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# The Routledge Handbook of American Military and Diplomatic History, 1865 to the Present

Edited by Antonio S. Thompson and Christos G. Frentzos

# THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF AMERICAN MILITARY AND DIPLOMATIC HISTORY

## 1865 to the Present

*The Routledge Handbook of American Military and Diplomatic History, 1865 to the Present* provides a comprehensive analysis of the major events, conflicts, and personalities that have defined the military and diplomatic history of the United States in the modern period. Starting after the Civil War, the chapters, written by an array of expert historians, chronicle America's wars and interactions with the world up to the present day. From the emergence of American imperialism in the late nineteenth century to September 11, 2001 and the War on Terror, the *Handbook* illuminates how America has been shaped by its military and foreign affairs.

Topics covered include Western expansion, the Spanish–American and Philippine–American Wars, U.S. expansion in the Pacific and Latin America, American involvement in the First and Second World Wars, the interwar period, Cold War diplomacy, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, U.S. clandestine operations, and “peripheral” conflicts during the Cold War, humanitarian intervention, the Gulf War, and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Each section also highlights some of the scholarly debates and interpretive schools of thought in the period's historiography.

With authoritative and vividly written chapters by both established and up-and-coming scholars, this state-of-the-field handbook will be a go-to reference for every American history scholar's bookshelf.

Contributors: Alexander Alderson, Emerald M. Archer, Günter Bischof, Laszlo Borhi, Thomas A. Britten, Robert Buzzanco, James M. Carter, K.A. Cuordileone, Gregory A. Daddis, James F. Dobbins, Justus D. Doenecke, Kevin W. Farrell, Christos G. Frentzos, Jeffrey Grey, George C. Herring, Sean N. Kalic, Ross A. Kennedy, Martin Loicano, Kyle Longley, James I. Matray, Stephen McCullough, Ron Milam, Barry Mowell, Brian Neumann, Anne Paulet, James D. Perry, Keith Pomakoy, Lubna Z. Qureshi, Joe Renouard, Benjamin D. Rhodes, Thomas Schoonover, Frank Schumacher, Brian G. Shellum, Lon Strauss, Michael J. Sullivan III, Antonio S. Thompson, Cyrus Veaser, Kara Dixon Vuic, Gerhard L. Weinberg, and Kenneth Weisbrode.

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**“This book is dedicated to my wife, Amy, and my children, Madeline, Julian, and Sophia. Thanks for being patient and loving me during the rough spots.”**

*Antonio Thompson*

**“This book is dedicated to my grandfather, Timothy Dominic Bucci, who helped instill in me a love and passion for American history.”**

*Christos Frentzos*

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*Christos Frentzos*

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Despite some close calls, no historians were harmed in the making of this project.

*Antonio Thompson*

# INTRODUCTION

*Antonio S. Thompson and Christos G. Frentzos*

The history of U.S. foreign and military policy since 1865 is rich and varied. This work encapsulates the most current writing, research, and topical arguments to present a comprehensive, yet concise examination of the history and historiography of the last nearly 150 years. Our goal was to provide a historiographical overview from established senior professors, while including important, but often overlooked, chapters on individual topics from some of the best established and up-and-coming historians. Each section is composed of an introductory chapter that is designed to provide a brief overview of a major conflict or critical period in American military or diplomatic history. These opening chapters also serve to introduce the reader to some of the relevant literature on the topic and set the historical context for the more specific topical chapters that follow. The collection presented here is the second volume of a two-volume set. Taken alone or together these works should provide an excellent foundation for further historical inquiry.

This volume begins with a study of the period between the American Civil War and the War of 1898. Historian Anne Paulet presents an overview of Part I in “Westward Expansion and U.S. Overseas Empire, 1865–1898.” During this period the U.S. pursued an aggressive policy of conquering the West and beyond. The Homestead Act helped push settlers west, while the U.S. military served to protect and expand American interests, often acting in a traditional role in combat with Native Americans, but also in a less-traditional role as diplomats and administrators. One of the key figures in the first half of this period in U.S. expansion is William H. Seward, Secretary of State for Presidents Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Johnson. It was under Johnson that Seward’s crowning acquisition achievement came, the purchase of Alaska from Russia in 1867.

During the expansion west, the U.S. fought numerous campaigns against the Native Americans. Among those troops employed by the U.S. were the “Buffalo Soldiers.” These were African-American soldiers serving in segregated units. The name was given by the Native Americans and came into common use by U.S. troops. The first group designated this way was the 10th Cavalry Regiment, but others, including the 9th Cavalry and the 24th and 25th Infantry, were also given this designation. These Buffalo Soldiers would play an important, but sometimes overlooked, role in westward expansion, warfare against the Native Americans, the War of 1898, and the Philippine Insurrection. This is a topic taken up in our volume by Brian Shellum in his chapter, “Buffalo Soldiers on the Western Frontier: 1866–1890.”



During this same period the U.S. also set its sights on an overseas empire that extended into the Pacific and the Caribbean. The Navy played a prominent role in this endeavor and the imperialist urge gained more steam with the publication of Alfred Thayer Mahan's *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660–1783*. The acquisition of Midway, the Hawaiian and Samoan Islands, economic interests in the Caribbean and China, set the stage for U.S. expansion. This quest for placement among the global powers led to the expansion of the Monroe Doctrine and nearly pushed the U.S. into military conflict with Germany, which was settled through diplomacy, and on a collision course with Spain, resolved through war. Historian Stephen McCullough addresses these issues in "U.S. Overseas Expansion in the Post-Civil War Era."

Numerous factors led to the U.S. war with Spain in 1898. In his chapter, "The Spanish–American War and the Development of U.S. Imperialism," historian Thomas Schoonover examines many of them and explains how the phrase Spanish–American War was too small to encompass the entire conflict. While the sinking of the battleship *Maine* gave Americans a rallying cry, the urge for empire served to divide them into two camps, the Imperialists and the Anti-Imperialists. U.S. victory brought with it territorial acquisitions, including the Philippine Islands. When the Filipinos discovered that the American motives did not include liberation, a long and bloody conflict, the Philippine–American War, followed. Frank Schumacher examines this topic in "The Philippine–American War and the Birth of U.S. Colonialism in Asia." While the U.S. also gained Puerto Rico in the Caribbean, they did not officially acquire Cuba, although the Platt Amendment gave the U.S. wide latitude there. Historian Cyrus Veese discusses this in "The Platt Amendment and U.S. Occupation Policies in Latin America."

In the period of U.S. neutrality during World War I, America faced not only German U-boat aggression, but also British trade restrictions, while trying to maintain neutrality. Even when the U.S. entered the war, the decision was not taken lightly. Also, the Treaty of Versailles, which ended the conflict, and the League of Nations, created following the war, led to vigorous debate in the U.S. Historian Justus Doenecke examines the prominent figures and the historical debates that surround this pivotal period in his chapter, "The United States in World War I and the Treaty of Versailles, 1914–1919." One of these key figures is U.S. President Woodrow Wilson who campaigned that he "kept us out of war" when running for re-election in 1916 and then directed the nation's efforts when the U.S. did enter the conflict in 1917. Historian Ross Kennedy takes a closer look at this in "Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points and the League of Nations." World War I was truly a coalition war and the U.S. entered the war as an Associated Power on the Allied side. This type of arrangement can be fraught with diplomatic and military problems and historian Brian Neumann analyzes these in "Allied Coalition Warfare During the First World War." An often overlooked group that has contributed to U.S. military history is Native Americans, and historian Thomas Britten gives them the attention that they deserve in his chapter, "Native American Soldiers in World War I."

Following the end of World War I, the U.S. did not join the League of Nations, nor did they sign the Treaty of Versailles. Rather, the interwar period has often been called a time of American "isolation," where the U.S. refused to get involved in foreign affairs or conduct much in the way of international relations. The three historians in this section demonstrate that, while the U.S. did not engage in any large military activity, they were actively engaged in world affairs. Kenneth Weisbrode presents a historiographical approach to this period with his chapter, "The United States During the Interwar Years, 1919–1941." Clearly the U.S. remained active in international affairs, as demonstrated by their attempts to address postwar Germany, beginning with President Woodrow Wilson's failed attempt to secure the Fourteen Points peace agreement and U.S. membership in the League of Nations. The U.S. banker Charles Dawes was later instrumental in creating the Dawes Plan, which helped lower German reparations payments

in 1924. In 1929, the Young Plan, created by American businessman Owen Young, again revisited German reparations payments. The postwar period was the Age of Rapallo and Locarno, treaties aimed to ensure a peaceful postwar world. In this environment, the U.S. contributed through various methods, including disarmament policies, and outlawing war. Of the most significant were the ones created at the Washington Naval Conference in 1921 and 1922. The Kellogg-Briand Pact, signed in 1928, sought to prevent war as a means of solving disagreements. Benjamin D. Rhodes' chapter, "The Age of Disengagement and Disarmament," examines the major foreign policies conducted during these years. While the American people might have preferred isolation, and U.S. diplomats engaged in discussion to make the world more peaceful, military officials still engaged in risk assessment and discussions of future war. In his chapter, "U.S. Military Planning During the Interwar Period," Lon Strauss demonstrates that the U.S. had prepared for numerous military contingencies prior to World War II.

Franklin D. Roosevelt was unique among U.S. Presidents, having been elected to office for four consecutive terms. During his tenure in office, he presided over the latter end of the Great Depression, instituted a New Deal that met much criticism and not a few failures, and directed U.S. efforts at neutrality and then as a belligerent during World War II. Historian Gerhard Weinberg examines Roosevelt and the U.S. in the years preceding American entry into World War II in his chapter, "The United States in the Second World War: 1941–1945." The U.S. entry into the war followed the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, on December 7, 1941. Many difficult and world-changing decisions followed. Textbooks often describe American industrial power and often mention the role of women in the work-force. Historian Kara Dixon Vuic closely examines the various roles of women during the war, as mothers, workers, and members of the Armed Forces, in her chapter, "American Women in World War II." One of the things that the U.S. was not prepared in advance for was the capture and transfer of hundreds of thousands of enemy prisoners of war. Historian Antonio Thompson discusses the difficulties of housing, and exceptional care provided for, the captive German, Italian, and Japanese prisoners of war housed in the U.S. in his chapter, "The Housing of Axis Prisoners of War in the U.S. During World War II." Ultimate Allied victory forced the U.S. to make difficult compromises with its Allies and difficult decisions with its military. It was understood by the Allies that British and American forces would have to invade Europe in order to win the war against Germany. Yet, the particulars of this invasion, including when, where, and with what amount of force, were debated, while Soviet forces continued to engage the Germans on the Eastern Front. Historian James Perry examines the debates surrounding this pivotal decision in his chapter, "Roosevelt, Churchill, Stalin, and the Second Front." The war against the Japanese took its own brutal turn and after island-hopping and incredible loss of life the U.S. was faced with the monumental decision of how best to invade Japan. Under the "Manhattan Project" the U.S. had been secretly preparing atomic weapons and ultimately decided to use this weapon to end the war. Historian Robert Buzzanco analyzes the often criticized use of the atomic bomb in his chapter, "The Atomic Bombing of Japan: Was It Necessary?"

From the ashes of World War II, a new "Cold War" developed between the former allies in the East and West. Part VI examines the origins and early expansion of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union from 1945 to 1950. In the introductory chapter to this section, entitled "The Origins of the Cold War at Home and Abroad: 1945–1950," historian Günter Bischof discusses the evolution of the conflict as well as some of the major historical arguments put forth to explain its genesis and assess culpability for the tensions which lasted for nearly a half century.

Some of the questions Bischof addresses in his discussion of the literature include: What guided Soviet actions in Eastern Europe? Was it pure territorial expansion driven by an aggressive

communist ideology; or was it merely an attempt by the Soviet Union to create “friendly governments” on its borders in an effort to protect itself from future western aggression? By contrast, what drove U.S. policy during this same period? Was it merely a desire to expand American capitalism and economic domination, or a legitimate concern with national security? What role did America’s atomic monopoly and fervent anti-communism play in furthering tensions between the two superpowers? How, if at all, has the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s and the opening of archives in the former Eastern bloc changed or confirmed early notions about the causes and responsibility for the conflict? Unfortunately, as Bischof explains, the end of the Cold War has not produced any real consensus on all of these hotly debated issues. Nevertheless, he acknowledges that some of the most recent publications dealing with the origins of the Cold War have greatly expanded our knowledge and understanding of the conflict.

The topical chapters that follow in this section touch on a number of important points introduced by Günter Bischof. In “The Soviet Union, the United States and Eastern Europe, 1941–1953,” Laszlo Borhi examines the role of Eastern Europe at the dawn of the Cold War. America’s new relationship with the former Axis Powers is the focus of James Dobbins’ chapter, “U.S. Occupation Policy and Nation Building in Germany and Japan.” Finally, K.A. Cuordileone examines some of the social and domestic consequences of the Cold War on the United States in her chapter entitled “The Cold War at Home.”

The first major “hot” war of the Cold War era was the Korean conflict, which is the focus of Part VII. The introductory chapter, by historian James I. Matray, analyzes some of the causes and consequences of the war, not only for the United States and the Soviet Union, but also its effect on the nations of East Asia. In “The Korean War, 1950–1953: A Historiographical Summary,” Matray acknowledges that historians continue to passionately debate several important issues, including whether or not the war was an international conflict or a civil war. However, he notes that during the last few years a consensus has developed regarding at least two significant points. First, Matray argues, the Korean War was crucial in militarizing the clash between U.S. and Soviet ideology, and internationally speaking, it globalized the Cold War confrontation. Second, he asserts, most historians now agree that the origins of the conflict can trace their development back at least as far as World War II.

Matray closes his chapter by discussing some of the possible future trends in historical research on the Korean conflict. One area that deserves further exploration, he argues, is an analysis of the conflict’s impact on domestic politics within the U.S. and some recent publications have begun to examine this very issue. Additionally, he notes that some of the latest scholarship has once again drawn attention to the continuing debate regarding the origins of the conflict, a topic that will probably remain one of the most hotly debated issues in the historiography of the Korean War for some time.

Other chapters in this section include Jeffrey Grey’s “UN Coalition Warfare During the Korean War,” an analysis of the successes and failures of the international alliance that defended South Korea, and “Warfare and Nation Building in the Republic of Korea, 1953–1973,” by Christos Frentzos, which in part examines the relationship between warfare and economic growth and development in East Asia.

The Vietnam War is the focus of Part VIII, and the introduction to the literature is provided by George Herring. Herring’s chapter, “The Vietnam War, 1945–1975: A Historiography,” addresses some of the important questions that continue to divide Vietnam War scholars. First, was the conflict primarily a nationalist struggle among Vietnamese to determine their own fate, or was it simply part of the larger international Cold War struggle between the U.S. and the Soviet Union and its allies? Second, what motivated America to intervene in the conflict and

did Washington have a legitimate moral or national security reason for becoming involved? Finally, and perhaps most controversial of all, why was the United States unsuccessful in Vietnam?

Herring concludes his chapter by pointing out that recent works have challenged the once-dominant view that Cold War necessities drove U.S. decisions. Lately, he notes, scholars have begun to internationalize the Vietnam War, as access to Soviet, Chinese, and other former communist nations has yielded valuable new insights and has highlighted the critical role by outside nations. Herring also emphasizes that the most recent scholarship focuses much more on Vietnam, by demonstrating how the war impacted Vietnamese individuals, society, and culture.

Rounding out the section are three chapters covering a variety of issues related to the war. Gregory A. Daddis discusses U.S. military strategy in "The Myth of an American Attrition Strategy in the Vietnam War." Washington's attempt to construct a viable government south of the seventeenth parallel is the focus of James Carter's chapter, "'Shaky as all Hell:' The U.S. and Nation Building in Southern Vietnam." Finally, Ron Milam gives an intimate look at the everyday life of an American serviceman in "The Soldier's Experience in Vietnam."

The chapters in Part IX examine the Cold War on the periphery and discuss American overt and covert intervention in the third world. The introduction is provided by Michael J. Sullivan, a longtime specialist in this area. His historiographical chapter, "The Cold War on the Periphery, 1953–1989," not only discusses the literature, but provides a narrative historical framework that puts into context the topical chapters that follow. Essentially, Sullivan argues that, although the U.S. justified its overseas intervention during the Cold War as a response to Soviet provocations and in the interest of American national security, Washington was actually guided more by its role as leader and protector of the global capitalist system.

His revisionist interpretation challenges the old consensus view that pictured American adventurism as a response to Soviet threats to American security. In contrast, he asserts that in areas where the U.S. intervened, evidence of actual Soviet military or political presence was minimal. According to Sullivan, U.S. involvement in the third world was usually carried out to "prevent the success of any socialist alternative to the dominant economic paradigm, even if the sources of this threat were primarily domestic." Sullivan's chapter is an excellent reminder that the Cold War was not limited to the core regions of Europe and Asia, as the economic and ideological battle between the U.S. and the Soviet Union spilled over into the third world, often with deadly consequences.

The other chapters in this section offer a more detailed investigation of some of the more controversial, one might even say notorious, U.S. interventions during the Cold War era. Joe Renouard examines the confluence of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the American presidency in U.S. foreign policy in his chapter entitled "Eisenhower, Kennedy, and the CIA: Guatemala and the Bay of Pigs." The role of the U.S. in overthrowing the popularly elected government of Salvador Allende in Chile is the focus of Lubna Qureshi's chapter, "U.S. Clan-destine Operations in Chile: 1970–1973." Kyle Longley takes a look at American military operations in the Caribbean in "U.S. Troops as an Instrument in Foreign Policy: The Dominican Republic in 1965 and Grenada in 1983."

Part X examines the decade or so between the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s and the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Sean Kalic, from the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, takes a critical look at this transitional period with an eye toward assessing some of the newly emerging security threats of the time and examining how the U.S. military handled the switch from major military engagements to peacekeeping and stability operations. In "Post Cold War Conflicts," he discusses some of the most important scholarships on these topics as the United States struggled to find its place in the rising "new world order."

More than anything else, Kalic notes, political instability and sectarian violence would mark the new international military and security environment of the post Cold War era. As he suggests, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States needed to readjust its strategic thinking in the face of changes to its military force structure and foreign policy and national security objectives. One of the most important concerns became transnational terrorism, and the proliferation of nuclear weapons and missiles. Kalic asserts that military contingency planning became ever more complicated as leaders needed to prepare not only for conventional operations like Panama (1989) and Iraq (1990–1991) but also for ever-expanding peacekeeping and humanitarian operations, such as those in Bosnia, Somalia, and Kosovo.

Some of the major U.S. military operations of the immediate post Cold War period are the focus of the three topical chapters in Part X. Barry Mowell describes the U.S. military action to remove Panamanian dictator General Manuel Noriega from power in “Operation Just Cause: The U.S. Invasion of Panama.” The deployment of uniformed U.S. servicewomen in the 1990–1991 Iraq war is the subject of Emerald Archer’s chapter, “The Participation of American Servicewomen in Operation Desert Storm.” New and expanded responsibilities for American troops following the collapse of the Soviet Union is the heart of Keith Pomakoy’s chapter entitled “U.S. Troops in Non-Traditional Roles: Humanitarian and Peacekeeping Operations.”

The final part of this volume takes a critical look at the September 11, 2001 terror attacks on the United States and the resulting wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Martin Loicano from the Air War College provides the introductory chapter to Part XI. Loicano’s chapter, “September 11, 2001 and the War on Terror,” serves both as a primer for the ensuing topical chapters which cover the Iraq and Afghan wars in more detail, but also as an introduction to the United States’ global “War on Terror” and the literature that has been published over these topics during the last decade. He emphasizes that the September 11 attacks had a profound impact on Washington’s world view and led the U.S. to adopt a much more aggressive foreign and military policy. Ironically, America’s actions and attitudes toward its perceived enemies during this period were strongly reminiscent of the myopic view Washington had of its adversaries through much of the Cold War era.

Loicano devotes time to discussing the multinational terrorist organization known as Al Qaeda and the leadership role played by Osama Bin Laden. It was Al Qaeda’s alliance with the Taliban of Afghanistan and Bin Laden’s presence in the region that led directly to U.S. action against that nation. While American military action against Iraq proved to be much more controversial, Loicano discusses both U.S. successes and failures in those theaters and notes the difficulty Washington faced in creating and maintaining an international coalition to defeat insurgents in both countries. In closing, Loicano remarks that, with instability continuing in Southwest Asia for the foreseeable future, the U.S. can only be successful through a long-term commitment to the region. Whether or not the U.S. has the political will and financial resources to carry out this mission has yet to be determined.

This concluding section closes with two chapters that take a hard look at the controversial U.S. military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Kevin Farrell assesses Washington’s military strategy in Central Asia and places American actions in the larger historical context of British and Soviet interventions in the region in “Operation Enduring Freedom: The United States in Afghanistan.” Alexander Alderson provides his evaluation of American successes and failures in the operation to topple Saddam Hussein from power and replace his regime with a stable, democratic government in “Operation Iraqi Freedom: 2003–2010.”

This work presents a current examination of the historiography and selected topics from U.S. military and diplomatic history since 1865. This handbook will hopefully form the basis of

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future discussion and inquiry and provide an excellent reference for students and historians alike. All of the contributors are either noteworthy or up-and-coming historians and anyone interested in further information on these topics is encouraged to look up other works by these authors. U.S. diplomatic and military affairs have to a large extent helped determine America's role in the international arena. Combining the two disciplines provides a unique perspective on how the United States has evolved from a string of small colonies to a global power. This two-volume work traces the ebbs and flows of American interaction on the world stage and highlights important and sometimes overlooked events. Taken as a whole, these chapters should provide a more complete picture of U.S. history, thereby putting American military and diplomatic history in its proper context.

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## PART I

# Post-Civil War American Expansion at Home and Abroad



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# 1

## WESTWARD EXPANSION AND U.S. OVERSEAS EMPIRE: 1865–1898

*Anne Paulet*

In 1898, the United States declared war on Spain and began a clear imperial adventure with the consequent acquisition of overseas territories. Yet the roots for this imperialism lay with earlier frontier expansion and settlement across the West aided by the U.S. Army and its removal of Native Americans to reservations. At the same time, Americans were conquering the continent in the wake of the Civil War, and growing American industrial might was sending Americans around the world in search of markets, converts, and coaling stations. Backed by an expanding navy, Americans sought to broaden their penetration and control of various Pacific territories, even before the United States explicitly joined the scramble for empire at the turn of the century.

In 1862, the United States Congress passed the Homestead Act, opening the vast federal domain and pushing the frontier inexorably westward as thousands of settlers in the next several decades poured onto the Great Plains. In the process, they encountered the Native Americans already living there, establishing the basis for countless dime novel stories of the conflict of “civilization” versus “savagery.” The federal government, attempting to mitigate the ensuing conflicts, sought to move Native Americans onto reservations removed from major settlement areas. To accomplish this, it negotiated a series of treaties with the tribes and deployed the army to enforce their removal, regardless of the desires of the native peoples. Consequently, the primary occupation of the U.S. military in the wake of the Civil War was not, as one might expect, policing the defeated South, but rather the conquest and containment of Native Americans in the trans-Mississippi West.

Histories of these military encounters across the moving frontier began even as the conflicts were occurring. These early writers, often succumbing to the more lurid rhetoric found in dime novels, told a story entirely sympathetic to white expansion and critical of Native Americans and their lifestyle. De Bienville Randolph Kiem wrote a journalistic account replete with frenzied savages, for instance.<sup>1</sup> Cyrus Brady, a historian writing at the time, though lacking sympathy for Native Americans or their resistance, still tended to treat all participants with respect.<sup>2</sup> By mid-century, while the language may have become more toned down and the writing more based on historically verifiable narrative, the approach still tended to celebrate western expansion and military endeavors, without acknowledging Native American rights or culture as valuable.<sup>3</sup> A major turning point came with the publication of Dee Brown’s *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, which sought to tell the history of western expansion from the Indian view. This is not a history

of justified settlement but one of broken treaties, military massacres, and genocide; it is an indictment of Anglo-American expansion and an effort to rebalance the history of western military encounters.<sup>4</sup> In the wake of this transformative approach and in line with changes in the profession in response to the minority rights movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s, later military histories of western expansion took a more balanced approach to the frontier, including both Indian perspectives and military misbehaviors as part of the overall narrative. There were several works which came out in the mid-1990s which sought to retell the histories of major confrontations either with a more balanced view or with a clearly Native American viewpoint.<sup>5</sup> Over time, efforts to include and understand Indian views were more common and better handled; although, within the genre, the story continues to favor the military and white expansion.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps the best example of the problems are found in the iconic works of Robert Utley, whose books continue to focus on Indian-white relations in ways historians with a more ethnohistorical base find problematic, especially his tendency to apologize for or excuse the action of white policy makers and military men.<sup>7</sup> Even in the late 1980s and 1990s, general histories still tended to support western expansion, even if there were now more caveats.<sup>8</sup>

As well as broad views of military efforts on the Plains, there were also more specific approaches, such as those focused on the military men themselves. A number of generals central to the military campaigns against the Native Americans penned memoirs in which Indians, for the most part, were simply foes to be overcome in the name of necessary white expansion.<sup>9</sup> A slightly different view was provided by Captain Richard Henry Pratt, whose memoirs detailed his eight years on the Plains but predominantly concentrated on his efforts to culturally transform the Indians during his roughly quarter-century as head of the Carlisle Indian School.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, accounts that dismiss Indians as savages in need of defeat and with few redeemable qualities can be found in the reminiscences of George Armstrong Custer. Arguably the most well-known of western military men, Custer was an ardent self-promoter, penning two accounts of his time in the West.<sup>11</sup> In the wake of his untimely demise, Custer's wife, Elizabeth, wrote three books about her time on the Plains with her husband.<sup>12</sup> This was simply the beginning of an outpouring of works centering on the famous encounter of Custer and the Lakota at the Battle of Little Big Horn and exploring the myth of Custer and often of those around him.<sup>13</sup> It should also be noted that Custer is not the only military figure to warrant further attention, and biographies on a variety of generals and military leaders have come out over the years, often arguing for the important role their subject had on directing American relations with Native Americans.<sup>14</sup> Finally, in 1990, Sherry Smith sought to understand the views of both white military men and their wives toward Native Americans in her book *A View from Officers' Row*.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to tales of white men, and occasionally women, of predominantly military significance on the frontier, new stresses on issues of race resulted in a few studies centered on Indian Scouts and more on the African-American Buffalo Soldiers. The latter were formed as the 10th cavalry in 1866, though the term later applied to the all-black, 9th cavalry and the 24th and 25th infantry as well. Officers were both white and black.<sup>16</sup> Buffalo Soldiers served throughout the West and were especially active in the Indian Wars. They later served overseas in the Spanish-American War in Cuba and in the war in the Philippines. As a historical subject, Buffalo Soldiers were largely ignored until the 1960s when the civil rights movement led to reappraisals of race in a number of historical fields. The eponymous pioneering work on the Buffalo Soldiers by William and Shirley Anne Leckie appeared in 1967, but then there was a lull until the last two decades.<sup>17</sup> These recent works attempt to portray the lives of African-American soldiers in the West and their efforts to fit in and prove themselves to the whites around them.<sup>18</sup> An interesting contribution to the literature which seeks to combine issues of race and gender is Phillip Thomas

Tucker's *Cathy William: From Slave to Female Buffalo Soldier*. It should be noted that the validity of this tale of an African-American woman who supposedly passed as male and served as a Buffalo Soldier has been questioned by some.<sup>19</sup> In the end, U.S. military confrontations with American Indians continue to inhabit an ever smaller portion of U.S. military monographs and to be relegated to western history or Native American studies. A few transnational works attempt to place U.S.-Indian relations in a broader perspective; but generally they make almost no appearance in diplomatic histories, whether the recent sweeping survey of U.S. foreign relations penned by George Herring or more textbook oriented works, such as Thomas Paterson's *American Foreign Relations*.<sup>20</sup> It remains then for U.S.-Native American relations to be fully integrated into the expanse of American imperial experience and especially into the history of American foreign relations.

Yet studies of American diplomatic history do not end with the conclusion of the Civil War and resume with the 1898 declaration of war on Spain; instead, a variety of work has been done on American interest in, and spread into, the Pacific during those years. Traditionalist approaches tended to ignore this period between the wars, but revisionists found new reasons to explore it. The seminal work of revisionism was William Appleman William's 1959 book, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*. Arguing that the vast industrial expansion of the United States in the last half of the nineteenth century necessitated acquiring markets for mass produced goods, Williams and others made economic motivations the center of consideration.<sup>21</sup> In addition to, or in conjunction with, economics, a number of historians studied the central role of the navy, drawing on Alfred Thayer Mahan's contentions that power rested in a large navy. They looked at everything from the growth of the navy and its consequent need for coaling stations to the role of naval personnel as diplomatic envoys, often central to American expansion.<sup>22</sup> Other historians looked for broader motivations using a more sociological or intellectual approach and concentrating on what they viewed as either key players, such as Ernest Paolino's book on William Seward, or key ideas.<sup>23</sup> Regarding the latter, in 1975 Robert Beisner proposed, in *From the Old Diplomacy to the New, 1865-1900*, that the 1890s marked a shift in the American approach to foreign policy from a haphazard one to a more organized and deliberate policy.<sup>24</sup>

There were also sweeping studies of U.S. movement into the Pacific and interaction with East Asian countries. The classic work is the 1967 *Across the Pacific* by Akira Iriye, but a more recent study is Arthur Power Dudden's *The American Pacific*.<sup>25</sup> The 1867 acquisition of Midway tends to remain a minor notation in books on naval expansion or diplomatic history. Surprisingly, the acquisition of Alaska in the same year does not receive much more attention. Ronald Jensen's 1975 book *The Alaska Purchase and Russian-American Relations* is the major work.<sup>26</sup> Other than a few articles, Alaska is mainly covered in larger general studies or in works on William Seward.<sup>27</sup> While the major imperial confrontation over Samoa occurred in 1899, Paul Kennedy looks at Samoa, starting in 1878, as a case study of imperialist conflict with Europeans in the Pacific.<sup>28</sup>

By the 1980s, the move to shift from social to cultural history started to appear in works on diplomacy, especially with Michael Hunt's 1987 book, which studied the role of ideology in expansionism.<sup>29</sup> By the 2000s, race had come to take center stage in a number of studies, including Eric Love's *Race over Empire* and Michael Krenn's *The Color of Empire*.<sup>30</sup> In addition to broad driving forces, historians also studied specific areas of interaction, most notably Japan, which had been "opened" by the United States in the 1850s, and China.<sup>31</sup> As a result of the growth of both women's history and cultural history, especially the latter's stress on non-governmental actors, more recent works on American intervention in China have focused on the important role played by missionaries as imperialists, diplomats, and inculcators of American culture, including Jane Hunt's *The Gospel of Gentility* and Patricia Hill's *The World Their Household*.<sup>32</sup>

However, perhaps most interesting to historians is the American relationship with Hawaii. An independent kingdom ruled by a native monarchy, the islands of Hawaii had come under increasing American influence during the nineteenth century.<sup>33</sup> These Americans, mostly missionaries and former missionaries, had a growing economic stake in the country. When a change in tariff law and an assertive new Hawaiian monarch threatened their position in the early 1890s, Americans overthrew the monarchy and asked for annexation. Denied due to the irregularities of the take-over, these Americans had to await the great imperialist surge of 1898 to become part of the United States. Early works by W.A. Russ Jr. and Helena Allen tend to focus on the Anglo-American perception of events.<sup>34</sup> More recent efforts by Noenoe Silva and Stuart Banner look at native Hawaiian resistance or place the encounter within the larger dispossession of natives as Europeans and Americans spread into and settled the Pacific.<sup>35</sup> In many ways, the story of Hawaii is the story of burgeoning American imperial expansion in the years before the war with Spain.

While the spread of cultural approaches and the inclusion of issues of race and gender have added much to the literature of this time period, historians have yet to really integrate the expansion of the United States across the continent with the expansion of the country across the Pacific. Few historians today would deny that American interaction with Native Americans was imperial; however, fewer still have explored either what that meant to the military and diplomatic history of the United States in the decades immediately after the Civil War or how that serves to fit the country into a transnational vision of imperialism.

## Notes

- 1 De Bienville Randolph Keim, *Sheridan's Troopers on the Borders: A Winter Campaign on the Plains* (Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen & Haffelfinger, 1870); also sympathetic to white actions and with greatest concentration on pre-Civil War encounters, Jacob Piatt Dunn, *Massacres of the Mountains: A History of the Indian Wars of the Far West, 1815–1875* (1886; repr., Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole, 2002); and from someone involved in conquest: John F. Finerty, *War-Path and Bivouac; or, the Conquest of the Sioux, a Narrative of Stirring Personal Experiences and Adventures in the Big Horn and Yellowstone Expedition of 1876, and in the Campaign on the British Border in 1879* (1890; repr., Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961). A 1930s monograph by a western newspaperman is significant predominantly for its portraits of Indian leaders, rightly doomed to fail perhaps but still somewhat sympathetically portrayed; see Paul I. Wellman, *Death on the Prairie: The Thirty Years' Struggle for the Western Plains* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1934; repr., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987).
- 2 Cyrus Townsend Brady, *The Sioux Indian Wars: From the Powder River to the Little Big Horn* (1904; repr., New York: Indian Head Books, 1992) and *Indian Fights and Fighters of the American Frontier of the 19th Century* (1904; repr., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1971).
- 3 See William H. Leckie, *The Military Conquest of the Southern Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963); Wilbur Sturtevant Nye, *Plains Indians Raiders: The Final Phases of Warfare from the Arkansas to the Red River* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968); and Ray Brandes, *Troopers West: Military and Indian Affairs on the American Frontier* (San Diego: Frontier Heritage Press, 1970).
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- 5 David Roberts, *Once They Moved Like the Wind: Cochise, Geronimo, and the Apache Wars* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993); Jerome A. Greene, ed., *Lakota and Cheyenne: Indian Views of the Great Sioux War* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994); Bruce Hampton, *Children of Grace: The Nez Perce War of 1877* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994); Charles M. Robinson III, *A Good Year to Die: The Story of the Great Sioux War* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995).
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- 7 See Robert Marshall Utley, *Frontier Regulars: The United States Army and the Indian, 1866–1891* (New York: Macmillan, 1974); and *The Indian Frontier of the American West, 1846–1890* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984).
- 8 See Robert Wooster, *The Military and United States Indian Policy, 1865–1903* (1988; repr., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995); and Thomas Goodrich, *Scalp Dance: Indian Warfare on the High Plains, 1865–1879* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1997).
- 9 General Nelson Miles, for instance, tends to be more disparaging of Mexicans and their lack of culture as he sees it than he is of the Native Americans. See Nelson Appleton Miles, *Personal Recollections & Observations of General Nelson A. Miles: Embracing a Brief Overview of the Civil War or from New England to the Golden Gate and the Story of His Indian Campaigns with Comments on the Exploration, Development and Progress of Our Great Western Empire*, 2 vols. (1896; repr., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992) and *Serving the Republic: Memoirs of the Civil and Military Life of Nelson A. Miles, Lieutenant-General, United States Army* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1911); O.O. Howard, *My Life and Experiences Among Our Hostile Indians: A Record of Personal Observations, Adventures, and Campaigns Among the Indians of the Great West, With Some Account of their Life, Habits, Traits, Religion, Ceremonies, Dress, Savage Instincts, and Customs in Peace and War* (1907; repr., New York: Da Capo Press, 1972); and George Crook, *General George Crook, His Autobiography*, ed. Martin Schmitt (1946 and 1960; repr., Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986).
- 10 Richard Henry Pratt, *Battlefield and Classroom: Four Decades with the American Indian, 1867–1904*, ed. Robert Utley (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964; repr., with introduction by David Wallace Adams, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004).
- 11 George Armstrong Custer, *My Life on the Plains, or, Personal Experiences with Indians* (1872; repr., Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962) and *Wild Life on the Plains and the Horrors of Indian Warfare* (1891; repr., New York: Arno Press, 1969).
- 12 Elizabeth Bacon Custer, *Boots and Saddles or, Life in Dakota with General Custer* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1885; repr., with introduction by Louise Barnett, Lincoln, NE: Bison Books, 2010); *Tenting on the Plains; or, General Custer in Kansas and Texas* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1895; repr., with introduction by Jane R. Stewart and forward by Shirley A. Leckie, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994); and *Following the Guidon: The Experiences of General Custer's Wife with the US 7th Cavalry* (1890; repr., UK: Leonaaur, 2010).
- 13 Among the numerous works on Custer, see Edgar Irving Stewart, *Custer's Luck* (1955; repr., Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980); Stephen E. Ambrose, *Crazy Horse and Custer: The Parallel Lives of Two American Warriors* (1975; repr., Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1996); Robert Marshall Utley, *Cavalier in Buckskin: George Armstrong Custer and the Western Military Frontier*, rev. ed. (1988; Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001); Jim Donovan, *Custer and the Little Big Horn: The Man, the Mystery, the Myth* (Stillwater, MN: Voyageur Press, 2001); Thom Hatch, *The Custer Companion: A Comprehensive Guide to the Life of George Armstrong Custer and the Plains Indian Wars* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2002); and Paul Andrew Hutton, ed., *The Custer Reader* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992; repr., with introduction by Robert Utley, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004). For a different perspective on events at Little Big Horn, see Charles Albert Varnum, *Custer's Chief of Scouts: The Reminiscences of Charles A. Varnum: Including his Testimony at the Reno Court of Inquiry*, ed. John M. Carroll (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987); and Charles K. Mills, *Harvest of Barren Regrets: The Army Career of Frederick William Benteen, 1834–1898* (Glendale, CA: A.H. Clark Co., 1985). For a modern perspective on Custer's wife which grounds her within both women's history and military history, see Shirley A. Leckie, *Elizabeth Bacon Custer and the Making of a Myth* (Norman: Oklahoma Press, 1993).
- 14 Richard N. Ellis, *General Pope and U.S. Indian Policy* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1970); Paul Andrew Hutton, *Phil Sheridan and His Army* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985; repr., Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999); Charles M. Robinson, *Bad Hand: A Biography of General Ranald S. Mackenzie* (Austin, TX: State House Press, 1993); Arthur J. Amchan, *The Most Famous Soldier in America: A Biography of Lt. Gen. Nelson A. Miles, 1839–1925* (Alexandria, VA: Amchan Publications, 1989); and Robert Wooster, *Nelson A. Miles and the Twilight of the Frontier Army* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993).
- 15 Sherry Smith, *A View from Officers' Row: Army Perceptions of Western Indians* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1990).
- 16 To understand why and how Indians participated on the side of the American military, see Thomas W. Dunlay, *Wolves for the Blue Soldiers: Indian Scouts and Auxiliaries with the United States Army, 1860–1890*



- (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982); and Mark Van de Logt, *War Party in Blue: Pawnee Scouts in the U.S. Army* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010).
- 17 William Leckie and Shirley Anne Leckie, *The Buffalo Soldiers: A Narrative of the Black Cavalry of the West*, rev. ed. (1967; repr., Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007).
  - 18 Monroe Lee Billington, *New Mexico's Buffalo Soldiers, 1866–1900* (Niwoot, CO: University of Colorado Press, 1991); Arthur T. Burton, *Black, Buckskin, and Blue: African American Scouts and Soldiers on the Western Frontier* (Austin, TX: Eakin Press, 1999); Charles L. Kenner, *Buffalo Soldiers and Officers of the Ninth Cavalry, 1867–1898: Black & White Together* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999); William A. Dobak and Thomas D. Phillips, *The Black Regulars, 1866–1898* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001); Elizabeth D. Leonard, *Men of Color to Arms!: Black Soldiers, Indian Wars, and the Quest for Equality* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2010); and Frank N. Schubert, *Black Valor: Buffalo Soldiers and the Medal of Honor, 1870–1898* (Wilmington, DE: SR Books, 1997) and *Voices of the Buffalo Soldier: Records, Reports, and Recollections of Military Life and Service in the West* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003).
  - 19 Phillip Thomas Tucker, *Cathy William: From Slave to Female Buffalo Soldier* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2002).
  - 20 James O. Gump, *The Dust Rose like Smoke: The Subjugation of the Zulu and the Sioux* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994); Jill St. Germain, *Indian Treaty-Making Policy in the United States and Canada, 1867–1877* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001); and Bruce Vandervort, *Indian Wars of Mexico, Canada and the United States, 1812–1900* (New York: Routledge, 2006). George Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); and Thomas Paterson, J. Garry Clifford, Shane J. Maddock, Deborah Kisatsky, and Kenneth J. Hagan, *American Foreign Relations: A History*, 7th ed., 2 vols. (Boston: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning, 2010).
  - 21 William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1959). Because Williams taught at the University of Wisconsin, works from students who adopted his economic approach were known as products of the Wisconsin school. Among these are Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860–1898* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1963) and Thomas J. McCormick, *China Market: America's Quest for Empire, 1893–1901* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1967). Additional economic approaches include later works by both Williams and LaFeber; see William Appleman Williams, *The Roots of the Modern American Empire* (New York: Random House, 1969); and Walter LaFeber, *The American Search for Opportunity, 1865–1913* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); as well as others, such as Tom E. Terrill, *The Tariff, Politics, and American Foreign Policy, 1874–1901* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1973); Emily S. Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic & Cultural Expansion, 1890–1945* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1982); and David M. Pletcher, *The Diplomacy of Involvement: American Economic Expansion across the Pacific, 1784–1900* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2001). For criticism of the revisionist approach, see Paul S. Holbo, “Economics, Emotion, and Expansion: An Emerging Foreign Policy,” in H. Wayne Morgan, ed., *The Gilded Age: A Reappraisal*, rev. ed. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1970).
  - 22 Walter R. Herrick, Jr., *The American Naval Revolution* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1966); John Doughty Alden, *American Steel Navy: A Photographic History of the U.S. Navy from the Introduction of the Steel Hull in 1883 to the Cruise of the Great White Fleet* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1972); Peter Karsten, *Naval Aristocracy: The Golden Age of Annapolis and the Emergence of Modern American Navalism* (New York: Free Press, 1972); Benjamin Franklin Cooling, *Grey Steel and Blue Water Navy: Formative Years of America's Military-Industrial Complex, 1881–1917* (UK: Gazelle Book Services, Ltd., 1979); and Mark Russell Shulman, *Navalism and the Emergence of American Sea Power, 1882–1893* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1995). For the role of the navy in diplomatic encounters, see Kenneth J. Hagan, *Gold Braid and Foreign Relations: Diplomatic Activities of U.S. Naval Officers, 1798–1883* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1973); Frederick Drake, *The Empire of the Seas: A Biography of Rear Admiral Robert Wilson Shufeldt, USN* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1984), a study of the admiral responsible for the treaty with Korea; and David Foster Long, *Gold Braid and Foreign Relations: Diplomatic Activities of U.S. Naval Officers, 1798–1883* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1988). For studies of Mahan, see, for instance, Robert Seager, *Alfred Thayer Mahan: The Man and his Letters* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1977).
  - 23 With his vision of an American empire which stretched from Canada to the tip of South America, William Seward is often studied as a source of expansionism; see Glydon Van Deusen, *William Henry Seward* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967); and Ernest N. Paolino, *The Foundations of the American Empire: William Henry Seward and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press,

- 1973). Broader approaches include David Healy, *U.S. Expansionism: The Imperialist Urge in the 1890s* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970); Milton Plesur, *America's Outward Thrust: Approaches to Foreign Affairs, 1865–1900* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1971); and Charles S. Campbell, *The Transformation of American Foreign Relations, 1865–1900* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976).
- 24 Robert Beisner, *From the Old Diplomacy to the New, 1865–1900*, 2nd ed. (1975; Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson, 1986).
- 25 Akira Iriye, *Across the Pacific: An Inner History of American-East Asian Relations* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1967); Arthur Power Dudden, *The American Pacific: From the Old China Trade to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).
- 26 Ronald J. Jensen, *The Alaska Purchase and Russian–American Relations* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1975).
- 27 There is a 100th anniversary study of the purchase: Archie W. Shiels, *The Purchase of Alaska* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, dist., 1967); there are also two main articles: Howard I. Kushner, “Seward’s Folly? American Commerce in Russian America and the Alaska Purchase,” *California Historical Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (1975): 4–26, *America History and Life* (45900592); and Richard E. Welch, Jr., “American Public Opinion and the Purchase of Russian America,” *American Slavic & Eastern European Review* 17, no. 4 (1958): 481–494, *America History and Life* (46422994).
- 28 Paul Kennedy, *Samoa Tangle: A Study in Anglo-German–American Relations, 1878–1900* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1974).
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## 2

# BUFFALO SOLDIERS ON THE WESTERN FRONTIER

1866–1890

*Brian G. Shellum*

### Introduction

Black Americans have served and sacrificed in U.S. military conflicts from the Revolutionary War onward, but it was during the Civil War that they first fought in large numbers and in organized black regiments. The service of 178,975 black volunteers during the Civil War, comprising about 10 percent of the total Union manpower by the end of the bitter struggle, paid the price for blacks to serve in the Regular Army in the postwar era. These black regiments fought in all the major theaters of combat and suffered 36,847 dead, and individual members received 16 Medals of Honor. As the Union Army demobilized the last of the black volunteer regiments at the end of the war, Congress passed legislation establishing black Regular Army cavalry and infantry regiments. This was the first time the U.S. permitted blacks to enlist as regulars and as soldiers in the nation's standing army. These black regulars came to be known as the Buffalo Soldiers.<sup>1</sup>

Nearly everyone today recognizes the term Buffalo Soldier, but in the post-Civil War era the black soldiers would have been known as colored troops who served in Negro regiments. The soubriquet Buffalo Soldier came into popular use in the twentieth century, even though it has its roots in the nineteenth century and was coined by Native Americans. According to various sources, the Cheyenne and Comanche used the expression first in the late 1860s and early 1870s for the members of the black regular regiments. The term was used occasionally by the press and in private letters, but not by the black soldiers themselves. Most agree the name referred to the soldiers' dark skin and black curly hair, similar in the Indian view to that of the buffalo. There is a great deal of disagreement in any meaning beyond this visual similarity. Certainly there was no empathetic connection between the two groups; the Indians viewed the African-American soldier as a blue-clad enemy bent on destroying their way of life.<sup>2</sup>

A first-hand account from 1886 illustrates the contemporary Indian view of the Buffalo Soldiers. When Major Frederick W. Benteen arrived with a detachment of the Ninth Cavalry at the future site of Fort Duchesne, Utah, an Indian agent reported that a Ute Indian headman shouted: "Buffalo Soldiers! Buffalo Soldiers! Coming! Maybe so tomorrow! Indians saw them at Burnt Fort yesterday, coming this way. Don't let them come! We can't stand it! It's bad—very bad!" When the agent asked through an interpreter about the Ute's aversion to the black

troopers of the Ninth, the Indian's broken English response was "All over black! All over black, buffalo soldiers! Injun heap no like him!" After rubbing his head with his hand, he screamed, "Woolly head! Woolly head! All same as buffalo! What you call him, black white man?" This is one of the earliest documented uses of the term Buffalo Soldier by Native Americans. The epithet evolved and came to embody much more.<sup>3</sup>

## **Establishment**

The Buffalo Soldier regiments were born in the post-Civil War legislation to set the size of the peacetime army and establish black Regular Army units. Congress approved an act on July 28, 1866 that added four cavalry regiments to the six existing and 26 new infantry regiments to the 19 then in service; two of the cavalry and four of the infantry regiments were reserved for black soldiers. This was a significant triumph for blacks who, so recently freed from their slave shackles in the South, sacrificed so much during the Civil War. It was an achievement anticipated when Frederick Douglass predicted:

Once let the black man get upon his person the brass letter U.S., let him get an eagle on his button, and a musket on his shoulder and bullets in his pocket, there is no power on earth that can deny that he has not earned the right to citizenship.

By August 1866, the military departments began recruiting black soldiers and white officers from the former Civil War volunteer regiments to fill the ranks of the Ninth and Tenth U.S. Cavalry Regiments and the Thirty-Eighth, Thirty-Ninth, Fortieth, and Forty-First U.S. Infantry Regiments.<sup>4</sup>

In 1869 and subsequent years, Congress moved to reduce the size of the peacetime Regular Army by limiting its enlisted strength to less than 30,000, the strength the army maintained throughout the Indian Wars. This mandate forced the army to reduce the number of infantry regiments to 25 but left the number of cavalry regiments at ten. The Ninth and Tenth Cavalry Regiments survived intact, but the Thirty-Ninth and Fortieth Regiments combined to form the new Twenty-Fifth Infantry Regiment, and the Thirty-Eighth and Forty-First Regiments formed the new Twenty-Fourth. These four Buffalo Soldier regiments comprised about 10 percent of the post-Civil War Regular Army strength, and played a key role in the Indian Wars on the western frontier in the period 1866 to 1890.<sup>5</sup>

## **Ninth and Tenth U.S. Cavalry**

The newly formed Ninth and Tenth Cavalry Regiments shared essentially the same organization as the white regiments in the Regular Army. A cavalry regiment consisted of 12 companies formed into three battalions (four companies in each battalion). At full strength, a cavalry regiment rode with 43 commissioned officers and 845 enlisted men. Each company had three officers, ten non-commissioned officers, and 60 privates. During this period, cavalry units began to commonly use the term "troop" instead of company and "squadron" instead of battalion, a practice that began during the Civil War. Cavalry units used both terms interchangeably until the army directed regiments to use troop and squadron exclusively in 1883.<sup>6</sup>

The Ninth and Tenth Cavalry were different from the white cavalry regiments in several important ways. Black enlisted men filled the regimental ranks, though they were led exclusively by white officers, with three exceptions, to be discussed later. Second, the army assigned chaplains to the black regiments. The army assigned chaplains to most military posts, but the

black regiments were the only ones allotted unit chaplains in this period. These chaplains, commissioned as captains, ministered to the black enlisted men and taught them fundamental school subjects. This practice of chaplains educating illiterate black soldiers began during the Civil War and was perhaps as important as their religious role.<sup>7</sup>

The Ninth U.S. Cavalry Regiment formed in New Orleans, Louisiana, beginning in August 1866, and was nearly full strength by early 1867 when it was sent to Texas to complete its training. In June the army ordered the regiment to occupy posts in west and south Texas, where it fought the Comanche and Apache and protected pioneers for eight years. In 1875, the regiment transferred to New Mexico and spent the next five years fighting the Apache and securing settlers. The regiment moved north in 1881 to Kansas and Indian Territory (later Oklahoma) where it remained until 1885. Finally, the Ninth moved to Montana, Nebraska, and South Dakota from 1885 to 1891, where it fought the closing battles of the Plains Indian Wars against the Sioux and Cheyenne.<sup>8</sup>

The Tenth U.S. Cavalry Regiment formed at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas in September 1866 and moved its headquarters to Fort Riley, Kansas the following August. Initially the regiment's troops were scattered among forts along the line of the Kansas Pacific Railroad, then under construction. By September 1867, the regiment was at full strength and had fought several sharp engagements against large bands of Cheyenne. The Tenth moved in 1869 south to new areas of Kansas and Indian Territory, alternately fighting, containing, and protecting the bands of Cheyenne, Comanche, Kiowa, and other tribes within the bounds of the territory. Texas became the home of the regiment in 1875, with troops spread over west Texas performing frontier duties and fighting Apaches. The unit moved to Arizona in 1885, where it participated in General Crook's campaign against Geronimo, and finally to New Mexico in 1886, where the regiment continued to pacify the region until 1891.<sup>9</sup>

### **Twenty-Fourth and Twenty-Fifth U.S. Infantry**

Similar to their cavalry brethren, the Twenty-Fourth and Twenty-Fifth Infantry were organized like the white infantry regiments in the Regular Army. At full strength, an infantry regiment marched with 35 commissioned officers and 505 enlisted men, which was considerably smaller in size than a cavalry regiment. Each of its ten companies was also smaller, with three officers, nine non-commissioned officers, and 39 privates. White officers led the black infantrymen and chaplains ministered the soldiers' needs as they did in the black cavalry regiments.<sup>10</sup>

The Thirty-Eighth was operating in New Mexico and the Forty-First in Louisiana and Texas when the merger took place, creating the new Twenty-Fourth U.S. Infantry. Texas served as the first home of the Twenty-Fourth Infantry from 1869 to 1880, where it fought the Comanche and Apache, built roads, and kept the peace. The regiment moved north in 1880 to Indian Territory with its companies spread among various forts and camps in Indian Territory and north Texas. Finally, in 1888, the regiment moved south again to New Mexico and Arizona, where it remained until 1892.<sup>11</sup>

The new Twenty-Fifth U.S. Infantry was formed through the union of the Thirty-Ninth and Fortieth Regiments in Louisiana in 1869 and moved to Texas the following year. For ten years, the regiment remained there, with companies spread throughout Texas and Indian Territory to build military posts, roads, and telegraphs lines, perform escort duty, and skirmish with the Comanche and Apache. The regiment moved north to the Dakotas in 1880 to take part in the final stages of the campaign against the Sioux. Finally, in 1888, the regiment transferred to Montana, where it remained for ten years.<sup>12</sup>

## **Enlisted Men**

Shortly after the legislation creating the Buffalo Soldier regiments passed in 1866, the units dispatched officers to canvass the black members of the former U.S. Colored Troops to find willing candidates to re-enlist into the new regiments. Nearly half of the black soldiers recruited were veterans of the Civil War and most were former slaves, illiterate with few skills beyond those of field hands or farm laborers. Black soldiers earned the same wage as their white counterparts in the Regular Army, a situation unparalleled in the civilian world at the time. It did not take long to fill the ranks and the regiments were soon deployed to the frontier to begin the arduous nation-building tasks of fighting Indians, protecting settlers, guarding strategic points, building roads, stringing telegraph lines, maintaining military posts, securing reservations, and enduring endless tours of escort and guard duty.<sup>13</sup>

With congressional limits placed on its size after the Civil War, the Regular Army kept the peace in a vast western frontier with 430 companies garrisoning roughly 200 scattered posts across the United States. Forty-four of these companies comprised the Buffalo Soldiers and it was common for black and white units to serve together at the same isolated frontier forts. The official record shows that the picture of race relations on frontier posts was far from equitable. At Fort Robinson, Nebraska, the post commander Lieutenant Colonel J.L. Brisbin noted with alarm in 1887 that black soldiers were court-martialed at a rate more than twice that of whites. Fort Robinson's mix of large numbers of black cavalry troopers and white infantry soldiers proved a fertile breeding ground for racism. Whites in the military might grudgingly accept that blacks could be molded into capable soldiers, but continued to believe that they were dependent on their white officers for leadership. The Buffalo Soldiers could not escape the ubiquitous racism and stereotypes of the time no matter how well or consistently they performed their duties.<sup>14</sup>

On the other hand, the bureaucratic machinery of the army housed, uniformed, equipped, and mounted black and white Regular Army troops the same. If a quartermaster issued a black regular unit threadbare uniforms, foul rations, or sway-back horses, it was due to an overburdened procurement system and insufficient congressional appropriations rather than racism. The same treatment might befall a white regiment. The army simply could not afford to cripple one tenth of its combat power by deliberately issuing substandard items to the black regiments. The army bureaucracy was by regulation color-blind when it came to all things official, such as recruiting, medical services, military pay, and pensions. Black and white soldiers received equal treatment when they applied for admission to the government-sponsored Soldiers' Home in Washington, DC.<sup>15</sup>

Individual Buffalo Soldiers compiled an impressive record during 25 years of campaigning and received a number of Medals of Honor, continuing the record begun during the Civil War and further dispelling the myth that blacks lacked military virtue. Congress awarded 18 black soldiers the Medal of Honor during the period 1870–1890. Six white officers who served with the Buffalo Soldiers also received the coveted award, showing their willingness to risk their lives for the black soldiers they led and respected. Of the 18 awarded to Buffalo Soldiers, ten came in fighting the Apache, four for combat with the Comanche, one each for action against the Ute and Sioux, and two for fending off white bandits. These black regulars personified the best qualities of the American soldier, willing to risk their lives for their brothers in arms.<sup>16</sup>

By 1890, there was a core of long-service, experienced frontier veterans in the Buffalo Soldiers that gave them a solid cadre of competent soldiers and professional non-commissioned officers. In an era when desertion was a chronic problem for the Regular Army, black soldiers rarely deserted. Secretary of War Redfield Proctor in 1889 suggested raising a black artillery

regiment based solely on their low desertion rate relative to white regiments. Black regulars also had a consistently higher re-enlistment rate than white units. These and other factors helped the Buffalo Soldier regiments develop a high esprit de corps, which in turn helped the black soldiers win the grudging respect of most of their white officers.<sup>17</sup>

## White Officers

Congress mandated that all of the lieutenants and two-thirds of the captains and field grades in the new infantry and cavalry regiments created in 1866 be set aside for volunteers who had at least two years of field service during the Civil War. The remaining third comprised Regular Army officers and most of these were graduates of West Point. Though at least 100 black officers served in the United States Colored Troops during the Civil War, none received commissions in the Buffalo Soldier regiments, most not having the minimum two years of field service. All of the volunteer officers competing for commissions in the new black and white regiments had to pass an examination before a board of officers. Ultimately, the quality of the officers in the black regiments ran the gamut from indifferent and incompetent to the highly capable and was probably no different than the other regiments in the Regular Army.<sup>18</sup>

A frank letter quoted in the *Army and Navy Journal* in 1887 by an unidentified white officer serving in a black regiment illustrates his respect for black soldiers as well as his conflicting emotions. The officer emphasized that he was “no admirer of the African, believing he will *ultimately destroy the white race*,” but confessed that he would have been as prejudiced or perhaps worse than his peers had he not served with black soldiers. He referred to himself as a “colored officer,” or an officer serving in a colored regiment, and admitted that he took the attendant “prejudices, remarks, slurs, etc., good humoredly.” His service in the Buffalo Soldiers caused him to “think the world of the men” in his company. When he looked at them he did “not see their black faces,” but “something beyond.” He considered them “far ahead of white troops” and “more like a lot of devoted servants and retainers, *faithful and trustworthy in every respect*, and *brave and gallant*.”<sup>19</sup>

Louis H. Rucker was among the white officers awarded Regular Army commissions in the Ninth Cavalry when it formed in 1866 and served with the unit until 1897. Rucker began his career as an enlisted volunteer in the Civil War in 1861 and was a first lieutenant by the end of the war. In the Ninth, he proved an able second lieutenant, an efficient first lieutenant regimental quartermaster, and a superb troop commander after promotion to captain in 1879. Rucker served as one of the exemplary unit commanders in the Ninth Cavalry during this period, a low-key officer who treated his enlisted and non-commissioned officers with respect and whose smaller-than-average troop desertion and dishonorable discharge rates reflected his effectiveness. Rucker served as a key mentor to black officers John Alexander and Charles Young during their formative years as second lieutenants with the Ninth.<sup>20</sup>

Frank B. Taylor was the polar opposite of Rucker. With no Civil War experience, Taylor used political connections to obtain a commission in the Twenty-Fifth Infantry in 1867. He transferred to the white Eighteenth Infantry in 1869, where his regimental commander tried to discharge him, and later moved to the Ninth Cavalry, where in 1881 he was court-martialed for verbally abusing, pistol-whipping, and beating a black trooper with the butt of a carbine. The board recommended he be dismissed, but President Chester Arthur reduced the sentence and he continued to serve. In addition to his contempt for black enlisted men, Taylor avoided service in the same troop with two of the black officers then on active service. Within a week of Lieutenant Charles Young joining his troop at Fort Robinson, Nebraska in 1889, Captain Taylor fell “ill” and remained on the sick list for nine months. Two years earlier, after Lieutenant

John Alexander was assigned to his troop, Taylor found convenient ways to be out on detached service for five months and was then reassigned. For the leadership of the regiment to condone such behavior indicates an unhealthy racial climate that could not have been lost on Young or Alexander.<sup>21</sup>

## **Black Officers**

Only three black Regular Army line officers served in the U.S. Army during the period 1866 to 1890 and all were graduates of West Point. Of the 13 blacks who attended the United States Military Academy in this postwar period, only three graduated: Henry O. Flipper in 1877, John H. Alexander in 1887, and Charles Young in 1889. The War Department assigned these black officers solely to the Buffalo Soldier regiments after graduation from West Point and the three had diverse careers and mixed successes.<sup>22</sup>

Henry Ossian Flipper, the first black alumnus of the Academy, chose the Tenth U.S. Cavalry after he graduated in 1877. Initially stationed at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, Flipper performed his duties admirably. Flipper's otherwise bright career came to a disastrous end with a court-martial in 1881. As a commissary officer at a new station at Fort Davis, Texas, his commanding officer charged him with embezzling funds. He was cleared of the embezzlement charge but convicted of "conduct unbecoming of an officer" for submitting inaccurate statements concerning the funds to his commanding officer. A court-martial board dismissed Flipper from the service and the charges were approved by President Chester Arthur. (The U.S. Army issued Flipper an honorable discharge posthumously in 1976.)<sup>23</sup>

John Hanks Alexander, the second black graduate of West Point, joined the Ninth U.S. Cavalry upon graduation in 1887. Initially posted to Fort Robinson, Nebraska, Alexander later served at Fort Duchesne, Utah, both posts occupied by the Ninth Cavalry. He won high praise from his commanders and quickly mastered the challenging duties of a second lieutenant on the frontier. Alexander's promising career in the army ended when he died unexpectedly of a heart attack in 1894. This left only Young on the active list to carry the torch for his race in the U.S. Army thereafter.<sup>24</sup>

Charles Young graduated from West Point in 1889 and, like Alexander, selected the Ninth Cavalry. He joined his unit at Fort Robinson, Nebraska and a year later rotated to Fort Duchesne, Utah, just before the Ninth participated in the Pine Ridge Campaign, the end to the wars with the Plains Indians. Young matured and honed his skills as a leader at Fort Duchesne while maintaining the peace with the Ute Indians, serving there until 1894. Unlike the two black Academy graduates preceding him, Young went on to a long and distinguished career and eventually attained the rank of colonel.<sup>25</sup>

## **Chaplains**

The legislation creating the black regular regiments in 1866 mandated the commissioning of chaplains—though not specifically black chaplains—to minister and educate the black enlisted men. It took some years for the army to fill these positions, and even longer to find black chaplains to serve, despite the fact that at least 14 black officers served as chaplains with the U.S. Colored Troops during the Civil War. Ultimately, five black chaplains served in the Buffalo Soldier regiments, but only two served in the period from 1866 to 1890 and will be discussed here.<sup>26</sup>

The U.S. Army appointed Henry V. Plummer the first black chaplain in the Regular Army in 1884 and assigned him to the Ninth Cavalry. Plummer performed ably his first ten years with

the Ninth, spending his time teaching school, leading Sunday services, counseling soldiers, and visiting men at the stockade. But he ran afoul of the command by objecting to his substandard housing on post, promoting temperance among the soldiers, and protesting the racial injustice the black soldiers faced in frontier towns. While celebrating the promotion of a non-commissioned officer, Plummer consumed alcohol with enlisted men and supplied the troopers with drink, both of which were considered conduct unbecoming of an officer, as well as being inconsistent with his preaching. A court-martial found him guilty and dismissed him from the service in November 1894. (The U.S. Army Board issued Plummer an honorable discharge posthumously in 2005.)<sup>27</sup>

The second black chaplain to serve with the Buffalo Soldiers, Allen Allensworth, proved an innovative chaplain and avoided the pitfalls that doomed Plummer. Allensworth actively campaigned for a position and became the second black chaplain with his appointment to the Twenty-Fourth Infantry in 1886. Chaplain Allensworth steered clear of the activist role during his service in the army and subscribed to the accommodationist school of Booker T. Washington. He managed to find a non-confrontational approach working for the black soldiers in his regiment and chose not to challenge the white officer corps establishment directly. Allensworth excelled in educating his men, earning accolades and recognition in the army and civilian community. Allensworth ultimately succeeded in creating a school for black soldiers, teaching them the skills they needed in the army and in civilian life. He served his soldiers faithfully until retiring in 1907 with the rank of lieutenant colonel.<sup>28</sup>

## **End of the Indian Wars**

By 1890, the serious troubles with the Plains Indians were over, so the soldiers of the black regular regiments, like white frontier troops, spent much of their time performing routine garrison duties, such as drill, training, target practice, and practice marches. Once the Indians were settled on reservations, the operational role of the army in the West changed, which facilitated improvements in the lives of the soldiers, black and white. General John M. Schofield, the serving Commander in Chief of the Army, declared in 1884: "The period of 'temporary huts' for the troops has passed." In this new role, the army concentrated troops near the reservations where they might be needed, and those posts selected for retention were provided appropriations for permanent, comfortable buildings. The spread of the railroad and telegraph meant these forts were no longer isolated; instead, they were regularly supplied with food and other goods. White settlements sprang up around posts, ending the soldiers' isolation.<sup>29</sup>

Perhaps more important to the everyday lives of the Buffalo Soldiers were the creature comforts afforded by the new permanent posts. Congress approved appropriations in 1886 to complete improvements in the barracks and other buildings at various posts, among them Fort Robinson, Nebraska. After the Ninth Cavalry moved its headquarters to Fort Robinson in 1887, the members of the Ninth moved into new barracks with all of the amenities they could ask for. At times in the past two decades, the Ninth Cavalry had spent tours in tents and temporary shelters at various postings in the southwest, so their new living quarters were a welcome change. And it was certainly not lost on the black troopers of the Ninth that they lived in buildings that were identical to those of their counterparts in the all-white Eighth Infantry. The army achieved this equality of housing not by design but by practical circumstance; they had no idea whether a white or black regiment would occupy the barracks they constructed. The army bureaucracy was color-blind at a time when the rest of America was not.



## Conclusion

The service and sacrifice of black volunteer soldiers during the Civil War paid the price for blacks to enlist as regulars in the postwar standing army. Soon after they arrived on the western plains, the Native American tribes gave the members of these black regiments the nickname Buffalo Soldiers because of their dark skin and black curly hair. Dispersed among several hundred isolated posts across the country, they served and fought side by side with white regiments, though not always in racial harmony. White officers led these regiments, with the exception of three black West Point graduates and two chaplains. Many, but not all, of the black soldiers and white officers developed mutual trust and respect.

The four regiments comprising the Buffalo Soldiers played a critical role in the settling of the western frontier during the period 1866 to 1890, proving capable soldiers and establishing a creditable record. Remarkably, they were the only black Americans at the time afforded equal recruitment, pay, housing, and pensions. In all things official, black soldiers were treated as equals, though racial bias persisted in all social or off-duty situations. These black regulars served competently with white regulars in spite of the ubiquitous racial prejudice of the age. What's more, the service of the Buffalo Soldiers paved the way for future generations and assured these black trailblazers a prominent place in U.S. military history.

## Notes

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- 15 Dobak and Phillips, *Black Regulars*, 267–273.
- 16 Shubert, *Black Valor*, xi.
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- 21 Ninth Regimental Return, November 1889–September 1890, NARA; Kenner, *Buffalo Soldiers and Officers of the Ninth Cavalry*, 113–114; Coffman, *Old Army*, 221.
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### 3

## U.S. OVERSEAS EXPANSION IN THE POST-CIVIL WAR ERA

*Stephen McCullough*

After the end of the Civil War in 1865, the United States embarked on low-key expansion until the Spanish–American War in 1898. The main goal of the U.S. government was the acquisition of naval bases in the Caribbean and Pacific, and the spread of U.S. trade and commercial interests. The changes in naval propulsion, from sail to steam, meant that the United States Navy needed coaling stations to project power overseas. As American merchants and companies sought new overseas markets for manufactured goods and foodstuffs, they expected the U.S. flag to follow for protection.<sup>1</sup> Along with the economic imperatives driving U.S. expansion, American racism and the Protestant missionary impulse also influenced U.S. policy. The Spanish–American war in 1898 was merely the culmination, not the beginning, of U.S. imperialism.<sup>2</sup>

Following the cessation of hostilities, the United States faced a lengthy Reconstruction of the former Confederate states with a new president. Republicans hoped Andrew Johnson would favor a harsh Reconstruction, only to be cruelly disappointed as the former senator from Tennessee sought to quickly bring the South back into the Union with no protection of African-American rights.<sup>3</sup>

When Radical Republicans gained control of Congress in the 1866 election and frustrated his domestic policies, Johnson turned to foreign policy to garner popular support. He inherited Secretary of State William Seward, and by 1866 Seward was the dominant cabinet member of the Johnson administration.<sup>4</sup> Seward embarked on a territorial expansion campaign that also sought to breathe new life into the Monroe Doctrine. The policy had remained dormant since being issued in 1823 as the United States did not have the military or economic power to enforce it.<sup>5</sup> During the Civil War, the United States had been unable to prevent a French intervention in Mexico. At the end of the war, General Ulysses S. Grant dispatched 50,000 men to the Texas border under the command of General Phillip Sheridan to intimidate the French. Seward successfully diplomatically pressured French emperor Napoleon III to announce a French withdrawal.<sup>6</sup>

Seward pursued an expansion policy that sought to gain new territory for the United States as well as coaling stations in the Caribbean.<sup>7</sup> He sought naval bases in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, only to be rebuffed by Haiti and foiled by a Dominican revolution.<sup>8</sup> His attempt to buy the Virgin Islands from Denmark failed when a hurricane struck the islands and the Senate refused to ratify the annexation treaty.<sup>9</sup> He negotiated a treaty with Columbia to give the United States the right to build a canal across the Panamanian isthmus, but the Columbian Senate rejected it. The United States failed to gain any new Caribbean territory during his tenure.