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# **Maintaining Sovereignty in Africa: The Role of External Forces in Warlord States**

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## **Abstract**

The article presents an analysis of the role that external forces play in the maintenance of sovereignty in Warlord states. We focus on the strategies enacted by various warlords in Africa, specifically in Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Liberia. Latham's concept of 'transterritorial deployments' underpins the article's analysis of African state sovereignty, leading us to argue that in order to maintain sovereignty, rulers of warlord states come to rely upon forms of transterritorial deployment. In this, sovereignty is maintained through a combination of three processes: the auctioning off of state resources, the employment of external actors to fill state roles, and the development of foreign patrimonial networks. This argument provides important insight into local/global interactions and the manner in which they affect perceptions of sovereignty. Moreover, the article highlights the roles that external entities can enact in shaping forms of authority and governance in Africa.

## **Introduction**

For a ruler of a warlord state, sovereignty is a powerful commodity. It permits an unparalleled level of manoeuvrability in the procurement of personal wealth and allows a ruler to "... manipulate [the] enforcement of laws, to generate globally accepted documents, and to hide clandestine activity behind diplomatic immunity."<sup>1</sup> In states where personal interest dominates decision making, maintaining sovereign status is of paramount importance. In this article we present an analysis of the role of external forces in the maintenance of state sovereignty, focusing predominantly on several strategies enacted by various warlords in Africa, specifically in Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Liberia. To demonstrate the necessity of external actors in the legitimisation of a ruler's authoritative position, we draw upon Latham's concept of 'transterritorial deployments,' arguing that in order to maintain

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<sup>1</sup> William Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States*. (London: Lynne Rienner, 1998), 2

sovereignty, rulers of warlord states come to rely upon judicial forms of transterritorial deployment.<sup>2</sup>

The argument is composed of three main strands. First, to clarify the role of external forces in the degradation of a state, we differentiate weak state politics from warlord politics. Fundamentally, such differentiation is best understood in terms of the ruler or ruling body's position on the state's economic responsibility: should the state utilise its resources for collective benefit, or private gain? Also of relevance here is Robert Jackson's concept of the 'quasi-state,' a term used to denote the reliance of a state on foreign aid to compensate for its internal weakness.<sup>3</sup> Second, we introduce the concept of 'transboundary formations'—the intersection between state and non-state entities within the territorial boundaries of the state itself. The notion of transterritorial deployments will also be discussed. Conceived as a dimension or element of transboundary formations, these deployments represent the physical presence of external forces in the state setting. Finally, we highlight significant aspects relating to the concept of sovereignty. Central to this is the identification of reciprocal recognition of a state's sovereign status. In a mutually beneficial practice, instances of legitimate international relations are facilitated by a shared recognition of autonomy. It is from this basis that the article argues that rulers of warlord states maintain sovereignty through a combination of three processes: the auctioning off of state resources, the employment of external actors to fill state roles, and the development of foreign patrimonial networks.

### **Weak, Warlord and Quasi-States**

Central to our analysis of sovereignty is the differentiation of weak state politics from warlord politics. This allows for the critical observation of the contribution on non-state forces to the adoption of warlord tactics, often in an attempt to delay state failure. It also enables a more thorough assessment of the context of the African political landscape. Weak states exhibit many of the characteristics associated with failed states, such as: an unstable political/social/economic environment, an inability to maintain legitimacy, a reliance on patrimonial networks, and a collapse of

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<sup>2</sup> Robert Latham, "Identifying the contours of transboundary political life," in *Intervention and Transnationalism in Africa: Global-Local Networks of Power*, ed. Thomas M. Callaghy, Ronald Kassimir and Robert Latham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> Robert Jackson, *Quasi-states: Sovereignty, International Relations and the Third World*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

the state bureaucracy.<sup>4</sup> Jean-Francois Bayart's notion of 'elite accommodation' provides a crucial insight into weak state policies.<sup>5</sup> Bayart suggests that in order to exercise a significant level of sovereignty within weak states, rulers often develop informal deals with individuals who occupy relevant positions of power.<sup>6</sup> Using the term 'shadow state,' Reno likens elite accommodation to neo-patrimonial forms of governance in that there exists a localisation of power within a specific individual, rather than a legal institution or representing party.<sup>7</sup> Weak states often come to rely on such patrimonial systems in order to bind "potential rivals to them in exchange for largesse without the need to create strong bureaucracies [which they fear] would heighten independent tendencies among elites."<sup>8</sup> An over reliance on maintaining patrimonial networks in an attempt to stabilise authority, however, results in the inability of the state to provide basic public services. This concept is central to Joel Migdal's "politics of survival," wherein the pursuit of authoritative security undermines economic development.<sup>9</sup> The state may view itself as acting in the collective interest by maintaining authoritative control, but its inability to meet the needs of its population undermines its internal sense of legitimacy. Filling the roles left in the wake of the state's inability are local strongmen, individuals whose "broader interests run counter to those of the ruler."<sup>10</sup> Due to this reliance on patrimonial systems—which isolate the working class—when challenged by such strongmen, weak state rulers lack the internal legitimacy to mobilise popular support.

In addition, weak states face acute problems from creditors who demand policy change and reform in exchange for much-needed financial backing. For instance, the World Bank lends to all but one of Africa's 47

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas M. Callaghy, "Networks and Governance in Africa: Innovation in the Debt Regime," in *Intervention and Transnationalism in Africa: Global-Local Networks of Power*, ed. Thomas M. Callaghy, Ronald Kassimir and Robert Latham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); William Zartman, ed. *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1995), 9-10.

<sup>5</sup> Jean-Francois Bayart, *L'etat en Afrique: Politique du Ventre* (Paris: Fayard, 1989), 150ff.

<sup>6</sup> Bayart, *L'etat en Afrique: Politique du Ventre*, 207-227.

<sup>7</sup> Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States*, 2-3.

<sup>8</sup> Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States*, 2.

<sup>9</sup> Joel Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988) 206-236.

<sup>10</sup> Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States*, 4.

sub-Saharan states.<sup>11</sup> In borrowing from the World Bank, each state must recognise the Bank's advice on reform, which emphasises abandoning patrimonial networks.<sup>12</sup> In responding to the call for economic and political liberalisation, however, rulers run the risk of isolating their patrimonial networks, and thus derailing their internal authoritative position.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, any reform that emphasises liberalisation through the creation of strong bureaucratic systems provides an opportunity for the elite to challenge state power.<sup>14</sup> Weak states rely heavily on both the accommodation of the elite and the backing of creditors to stave off threats to state survival. Each of these components plays a significant role in the maintenance of authoritative sovereignty. Yet paradoxically, both cannot exist harmoniously if the state works towards the collective interest. External pressure for greater levels of liberalisation, deriving from non-state creditors, seems to call for the dismantling of established patrimonial networks in favour of regimented bureaucratic institutions. These networks, however, facilitate the ability of a ruler to exercise state autonomy in that they stave off internal power struggles. As such, weak states may seek to adopt warlord strategies that allow them greater manoeuvrability in terms of the manipulation of state resources.

As a weak state slips towards failure, it may adopt warlord strategies to delay its decline; a strategy of state survival. The primary difference between weak state politics and warlord politics is the contrasting focus of collective versus private interest.<sup>15</sup> Within weak states, the pursuit of authoritative power is still theoretically acting to further the collective good; maintaining state authority is considered the best possible scenario for state survival. This is often regardless of any focus on neopatrimonialism, the politics of survival, and the disregard of the working class. Conversely, warlord politics entail an absolute focus on the individual ruler, who adopts strategies that contribute to prolonging his/her position of personal interest, pursuing power through purely

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<sup>11</sup> Jeffrey D. Sachs et al., *Ending Africa's Poverty Trap*. Brookings Papers on Economic Activity, 1: 2004: 117-240.

<sup>12</sup> Callaghy, "Networks and Governance in Africa," 115-116; The World Bank, *Adjustment in Africa: reforms, results, and the road ahead, Volume 1*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) xvii.

<sup>13</sup> Philippe Le Billon, "The political ecology of war: natural resources and armed conflicts," *Political Geography* 20 (2001): 568-569.

<sup>14</sup> Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States*, 21.

<sup>15</sup> Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States*, 1-4.

personal means.<sup>16</sup> Antonio Giustozzi explains that a warlord is “primarily concerned with his own benefit and does not fight for a superior cause.”<sup>17</sup> In order to maintain their authoritative positions, rulers dissolve any institutions that could serve the public interest, under the belief that they may act as stepping stones for potential rivals or unruly citizens.<sup>18</sup> Such states come to rely more heavily on patrimonial systems than weak states, as these help compensate for the lack of internal legitimacy.

These patrimonial networks, however, are not limited to local capacity. An external dimension of elite accommodation allows warlord states to maintain a semblance of international sovereignty while by-passing the liberalisation paradox associated with meeting weak state creditors’ demands for reform. Indeed, finance provided by foreign patronage often serves to maintain a ruler’s internal clientele network.<sup>19</sup> Internal authoritative control is made possible by auctioning off state resources to external entities, which in turn provides funds that can be used to buy political and military legitimacy among a patrimonial network of elites. Robert Jackson uses the term ‘quasi-state’ to describe this combination of external dependency and internal institutional weakness.<sup>20</sup> A quasi-state comes to rely upon foreign patronage systems, as these help compensate for the lack of bureaucratic institutions that result from the adoption of warlord strategies. The leaders of quasi-states are reliant upon the compensating effect of foreign entities to maintain their authoritative positions. These external forces are indeed central in ensuring the international recognition of a ruler’s sovereignty, regardless of local empirical reality.

If networks of patronage extend beyond the territorial boundaries of the state itself, as is often the case with elite accommodation, we find ourselves in the realm of international relations. Within this discipline, the external and internal forces are traditionally regarded separately. However, Callaghy et al. argue for the introduction of the concept of

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<sup>16</sup> William Reno, “War, Markets, and Reconfiguration of West Africa’s Weak States,” *Comparative Politics* 29:4 (1997): 493-510; William Reno, “The Politics of Insurgency in Collapsing States,” *Development and Change* 33:5 (2002): 837- 858.

<sup>17</sup> Antonio Giustozzi, *The Debate on Warlordism: The Importance of Military Legitimacy*. Crisis States Discussion Paper, 13. (London: Crisis States Programme, London School of Economics and Political Science, 2005), 5.

<sup>18</sup> Chris Allen, “Warfare, Endemic Violence & State Collapse in Africa,” *Review of African Political Economy* 81 (1999): 367-384.

<sup>19</sup> Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States*, 2, 21, 30.

<sup>20</sup> Robert Jackson, *Quasi-states: Sovereignty, International Relations and the Third World*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990)

‘transboundary formations,’ wherein the external and internal are analysed in conjunction with each other.<sup>21</sup> As the present analysis is concerned with the role external forces play within a local setting, it is useful here to deconstruct this concept.

### **Transboundary Formations and Transterritorial Deployments**

The term transboundary formation (TF) signifies the intersection of state and non-state actors within the territorial boundaries of the state itself, employed to indicate the junctures of local (state) and external (non-state) forces.<sup>22</sup> The adoption of the term transboundary formation is significant in that it encompasses the considerable diversity that accompanies instances of domestic intersection. Usage of this concept facilitates an understanding of how global, regional, national and local forces are linked through differentiating structures and networks. This connectivity, however, is not limited to a single capacity, such as a physical presence or trade resources. TFs exist within three specific dimensions: international arenas, translocal networks and transterritorial deployments.<sup>23</sup> Broadly speaking, these dimensions can be seen as, or reflective of elements of globalisation theory, as they mirror the global/local interactions of TF.

Arjun Appadurai’s text *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalisation* breaks the theory of globalisation into five basic overlapping components: money, people, ideology, technology and media.<sup>24</sup> We argue that instances of transboundary formation can result from any of these dimensions and may not be limited to a single component. Indeed, within globalisation theory, such global/local interactions can be derivatives of a combination of these antecedent components, for example, technology facilitates media coverage, which is further aided by transportation and this, in turn, relies on finance. Callaghy et al. arrive at a similar conclusion, highlighting the reciprocal

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<sup>21</sup> Thomas M. Callaghy, Ronald Kassimir and Robert Latham, eds. *Intervention and Transnationalism in Africa: Global-Local Networks of Power*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 7.

<sup>22</sup> Robert Latham, “Identifying the contours of transboundary political life.” In *Intervention and Transnationalism in Africa: Global-Local Networks of Power*, eds. Thomas M. Callaghy, Ronald Kassimir and Robert Latham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 84-85.

<sup>23</sup> Callaghy, “Networks and Governance in Africa,” 145; Callaghy et al., *Intervention and Transnationalism*, ix; Latham, “Identifying the contours,” 71.

<sup>24</sup> Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalisation*. 8th ed., (London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 37; Appadurai employs the terms: financescape, ethnoscape, ideoscape, technoscape, and mediascape to classify these components.

flow of ideas often observed in domestic institutions engaging in translocal and transnational interactions.<sup>25</sup> It is reasonable to conclude that transboundary formations are not limited to, nor exist solely within, any one component force, and thus act as examples of globalisation.

Within transboundary formations, a distinction between judicial and non-judicial intersections exists. We use the term ‘judicial’ to denote an institution’s existence as deriving from some form of legal expression, such as “a constitution or chapter that is accorded recognition by other institutions and groups operating as legal entities.”<sup>26</sup> This distinction is critical for illuminating the complexities of order and authority that occur through global/local intersections. Categorising instances of transboundary formation as either judicial or non-judicial not only furthers understanding of how they differ from one another, but assists in the comprehension of their complex interactions. Although this article is focused on judicial forms of intersection, the actors who propagate them are often involved in a range of non-judicial, informal or illegal political and economic practices. In making this distinction here, we differentiate between the forces while allowing for the discussion of significant crossover in the following analysis.

Within the scope of transboundary formation, Robert Latham’s concept of transterritorial deployment (TD) denotes the physical presence of an external force in a domestic setting.<sup>27</sup> Although instances of TF can originate via several forces that have their inspiration in/from globalisation, TD explicitly implies a physical non-state presence within territorial borders.<sup>28</sup> This stands in contrast to contemporary ideological or economic instances of transboundary formation, which often bypass the need for a physical presence; such as offshore banking and online communications. This does not imply, however, that such forces will not result in an eventual physical presence, but rather that their intended purpose does not call for it. TD is unidirectional, in that the external force does not require a reciprocal physical presence. As such, it is distinct from mutual instances of deployment, such as student exchange. This form of transboundary formation only requires the external force to be

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<sup>25</sup> Callaghy et al., *Intervention and Transnationalism*, 17.

<sup>26</sup> Callaghy et al., *Intervention and Transnationalism*, 15.

<sup>27</sup> Latham, “Identifying the contours,” 71, 75.

<sup>28</sup> Ronald Kassimir, “If You Are Part of the Solution, You Are Likely Part of the Problem: Transboundary Formations and Africa.” In *The Study of Africa: Global and Transnational Engagements*, ed. Paul Tiyambe Zeleza (Oxford:African Books Collective, 2006), 45.



present within the territorial borders of the state. Latham, commenting on the origin of the deployment, elaborates upon unidirectional actors by stating that “the place from which they are deployed is typically some kind of organizational platform.”<sup>29</sup> Transnational corporations and international agencies are prominent instigators of TD.<sup>30</sup> For example, the Canada-based exploration and development company Castle Peak Mining Ltd. owns and works on eight gold mines and multiple development projects in Ghana.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, the international non-profit organisation WaterAid works throughout 17 countries in Africa, Asia and the Pacific region.<sup>32</sup>

Similar to the judicial distinction highlighted in TF, both judicial and non-judicial forms of TD also exist. Latham highlights that non-judicial forms include “syndicates and trading diaspora conducting illegal commerce and rebel forces penetrating neighbouring territories.”<sup>33</sup> Similarly, judicial forms include “transnational corporations, development agencies, and peacekeeping troops.”<sup>34</sup> Though judicial and non-judicial forms of TD share similarities, favoured structural and ideological characteristics often serve as markers for their differentiation. Indeed, a classification as judicial informs aspects of the structure and purpose of the organisational platform from which an intersection force is deployed. Identifying the legal disposition of an organisation can help us to understand its general characteristics. For example, an invading militia (non-judicial) will often employ a decentralised cell network, while stationed peacekeeping troops (judicial) will adhere to a hierarchical structure.<sup>35</sup> Though both are examples of TD by non-state actors, the characteristics of their judicial/non-judicial form differentiates them.

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<sup>29</sup> Latham, “Identifying the contours,” 75.

<sup>30</sup> Latham, “Identifying the Contours,”; Yolande Miller-Grandvaux, Michel Welmond, and Joy Wolf, *Evolving Partnerships: The Role of NGOs in Basic Education in Africa*. (Washington: United States Agency for International Development, Bureau for Africa, Office of Sustainable Development, 2002).

<sup>31</sup> InfoMine Inc. *Castle Peak Mining Ltd.* Mining Company & Property Database, 2011, [http://www.infomine.com/index/companies/Castle\\_Peak\\_Mining\\_Ltd..html](http://www.infomine.com/index/companies/Castle_Peak_Mining_Ltd..html) (accessed 4 September 2011).

<sup>32</sup> WaterAid. *About Us: Organisation*. 2011, [http://www.wateraid.org/australia/about\\_us/organisation/default.asp](http://www.wateraid.org/australia/about_us/organisation/default.asp) (accessed 4 September 2011).

<sup>33</sup> Latham, “Identifying the contours,” 17.

<sup>34</sup> Latham, “Identifying the contours,” 17.

<sup>35</sup> Kevin. C. Leahy, *The Impact of Technology on the Command, Control, and Organizational Structure of Insurgent Groups*, A thesis presented to the Faculty of the US Army Command and General Staff College. Scranton, University of Scranton. Master of Military Art and Science, 2005, available at [www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a437024.pdf](http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a437024.pdf) (accessed 15 August 2012), 74.

If we consider instances of transboundary formations to occur in fact, then we are left to contemplate the reasons behind their occurrence. Why do weak African states engage with and allow external forces to hold such levels of authority within their territorial borders? Certainly one such interaction pivotal in the development of transboundary formations is Jean-Francois Bayart's concept of 'extraversion' strategies, which sheds light on how warlord states maintain sovereignty.<sup>36</sup> To compensate for the internal weakness of their state, rulers develop relationships with external entities such as non-African states, transnational corporations and international organisations. As Callaghy et al. explain, individual states utilise extraversion strategies for a plethora of reasons.<sup>37</sup> States such as Mozambique and Uganda draw upon them to stabilise and, in some instances, strengthen their position after significant decline. Nigeria and Kenya have employed strategies of extraversion to alleviate pressure from challenges instigated by non-state transboundary formations. Finally, states such as the DRC, Chad and Sierra Leone have used such strategies to manage decline "while attempting to carve out new orders that might benefit those who control the increasingly hollow state."<sup>38</sup> This concept can be seen as an extension of Bayart's own notion of elite accommodation—that strategies of extraversion expand the concept of regional patronage systems to include foreign investors.<sup>39</sup> As a foreign patrimonial system, it affords external entities similar benefits to those experienced by internal elites. This is significant in that it demonstrates the capacity of external entities to inhabit political positions that run parallel to those of local strongmen, positions which the state then comes to rely upon to maintain sovereignty.

### **Sovereignty**

Thomson has observed that international relations and politics are conducted within a network of sovereign governments.<sup>40</sup> Without the recognition of state autonomy, ethically sound relations—political or economic—cannot transpire on the global stage. It has even been suggested that sovereignty lubricates the machinery of international relations.<sup>41</sup> Chazan et al. consider sovereignty to be the recognition of

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<sup>36</sup> Jean-Francois Bayart, *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly*. (New York: Longman Publishing, 1993), 218.

<sup>37</sup> Callaghy et al., *Intervention and Transnationalism*, 12, 14.

<sup>38</sup> Callaghy et al., *Intervention and Transnationalism*, 12.

<sup>39</sup> Bayart, *L'etat en Afrique: Politique du Ventre*, 150ff.

<sup>40</sup> Alex Thomson, *An Introduction to African Politics.*, 3rd ed., (London and New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2010), 155.

<sup>41</sup> John Hoffman, *Sovereignty*. (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1998).

international legitimacy; indeed this is the most commonly held definition.<sup>42</sup> Drawing upon the notion that sovereignty is the claim of supreme political authority within territorial borders, it stands to reason that the act of engaging in international relations reinforces political autonomy to non-state entities. This is often regardless of localised perceptions of the controlling power's legitimacy and the empirical reality of its ability to fully enact sovereign rule.<sup>43</sup> Sovereignty, in this context, is a mutually beneficial construct in that it allows states to engage in reciprocal recognition. To cite Thomson's example, state A's recognition of state B's sovereign status usually implies a shared recognition of A's own sovereign status.<sup>44</sup> Thus, substantive relations conducted within legitimate global networks allow for the reciprocal recognition of states' autonomous status. Recognition of complete authority is further strengthened by the presence of an international system advocating 'non-interference' in the territorial jurisdiction of other states. Sovereign status, in this regard, implies complete political and military authority within the territorial borders of a state, free from the interference of similarly recognised states.<sup>45</sup> Reno, following Jackson, argues that rulers of quasi-states do not possess sovereignty via internal legitimacy, but rather through a "... globally recognised people's right to a particular territory."<sup>46</sup>

Interestingly, quasi-states do not meet the theoretical requirements for legitimate sovereignty. The ability of a quasi-state to maintain control relies significantly on the backing of external investors to compensate for institutional weakness. In the present argument, rulers of warlord states have been characterised within this article as agents of bureaucratic extirpation.<sup>47</sup> Neopatrimonialism fills the void left in the wake of warlord

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<sup>42</sup> Naomi Chazan, Peter Lewis, Robert Mortimer, Donald Rothchild, Stephen John Stedman, *Politics and Society in Contemporary Africa*. (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999), 30.

<sup>43</sup> David W. Potter, *State Responsibility, Sovereignty, and Failed States*, in *Australasian Political Studies Association Conference*. 2004: University of Adelaide.

<sup>44</sup> Thomson, *An Introduction*, 155.

<sup>45</sup> Conversely, following the Cold War the respect for non-interference has diminished somewhat. Citing humanitarian intervention and 'the fight against terrorism,' major Western powers have been viewed as infringing upon the sovereignty of smaller states.

<sup>46</sup> Jackson, *Quasi-states*; Reno, *Warlord Politics*, 18.

<sup>47</sup> Antonio Giustozzi, *The Debate on Warlordism*, 1; Jeremy I. Levitt, "Illegal Peace?: An Inquiry into the Legality of Power-Sharing with Warlords and Rebels in Africa," *Michigan Journal of International Law* 27(2006):495-577; Kimberly

politics, compensating for the structural insufficiencies of bureaucratic dissolution. Yet, as we argue here, the instances of bureaucratic and military replacement created by TD are merely by-products of the presence of an external force. They do not represent a persistent and reliable structure, let alone a basis for the development of the working class. Sovereignty derives from the recognition (domestic and/or international) of the legitimate use of force. The process of foreign actors propping up quasi-states, and enacting varying levels of political influence, serves to contradict claims of autonomy. Moreover, as political, economic and social activity within the quasi-state's jurisdiction is traditionally centralised in an attempt to monopolise power, state influence will disperse the further one travels from the central city or economic asset.<sup>48</sup> In instances where autonomy is localised, the ruler has a diminished capacity to enact political control throughout territorial borders. External forces however, are may still be willing to recognise that state's sovereignty. This notion of reciprocal benefit is central to our argument here: in order to maintain sovereignty, rulers of warlord states come to rely on judicial forms of TD.

### **Maintaining Sovereignty through Transterritorial Deployments**

Rulers of warlord states reject the pursuit of the collective good, which they view as providing resources to potential rivals. Indeed, this is the primary reason that such rulers abjure the creation of institutions that are "capable of developing independent perspectives."<sup>49</sup> They fear that such institutions will act on interests that run counter to their own. Dissolving bureaucratic institutions provides a barrier to localised economic development, which could be used against the ruler. This termination of state infrastructure, however, isolates the ruler from the local population, which fails to receive vital state support.<sup>50</sup> The resulting deficiency of internal legitimacy is a significant contributing factor in the mobilisation of popular support to challenge strongmen. To compensate, rulers place increasing levels of reliance on internal patrimonial networks. These networks allow the ruler to buy the loyalty of individuals in positions of power. In many cases, these patrimonial systems stem the tide of internal resistance. Consider the emphasis of Liberia's Samuel Doe on accommodating the elite following the violent overthrow of President

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Marten, "Warlordism in Comparative Perspective," *International Security*, 31:3 (2006/07): 41-73.

<sup>48</sup> Thomson, *An Introduction*, 5.

<sup>49</sup> Reno, *Warlord Politics*, 1.

<sup>50</sup> Zartman, *Collapsed States*, 10.

William Tolbert.<sup>51</sup> Doe successfully co-opted and balanced different political factions and created a patrimonial system within the state, allowing for a monopolisation of the distribution of state resources.<sup>52</sup> A reliance on neopatrimonialism, however, can also have the undesired effect of further isolating the ruler from ordinary citizens, as they come to realise that the weakness of their state derives from their ruler's accommodation of the elite. Nevertheless, these patrimonial systems are crucial in maintaining political and military control within territorial borders.

As warlord states lack bureaucratic institutions, and thus vehicles for legitimate economic development, patrimonial systems are kept afloat via wealth derived from foreign investors; accessed through the enactment of strategies of extraversion. This non-state wealth is critical to the maintenance of state sovereignty. Laurent Kabila's march to power over Mobutu in 1997 within the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) highlights the significance of external wealth in establishing authoritative power.<sup>53</sup> As Callaghy et al. have explained, "[i]n order to finance the ongoing uprising, Kabila, as the presumptive new leader of the country, hurriedly made deals with an assortment of international mining companies and other firms."<sup>54</sup> Kabila continued to make these deals, all the while stopping the UN and most non-government organisations from operating within the newly baptised DRC, in a blatant rejection of the UN's liberalist ideology. Indeed, Reno suggests that Kabila's construction of authority took inspiration from Mobutu's own system of resource control.<sup>55</sup> Kabila recognised the value of the state's natural resources, and welcomed foreign firms to invest in them providing they paid a war tax of 15% of the projected investment.<sup>56</sup> When American Mineral Fields (AMF) signed a billion-dollar deal with Kabila in 1997, in addition to providing his regime with a healthy financial boost it helped

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<sup>51</sup> William Reno, "Reinvention of an African patrimonial state: Charles Taylor's Liberia," *Third World Quarterly* 16:1 (1995): 109-120.

<sup>52</sup> Yekutiel Gershoni, "War without End and an End to a War: The Prolonged Wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone," *African Studies Review* 40:3 (1997): 55-76.

<sup>53</sup> Jeffrey Herbst, "Let Them Fail: State Failure in Theory and Practice." In *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences*, ed. Robert I. Rotberg (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 306-308; Filip Reyntjens, "Briefing: The Democratic Republic of Congo, from Kabila to Kabila," *African Affairs* 100:399 (2001): 311-317.

<sup>54</sup> Callaghy et al., *Intervention and Transnationalism*, 2.

<sup>55</sup> Reno, *Warlord Politics*, 13, 172-173.

<sup>56</sup> Reno, *Warlord Politics*, 174.

to legitimise his authoritative position to outsiders.<sup>57</sup> The deal was significant in establishing his credibility with other external investors, as it displayed his willingness to participate in global markets. The subsequent judicial TD served as a form of reciprocal recognition. In establishing himself as an authoritative leader—one who controlled the state’s resources and enacted a significant level of military control—the investment on behalf of the AMF served to reinforce to non-state entities Kabila’s rule.<sup>58</sup> In this instance, investors accepted warlord tactics as long as the maintenance of Kabila’s sovereignty continued to meet their interests.

The role of wealth deriving from transboundary formations in maintaining sovereignty is not limited to reciprocal recognition (Kabila) or the maintenance of patrimonial networks (Doe). Wealth also plays an important factor in maintaining military control over a state’s resources, which rulers can then auction off to achieve global recognition of their state’s sovereignty. In 1994, the civil war in Sierra Leone took a dramatic shift when the country’s diamond, titanium oxide and bauxite mines were captured by local rebels. Responding to this critical situation and the impending attack on the capital Freetown, the ruler Valentine Strasser contracted a number of external military organisations to provide assistance. One such force was the Gurkha Security Guards (GSG), which was hired to train the Republic of Sierra Leone Military Force (RSLMF). The GSG, however, soon came under pressure to directly engage the rebels. Refusing to do so, it became apparent that the RSLMF, regardless of its training, would be unable to recapture the resources of the state without additional help.<sup>59</sup>

Following the refusal of the GSG in Sierra Leone, Strasser’s regime faced widespread warlord competition.<sup>60</sup> Lacking the adequate military force to otherwise legitimise his local position, he contracted the non-state mercenary organisation Executive Outcomes to clear the country’s

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<sup>57</sup> David Barouski, *Mining in the Ituri Province of the Congo: A Contemporary Profile*, 2009, [www.zcommunications.org/mining-in-the-ituri-province-of-the-congo-a-contemporary-profile-by-david-barouski](http://www.zcommunications.org/mining-in-the-ituri-province-of-the-congo-a-contemporary-profile-by-david-barouski) (accessed 5 September 2011).

<sup>58</sup> Jeffrey Herbst, “Let them Fail,” 2004, 302-303; Reno, *Warlord Politics*, 174-175.

<sup>59</sup> Alex Vines, “Gurkhas and the private security business in Africa.” in *Peace, Profit or Plunder? The privatisation of security in war-torn African societies*, eds. Jakkie Cilliers and Peggy Mason (Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, 1999), 123.

<sup>60</sup> Vines, “Gurkhas,” 129-132.

resource areas of their current occupants.<sup>61</sup> The firm was effective in eliminating rebel opposition within the state itself, denying warlord competitors the potential springboard from which to usurp Strasser's position.<sup>62</sup> Collaborating with Brigadier Julius Maada Bio, Strasser's second in command, they managed to clear the capital area of rebels in one week and reconquer the diamond mining areas shortly thereafter.<sup>63</sup> Strasser's regime, however, had very little money to pay for the military services provided by Executive Outcomes: "at first, with about 200 employees, Executive Outcomes' services cost several million dollars a month."<sup>64</sup> Drawing upon his state's reinvigorated sovereign status, Strasser mortgaged off the state's natural resource areas to foreign firms which, thanks to Executive Outcomes, were now free of their previous occupants. In addition financial payment, Executive Outcomes was allowed to organise favoured commercial firms to set up businesses in the territories to exploit natural resources.<sup>65</sup> The most significant of these is the British mining company Branch Energy, which is partly owned by Strategic Resources of Pretoria, the holding company of Executive Outcomes. In this way, Strasser's sovereign status facilitated the hiring of EO, which, at the same time, helped reinforce the status itself. Stability, and thus recognition of sovereignty, was a result of the presence of Executive Outcome. By securing the state's resources, the firm paved the way for its larger investing company, Branch Energy, to develop legal infrastructure within the state itself. The wealth that resulted from contracted judicial TDs, such as that of Branch Energy, allowed Strasser to maintain his local authoritative position and, ultimately, his political autonomy.

Transterritorial deployments also serve a pivotal role in maintaining sovereignty within warlord states by placing external actors in positions of state power. Indeed, the presence of Executive Outcomes was of paramount importance to Strasser's continued sovereignty in Sierra Leone.<sup>66</sup> The militia organisation occupied the role of the state's primary military power, eradicating the rebel forces that had previously plagued

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<sup>61</sup> Herbert M. Howe, "Private Security Forces and African Stability: The Case of Executive Outcomes," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 38:2 (1998): 307-331; Reno, *Warlord Politics*, 131-136.

<sup>62</sup> Vines, "Gurkhas," 129-132.

<sup>63</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Sierra Leone: Getting Away with Murder, Mutilation, and Rape*, UNHCR 1999, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6a7fa0.html> (accessed 15 August 2012).

<sup>64</sup> Reno, *Warlord Politics*, 131.

<sup>65</sup> Howe, "Private Security Forces," 318.

<sup>66</sup> Howe, "Private Security Forces," 313-314.

the state. With EO's direct participation and collaboration, Strasser was able to maintain political and military control over the state and its resources, thereby achieving a level of sovereignty that was recognised internationally. The hiring of Executive Outcomes, however, had an added benefit. The presence of the militia firm allowed Strasser's regime to reduce its reliance on the "underpaid rank-and-file military, which had a tendency to spawn 'sobels,' or soldier-rebels who looted and engaged in clandestine mining like their erstwhile rebel enemies."<sup>67</sup>

Strasser's favouring of external actors for positions of state power was also demonstrated in his contracting of GSG to train Sierra Leonean troops prior to the involvement of Executive Outcomes. Here, Robert Mackenzie, an American professional soldier, served as GSG's Sierra Leone commander.<sup>68</sup> As a hired external force, Mackenzie posed less of a threat to Strasser's authority than a local strongman delegated the same level of command. Placing internal actors in positions of power creates opportunities for localised conflict, for example, in the form of insurgent movements. Conversely, external judicial actors represent far less of a threat to the maintenance of authority as they lack the patrimonial networks that facilitate strongman power. In some cases, transnational corporations engaging in TD enact a level of independence in providing their own military protection. Not willing to rely on the state military, they employ local strongmen and/or external militia firms to compensate for the lack of state infrastructure.<sup>69</sup>

Indeed, the level of support these deployments bring with them is sometimes enough to balance out the degrading effects warlord strategies have on the local population. If nothing else, they provide an ad hoc military defence from local rebel movements looking to acquire valuable state resources. Interestingly, because such quasi-states rely so heavily on foreign patrimonial networks to support their regimes, they do not technically qualify for sovereign status. Considering that sovereignty is the recognition of significant political and military control within

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<sup>67</sup> William Reno, "How Sovereignty Matters: International Markets and the Political Economy of Local Politics in Weak States." In *Intervention and Transnationalism in Africa: Global-Local Networks of Power*, ed. Thomas M. Callaghy et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 208.

<sup>68</sup> Vines, "Gurkhas," 129.

<sup>69</sup> Kevin. C. Dun. "MadLib # 32: The (black) African State: Rethinking the Sovereign State in International Relations Theory." In *Africa's Challenge to International Relations Theory*, eds., Kevin. C. Dun and Timothy. M. Shaw (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001) 46.



territorial borders, the infrastructure supplied by external forces merely provides a facade of stability. True stability should derive from internal infrastructure developed by the state, rather than a proverbial 'bandaid' which only remains in place as long as the state itself has something to offer. External forces can assume positions of power within a state, however they do not contribute to an empirical status of sovereignty. The bureaucratic structures developed by external forces are merely factors resulting from the firm's continued presence. Once you remove the external force, you effectively remove the state stability.

In terms of external actors occupying positions of state power, this is not restricted to the provision of a military presence. In some instances, TDs inhabit political positions beyond roles in state security, thereby contributing to a continued perception of sovereignty. One obvious example is where foreign patrimonial networks provide opportunities for exercising diplomatic relations with other outsiders. The involvement of AMF in the DRC is an excellent example of this. As discussed earlier, during 1997 Kabila's rebel forces acted to systematically dissolve the control of Mobutu over the former Zaire. As Kabila gained control over state resources, he auctioned them off to foreign firms, providing his war effort not only with a critical financial boost but also international recognition of his growing political control. However, the most significant factor was AMF's billion-dollar deal, which provided cash and a jet to transport associates of the rebel leader. In addition to gaining access to secured state resources, AMF obtained rights to buy diamonds in Kisangani, "a trade that totalled \$100,000 daily after rebels captured the city."<sup>70</sup> Though a calculated risk, the involvement of AMF in Kabila's war efforts helped legitimise his political authority internationally. Prior to this, even Anglo American, an established former partner, had been hesitant to conduct deals with the perceived illegitimate rebel regime. Reno suggests that this derived from a fear of unsettling rulers of other weak states in which it had investments.<sup>71</sup> AMF's initial involvement, however, served to reassure other international firms of Kabila's legitimacy. In this sense, the physical presence of AMF in the DRC served as a node for conducting international trade. Although external actors can be seen to play a noteworthy role in the legitimisation of state sovereignty, the recognition of a ruler's ability to maintain an internal sense of legitimacy is an important factor in the development of these international trade networks.

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<sup>70</sup> Dani Nabudere. *Conflict Over Mineral Wealth: Understanding the Second Invasion of the DRC*, IGD Occasional Paper No. 37, 2003: 40-66; Reno, *Warlord Politics*, 175.

<sup>71</sup> Reno, *Warlord Politics*, 174-175.

An example of the significance of sovereignty in constructing international trade and other foreign patronage networks is the actions of Charles Taylor in Liberia in 1989. On Christmas Eve, Taylor's dramatic appearance at the head of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia acted as a catalyst that dissolved the authoritative position of Samuel Doe as ruler of Liberia.<sup>72</sup> In capturing Doe's commercial networks, Taylor effectively crippled Doe's dual patronage system which had previously allowed him to maintain political and military control. Taylor was set to create his own patronage network using local resources, thereby solidifying his position as the head of a sovereign state. As he marched towards Monrovia, the state's capital city, he was blocked by a 12,000-strong intervention force.<sup>73</sup> Known as the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and comprised mainly of Nigerian soldiers, the military intervention prohibited Taylor from entering the capital city. This effectively split Liberia into two sections: one controlled by Taylor (known as Taylorland), and the other comprised of ECOMOG and remnants of Doe's Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL).<sup>74</sup>

While Doe still held the capital and its port, Taylor was in possession of a significant portion of the state's resources, a noteworthy contributing factor to Doe's patronage system. However, the intervention of ECOMOG prevented Taylor from claiming sovereignty as he did not display significant political authority within Liberia's territorial borders. This lack of sovereign status meant he was unable to "... sell diplomatic support in exchange for aid or politically motivated foreign investment as Doe had done."<sup>75</sup> Unconvincing in his claims to support state liberalist reform efforts, such as the holding of elections in the state's capital, Taylor's organisation could not attract large-scale overseas aid to counterbalance local strongmen. Taylor's only option, in this sense, was to incorporate as many foreign commercial networks as he could in order to support his own military force. Regardless, the denial of state sovereignty was a crippling blow to Taylor's bid for an authoritative position, as it ultimately rendered him unable to manipulate the privileges associated with state sovereignty and therefore push into the state's capital. While this example highlights the importance of foreign patronage, particularly with regard to solidifying the global legitimacy of the ruler, it also demonstrates the role of TDs in denying resources to

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<sup>72</sup> Reno, "War, Markets, and Reconfiguration," 498.

<sup>73</sup> Reno, "How sovereignty matters," 197-215.

<sup>74</sup> Security forces under Hezekiah Bowen's control also contributed to the position being held.

<sup>75</sup> Reno, *Warlord Politics*, 97.

rivals. The intervention of Nigeria in Liberia makes an interesting case for how state regional capacity influences sovereignty.

The denial of state resources to potential rivals is an effective means of enforcing autonomy in a warlord state. Throughout the present discussion, rulers of warlord states have been characterised as primarily invested in the accumulation of personal wealth and power. They reject all notions of creating bureaucratic infrastructure under the belief that such institutions may develop philosophies that differ from their own and potentially act independently, providing a launch pad from which to usurp power. Reno has stated, “[e]conomic development is abjured when it threatens to put resources into the hands of those who might use them to challenge the rulers’ position.”<sup>76</sup>

In May 1997, Kabila employed similar denial tactics in his attempt to rein in regional autonomy within the Kasai-Oriental province. Kasai-Oriental, specifically its provincial capital Mbuji-Mayi, had long been the centre for autonomous development efforts.<sup>77</sup> In addition to establishing a university funded by the state-run mining company Société Minière de Bakwanga (MIBA), it used the nearby Lubilanji hydro station to generate electricity, compensating for the state’s failure to provide suitable infrastructure.<sup>78</sup> In an attempt to block further attempts at autonomy, Kabila moved to disrupt a proposed infrastructure deal with South African engineering firm Swanepoel to create a local railroad. The proposed infrastructure was contracted by the Conference for the Development of Kasai Oriental (CODEKOR), a collaboration of local officials and businesses intent on taking steps toward institutionalised autonomy. In an example of a separatist attempt to form a patrimonial network, “Swanepoel appointed a member of its firm to the board of CODEKOR,” effectively solidifying the political-private commercial nature of Kasai.<sup>79</sup> These displays of autonomy represented a significant threat to the complete political control of Kabila’s regime. Backed by transterritorial networks of wealth, Kabila tightened his control over the area and, in doing so, furthered his own sovereign status. Denial tactics, however, are not confined to the wholesale dissolution of economic

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<sup>76</sup> Reno, *Warlord Politics*, 1.

<sup>77</sup> Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada. *Zaire: The Balance of Power in the Regions*, 1997, [www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6a81ac.html](http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6a81ac.html) (accessed 8 Aug 2011).

<sup>78</sup> Mwana Africa. *Operations and Exploration: MIBA*, 2009, [http://www.mwanaafrica.com/oe/drc\\_miba.asp](http://www.mwanaafrica.com/oe/drc_miba.asp) (accessed 8 August 2011).

<sup>79</sup> Reno, *Warlord Politics*, 175.

footholds; a reliance on foreign patronage is also a useful method adopted by rulers to deny resources to potential rivals.

Using foreign patronage as a denial tactic, rulers contract the exploitation of the state's natural resources solely to overseas firms. The resulting wealth stays within a network of elites and out of the hands of threatening rebels and strongmen. Much of this wealth is often reinvested into local patrimonial networks in order to buy political resources, such as the procurement of loyalty from prominent individuals, and to secure weapons to strengthen the military position of the ruler. The early inability of Samuel Doe to control the state's established elite network upon assuming power in 1980 is an excellent example of how control over state resources is critical. While Doe was later able to maintain control throughout these elite networks, his ability to do so derived not from his domination of state resources, but rather through a reliance on politically loyal foreign investors, multilateral creditors and U.S. aid.<sup>80</sup> The existence of TDs in the form of non-state firms allowed Doe to maintain a semblance of sovereignty within the complex network of established elites. Mobutu, however, recruited judicial forms of TD to deny resources in a much more obvious manner. In control of significant portions of Zaire's resources, Mobutu auctioned them off to foreign investors to support his authoritative position.<sup>81</sup> This allowed him to compensate for the state's lack of bureaucratic institutions whilst denying economic resources to potential rivals. The money deriving from the external forces went directly into purchasing political loyalty or resources within his network of supporters.<sup>82</sup> This prevented any autonomous economic development from which a counter-movement could develop. In short, the physical presence of foreign entities within the state allowed Mobutu to procure wealth without having to rely on bureaucratic institutions that posed potential threats. This wealth was used to secure political power, reiterating his sovereign status.

## **Conclusion**

Warlord states and their rulers can be characterised by an almost complete disregard for the collective interest. Rulers of weak states, regardless of their failure to meet the basic needs of the population, still

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<sup>80</sup> Reno, *Warlord Politics*, 84.

<sup>81</sup> Ola Olsson and Heather C. Fors, "Congo: The Prize of Predation," *Journal of Peace Research* 41:3 (2004): 321-336; Michael G. Schatzberg, "Beyond Mobutu: Kabila and the Congo," *Journal of Democracy* 8:4 (1997): 70-84.

<sup>82</sup> Olsson and Fors, "Congo: The Prize," 7, 10, 13; Reno, *Warlord Politics* 152; Reyntjens, "Briefing: The Democratic Republic," 311-317.

assume their roles under the pretence of acting for the collective good: the betterment of the state and its people. Conversely, rulers of warlord states manipulate the composition of the state to benefit their own ability to maintain power and wealth. This is demonstrated by their actions to completely dissolve state bureaucracies and a tendency to rely on forms of neopatrimonialism.

Similarly, quasi-states can be defined by the over reliance of a state on external patronage and support to compensate for its own structural insufficiencies. Within these states, rulers privatise natural resources to maintain their sovereign status. Relevant to this is the presence of transboundary formations, the intersection of local and external forces deriving from one of several sources inspired by globalisation. A subset of these formations, transterritorial deployments (TDs), denote the physical presence of an external force in a domestic setting. In the present argument, we have characterised the domestic setting as strictly African, and the converging external force as predominantly non-African.

In order to maintain sovereignty, rulers of warlord states capitalise upon the physical presence of non-state entities through a combination of three processes. First, they auction off state resources to procure wealth, enabling them to purchase political power within the state and maintain a patrimonial network to support the regime. Instances of TD serve as markers for other external firms concerned with state stability. In this capacity, the physical presence of an external force contributes to international recognition of the rulers' legitimacy. Second, rulers employ non-state actors to fill positions of political and military power to compensate for the state's lack of bureaucratic infrastructure. Transterritorial actors in such positions pose significantly less of a threat to state authority than local strongmen. These positions also contribute to a facade of stability in areas displaying structural weakness. Last, the foreign patrimonial networks deriving from TD ensure that wealth and natural resources are kept out of the hands of individuals who would utilise them to challenge the ruler's sovereign position. Moreover, the backing of these networks allows for the dissolution of any infrastructure resulting from separatist economic development.

Instances of TD constitute but one facet of the ability of warlord states to maintain sovereignty. They are significant, however, in that they legitimise a ruler's authority regardless of their having complete empirical control over the state. Analysis of their influence facilitates a greater understanding of the contribution of external forces in warlord

states. Further research is required to investigate the role of regional actors in the maintenance of state sovereignty, and to examine non-judicial forms of TD—a noteworthy contributing force not discussed here. In a broader sense, TDs comprise but one element of transboundary formations. Analyses of their variant forms in relation to warlord states would provide important insight into local/global interactions and the manner in which they affect perceptions of sovereignty, and contribute to current understanding with regard to how external entities shape forms of authority and governance. Such understanding would inform the critical analyses of all forms of government and their ability to maintain sovereignty.

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