American Warlord

(Kurt Schlichter)

November 25, 2026

Over the past several weeks an odd apocalypse fever has swept America, or at least significant segments of America, including many people not usually prone to a focus on disaster. Primarily this has arisen as a social media contagion, exacerbated by strange pronouncements from some European governments that the populace should store food and water. Even the Vice President has been publicly queried on whether Americans should "prep"; he gave an unconvincing "not really" answer. For the record, I don't think an apocalypse is more nigh today than any other day. However, were it to arrive, Kurt Schlichter has delivered us a timely, gripping work of fiction on how it might play out in America.

No surprise, it doesn't play out well, at least in the short- and medium-term. But if anything, this book proves the maxim, taken from Tolkien, that when faced with difficult times, all we have to decide, all we can decide, is what to do with the time that is given us. Nothing more, and nothing less. *American Warlord* tells the story of American collapse—the result of both political conflict and a real, not Covid-fake, pandemic—through the story of Vic Kincaid, logistics manager, who turns warlord without any intention to do so, merely as a result of the incremental decisions he makes when forced to make a choice, combined with his inborn talents and personality.

Now, as some readers no doubt know, I am not infrequently referred to online as the Shampoo Warlord. This moniker comes from my former occupation of manufacturing shampoo (and other haircare products), along with my occasional musings on warlordism. More precisely, I have more than once analyzed what I call the Armed Patronage Network, a proposed, and perhaps inevitable, organizing device in the event of any American societal collapse (although as I am fond of pointing out, the armed part is less important than the patronage and the network). Hostile media outlets have written a few hysterical attack pieces on me, distorting this very interesting and excellent concept because they fear my ever-growing power, and talk of warlordism scares the normies, who think it is still 1986. Nonetheless, I actually like the moniker, even though most likely I will die in my bed.

But enough about me, my favorite topic. I will note, however, that this review contains spoilers. I highly recommend buying *American Warlord* and reading it before reading my review, which as usual is not really a review, or not solely a review, but a vehicle for my own thoughts.

Schlichter has earlier written several books that revolve around the violent collapse of the United States, following the adventures and exploits of an ex-soldier, one Kelly Turnbull, in the former United States, divided into two countries after the "Split," one Right-leaning, or rather simply reality-based, one hard Left. Those are excellent popcorn books, perhaps prophetic in the event certain future circumstances come to pass, but the main character is not an everyman. Rather he is a man, as Liam Neeson says of himself in *Taken*, with a "very particular set of skills." The reader cannot see himself in Turnbull.

Not so for Kincaid. He is an average man of no significance, in his early forties. He is a widower with no children, somewhat of a loner, his only quirk a near-obsessive interest in Roman history, who works for a trucking company in a suburb of Houston, coordinating truck movements around the country. The year is not specified, but it appears to be around 2030, with the Left having regained total power in 2028 and proceeding to do what the Left always does when given unbridled power—ruin everything in their insane quest for utopia. The economy is failing; tensions between Red states resisting Left aggression and the federal government have risen to very high levels, as the Left cuts down every Chesterton's Fence it can find. All of society is plumbing ever lower levels of trust. Violence has notably increased; for the first time in American history, the Right is also engaging in organized violence, such as assassinations of FBI functionaries who pervert the rule of law through Merrick Garland-type political terror. This is, of course, a back-handed recognition by Schlichter both that for decades the American Right has been fighting, not with one hand tied behind its back, but as if it were a man in a coma, and that this situation is both unnatural and not sustainable in the face of massive Left violence, which is partially on hold in 2026 while Republicans still exercise some control of the executive branch of the federal government, though tremendously hampered by our illegitimate judiciary and the left-wing permanent bureaucracy.

Kincaid sees his times, accurately enough, as not dissimilar to the late Roman Republic, with the wars between Marius and Sulla, which

completed the ruin of Rome's ancient *mos maiorum*, the unwritten code which governed the Republic. He muses as he views the small statue of Augustus he owns and always keeps near him, a gift from his wife. "Everything happening, the daily litany of imbroglios and outrages, seemed surreal to him, as if the chaos could vanish in an instant and the normal America he grew up in could pop into being." "For a moment, he wished he were historically illiterate; he would be happier, and everything that happened would be an interesting surprise." I can relate.

Normal America does not return. Soon enough, people are getting sick, with a new version of the Wuhan Plague, again from China, that makes the sufferer very ill, followed by improvement, followed by death in the majority of cases. Meanwhile, political events are reaching a head, with the President declaring a rebellion and remotely disabling Red state vehicles, while basic services such as ATMs and credit cards fail. None of that really matters, though Schlichter spends quite some time on it, because politics in the traditional sense quickly disappears. There is no politics left when considerably more than half the country, eighty or ninety percent, is dead, either from the plague or from starvation, cold, and violence.

Kincaid becomes ill himself, hovering between life and death for three weeks. When he awakes, the United States is gone, and the scope of the book narrows to a small geographic area, eastern Texas and points somewhat north. Kincaid is not a prepper; all he has is a rifle and a pistol, and can use both with only basic competence, along with a week of food, and, fortunately, no chronic medical conditions. Armed looters invade his neighborhood, and, unlike me, he lacks the resources to fight even a small, disorganized group. So he starts to walk north, figuring that some of the nicer suburbs might still retain law and order. A few do, tenuously, but they don't want him. And, in the most momentous decision of his life, he grudgingly acquires travelling companions—a woman and her daughter, on whom he takes pity, and for whom he becomes patron and leader. From this fateful step, he evolves into the warlord of the title.

Schlichter accurately portrays that once this process starts, under the leadership of the right man, it is both inevitable and unstoppable. There is no steady state in any condition of social anarchy or near-anarchy; whether a small or a big fish, you are either expanding your power and

ability to defend you and yours, or both are being eroded. That necessarily means, among other things, increasing the number of people for whom you are responsible, and who answer to you. For much the same reason, complete anarchy has never existed in any Western country, and never will, for longer than a few days, because Western man is unparalleled at both organization and violence, and Westerners never abide anarchy—they will do anything to avoid it.

Most people in Texas, and around the globe, are dead. Thus, Kincaid and his growing group acquire supplies from abandoned houses, though danger lurks everywhere. A slightly autistic young man becomes his aide-de-camp, a crucial role for a military leader, a balance and advisor (the same young man narrates the introduction of the book, as an old man, implying that Schlichter plans sequels—this book ends less than a year after the collapse). Within a few months he leads about two hundred people, men, women, and children, ranging from the hapless with zero useful skills to a few former military officers, for all of whose feeding and defense he must constantly provide.

Schlichter deftly shows the challenges involved, from logistics (at which Kincaid naturally excels) to essential constant military and physical training for all, through which Kincaid forms a competent militia, though certainly not a professional military. (The women, to be sure, do not fight in the ordinary course, because "woman soldier" is a ridiculous oxymoron.) Most interestingly, Schlichter depicts internal leadership challenges, which necessarily arise in a fluid situation that does not have the traditional rigid hierarchy of a normal military organization. Kincaid does not hesitate to discipline, sometimes to kill, even valuable members of the group, who substantively challenge his leadership directly or through causing chaos, and that is as it should be.

Smaller external threats quickly diminish in importance, but a larger group attracts larger threats, and being wanderers on the face of the earth is not a sustainable situation. Kincaid dubs his group the "Republic," again channeling his inner Roman. They move north, past Dallas and into Oklahoma, or what was Oklahoma, and then into southern Missouri. They execute scumbags they encounter. They improve their weaponry, in keeping with the old joke that if you ever actually need a machine gun, they will be available for free lying on the ground, while finding greater and greater difficulty acquiring food, making it

clear they need a place to settle and farm. They encounter settlements that are functioning, growing food and surviving, but all are unstable. Unlike the Republic, which "trained for war and prepared for the future," they are only aiming to get by, and they are not ready for the larger predator groups which are now coalescing, presumably all over the country.

A great deal happens along the way, but the climax of the book is the Republic's conquest, largely by stratagem with minimal fighting, and subsequent incorporation of a small farming town that had refused Kincaid's offer of a peaceful melding, followed by the defeat, the massacre, of a large group of marauders who have been systematically pillaging other towns in the area. The book ends there, with Kincaid's establishment of an Armed Patronage Network. And as I say, the introduction and epilogue imply that he, the Warlord, ultimately becomes a world-historic figure, rebuilding a new country from the ashes. We will have to wait for the presumed sequels to find out.

How realistic is all this? Very realistic, I think. We should always remember that cometh the hour, cometh the man, and that the Great Man theory of history is the only theory of history with any truth in it. Most men are not capable of taking a leadership role in times of extreme flux and danger; this is not a character flaw, but human nature. Leadership is always inborn—it cannot be taught, or learned from a book, though it can be honed. But at the same time, a nascent leader must make the deliberate choice to lead, and while much of that is will and the willingness to accept risk, it also depends in part on another portion of human psychology.

It is undisputed, as I wrote in two different reviews some years ago, that in times of immediate crisis, small or large, the most common reaction is stunned paralysis, with a smaller portion of panic, and an even smaller proportion of men who rise to the moment and take definite action (along with a tiny proportion of women, who almost always fall into one of the first two groups, and even if they avoid that, almost never, or maybe never, adopt a leadership role). We all want to think we would be the man who meets the challenge, as Kincaid does, but no man knows until he is tested, and rising above the mass, exposing yourself as a lightning rod and the person on whom success or failure, life or death, depends for others, is only for a few. Yet unlike leadership

itself, I think in most cases taking action is a choice, which can be made simply by force of will.

I try to teach my children this. Some years ago, I and my family went on a cruise. As required by law, before embarking the cruise line made all passengers go to the decks with the lifeboats, to the lifeboat each was assigned. While a recorded lecture droned overhead about boarding the lifeboats in an orderly fashion in an emergency, I turned to my children and said, "This is all lies. When this ship is holed below the waterline by an Exocet missile, the entire ship will be total chaos. The lights will be out and the boat listing, taking on water. Many people will be panicking and screaming, and most people will be paralyzed. Your only job is to get here to the lifeboat, and launch it, by any means necessary, while ensuring nobody in the family is left behind. Take any action necessary to achieve this goal, including direct action against any person hindering the goal." This made the other passengers nearby gape and edge away. Fortunately, the cruise was uneventful (though I did learn the entire Caribbean is a shithole outside the resorts). But hopefully the children absorbed the lesson.

There is a famous example of this dynamic in actual practice in modern America. In 1991, a firestorm swept through Oakland, destroying thousands of homes. The area destroyed was a typical affluent California neighborhood, full of white-collar shitlibs. The episode was memorialized in several famous academic articles by Susanna Hoffman, who wrote "Most of the victims could be said to follow socially progressive tenets. Most gave heed to racial, gender, and age equality. Many were highly committed to political causes. Most socialized with a network of friends in preference to extended family ties." Yet, no surprise to anyone based in reality, the entire neighborhood immediately advanced (or in Hoffman's eyes, regressed) to the social order of the eighteenth century. Men took total charge, both of decisions and large tasks. Family became everything. Women adopted strictly domestic roles and small tasks assigned by men suitable to the feminine nature. (And, as I say, there was no anarchy.) Thus it will always be, for human nature never changes, and most of the sex (and other) roles in modern America are purely artificial, imposed by the ideologues who rule us.

Not everything about the Warlord's budding society is laid out in this book. For example, Schlichter nowhere says what the politics of

the new country will be; no doubt this will become evident in later books. As I've written before, Schlichter's politics differ somewhat from mine. He favors what I call Agnostic Pragmatic Libertarianism, a reasonable political philosophy in theory, but one that has never been tried in practice and never will be tried in practice, because it is entirely antithetical to human nature. Men and woman organizing in times of societal collapse turn to religion (completely absent in this book), tight strictures that rigidly constrain behavior, and authoritarian government. Such politics are required in challenging times; we will not get the American Founders after a collapse, at least not at first, and probably not later, if history is any guide.

And what of today, and the strange instructions being issued about three days of food and water? The instructions are silly; the Food and Water Fairy does not return on the fourth day. If you are prepping, you should be doing much more. Yet I doubt the apocalypse will arrive in 2026; it will probably not arrive ever (although the only truly plausible apocalypse is indeed a real pandemic). Apocalypse fever today in America is, for the most part, a type of wishing for the eschaton, a way to resolve the knowledge that we are in the stupid stage of America, and we all want to see what comes next, in the hope it will resolve the idiocies and unnatural contradictions that bombard us in our daily life. C. P. Cavafy's poem "Waiting for the Barbarians," about a town during the collapse of the Roman empire that hears the barbarians are coming on a certain day, captures this feeling. The barbarians don't show up, and the people are disappointed, for "Those people were a kind of solution." No doubt all our talk of apocalypse is largely driven by the same feeling.