



BUILDING ARMIES FOR DEMOCRACY: U.S. ATTEMPTS TO REFORM THE ARMED FORCES OF CUBA (1906-1909) AND NICARAGUA (1927-1933)

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

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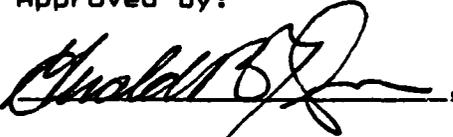
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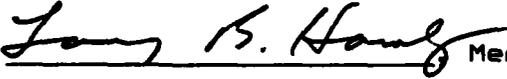
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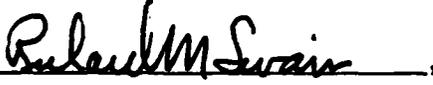
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ABSTRACT

BUILDING ARMIES FOR DEMOCRACY: U.S. Attempts to Reform the Armed Forces of Cuba (1906-1909) and Nicaragua (1927-1933), by Major Freddy L. Polk, USA, 137 pages.

This study is an historical analysis of the military reform efforts of the United States Army and Marine Corps in Cuba and Nicaragua, respectively. The study sets these cases in the political context of United States foreign policy and the political culture of the nations involved. Established concepts for the analysis of civil-military relations are employed to determine the reasons for the failure of American attempts to create professional, nonpartisan, apolitical militaries in these nations.

This study concludes that the reform efforts failed because the United States achieved operational rather than institutional change in these nations. Factors contributing to these failures were an inadequate strategy for military reform and the lack of support from indigenous political elite. The study suggests that these shortcomings may have developed, in part, because of an incomplete understanding of the relationship between military and political institutional change.

This research points to the possibility that political and military institutional reforms may need to precede military organizational change, or risk an unintended redistribution of political power. It also raises questions about the pursuit of reform strategies that call for concurrent development of political and military institutions and organizations. Further questions are raised about the policy implications of incomplete military reform.



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Today, the United States military is building, training, and advising armed forces throughout the world. These military assistance programs -- important and integral parts of United States foreign policy -- are designed to foster and support the growth of democratic regimes.¹ Such is the case in Latin America, where the armed forces of the United States are attempting to promote and assist military forces which will support democratic institutions and protect legitimate governments from insurgency.²

Many United States military officers believe that such security assistance and foreign internal defense missions are post World War II developments. Most are unaware that the armed forces of the United States have a history, predating the First World War, of trying to build military forces to support democratic experiments in the Caribbean and Central America.

¹ United States Department of Defense, United States of America Congressional Presentation for Security Assistance Programs, Fiscal Year 1987, Volume I, (1986) pp. 1-2.

² General John R. Galvin, "Challenge & Response: On the Southern Flank Three Decades Later," Military Review, (August 1986) p. 10.

This paper examines the history of the military reform efforts of the United States Army and Marine Corps in Cuba (1906 - 1909) and Nicaragua (1927 - 1933). The cases are set in context with the foreign policy of the United States, the broader political objectives of these interventions, and the political climates of the nations involved.

There is little question that the American attempts to create professional apolitical nonpartisan militaries in these two nations failed. Yet, the questions of how and why these efforts failed have received relatively little attention.

In essence, the United States was attempting to establish new national security structures and processes in these nations. Such efforts can be divided conceptually into two levels: operational and institutional. This paper examines the failures at both levels.³

³ The concepts for describing the nature of civil-military relations as consisting of two levels is taken from Samuel P. Huntington's description of national security policy in Samuel P. Huntington, The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981.) pp. 1-2.

The operational level deals with the building of organizations and the implementation of programs. The United States officials charged with building, training, and advising these armed forces, lacked a strategy for military reform which could incorporate the political elements of the problem, and failed to convince the indigenous elites of the viability and validity of their programs for rebuilding the armed forces of their nations.

Despite these failings, the United States did succeed in creating efficient and effective military organizations in both nations. Ironically, this success appears to have been a major factor in the failure to achieve the ultimate political objective of stable democratic regimes.

At the institutional level reform eluded the American officials. Fair elections were held under American supervision and responsible fiscal policies were initiated, but the reforms necessary to create stable political systems capable of controlling these new armed forces and insuring their apolitical nonpartisan nature, never occurred. Despite extensive revision of the constitutions, laws, and military regulations of these nations, the civil-military institutions of these nations remained essentially unchanged.

Military organizational reforms created modern military forces with a potential for political power unprecedented in these societies. However, these forces were created without the institutional checks and balances on military political power that existed in mature democracies.

Under these conditions, professional apolitical nonpartisan forces were unlikely to survive, let alone prosper following the withdrawal of American forces. The militaries that did emerge played major political roles and clearly contributed to the current state of these nations.

This research suggests that healthy stable political institutions may have been prerequisites for successful military reform. Additionally, it appears that the strategy of concurrent development of new political and military organizations, without a clear concept of their institutional relationships and requirements and a means for integrating their development, was exceptionally risky.

Today, in Latin America, the United States is still pursuing stability through democracy. As in the past, concurrent military and political reforms are being attempted. Perhaps these historical examples will help to identify some of the pitfalls and risks associated with such efforts.

I: KEY CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

While the meanings of most of the terms used in this thesis should be evident from their context, several key concepts require definition. The words organization, institution, professionalism, apolitical, and nonpartisan suffer distortion in common usage. In some cases, they have implicit meanings, associated with the period under study, which may not correspond with some currently accepted interpretations.

The terms organization and institution are frequently used interchangeably. In this thesis they have specific and distinct meanings which correspond with their sociological definitions.

An organization is "an administrative and functional structure".⁴ An institution is "an established set of procedures and relationships".⁵ Military institutions are those procedures and relationships that a nation has adopted to meet its military security needs. Thus, the Army of Nicaragua has both an organizational and institutional component.

⁴ Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, p. 802.

⁵ Ibid., p. 594.

Normally, military organizations are built to accomplish specific tasks within an established framework of institutionalized procedures. These military institutions determine how various organizations with military functions relate and provide the mechanisms for control of the military structures.

Professionalism is a term to which many have attached their own values, and thus it frequently loses its analytical utility. In this thesis the terms profession and military professionalism are taken from Samuel Huntington's work.

A profession is a bureaucratic or associative grouping of human beings who possess expertise, responsibility, and corporateness. Expertise is "specialized knowledge and skill in a significant field of human endeavor... acquired only by prolonged education and experience."⁶ The responsibility of a profession is to perform an essential function for society which is "the client of every profession"⁷ Corporateness is a shared "sense of organic unity and consciousness...as a group apart from laymen."⁸ A military professional belongs to a bureaucratic group which exhibits these qualities and characteristics in the execution of military service. ⁹

⁶ Samuel P. Huntington, The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Practice of Civil-Military Relations. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1981.) p. 8.

⁷ Ibid. p. 9.

⁸ Ibid. p.10.

⁹ Ibid. pp. 10-18.

It is essential to note that this concept of professionalism does not exclude from a profession those individuals who engage in political behavior. Thus, a professional, military or otherwise, is not, by this definition, excluded from association with a political party, or the exercise of political power. United States military officers frequently attach the qualities of nonpartisanship and apolitical behavior to their definitions of professionalism since these norms have been acquired through their education and are part of their professional ethic.

Partisanship and politics are closely linked in most societies. However, the specific nature of this relationship requires elaboration, particularly when it comes to the use of the terms nonpartisan and apolitical.

A person, or organization, is nonpartisan when they are not associated with a political party, or their association with a political party does not influence their behavior in a particular situation. This does not mean that they are necessarily apolitical or that their behavior is without political motive.

United States military officers testifying before Congress in pursuit of a particular budget objective are involved in politics and usually behave in a political manner. But, seldom do they allow their behavior to be influenced by party affiliation.

A particular act, or series of actions, is apolitical when the norms or rules governing the procedures are based on a rationale which excludes political calculations. This does not mean that the act cannot have political consequences. Thus, an apolitical institution is an established set of procedures which are based on a rationale which excludes political calculations.

American military officers tend to see their behavior in battle as based upon a complex set of decision making procedures which excludes political calculations, and is based solely on military considerations.¹⁰ While a battle may have major political implications, the decision of how to fight the battle is seen as apolitical.

¹⁰ The term battle is defined as "... a period of continuous direct contact of armed forces in which at least one side is engaged in a tactical offensive." in Quincy Wright, A Study of War. Abridged by Louise Leonard Wright. (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1964) p. 8. This definition corresponds with those currently in use in United States Army manuals.

II. BACKGROUND

In addition to the basic analytical tools provided in the previous section, the development of an understanding of possible explanations for the failure of United States efforts at military reform in Cuba and Nicaragua requires some background in the history of the period. This section begins by reviewing United States interests and policies in the region, and concludes with a theoretical discussion of the perceived roles of military reform in building democracy and stability in these nations.

Prior to the War with Spain, the United States had embarked on an economic and political course that caused it to seek new markets in Latin America, and develop an increasing interest in the Caribbean and Central American region. The industrial revolution and the closing of the American frontier contributed to expansionism. American success, a sense of destiny, and competition with Europe placed the United States on the verge of becoming a world power.

The independence of most of the Latin American Republics had reduced European influence in the hemisphere. Testing the bounds of the Monroe Doctrine, the United States began to regard the regions south of its border as its exclusive sphere of influence.¹¹ Particular interest was drawn to the economic and military potential of Central America.

The growing demands of transcontinental commerce, and the tremendous expense and risk that could be avoided if shipping did not have to make the Cape Horn passage, spurred United States economic interest in the region. The War with Spain gave the United States control of a number of Caribbean islands, including Cuba and Puerto Rico. The need to protect these possessions increased the demand for American hegemony in the region, and a transoceanic waterway.

¹¹ The Monroe Doctrine was formalized in an address by President James Monroe to the Congress of the United States on December 2, 1823. The doctrine was designed to thwart the possible attempt of anti-democratic European forces to reestablish control over their former colonies. President Monroe stated, in part "...any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere (will be viewed) as dangerous to our peace and safety." See Dana G. Munro, The Latin American Republics: A History. (New York: Appleton, 1960) pp. 151-152.

In 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt acquired the Panama Canal site. In 1905, following a showdown with Imperial Germany in Venezuela, he established his Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine.¹² This policy paved the way for major interventions in the region by the United States .

While many European nations regarded the United States' behavior as imperialistic, most Americans looked at their government's involvement in the Caribbean and Central America in a much more idealistic vein. They saw the extension of their authority as a means of assuring the independence of the Latin American republics, and fostering their democratic growth. The United States adopted a paternalistic attitude toward the Caribbean and Central American nations, and accepted a policy of intervention as appropriate and necessary to bring democracy and stability to the region.¹³ Cuba and Nicaragua recieved special attention.

¹² In essence, the Roosevelt Corollary obligated the United States to prevent the conditions which might prompt European interference in Latin America. Of particular concern were conditions of political instability and fiscal irresponsibility. Roosevelt held that the United States must intervene to prevent these conditions and preclude European intervention. See Munro, Latin American Republics. p. 388.

¹³ Munro, The Latin American Republics pp. 391-477.

In 1902 with the passage of the Platt Amendment, the United States entered into a "special relationship" with Cuba. Having spent three years freeing the island from Spain and attempting to establish a democratic form of government, the United States reserved the right to intervene in Cuba to protect life, liberty, and property.

The Cuban interventions were essentially Army enterprises. The second Cuban intervention of 1906-1909 drew on previous Army experiences of governing Cuba from 1899 to 1902, and the conquest and occupation of the Philippines, 1900 to 1905. The Army which intervened in Cuba in 1906 was a different Army than the one that defeated Spain. It was a regular professional peacetime military with a new senior leadership.¹⁴ This revitalized force brought some of its best talent to bear on the problem of Cuban "pacification".¹⁵

¹⁴ Alan R. Millett, The General: Robert L. Bullard and Officership in the United States Army, 1881-1925. (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1975.) pp. 379-383.

¹⁵ President Theodore Roosevelt chose to term this intervention a "Pacification" in an attempt to quell some of the anticipated political clamor over our return to Cuba. Lester D. Langley, The Banana Wars: An Inner History of American Empire, 1900-1934. (Lexington, Ky.:Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1983.) p.34.

High on the pacification agenda was the creation of an apolitical armed force which would provide stability in Cuba and bolster United States defense of the hemisphere.¹⁶ This attempt failed, and except for its brief occupation of Vera Cruz in 1914, the United States Army abandoned the task of building armed forces, and the mission of intervening in Latin America.¹⁷

As the Army turned its attention toward conventional conflicts with the major powers of Europe and Asia, the Marine Corps became the primary interventionary force in the Caribbean. Many Marine Corps officers received their introduction to combat and honed their military skills in the rugged terrain of Nicaragua between 1912 and 1933. Yet, it was the period from 1927 to 1933 that challenged the Corps to subdue Sandino and build the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua.

¹⁶ Taft, William H., and Bacon, Robert. "Cuban Pacification: Report of William H. Taft, Secretary of War, and Robert Bacon, Assistant Secretary of War, of What Was Done Under the Instructions of the President in Restoring Peace in Cuba." Department of War. Report of the Secretary of War, 1906. Appendix E. United States Congress, House, 59th Cong., 2nd sess., House Document No. 2, ser. 1505, (Washington, D.C., 1906)

¹⁷ Langley, Banana Wars, p.20.

During the initial intervention the Marine Corps was not saddled with the task of reforming the Nicaraguan armed forces. Two State Department efforts to contract out this mission to former United States Army officers failed.¹⁶ In the meantime, the United States Marine Corps intervened in Haiti and the Dominican Republic where they established and led national constabularies.

When civil war broke out in Nicaragua in 1925, the United States sought a definitive solution to the chronic instability of this nation. A presidential envoy, Colonel Henry L. Stimson, arbitrated an end to the dispute and imposed several conditions on the warring factions. One was the creation of a national apolitical military force.¹⁷

Drawing on their decades of experience in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, and their established presence in Nicaragua, the Marines set out to build a professional apolitical force. The new Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua was to subdue the recalcitrant "bandit" Sandino and support the democratic process which the United States hoped to nurture through supervised elections in 1928, 1930, and 1932.²⁰ Instead, when United States forces withdrew, the Guardia assassinated Sandino and elevated its commander, Anastasio Somoza, into power.

¹⁶ Richard Millett, Guardians of the Dynasty: A History of the U.S. Created Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua and the Somoza Family. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, Inc., 1977.) p.30 and p.52.

¹⁷ Neill Macaulay, The Sandino Affair. (Chicago, Ill.: Quadrangle Books, 1967.) p.34.

²⁰ Millett, R., Guardians, pp. 61-62.

United States policy during this era of intervention held to a fairly steady course. The United States attempted to establish democracies in the nations of the region, and assist in building fiscally responsible governments. The latter goal was achieved through "Dollar Diplomacy" which sought to reform the revenue and debt systems, and make Latin American nations less dependent on foreign capital.²¹

The United States also drafted and installed a number of constitutions in the nations in which it intervened. Convinced that good laws led to good government, the United States employed a number of lawyers, in and out of uniform, to write these documents. Electoral laws received particular attention.

Elections were the basis of the American concept of democracy, but they also held significant foreign policy benefits for the United States. Free elections in the nations into which the United States intervened could be used as *prima facie* evidence to repudiate European allegations of imperialism. Additionally, free elections could also be presented as evidence of success in democratic reforms, and thus used to mark the culmination of an intervention and the passage of responsibility back to the indigenous population.

²¹ President Taft is credited with establishing "Dollar Diplomacy" as the basis for United States foreign policy in Latin America. For an excellent and detailed discussion of Dollar Diplomacy see Dana G. Munro, Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy in the Carribean, 1900-1921. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964.)

At the conceptual level the linkage between the United States efforts to build democracies and the attempts to establish professional nonpartisan apolitical constabularies in these nations seems fairly clear. The democratic governments needed protection and a means for enforcing the law. Since the United States could curb international conflict in the area, these nations would not need conventional armed forces. The principal military threats to these governmnets were seen as coups and revolutions.

These militaries would have to be efficient organizations which would not place a burden on the small treasuries of these nations. Thus, a single organization for enforcing law and preventing revolutions was preferable.

Officered by American trained professionals, with party affiliations prohibited by law, the officer corps would abstain from politics and develop an allegiance to the constitution and the democratic process. In other words, these militaries would acquire the values that characterized the American armed forces.

The study of the failure of these well intentioned efforts has not been that extensive. The following section provides an overview of the literature devoted to the topic, and key sources used to develop this thesis.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.

In the course of researching this thesis a number of secondary sources were examined and discarded. The following proved most useful. The sources included here provide the background necessary for general research of the topic.

Since it is imperative that the researcher keep the cases of Cuba and Nicaragua in context with the region, the ebb and flow of United States foreign policy, and the overall objectives of each intervention, a solid foundation in the diplomatic history of the region and era is essential. For this purpose the classic works of Professor Dana G. Munro are indispensable.

The Latin American Republics, first published in 1950, provides excellent historical background for the era, and has several chapters dedicated to the Caribbean and Central America. "Chapter 26: Inter-American Relations 1889-1945" is of particular importance.

Munro continues his excellent series with Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy in the Caribbean, 1900-1921. This work highlights the foreign policy objectives of the United States and the role of dollar diplomacy. It covers the case of Cuba, explains the role of the Panama Canal decision in United States-Nicaraguan relations, as well as United States security interests in the region.

The United States and the Caribbean Republics 1921-

1933 is particularly good. During this period Munro was a foreign service officer in the Department of State's Division of Latin American Affairs. His solid historical analysis and personal observations bring the decline of dollar diplomacy, and the rise of the Good Neighbor policy into perspective. Obviously, Nicaragua, where Munro was directly involved in the policy, receives solid treatment.

Munro's work has two flaws. It is overly reliant on State Department material, and reflects the author's preoccupation with the economic dimension of policy. To balance these views Richard Challner's book, Admirals, Generals, and American Foreign Policy, 1898-1914, which brings the roles of the Departments of War and Navy into focus, and Lester Langley's The Banana Wars: An Inner History of American Empire, 1900-1934, which deals with the role of uniformed officers in implementing and shaping policy in the region, are recommended.

Published works devoted specifically to United States intervention in Cuba, not the War with Spain, are scarce. Fortunately Allan R. Millett, a talented military historian has devoted significant research to this topic. Politics of Intervention: The Military Occupation of Cuba, 1906-1909 is superb. The chapter devoted to the debate over the establishment of a Permanent Army was indispensable for this thesis. Magoon in Cuba: A History of the Second Intervention, 1906-1909, by David Lockmiller, covers the intervention from the civil perspective. For the formative days of the Rural Guard under the military government of Leonard Wood, the only reasonable source was Louis A. Perez's book, Army Politics in Cuba, 1898-1958, which also provided details lacking in Lockmiller's and Millett's books.

Nicaragua has received a more thorough exposure, but most of the work is devoted to the Marines' pursuit of Sandino. In this genre Neill Macaulay's The Sandino Affair is still perhaps the best. While his interpretation of the events is clearly biased in favor of Sandino, his observations of the internal struggles of Sandino's opposition, which are scattered throughout the work, add a unique view to any attempt to understand the reforms attempted by the Marine Corps and the Department of State. However, Richard Millett's Guardians of the Dynasty: A History of the U. S. Created Guardia Nacional De Nicaragua and the Somoza Family is the authoritative work on the Guardia. His inclusion of the early attempts at reform by the Scull and Carter missions, have not been chronicled elsewhere. These two sources, when coupled with William Kammen's diplomatic history of the intervention, A Search for Stability: United States Diplomacy Toward Nicaragua, 1925-1933, and Munro's previously mentioned work, provide more than adequate background for this dimension of the Nicaraguan intervention.

Since the purpose of this study was to determine why United States attempts to create apolitical militaries in Nicaragua and Cuba failed, a number of civil-military theoretical sources were consulted. Key concepts and a framework for analysis have been borrowed from Samuel P. Huntington's The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil Military Relations. Morris Janowitz's book, The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait, helped explain the social and political values of the United States officers who intervened in these nations. Chalmers Johnson's The Military and Society in Latin America does not deal specifically with Cuba or Nicaragua, but is the best general source of theory on traditional Latin American political-military relationships.

S. E. Finer's classic, The Man on Horseback: The Role of the Military in Politics, still provides the best explanation of the military caudillo. However, the insight which Sanislav Andreski's work, Military Organization and Society, brought to the linkage between operational reforms and the redistribution of political power within societies made this thesis possible. While cumbersome and obtuse, Andreski brought the pieces of the puzzle into place.

Late in the research process three extremely useful documents were acquired from Professor Allan R. Millett of Ohio State University. Two of these were essays prepared by Professor Millett for the United States Army War College's Military History Research Collection. The first, titled: "'Cleansing the Augean Stables': The American Armed Forces in the Caribbean, 1898-1934", examines the cases of Cuba, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Nicaragua. The purpose of the essay was:

...to examine the use of American armed forces through the mode of military occupation to produce institutional change in four turbulent, troublesome Caribbean nations. (And, to look) ... at one specific aspect of that policy, the creation of apolitical national constabularies capable of deterring and suppressing insurrections, but which would also resist the temptation of interfering with peaceful political processes like elections. ²²

This excellent, though sparsely documented, essay helped focus and corroborated a number of tentative conclusions reached in this research.

The next chapter of this same volume of essays provided a well thought out list of "Useful Lessons of the Caribbean Interventions." While most of the lessons deal with the implementation of policy, there are also points on tactics and cross cultural communication.

²² Allan R. Millett, "'Cleansing the Augean Stables': The American Armed Forces in the Caribbean, 1898-1934." Chapter IX, Volume IV, Essays in Some Dimensions of Military History. (Carlisle Barracks, Penn., n.d.) pp. 123-141.

The third document was a copy of an article published by Dr. Millett in The Americas. "The Rise and Fall of the Rural Guard of Cuba" points clearly to the Permanent Army debate as the point at which the American efforts to revamp the Rural Guard failed. Additionally, this excellent article chronicles the efforts of one United States Army officer tasked to advise and train the Rural Guard of Cuba.

Dr. Millett paints a vivid picture of Captain Frank Parker, the last adviser to the Rural Guard. This officer's steadfast conviction that if you ride a horse you have to be cavalry, and if you're cavalry you have to train and drill as cavalry, destroyed the last vestiges of the constabulary concept in the Rural Guard. The exploits of Frank Parker should be mandatory reading for all officers providing military advise and training to foreign nations.

As reassuring to this research effort as Dr. Millett's work has been, it is not the consensus among historians or the mass of authoritative secondary sources that establishes the validity of a thesis. Instead, it is the rigor of the analysis and the quality of the primary sources.

IV: METHOD OF ANALYSIS AND PRIMARY SOURCES

For most, the methodology of history is not a particularly exciting topic. Fortunately it is not, in theory, that complex. In essence, a historian draws his conclusions by carefully weighing the evidence available regarding possible explanations for a given event. This first involves establishing the chronology of events, and then using some method to focus the analysis of these facts.

In this study I have relied on four research questions to structure inquiry into the central issue of why these attempts to generate professional nonpartisan apolitical militaries failed.

1. Why did the United States attempt to establish professional armed forces, nonpartisan officer corps, and apolitical military institutions?
2. What plans were made for indigenous military reform and how were they implemented?
3. What plans were made for institutional reforms that would enable the elected civil political authorities to control these new military forces and how were they implemented?
4. What were the net results of the attempted military reforms in terms of United States policy goals and objectives?

With these questions refined through the evaluation of the aforementioned secondary sources, the possible answers were then compared with the facts contained in the primary sources and historical record.

In the case of Cuba, the correspondence of the War Department proved most useful. These documents, held in various record groups in the National Archives, were key in researching this thesis. Brigadier General Herman J. Slocum's correspondence is of particular interest. As officer in charge of building the Rural Guard under Wood, and reforming it under Magoon, his infrequent but candid correspondence with superiors, during and after the intervention, was an unexpected source.

Archival sources on Nicaragua are more widely spread. Since the State Department had risen to prominence in the region following the First World War, the published correspondence in Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, and those found in the National Archives validated many of the observations in secondary sources. However, the United States Marine Corps' Historical Division holds the most important sources necessary for this type of study. Of particular note is a detailed study entitled: A Review of the Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua; by Direction of the Major General Commandant of the United States Marine Corp., prepared by then Major Julian C. Smith.

The method of analysis employed in this study is the classical comparison of historical cases. Thus, one aspect of the study does require some explanation, that is the selection of the cases of Cuba and Nicaragua.

First, my attention was drawn to these cases because of their current regimes. I was then struck by the ironic fact that the United States had made significant efforts at political-military reform in the only nations in the hemisphere which today have communist regimes.

After considering other major interventions in the region, Cuba and Nicaragua were selected, in part, because of their prominence. They represented the most mature and well documented examples of the pre-World War II attempts by the United States Army and Marine Corps to perform this type of mission.

Furthermore, if a common explanation for the failure of the military reforms in two interventions did emerge, some consideration had to be given to its potential spuriousness. By selecting cases from two different services during two different periods the possibility of a common spurious explanation was significantly reduced. Of course, this also limits the scope of inferences which can be drawn from this study.

If there is a methodological bias in this work, it is probably due to a predisposition to search for explanations which offer utility in the formulation of current policy, or an inclination to search for general explanations in the political and sociological theory associated with the topic. While traditional historians may find fault with this approach, the validity of an explanation rests not with its source, but whether it can be, and has been, tested against the historical record.

V. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

In reality the scope of this thesis is relatively narrow. It is limited to the comparison of two historical cases. It is neither a general history of either Cuba or Nicaragua, nor even a detailed account of the interventionary experiences of the United States in these nations. As with all research, this work is incomplete, and limited by the resources available at the time. While Spanish language sources were translated and incorporated into the secondary sources used in this work, there are no Spanish language primary sources employed in the analysis. I view this document as a the start of my research in this area, not the end.

VI. SIGNIFICANCE

The relative significance of a thesis is difficult to judge while it is in progress. Yet, all students and scholars have hopes for their work to contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the field, and to hold some practical utility.

Within the realm of political history, there is little new in this thesis. It does however compare two cases which on the surface seem to be unique, and offer a common explanation for their failure.

If this thesis has policy utility it is in the realm of such political-military endeavors as interventions and security assistance. Throughout my research I was struck by the fact that there has been so little historical study in this area by professional military officers.

Despite the fact that more is learned from defeat than victory, American military officers have neglected these early twentieth century attempts at foreign military reform. It seems that we devote far more attention to the possibly unique successes of other nations, such as the British in Oman, and our own more recent efforts in Central America. In the first case we risk learning lessons that can not be replicated due to our political heritage. In the second we risk drawing premature conclusions from cases which have yet to stand the test of time, remain distorted by the current political implications of the analysis, and ignore the long term consequences of what may appear to be successful in the present.

Hopefully, this study will raise questions from history which may preclude errors in the future. The cases of Cuba and Nicaragua, as well as others, are rich in lessons to be learned about the difficulties of limited wars, counterinsurgencies, and interventions. The United States Army has tried to forget its lessons from Latin America once already this century. Perhaps this study will at least remind some that there are experiences from which we still have the opportunity to learn.

CHAPTER 2

CUBA (1906 - 1909)

I: OVERVIEW

The Rural Guard of Cuba, originally formed during the military occupation of 1899-1902, was Brigadier General Leonard Wood's solution to the military needs of Cuba. Wood's concept for the Cuban military returned to the island in 1906, with Major Herbert J. Slocum, who had been responsible for implementing Wood's program during the occupation. A viable concept and practical solution in 1900, this idea never succeeded in the intervention of 1906.

While Slocum and others held rigidly to the Wood concept, the United States' political agenda had changed. The United States was more concerned with limiting the need to intervene in Cuba, than building an ideal Cuban force. The provisional government of 1906-1909 was tasked with getting the Cubans to accept responsibility for their own future. Magoon's administration lacked the praetorian authority of Wood's, but it also lacked an alternative to the Rural Guard concept.

The Wood solution was not uniformly accepted by the United States Army, and was adamantly resisted by Cuban leaders. With Slocum and his subordinates equally intent on their approach, a major debate developed. Governor Magoon searched for a compromise for nearly two years. The prolonged debate and negotiations precluded the development of a coherent and integrated political-military strategy for reforming the military forces of Cuba.

Slocum proceeded to build the Cuban armed forces by expanding the Rural Guard. A strong national network of police forces emerged. However, the compromise reached by Magoon created a Permanent Army which, due to the imminent withdrawal of American forces, would develop without American supervision. The Army eventually incorporated the Rural Guard. The partisan political character of this combined force was predicted by the Rural Guard advisers.

When reviewing the history of military reform in Cuba it is tempting to see the Rural Guard as the American solution to the problem, and the failure of the concept as the reason for the failure of the reform effort. This is not the case. In fact, the United States did not have a clear concept of what type of force should be developed in Cuba, nor could they convince the Cubans that apolitical professional nonpartisan forces were either viable or in their interest.

The Cubans could not prevent the United States from building military organizations. Thus, relatively effective military structures emerged and survived. But, the apolitical military institutions that the United States envisioned for controlling these forces, and the nonpartisan officer corps expected to lead these forces did not develop.

This chapter begins by reviewing the development of the Rural Guard under the Wood administration and the evolution of United States political objectives between the years 1902 and 1906. The bulk of the chapter is devoted to the Permanent Army debate, which brought the shortcomings of the American approach to military reform in Cuba into stark relief.

II: The Wood Legacy.

Reforming the armed forces was not a new American prescription for Cuban political problems. Under Brigadier General Leonard Wood, Military Governor of Cuba from 1900-1902, the United States Army had disbanded the Cuban Army of Liberation and established the Rural Guard of Cuba in order to facilitate the administration of the island.

When hostilities ceased in Cuba in 1899, the Army of the United States took up the task of occupation, while its political leadership debated what was to be done with its newly liberated possession. Unfortunately, Wood and the other United States officers trying to maintain order in Cuba were faced with issues that would not wait for a congressional consensus. Among the more pressing were the questions of what to do with the Cuban Army of Liberation, and how best to maintain law and order.

When the American army landed at Dacquiri, they were surprised to find a bedraggled force, loosely organized, and composed mainly of blacks. The American officers immediately doubted the Cuban military capabilities, and resented their lack of gratitude. Some Americans observed that the Cubans seemed more interested in American rations than in assisting the United States in defeating the Spanish.¹

¹ Langley, Banana Wars, p. 13.

American sensibilities were further offended by the Cuban disregard for the proprieties of war, in particular their tendency to summarily execute prisoners and accused spies.² It became evident to the American officers that this guerrilla army might be a threat to their authority once the Spanish were defeated. This possibility was enhanced by Cuban expectations regarding their political future.³

Like the Filipinos, the Cubans had expected the United States' intervention to result in their immediate freedom. American officers had difficulty explaining that they were there to defeat the Spanish and that they did not have instructions or the authority to establish the revolutionary forces as the government in Cuba.

Precipitated by the destruction of the Maine, the United States had invaded Cuba amid calls for Cuban independence and demands for an end to Spanish oppression, but the machinery of American government had not worked out the details of the future of Cuba.⁴ In this policy vacuum, the American military officers, seeking to maintain control in Cuba, had been forced to find their own solutions.

² Ibid.

³ Louis A. Perez Jr., Army Politics in Cuba, 1898 - 1958, (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1976) p. 5.

⁴ J. H. Hitchman, Leonard Wood and Cuban Independence, 1898 - 1902, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971) p. 6.

As Provincial Governor of Santiago Wood had found that the enforcement of the laws and regulations emanating from the military government was best accomplished by Cubans.⁵ He observed that there was less resentment and confusion if loyal Cubans were entrusted with this task. Thus, he formed a constabulary, commanded by American officers. To man this force, he culled the veterans of the Army of Liberation seeking the "better elements" of Cuban society.⁶ This resulted in a predominantly white hispanic force.⁷

This still left the problem of the remainder of the Army of Liberation -- a home grown military institution spawned by the years of revolution -- unsolved. General Wood, Secretary of War Root, and President McKinley considered a British solution. They thought that the Cubans could be formed into colonial regiments and sent to fight in such places as the Philippines.⁸

⁵ Allan R. Millett, "The Rise and Fall of the Cuban Rural Guard, 1898 - 1912" The Americas, October 1972, p. 193.

⁶ Leonard Wood, "The Existing Conditions and Needs in Cuba," North American Review, (May 1899) p. 600.

⁷ Major General Leonard Wood, "Civil Report of Major General Leonard Wood, U.S. Volunteers, Military Governor of Cuba," United States Department of War, Annual Report of the Military Governor of Cuba on Civil Affairs, United States Congress, House, 56th Congress 2d session, House Document no.2 ser. 4080-4087 (2 vols., Washington, 1901), I, part 1, p. 65. (Hereafter cited as Civil Report 1900)

⁸ Elihu Root to William McKinley, August 17, 1899, Series 1: reel 7, William McKinley Papers, Library of Congress. Quoted in Millett, A. "Rural Guard" p. 192.

While this idea had some military merit, it smacked of old world colonialism -- an image many in Congress were anxious to avoid. Fortunately, the potential problem of an idle and disaffected former soldiery seemed to resolve itself, as Wood replaced many Spanish government bureaucrats with the leaders of the Army of Liberation, and created public works jobs for the rank and file.⁹

Under the Wood administration, Captain Herbert Slocum was tasked with implementing the concept of a Rural Guard throughout Cuba. With instructions from the Military Governor Slocum's Rural Guard focused on patrolling the economic heart of Cuba.¹⁰

Stationed in small outposts it secured the vast plantations and enforced the laws proclaimed in Havana. This organization met with overwhelming approval from the wealthy land owners. While some less scrupulous owners told their peasants that the Rural Guard was there to insure that they worked, the population, in general, perceived the Rural Guard as a positive contribution to law and order.¹¹

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Millett, A., "Rural Guard," p. 195.

¹¹ Captain Herbert J. Slocum, "Report of Captain H. J. Slocum, 7th U.S. Cavalry, Superintendent of the Rural Guard and Cuerpo de Artilleria of the Island of Cuba," Civil Report 1902, (Washington, D.C., 1902) III, pp. 67-71.

Under American leadership, and with the presence of American troops, this force proved effective and appeared professional. The force was divorced from the factional politics of Cuba through its association with the United States Government. While it seemed that the Rural Guard had assumed the role of the national army of Cuba, it is probably more accurate to say that the United States Army had assumed this role, and the Rural Guard was the state police.¹²

At the heart of the debate that embroiled Congress was the issue of Cuban sovereignty. The United States had invaded and occupied Cuba with the stated purpose of providing the benefits of freedom for its population and independence of the nation from the foreign dominance of Spain. Smarting under European accusations of colonialism, the United States sought to balance its responsibilities for the protection of life and property in Cuba, its growing military strategic interests in the region, and the Cuban cries for independence.

¹² Elihu Root, The Military and Colonial Policy of the United States, ed. Robert Bacon and James Brown Scott (Cambridge, Mass.: 1916) p. 190.

As the Platt Amendment was debated Wood had reached his own conclusions regarding the future of Cuba. He was convinced that it must and would eventually become a member of the Union. In fact, he seemed "obsessed by the dream that the Cubans themselves would ask to be annexed to the United States if they could only see the positive benefits of such an association..."¹³

The extent to which Wood's convictions regarding statehood or territorial status for Cuba influenced his subordinates and shaped the roles and mission of the Rural Guard is open to debate. What is clear is that Wood was admired by his staff, including Slocum, and that in the years following his departure from Cuba Wood kept an active correspondence with these officers.¹⁴

It is also evident that Slocum shared Wood's concept of a Rural Guard, and that neither he nor Wood saw the need for regular Cuban forces to secure the borders of the nation. Regardless of its future status, they were confident that these tasks could, and should, be performed by the United States Army and Navy.¹⁵

¹³ Millett, A., "Rural Guard" p. 195.

¹⁴ Allan R. Millett, The Politics of Interventions: The Military Occupation of Cuba, 1906 - 1909, (Columbus, Ohio: 1968) p. 226.

¹⁵ Slocum to McCoy, June 6, 1907, Wood Papers.

The United States withdrew from Cuba in 1902. Proclaiming success, but harboring doubts, Wood departed.¹⁶ Cuba was left to demonstrate its capacity for democracy and the Rural Guard given the opportunity to show its professional and nonpartisan qualities as an apolitical force in the service of a duly elected government.

III: The Intervention of 1906: New Situation, New Objectives, and Old Solutions.

The international scene and American situation changed rapidly between 1902 and 1906. Roosevelt assumed the presidency. Taft became Secretary of War. The United States Army had concluded a bloody counterinsurgency in the Philippines. Roosevelt acquired the Panama Canal, and established his corollary to the Monroe Doctrine. United States intervention in the Caribbean and Central America was still an accepted political option, but Roosevelt was growing conscious of its risks and the cost.¹⁷ Meanwhile, Cuba struggled with democracy.

¹⁶ Herman Hagedorn, Leonard Wood: A Biography, 2 vols., (New York: Harper and Row, 1931), 1: 260-261.

¹⁷ Bacon to Steinhart, September 10, 1906. In William H. Taft and Robert Bacon, "Cuban Pacification: Report of William H. Taft, Secretary of War, and Robert Bacon, Assistant Secretary of War, of What Was Done Under the Instructions of the President in Restoring Peace in Cuba." Department of War. Report of the Secretary of War, 1906. Appendix E. United States congress, House, 59th cong., 2d sess., House Document No. 2, ser. 1505, (Washington, D.C., 1906) p. 445. (Hereafter referred to as Taft Report.)

The squabblings of the Cuban Congress prevented the resolution of constitutional and electoral issues. Factionalism ground the machinery of government to a virtual halt.¹⁶ The President, Tomas Estrada Palma, while "not a forceful leader or experienced executive", faced reelection in 1905, and was determined to retain his office and gain a majority in the legislature.¹⁷ The opposition party, facing possible defeat and doubting the fairness of the election boycotted the polls. Fraud and coercion further assured Palma's retention of the presidency.²⁰

The Liberal party, contending that the Platt Amendment obligated the United States to insure free elections sought redress of its grievances with the United States Government.²¹ Palma, encountering growing civil unrest, also invoked the Platt Amendment.²² Citing a growing threat to the safety of foreign property and citizens, he demanded American intervention in support of the government. The United States balked.²³ Both sides attempted to force the American hand.

¹⁶ Taft and Bacon, Taft Report, p. 451.

¹⁷ Dana G. Munro, The Latin American Republics: A History, (New York: Appleton, 1960) p. 444.

²⁰ Taft and Bacon, Taft Report, p. 453.

²¹ Langley, Banana Wars, pp. 35-36.

²² Steinhart to Secretary of State, September 12, 1906. In Taft Report, p. 445.

²³ Ibid., p.446.

The Liberals took "to the field" to form a revolt. After repeated pleas for American assistance, Palma ordered the Conservative congress adjourned, and resigned from office. The Vice President refused to take his place, and the Congress was unavailable to choose a successor. Predicting anarchy, the American Consul General of Havana, Mr. Steinhart, cabled Washington for immediate assistance:

President Palma has resolved not to continue at the head of the Government, and is ready to present his resignation, even though the present disturbances should cease at once. The vice-president has resolved not to accept the office. ... The consequences will be absence of legal power, and therefore the prevailing state of anarchy will continue unless the Government of the United States will adopt the measures necessary to avoid this danger.²⁴

By the fall of 1906 the government of Cuba was paralyzed. Revolution threatened to destroy much of the progress that the United States felt it had achieved after freeing the island from Spain in 1899. The conditions of liberty and peace --which the United States had pledged to enforce in the Treaty of Paris -- were clearly in jeopardy, as were the lives and property of foreign citizens, and the growing strategic interests of the United States.

²⁴ Steinhart to the Secretary of State, September 14, 1906 - 2.41 p.m., In Taft Report, pp. 446-447.

The government of Cuba and the opposition leadership which began the revolt in protest of the 1905 elections, both requested United States intervention. President Roosevelt, weary of Caribbean politics, and fearful of another prolonged struggle like the Philippines, sent Secretary of War Howard Taft and Assistant Secretary of War Bacon to the island to determine if an intervention could be avoided.

Upon arrival in Cuba, the tide of events forced Taft to act promptly. He not only recommended intervention, but declared a provisional government, with himself as acting governor, and sought to bring order to the situation.²³ Taft quickly concluded that political and military reforms would be necessary to reestablish democracy and stability in Cuba. Constitutional and procedural reforms had to be made to assure free and fair elections. The office of the chief executive had to be strengthened, and the government had to have an armed force capable of protecting it from rebellion.²⁴

²³ William H. Taft, "Proclamation to the People of Cuba" September 29, 1906. In Taft Report, pp. 463-464.

²⁴ Taft and Bacon, Taft Report, p. 456.

During his first administration Palma had responded to the demands of the rural elites for increased protection and expanded the Rural Guard. He also reinforced the token corps of artillery.²⁶ Still this force was scattered, and despite the fact that as much as half of the Rural Guard owed their positions to the Palma government, they offered little effective resistance in the revolt.²⁷

Taft determined that the Rural Guard had collaborated with the Palma government and helped coerce the electorate into the lopsided victory that had kept the Palma government in office.²⁸ Subsequent investigation by Major Slocum showed that the Rural Guard had, through recruitment and shared interests, become politically aligned with the rural elites.²⁹

²⁶ Perez, Army Politics, pp. 15-16.

²⁷ Jacob Sleeper to the Secretary of State, August 21, 1906, United States Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1906, Part 1, pp. 454-455.

²⁸ Taft and Bacon, Taft Report, p. 454.

²⁹ Captain C.F. Crain to Major H.J. Slocum, February 5, 1907, File 064, Records of the Provisional Government of Cuba, National Archives, Record Group 199.

Secretary of War Taft turned over the responsibility of Provisional Governor of Cuba to Charles E. Magoon, a civilian, selected by President Roosevelt based on credentials acquired in Panama. Magoon faced a difficult task. American objectives in Cuba had evolved, and a quick and peaceful solution to the problem of Cuban instability was desired. Roosevelt felt that the Platt Amendment had become a crutch for Cubans who would not accept responsibility for solving their own problems. Lacking Wood's authority, Magoon was faced with the task of getting the Cubans to accept responsibility for their own nation through negotiation.³⁰

For the most part Magoon inherited Wood's staff. Colonel Enoch Crowder was tasked with rewriting the electoral laws. The Army General Staff, under the leadership of its Chief of Staff, General Bell, planned and led the deployment of the Army of Cuban Pacification. This organization contained many veterans of the previous Cuban experience. Herbert Slocum, now a major, returned to again take responsibility for the Rural Guard.³¹

³⁰ Langley, Banana Wars, pp. 43-44.

³¹ Millett, A., "Rural Guard," p. 199. Other officers assigned to the Rural Guard were Captains Powell Clayton, Jr., James A. Ryan, George C. Barnhardt, Andrew J. Dougherty, Charles F. Crain, Cary I. Crockett, and Edmund Wittenmyer. Ibid.

Convinced that the concept of the Rural Guard was sound Slocum made an assessment of its organizational weaknesses and began building a bigger and better Rural Guard. Larger detachments were placed in the vicinity of population centers so they could respond to the possibility of revolutions. The autonomy of the Rural Guard was to be increased by promotion through the ranks, and by reducing its dependence on the rural elites for facilities.³²

Seeing no basic flaws in this approach, Governor Magoon concentrated on getting legislation enacted which would provide for a military justice system, establish the legal basis for the organizational structure of this force, and revamp the compensation system.³³ Strong sanctions were to be established for political activity by Rural Guard members.

The Provisional Governor decreed that there would be no partisanship within the guard itself. In General Order No. 28 (March 11, 1907) General Rodriguez announced that participation in political activity would be henceforth a court-martial offense.³⁴

³² Slocum to Provisional Governor of Cuba, February 26, 1907, File 866/44, National Archives, Records of the Bureau of Insular Affairs, Records Group 350.

³³ Charles E. Magoon, Report of the Provisional Government of Cuba From December 1st, 1907 to December 1st, 1908, (Havana, 1909) pp. 15-16.

³⁴ Millett, A., Politics of Intervention, p. 224.

Slocum, and his cadre of seven other officers, immediately embarked upon their plans to improve the Rural Guard. They were confident that their actions were in concert with the needs of the people of Cuba. These officers were only slightly surprised when the Cuban political parties objected to their reforms. They were absolutely astounded when Governor Magoon and the Roosevelt administration accepted as valid some of the Cuban arguments.

IV: The Permanent Army Debate.

Magoon was obligated to hear all parties in his efforts to negotiate a Cuban return to stability. At Palma's suggestion the Provisional Governor met regularly with the heads of the two major political parties.³⁵ The most effective Cuban lobby was the Liberal Committee. This organization represented the hierarchy of the opposition party which had rebelled against the Palma administration. To defeat the attempts to rebuild the Rural Guard they put together an eloquent argument that exploited United States interests in Cuba.

³⁵ While this thesis refers to these political groups as parties, Magoon, and subsequently Millett, have taken care to point out that these organizations were not comparable to American political parties of the era. It would be more correct to characterize these elements as political factions, for they performed none of the platform or organizational functions we associate with parties in America.

First, the Liberals observed that if you wanted to prevent a revolution, you needed a proper armed force, not a constabulary. Drawing on their own successes they asserted that revolts could be quelled quickly if the government had at its disposal a reasonably large body of disciplined soldiers who could make a convincing show of force. Such tactics prevented the revolution from gaining momentum and swelling the ranks of the revolutionaries to the point that no force of any size could effectively oppose their mass. They reasoned that a constabulary, committed to other tasks and dispersed throughout the country, could not effectively execute such a show of force.³⁴

Second, exploiting the American conviction that Cuba had to remain a fiscally solvent nation, they pointed out that the expansion of the Rural Guard -- a mounted force with extensive dispersed facilities -- was a very costly venture. A conventional force of infantry, with some cavalry and artillery would be significantly cheaper.³⁷

Last, but not least, they argued that if the United States wanted the nation of Cuba to behave like a sovereign state, it must have the means to accept this responsibility. An Army, and provisions for calling its citizenry to arms, were basic necessities for an independent nation.³⁸

³⁴ "Stenographic Report of the Conference between Mr. Juan Gualberto Gomez, (et al)... and the Provisional Governor" February 6, 1907, File 062/2, Records Group 199.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

Major Slocum denounced the proposal as an attempt by the former rebels to build an armed force of their own which they could turn to their own political purposes. Others argued that the force would set idle and ineffective, leaving the most important portions of Cuba-- its rural agricultural base-- unprotected.³⁷ Adamant that Cuba did not need a conventional Army, these officers continued building a stronger Rural Guard.

There were other views within the United States Army regarding the type of armed force needed in Cuba. Writing in the Journal of the Military Service Institute of the United States, Captain Matthew E. Hanna, Military Attache to Cuba, had proposed a regular armed force for Cuba, and suggested sending a portion of its officer candidates to The United States Military Academy at West Point. Hanna felt that a Cuban army capable of protecting its own shores would free American forces from this task and allow for the employment of the United States' military power, elsewhere in the Caribbean.

It is unlikely that Hanna's argument went unheeded. Roosevelt was insuring that there would be more than enough work for American armed forces in the Caribbean. The Panama Canal needed protection and, since the announcement of the Roosevelt Corollary, future showdowns with rising European powers had become more than remote possibilities.

³⁷ Perez, Army Politics, pp. 23-24; Millett, A., Politics of Intervention, pp. 231-232.

Working against the position of the Rural Guard advisers was the fact that it had failed to prevent the previous uprising. The Liberals also played up the point that the Rural Guard had collaborated with the Moderates in the election of 1905, and thus was politically tainted.⁴⁰

Magoon was in a difficult position. He sought advice from Washington, and referred the issue to the Advisory Law Commission.⁴¹ Headed by Colonel Enoch Crowder, this group was working on revamping the Cuban constitution and codifying the laws which would establish the procedures and relationships between the various organizations and institutions of the Cuban Republic.⁴² The debate continued, as did the building of the Rural Guard.

The argument and negotiation regarding the Permanent Army went unabated for the better part of two years. The question was a major issue in the Cuban press and demanded the attention of the War Department's Bureau of Insular Affairs.⁴³ The development of the Rural Guard organization proceeded and the organizational reforms sought by Slocum were nearly complete, when in April of 1908 a "compromise" was reached.

⁴⁰ Millett, A., Politics of Intervention, p. 228.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Munro, Latin American Republics, p. 445.

⁴³ Millett, A. "Rural Guard" pp. 200.

The Advisory Law Commission, acting on a recommendation by the Bureau of Insular Affairs and citing the law establishing the Rural Guard as justification, recommended relegating the tasks of public safety to the Rural Guard, establishment of a Permanent Army, and including a militia clause in the Cuban constitution.⁴⁴ This solution may have appeared as a compromise to Magoon, but it was a clear victory for the Cubans, and a devastating defeat for the Rural Guard advisers.

With less than eight months remaining prior to the programmed withdrawal of United States forces, the armed forces of Cuba assumed an entirely different structure. Any program designed to instill professionalism and nonpartisanship in this force would have to be a Cuban initiative. The United States was left with making paper reforms to this proposed organization.⁴⁵

Control of the new organization was vested in the executive branch, and relied upon faithful execution of the constitution by the President of Cuba. United States legal officers scurried to revise the constitution and change the military code to incorporate the new force. It was hoped that by balancing the Rural Guard against the Permanent Army the political activity of both would be checked. Meanwhile, Magoon sought to influence the selection of its senior leadership.

⁴⁴ "Final Report of the Advisory Law Commission" January 15, 1909, pp. 22-23. Exhibit A in Taft Report.

⁴⁵ Langley, Banana Wars, p.46

Magoon supported the appointment of General Guerra, a veteran of the Army of Liberation and a member of the Liberal Committee, to the position of command of the armed forces. Magoon's rationale for selecting Guerra reflects the shifting emphasis on maintaining order instead of instilling democratic institutions.

Guerra, a protege of the guerilla genius Antonio Maceo, was acclaimed for his ruthlessness and ability: "This puts an end to insurrections; nobody will want 'Pino' to go after them; he would not bring in prisoners." Such were the comments Magoon heard, with evident approval. In any event Magoon believed power, politics, and the armed forces were problems the Cuban should handle themselves.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Magoon to Taft, April 9, 1908, File 15984, General Classified Files, Bureau of Insular Affairs, Record Group 350. Quoted in Millett, A. "Rural Guard" p. 204.

V: The American Withdrawal

The departure of the provisional government was keyed to the general elections of 1908. Extensive procedural reforms had been enacted, and the election was closely supervised by United States officers. Once a proper election had been held, the United States was free to withdraw. Roosevelt, among others was not convinced that democracy would succeed.

Close to the end of his administration, when his thoughts were far from Kettle Hill and his Corollary, Roosevelt in a conversation with his military aide and Cuban veteran, Captain Archibald Butt, gave his (and his nation's) eulogy to the Second Intervention. "I do not think about Cuba now, he said. "It is not our fault if things go badly there..."⁴⁷

Governor Magoon turned over the responsibilities of government to President Gomez in January of 1909 and the American advisors who oversaw the development of the Rural Guard during the better part of the first decade of the 20th century were withdrawn. A single adviser, without previous Cuban experience, was selected by the War Department to assist in the training of this organization in what would be its final days as a semi-autonomous force.

⁴⁷ Captain Archibald Butt to Mrs. Lewis F. Butt, February 3, 1909, in Lawrence F. Abbott (ed.), The Letters of Archie Butt (New York, 1924) p.325. Quoted in Millett, A., Politics of Intervention, p. 252.

VI: An Epitaph for Military Reform in Cuba: Captain Frank Parker.⁴⁰

Captain Frank Parker was a cavalryman. With the backing of the President of Cuba, a disproportionate share of resources, and the indifference of the United States Department of War, Parker made what would be the final American contribution to the building of a professional nonpartisan apolitical Cuban military.

Finding that the Rural Guard was a mounted unit Parker immediately set about making proper cavalry out of this constabulary force. He created a demonstration troop in Havana for the proported purpose of training the remainder of the Rural Guard by rotating individuals through this unit. His soldiers and mounts looked superb but, in fact, these troopers did not rotate out of Havana. Instead, they became an elite palace guard.

This fine cavalry organization proved exceptionally useful. President Gomez used them to put down riots by disenfranchised black veterans of the Army of Liberation during the Race War of 1912. The remainder of the Rural Guard also proved effective in Cuban politics. Intelligence reports of the era credit the Rural Guard with assassination of rival politicians and intimidation of other opponents. Clearly a versatile and effective force, these units were neither nonpartisan nor apolitical.

⁴⁰ The material presented in this section is condensed from Millett, A., "Rural Guard" pp. 208-211.

When Parker left Cuba in 1912 the responsibility of advising the Rural Guard became a part time task for the military attache. In that same year, Marines landed in Nicaragua.

CHAPTER 3

NICARAGUA (1927 - 1933)

I: Overview.

In 1927 Nicaragua was involved in a civil war which threatened the stability of Central America. Unlike most previous armed contests for control of Nicaragua, this dispute involved foreign powers other than the United States or Britain. Mexico was deeply involved in supporting the Liberal cause, which was trying to install Vice President Sacasa in the office vacated by President Solarzano and seized by General Chamorro.

The Liberal forces were under the command of General Moncada and counted among their ranks Generals Somoza and Sandino. This partisan Army enjoyed considerable success on the battlefield. Seeking to end the war the United States forced Chamorro's withdrawal from office, but the Liberals refused to recognize his American endorsed successor, Adolfo Diaz. With a Mexican sponsored force on the verge of victory President Coolidge dispatched a special envoy, Colonel Henry L. Stimson, to negotiate a settlement to the crisis.

Stimson's mission met with remarkable success. Through direct negotiation with Moncada, and the judicious employment of a growing force of Marines, Stimson succeeded in convincing the Liberal leaders, other than Sandino, to lay down their arms and accept a new election in 1928. The Stimson agreement also required the Nicaraguan national forces, then under Conservative control, to surrender their arms to the United States Marine Corps and disband. The new government, to be elected in 1928, would have at its disposal a new armed force.

The new Nicaraguan military was to be a constabulary trained, and initially led, by active duty United States officers. This would be a nonpartisan apolitical force. It would prevent the raising of Nicaragua's traditional partisan armies. It would also replace the corrupt National Army, and an American led constabulary which had been coopted to the Conservative cause by General Chamorro.

Obviously, the second intervention of 1927-1933 was not the first attempt at political-military reform in Nicaragua. To understand the events that took place following 1927 it is necessary to review the previous reform efforts. Additionally, for a clear understanding of the events, proposals and programs regarding military reform, these efforts must be examined in the light of American foreign policy and Nicaraguan presidential politics.

This chapter begins by tracing the development of United States interests in Nicaragua and Nicaraguan reactions to prior attempts at military reform. The focus then turns to the intervention of 1927, and the complex environment of Nicaraguan presidential and military politics which confronted United States officials. The key factors of Sandino and shifting United States policy, which further complicated the task of political military reform are also addressed.

The conditions under which the United States attempted military reforms in Nicaragua differed in many ways from those in Cuba. Nicaragua was an established sovereign nation, not a recently freed colony. Dollar diplomacy -- President Taft's contribution to United States foreign policy -- had reached its logical and practical limits. The Panama Canal was in full operation. The Department of State, not the Department of War, was formulating policy for the intervention. The United States was a new world power. Finally, the development of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua was overseen by officers of the Marine Corps, not the Army. Yet, there were remarkable similarities.

The Marine efforts were also hampered by a lack of consensus as to the role and mission of the Guardia. The Nicaraguan President, General Moncada, and the Nicaraguan Congress resisted efforts to establish an apolitical force. Again, as in Cuba, the development of the Guardia continued despite these problems, and very effective units were built.

The military organizations that emerged from the intervention in Nicaragua differed in one basic way from those that resulted in Cuba. Neither the Army nor the Marine Corps succeeded in building nonpartisan officer corps or apolitical institutions for the control of the armed forces, but the Marines succeeded in maintaining the autonomy of the Guardia Nacional. This was due, in part, to the demands of chasing Sandino. Thus, when the Marines departed, the Guardia has a monopoly on state force, which it maintained for nearly fifty years.

II: America, Nicaragua, and a Transisthmian Passage.

In 1927, the basis of American interests in the region, and Nicaragua in particular, had been acknowledged for the better part of a century. A growing demand for transisthmian commerce, and Nicaragua's control of the only feasible sea level canal route kept United States commercial interest in the nation at a high level.¹

As in Panama, American companies developed a system of ferries and railroads for crossing the isthmus.² With the vast amount of commercial traffic growing each year, the United States was not alone in its interests in Nicaragua.

¹ Dana G. Munro, The Latin American Republics: A History. (New York: Appleton, 1960) p. 391.

² At the time Panama was still a part of Columbia.

In the late 18th century Britain had developed commercial ventures in settlements such as Bluefields and contested the Spanish claims of authority over the Mosquito Coast. Recognizing the strategic implications of a canal in Nicaragua, or elsewhere on the isthmus, the United States and Great Britain entered into a treaty in 1850 which forbade either country to establish exclusive control over such a future waterway.³

By 1900 United States interests in the region eclipsed those of the British. The United States was on the verge of becoming a global power. Her newly acquired possessions in the Caribbean and the Pacific, and the exponential growth in commerce and shipping, required a major naval force. Significant economies could be achieved if this force did not have to make the Cape Horn passage, and could, instead, pass through a Central American canal. A canal was a technical possibility not only in Nicaragua, but also in Panama.

³ William Kamman, A Search for Stability: United States Diplomacy Toward Nicaragua, 1925-1933. (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968) p. 8.

III: A Country and a Canal for Panama; A Watchful Eye on Nicaragua.

In 1901, Great Britain and the United States reconsidered their previous agreement and the United States was freed from its promise not to acquire control over a canal. When President Roosevelt assumed office, a canal was top priority.⁴

The French attempt to build a canal in the Panama region of Columbia had failed, and Nicaragua recognized an opportunity to persuade the United States to build the canal across its route. Bargaining was stiff and the eventual selection of the Panama route infuriated the President of Nicaragua, Jose Santos Zelaya.⁵

Zelaya was not a favorite of the United States. He seized control of Nicaragua in 1893 and sought to establish his nation as the dominant power in the region. He built a modern Army and attacked Honduras.⁶ After coming to power he attempted to renegotiate monopolies granted American companies by the previous government. Under Zelaya Nicaraguan nationalism began to threaten United States interests in the region.

⁴ Munro, Latin American Republics. p. 393.

⁵ Kamman, Search for Stability. p.10.

⁶ "The Nicaraguan Army" Anon. Manuscript in the Nicaraguan Records of the United States Marine Corps Historical Archives. Cited in Richard Millett, Guardians of the Dynasty: A History of the U.S. Created Guardia Nacional De Nicaragua and the Somoza Family. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1977) p. 21.

In the wake of the canal decision Zelaya offered the potential Nicaraguan passage to other nations, including Japan. When Costa Rica contested the right of Nicaragua to offer the San Juan River as a portion of the route, Zelaya refused to submit to the judgement of the Central American Court of Justice.⁷ This further antagonized the United States who had established the tribunal to resolve international disputes in the region.⁸

Zelaya was falling into disfavor with the Americans, and his domestic opponents recognized this fact. With tacit encouragement by the United States Juan J. Estrada began a revolt to topple Zelaya.⁹

⁷ The southern bank of the San Juan River was clearly in Costa Rican territory, and the proposed channel included the boarder of Costa Rica. See Kamman, A Search for Stability. p.10.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Munro, Latin American Republics. pp. 422-423.

IV: Intervention and the First Invitation for Reform.

After Zelaya fell, Estrada assumed the Presidency as an interim executive until elections could be held. Unfortunately, Estrada's coalition evaporated.¹⁰ Rivals for his position controlled the Army and partisan forces. Estrada proposed that the United States build a national constabulary.¹¹ The United States looked favorably on this request, but before it could respond Estrada was deposed by General Mena, commander of what remained of the Nicaraguan Army.¹²

General Emiliano Chamorro, the acknowledged Conservative party leader, wrestled control from Mena, and reluctantly handed over the Presidency to Adolfo Diaz. The United States had ruled that Chamorro was ineligible for election to the presidency since he currently held the positions of Minister of War and Commander of the Army. However, Diaz agreed to support Chamorro who would be eligible for the next election.¹³

¹⁰ Millett, R. Guardians of the Dynasty. p. 27

¹¹ Northcott to Knox, February 25, 1911, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, Part I. (Washington, D.C., 1911) pp. 655-656.

¹² Millett, R., Guardians of the Dynasty. p. 28

¹³ Munro, Latin American Republics. p. 423; Again, the term political parties is used loosely and does not necessarily mean a political organization comparable with political parties in the United States. In accordance with the Dawson Agreements and the Nicaraguan constitution, presidents could not succeed themselves, and military officials could not be elected to the office.

The Conservatives consolidated their control of the presidency, and the armed forces. Diaz passed the presidency to Chamorro, and Chamorro passed it to his uncle. As fate would have it, the elder Chamorro died in office before he could pass control back to his nephew. Vice President Martinez, a Conservative, but not a member of the Chamorro faction assumed the office. Thus, in 1923, a new crisis developed that would soon draw the attention of the United States.¹⁴

¹⁴ Kamman, Search for Stability. p.17

V: The American Pursuit of Elections and Stability.

The United States had maintained a strong legation guard in Nicaragua following the intervention of 1912. This force had intervened to stop at least one coup, and the United States let it be known that it would not tolerate persons assuming the Office of the President without being elected.¹⁵ However, the United States was never satisfied with the Nicaraguan electoral process. The system seemed to insure that the candidate endorsed by the ruling President succeeded at the polls. It seemed that this mandate could only be broken by revolution or coup. The Chamorros had rebuffed American efforts at electoral reform, but Martinez, seeking American endorsement of his eligibility to run for office in 1923, accepted an American mission to rewrite the electoral laws.¹⁶

Whether Martinez had any intention of complying with these laws is open to question. Regardless, when the United States held that in its interpretation of the Nicaraguan constitution he was ineligible for a second term, Martinez, disregarding the reforms and following Nicaraguan tradition, sponsored a successor.¹⁷

¹⁵ Munro, Latin American Republics. p. 424.

¹⁶ V. I. Greer, "State Department Policy in Regard to the Nicaraguan Election of 1924," Hispanic American Historical Review. (November, 1954) pp. 445-467. Cited in Lester Langley, The Banana Wars: An Inner History of American Empire 1900-1934. (Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 1983) p. 183.

¹⁷ Kamman, Search for Stability. pp. 25-29.

True to form, Martinez's nominee, Carlos Solarzано, was elected. But, his government was based on a shaky coalition which left the Chamorrista faction in control of the Nicaraguan Army. Martinez convinced the United States to retain the legation guard, which it had been trying to withdraw, until after the elections. Solarzано, Martinez's hand picked successor, immediately requested an extension of this force.¹⁶

The United States refused unless Solarzано accepted American supervision of the 1928 elections and the establishment of an apolitical constabulary. Faced with a hostile army, and the firm support of neither the Conservatives nor the Liberals, Solarzано accepted.¹⁷ This American fixation on the establishment of apolitical militaries was a product of the evolution of United States foreign policy.

¹⁶ Langley, Banana Wars. p. 184.

¹⁷ Thurston to Department of State. Letter dated December 13, 1924. National Archives of the United States, General Records of the Department of State, Records Group 59. File No. 817.00/3242.

VI: The Rise of The State Department and Dollar Diplomacy.

In the wake of the First World War, the State Department assumed a prominent role in Caribbean and Central American affairs. Its new Latin American Division supplanted the Bureau of Insular Affairs of the War Department as the policy proponent for the Caribbean and Central America. The Marine Corps and the Navy's Special Squadron in the Caribbean accepted the primary responsibility for the conduct of military operations in the region.

When the United States intervened in 1912 it had sought stability through the Dawson agreement. This accord, a product of the early days of dollar diplomacy, brought some measure of fiscal responsibility through United States supervision and collection of custom receipts, and drastically reduced the reliance of Nicaragua on European capital.²⁰ But, this approach had not provided a sufficient

²⁰ Munro, Latin American Republics. pp. 422-423.

foundation for political stability. The necessity for military and political, as well as economic reform, became evident to the formulators of United States policy. By 1927 the position of the Department of State was clear regarding military reform:

The establishment of non-partisan constabularies in the Caribbean states was one of the chief objectives of our policy from the time it became clear that the custom collectorships wouldn't assure stability by themselves. The old armies were or seemed to be one of the principal causes of disorder and financial disorganization. They consumed most of the governments revenue, chiefly in graft, and they gave nothing but disorder and repression in return. We thought that a disciplined force, trained by Americans, would do away with the petty local oppression that was responsible for much of the disorder that occurred and would be an important step toward better financial administration and economic progress generally.²¹

Nor had the Dawson agreements resulted in free elections. The coercive powers of the incumbent still determined the outcome of each Nicaraguan election, and serious opposition candidates found recourse only in revolution.

²¹ Letter from Dana G. Munro to Richard Millet, dated February 24, 1965. Quoted in Millet, R. Guardians of the Dynasty. p. 41.

In a regional effort to further democracy as a route to stability the United States had sponsored a treaty which obligated the nations of the United States, Costa Rica, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua, to refrain from recognition of regimes that came to power through extra-legal means. Given the questionable viability of a government which could not secure recognition from the United States, it was hoped that Central American politicians might adopt democracy out of some sense of necessity and survival.²²

Thus, with Solarzano struggling to hold together a coalition of Conservative and Liberal minorities, the United States sought the guarantee of comprehensive political military reforms. As mentioned, Solarzano agreed, and the Marine legation guard remained in Nicaragua until August of 1925.

²² Munro, Latin American Republics. p. 426.

VII: Major Carter's Constabulary and Chamorro's
"Constitutional" Coup.

Through the good offices of the Department of State, Major Calvin B. Carter, United States Army, retired, was hired as director of the new Guardia.²³ Carter was faced with a formidable task. While the Nicaraguan Army had atrophied during the past decade, it was still a major armed force, and controlled the fortress La Loma. Situated on the dominant high ground in Managua, La Loma was a symbol of political authority as well as the national arsenal.²⁴

²³ Transcript of Contract between Major Calvin B. Carter and The Nicaraguan Government, National Archives of the United States, General Records of the Department of State, Records Group 59, File No. 817.1051/81.

²⁴ Calvin B. Carter, "The Kentucky Fued in Nicaragua" World's Work (July, 1927) p. 317. Also see Endnote 78 Millett, R., Guardians of the Dynasty. p. 39.

While Carter labored to build a constabulary, Chamorro who felt he had been denied his rightful position as president, began maneuvering for the office. First, Chamorro was given control of La Loma by Chamorrista officers and forced an outgunned Solorzano to appoint him as Minister of War. Major Carter advised Solorzano to resist, but with the legation guard gone, and the Guardia only lightly armed and partially trained, Solorzano demurred.²⁹ Then, with Vice President Sacasa, a Liberal, out of the country Chamorro persuaded Solorzano to resign. Solorzano was advised to seek treatment for his "poor health" in the United States where he could be the Nicaraguan Consul General in San Francisco.²⁰

²⁹ Ibid. p. 319.

²⁰ Kamman, Search for Stability. pp. 37-45.

Chamorro then oversaw the dismissal of all non-conservative members of the Congress. Next, from his position as Minister of War, he had himself appointed to fill a vacant Senate seat from his home district. Finally, his new congress voted him first in the chain to assume the presidency should Sacasa not return. Fearing for his life, Sacasa refused to return, but also refused to resign the Vice Presidency. Calling on Liberal forces to revolt, he challenged Chamorro's position and set up a government in exile.²⁷ The Marine legation Guard had been withdrawn after Carter began forming a constabulary under Salarzano. Chamorro, who had violently opposed the formation of the new Guardia, now assumed the office of the President, and moved quickly to incorporate the Guardia into his forces.²⁸ Carter faced the dilemma of accepting Chamorro's orders, or by refusing, aiding the Sacasa cause.

The American legation was of no help in resolving this issue. They had strict instructions to support neither side, while Washington decided between the lesser of two evils.

²⁷ Ibid. pp.58-60.

²⁸ Ibid. p. 190.

The United States did not want to support what would be clearly a weak government under Sacasa, and refused to use force to remove Chamorro. On the other hand, Chamorro's ascent to the presidency was blatantly extra-legal, and its recognition would complicate sanctions against coups and revolutions in the region.²⁹

For Carter, the problem was overcome by events. The Liberals launched a military campaign on the east coast, and the Guardia was forced to fight for the Chamorro Conservatives.

Despite initial successes, Chamorro suffered from the withdrawal of United States support, and the Liberals gained strength. The United States demanded that Chamorro vacate the office of the President, and restore the Congress to its previous composition. However, the United States refused to accept Sacasa as president. Doing so would have been perceived as a victory for the Mexicans who were supporting the Liberal effort. The Liberals refused to accept the American endorsed successor to Chamorro, the venerable Adolfo Diaz, and continued the fight.³⁰

²⁹ Millett, R., Guardians of the Dynasty. p. 47.

³⁰ Dana G. Munro, The United States and the Caribbean Republics 1921-1933. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1974) pp. 196-198.

These events set the stage for the United States intervention in 1927, and the Stimson agreement. More importantly, they show the historical linkage that had developed between American foreign policy, Nicaraguan Presidential politics, and American efforts at political-military reform.

VIII: Reluctant Reform and Nicaraguan Power Politics.

The pattern of Nicaraguan reaction to the possibility of military reform by the United States had been set. Nicaraguan presidents accepted the idea of an American trained or led constabulary only under dire circumstances. Their motive for accepting these forces was to increase their relative power versus their political opponents, especially when these opponents controlled superior armed forces. With United States Marines in the country, and a United States policy of supporting the established government, Diaz and the Chamorros did not need a constabulary to perpetuate Conservative party control. Solarzano's unforeseen ascension to the presidency broke this chain, but left the Conservatives in control of the Army. Like Estarada, Solarzano grasped at the straw of an American constabulary.

Diaz had rebuffed American offers to form a Constabulary when his position in office was secure. Instead, he diverted the Scull mission to reforming the police department of Managua, where it quickly failed.³¹ In 1927, Diaz was faced with acceptance of the Stimson provisions or the withdrawal of American assistance and defeat at either the hands of the Liberals or the Chamorrista conservatives.

³¹ Millett, R. Guardians of the Dynasty. p. 30.

The establishment of professional nonpartisan apolitical constabularies had become part of the United States' equation for democracy and stability in Latin American nations. Circumstances forced Diaz to accept the military reform provisions of the Stimson agreement. Threatening the use of United States Marines, Colonel Stimson secured the endorsement of the Liberal commander in the field, General Moncada.³²

With Sacasa neatly removed from the picture, the United States began its reformation of Nicaragua. Secretary of State Frank B. Kellogg hoped for a peaceful and rapid transition to a secure democracy.³³ Stimson had pulled off what seemed to be the diplomatic coup of the decade, if not the century.³⁴

³² Langley, Banana Wars. p. 193.

³³ Kellogg to Munro, Letter dated December 8, 1927, National Archives of the United States, General Records of the Department of State, Records Group 59, File No. 817.1051/178.

³⁴ Citing Stimson and Bundy, On Active Service in Peace and War, Kamman observes that Stimson "...always felt that Charles Lindbergh's flight to Paris the same month deprived the Nicaraguan venture of much publicity." Kamman, Search for Stability. p. 114.

IX: The Two Front War for Reform: Sandino and Moncada.

Diaz had been accepted as the interim President until the elections of 1928. Under the Stimson Agreement the United States Marines immediately began disarming the various factions, including the Nicaraguan Army. Lieutenant Colonel Elias R. Beadle was appointed to command the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua, and the American legation began preparing legislation that would provide for the Guardia's legal existence.³⁵ Sandino, his force depleted by the cash incentive offered for surrendering arms to the Marines, was withdrawing to the rugged areas near Nicaragua's northern boarder.³⁶

³⁵ The original commander of the Guardia was a Colonel Rhea, USMC, but he suffered from health problems and was replaced by Lieutenant Colonel Elias R. Beadle within a month of the formation of the Guardia. See Millett, Guardians of the Dynasty. p. 61.

³⁶ Neill Macaulay, The Sandino Affair. (Duke University Press, 1985) p. 62.

The United States Marine Corps had fought hard to secure the task of training and leading the Guardia Nacional.³⁷ The Nicaraguan request for the United States Army to be assigned this task was rejected. With the presence of a reinforced Marine Brigade in Nicaragua, and the authority for naval forces in the region vested in the Commander of the Special Squadron in the Caribbean, the question of to whom the Jefe Director of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua, a Marine Lieutenant Colonel with the Nicaraguan rank of General, was to report became an immediate issue.

The American Minister sought autonomy for the Marine detachment assigned to the Guardia. The Marine Brigade Commander, Brigadier General Logan Feland, and the Commander of the Special Squadron, Rear Admiral David Foote Sellers, wanted direct control of this organization and its American leaders.³⁸

³⁷ Millett, R. Guardians of the Dynasty. p. 62.

³⁸ Julian C. Smith, Major, USMC, "A Review of the Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua: by the Direction of the Major General Commandant of the Marine Corps." (Washington, D.C., n.d.)

The Stimson agreement had not been specific regarding such matters, and the presidential order authorizing the assignment of officers and non-commissioned officers of the Marine Corps was also suitably vague. The issue, as well as many others, remained unresolved when General Moncada was elected President in 1928. Predictably, the former rebel commander sought to establish his personal authority over the Guardia. This contest for authority persisted for the duration of the intervention.

Moncada recognized that under the conditions he could not prevent the establishment of the Guardia, nor confront the entire American effort. The American Minister, Mr. Eberhardt, and the Jefe Director of the Guardia, Lieutenant Colonel Beadle, were adamant on forming an apolitical force, and incorporating all police and military functions in the Guardia.³⁹ In order to establish as much influence over the Guardia as possible, Moncada concentrated on bring the Guardia under control of the Marine Brigade, and bringing the Marine Brigade commander around to his view regarding the role of the Guardia.⁴⁰

³⁹ Kellogg to Eberhardt, Letter dated August 20, 1927. National Archives of the United States, General Records of the Department of State, Records Group 59, File No. 817.1051/159.

⁴⁰ Millett, R. Guardians of the Dynasty. p. 108.

This strategy split the American authorities further and kept the question of how to hold the Guardia accountable open. The issue was further stalled by the Nicaraguan Congress, which refused to pass the legislation authorizing the establishment of the Guardia. Eventually, the American Minister was forced to ask for the relief of both the Marine Brigade Commander, and the Jefe Director of the Guardia. Moncada's strategy had paid at least some dividends. The Marine Brigade Commander, Brigadier General Feland made it known that he felt that the future of United States interests were with Moncada, and that an apolitical force was impossible in Nicaragua.⁴¹

The departure of Beadle and Feland did not solve the question of authority over the Guardia. A bureaucratic compromise which split the authority over the Marines assigned to the Guardia was reached by the Marine Corps' headquarters in Washington. This only allowed for the continuation of Moncada's strategy. Meanwhile, the focus of United States policy in Nicaragua had shifted to the defeat of Sandino.

⁴¹ Memorandum of conversation between Feland and Francis White. United States Department of State, dated April 9, 1929, National Archives of the United States, General Records of the Department of State, Records Group 59, File No. 817.1051/283.

In the immediate aftermath of the agreement reached by Stimson and Moncada at Tipitapa it appeared that the recalcitrant rebel leader Sandino would be no more than a temporary nuisance to the American plans for Nicaragua. The bulk of Marine forces were withdrawn, and the building of the Guardia Nacional focused on establishing a national organization that would incorporate the functions of the army and the police, in both rural and municipal areas. However, Sandino's success required the reinforcement of the Marine effort and drastically altered the development of the Guardia.

Sandino's success was not only a challenge to United States authority, but also a challenge to the legitimacy of the government the United States was attempting to build. Yet, perhaps the most important challenge Sandino posed was to the effectiveness of the Marine Corps. ⁴²

⁴² Brigadier General Frank McCoy, United States Army, was dispatched to Nicaragua to establish an electoral commission for the 1928 Presidential elections. McCoy was openly critical of the Marines inability to capture Sandino. This Army criticism was not well recieved by the Marines. See Kamman, A Search for Stability. pp.174-176. Also see Millett, R. Guardians of the Dynansty. p.105.

The persistence of Sandino's campaigns focused international attention on the United States intervention, and heightened the political dissent within the United States regarding policy in the region. Pressure grew to defeat Sandino, or to replace the Marines chasing Sandino with Nicaraguan forces. Fighting Sandino with a Nicaraguan force involved far more than finding the elusive "bandit". It also meant building Nicaraguan support for an expanded Guardia. As in Cuba, there was wide spread resistance to this idea. Much of the issue was cloaked in the political fog of Nicaraguan politics and the control of the legislature.

The United States was trying to develop the legislative process in Nicaragua and promote fiscal responsibility. The newly elected legislature still balked at funding the United States plan for the Guardia. While the Nicaraguan issue was the division of political authority among the jefe politicos (provincial governors), the executive, and the parties, the Congress and President Moncada argued the issue with the American officials in terms of cost.

Expanding the Guardia to fight Sandino would strain the budget. Forming auxiliary forces, which could be recruited cheaply and placed under command of the Marine Brigade, would be cheaper. Of course, this would also provide the President with a force that could respond to traditional Nicaraguan influence within the military, so the proponents of the Guardia resisted. The Marine Brigade however, supported this offer.⁴³

Guardia advocates were faced with shifting their efforts to defeating Sandino or losing their monopoly on Nicaraguan military power. The Guardia moved rapidly to build units to field against Sandino.

The development of the Guardia organization shifted to the creation of a national counterinsurgency force. The emphasis was on small unit leadership, and the creation of effective nationwide communications, logistics, and intelligence structures. These efforts progressed rapidly, and effective small units, still under Marine command, took to the field against Sandino. Marine officers and NCO's found that the Nicaraguan made an excellent soldier, and developed a strong sense of loyalty to his leaders.⁴⁴ Preoccupied with defeating Sandino, the Marines yielded few leadership positions to Nicaraguans.

⁴³ Eberhardt to Kellogg, Letter dated 22 January 1929. National Archives of the United States, General Records of the Department State, Records Group 59, File No. 817.1051/238

⁴⁴ Evans F. Carlson, Captain, USMC, "The Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua," Marine Corps Gazette. (August, 1937) p. 9.

X: Time to Withdraw.

When Colonel Henry Stimson replaced Kellogg as Secretary of State the temporary presence of Marines in Nicaragua had no definitive date for ending. Kellogg had rejected a permanent presence, and had expressed opposition to maintaining advisers for anything approaching the recommended twelve year period. Stimson set a date.⁴⁹ Marines would be withdrawn, with or without the defeat of Sandino, following the Presidential election of 1932. This not only applied to Marine combat forces, but to Guardia advisers as well. Marines in Nicaragua were to make immediate preparations to turn over the leadership of the Guardia, and to have the Guardia assume the fight against Sandino.⁴⁴

⁴⁹ Langley, Banana Wars. p. 214.

⁴⁴ Stimson to Hanna, Letter dated February 24, 1931. Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. (Washington, D.C., 1931) Vol.II, pp. 844-845.

In concert with these plans, the new American Minister in Nicaragua, Matthew Hanna, dropped the legation's opposition to supplementing the Guardia forces with an auxiliary, and proposed that the municipal functions of the Guardia be turned over to such forces.⁴⁷ By this time the Guardia had developed a vested interest in the maintenance of these functions, and President Moncada had succeeded in using these forces to arrest and harass political opponents. With Sandino pledging to halt his resistance once the Marines left Nicaragua, the American bargaining position was extremely weak.⁴⁸

The situation was made worse by the fact that the Marines had failed to turn over any senior leadership and staff positions to Nicaraguans. The ranking Nicaraguan Guardia officer was a first lieutenant.⁴⁹ Stimson was adamant on the date for withdrawal and had the full support of the President.

At this point an interesting proposal emerged from the bowels of the State Department. The Marines needed only to locate Nicaraguans with established military credentials, and no political affiliations, and appoint them directly to positions of authority in the Guardia.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Hanna to Stimson, Letter dated April 5, 1931. Ibid. pp.792-793.

⁴⁸ Macaulay, The Sandino Affair. p. 231.

⁴⁹ Laurence Duggan to Ed Wilson Memorandum dated March 7, 1932. National Archives of the United States, General records of the Department of State, records Group 59, file No. 817.1051/612 1/2. Cited in Millett, R., Guardians of the Dynasty. p. 126.,

⁵⁰ White to Hanna, Letter dated April 17, 1932. National Archives of the United States, General Records of the

One can only wonder about the American legation's off the record response. The only way a Nicaraguan acquired extensive military experience was in fighting other Nicaraguans under a party banner. The only way he acquired positions of authority in these party armies was through recruiting his own force and demonstrating political skill. The American mission in Nicaragua could find no senior officer leadership without a strong party affiliation. They sought a compromise.

Colonel Calvin B. Matthews, the Jefe Director of the Guardia, who had replaced Beadle, proposed that a bipartisan list of potential officers be drawn up by the Liberal and Conservative presidential candidates for the 1932 election. The American Minister and the Marine Jefe Director de La Guardia Nacional would select an equal number of officers from both party lists, and this bipartisan senior officer corps would assume control of the Guardia.⁸¹ The Nicaraguans accepted this solution, and the State Department released the plan as a solution to maintaining a nonpartisan force in Nicaragua.⁸²

Department of State, Records Group 59, File No. 817.1051/643.

⁸¹ Kamman, A Search for Stability. p. 209.

⁸² "Agreement Signed on November 5th 1932, Providing for the Maintenance of the Non-Partisan Character of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua." Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. (Washington, D.C., 1932) Vol. V, p. 887.

The Americans turned their attention to finding a leader for the Guardia. With proper leadership the Guardia might maintain its effectiveness, and resist becoming embroiled in domestic politics.

The American Minister, Matthew B. Hanna, had a strong and cordial relationship with the Deputy Foreign Minister of Nicaragua, Anastasio Somoza. Stimson had taken note of Somoza's talents when he had offered assistance in the negotiations at Tipitapa. The unanimous American choice for the position of Jefe Director was Somoza.⁵³

Somoza had been a loyal subordinate of Moncada's in the Liberal Army. Moncada had appointed him to his present position, and Somoza and Moncada were related by marriage. Moncada was going to hesitate on any appointment to this position, but prohibited by the constitution, and the American presence, from seeking reelection in 1932, he expected to have at least some influence in the government if Somoza headed the Guardia.⁵⁴

⁵³ Kamman, A Search for Stability. p.210.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

Elections approached and the Americans began preparations for withdrawal. Fair elections had been held under close United States supervision in 1928, and 1930. Each time implementing the election laws had required a herculean effort on the part of the American armed forces. In the critical election of 1932 the Navy was tasked to supervise the polls. In the midst of the depression, this was an unfinanced mission. After heated debates with the State Department, a minimum cost option was selected.⁵⁵

As in Cuba, the purpose of the election had changed during the course of the intervention. The original intention had been to set in place an electoral process that would permit the exercise of democracy, thus generating legitimate governments responsive to the will of the people and secured from extra legal challenges by a professional nonpartisan apolitical armed force. Upon withdrawal this process was to be sustained by the indigenous political structure, and the results to be accepted by those seeking political power.

⁵⁵ Ibid. p. 212.

Yet, the final election required as much United States involvement and supervision as the first. As in Cuba, the American leadership recognized that its efforts to breed democracy had met with only marginal success. The United States supervised elections in 1932 were not the first steps of a new democracy, but the last steps in the retreat of a defeated American reform effort. With peaceful elections, the United States could declare its mission to be complete, and the future of Nicaragua to be in the hands of its people.

Among others, Anastasio Somoza recognized that the American agenda had changed. The United States was weary of intervention in the Caribbean, and was faced with a major domestic economic crisis. Stability in the region of Central America and the Caribbean was more important than the means for achieving this end. While Somoza probably lacked the ability or the motivation to establish democracy in Nicaragua, the Guardia gave him the means to impose his own variety of stability. He began by ordering Guardia officers to assassinate Augusto Sandino.³⁴

³⁴ Macaulay, The Sandino Affair. pp. 255-256.

CHAPTER 4

ASSESSMENT

This chapter returns to the basic research questions as a frame of reference for further analysis of the United States' military reform efforts in Cuba and Nicaragua.

I: Why did the United States attempt to establish professional armed forces, nonpartisan officer corps, and apolitical military institutions?

In both Cuba and Nicaragua there was a strong American conviction that this type of military was the preferred method for supporting democracy. It was believed that centralized control of professional forces was the effective and efficient enforcement mechanism for the protection of the government.

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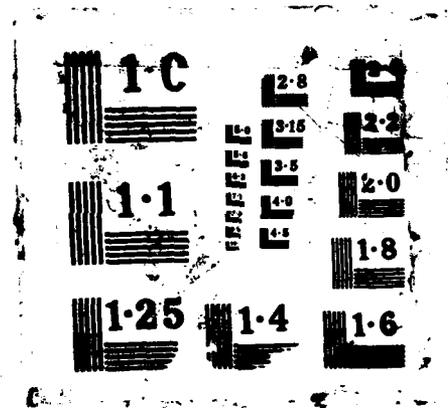
BUILDING ARMIES FOR DEMOCRACY: US ATTEMPTS TO REFORM
THE ARMED FORCES OF CUBA (1906-1909) AND NICARAGUA
(192771933)(U) ARMY COMMAND AND GENERAL STAFF COLL FORT
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In Cuba the Rural Guard expansion was a product of the prior military occupation and Brigadier General Leonard Wood's solution for the maintenance of law and order. In Nicaragua the origins of the concept are found in the evolution of dollar diplomacy, and the Marine Corps experience in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. It is worth noting that neither of the other constabularies created under Marine supervision had been turned over to indigenous control prior to the establishment of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua.¹

In both cases the viability of this approach was questioned, but the officers in charge of implementing the basic organizational reforms were steadfast in their convictions that professional apolitical nonpartisan forces could be built, and that the best structure for these organizations was a centralized national constabulary which would incorporate the functions of both police and defense. Major Herbert J. Slocum staunchly defended Wood's concept of a Rural Guard in Cuba. Lieutenant Colonel Elias R. Beadle, USMC, aligned himself with the American Minister, Mr. Eberhardt, and championed the cause of an apolitical Guardia, even when its feasibility was doubted by his Marine Corps superior, Brigadier General Feland.

¹ Lester Langley, The Banana Wars: An Inner History of American Empire, 1900-1934. (Lexington, Ky.: 1983) p. 217.

In Nicaragua and Cuba, indigenous political leaders challenged these efforts. Yet, in both Cuba and Nicaragua, the establishment of professional apolitical nonpartisan armed forces became United States' policy objectives.

When Secretary of War Taft observed that the Government of Cuba needed more effective means of protection, he did not immediately stipulate what type of force was necessary, but he went on to criticize the Rural Guard for its lack of professionalism and its partisan involvement in the elections of 1905. By 1927, when Colonel Henry L. Stimson negotiated his agreement in Nicaragua, the establishment of apolitical national forces was an accepted part of American policy.

There were at least two questionable assumptions in the arguments which favored professional apolitical nonpartisan constabularies as the exclusive armed forces of these nations: that American military institutions and values could be transferred to these forces, and that such constabularies had proven effective elsewhere.

The United States was attempting to foster democracies with sound fiscal policies, but with limited capabilities for aggression. The traditional militaries of these nations had proven corrupt, and inhospitable to democracy. Therefore, if democracy and a fiscally sound government were going to have a chance at success, a different type of force was required. A professional, nonpartisan, apolitical military served the United States well. Tailored to the internal needs of Cuba and Nicaragua, such forces could do the same for these new republics.

The fact that American military professionalism had taken more than a century to evolve, and that the armed forces of the United States were focused on external threats apparently was not considered. Nor did the concept of military reform take into account the fact that the framers of the American Constitution had taken great pains to diffuse political authority and military power between the states and within the federal structure. Clearly, the possibility that indigenous elites might not necessarily equate forces which were in the interest of the United States with forces which would serve their own interests was also given little attention.

Centralized constabularies seemed to have been effective and served American interests during the occupations of Cuba, the Philippines, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic. However, the fact that such forces had failed previously in both Nicaragua and Cuba, and that the United States had yet to withdraw from the the Philippines, Haiti, or the Dominican Republic seems to have been overlooked.

While there were a number of flaws in the conceptual arguments for such forces, it seems that ultimately these were the only forces conceivable to the planners involved, and perhaps the only type of forces the United States military was prepared to build.

The American officers involved in these reforms may have lacked an appreciation for the political conditions that permitted American military professionalism to develop, but they understood what it took to build sound military organizations. Following both the War with Spain, and the First World War, major military organizational reforms were undertaken in the United States and resulted in significant improvements in the effectiveness and efficiency of American armed forces.² The officers who intervened in Cuba and Nicaragua were professionally primed for creating sound military organizations, regardless of the environment.

² The Root Reforms followed the War with Spain and a comparable set of organization reforms followed when Pershing returned from France. See Alan R. Millett and Peter Maslowski, For The Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America. (New York: The Free Press, 1984) pp. 286-287; and, pp. 365-366.

The United States officers who attempted these reforms did not seem to doubt the validity of the concept of professional nonpartisan apolitical constabularies. They may have bemoaned the lack of political support, and the inadequate time and resources devoted to their missions, but they never challenged the need for sound military organizations, even if they doubted the possibility that they would remain apolitical or nonpartisan.

At the time arguments against these constabulary forces would probably have fallen on deaf ears. This may have been because they ran counter to the views of those attempting to build these forces, but it also seems that such arguments would cast doubt on the viability of American style democracy as a route to stability in these nations. While some may have held this view, it would have been very impolitic to express this position.³

In retrospect, the conceptual basis for military reform may appear faulty. However, regardless of the validity of the concept, at the time, there was at least sufficient consensus to warrant formulation of a strategy for military reform.

³ Alan R. Millett, "Useful Lessons of the Caribbean Interventions." Chapter X, Volume IV, Essays in Some Dimension of Military History. (Carlisle Barracks, Pa., n.d.) p. 156.

II: What plans were made for indigenous military reform and how were they implemented?

Neither of these reform efforts was the product of a lengthy deliberation process. Both were consequences of interventions that the United States would have rather avoided. As a result, planning for the reform of the military organizations and institutions of the nations of Cuba and Nicaragua was at best, concurrent with execution, and at worst, after the fact.

In Cuba, an assessment of the force structure requirements for the reformation of the Rural Guard was made by a War Department board following the deployment of forces to the island.⁴ Their recommendation for a force of 10,000 is credited with starting the Permanent Army debate. Regardless, the Rural Guard advisers deserve credit for moving rapidly and methodically to determine an appropriate size, deployment, and composition for the reformed Rural Guard.

⁴ Alan R. Millett, The Politics of Intervention: The Military Occupation of Cuba, 1906-1909. (Columbus, Oh.: Ohio State University Press, 1968) p. 235

To a lesser extent the same was true in Nicaragua. Working with what best can be described as a benchmark figure of a one million dollar budget, and a fifteen thousand man force, the Marines began building the Guardia.² However, questions of ideal size, deployment, and composition were soon overtaken by the pursuit of Sandino and the efforts of President Moncada to establish his influence over the force.

Regardless, sound organizational plans quickly developed and were closely monitored. What was lacking in both cases was a broader strategic framework within which to fit these organizational reforms.

In Cuba, the void between the broader convictions of Major Slocum, and others, about the correctness and viability of the decision to build a professional, nonpartisan, apolitical constabulary force, and the execution of organizational reforms, was filled by the chaos of the Permanent Army debate. When a compromise emerged in April of 1908, it was too late to build a strategy for much other than a timely departure.

² Richard Millett, Guardians of the Dynasty: A History of the U.S. Created Guardia Nacional De Nicaragua and the Somoza Family. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1977) pp. 54-54.

In Nicaragua, the initial opportunity to develop a sound integrated approach to reform was lost in the bureaucratic infighting over the control of the Marines leading the Guardia. As Sandino's resistance grew, the question of a strategy for military reform was overwhelmed by the need to defeat Sandino. This upset the time table for development of the Guardia, and distorted its other missions.

In the sense of a strategy derived from policy, fit to the political-military situation, and flexible enough to adapt to changes, no plan for reform existed. Those documents labeled as plans were either blue prints for organizational development, or philosophical documents affirming the United States convictions to restore democracy and stability.* The absence of a strategy for reform precluded American military initiatives for the integration of organizational reforms with the political reforms taking place in these nations.

* For an example of each see: Slocum to the Provisional Governor of Cuba, Letter dated 26 February 1907. National Archives of the United States, Records of the Bureau of Insular Affairs, Records Group 350, File No. 866/44; and, "Plan for the Establishment of a Constabulary in Nicaragua, 17 February 1925," Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. (Washington, D.C., 1925) Vol. II, p. 624.

III: What plans were made for institutional reforms that would enable the elected civil authorities to control these new military forces and how were they implemented?

Reform of the Cuban and Nicaraguan political structures and institutions were perceived as necessary to create proper conditions for stability and democracy. In essence, United States political reforms attempted to replicate the political structure of the United States federal system, establish the revenue and fiscal organizations and procedures necessary to sustain a debt free government, and institutionalize elections as the means for selecting political leaders and resolving major political issues.

In order to accomplish these goals the United States planned to revise the constitutions of these nations and codify the procedures necessary for the functioning of government. The bulk of this effort was to be accomplished by American lawyers or political experts who would draft the appropriate laws and regulations for enactment by the indigenous governments.

Certain critical functions were to be overseen by American officials until the procedures for their proper execution were adequately assimilated by the governments of Cuba and Nicaragua. These functions included the receipt and disbursement of customs revenues, the staffing of electoral commissions, and the command of the armed forces.

In the case of military institutions, the actual implementation of this approach to building institutions differed somewhat in Cuba and Nicaragua. In Cuba, the United States established a Provisional Governor who acted as the chief executive throughout the intervention. The leadership of the Rural Guard of Cuba was never composed solely of American officers, but the American advisers were, the *de facto* senior commanders of these forces.

The American Minister in Nicaragua functioned through interim presidents until elections were held, and counted on his immediate access to the President of Nicaragua to advance American interests. The Marine Corps initially provided all officers for the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua, and did not surrender senior company grade, or any field grade or flag positions, until the withdrawal of all advisers in 1933. However, in both cases the reforms followed basically the same pattern as attempts to reform other political institutions.

Procedural reforms were attempted by drafting laws. These documents then had to be approved by the indigenous legislature. In Cuba this task was accomplished by the Advisory Law Commission and, in Nicaragua, by special assistants to the American Minister. Neither the Provisional Governor in Cuba, nor the American Ministers in Nicaragua were reluctant to bring pressure to bear on the legislatures or party leadership to secure the passage of essential legislation. When the system did not respond promptly, or in the manner they expected, they operated under executive decrees.

The customs receiverships were institutions unique to the policy of dollar diplomacy. The fact that these key revenue producing organizations were firmly controlled by United States citizens raised the credit ratings of these nations. United States lenders made loans to these nations contingent upon this control. These functions became institutionalized but were never effectively transferred to Cuban or Nicaraguan control.⁷ Even less successful were attempts at establishing an electoral process.

⁷ Dana G. Munro, The Latin American Republics: A History. (New York: Appleton, 1960.) p. 424.

Electoral reforms played a central role in the United States efforts to build democratic institutions and in the timetable for political reforms in these interventions. The value that the United States placed on voting as the basis for legitimate government is readily evident. What may be less apparent is the role that elections played in validating the success of the interventions, and thus establishing the point at which United States forces could be withdrawn.

Peaceful and free elections were seen as the means for demonstrating that the nations of Cuba and Nicaragua were capable of democracy, and that the governments that the United States left behind were legitimate. Until free and peaceful elections were held the American missions in Cuba and Nicaragua could not be declared successful. Therefore, the United States devoted significant resources to insuring that fair elections were held, even if they could not be replicated after their departure.

The elections of 1906 and 1908 in Cuba, and the elections of 1928, 1930, and 1932 in Nicaragua were, for all intents and purposes, conducted by the United States. As in the case of custom receiverships, the absence of United States supervisors meant the end to the exercise of the procedures which the United States was attempting to institutionalize. The same pattern is readily apparent in the effort to establish apolitical military institutions.

Reams of laws and regulations regarding the Armed Forces of Cuba and Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua were promulgated by the provisional government and the American dominated headquarters of the constabularies. Much of this morass was devoted to setting up the bureaucratic machinery of these armed forces. However, a significant portion addressed the distribution of political power over the armed forces, restricted the political involvement on the part of members of the armed forces, and guaranteed, by law, the autonomy of the military and its insulation from outside political influence.

The Advisory Law Commission in Cuba issued, concurrent with its recommendation for the establishment of a Permanent Army, a Military Code to govern the Armed Forces of Cuba. Great care was taken in drafting documents to distribute the authority over the Rural Guard and the Permanent Army so as to prevent their falling under the political domination of the President, or the exclusive control of either officer corps.

In Nicaragua, the laws governing the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua, faced prolonged debate in the legislature. The Guardia operated under executive order for the better part of Lieutenant Colonel Beadle's tenure as Jefe Director.

The laws adopted for governing the Guardia Nacional of Nicaragua were different from those in Cuba due to the success of since the American advisers in Nicaragua in defeating indigenous efforts to form other military organizations. The Jefe Director of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua reported directly to the President, and aside from bugetary matters the legislature had little control or influence over the selection of officers or the deployment and operation of these forces.

Of course, these systems of control were never exercised during the American presence. American leaders of the military organizations reported to the American Minister in Nicaragua, and the Provisional Governor of Cuba. They also maintained a channel to the senior commander of American forces stationed in these nations. The fate of the planned institutional reforms in both nations is perhaps most clearly illustrated by a Nicaraguan example.

As the Marine Corps departed Nicaragua in 1933, it was on the verge of publishing the regulations governing the Guardia Nacional. The American staff worked feverishly to complete this comprehensive set of rules and instructions prior to their departure. Unable to publish the final document, they left the printing, distribution, and application of these regulations to their Nicaraguan successors. These regulations were never published.⁸ This act of faith and necessity characterized American attempts at generating the procedures necessary for the system of government prescribed in the American drafted constitutions.

The plans for the political control of the armed forces, regardless of their centralization or diffusion, rested upon the successful implementation of the constitutions of these nations. The same was true of the vast majority of political reforms attempted in these nations. The causes for the failure of the electoral systems or other civil political reforms are beyond the scope of this thesis. It suffices to say that the reforms left untouched the political norms of the societies. At best, they changed the rules that local politicians would have to work around in order to avoid incurring the wrath of the United States.

⁸ Millett, R., Guardians of the Dynasty. p. 136.

IV: What were the net results of the attempted military reforms in terms of United States policy goals and objectives?

The final assessment of these results can not be made until the broader goals of the United States interventions are more carefully examined.

This study began with the basic assumption that the establishment of democracy was an American goal for the nations in which the United States intervened. This research indicates that as the interventions developed the political objectives shifted toward attaining stability, and departing with some semblance of order. It appears that the United States, at some point, may have abandoned its attempt to achieve stability through democracy, and settled instead for stability, regardless of the means. This raises the possibility that the success or failure of the military reform efforts may have been measured against the wrong standard.

If the interventions are measured against the standards of stability, and the extent to which the military reforms contributed to the capability of the governments installed by the United States to maintain control over the nations, or at least protect American interests, and preclude the need for intervention by United States troops, then both Nicaraguan and Cuban efforts were successful.

The political leaders of Cuba and Nicaragua found it in their interests to support United States policy in the region until well after the Second World War. American investments in these nations were considered relatively safe, and while not democratic these nations were counted among the United States' staunchest allies.

Some analysts argue that in fact, the United States was predisposed to stability at the cost of democracy, and that the United States military officers who intervened had little patience for politics or the democratic process.⁹ This school of thought suggests that the values of law and order, not democracy, were the underlying principles for the interventions and the attempted reforms. If this is the case, the military organizations, and to some extent the political-military institutions that resulted, were more closely in line with the intentions than has been suggested in this study.

⁹ Langley, Banana Wars. pp. 222-223.

But, this line of reasoning raises several questions. If stability was the end which displaced democracy as a means, what role did the establishment of democratic political institutions play in the plan to generate stability? Were the efforts at constitutional and electoral reforms only charades? Did American military officers scoff at the idea of bringing democracy to these nations and feel that given their history and culture that the best thing for United States interests and the people of these nations were strong benevolent authoritarian leaders?

While in some cases this may have been true, based on the material reviewed for this study, it seems that the United States officer corps did not disdain democracy, nor doubt its value. While some doubted the feasibility of establishing this system of government in the brief time available during the interventions, they did their best to build the professional apolitical nonpartisan forces envisioned at the beginning of each intervention.

The ebb and flow of events surrounding these attempts to build armies for democracies has been detailed in the preceding chapters. Assuming that the United States did in fact intend, in some way, to create apolitical military institutions, nonpartisan officer corps, and professional armed forces, the results of the military reform efforts can be efficiently assessed by gauging success in each of these areas.

Apolitical institutions for the control of the military were created on paper only. It is clear from the emphasis that Governor Magoon, and American Minister Hanna, placed on the selection of the commanders of the reformed forces that they were concerned about the effectiveness of these laws in providing for political control of these forces. In the final judgement they resorted to finding the best men available to try and maintain the efficiency and autonomy of these forces.

The American attempts to create nonpartisan officer corps relied upon the segregation of the Cuban officer corps from the domestic political environment, and resulted in speculation that these officials owed their allegiance more to the United States than to Cuba.¹⁰ Efforts to generate a nonpartisan officer corps in the Rural Guard might have met with success, but when this ceased to be the sole military force in Cuba, the chances for an nonpartisan corps vanished.

¹⁰ Louis A. Perez, Army Politics in Cuba, 1898-1958. (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1981) pp. xv-xvi.

The Marine Corps had developed a bottom up approach to generating its nonpartisan officer corps. Officers were to attend the Nicaraguan Military Academy, and progress through the ranks to positions of higher responsibility.¹¹ At the rate of development set by the Marines, a full corps of officers would have taken at least thirty years to train. In all fairness it should be noted that the Marine effort may have progressed more rapidly had they not had to deal with chasing Sandino.

The progress in professionalism was by no means balanced. Both the Rural Guard, and the Guardia Nacional rapidly acquired the minimum military and bureaucratic expertise necessary to run their respective organizations. The corporateness of the Rural Guard was reduced with its incorporation into the Permanent Army, but both organizations acquired a sense of separateness from society.

The Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua became a very cohesive force, particularly at the small unit level. The junior officer corps developed by the Marines also felt a strong sense of corporateness, and the centralization of political authority over the Guardia further enhanced its bureaucratic autonomy.

¹¹ Denig, Robert L., Major, USMC, "Native Officer Corps, Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua," Marine Corps Gazette. (November, 1932) p. 77.

The advisers of the Rural Guard, and the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua clearly took pride in the units they built, and their disciplined behavior and military demeanor gave the outward appearance of professionalism. What was lacking was a sense of responsibility to constitutional government, or the more abstract idea of society as a client. The sense of responsibility and loyalty generated by the American advisers was of a different variety.

Building on the foundations of personalismo, and continuismo, the American tutelage seems to have developed in these forces an increased sense of personal loyalty to their immediate commanders and leaders. This was not a new phenomena in Latin culture, but its extension to the leadership of an established self-perpetuating military organization was different than establishing the same link between the patron and his peasants. The patrons were not necessarily organized into a hierarchy, and the peasants were not trained in organized violence.

The net result of the American efforts at military reform in Cuba and Nicaragua was a redistribution of political power. Clearly, the military organizations created by the United States interventions had significant potential for political involvement and the civil political institutional reforms, as well as the military institutional reforms, which may have checked or channeled this political power failed to develop in accordance with the American plans.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND CONJECTURES

I: Operational Success and Institutional Failure.

It is readily evident that the United States' attempts at military reform met with limited operational success and virtually complete institutional failure. While effective and efficient organizations were built, the procedures and relationships necessary to provide for their control by duly elected civil authorities did not keep pace with the organizational changes. The net result was a redistribution of political power within Cuba and Nicaragua which left the militaries with a significantly increased capacity for coercion.

The increased effectiveness and efficiency of the military organizations, and therefore their significantly enhanced capacity for political coercion, was most evident in Nicaragua where the Guardia Nacional established a national counterinsurgency infrastructure and a monopoly on armed force. In Cuba, the impact of the centralization of military force was reduced by the dispersal of military power between the Rural Guard, the Permanent Army, and a militia. However, increased size, efficiency, and effectiveness still resulted in a drastic increase in the coercive power available to those who controlled these organizations.

The historical facts that the leaders of these military forces became major political actors in both Cuba and Nicaragua, and that control, or defeat, of these organizations became the sole routes to political power have never been disputed. The critical question is: Why did the military institutions which might have prevented such abuses of power and authority never form?

The failure of the United States Army and Marine Corps programs for building professional nonpartisan officers corps drastically reduced the likelihood that these organizations would submit to civil authority and abstain from partisan politics. Yet, these incomplete internal reforms were only one dimension of the failure to build adequate institutions. Successful political-military reforms which might have resulted in professional, nonpartisan, apolitical militaries were also dependent upon adequate military and civil institutions.

The development of procedures and relationships that might have provided for the exercise of civil authority over these military forces failed in two respects. First, the procedures and relationships which subordinated the military to civil officials were written out in excruciating detail, but never adopted or exercised by the indigenous officials. Second, the American reformers apparently failed to recognize that, ultimately, these military reforms may have been dependent upon the success of political reforms which had to provide stable legitimate civil government.

There were a number of factors that apparently limited the ability of the American advisers to turn the military laws and regulations penned by the legal advisers into functioning procedures and relationships. Some of these obstacles were evident from the beginning of the interventions, others were the results of unexpected changes in the political and military environment. The apparent failure to anticipate several evident and critical problems, and the inability to adapt to the changing political and military environment, can be blamed, in part, on the absence of a sound strategy for military reform.

Some critics of these early attempts at security assistance may feel that debating the strategy of these military reforms is irrelevant since it is readily evident that the political culture of these nations could not adapt to or support the political and military institutions that the United States was attempting to export. While it is clear, in retrospect, that the United States' attempts to build democracies in these nations may have been ill-advised, unrealistic, or overly ambitious, it does not necessarily follow that the political cultures precluded any type of American security assistance or automatically doomed any attempt at military reform to failure. On the other hand, failure to properly consider the political culture, was a major flaw in these intervention strategies.

In the near term, political culture is to the military adviser, as terrain is to the operational commander. It a dominant factor which the imaginative adviser can exploit, but which he can alter only at the margins. In the long term, the political culture is the objective of all major military reforms. The intent is to build military structures and institutions which will become part of the political culture and compliment the form of government that is envisioned for a nation. Obviously, this must be done in such a way that the nation's immediate and future security needs are met.

An adequate strategy for military reform takes into account the political culture. In the course of formulating a plan for military reform, options which are not feasible due to political culture should be eliminated. Many of the officers involved in Cuba and Nicaragua had a reasonable appreciation of the political culture, and in some cases exploited it to achieve the desired organizational reforms.¹ What appears to have been lacking was an approach to military reform which would take the long term impact of changes in military organizations into account. Thus, it seems that in some way the process or our strategic vision of military reform may have been flawed.

¹ An excellent and frequently cited example is H. C. Reisinger advice on leadership of small Nicaraguan units in "La Palabra del Gringo, Leadership in the Nicaraguan National Guard," United States Naval Institute Proceedings. (February, 1935) pp. 215-221.

However, this does not explain why such factors as the time available to accomplish these reforms seems to have been drastically underestimated. The plan for building a Nicaraguan officer corps obviously required a long term presence, which the political authorities of the United States were anxious to avoid. While the fight against Sandino lessened the tolerance of the United States' populace for a Marine presence in Nicaragua, the intent to withdraw the Marines predated the civil war of 1925. Likewise, Secretary of State Kellogg clearly envisioned a temporary presence when the Marines were committed in 1927. Cynics may point to the fact that it was not in the personal or bureaucratic interests of the Marines to leave Nicaragua, but it also appears that there was a failure to integrate the plans for military reform with the political objectives and limitations on the intervention.²

² Marines serving in the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua received double pay. They were paid in their regular marine grade by the United States and in their rank of appointment in the Guardia by the Nicaraguan Government. It has also been observed that, by maintaining a committed deployed force, the Marine Corps avoided cuts in their strength during the inter war years.

In Cuba there are indications of the same problem. Plans to build the Rural Guard proceeded independent of the political realities of the second intervention. Fixed on a concept that was clearly unacceptable to the Cuban political elites, and lacked the support of the American administration, Major Slocum and his advisers doggedly pursued the expansion of the Rural Guard. While they may have been right regarding the consequences of forming a Permanent Army, there was no reason to believe that their reforms would not have resulted in a force similar to the Guardia Nacional of Nicaragua.

What is apparent is that with limited time available they resisted attempts at compromise by the Provisional Governor, and ignored the political factors that developed. Obviously, they saw the implementation of their plan to rebuild the Rural Guard as independent from the political environment. This is perhaps the crux of the problem regarding the failure of institutional reforms.

Clearly, the existence of a shadow American chain of authority for the military forces in Cuba and Nicaragua precluded the exercise of the channels of civil authority prescribed in the laws and regulations that the Cuban and Nicaraguan were expected to follow after the American departure. Likewise, the resistance of the indigenous political elites can not be disregarded. However, the failure to develop an adequate strategy, and properly interpret the resistance of the political elites to these organizational and military institutional reforms raises the possibility that there was a major blind spot in the planning and implementation of these attempts at a military reform.

Many analysts have pointed to the failure of military reforms as a cause for the failure of democracy in these nations. The possibility exists that the inverse is also true. The military reforms appear to have been dependent upon successful political institutional reform. The failure to appreciate this reciprocal relationship would explain most of the oversights in the American approach to reform, offer a possible explanation for why the organizational and institutional reforms came to be so far out of balance, and shed a different light on the resistance offered by the indigenous political elites.

There is little question that to accomplish the reforms envisioned by the United States, the active support of the political elites of Cuba and Nicaragua was required. There is no question, that in the case of military reforms, United States' initiatives were accepted reluctantly, circumvented where possible, and in some cases, effectively and openly defeated. While the United States military officers attempting the reforms viewed this resistance a politically self-serving and irresponsible, this behavior also represented the gap that had grown between the military reforms that were attempted and the political reforms that were necessary if long term change was to take place.

The political leaders of Cuba and Nicaragua were not irrational. They operated in accordance with the established political norms of their societies, and according to the procedures and relationships of their systems of government. If anything, these individuals were the epitome of political pragmatism.

The fact that their behaviors were self serving is irrelevant. Self martyrdom is a phenomenon associated with revolution, not reform. What is important is that their behavior, when they were not being coerced by United States officials, was tangible evidence of the extent to which institutional reform had progressed. Their unwillingness to accept an agenda for military reform should have alerted the American advisers that they had reached the practical limits of institutional change.

In the final analysis these leaders were the embodiment of the political institutions of these nations. Failure to recognize that the envisioned military institutional reforms were dependent on political reforms which may have been beyond the capacity of the existing political institutions may have been the fatal flaw in the American attempts at military reform.

II: Implications for Strategies of Military Reform.

If in fact there is a reciprocal relationship between civil political reform and military institutional reform two strategic lessons can be drawn from these experiences. First, to some extent military political development must precede military reform. The formation of military organizations redistributes political power. Unless political institutions are prepared to accept this redistribution, and the military institutions are in place to provide for control of this power, the possibility exists that power will be redistributed in accordance with established institutions or captured by political actors outside the envisioned political system.

Cuba and Nicaragua were cases where the United States attempted concurrent programs of political and military reform. These cases strongly suggest that more than a conceptual linkage between reform programs must exist. If there is a reciprocal relationship between political and military institutional reforms, these programs can not proceed independently as they appear to have in these cases. A coherent strategy for integrating these programs must exist. The absence of a strategy and the mechanisms for integrating military and political reforms will drastically increase the risk of failure.

Regardless of the direction of the relationship between the political and military elements of institutional reform it is readily evident that a strategy for military reform must take into account more than the building of military organizations or the pursuit of insurgents. Aside from the fact that there are political externalities to the building of military organizations, the strategies for military reform must take into account the certainty that the political environment is dynamic, and that ultimately the long term objective of military reform is an adjustment in the political culture of the nation. A military reform strategy limited to building organizations or impervious to political factors also seems doomed to fail.

III: Implications for Policy.

To suggest that these historical lessons have implications for current policy implies that current efforts at political and military reform in Latin America are similar to those in the past and are being attempted under comparable conditions. This may or may not be the case. However, it is clear that the United States is still pursuing democracy as a route to political stability in the region and that American security assistance efforts are directed toward these objective. Likewise, it is clear that the United States reform efforts in the nations of Central America are employing a strategy of concurrent development of military and political institutions while engaged in active counterinsurgency campaigns.

If the conditions are comparable, it seems that the policy makers of today would benefit from asking two questions which appear to have been overlooked in Cuba and Nicaragua:

To what extent are the military reforms envisioned by the United States dependent upon the development of successful and appropriate political institutions?

What is at risk if the military organizational reforms succeed and the democratic political reforms fail?

It may be that the lessons of history have little or no applicability to today's situations. However, today it seems that the United States may have much more at risk. Cuba and Nicaragua are clear examples of the possible consequences of military reform efforts which are not kept in balance by the development of appropriate institutions. Can the United States afford to ignore the possible implications for the freedom of nations and its vital interests should another series of military reforms fail?

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