forgotten War*, 176

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 176-177

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 177

¹⁵⁸ Bisher, *White Terror*, 205

Russian Embassy in Tokyo, suggest that Semenov, Japan's puppet in Siberia, would not have dared to seize the gold without previous Japanese approval."¹⁵⁹ Japan clearly had influence over Semenov, since he relied on them for supplies and support beyond what he was able to steal from Kolchak. Semenov wasn't, however, simply a puppet of Japan.

Ataman Semenov, despite his deference to the Japanese, had his own desires and objectives. He was intent on creating his own fiefdom out of the power vacuum in East Asia. While Japan sought to create a puppet buffer state as a bulwark against Bolshevism, Semenov wanted to create a pan-Mongolian state, including Transbaikalia, Inner and Outer Mongolia and many other regions.¹⁶⁰ Semenov knew he couldn't create this state alone, however, and wooed supporters from various parts of his proposed kingdom. He invited important people from these districts in February 1919 to attend a conference wherein they would attempt put Semenov's plan into action; while few people actually attended the conference, there was enough interest to schedule a second conference.¹⁶¹ The second conference, held at Verkhne-Udinsk in March 1919, concluded that Hailar would be the seat of government and that a delegate should be sent to the Paris Peace Conference to seek official recognition.¹⁶² The second conference also decided that Semenov should be made a prince and that an army should be raised to liberate Mongolia from China.¹⁶³ The scope of his plan was immense, and unsurprisingly generated some interest, though the amount of interest was not nearly enough to implement his ambitious dream.

Ataman Semenov, whose aspirations to a pan-Mongolian state would not come to fruition, nevertheless gained sudden and unexpected power in early January 1920. Kolchak

¹⁵⁹ Petroff, *Remembering Forgotten War*, 228

¹⁶⁰ Paine, *Imperial Rivals*, 316

¹⁶¹ Weigh, *Russo-Chinese Diplomacy*, 188

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 188

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 188

issued Orders No. 240 and 241, which promoted Semenov and gave him command of Transbaikalia, Priamursky krai and Irkutsk; Semenov was tasked with safeguarding the deep rear.¹⁶⁴ Kolchak transferred authority to Semenov and resigned the post of Supreme Ruler, which seems absurd given how little Semenov had respected him and how frequently he had undermined him. This additional power further fueled Semenov's dreams of grandeur, though he was forced to abandon Transbaikalia in late 1920.

Semenov's self-perception should be taken into account before any attempt to describe him as a warlord occurs. Wrangel relates one message from Semenov that provides insight into his mindset; "On October 6th I received a telegram from Ataman Semenov who was in command of the fighting in the far east of Russia. It ran as follows: - I understand the character of the Cossacks, the native tribes and the peasants who live on the borders of eastern Russia, and I have come to the irrevocable decision, that not only must I recognize in your person the Government of South Russia, but also that I must submit to you as to the successor of the legitimate Russian Power, whilst I remain the chief authority in far eastern Russia and retain the powers of Commander-in-Chief and Pokhodny Ataman of the Cossack troops of Transbaikalia, Amur, Oussouria, Yenissey, Siberia, Orenburg, and Bachkiria, the last four States having become our property, together with their Governments. The rural population which was intoxicated with the delights of Bolshevism has already begun to grow sober again; the volunteer Cossacks, the native tribes, and the peasants, are returning to our side. The units of my Army find this state of affairs in Transbaikalia, the Oussourian region and Northern Mongolia. In my own name and in that of my troops and the population which is subject to me, I compliment you on the great

¹⁶⁴ Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, 604

services which you have rendered to your country.”¹⁶⁵ There are two important points within this telegram, the first is that Semenov recognizes Wrangel as his superior and the second is Semenov’s mindset. Semenov demonstrates his arrogance as well as being exceedingly braggadocios; Semenov’s tendency toward self-aggrandizement is evident, since he claims authority over all the areas that had been under the control of Kolchak despite not actually controlling most of these areas. In fact, Semenov would have been unable to administer all the territories he claims, even if the Bolsheviks had not occupied parts of them. Semenov controlled his territory through terror and the support of the Japanese, since he lacked the ability to marshal troops effectively.¹⁶⁶ Without a suitably large number of troops to administer all of the territory he claims, Semenov clearly inflates his own importance; Semenov’s troops never numbered more than 12,000.¹⁶⁷ Semenov’s claims to such a vast territory are just that: claims. He couldn’t possibly have administered all the land he claimed to, and utilized brutal tactics to maintain order in the territory he did control.

Semenov, more than most other commanders assessed, fulfills the expectations of a warlord, and certainly acts the part. His activities took advantage of the lawlessness inherent on the fringes of the collapsed empire, where he used his politico-military skill to build a fiefdom. Semenov claimed dominion of Trans-Baikalia and had a makeshift capital at Chita, satisfying the requirement for territory. His hindrance of Kolchak’s war effort, while never enough to have seriously undermined Kolchak’s anti-Bolshevik efforts, demonstrates his antipathy toward his supposed commander as well as toward his supposed homeland; Transbaikalia was Semenov’s true homeland. Much like Chinese warlords, Semenov’s allegiance was to his regional

¹⁶⁵ Wrangel, *Always with Honour*, 197

¹⁶⁶ Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, 605

¹⁶⁷ Pereira, *White Siberia*, 146

homeland, rather than the central government of the empire. He had the personal charisma and leadership to inspire obedience; he made his base of operations in his homeland, among the Transbaikal Cossacks, to bolster his own power. Additionally, he cultivated an image of himself as a leader with ties to all people of the frontier, in an attempt to unite the disparate people under his control.¹⁶⁸ Semenov's control of territory through a military organization demonstrates that he could qualify as a warlord. There is only one issue remaining, which is whether or not he answered to a higher authority. Semenov acknowledged Wrangel as his superior, though this is hardly conclusive; given their geographic separation and inability to otherwise influence each other, it seems that Semenov's acknowledgment is merely ceremonial, much the same as his acknowledgement of Kolchak had been. However, the Japanese exercised influence over him. Moreover, the Japanese were able to directly control him, suggesting that he was not a true warlord.

Baron Roman von Ungern-Sternberg proves to have one of the most enduring legacies to emerge from the Russian Civil War. Ungern left school to enlist in the army during the Russo-Japanese War and, while he didn't see any combat, he was decorated.¹⁶⁹ After the Russo-Japanese, Ungern finished school and, with difficulty, passed the officer's examination.¹⁷⁰ He joined a Cossack regiment and chose to be stationed near Manchuria.¹⁷¹ In the interwar period, Ungern proved restless and hotheaded. It was during the interwar period that he famously picked a fight with a comrade and received a sword-blow to his head which affected him for the rest of his life.¹⁷² At the outbreak of the First World War he joined the Nertchinsk regiment as a sub-

¹⁶⁸ Sunderland, *Baron's Cloak*, 154-155

¹⁶⁹ Sunderland, *Baron's Cloak*, 53

¹⁷⁰ Wrangel, *Always with Honour*, 7

¹⁷¹ Palmer, *Bloody White Baron*, 32-33

¹⁷² Wrangel, *Always with Honour*, 7

lieutenant. It was during the First World War that he made a name for himself through his daring antics; Wrangel described him as “the type that is invaluable in wartime and impossible in times of peace.”¹⁷³ Wrangel, who was his commanding officer, described him as being “of medium height, fair and puny-looking, with a long reddish moustache, but he possessed an iron constitution and ruthless energy. War was his natural element.”¹⁷⁴ Ungern proved Wrangel to be prophetically correct in this last statement; war truly was his natural element. Ungern’s tendency toward violence proved quite useful during the war.¹⁷⁵

Ungern was not a typical Tsarist officer, despite passing the examination. Wrangel offers the best summary of why he did not fit with his fellow officers; “He was not an officer in the ordinary sense, he knew nothing of system, turned up his nose at discipline, and was ignorant of the rudiments of decency and decorum. (...) He was dirty and dressed untidily, slept on the floor with his Cossacks, and messed with them. When he was promoted to a civilized environment his lack of all outward refinement made him conspicuous. I tried in vain to awaken his conscience to the need for adopting at least the external appearance of an officer. He was a man of queer contrasts. He had an original, penetrating mind, but at the same time an astonishing lack of culture, an extremely narrow outlook, the shyness of the savage, a foolish swagger, and an unbridled temper.”¹⁷⁶ The inability of Ungern to adapt to the life of an officer limited his potential upward mobility, as he only achieved the rank of junior captain by 1916 despite being decorated numerous times.¹⁷⁷ His behavior eventually landed him in a military prison in late

¹⁷³ Ibid., 6

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 7

¹⁷⁵ Sunderland, *Baron’s Cloak*, 137

¹⁷⁶ Wrangel, *Always with Honour*, 7

¹⁷⁷ Palmer, *Bloody White Baron*, 74

1916, which he was released from in January 1917.¹⁷⁸ Ungern's release and subsequent reassignment led to his introduction to Semenov, who would have a significant impact on him.

Semenov and Ungern formed a friendship, possibly out of mutual disdain for their fellow officers. They shared many characteristics, notably an ability to inspire obedience among the men under their command as well as an affinity for the eastern reaches of the empire.¹⁷⁹ The two attempted to recruit an Assyrian Christian regiment, though the effort was ultimately for naught.¹⁸⁰ It was during this attempt that Semenov decided to recruit a Buryat regiment, which he received permission to do from the Provisional Government.¹⁸¹ The two travelled together to Transbaikalia, where they attempted, unsuccessfully at first, to recruit Buryat soldiers. The first notable success was when Ungern and a small group of followers managed to disarm a mutinous group of fifteen hundred men at the Manchuli garrison; this success led to additional recruits, numbering several hundred by the beginning of the next year.¹⁸² The two began a long process of increasing the size of their army and shoring up their positions in the Transbaikalia.

While Semenov chose Chita to make his capital, Ungern chose the more modest Dauria, located close to the Chinese border. Despite the town's small size, it sat upon the Trans-Siberian Railroad, making it a valuable town to occupy. Semenov, as ataman of the Transbaikalia Cossacks, held more power and influence than Ungern, though each left the other to their own devices. Ungern utilized his time in Dauria to set up a detention center where Ungern prosecuted an ideological war against perceived enemies; the system of 'justice' that Ungern implemented was crude, consisting of a single officer drafting paperwork for the numerous executions that

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 75

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 75-77

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 78

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 78-79

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 82-83

occurred.¹⁸³ The army that Ungern constructed was staggeringly diverse, with at least a dozen different ethnicities and a range of languages and religions.¹⁸⁴ The army was intended to protect the Trans-Siberian Railroad, as well as serve as Semenov's military police; in order to supply this army, Ungern turned to robbery.¹⁸⁵ In addition to mere robbery, Ungern has been accused of all manner of cruelty and savagery; accounts of merchants being robbed were common, though some also accused Ungern's men of removing fingers to take tight-fitting rings.¹⁸⁶ The reputation of 'the Baron' appears to have spread across Siberia, though it is difficult to separate the myths from reality.

By 1920, White resistance to the Bolsheviks was collapsing throughout Siberia. Semenov, who had been content to let Kolchak struggle with minimal assistance, was suddenly forced to face the Red Army. His troops were woefully outclassed, and Chita was swiftly captured. Moreover, Ungern had taken his Asiatic Division, a cavalry division initially meant to form the core of a larger Mongolian army, and crossed into Mongolia; the so-called "Mongolian campaign" had begun. The certainty of Ungern's plans is unknown; Semenov claims that Ungern was following a plan the two had worked out earlier, while Ungern himself claims that his actions were mostly accidental.¹⁸⁷ Ungern, nevertheless, advanced deep into Mongolia and attempted to take the city of Urga. He attacked twice and was repulsed each time, whereupon he retreated and spent the winter replenishing his supplies and manpower.¹⁸⁸ The third attack was preceded by a mission to rescue Bogd Khan, who was being held under guard by the Chinese.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸³ Sunderland, *Baron's Cloak*, 160-161

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 161

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 161-162

¹⁸⁶ Palmer, *Bloody White Baron*, 93-94

¹⁸⁷ Sunderland, *Baron's Cloak*, 165-166

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 172

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 173

The rescue of Bogd Khan, who was a beloved figure, granted Ungern legitimacy among the Mongols.¹⁹⁰ The ‘liberation’ of Urga was accomplished soon afterwards; pogroms against the Jews and Socialists, as well as the Chinese, accompanied Ungern’s arrival.¹⁹¹ Ungern, named commander of the army by the restored Bogd Khan, pursued the Chinese forces that had fled.¹⁹² The restoration of Bogd Khan was the first step in Ungern’s monarchist goals, though his plans were unclear at best.¹⁹³ In May of the following year, Ungern began a campaign to retake Siberia. Ungern experienced some victories and some defeats, though mostly fought skirmishes rather than pitched battles. It was during this fateful campaign that he was ultimately captured, betrayed by his own forces.¹⁹⁴

On the day his troops left Urga, Ungern issued Order No. 15; the order itself was a call to arms for any White forces left in Mongolia and Siberia, as well as an apocalyptic decree against Bolshevism.^{195 196} His goal in creating the order, according to his post-capture testimony, was to convince White forces in Mongolia and Siberia to join him and to bolster his authority among his regional commanders.¹⁹⁷ Ungern planned to raise a Mongol army to stop socialism, not only in Russia but all Eastern Europe.¹⁹⁸ The order gives some insight into Ungern’s command, the disorganization of which often worked against him. Since he had no centralized command, it was difficult for him to get his orders to his men. Many of his orders were simply orders to bring Decree No. 15 to the men.¹⁹⁹ Order No. 15 presents a unique mirror of Ungern himself; he was a

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 174

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 174-175

¹⁹² Ibid., 178

¹⁹³ Ibid., 183-184

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 205-207

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 196-199

¹⁹⁶ Kuzmin, *Legendarnyi Baron*, 26

¹⁹⁷ Sunderland, *Baron’s Cloak*, 200

¹⁹⁸ Kuzmin, *Legendarnyi Baron*, 90

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 105

chaotic and impulsive commander, whose ambitions severely overreached his capacities. He was frequently impatient to the point of recklessness.²⁰⁰ He was a strict disciplinarian and supported informing among his troops; he beat soldiers who disobeyed him as well as attempted deserters, sometimes killing the latter.²⁰¹ He preferred his soldiers uneducated and he had few officers; Ungern valued blind obedience to his will above all other considerations.²⁰² In fact, he even valued uneducated officers, having once turned down an officer for promotion whom he deemed ‘too educated.’²⁰³ The lack of education among his men served to exacerbate command structure issues; it was always difficult for him to coordinate his troops, especially given his lack of officers. His inefficient command structure allowed one of his commanders to refuse to subordinate himself to Ungern, which was unknown to the latter until 1921.²⁰⁴ He was a good partisan, but a poor commander; he had a strong will, hardy constitution and could orient himself well at night, but was a poor tactician, strategist, politician and administrator.²⁰⁵ One potential outcome of this was that desertions were common.²⁰⁶ His demise also speaks to his character; he always assumed loyalty and honesty from his soldiers, and didn’t believe his soldiers capable of lying to him.²⁰⁷ Ungern, therefore, seems to earn his nickname of the “Mad Baron”, though whether he earns the moniker of warlord is harder to determine.

Ungern has frequently been described as a warlord and his actions certainly seem to earn him the moniker, though it is difficult to assert that he is one. Given the numerous desertions, it is hard to argue that he inspired complete obedience in his men, but he did manage to inspire

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 82

²⁰¹ Ibid., 48

²⁰² Ibid., 20

²⁰³ Ibid., 21

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 105

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 320

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 320

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 259

enough obedience to make his Asiatic Cavalry Division a formidable fighting force. Similarly, he had the charisma and leadership to effectively marshal his troops and lead them into seemingly suicidal operations. The first obstacle to describing Ungern as a warlord lies in his rise to power. Ungern initially held power as Semenov's subordinate, meaning that he did not use his own skill to assemble a powerbase. The Asiatic Cavalry Division was also given to Ungern, rather than recruited by him. These two facts undermine the idea that Ungern was using his own skill to rule as a warlord, but simply enjoyed the patronage of Semenov. Additionally, for the vast majority of the Civil War Ungern obeyed his superior's commands; only after the beginning of the Mongolian campaign can Ungern truly claim to have no higher authority than himself. While Ungern did seem to exercise control over Dauria, he did so with the permission of his friend and superior, Semenov. Thus for the majority of the Civil War, Ungern cannot be classified as a warlord. Problematically, when Ungern finally sets off on his own, he does so by abandoning the territory he controlled, undermining the requirement of holding territory.

Ungern's capture of Urga, which he achieved while obeying no higher authority, appears to fulfill the requirement of control of territory. Ungern captured Urga and was honored by Bogd Khan, who gave him the rank of khan as well as several other titles.²⁰⁸ Ungern did not fully administer Urga, instead he focused on utilizing the resources of the city to marshal a larger army by rounding up any useful supplies left over from the Chinese garrison and conscripting able-bodied men into service.²⁰⁹ Moreover, Ungern set up a police office to take care of enemies, such as spies.²¹⁰ However, some doubt exists as to the extent of Ungern's involvement in the administration of Urga; Tornovski wrote that Ungern was not good a good administrator, and

²⁰⁸ Sunderland, *Baron's Cloak*, 174

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 178-179

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 178

that the majority of administrative work was done by his subordinates.²¹¹ The cavalry was combat-ready only though the work of General Rezukhin, and civil administration in Urga was due to the work of the engineer Rerikh and the doctor Klingenberg.²¹² In fact, Ungern berated those subordinates who were not fighting but focused on civil tasks.²¹³

Ungern did not administer himself, making it difficult to conclude that he was a warlord; a case could be made, however, that he was in control of a warlord organization, and that his underlings functioned as extensions of that organization. Since a warlord organization is made up of members who are specifically initiated, including forced conscription, and function as a group, it appears that Ungern's makeshift military fits within this paradigm, meaning that civil administration performed by underlings can technically be considered an extension of his own authority. In this manner, he appears to meet the requirements of a warlord, since he used his military force to administer the territory. However, he wasn't the only one to administer Urga; Bogd Khan, having been restored to the throne, shared at least some of the responsibilities. Moreover, Bogd Khan had been made the head of state, as Ungern had intended. Since Bogd Khan was the head of state, it would suggest that Ungern was subservient to him. This proves to be difficult to conclude, however, since Bogd Khan had little power without Ungern; shortly after Ungern's forces left, Urga was taken by Red forces, which suggests that Bogd Khan was incapable of maintaining his own power without Ungern's support. If Bogd Khan was as weak as he appeared, then Ungern's subservience to him would be ultimately irrelevant. Thus, Ungern appears to fulfill the requirements for being a warlord during his brief time in Urga; he controlled territory through military means and answered to no higher authority than himself.

²¹¹ Kuzmin, *Legendarnyi Baron*, 321

²¹² *Ibid.*, 321

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 321

Ungern, because he willingly left behind his fiefdom, appears to abandon his warlord title after a very brief time in Urga. He was perpetually restless, and sought fighting constantly; Wrangel described that he was “of the type that is invaluable in wartime and impossible in times of peace.”²¹⁴ Never was this assessment more demonstrably true than when he left the relative safety of Urga to attempt the impossible feat of liberating Siberia with his paltry band of 3,600 men.²¹⁵ Tornovski summed up Ungern as a typical partisan but a bad leader (*vozhd'*), which perfectly encapsulates why he could not stay a warlord in Urga.²¹⁶ If Vinci's definition of a warlord organization was applied to Ungern's force, it may still be possible to argue that he remained a warlord until his capture and the dissolution of his force, though the force existed for such a short time after leaving Urga that it would ultimately be a useless designation. The purpose of Ungern's march, to liberate Siberia, was proof of Ungern's madness; Semenov had been forced out of Transbaikalia in 1920, and the Bolsheviks were consolidating their strength in Siberia. Ungern had no potential for victory, implying that either he planned to find a soldier's death against the Reds or through his intense belief in destiny he had somehow convinced himself of the possibility of success. Both seem plausible given Ungern's personality. Nevertheless, Ungern's tenure as a warlord was incredibly short and willingly abandoned; Semenov had chosen to flee and survive, while Ungern had chosen to charge into a hopeless battle.

Ivan Pavlovich Kalmykov is a relatively mysterious figure in the Russian Civil War. He was elected ataman of the Ussuri Cossacks in 1918, though not actually a Cossack himself.²¹⁷

²¹⁴ Wrangel, *Always with Honour*, 6

²¹⁵ Sunderland, *Baron's Cloak*, 201

²¹⁶ Kuzmin, *Legendarnyi Baron*, 320

²¹⁷ Bisher, *White Terror*, 96

Kalmykov, a traditionalist, attempted to rally the Ussuri Cossacks against the Bolsheviks, but his authority was rebuffed.²¹⁸ With aid of the British and Japanese, Kalmykov attempted a general mobilization of the Ussuri Cossacks, which ultimately failed and forced him to flee with a small number of followers; it was from these followers that Kalmykov formed the *Osobii Kazach'ii Otryad* (OKO), supplied by Japanese weapons and ammunition.²¹⁹ While Kalmykov had international support, monetary and military, from France, Britain and Japan, the OKO was initially quite small, consisting of a mere 150 men.²²⁰ Meanwhile, the pro-Bolshevik elements of the Ussuri Cossacks attempted to disband the Host, and merge it with the peasant populace; Kalmykov responded by issuing a manifesto that derided the Bolsheviks and issued a call to arms.²²¹ Despite his outside support, Kalmykov experienced little success early on, though he had proven himself in battle to his followers.²²² Kalmykov finally achieved some success late in the summer, when the Japanese and OKO defeated Bolshevik forces near Shmakovka and proceeded to take Khabarovsk.²²³ Shortly afterwards, Kalmykov's forces began to commit atrocities against the civilian population of Khabarovsk; some of the crimes attributed to Kalmykov included murdering a band of Austrian musicians as well as Swedish Red Cross workers and robbery of some three million rubles.²²⁴ Other accounts claim that Kalmykov murdered a child and a group of elders for not knowing the location of local Bolsheviks; some of his followers, in the presence of Japanese officers, attacked and beat peasants.²²⁵ The atrocities in Khabarovsk became notorious, and fueled later accusations against Kalmykov of warlordism.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 96

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 97

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 97

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 97

²²² *Ibid.*, 98

²²³ *Ibid.*, 100

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 100-101

²²⁵ Pereira, *White Siberia*, 56

Kalmykov's power only continued to grow after the capture of Khabarovsk. The Japanese Army installed Kalmykov as garrison commander and town commandant, and he began to administer the city.²²⁶ As part of city administration, Kalmykov began to commandeer supplies and forcibly conscript men for his OKO; additionally, he conducted anti-Bolshevik raids, though there is some doubt whether the men executed for such crimes were guilty.²²⁷ Kalmykov then convened another meeting of the Ussuri Cossacks, which provided him the opportunity to be promoted to major general.²²⁸ During this meeting, a representative of Semenov had addressed the group to subtly remind them that they were Semenov's subordinates, which prompted them to agree to form the Union of Far Eastern Cossack Armies with Semenov as its leader.²²⁹ Kalmykov did not have such cordial relations with other White forces, however. Kolchak attempted to replace Kalmykov with another officer, to which the latter responded forcefully that he would not only not obey Kolchak but wouldn't even work with him.²³⁰ Kalmykov soon received supportive telegrams from other White Cossack leaders, though the Japanese, as the true power behind Kalmykov, would prove to be the biggest obstacle to his replacement.²³¹ As long as the Japanese backed Kalmykov, he would prove impossible to remove.

Kalmykov continued to 'administer' Khabarovsk, inspiring terror in its inhabitants. Through his extra-judicial seizures and shipments from the Japanese, Kalmykov amassed an arsenal, including several pieces of artillery and even an armored train.²³² Kalmykov's arsenal

²²⁶ Bisher, *White Terror*, 118

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 118

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 118-119

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 119

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 119

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 119

²³² *Ibid.*, 120

wouldn't be of immediate use, since the Bolsheviks had largely been chased out of the region and the survivors were laying low.²³³ Nevertheless, Kalmykov's Juridical Department frequently arrested citizens on dubious charges, executing them and seizing their assets; many of those put to death for Bolshevik sympathies were wealthy, undermining the credibility of Kalmykov's justice.²³⁴ Kandaurov, head of the Judicial Department, accumulated close to a million rubles in this manner, prompting Kalmykov to arrest him and the rest of the department.²³⁵ Kalmykov then took the money for himself and had the perpetrators shot.²³⁶ His avarice won him few allies, and his inept administration won him even fewer. His territory included Nikolsk-Ussuriisk, though he had been unable to re-impose stability; bands of Austro-Hungarian prisoners were causing trouble and, to make matters worse, the local economy was in shambles.²³⁷ Indeed, Kalmykov apparently had not intended to administer his territory at all and had planned to flee to the United States with his ill-gotten funds; the only reason he was unable to do was because his officers had learned of the plan and kept too close an eye on him.²³⁸ The rich were especially targeted by Kalmykov and his men, though common peasants were also victimized.

Terror became a feature of daily life in Khabarovsk. Major General Graves described Kalmykov as "the notorious murder, robber and cutthroat (...) he was the worst scoundrel I ever saw or ever heard of and I seriously doubt, if one should go entirely through the Standard Dictionary, looking for words descriptive of crime, if a crime could be found that Kalmikoff had not committed."²³⁹ Major General Graves, sickened by Kalmykov's wanton brutality, attempted

²³³ Ibid., 120

²³⁴ Ibid., 120

²³⁵ Ibid., 120

²³⁶ Ibid., 120

²³⁷ Ibid., 120

²³⁸ Ibid., 143

²³⁹ Graves, *America's Siberian Adventure*, 90

to stop him by threatening his arrest should he murder another Russian; “I received a reply from Japanese Headquarters saying: ‘Kalmikoff had promised them, on November 28, that he would not kill any more people, and that he had kept that promise but, if I desired, they would join me in notifying him as I had suggested.’ It was evident that Kalmikoff did not kill, after that, where Americans could verify the murder, but it was evident that he was taking his victims where Americans could not see their bodies.”²⁴⁰ Kalmykov became an expert in unorthodox methods of disposing of bodies. Major General Graves reported an incident where two peasant women came to him after Kalmykov had kidnapped their husbands; “Kalmikoff replied that they had escaped, and he gave the Commanding Officer, what purported to be, a copy of instructions he had sent to all stations to see that they were recaptured. It later developed that when his train was passing over a lake, Kalmikoff had it stop while he had stones tied to the necks of these men, and they were thrown into the lake.”²⁴¹ Kalmykov, whose Japanese overlords ensured his free rein, continued to brutalize his subjects.

Kalmykov, despite his success, was not an adept leader. Major General Graves recalls an incident of desertion of OKO members; “On the nights of January 27 and 28, 1919, seven hundred of Kalmikoff’s troops deserted. Three hundred of these men went into hiding in near by towns; about thirty asked protection of the Chinese troops, and three hundred and ninety-eight, with animals and arms, including 4 guns and 3 machine guns, came in a body to Headquarters 27th Infantry, and told the American Commander if he would give them protection from Kalmikoff, they would surrender their arms and equipment; but if the American Commander would not protect them, they would return in a body and fight it out with the remainder of

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 127-128

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 128

Kalmikoff's troops. According to Japanese statement there still remained about four hundred Cossacks with Kalmikoff."²⁴² Kalmykov's lack of leadership is evident. Approximately two thirds of his forces abandoned him, with only one third remaining loyal. According to Major General Graves, shortly after the mass desertion, Colonel Styer sent him a telegram reading "there is no semblance of discipline left in Kalmikoff's force."²⁴³ The breakdown in discipline is hardly surprising, given that many of Kalmykov's forces were raised through forced conscription and maintained through terror.

Kalmykov clearly meets most of the criteria of a warlord. His territory, which included Khabarovsk, Iman and Nikolsk-Ussuriisk, was ruled through military means. Kalmykov fails only to meet one requirement: having no higher authority than himself. He clearly has two would-be masters, Semenov and the Japanese. Semenov's relationship with Kalmykov is rather superficial. While Semenov was his superior, Kalmykov was functionally independent. The two were very similar; they both led Cossack bands that actually contained few Cossacks and ruled territory as warlords. They were both vehemently anti-Bolshevik, though the extent of their anti-Bolshevik activity was generally confined to their respective territories. Additionally, the two frequently agreed on matters, such as their mutual distrust of the Americans, and occasionally worked together. Moreover, they each had their own fiefdom to manage, and lacked a reliable command structure that would allow them to part from their territories for extended lengths of time. Therefore Semenov likely exerted no real direct influence on Kalmykov, and his authority was mostly ceremonial. The Japanese, however, prove to be more difficult to dismiss; they provided immense support to Kalmykov, while simultaneously giving him explicit commands.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 130

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 133

While Kalmykov may have operated with impunity in most regards, the Japanese ultimately controlled him. Kalmykov appears to be very similar to Semenov, in this regard.

Warlordism during the Russian Civil War appears to have been confined to the Far East, where Cossack atamans carved fiefdoms out of the crumbling empire. This assessment misses one crucial commonality to the warlords of the Civil War: the involvement of the Japanese. The Cossack atamans, most notably Semenov and Kalmykov, operated under the aegis of the Japanese Army, who provided them with material and financial support. While other Allied nations supported Kolchak, Japan provided immense support to the Cossack atamans who opposed the Supreme Ruler. These Cossack atamans, who fit the title of warlord more than any other White commanders, received massive incentives to obey Japanese commands. The atamans and the Japanese formed a symbiotic relationship; the atamans provided the Japanese with agents from the native population that could present a more legitimate face for Japanese imperial interests, while the Japanese provided the atamans with weapons, ammunition, supplies and occasionally even troops. The client states of the atamans provided the Japanese with a buffer against Bolshevism, as well as a means of extending Japanese interests further into the Russian Far East.

Semenov was the most successful of the ataman warlords and consequently relied on the Japanese less than his fellow warlords. Initially, the Japanese provided considerable assistance to Semenov; the *Osobii Manchzhurskii Otryad (OMO)* force that Semenov assembled was organized with the help of the Japanese.²⁴⁴ However, once he had conquered Transbaikal and established himself, he relied less on the Japanese. Semenov's ties to the Japanese undermined

²⁴⁴ Bisher, *White Terror*, 80

his authority, as did perceptions of the barbarity of his OMO troops.²⁴⁵ Nevertheless, Semenov was able to re-establish some semblance of law and order, particularly by reopening the law courts at Starnovski House.²⁴⁶ Additionally, Semenov's natural leadership and charisma meant that he was more successful in attracting followers to his cause. While he still committed criminal acts, his crimes were largely property crimes; he robbed passenger trains, stole military supplies and seized property. The extent of Japanese involvement in Chita was minimal. Their troops were clearly present, but their interference in matters of governance was limited.²⁴⁷ Instead, they focused on extracting wealth; they purchased iron and gold mines in Semenov's territory, as well as flooded Transbaikal with Japanese goods.²⁴⁸ Semenov, for his part, toadies support from the Japanese Army, but didn't overly concern himself with Japanese ambitions in the area.²⁴⁹ He did, however, receive material and financial support from the Japanese.²⁵⁰ Semenov's doom came with the fall of Kolchak's regime, which opened his territory to the possibility of invasion from the Red Army. Even with Japanese support, Semenov was unable to hold off the Red Army's advance, and was forced into successive retreats.

Kalmykov, while not as successful as Semenov, achieved some success as a warlord, though his reliance on Japan was much more pronounced. Kalmykov's OKO was significantly weaker than Semenov's OMO. As a result, he required the assistance of the Japanese to conquer the territory that he would eventually rule as warlord. The Japanese joined forces with the OKO to conquer Khabarovsk; unlike Semenov, Kalmykov was too weak initially to conquer territory for himself. In fact, Kalmykov's rule would prove to be marked by an overreliance on Japanese

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 105

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 105

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 122

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 123

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 122

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 122

support. Kalmykov lacked Semenov's charisma, which combined with his well-known and wanton cruelty to leave a negative impression. A partial explanation of his poor performance as a warlord lies in his early plan to escape with stolen money, which failed because word of the planned flight got around and his officers kept him under close scrutiny.²⁵¹ Since Kalmykov hadn't planned to actually rule, it makes sense that he would invest little effort into proper administration of his territory. Nevertheless, Kalmykov's inept administration added to the chaos that consumed the territory under his control. The Japanese, for their part, sheltered him from any ramifications of his actions; Major General Graves' attempts to bring punitive actions against him were thwarted by the Japanese at every turn. When Kalmykov's soldiers deserted en masse, Major General Graves' decision to shelter them from Kalmykov's retribution led him into conflict with Japanese Army command. "A Colonel of the General Staff from Japanese Headquarters came to see me and after telling me that the Japanese Chief of Staff was ill, he said he had come to request me to return the prisoners to Kalmikoff. I replied that this would never be done. He then asked me to turn them over to the Japanese and let them settle it. I told him that I considered his suggestion bordered on an insult, and that I had no intention of asking Japanese approval or disapproval of my acts, and that the interview was over."²⁵² The Japanese interest in the matter demonstrates Kalmykov's reliance on them in order to maintain power. Despite Japanese claims that they were not responsible for Kalmykov, he clearly ruled only through their support.

The relationship between the Japanese and their client ataman warlords demonstrated how reliant the latter were on the former. The success of Semenov was due in part to the

²⁵¹ Ibid., 143

²⁵² Graves, *America's Siberian Adventure*, 132-133

Japanese, while almost all of Kalmykov's success was as well. Major General Graves perfectly summarizes the relationship between Japan and its client warlords when he describes an incident that occurred shortly after he returned from Omsk in late 1919; "On September 3, Colonel Sargent, who was in command during my absence in Omsk, cabled the War Department, in part: 'Semenoff and Kalmikoff left Vladivostok for Habarovsk today.' These two Japanese puppets were going to Habarovsk together for some purpose. This purpose was to plan to attack American soldiers. General Horvath, who was opposed to my policy of non-interference, came to me and warned me that Kalmikoff was going to kill some American soldiers. He said that Japan sanctioned this and had given Kalmikoff thirty thousand yen."²⁵³ Clearly Japan wanted to provoke the Americans into leaving, which would allow the Japanese to have free rein in Siberia, and they intended to do this through their warlord puppets. The atamans, for their part, would be suddenly free of the only force in the region that had acted as a check to their exercising complete authority. The Americans acted as a theoretical check to prevent the worst atrocities from being committed, though they frequently were unable to stop them anyway; if the Americans withdrew, the atamans would be able to act as they wished.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 251

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

The primary purpose of this work was to re-assess whether warlordism is a useful or meaningful paradigm when discussing the Russian Civil War and suggest an alternative paradigm to understanding the conflict. The Volunteer Army and its commanders did not fit the moniker well, and use of the term would grossly oversimplify the complexity of their endeavor as well as mischaracterize the organization, its leaders and its governance. Supreme Ruler Kolchak, by taking power from a legitimate governing force, also cannot be described as a warlord. Kolchak ruled dictatorially, though he clearly stated that his dictatorship was purely temporary, and he publically acknowledged the future of Russia would be democratic. Yudenich, having been appointed to his position by Kolchak, never fulfilled the requirements of a warlord. The Cossack ataman Krasnov, who was elected, had some of the characteristics for warlordism, but did not fully realize the role. The other Cossack atamans, Semenov and Kalmykov, proved to have met the requirements for warlordism by carving fiefdoms for themselves out of the unstable Far Eastern frontier. Ungern was the outlier, as he became a warlord for a time before willingly abandoning his territory to pursue the impossible task of liberating Siberia. The Far East provided the most fertile ground for warlordism, since the state was weakest there and there was a competing hegemonic power that could provide support. From this, some conclusions can be drawn that can serve to revise the typical interpretation of the Russian Civil War.

The White forces can generally be divided into two broad categories: Western and Eastern. This division is not meant to be geographical, instead it reflects the orientation of the forces; the Western Whites were concerned with recapturing Moscow and Petrograd in the West, while the Eastern Whites were concerned with building their fiefdoms in the Far East. The

Western White forces include the Volunteer Army and its commanders, Krasnov, Yudenich and Kolchak. The Eastern White forces are comprised of Semenov and Kalmykov; Ungern can also be included, but he doesn't fit many of the patterns otherwise established by the 'true' warlords. These two categories, in addition to providing geographical perspective, serve as a means of differentiating them based on their composition and goals. Western White forces were led by senior Tsarist military officials and sought to restore order and reinstate the borders of Imperial Russia; Eastern White forces were primarily young Tsarist officers who utilized the instability of the Far East, and with the help of the Japanese, to establish fiefdoms and rule as warlords. While both forces were nominally anti-Bolshevik, they had fundamentally different goals and methods of governance. The Western White forces inherited their understanding of the role of government from the legacy of the Tsarist state; their governments were highly centralized, even dictatorial, and the purpose of their governance was to mobilize the resources of their territory in an effort to wage war on the Bolsheviks. The Eastern White forces, conversely, had little regard for formal governance; they controlled through fear, intimidation and force, and their purpose was to extract as much wealth as possible from their territory as possible.

The Western White forces waged an anti-Bolshevik military campaign in pursuit of a united and indivisible Russia. Their blind dedication to this goal would undermine their potential for success by alienating non-Russian populations who sought independence or autonomy. Kolchak was unwilling to give the Estonians independence, which led to the undermining of Yudenich's campaign against Petrograd. Denikin was unwilling to recognize Ukrainian independence, which prevented him from marshaling support from the region after conquering it. Had either Kolchak or Denikin been more flexible, they could have enjoyed more success. The Western White forces were ex-military from the highest ranks: Kolchak had been an admiral,

while Denikin, Wrangel and Yudenich were generals. Their understanding of Russia was profoundly militaristic; they usually believed that the population under them had a 'duty' to obey them, which heavily undermined their ability to govern. By not understanding their populations, they were less successful in mobilizing the resources of their territory to wage their anti-Bolshevik war. The Western White forces were supported by Allied nations that opposed the Bolsheviks; America, France and Britain all contributed financial and military aid to the Western White forces. These same forces tended to shy away from supporting the Eastern White forces, whom they perceived as being largely illegitimate warlords.

The Eastern White forces waged a campaign of terror on their own populations in pursuit of personal gain. The Eastern Whites never seriously concerned themselves with the anti-Bolshevik war; Kolchak's state provided a buffer that protected them from potential invasion. While some anti-Bolshevik activity occurred, it tended to be a thinly-veiled excuse to terrorize their population, extort wealth or justify otherwise criminal behavior. Kalmykov was especially inclined toward savagery in the name of anti-Bolshevism, though his actions likely helped Bolsheviks by engendering resentment among his subjects. Lawlessness and chaos tended to prevail, as the warlords had little interest in proper governance; Kalmykov, in particular, was an incredibly inept administrator who spent the majority of his time terrorizing his populace instead of seeking law and order. The Eastern White forces were supported by Japan, which proves to be the most important player in the Far East. Japan didn't seek the end of Bolshevism itself, but rather a buffer state against Bolshevism that could be manipulated. Japan provided massive financial and military aid to the warlords of these potential buffer states, effectively propping them up and controlling them. Thus Japan's role in the activities of the Eastern White forces

mustn't be understated, as the warlords they installed wouldn't have been nearly as effective without them.

Ungern-Sternberg is the only actor analyzed who does not fit well into either category, though his overall influence in the Russian Civil War was minimal. Ungern doesn't fit well into the East/West dichotomy and established patterns; he fits the 'Easterner' role better than he fits the 'Westerner' role, but not all of its associated tendencies. He was certainly anti-Bolshevik and utilized terror in his fiefdom of Dauria, but he was not a warlord under the employ of Japan. Instead he ran an autonomous operation that was loosely subordinated to Semenov's organization. His only time spent as an actual warlord wasn't even in Russia, but in Mongolia. His influence in the Civil War was limited, initially by his isolation and later by the miniscule size of his force; he was only capable of winning small-scale skirmishes around the Russian border with Mongolia, and was captured some two months after leaving Urga. Thus Ungern is clearly an outlier of the Russian Civil War; he has, perhaps, the most interesting legacy, but he doesn't play a large enough role in the conflict itself to warrant inclusion into either category. He does, however, provide an interesting means of including Mongolia in the conflict; Ungern's abandonment of Urga and Mongolia's subsequent capture by pro-Bolshevik forces allows his story to be included as a means of introducing Mongolia's role in the Civil War.

The broader importance of the Western/Eastern dichotomy is that it allows for a better understanding of the two major anti-Bolshevik White groups in the Russian Civil War, as well as eliminating the troublesome warlord notion. The anti-Bolshevik groups have long been oversimplified into one large heterogeneous "White" group. By dividing this White movement in two based on these broad categories, it allows for two more homogenous groups to be examined and understood. The roles of the interventionist powers can likewise be simplified by splitting

the Whites into two camps; the Western Whites received aid from the traditionally-understood ‘Allies’ of France, America and Britain, while the Eastern Whites were aided by the Japanese, whose involvement has typically been forgotten or ignored. Japanese involvement in Russia can be seen as a reflection of their involvement in China, since they supported regionalist warlords in order to assert a sphere of influence in the remnants of an imperial state. The role of the Japanese, similar in parts of China and the Far East of Russia, should be taken into account when assessing the Eastern White forces. Therefore, the dichotomy can be of use to historiography in the Russian context, but also in the Chinese and Japanese contexts.

The warlord paradigm should be abandoned for the Western/Eastern dichotomy due to the restrictiveness of the former and the broader applicability of the latter. The warlord paradigm had extremely limited usefulness in the Russian context. Warlords can be reclassified as “Eastern White” forces, in order to prevent unnecessary complications in the historiography. The Western Whites have been the focus of the vast majority of the historiography of the Civil War, while the Eastern Whites have had little attention paid to them; the Eastern Whites deserve more analysis, but it should be done with an eye to Japan and China. There are more warlords in the East, to be sure, but not enough research has been done to illuminate the topic; therefore, additional research into other potential warlord candidates in the Far East would allow this dichotomy to be further developed.

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