

Civil-Military Relations and the Dynamics of American Military Expansion

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It is the era of the political general.¹ Our combatant commanders “own the battlespace” and have extraordinary influence on the resources that flow into their theater of operations. They seem just as comfortable briefing the public at high-profile think tank events and writing *Washington Post* op-eds as they are leading their troops in battle.² The important resources for these modern-day warriors include their “Capitol Hill contacts and web of e-mail relationships throughout Washington’s journalism establishment.”³ Savvy American presidents give these men the time and resources they need and in return expect them to “prop up” administration policies.⁴ Their relationships with American presidents are the stuff of front-page headlines, as are their ethical failings and lapses in judgment.⁵ These commanders have also been strong advocates of expanding and intensifying combat missions by lengthening the US commitment, increasing the number of troops, and engaging in armed state-building.⁶ In sum, military commanders in-theater have a strong influence on military strategy, and they appear to use that influence to escalate, expand, and prolong America’s recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. This trend is potentially problematic in a time when many prominent strategists are calling for restraint.⁷

The characterization of the modern general outlined above is based on a very small sample of general officers, mainly Gen David Petraeus and Gen Stanley McChrystal. Do these two generals exemplify a trend in civil-military (civ-mil) relations, or are they outliers? More generally, are military officers on the ground

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more likely to favor a militarized and expansionist foreign policy? According to the civ-mil literature, Generals Petraeus and McChrystal are typical of military leaders in their aggressiveness and optimism about military force. Qualitative and quantitative studies have found that military leaders tend to emphasize the effectiveness of military solutions to foreign policy problems, favor offensive military doctrines, and inflate the likelihood of war.⁸ Generally, military influence is correlated with an increased probability of militarized interstate disputes.⁹ However, less has been written about the specific type of influence exercised by combatant commanders.¹⁰ As recent history has shown, these commanders can be especially influential because of their firsthand knowledge of the situation on the ground, the perception that they are unbiased experts, and their willingness to engage with the media and civil society.

This article uses 10 case studies of the American experience during its “imperial” era to test the hypothesis that field commanders are likely to advocate for expansionist military policy or, more generally, political-military expansion.¹¹ The methodology consists of both between-case comparison and within-case analysis. First, the cases are examined to determine whether field commanders advocated for political-military expansionism. Second, the within-case analysis compares the actions and advice of military commanders to the actions and advice of deployed civilians to distinguish the causal effect of being a military commander from the causal effect of being “the man on the spot.” Cases are taken from the height of the era of American imperialism because it is a fertile ground for studying expansionism and it is a period with certain similarities with the current era. Then, like now, American Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines were frequently deployed in stability operations that gave the United States increased political-military control over foreign territory. Then, like now, deployed military officers and civilian officials had considerable influence on policy. Finally, then, like now, there were strong debates in the United States about the efficacy and morality of political-military expansionism.

Civil-Military Relations and American Imperialism¹²

This section examines civ-mil relations during the height of American imperialism under the presidential administrations of Cleveland, McKinley, Roosevelt, and Taft (1893–1913). It focuses primarily on cases in which US officials (civilian and military) were deployed in a position to advance American political-military expansion in word or deed. The guiding questions are as follows: Did military commanders deployed in foreign territory or offshore from foreign territory take actions to further political-military expansion or make arguments in support of such expansion? Did civilian officials stationed in foreign territory take actions to further political-military expansion or make arguments in support of such expansion? The answers to these questions are summarized in the table below, which shows that in the majority of cases, the military commander in the field was expansionist and that in a majority of cases in which civilian officials were present, they also favored expansionism. Therefore, the initial test of the militarization hypothesis is that field commanders do tend to favor political-military expansion, especially in the form of direct military intervention, longer and deeper military occupations, and annexation and colonial control of territory. However, evidence suggests that deployed civilian officials also tend to favor political-military expansion although influential civilians are less likely to be present during military operations. The main inference we can draw is that being on the front line tends to encourage expansionist attitudes regardless of whether an individual is military or civilian.

Table. Summary of cases

Cases	<i>Deployed Military Commanders' Policy Preference</i>	<i>Deployed Civilian Officials' Policy Preference</i>
1. Attempted Annexation of Hawaii, 1893	Highly expansionist ^a	Highly expansionist
2. Annexation of the Philippines, 1898	Moderately expansionist ^b	N/A
3. Benevolent Assimilation Proclamation, 1898	Moderately expansionist	N/A
4. Occupation of Cuba, 1899	Highly expansionist	N/A
5. Occupation of Beijing, 1900	Moderately expansionist	Moderately expansionist
6. Acquiring the Canal Zone, 1903	Neutral ^c	Highly expansionist*
7. Occupation of Cuba, 1906	Moderately expansionist	Moderately expansionist
8. Nicaragua Intervention, 1909	Neutral	Highly expansionist
9. Nicaragua Intervention, 1910	Highly expansionist	Moderately expansionist
10. Nicaragua Intervention, 1912	Moderate restraint ^d	N/A

*Foreign and American civilians played the highly expansionist role, but they generally were operating under a tacit understanding with American political leaders.

- ^aHighly expansionist = took independent action to facilitate additional political-military expansion, escalation of existing political-military intervention, or lengthening of intervention
- ^bModerately expansionist = took a position favoring additional political-military expansion, escalation of existing political-military intervention, or lengthening of intervention
- ^cNeutral = took a neutral position or followed orders to implement either expansion or restraint
- ^dModerate restraint = took a position against political-military expansion, escalation of existing political-military intervention, or lengthening of intervention
- The shading visually represents the spectrum from “Highly expansionist” (dark gray) to “Moderate restraint” (white).
- High restraint is a theoretical possibility, but is not present in the 10 cases analyzed in this article. High restraint is defined as taking independent action to prevent political-military expansion, escalation of existing political-military intervention, or lengthening of intervention.

The remainder of this section analyzes 10 cases of American expansion or attempted expansion. The cases are not exhaustive but focus on instances when military and/or civilian officials were deployed away from American shores and had a potential impact on decisions of whether or not to engage in political-military expansion. The concluding remarks following the case study analysis summarize the findings and discuss the implications of this study.

Attempted Annexation of Hawaii in 1893

After many years of conflict between American-Hawaiian plantation owners and the indigenous Hawaiian royalty, the owners staged a coup on 16 January 1893 with the support of John Stevens, American minister to Hawaii, and Capt G. C. Wiltse, the US Navy commander in Hawaii. The American officials were vital to the success of the overthrow of Queen Liliuokalani. Stevens ordered US Marines to come ashore from the USS *Boston* in Pearl Harbor to protect American property, occupy government buildings, and intimidate the queen and her supporters. Importantly, US forces were deployed before the coup was completed, and therefore it took place under American protection. Queen Liliuokalani peacefully stepped down but made the point that she relinquished her authority to the “superior forces of the United States of America” until such time as she could be reinstated by that same force.¹³ Stevens immediately recognized the new government established by the annexationists under the leadership of provisional president Judge Stanford B. Dole and declared Hawaii an American protectorate. Stevens acted without orders from Washington and hoped that his superiors would accept his *fait accompli*.¹⁴

The actions of the Hawaiian-American annexationists and American minister Stevens and Captain Wiltse were for naught. Incoming president Grover Cleveland repudiated the actions of American agents and refused to support the annexation of Hawaii. Not until the wartime presidency of William McKinley

did annexation in 1898 finally occur.¹⁵ Nevertheless, the important point is that the top civilian official and military officer deployed in Hawaii were strong proponents of political-military expansion and took actions that went well beyond their authority in order to facilitate the annexation of Hawaii.

McKinley's Decision to Annex the Philippines, 1898

The Philippines was the largest, most important colonial possession of the United States. The opportunity to annex the archipelago emerged from the dynamics of the War of 1898. One of the most important battles of the war was fought at Manila Harbor where Commodore George Dewey's fleet defeated Spanish forces on 1 May 1898. American forces then took the city of Manila on 14 August, two days after the war ended—the time lag was caused by slow communications.¹⁶ A cease-fire or "Protocol of Agreement" was signed on 12 August 1898 that settled the status of Spanish possessions in the Caribbean and Guam but left the status of the Philippines to be determined at the peace conference, which would last from 29 September to 10 December 1898.¹⁷

The crucial step in the annexation process examined here is President McKinley's decision to order his peace commissioners to demand control of the Philippines during peace negotiations with Spain. McKinley's position on this issue developed over the course of several months' time. Between May and October 1898, the president slowly increased his territorial demands toward the Philippines. In May 1898, the official US position was to allow Spain to keep the Philippines except for a coaling station for the United States there or the Caroline Islands. By July the McKinley administration's plan was to claim only a Philippine harbor (Manila) for a naval base and leave the rest to Spain. By September McKinley had modified his position to claim all of Luzon Island (where Manila was located). However, this position did not last long. Most of his advisers argued that it would be difficult and strategically unwise to attempt to occupy only Manila or Luzon due to the interdependence of the island chain and the idea that the Philippine people could not govern themselves and would rapidly be swallowed up by Germany or Japan. On these points, Gen Francis V. Greene is thought to have been particularly influential. After returning from the Philippines, where he led the attack on Manila, he gave a report to McKinley favoring annexation of the entire archipelago for the two reasons mentioned above.¹⁸ General Greene's position was reinforced by Cdr Royal B. Bradford, chief of the Navy's Bureau of Equipment, who had

been to Manila to look for potential sites for naval and coaling stations. By October McKinley had decided to annex the entire archipelago.¹⁹ In February 1899, the Senate voted to ratify the peace treaty with Spain and complete the annexation of the Philippines.²⁰

Although President McKinley received advice from many civilian officials and private citizens, the justification he gave for annexing the entire island chain closely mirrors the analysis he received from General Greene.²¹ The most authoritative and authentic statement given by McKinley himself was recorded on 19 November 1898—a month after he instructed his peace negotiators to gain the entire archipelago—by Chandler Parsons Anderson in a private discussion with the president and Thomas Jefferson Coolidge in McKinley’s office. According to Anderson’s written record of the conversation, McKinley stated that the United States had to maintain control of all the Philippine Islands because (1) they could not be returned to Spain “for the very reasons which justified the war” (i.e., humanitarian reasons), (2) they could not be transferred to another European power because doing so would cause a war and would go against American interests, (3) it was the “responsibility” and “duty and destiny” of the American people to accept control of the islands, and (4) the “strategic interdependence of the islands” was such that the United States had to keep all of them or none of them.²²

McKinley’s initial position was simply to maintain a coaling station, but he shifted to a much more expansionist position after getting advice from military officers returning from the field. This case shows that military officers returning from the theater favored political-military expansionism and likely had a strong influence on the president’s decision to seek annexation of the Philippines. No important civilian officials were deployed in the Philippines at that time—at least no one important enough to make it into the history books.

Benevolent Assimilation Proclamation, 1898

Following McKinley’s decision to annex the Philippines, the United States had to determine exactly how to exercise control over its new possession. Options ranged from a self-governing protectorate to a colony governed by American officials. The key issue was how America would choose to deal with the Philippine nationalists led by Emilio Aguinaldo.

US forces were concentrated in Manila following the Battle of Manila Harbor, and throughout most of 1898, they were on uncertain terms with Philippine nationalists who controlled most of the Philippines. The national-

ists wanted Philippine independence and were suspicious of US intentions. American forces in the Philippines lacked clear orders and tried to muddle through the situation as best they could. The defining breaking point between the Americans and Filipinos was McKinley's Benevolent Assimilation Proclamation of 21 December 1898, an executive order that established American sovereignty over the Philippines. Brian Linn notes two crucial aspects of McKinley's proclamation: First, the VIII Corps mission was to establish control over the Philippines (i.e., any Filipino aspirations for independence were to be pushed aside). Second, McKinley established a benevolent policy of "protecting Filipino lives, property, and civil rights," thus putting in place the first American experiment in trying to win the hearts and minds of a foreign people.²³

Historian Grania Bolton argues that McKinley's order to establish American sovereignty over the entire archipelago was the result of advice from Gen Wesley Merritt (the first Army commander in Manila), Gen Elwell S. Otis (Merritt's replacement), and Commodore Dewey (the hero of the Battle of Manila Bay). They all assured the president that Filipinos were unable to govern themselves and would welcome American control of the islands. However, despite these assurances, Aguinaldo saw the proclamation as a betrayal, and subsequent events suggest that the executive order was "the last step toward violence" between US Soldiers and the nationalists.²⁴ Hostilities began on 5 February 1899, a little over a month after McKinley issued his Benevolent Assimilation Proclamation. The president's decision to establish direct American control of the archipelago was supported and encouraged by Army officers returning from the Philippines and the naval commander who established the US foothold there. Again, no deployed civilian is described as having influenced McKinley's decision to exercise direct control over the Philippines.

American Occupation of Cuba, 1899–1902

During the War of 1898, an American army invaded and occupied significant portions of Cuba. Following the peace agreement between the United States and Spain, the United States moved to occupy the entire island and build a new Cuban nation-state. Brig Gen Leonard Wood was appointed military governor of Cuba with the mission, in the words of President McKinley, "to get the people ready for a republican form of government. . . . Give them a good school system, try to straighten out their courts, and put them on their

feet as best you can. We want to do all we can for them and to get out of the island as soon as we safely can.”²⁵

Despite the president’s desire for a quick transition to Cuban independence, Wood hoped that a long-term transformation of Cuban public opinion could make annexation possible.²⁶ Wood made it his goal to Americanize Cuba rather than prepare it for independence. The general’s purpose was to “create during the military government, while the island remained under American rule, the conditions leading to ‘annexation by acclamation.’”²⁷ An important step in the process was gaining Cuban collaborators who could be made loyal to the United States and trusted to make the request for annexation. To increase the chances of American-friendly elites winning election to top positions in the Cuban government, US officials worked to foster a cohesive political party out of loyal Cubans and to shape the electorate through suffrage laws. Wood even went on the campaign trail for his favored candidates.²⁸ He also instituted major infrastructure, education, and public health projects to increase the legitimacy of the occupation forces and Americanize the Cuban people.²⁹

Although General Wood’s efforts to promote annexation convinced neither President McKinley nor the Cuban people, his last major assignment in Cuba was to ensure that the United States would maintain influence on the island nation for the foreseeable future. He led the effort to convince Cubans leaders to accept the Platt Amendment, which significantly curtailed Cuban sovereignty by giving the United States a right to intervene in Cuba as necessary “for the protection of life, property, and individual liberty.”³⁰ The amendment also limited the size of the debt the Cuban government could assume and gave the United States the right to maintain naval stations in Cuban territory.³¹

In this case, Gen Leonard Wood went beyond official US policy to attempt to create the conditions for America’s eventual annexation of Cuba. In these efforts, he was far more expansionist than policy makers back in Washington. US policy did shift in an expansionist direction with the Platt Amendment, but strong Cuban opposition prevented Wood’s dream of annexing Cuba from becoming reality.

American Occupation of Beijing, 1900–1901

In 1900 the United States joined a multinational effort to pacify the Boxer Rebellion in China, centered on Beijing and the surrounding province. After

the successful occupation of the city by international forces (including Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, Russia, and the United States), President McKinley had to decide whether he would order a quick withdrawal of troops from China or join in the partition of that country into spheres of influence. Secretary of War Elihu Root saw no good reason for American troops to remain in Beijing without a clear mission and advocated their withdrawal to the coast. But McKinley followed the advice of his field commander Lt Gen Adna Chaffee; Edwin H. Conger, the American minister to China; and Secretary of State John Hay to keep some of the troops in place in Beijing and continue to cooperate with the European powers and Japan. To appease anti-imperialist sentiment and to facilitate troop increases in the Philippines, McKinley ordered a gradual withdrawal of troops, cutting Chaffee's force in half to about 1,900 men.³²

As stability was being restored, the Department of the Navy and General Chaffee began to expand their ambitions for an American presence in China. By early winter, General Chaffee was arguing in favor of "acquiring military bases that would demarcate and safeguard an American sphere of influence in North China."³³ He believed that the United States should establish control of a port city and use it to support a permanent American base in Beijing. Chaffee worried that instability would continue in China and that America needed to maintain a strong position vis-à-vis other foreign powers. Rear Admiral Bradford, chief of the Naval Bureau of Equipment, and John D. Long, secretary of the Navy, were also strong proponents of acquiring a base in China and made a formal request to Secretary Hay to look into obtaining permission for a naval base in Samsah Bay in Fukien. Hay forwarded the request to Conger, but the American minister to China opposed attempts to obtain any territorial cession in China, reversing his previously enthusiastic support. Secretary Hay backed his man in China and rejected the Navy's request; he also ignored subsequent appeals from Bradford. However, Conger did favor renewing the concession the United States had been granted in Tientsin in 1861 but never occupied. The McKinley administration, though, had little interest in gaining a territorial concession in China. The president's goals were to strengthen the Chinese government, stay out of the competition for Chinese territory, and maintain the relatively favorable image the United States had earned in China.³⁴

The American occupation ended in May 1901, well ahead of the other occupying nations. This early withdrawal went against the advice of field commander Chaffee and against the preferences of the Department of the Navy,

both of whom wanted to expand the mission to include a permanent US military presence in China. The position of Conger, the top civilian official in China, was expansionist on the issue of US policy there but not quite as expansionist as that of his military colleagues. He favored extending the American troop presence in Beijing (contrary to Secretary Root's advice) and favored renewing a lapsed 1861 concession; however, he opposed acquiring a naval base (contrary to General Chaffee's advice and the request of the Department of the Navy).

Acquiring the Canal Zone, 1903

It appears to be engineer and entrepreneur Philippe-Jean Bunau-Varilla (representative of the New Panama Canal Company) who took the lead in connecting the strands of American expansionism and Panamanian nationalism in 1903. After consultation with American officials, he concluded that the United States would tacitly support Panamanian secession from Colombia. America would justify its actions by referring to its right to maintain transit across the isthmus, a right given to the United States in its 1846 treaty with Colombia. Bunau-Varilla then contacted Dr. Manuel Amador Guerrero—a leader of the independence movement in Panama and physician for the Panama Railroad, owned by the New Panama Canal Company. The alliance formed by the canal company and Panamanian nationalists began planning for a new rebellion. In a personal meeting with President Roosevelt in October 1903, Bunau-Varilla made it known that revolution in Panama was certain. Roosevelt did not encourage the revolution, but Bunau-Varilla inferred that the United States would take advantage if it were to occur. US naval vessels were directed to take positions along the coast of the potential breakaway region to prevent the landing of any troops from either side and to establish control over the Panama Railroad. Bunau-Varilla was informed of these actions during conversations with American officials. On 2 November, after he learned that the American cruiser *Nashville* would be passing through Panamanian waters, the plan went into action. In a confused situation on 2 November, the captain of the *Nashville* allowed Colombian troops to land at Colón, on the Pacific Ocean side of Panama. Quick thinking on the part of Railroad Superintendent James R. Shaler (a former US Army colonel) prevented disaster for the rebels. Shaler offered to transport the Colombian officers to Panama City on a special rail car, promising that their troops would be following soon after. Once the officers reached their destination, they were arrested by bribed

Colombian troops. The next day, American troops landed to establish control of the railroad and supervise the Colombian forces but did not offer support to the rebels. The revolution concluded on 6 November 1903 in an almost bloodless fashion—one civilian was killed accidentally in Colón. The United States, as well as European and Latin American countries, quickly recognized the new country of Panama, and work began immediately on a canal treaty.³⁵

In this case, agency is murky. It is unclear to what extent US personnel were following explicit orders and to what extent they were improvising. At the very least, it seems American officers in the theater received general orders to prevent Colombian troops from putting down the Panama rebellion. However, the main instigators of and participants in the rebellion were a French engineer, Panamanians rebels, and an American employee of the French-owned New Panama Canal Company. Thus, in this case private citizens (American, French, and Panamanian) on the ground played the most important roles, but officials back in Washington supported those actions, which resulted in political-military expansion for the United States after the signing and ratification of the Hay–Bunau-Varilla Treaty.

Occupation of Cuba, 1906

After a fraudulent electoral victory by the Moderate Party in May 1906, Cuba descended into civil war. Both sides in the conflict (Liberal and Moderate forces) requested US intervention. In response, President Theodore Roosevelt dispatched the USS *Denver* to Havana and the USS *Marietta* to Cienfuegos.³⁶ However, President Roosevelt wanted to avoid a new entanglement. He was reluctant to intervene, writing “on the one hand we cannot permanently see Cuba a prey to misrule and anarchy; on the other hand I loathe the thought of assuming any control over the island such as we have over Porto Rico [*sic*] and the Philippines. We emphatically do not want it.”³⁷ Roosevelt had come to believe that “the American people were reluctant to support prolonged military involvement in other countries.”³⁸

Despite Roosevelt’s desire to stay out of Cuban politics, the resignation of President Estrada Palma and his cabinet forced Roosevelt’s hand. With Roosevelt’s reluctant support, Secretary of War William H. Taft established a provisional government on 25 September 1906 and requested 6,000 American troops. Roosevelt was reluctant to take this step because of congressional and public opposition, and he continuously implored Taft to avoid using the word

intervention. The United States would set up a provisional government, but it would be under Cuban law and Cuban cooperation.³⁹

Charles E. Magoon was chosen to replace Taft, who returned to Washington to recommence his duties as secretary of war. Magoon, a lawyer and diplomat, was most recently governor of the Canal Zone in Panama. He took up his new post as governor of Cuba in October 1906. Magoon's main strategy was to give the Liberals more voice in the Cuban government while increasing the quality of life for Cubans in general. He used Cuban finances to fund public works and create jobs, reversed some of the most clearly fraudulent elections, and transformed the Liberal insurgents into a Cuban army that would exist alongside the Moderate-dominated Rural Guard. Finally, Magoon expanded suffrage. Overall, he amplified the Taft pacification strategy of buying off the opposition.⁴⁰

Despite his successes, Magoon was not optimistic about Cuba's political future, arguing that the Hispanic race was culturally or biologically unfit for responsible self-government. Beyond the reforms listed above, he recommended a permanent American presence as military and legal advisers, but Roosevelt vetoed any extended American presence in Cuba.⁴¹ Army special investigator Lt Col Robert Lee Bullard and other officers also supported a long-term occupation of Cuba, lasting perhaps a generation.⁴² Roosevelt had no interest in prolonging the occupation, and Magoon departed on 28 January 1909, the same day that José Miguel Gómez was installed as the new Cuban president. As it happened, the occupation lasted longer than Roosevelt wanted because of the difficulties in carrying out a census as a precursor to a free and fair election.

This case shows that the civilian and military leadership on the ground in Cuba strongly favored intensifying and prolonging American occupation there. Civilian opposition to occupation at the highest levels in Washington, DC, ensured that it was shallow and short.

Nicaragua Intervention, 1909

American relations with Nicaragua were strong until the United States decided in 1903 to build an isthmus canal in Panama instead of Nicaragua. Relations deteriorated between 1903 and 1909 as it became clear that Nicaraguan Liberal leader José Santos Zelaya and American leaders had different visions of the future of Central America. Zelaya believed Nicaragua should be the dominant state in the region, but the United States was not convinced this was

best for regional stability and American interests. It did not help that Zelaya also threatened to allow Europeans to build a canal in Nicaragua and displayed a hostile attitude toward the United States and Americans doing business in Nicaragua.⁴³ Zelaya saw Guatemalan leader Manuel Estrada Cabrera as his main rival for regional predominance. By 1906 the region was “inflamed” by the rivalry as fighting broke out among Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras, and El Salvador.⁴⁴ The Taft administration pursued a policy of diplomatically isolating Zelaya and supporting the sovereignty of El Salvador and Honduras. In October 1909, a rebellion against Zelaya was launched by Nicaraguan Conservatives led by Juan Estrada—a provincial governor, general, and disenchanted Liberal. The rebellion had support from Americans living in Nicaragua, including American consul Thomas Moffat, but lacked official US support. Some dispute exists over the position of US naval officers. Dana Gardner Munro states that Moffat’s interventionism was met with hostility by American naval officers deployed in the area.⁴⁵ Benjamin Harrison, citing Moffat’s congressional testimony, notes that unnamed naval officers encouraged Estrada’s rebellion.⁴⁶ Clearly, Moffat was so supportive of the rebellion that he was “virtually a revolutionary agent.”⁴⁷ Evidence suggests that Moffat was pursuing his own interventionist foreign policy in Nicaragua as confidant and adviser to Estrada.⁴⁸ Moffat’s hostility toward Zelaya was certainly shared by Secretary of State Knox, but the consul’s close ties with Estrada went well beyond official policy.⁴⁹

During the fighting, two Americans serving Estrada’s forces as demolition experts were captured and executed by Zelaya’s forces. In response, the United States broke off relations with Nicaragua and threatened to use force to capture Zelaya, but the State Department declined to pursue further intervention due to concern that congressional approval would be required. Under American pressure, Zelaya resigned in December 1909 and sought asylum in Mexico.⁵⁰

American actions in 1909 did not amount to much in the way of political-military expansion, but it wasn’t for lack of trying on the part of American diplomats. Thomas Moffat, the American consul to Nicaragua, supported American military intervention and was a partisan of the rebellion leader Estrada. Deployed naval officers may have opposed intervention. Political leadership in the United States did not follow the expansionist advice of Moffat but did put sufficient pressure on Zelaya to force his resignation.

Nicaragua Intervention, 1910

The United States was not much happier with President José Madriz, Zelaya's replacement, and dispatched the Nicaraguan Expeditionary Force to the waters off Corinto on the west coast of Nicaragua. Rear Adm William Kimball, the leader of the expeditionary force, requested authority to set up a provisional government in Nicaragua, but his request was rejected; instead, the force was slowly withdrawn. The civil war (Madriz continued the civil war against Estrada's forces) persisted through early 1910, and by May forces loyal to President Madriz surrounded a rebel force in Bluefields on the Atlantic coast, threatening to bombard the town. Capt William Gilmer of the USS *Paducah* deployed 100 Marines to prevent fighting from occurring in the town. This action was taken primarily to protect American lives and property but also had the effect of preventing government forces from finishing off the rebels—a result consistent with the preferences of the Taft administration. American naval forces also prevented Madriz's troops from searching ships for contraband, thereby preserving Estrada's supply route. Stymied in their attempts to end the rebellion, the government troops withdrew. The “neutral” US policy sapped the morale of the Madriz forces and undermined the government's legitimacy. By August the rebel forces were victorious. American intervention fostered a rebel victory and an Estrada government.⁵¹

In this case, the United States did not formally take sides and only briefly landed a small number of Marines to establish a neutral zone in the town of Bluefields. However, even this small intervention had a significant impact on the outcome of the rebellion. Rear Adm William Kimball requested permission to occupy Nicaragua and set up a new government, and Capt William Gilmer sent Marines ashore to protect a rebel enclave. As in 1909, deployed officials held expansionist positions that went beyond the intent of policy makers in Washington. Unlike the events of 1909, the naval officers in command in 1910 took the lead in expanding US intervention in Nicaragua.

Nicaragua Intervention, 1912

In June 1912, a new rebellion engulfed Nicaragua led by Minister of War Luis Mena against the American-supported president Adolfo Díaz. In the initial phases of the war, Mena's forces bombarded the capital of Managua, endangering the lives of many Nicaraguans, Americans, and other foreigners. President Díaz asked for and received American military assistance; by September 1912, approximately 2,700 US Marines were stationed in Nicaragua. After

their arrival, the first priorities for the Marines and bluecoats were to protect American lives and property, stop attacks on the capital, and end rebel strikes along the rail line from Managua to Granada. American forces were not involved in the fighting between government and rebel forces. Rear Adm W. H. H. Southerland, the commanding officer of American forces, took a neutral stance toward the combatants and saw no reason why US Marines should fight battles for the Nicaraguan government. Marines fought only to maintain the security of the railroad. In September, after several battles along the rail line between US forces and insurgents, Marine Major Smedley Butler convinced Mena to cease attacks on the railroad and respect American lives and property. This concession was followed quickly by the surrender of Mena, due largely to illness. However, Gen Benjamín Zeledón continued the fight and maintained control of the town of León and the hills above the rail line near the towns of Coyotepe and Masaya. Admiral Southerland was reluctant to attack the rebels but was ordered to do so by his superiors in Washington. On October 3–4, an estimated 850 US Marines and bluejackets attacked Zeledón's forces dug in near Coyotepe. In the most difficult fight of the intervention, American forces defeated the rebels, suffering four dead and seven wounded. Nicaraguan government forces then defeated Zeledón at Masaya, killing him in the process. US Marines then cleaned up the remaining rebel forces at León.⁵²

US forces remained to supervise the November election, after which the force level was reduced to around 100 Marines, which remained as a “legation guard”—a symbol of US commitment to peace and stability in Nicaragua. The continued American presence meant that no revolution would be tolerated and therefore the minority Conservative party would remain in power.⁵³ The legion guard remained until 1925; after it departed, civil war again erupted in Nicaragua.⁵⁴ The 1912 intervention marked the first time that “American forces had actually gone into battle to help suppress a revolution.”⁵⁵

In this case, deployment and escalation occurred at the direction of Washington and contrary to the advice of Admiral Southerland, the military commander. Thus, the top military officer on the ground in Nicaragua seemed to oppose American intervention in the Nicaraguan civil war but followed orders to intervene in specific instances.

Conclusion

The findings of the case studies above suggest that Generals Petraeus and McChrystal are not much different from American military officers who par-

ticipated in the previous era of American “small wars.” The cases suggest that field commanders tend to favor expansionist policy. An additional finding is that civilians on the ground exhibit similar proclivities for expansionism. Therefore it seems that participation in contingency operations and military occupations abroad tends to shape the beliefs of both civilian officials and military officers in a way that favors expansion. This finding brings into question conventional wisdom about the differences in attitudes between civilian officials and military officers. Previous findings in the civ-mil literature suggest that military officers are more likely to favor the use of military force than are civilians. Thus, we can infer that field commanders would be more likely than their civilian counterparts to favor the use of force to solve problems that emerge during military occupations and contingency operations. This is not what occurred in most of the case studies presented above. Instead, both military officials and civilians were likely to prefer an expansive political-military strategy—in some cases, civilians were more expansionist than military commanders.⁵⁶

What is to be done if we want to foster a more restrained American foreign policy? First, the fewer deployments of boots and loafers on the ground abroad, the fewer advocates for expansionism. The act of deploying US forces seems to socialize deployed officials to the extent that they end up becoming the spokespeople for prolonged and deepened expansion. We should be aware that even “light footprint” operations might have a propensity for mission creep. Second, the only realistic method of effectively regulating the inherent expansionism of expeditionary civilian officials and military officers is constant and involved civilian oversight over military strategy and operations at the highest levels. This approach seems to have worked well for some of the most well-respected wartime leaders in British and American history.⁵⁷ In sum, civilian leadership, either in the White House or in the Pentagon, must overcome the strategic-operational divide and provide consistent strategic assessment and revision if we are to successfully implement a more restrained US foreign policy.

Notes

1. Steven Lee Myers, “Generally Speaking,” *New York Times*, 6 April 2008, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/06/weekinreview/06myers.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0; and Hew Strachan, *The Direction of War: Contemporary Strategy in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 219.

2. See David H. Petraeus, "Battling for Iraq," *Washington Post*, 26 September 2004, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A49283-2004Sep25.html>; and Marybeth P. Ulrich, "The General Stanley McChrystal Affair: A Case Study in Civil-Military Relations," *Parameters* 41, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 88–89.

3. Elisabeth Bumiller, "Voice of Bush's Favored General Is Now Harder to Hear," *New York Times*, 4 October 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/05/world/05military.html>.

4. Mehdi Hasan "Rise of the Four-Star Deities," *New Statesman*, 5 July 2010, <http://www.newstatesman.com/north-america/2010/07/iraq-military-war-petraeus>.

5. Tom Curry, "David Petraeus: Battlefield 'Hero' and Savvy Washington Insider," *NBC News*, 9 November 2012, http://usnews.nbcnews.com/_news/2012/11/09/15056759-david-petraeus-battlefield-hero-and-savvy-washington-insider?lite; and Ulrich, "General Stanley McChrystal Affair."

6. See Vali Nasr, "The Inside Story of How the White House Let Diplomacy Fail in Afghanistan," *Foreign Policy*, 4 March 2013, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/03/04/the-inside-story-of-how-the-white-house-let-diplomacy-fail-in-afghanistan/>.

7. Barry R. Posen, *Restraint: A New Foundation for U.S. Grand Strategy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014); and John J. Mearsheimer, "America Unhinged," *National Interest* issue 129 (January–February 2014): 9–30, <http://nationalinterest.org/article/america-unhinged-9639>.

8. Stephen Van Evera, "The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War," *International Security* 9, no. 1 (1984): 58–107; Jack Snyder, "Civil-Military Relations and the Cult of the Offensive, 1914 and 1984," *International Security* 9, no. 1 (1984): 108–46; Todd S. Sechser, "Are Soldiers Less War-Prone than Statesmen?," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48, no. 5 (October 2004): 746–74; Seung-Whan Choi and Patrick James, "Civil-Military Relations in a Neo-Kantian World, 1886–1992," *Armed Forces & Society* 30, no. 2 (Winter 2004): 229–31; and Seung-Whan Choi and Patrick James, "Civil-Military Structure, Political Communication, and the Democratic Peace," *Journal of Peace Research* 45, no. 1 (2008): 38–39.

9. Choi and James, "Civil-Military Relations," 243–47. Choi and James, "Civil-Military Structure," 45–50.

10. One exception is Richard K. Betts, *Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises*, Morningside ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 240. Betts found that field commanders were usually just as or more aggressive than civilian advisers.

11. Political-military expansion is an increase in the degree of control over foreign territory or actions that appropriate sovereign powers of a foreign state. See Jeffrey W. Meiser, *Power and Restraint: The Rise of the United States, 1898–1941* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2015), xix–xx.

12. The case studies in this section draw on material from *ibid.*

13. Sylvester K. Stevens, *American Expansion in Hawaii, 1842–1898* (Harrisburg, PA: Archives Publishing Company, 1945), 223.

14. Stevens, *American Expansion in Hawaii*, 217–29; H. W. Brands, *The Reckless Decade: America in the 1890s* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 296–97; Walter LaFeber, *The American Search for Opportunity, 1865–1913* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 94; Tennant S. McWilliams, "James H. Blount, the South, and Hawaiian Annexation," *Pacific Historical Review* 57, no. 1 (February 1988): 33–46; David M. Pletcher, *The Diplomacy of Involvement: American Economic Expansion across the Pacific, 1784–1900* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2001), 239–40; and Albertine Loomis, *For Whom Are the Stars?* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1976), chap. 1.

15. Pletcher, *Diplomacy of Involvement*, 272–75; and Merze Tate, *The United States and the Hawaiian Kingdom: A Political History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1965), 301–6.

16. H. W. Brands, *Bound to Empire: The United States and the Philippines* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 24; and Pletcher, *Diplomacy of Involvement*, 276, 284.

17. Richard F. Hamilton, *President McKinley, War and Empire: President McKinley and America's "New Empire,"* vol. 2 (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2007), 63–64.

18. Ephraim K. Smith, "A Question from Which We Could Not Escape": William McKinley and the Decision to Acquire the Philippine Islands," *Diplomatic History* 9, no. 4 (October 1985): 371–72; Hamilton, *President McKinley, War and Empire*, 75, 82; Lewis L. Gould, *The Presidency of William McKinley* (Lawrence:

University Press of Kansas, 1980), 134–35; and H. Wayne Morgan, *William McKinley and His America*, rev. ed. (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2003), 308.

19. For a discussion of the evolution of McKinley's position on annexation, see Julius William Pratt, *Expansionists of 1898: The Acquisition of Hawaii and the Spanish Islands* (New York: P. Smith, 1951), 329–38; Gould, *Presidency of William McKinley*, 133–42; Brands, *Bound to Empire*, 25–26; Paolo E. Coletta, "McKinley, the Peace Negotiations, and the Acquisition of the Philippines," *Pacific Historical Review* 30, no. 4 (November 1961): 344–47; Pletcher, *Diplomacy of Involvement*, 275–76, 283–85; Hamilton, *President McKinley, War and Empire*, 69–82; Morgan, *William McKinley and His America*, 304–22; and Richard E. Welch, *Response to Imperialism: The United States and the Philippine-American War, 1899–1902* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 6–10. During this period, McKinley sought advice from a large number of government officials and private individuals with various positions on the annexation issue. See Hamilton, *President McKinley, War and Empire*, 70–79.

20. Paolo E. Coletta, "Bryan, McKinley, and the Treaty of Paris," *Pacific Historical Review* 26, no. 2 (May 1957): 139n23; and W. Stull Holt, *Treaties Defeated by the Senate: A Study of the Struggle between President and Senate over the Conduct of Foreign Relations* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1933), 169.

21. See Smith, "Question from Which," 371–72.

22. Quoted in *ibid.*, 369. The phrase "strategic interdependence" is Smith's (*ibid.*, 372). Coletta's analysis of McKinley's logic is similar but puts more emphasis on commercial advantages gained from annexation and favorable public opinion. Coletta, "McKinley, the Peace Negotiations," 345–47.

23. Brian McAllister Linn, *The Philippine War, 1899–1902* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000), 30–31.

24. Grania Bolton, "Military Diplomacy and National Liberation: Insurgent-American Relations after the Fall of Manila," *Military Affairs* 36, no. 3 (October 1972): 103.

25. Quoted in Morgan, *William McKinley and His America*, 339. See also J. H. Hitchman, "The American Touch in Imperial Administration: Leonard Wood in Cuba, 1898–1902," *Americas* 24, no. 4 (April 1968): 394.

26. Hitchman, "American Touch," 393–94; Louis A. Pérez, *Cuba between Empires, 1878–1902* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1983), 272; and Lejeune Cummins, "The Formulation of the 'Platt' Amendment," *Americas* 23, no. 4 (April 1967): 377–78.

27. Pérez, *Cuba between Empires*, 281.

28. *Ibid.*, 274–318; and Lars Schoultz, *Beneath the United States: A History of U.S. Policy toward Latin America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 144–46.

29. Schoultz, *Beneath the United States*, 145; David Healy, *The United States in Cuba, 1898–1902: Generals, Politicians, and the Search for Policy* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1963), chap. 15; and Hitchman, "American Touch in Imperial Administration," 395–99.

30. Quoted in Schoultz, *Beneath the United States*, 148.

31. *Ibid.*, 148–50.

32. Michael H. Hunt, "The Forgotten Occupation: Peking, 1900–1901," *Pacific Historical Review* 48, no. 4 (November 1979): 514–15; and Marilyn Blatt Young, *The Rhetoric of Empire: American China Policy, 1895–1901* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), 179–87.

33. Hunt, "Forgotten Occupation: Peking," 515.

34. *Ibid.*, 514–18; Young, *Rhetoric of Empire*, 204–6, 216; and Seward W. Livermore, "American Naval-Base Policy in the Far East, 1850–1914," *Pacific Historical Review* 13, no. 2 (June 1944): 118–25.

35. Walter LaFeber, *The Panama Canal: The Crisis in Historical Perspective*, updated ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 23–26; Richard H. Collin, *Theodore Roosevelt's Caribbean: The Panama Canal, the Monroe Doctrine, and the Latin American Context* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 245–67; and Lewis L. Gould, *The Presidency of Theodore Roosevelt* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991), 91–97.

36. Lester D. Langley, *The Banana Wars: United States Intervention in the Caribbean, 1898–1934* (Wilmington, DE: SR Books, 2002), 30–31.

37. Quoted in Schoultz, *Beneath the United States*, 198. See also Louis A. Pérez Jr., *Cuba under the Platt Amendment, 1902–1934* (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1986), 98.

38. Langley, *Banana Wars*, 61.

39. Schoultz, *Beneath the United States*, 200–201; Collin, *Theodore Roosevelt's Caribbean*, 534–39; Howard C. Hill, *Roosevelt and the Caribbean* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1965), 99–100; Ralph Eldin Minger, “William H. Taft and the United States Intervention in Cuba in 1906,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 41, no. 1 (February 1961): 77, 82–85; Ralph Eldin Minger, *William Howard Taft and United States Foreign Policy: The Apprenticeship Years, 1900–1908* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975), 122–23, 130–31; Langley, *Banana Wars*, 32–35; Dana Gardner Munro, *Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy in the Caribbean, 1900–1921* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964), 133–35; Gould, *Presidency of Theodore Roosevelt*, 252–53; and H. W. Brands, *T. R.: The Last Romantic* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 570, 572.

40. José M. Hernández, *Cuba and the United States: Intervention and Militarism, 1868–1933* (Austin, TX: University of Austin Press, 1993), 145–56; and Munro, *Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy*, 136–39. See also Collin, *Theodore Roosevelt's Caribbean*, 540–41; and Langley, *Banana Wars*, 42–43.

41. Schoultz, *Beneath the United States*, 202–3.

42. Langley, *Banana Wars*, 41.

43. George C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2008), 374; Thomas W. Walker, *Nicaragua: Living in the Shadow of the Eagle*, 4th ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2003), 18; and Munro, *Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy*, 167–69.

44. Walter LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America*, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1993), 41.

45. Munro, *Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy*, 173–75. At the time, some people suggested that American merchants hoped to trigger an American intervention that would increase the value of their investments in Nicaragua. Schoultz, *Beneath the United States*, 212. It appears that the independent banana producers on the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua had ongoing grievances with the Zelaya government regarding the monopoly granted to the Bluefields Steamship Company. Munro, *Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy*, 172–73.

46. Benjamin Harrison, “The United States and the 1909 Nicaragua Revolution,” *Caribbean Quarterly* 41, no. 3/4 (September–December 1995): 53.

47. Lester D. Langley and Thomas D. Schoonover, *The Banana Men: American Mercenaries and Entrepreneurs in Central America, 1880–1930* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995), 82.

48. Harrison, “1909 Nicaragua Revolution,” 53.

49. Thomas M. Leonard, *Central America and the United States: The Search for Stability* (Athens: University Press of Georgia, 1991), 61.

50. Schoultz, *Beneath the United States*, 212–13; Langley, *Banana Wars*, 56–59; Ivan Musicant, *The Banana Wars: A History of United States Military Intervention in Latin America from the Spanish-American War to the Invasion of Panama* (New York: Macmillan, 1990), 138–39; and Munro, *Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy*, 175–79.

51. Musicant, *Banana Wars*, 139–42; Schoultz, *Beneath the United States*, 213; Langley, *Banana Wars*, 59–60; Walker, *Nicaragua*, 18; and Munro, *Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy*, 181–86.

52. Langley, *Banana Wars*, 64–69; Schoultz, *Beneath the United States*, 218; Munro, *Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy*, 204–10; and Musicant, *Banana Wars*, 144–56.

53. Schoultz, *Beneath the United States*, 218–19; Langley, *Banana Wars*, 69–70; and Munro, *Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy*, 216.

54. Walker, *Nicaragua*, 20.

55. Munro, *Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy*, 215.

56. For similar findings during different historical periods, see Betts, *Soldiers, Statesmen*; and Christopher Gelpi and Peter D. Fever, “Speak Softly and Carry a Big Stick? Veterans in the Political Elite and the American Use of Force,” *American Political Science Review* 96, no. 4 (December 2002): 779–93.

57. Eliot A. Cohen, *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime* (New York: Free Press, 2002).

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