

Wars of Civilization: The US Army Contemplates Wounded Knee, the Pullman Strike, and the Philippine Insurrection

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Abstract

This article explores the military history that links federal suppression of the Pullman Strike in 1894 to the massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890 and the US conquest of the Philippines in 1899–1903. Military men expressed remarkably similar understandings of their targets in the three campaigns, and in each case they paired condemnations of the enemy with many of the same positive stereotypes of soldiers like themselves. Analysis of this imagery offers new perspectives on the US Army's role in imperial projects as well as state action against labor. If strikers resembled unruly colonial subjects in the military mind, the reverse also held true; and soldiers' self-representations reveal that their goals did not necessarily match the state's agenda.

In August 1894, as the Pullman Strike gave up the ghost, General Nelson Miles of the US Army explained to readers of *The North American Review* why they should feel grateful that federal troops had mobilized against the strikers. President Grover Cleveland, Attorney General Richard Olney, and other civilian defenders of the Army's intervention argued the legalities, insisting that law obliged the government to put down insurrection, ensure the timely delivery of mail, protect rail lines chartered as military roads, and back up US attorneys and marshals who called for help in the enforcement of federal statutes and injunctions. For Miles, the issues were vastly larger and simpler. The strike was but the latest battle in an ongoing "war of civilization" that pitted good against evil. Interruptions of railroad commerce were inherently wicked in that they brought "famine, pestilence, and death" to otherwise happy, prosperous communities. The Pullman strikers had committed additional sins, destroying property, cursing the government, wearing white ribbons to express "allegiance to their dictator, Eugene V. Debs," and preventing loyal workers from doing their jobs. These crimes obliged government at all levels to respond with armed force, and ordinary citizens had their own role to play. The time had come for "American manhood to assert its principles" and cheer the Army's deployment against a strike that had threatened to "blow down the beautiful arch of our sovereignty—the hope of humanity, the citadel of liberty, independence, the temple of happiness for all mankind."¹

The grandiloquence had a defensive ring. A Civil War hero whose uncles-in-law included General William Tecumseh Sherman and US Senator John Sherman, Miles could find welcome in the nation's finest homes. Still he

must have recognized that military men no longer commanded the esteem they had enjoyed during the war, when the US Army had enlisted well over two million civilians and the communities they left behind had enthusiastically celebrated the “boys in blue.” After the war the Army lost ground, both politically and in public opinion. Congress initially set the peacetime Army’s size at 54,000, then steadily reduced it until, by the mid-1870s, it stood at half that number, where it remained for the next twenty years. The Army’s reputation diminished too. During Reconstruction, conservatives in the North and South alike vilified troops stationed in former Confederate states; humanitarians took aim at those who went west to protect transcontinental railroads and suppress American Indians; and William Belknap, a former brigadier general who served as President Grant’s secretary of war, resigned in disgrace when it came to light that he took bribes from the merchants he appointed to trade at military posts. By 1877, when military action against the national railroad strike further offended working-class communities, multitudes of Americans had already concluded that the Army so beloved during the Civil War was now merely a band of ruffians—“bummers” and “loafers,” to quote the *New York Sun*—who drained the national treasury and returned virtually nothing in the way of useful service to the republic.²

In 1883, a military man complained in *Army and Navy Journal* that “The people at large seem to think the Army composed of fugitives from justice, and whenever they hear that a neighbor’s son has enlisted, break into ejaculations of pious horror.” Actually, he countered, the Army attracted men a cut above the norm—men unhappy “with the selfish ideas prevalent in civil life.” This claim contained some truth. Although most US troops in this period never engaged in combat, even on the “Indian frontier,” barracks life did create an esprit de corps that encouraged exceptional generosity to fellow soldiers, at least among enlisted men. But no honest judge would have deemed them or their commanders the most respectable examples of the civilization they represented. The Army’s rank and file—25,000 enlisted men, mostly assigned to posts west of the Mississippi—had generally signed up for lack of alternatives. About half of them were immigrants from Ireland, Germany, or elsewhere in Europe. Whereas state militias included a good many professionals and craftsmen, the federal troops had seldom received much education or mastered skilled crafts. Their conditions as soldiers were unenviable to say the least. For pay that ranged from thirteen dollars a month for green privates to twenty-two dollars for well-seasoned sergeants, they rose at 5:30 to the sound of reveille and typically devoted the better part of the day to what the Army called “fatigue duty”—all of the work required to construct and maintain military installations. Anyone who shirked or resisted risked time in the stockade, reduction or suspension of wages, and physical punishments, such as marching to exhaustion or confinement to a sweatbox—no longer allowed by Army regulations but continued by officers. No wonder, then, that annual turnover among enlisted men in the late nineteenth century never fell below twenty-five percent and sometimes climbed much higher. They normally exited the Army as soon as

their three-year terms of enlistment ended, and quite a few left earlier. In 1891, Army headquarters calculated that of the 255,712 new recruits who had joined the Army since 1867, fully one-third had become deserters.³

That some stayed on for multiple enlistments testifies to certain attractions of Army life. An ambitious private could work his way up to corporal and then sergeant if he followed orders and kept his nose clean. That was more advancement than civilian life commonly offered. More important, perhaps, Army life made more room for fun. Soldiers played as hard as they worked. After 1881, post canteens no longer sold hard liquor, but they still furnished beer and wine, and the “hog ranches” that sprang up near every military post offered a menu of pleasures that included gambling and sex as well as spirits. On post, no one much cared if an enlisted man began every day with a shot of whiskey, visited prostitutes on a regular basis, or gambled away his monthly pay. No one gossiped if he contracted a venereal disease, the most common ailment that Army physicians treated. For the most part, a frontier post belonged to bachelors—only a few, very high-ranking officers occupied quarters that could accommodate families—and post mores reflected the proclivities of young, single men. While temperance societies, reading rooms, and amateur theatricals flourished in a few of the larger installations, those with a critical mass of officers’ ladies, soldiers’ leisure revolved first and foremost around cards, billiards, alcohol, prostitution, hunting, horse-racing, and like pursuits. Within the framework of Gilded Age culture’s bifurcation of rough and respectable, enlisted men were unambiguously rough.⁴

Members of the officer corps—about 2,000 strong in the mid-1890s—could claim respectability by virtue of rank, education, or family connections, but the war heroes were increasingly few and the others were no less self-seeking than managers of civilian enterprises. Immediately following the Civil War, the officer corps belonged almost entirely to men whose achievements on battlefields had propelled them up through the ranks. By the 1890s, however, the war veterans were well outnumbered by West Point graduates with no combat experience. Ambitious and well educated in engineering and military strategy and tactics, West Pointers entered the Army expecting to move up; but officers won promotion strictly by seniority, so a go-getter often found his career path blocked by old timers who declined to retire. Some of the men thus thwarted simply settled into life on the frontier posts, working less strenuously than enlisted men, enjoying equally rough leisure pastimes, and earning vastly higher pay—\$1,500 to \$2,000 a year. Others kept trying to get ahead, scheming and competing like mad to ingratiate themselves to generals, members of Congress, or anyone else who could arrange for an officer’s special appointment to one of the Army’s staff positions in Washington, DC. This unseemly scramble gave civilians yet another reason to doubt the superiority of military men.⁵

To the degree that it had caught their attention at all, then, the Army that intervened in the Pullman strike had not favorably impressed most outsiders. Like good military strategists, however, its public champions favored an aggressive defense. Though not all of them could match General Miles for hyperbole,

military men and their spokespeople produced a fairly large body of literature—fiction, journalism, and official reports—that portrayed the Army as the only reliable force standing between civilization and the abyss.

Frederic Remington—famous for his work as a reporter and illustrator embedded with the US Army on the frontier—covered the strike in Chicago, where Miles commanded federal forces. In Remington's dispatches to *Harper's Weekly*, "tall, bronzed young athletes" from the Seventh US Cavalry stopped a "malodorous crowd of anarchistic foreign trash" from committing a "rape of government." The soldiers displayed uncommon courage and pride—traits in short supply among civilians. A "hopelessly brave" lieutenant armed with just one handgun refused to back down when he found himself alone face to face with a mob. A sentry begged for permission to fight a mob with his bare fists, promising first to strip off his uniform so that he would not disgrace it. Although many of Chicago's "American workmen" secretly opposed the strike and despised the "violent foreigners" fomenting riots, they dared not take a stand. Only when the troops finally withdrew from the immigrant city and entered "the United States of America proper" did they receive the ovations they so thoroughly deserved.⁶

The Pullman strike also seized the imagination of Captain Charles King, a retired cavalryman who produced dozens of popular novels about military life. In 1895 he treated readers of *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* to "A Tame Surrender: A Story of the Chicago Strike," issued as a book the following year. In King's Chicago, the Army's most remarkable trait was self-restraint in the face of ferocious provocation. "Calm, grim and silent, conscious of their power, merciful in their strength, superb in their disdain of insult, their contempt of danger," the troops refused to respond when "maddened men showered the ranks with mud and gravel" and "slatternly, foul-mouthed women—vile, unclean harpies of the slums—dipped their brooms into the reeking gutters and slashed their filth into the soldierly faces."⁷

In a report to the secretary of war that was also released to the press, Major General John Schofield, commander of the US Army, carried King's theme to its logical conclusion with regard to federal policy. The Army's "prompt and vigorous action" and "great forbearance . . . when subjected to all sorts of insults and indignities" proved that federal troops were the most effective enforcers of federal law. To meet the nation's needs in an era of industrial strife, Congress should fund the Army's expansion, so that more troops could be assigned to patrol railroad lines and protect industrial centers. In an article in *The North American Review*, Brigadier General George Ruggles, Schofield's adjutant and the Army's day-to-day administrator, put the number of enlisted men needed at 30,000—5,000 more than had been at commanders' disposal during the Pullman Strike.⁸

In less public venues as well, military men defined the strike as a deadly threat to the nation and themselves as the force best equipped to meet the threat. When commanders of the Army's various geographical departments sent Ruggles their reports for 1894, especially dramatic accounts came in from

Rocky Mountain states and the Pacific Northwest, where the strike followed close on the heels of train seizures by unemployed miners inspired by Jacob Coxey's call for a march on Washington, DC. General Wesley Merritt, commander of the Department of Dakota, described Montana towns in which "idleness, viciousness, and lawlessness" ran rampant; disputes were settled with gunfights, fisticuffs, and dynamite; upstanding citizens kept their mouths shut for fear of reprisal; and elected officials declined to act because they "depend[ed] on the suffrage of the less law abiding." Only the US Army could redeem such communities. Equally dire conditions prevailed in Idaho's mining towns, according to General Elwell Otis of the Department of the Columbia, and there too only the Army could save the day. General Thomas Ruger of the Department of California furnished the sole report that federal troops had opened fire on the strikers, and he no less than other commanders praised his men for efficiency, calm, and prevention of "serious bloodshed." As Ruger made clear, no soldier used his rifle until after July 11, when strikers in Sacramento derailed a train protected by a detachment from the Fifth US Artillery, instantly killing the engineer and three artillerymen. Two days later, members of the Fifth killed one striker as they fired into a Sacramento crowd that had commenced "throwing missiles." Otherwise, federal troops in California and elsewhere broke the strike with sabers and bayonets rather than firearms, though General Merritt thought it wise to develop tactics for the deployment of machine guns the next time federal soldiers mobilized against strikers.⁹

Army and Navy Journal, a weekly in which military men discussed things among themselves, treated the Pullman Strike as a glorious test of the Army's mettle. Numerous correspondents testified that state troops and local police had failed to meet the challenge because they sympathized with the strikers or were simply inept. It seemed risky, moreover, to rely on deputy marshals like the men hastily recruited—in some cases virtually press-ganged—by the US Department of Justice. As the *Journal's* editors observed, "the dignity of the United States may be brought into contempt when the attempt is made to enforce the process of the courts by men picked up on the streets at \$2.50 a day." Federal troops, on the other hand, were made of the right stuff. Just days into their deployment, the *Journal* declared:

We have long believed that the forces of disorder were gathering their strength for a death struggle with Law; with the conservative and orderly methods, beyond whose limitations is not freedom, but anarchy. Never doubting the result, we have been equally sure that it could only come through the ultimate assertion of military authority. The event is showing that for a contest in any way national in its character, or involving class disputes which divide communities, we have but one sure reliance, and that is the Army.

Given the high stakes, it was "almost like subornation of treason" to oppose military intervention in the strike.¹⁰

Although labor historians have not looked closely at military discourse on the Pullman strike, views like those offered by Nelson Miles, Charles King, and the editors of *Army and Navy Journal* can scarcely surprise us. The melodrama of heroes squaring off against villains has a familiar ring to anyone who has read the labor press's coverage of the strike or narrative histories based on that coverage. That military men believed civilization hung in the balance fits neatly with analytic histories that link the strike to the "crisis of the 1890s," whether that crisis is defined as the tragic death of labor republicanism or the auspicious birth of a new American liberalism that would come of age in the Progressive Era. New perspectives do emerge, however, if we situate the Pullman strike's suppression within the larger history of federal military mobilizations in the 1890s, which began with the "Sioux War" that climaxed with the massacre at Wounded Knee and ended with US troops fighting to colonize the Philippines.¹¹

Some regiments, such as the Sixth US Cavalry and Seventeenth US Infantry, took part in all three campaigns, and quite a few units or commanders served in more than one. The Seventh Cavalry that so captivated Frederic Remington in Chicago also perpetrated the bloodbath at Wounded Knee. Nelson Miles was the Seventh's commanding general in both cases, and several other regiments under his command in the Sioux War later did strike duty in Chicago. Almost all of the units that mobilized against the Pullman strike would eventually make their way to the Philippines, where Wesley Merritt and Elwell Otis both served stints as military governor.

The records that these men and their comrades left behind reveal remarkable continuities in their attitudes toward the US Army's targets in the Sioux War, the Pullman Strike, and the Philippines. Sometimes they drew explicit comparisons. Stationed in Chicago for the duration of the Pullman strike, an Army surgeon who had earlier served in the Sioux War predicted that Nelson Miles would end the deployment with a grand review of the troops to "let these Chicago *indians*, see what a 'heap' of soldiers our big chief Cleveland can send into the field." Charles King, who came out of retirement to serve in the Philippines, wrote of Filipinos' "Indian-like skill in concealment." US troops in the Philippines called the people they killed "good Filipinos," just as they called dead Native Americans "good Indians."¹²

Civilians drew similar comparisons. Michael Schaack, a Chicago police captain who rose to national fame in connection with the Haymarket bombing and trial, referred to anarchist women as "squaws" and their street protests as "war dances." Chicago's anarchists meanwhile celebrated Indians as heroic resisters of capitalism. Railroad managers labeled disruptive workers as examples of the "Digger Indian white man." A Methodist missionary, Bishop James Thoburn, who thought a divine hand had led the United States to colonize the Philippines, testified before the Senate that Filipinos, "like our American Indians," lacked the "cohesion" necessary for self-government. Defending against critics of the Philippines campaign, Teddy Roosevelt retorted, "Every argument that can be made for the Filipinos could be made for the Apaches; every word that can be said of Aguinaldo could be

said for Sitting Bull.” Variations on these themes included the complaint by US Senator Henry Dawes that Indian values too closely resembled those of radical labor. “They have got as far as they can go,” he charged, “because they own their land in common. It is Henry George’s system and under that there is no enterprise to make your home any better than that of your neighbors.” Like Roosevelt, anti-imperialists equated Filipinos with Indians, though they reached an entirely different conclusion. To quote the Anti-Imperialist League: “That we have dealt unjustly with the Indians . . . cannot justify our attempt to compel millions of human beings to submit unconditionally to our rule.” In short, civilians of various political shades associated Indians, unruly workers, and Filipino insurgents.¹³

It seems doubtful, however, that the Army simply borrowed such comparisons from the civilian press. Not even the officers were avid readers. “Only a few read or studied,” a retired general recalled. The older men ridiculed reading; to them, “book learning was as nothing compared to experience of war.” The younger set that “graduated from the treadmill of West Point” now “hated the sight of a book.” This perhaps explains why civilian images of Indians, workers, and Filipinos only dimly resembled military discourse, which lumped them together in less explicit and more self-referential ways. Applying the same negative stereotypes to one and all who resisted the Army’s agenda, military men consistently paired condemnations of enemies with veneration of soldiers. This essay explores such imagery, asking what it discloses about the mechanisms of state control of workers and colonial subjects.¹⁴

Keeping the Peace

The considerate, merciful troops found in the Army’s reports on the Pullman Strike were stock figures in military discourse, and it was not just martial discipline that made them so peaceable. Military writers depicted them as inherently kindhearted, fighting only to defend the weak, preserve the peace, and champion republican ideals—in stark contrast to strikers and other malcontents who menaced the common good. Men who joined the Army, General Schofield insisted, were “not the kind of men who participate in the operations of a lawless mob.” Charles King described soldiers as remarkably diverse in personality, experience, and background “but unanimous in one trait,—no meanness could live among them.”¹⁵

So fixed was this stereotype of the benevolent soldier that it even withstood the massacre at Wounded Knee. A key component of the Army’s version of this incident was the myth of the “Sioux War” of 1890-1891, which was in fact not a war at all but a one-sided campaign to stop Lakotas from taking part in a religious revival that swept across Native American communities from the Southwest to the Great Plains. The revival’s central ritual—the Ghost Dance—summoned ancestral spirits to help restore ways of life that colonization had destroyed. When this movement reached the Dakotas in fall 1890, local agents of the Office of Indian Affairs did all they could to suppress it,

and thousands of Lakotas left reservations to form Ghost Dance circles beyond the OIA's reach. By late November, when the Army arrived to push them back onto reservations, they had already begun to return on their own, for food was scarce and the frigid Dakota winter was closing in. As of mid-December, some 16,000 Lakotas were on reservations, and the holdouts numbered no more than 700, including children, women, and the elderly—yet the Army treated these “hostiles” as a huge threat. Nelson Miles, the commanding general, had summoned over 8,000 troops to the Dakotas and was calling for still more. Although it seems possible that he overreacted in order to make a case for the Army's expansion, a more likely explanation lies in the Army's earlier defeat at Lakotas' hands at the Battle of the Little Bighorn in June 1876, in which five companies of the Seventh US Cavalry had been wiped out. Miles preferred not to fight the Lakotas in 1890, and he certainly did not wish to risk even a small defeat. The massive show of force would presumably make it unnecessary to fire a single shot. Or, as Frederic Remington later put it, Miles “spoiled the Sioux War” by gathering so many troops that the enemy declined to fight.¹⁶

Against this backdrop, Lakotas led by the chief Big Foot surrendered themselves to troops from the Seventh Cavalry. On their way to the nearest reservations, they camped for the night at Wounded Knee Creek—about 500 soldiers and 400 Lakotas (no more than 135 of them males of fighting age). The next morning, December 29, 1890, Colonel James Forsyth insisted that his captives disarm and a detail of troops went into the Lakotas' encampment to search for rifles. When someone fired a shot, all hell broke loose, the soldiers shooting wildly, hitting one another as well as Lakotas, and artillerymen using their 42 mm Hotchkiss guns with a range of more than 2,000 yards. In the words of one witness, a brigadier general from the Nebraska National Guard, “the battle became really a hunt on the part of the soldiers, the purpose being total extermination. All order and tactics were abandoned, the object being solely to kill Indians, regardless of age or sex. The battle was ended only when not a single live Indian was in sight.” Investigators counted about 100 survivors; all others were either confirmed dead or never found.¹⁷

In the story that the Army told, and doubtless believed, Ghost Dancers had been warming up for a bloody war on white settlers; Big Foot's people, “crazed by religious fanaticism,” had plotted a sneak attack on the Seventh Cavalry; and the troops had grimly, almost reluctantly, fought back, making every reasonable effort to spare women and children. The incident at Wounded Knee was not, then, a massacre but a battle in which the Army had paid a high price—twenty-five men killed, thirty-nine wounded—to save defenseless settlers from “[m]urder and assassination.” Any soldier plagued by shame or guilt could find comfort in the pages of *Army and Navy Journal*, which reprinted a military chaplain's sermon in defense of the Seventh: “The facts show that the troops acted with consummate skill and wisdom. The officers commanding these troops are gentlemen, humane and tender in all their instincts, unusually refined and cultured, the farthest removed from cruelty and inhumanity.”¹⁸

Although the Army did investigate—very briefly—no soldier was convicted of misconduct at Wounded Knee. In fact, dozens of men received commendations for their actions, including twenty Congressional Medals of Honor. Colonel Forsyth, temporarily relieved of his command, was soon reinstated and later promoted to the rank of general. In 1911, looking back on a life devoted to “serving the republic,” Nelson Miles celebrated the outcome of the Sioux War of 1890-1891: “Those prairies would see a new civilization, happy homes, prosperous communities, and great States; and the sound of the merry bells of industrial activity and the music of progress were to take the place of the war-cry and the echoes of alarm and danger.” Even the Indians, he added, now enjoyed “the benefits of a life of civilization.”¹⁹

In the Philippines, too, the Army defined its mission as pacification of a violent land. Initially, the villain of this piece was Spain; American soldiers congratulated themselves for liberating Filipinos from the savagery of Spanish colonialism. That narrative could not endure for long, however, because it left out the very salient fact that Filipinos had launched their own war for liberation well before Americans arrived in May 1898. Briefly, Filipino and US forces made common cause against the Spanish, the Americans generally portraying their allies as lackadaisical soldiers—poor shots with ragged uniforms and too little ammunition and gumption to get much done. Then, starting in February 1899, Filipinos and Americans fought each other, and the careless native soldier gave way to an entirely different stereotype: the sadistic and lethal insurgent, anxious to use his gigantic bolo knife on the nearest American. As the war dragged on—although the United States declared a victory in July 1902, fighting continued for another eleven years—the American military stopped distinguishing between *insurrectos* and *ladrones*, fighters for independence and marauding bands of robbers. Eventually, virtually all Filipinos seemed suspect; those not actively helping the US military must be helping the insurgents—and even apparent friends might turn out to be murderous enemies. “They need watching all the time,” wrote Yellowstone Kelly, a famous Army scout and frontiersman who went to the Philippines as an officer of the Fortieth US Volunteers. “At our outpost troops of men, women and children are daily searched to prevent smuggling to the *insurrectos*.”²⁰

The counterinsurgency that Army spokesmen described was unavoidable and fundamentally defensive and altruistic—never aggressive or self-interested. Such assertions rested on certain stereotypes of the enemy, defined only as *insurrectos*, never *independistas*. Military governor Elwell Otis insisted that insurgents were motivated by bloodlust more than patriotism. “Independence was the cry,” he reported, “and the extermination of the Americans the determination.” Otis and other US commanders also charged insurgents with terrorizing their countrymen, spreading false rumors of American cruelty, and fighting in devious, unmanly ways—disguising themselves as friendly civilians, for example, and recruiting women and children to assist in sneak attacks. Worst of all, perhaps, they kept fighting even after it was clear that they could not

expel US troops from the Philippines. That perseverance, which the Army would have found admirable in itself, looked like savagery in its enemy. The *insurrectos* in Charles King's fiction about the Philippines were "fanatical natives to whom the taking of human life was of less account than the loss of a game chicken."²¹

Within this framework, brutalities committed by American forces seemed inconsequential, justified, or even beneficent. The "water cure," in which water was forced into a victim's stomach until he divulged whatever secrets he possessed; the destruction of villages, burning of crops, and killing of livestock; the roundup of more than 300,000 noncombatants into concentration zones; summary executions of suspected *insurrectos*: all of this fell under the heading of "pacification." After close consultations with military officials, Edgar Bellairs of the Associated Press doubted that "ever a campaign of such a nature was conducted with so much kindness and humanity." *Army and Navy Journal* vigorously agreed.²²

Unsurprisingly, racism loomed very large in the culture that spawned and rationalized tactics like the "water cure." US troops habitually applied racial epithets to Filipinos and ascribed to them a host of inborn traits that rendered them white men's inferiors and made it imperative that Americans fight—if necessary, die—to save the Philippines from Filipinos. Rudyard Kipling captured that world view in the opening lines of his poem "The White Man's Burden," published in February 1899 as the US Army went to war with the insurgents:

Take up the White Man's burden—
Send forth the best ye breed—
Go bind your sons to exile
To serve your captives' need.

What critics regarded as cruelty looked like sacrifice to the military mind. In June 1902, Mary Gay Humphreys, a journalist who served as a war nurse in the Philippines, published an essay titled "Filipino Torture of American Soldiers," an indignant response to the US Senate's investigation of the Army's mistreatment of Filipinos. If Americans could only know the truth, she insisted, they "would throb with sympathy for the lot of the army," not the irredeemably cruel race it confronted in this war.²³

Official apologists for the Army's tactics in the Philippines reasoned along somewhat different lines, appealing less to racism per se than to republican ideals. In testimony before the Senate, Major-General Arthur MacArthur, Elwell Otis's successor as military governor of the islands, defined the war as an effort to propagate "our conception of right, justice, freedom, and personal liberty"—principles that the United States "held in trust for the general benefit of mankind." And the war's humane motives, he added, had a profound impact on its conduct: "I doubt if any war—either international or civil, any war on earth—has been conducted with as much humanity, with as much careful

consideration, with as much self-restraint, in view of the character of our adversary, as have been the American operations in the Philippine Archipelago.” That vision reached its logical conclusion when President Theodore Roosevelt likened the Philippines campaign to the Civil War. In August 1902, a month after he celebrated the Fourth of July by declaring victory in the Philippines, Roosevelt visited a reunion of the Grand Army of the Republic to tell 3,000 Civil War veterans that US soldiers in the Philippines—“your sons and your successors”—had picked up the G.A.R.’s torch: “They claim their share in your glory by inheritance and . . . have added new lustre to that glory,” even if a few had yielded to the urge “to retaliate for the fearful cruelties of a savage foe.”²⁴

The Civil War likewise figured in apologies for the massacre at Wounded Knee. A cavalry sergeant who had not himself served in the “Sioux War” but certainly sympathized with those who had, complained in *Army and Navy Journal* that “when during the war a few Rebs were killed there arose no outcry of a massacre, but everybody felt that no war could be carried on, no rebellion quelled without bloodshed. But if some soldiers, in actual self-defense and stringent necessity, kills a few Indians a great outcry passes through the land about the cruelty of the soldiery.” Public memory of the nineteenth century’s “good war” might help to reestablish the troops as heroes.²⁵

It was in the context of the Pullman strike, however, that military men most often invoked the Civil War—not as a fight for justice or freedom, but as a defense of lawful government against insurrection. *Army and Navy Journal* covered the strike extensively but never called it by that name, referring instead to a “rebellion.” In testimony before the federal commission that investigated the strike, Nelson Miles at least admitted that a labor dispute had occurred; but he also insisted that “The military had nothing whatever to do with the strike.” It had simply put down “opposition to the federal government.” In Charles King’s novel about the Pullman strike, an anarchist challenged the constitutionality of the Army’s mobilization and a Civil War veteran retorted: “Those identical words were addressed to me by an irate gentleman in Virginia in ’62.”²⁶

There were, of course, counterclaims to the Civil War’s legacy. The Pullman strikers and their supporters included veterans of that war, who pinned G.A.R. buttons next to their white ribbons. The labor poet T.C. Walsh described the strike’s suppression as an affront to “the starry flag . . . floating o’er the land that knows no slave.” Appeals to republican values—freedom, equality, the sacred right of the oppressed to emancipate themselves—suffused unionists’ commentary on the strike. From the Army’s standpoint, however, only military men could accurately determine a war’s meaning, and what the Civil War meant with respect to the Pullman Strike was that federal authority must prevail. In mid-July 1894, as the strike wound down in Chicago and intensified in the West, *Army and Navy Journal* confidently told its readers that military intervention had won the support of “all who love liberty, and who realize the impossibility of securing liberty without order.”²⁷

The Labor Question

In the well-ordered world, each person had a job to do on behalf of civilization's advancement, and one of the things that united Indians, strikers, and *insurrectos* in the military mind was that all fell down on that job. Soldiers, on the other hand, received praise for conscientious work, the laborious nature of their service a central theme of military discourse. Tales of heroism and gallantry competed with descriptions of the decidedly unglamorous chores troops performed—driving mules, toting supplies, erecting camps—and the discomfort and deprivation they endured along the way. Even off the battlefield, soldiering could be as dangerous as it was grueling. In July 1894 four enlisted men were killed and a dozen more injured when a caisson exploded amid a parade of regiments on strike duty in Chicago. In the Philippines, many more US troops died of cholera than in battle. If soldiers resented their own poor working conditions, they resented more deeply the shirking and sabotage attributed to their foe.²⁸

Two themes dominated military discussion of soldiers' labor: that it was incomparably difficult and that it was performed with incomparable diligence and skill. Sometimes these claims were merely reactions to criticism of the Army. As news of Wounded Knee touched off a firestorm of protest, General Nelson Miles wrote in *The North American Review* that

No one who has not experienced it can comprehend or appreciate the fortitude, hardships, and sacrifices displayed by our army in its years of experience in Indian warfare; frequently in the wildest and most rugged sections of the country, amid cañons, mountains, and lava-beds, under the tropical heats of the south, or in the Arctic blizzards of the extreme north; yet year after year it discharges whatever service is required of it with the most commendable fidelity.

A sergeant made the point more bluntly in *Army and Navy Journal*: "If some of these stay-at-homes would only come out for a week and share the fatigue, suffering, and privations that the United States soldier just now has to undergo in the bare wastes of Montana and Dakota they would probably not be so ready to throw slurs at the soldiers."²⁹

Praise for the toiling soldier offered more than a shield against censure, however; it also expressed genuine pride. Never was that more evident than during the Pullman strike, when *Army and Navy Journal's* tributes to the discipline and efficiency of Army regulars appeared side by side with testaments to the shortcomings of state militiamen, some of whom dragged their feet or outright refused to mobilize, while others committed tactical blunders that led to needless casualties. Officers attributed the Army's superior showing to superior management. As General Merritt had it, "The dispatch with which the troops moved, without being cautioned to that effect, the celerity with which they reached their several destinations, and the clearness with which orders were understood and reports were made reflect credit on the soldierly instincts of the responsible officers at the posts and in the field." Whether enlisted men

were equally pleased with themselves is hard to say. According to Frederic Remington, they found strike duty demoralizing, not because they sympathized with the crowds but because their trade was to “hit a man at 500 yards with a Springfield,” and they had been ordered to hold fire. That they generally obeyed the order could nonetheless make them proud; by Army standards, discipline in the performance of duty mattered as much as marksmanship. In the Philippines, when volunteers drawn from state militias rubbed elbows with regulars, the latter’s more businesslike approach to soldiering was immediately evident. As a volunteer from Utah admiringly described it, “The regular army is no place for sentiment or complaint. It is a vast machine, with unlimited endurance, moving with merciless regularity. It is affected by neither applause nor censure, but moves at command.”³⁰

So dictated the ideal; realities were more complicated. Some recruits despised military discipline. Needom Freeman, a streetcar conductor who joined the Army on a whim in 1895, hated basic training: “The manner of all the drill masters was very objectionable to me at first; I did not like the way they spoke to a soldier and gave commands, which, if disobeyed, punishment was inflicted.” Although Freeman stayed on long enough to go to the Philippines with the Twenty-Third US Infantry, he separated from the Army shortly after that—as soon as he legally could. When soldiers stationed in the Philippines declined to reenlist, it was not necessarily to avoid combat. While fighting was dangerous and scary, it at least offered opportunities for improvisation and advancement. Not so with fatigue duty and garrison duty—the common labor and incessant drills that occupied troops between combat missions. For most soldiers these were the worst aspects of military life. Desertions from the regular Army, which averaged more than a thousand a year in the 1890s, diminished during the Philippine War—not only because, as Freeman observed, “to get away from the islands [was] almost impossible,” but also because combat lent military service a sense of purpose. As the wife of a US official in the Philippines remarked about troops assigned to guard bureaucrats instead of fight *insurrectos*, “It is a miserable life—that of a soldier in peace—and I don’t wonder these boys would like to see a little active service.” Sailors felt the same. On a ship in Manila Bay, shortly before the counterinsurgency began, seaman Charles Julian wrote in his diary: “We are laying her still doing nothing but watching the rebels building up their strongholds. Our soldiers are angers [anxious] to get a wack at them. And we are smiling every day to think how nice it will be to blow them old Guns from the Rebels in the air with ours.”³¹

Discursively, too, the Army enjoyed squaring off against an enemy, shoring up its own claims to productivity and reliability by defining its antagonists as idlers and saboteurs. In Remington’s dispatches on the Pullman strike, the troops never confronted workers—just “the mob,” “trash,” “a seething mass,” “tramps,” “bums,” “Central European peasantry,” “the social scum,” “vermin,” and “rioters.” In Charles King’s Chicago, the only striker in the foreground was a hothead who had never held a job for very long, depended on his

sister to support his wife and child, and looked forward to the day that money appropriated from bondholders would “feed and clothe and keep us all in luxury,” without anyone’s having to work. Reporting to Army headquarters, General Ruger in California referred to “the so-called railroad strike” and “so-called strikers”; from Miles in Chicago came the opinion that employment in the stockyards made men unruly because it exposed them to “scenes of blood and slaughter.” On the pages of *Army and Navy Journal*, Eugene Debs was a delusional alcoholic, not a union leader; the American Railway Union was a criminal conspiracy, not a workers’ organization. Never did military spokesmen refer to the strike as a bona fide labor dispute; it merely reflected the fact that some people, mostly foreigners or drifters, would rather riot than work. The troops’ own preference for combat over fatigue duty was projected onto those on the receiving end of the bayonets.³²

Lakotas were understood to be likewise defective. The Ghost Dance—tantamount to riot by the Army’s lights—had promised to bring back the buffalo herds that once sustained life on the plains, and only loafers would prefer big game hunting to farming, wage work, and other ways of life that occupied white men. The stereotype of the idle Indian dated back to the earliest days of British settlement in North America, and it had deep roots in the US Army. In 1865 an Army surgeon wrote home about his first encounter with Native Americans in the vicinity of Fort Bridger, Wyoming, another place in which colonization had destroyed the old ecosystem. “If they won’t work like other people,” he wrote, “they had better be exterminated. They are nothing but a nuisance and an obstruction to civilization. . . . Let them know that they too must earn their bread by the sweat of their brows instead of eking out a miserable existence by hunting.” The regiments that confronted Lakota Ghost Dancers harbored similar feelings, often articulated in *Army and Navy Journal*, and they resented in addition that the Office of Indian Affairs provided Lakotas with cattle and other rations in annual payment for land they had given up. Two weeks before the Wounded Knee massacre, one of the soldiers sent to corral the Ghost Dancers told his wife, “It certainly is time something be done; here we are pampering a lot of worthless loafing Indians.”³³

As the campaign to round up Ghost Dancers got underway, the War Department authorized Nelson Miles to expand the Army’s troop of Indian scouts drawn from Lakota communities, in particular Christian families not involved in the Ghost Dance. When the campaign closed, Miles appointed Army officers to supervise several Lakota reservations previously managed by the Office of Indian Affairs, and the scouts’ numbers further expanded, the Army now becoming a major employer of Lakota men. Ghost Dance leaders were removed to Fort Sheridan near Chicago for indefinite detention. With Miles’s permission, William F. Cody, who had led the extermination of buffalo on the Great Plains, recruited some the detainees to tour Europe with his traveling show, Buffalo Bill’s Wild West, in which they enacted scenes from the “Sioux War,” including the so-called battle at Wounded Knee. In a

letter from Darmstadt, Germany, Cody assured Miles that the Lakotas in his troupe were “so anxious to make money” that “they have forgotten their desire to fight.”³⁴

In contrast, the US military had deep, downright terrifying doubts that wage work would undercut Filipinos’ desire to fight. Predictably, the Army stereotyped Filipinos as lazy and uncooperative, likening them to North America’s Indians. Captain Charles Sawyer of the Thirty-Eighth US Volunteers complained, “They will do nothing well if they can possibly do it ill—even going out of their way to do a bad job when it would be easier to give you a good one.” The regular Army’s Signal Corps put a more positive construction on things, describing residents of Manila as kindly disposed toward Americans but “happy-go-lucky people, not overfond of work.” From privates to generals, the US Army in the Philippines brooded over the quality and loyalty of native labor, for virtually every officer had Filipino servants in his home and regiments routinely employed Filipinos to clear land, carry supplies, guide expeditions, and otherwise assist the military mission. Rumors flew that seemingly friendly workers were *insurrectos* in disguise, making ready to slaughter Americans. Charles King’s novel *Found in the Philippines*—published in 1899 and doubtless read by a great many US soldiers stationed in the islands—portrayed a vast network of murderous servants: “day after day, awaiting the signal for their bloody work, these native devotees greeted with servile bows and studied the habits of the officers they were designated to fall upon in their sleep and slay without mercy. Even women and children were not to be spared.” The stereotype of the shiftless Filipino had developed a horrific counterpart.³⁵

In September 1901, in the town of Balangiga on East Samar’s coast, that fantasy became flesh. A unit from the Ninth US Infantry had arrived in Balangiga in August to set up a garrison at the request of townspeople asking for protection against pirates and *insurrectos*. Scores of local residents worked for the Ninth as it erected a barracks. At daybreak on September 28, the town’s chief of police led a large party of laborers to the garrison, ostensibly to hack away underbrush; but, at the chief’s signal, they instead turned their bolo knives on the troops. Caught in the mess hall, their rifles in another room, most members of the unit quickly bled to death. The survivors fled under fire, losing more men along the way. Of the eighty-eight US soldiers in Balangiga that day, fifty-nine died and twenty-three sustained wounds. *Army and Navy Journal* covered the incident in multiple stories, with increasingly close attention to the gruesome details of the soldiers’ deaths and increasingly shrill warnings that Filipinos who made themselves available for work details might well be up to no good. As one officer told the *Journal*: “[R]ebels have an innocent smile and subordinate presence by day, greeting you with ‘amigo,’ while in reality they are spying around looking for an opening to use a bolo to advantage.”³⁶

The US military retaliated for Balangiga with overwhelming force. Marines commanded by Major Littleton Waller spearheaded the campaign. In an

infamous declaration that later earned him a trial by court-martial, the Army's Brigadier General Jacob Smith instructed Waller to make Samar a "howling wilderness" and kill everyone "capable of bearing arms," which he then defined as everyone over ten years of age. Although Waller countermanded the order to kill women and children, Samar was badly battered, with extensive destruction of property and many civilian deaths, including the summary execution of a group of Filipino porters employed by the Marines. In late December, Waller set off to march across the island with a party of sixty Marines and more than thirty porters. He estimated that the journey would take four days, but thick jungle, mountainous terrain, and incessant rain slowed the column to a crawl. In less than a week, the Marines were lost, sick, and out of rations. While Waller and his second in command led small groups out of the jungle to bring back help, most of the Marines were too weak to march and could only wait for rescue parties, which took about two weeks to arrive. In the meantime, some of the porters who had been left behind stole a junior officer's pistol and ran off into the jungle, the other porters doing nothing to stop them. By the time the Marines were rescued, ten of them had died, and the frightened, delirious survivors had decided that the ten porters who had stayed on intended to kill them. When these Marines finally made it back to camp, the porters were shot without trial, on Waller's orders.³⁷

The charge General Smith faced in his court-martial was not that he had encouraged the killing of noncombatants but that he had engaged in "conduct to the prejudice of good order and discipline"—that is, he had spoken injudiciously. Of this he was convicted, with a sentence of involuntary retirement from the Army. Major Waller was court-martialed too, for the murder of the ten porters and a Filipino guide who had tried to steal his bolo. At trial, Waller defended himself by defining his victims as enemy combatants and invoking Army regulations that allowed reprisals against prisoners of war whose comrades had committed atrocities against Americans. By that doctrine, the incident at Balangiga justified the killing of anyone construed as an enemy. The judges apparently agreed, exonerating Waller on all charges. Back in the States, he gave the press a simpler defense: the porters he executed had been "*insurrectos* at heart."³⁸

Soldiers and Civilian Power

No matter how surly or uncooperative, the civilian laborers who loaded troop ships bound for the Philippines would never have faced a firing squad, and it is impossible to imagine a massacre of Pullman strikers on the scale of Wounded Knee. As I hope this article has shown, this is not because the Army looked more kindly on the strikers than it did on Filipinos or Lakotas. In fact, Nelson Miles, who thought the strike might culminate in a rebellion comparable to the French Revolution or Paris Commune, sought permission to open fire on the crowds in Chicago. On July 5, 1894, the day after he arrived to take

command of federal troops in the city, Miles sent Army headquarters a confidential telegram that ended on this dire note: "The injunction of the United States Court is openly defied, and unless the mobs are dispersed by the action of the police, or if they are fired upon by United States troops, more serious trouble may be expected. . . . Shall I give the order for troops to fire on mob obstructing trains?" Had the answer been yes, his soldiers would surely have obeyed. Their attitude toward the immigrant crowds was summed up nicely by the soldier who told Frederic Remington, "Say, do you know them things ain't human?—before God I don't think they are men." Feelings aside, moreover, Army regulars faced steep consequences for failing to follow orders during military engagements. John Vance Lauderdale, an Army surgeon, wrote in his scrapbook on the Pullman strike: "If the order is to, 'Fire?' The Regular soldier fires to kill . . . as they know that what proceeds from the President is final and must be obeyed." As it happened, however, Secretary of War Daniel Lamont, a lifelong civilian who oversaw the Army's intervention in the strike, did not authorize the troops to fire. Only metaphorically did a state of war exist between the US government and Chicago's crowds.³⁹

That did not rule out martial law. Looking back on the Pullman strike a year later, General John Schofield—a military man who nonetheless shared Lamont's caution—asserted that the Army could have pacified Chicago in just one day had the soldiers from Fort Sheridan massed in the areas where crowds gathered. Instead, they had spread out across the city, a mistake that Schofield blamed on commanding officers' deference to civil officials, such as local police and federal marshals, whose judgments about the placement of troops betrayed "ignorance in respect to the proper tactical methods of dealing with insurrection." Army commanders had yielded to these judgments on the assumption that civil authority trumped their own. This, Schofield contended, was not the case during a rebellion: "When the civil power ceases to be effective and the President is required to exercise his authority as commander-in-chief of the army, his acts become purely military, untrammelled by any civil authority whatever. This is perhaps one of the strongest and most valuable provisions of the Constitution and laws."⁴⁰

No matter their thoughts about legalities, or the tactical merits of gunfire versus crowd control by bayonet, most military men agreed that they should be empowered to put down rebellion in whatever way they saw fit. They did not think civil government could effectively manage the process, let alone do the job itself. The wheels of civilian justice turned too slowly; elected officials too often pandered to the crowd; and corruption reigned among political appointees. Perhaps most important, civilian bureaucrats, unlike military men, imagined that one could reform or reason with rebels. To the military mind, nothing could have been further from the truth.

The Army blamed the "Sioux War" not only on Lakotas but also on the Office of Indian Affairs, whose Indian agents got their jobs through the spoils system. A good many were inept; equal numbers were simply grafters, robbing blind the tribes they were supposed to manage; and the Army believed

that incompetence and dishonesty prompted agents to indulge Indians. On the eve of the massacre at Wounded Knee, *Army and Navy Journal* reported:

This whole matter is a farce. Someone has blundered, and the feeling here is that the great expense to the War Department, as well as for officers and their families, and annoyance to all, is due to the weakness, if not more, of an Indian agent and the disposition to give too ready an ear to Indian troubles.

Military supervision of reservations would presumably right this wrong. The Episcopal Church, which possessed an exclusive license to proselytize on the Lakotas' Pine Ridge reservation, vigorously seconded the Army's assertion that it could manage Indians more effectively than the OIA. *Army and Navy Journal* proudly quoted the endorsement: "Happily the officers of the Army can be trusted to do all that civilians can do, and to leave undone many things that the political civilian very generally does."⁴¹

In the Pullman strike, the balance of power between state and federal government was hotly contested. As most US labor historians know, Illinois's Governor John Altgeld loudly protested when the US Army mobilized to break the strike in his state, but Altgeld was by no means the only governor who declined to abet federal strikebreaking. In Indiana, Claude Matthews infuriated US Attorney General Richard Olney by refusing to call for federal troops when strikers derailed trains and seized the telegraph office in Hammond. *Army and Navy Journal* excoriated the governors of California and North Dakota for pleading with strikers for permission to travel on railroad lines they had shut down: "It is such white-livered and trembling officials as these who are largely responsible for the trouble we have had with striking labor." Colorado's governor was slammed for protesting federal marshals' deployment in his state. Any governor who imagined he could fend off an intervention by federal forces quickly learned otherwise. Once the US Army arrived on the scene, moreover, a governor had little choice but to call out the militia to assist in "peacekeeping." As John Vance Lauderdale observed in Illinois, the presence of federal troops was "as a menace held over this commonwealth to do its duty in preserving the peace." Still, Nelson Miles smelled danger. Governor Altgeld had sent six regiments of state troops to Chicago, placing them at the disposal of Mayor John Hopkins, who made no secret of his sympathy for the strikers. Reporting to Army headquarters in mid-July, Miles complained that the mayor's office left him in the dark as to the movements of both the Illinois regiments and the Chicago police. "Should any serious outbreak occur," he wrote, "like those that have occurred in other cities, particularly in Paris in 1790 and 1871, there would be great danger of the armed forces of the United States coming in conflict with those of the city and state."⁴²

Nowhere was the relationship between military and civilian power more contentious than in the Philippines. By the time the US war with Filipinos began in February 1899, President William McKinley had appointed a five-man Philippine Commission to organize a colonial regime. Although two

of the seats went to military men, civilians controlled the project, whose objective was to end military administration of the islands as soon as possible. When the Second Philippine Commission was appointed in 1900, under the chairmanship of William Howard Taft, the military got no representation and the commissioners gave most of their attention to economic affairs, issuing bonds, enacting banking laws, privatizing public lands, and otherwise making the islands a profitable place for business investment. The following year, governorship of the Philippines passed from military hands to the civilian Taft, and the administration that took shape under his supervision included a good many Filipinos who had earlier borne arms against Americans. All of this infuriated the military.⁴³

Complaints about civilian government reached a crescendo following the Balangiga incident, which occurred on Taft's watch. In December 1901, as soldiers laid plans for the punitive campaign in Samar, *Army and Navy Journal* bemoaned the "divided authority" that made it unclear whether soldiers would be prosecuted for killing Filipinos in districts under civil administration. In a report from the field, General Adna Chaffee warned Americans against "over-confidence in assumed pacified conditions, and in a people who, to a great extent as yet, are strangers to, and unappreciative of our human and personal liberty"—in other words, incapable of self-government. Seconding Chaffee, the *Journal* warned that Taft was "playing with fire" when he suggested to the press that the Philippines would soon be pacified and the number of US troops stationed there drastically reduced. The Army's rank and file sang this refrain in response to Taft's professions of fraternity with any Filipino who cooperated with the colonial regime: "He may be a brother to William H. Taft, but he ain't no brother of mine."⁴⁴

In the end, the military lost the contest. Despite the Army's warnings, President Roosevelt soon declared the Philippines pacified; the islands' governorship remained in civilian hands; and former *insurrectos* continued to serve in the colonial administration. Taft went on to become Roosevelt's secretary of war and then, as the nation's president, the military's commander in chief. By 1913, strong criticism of civilian rule in the Philippines could wreck a military man's career. In December of that year, President Woodrow Wilson ordered the formal reprimand of thirteen Army and Navy officers who organized a dinner at which veterans of the Philippines campaign mocked US policy in the islands. Taft came to the veterans' defense, describing their songs and skits as perhaps offensive but inconsequential.⁴⁵

On other fronts too, things did not turn out as the Army had hoped. As the "Sioux War" drew to a close, *Army and Navy Journal* confidently announced that Lakota reservations would henceforth be under military control, but the War Department's bureaucracy did not support this plan, which ignited angry protests by political appointees employed as Indian agents. In 1891, the department reorganized the Army's geographical divisions so that Nelson Miles lost jurisdiction over the Dakotas. With that went the authority to place officers in charge of reservations there. By the late 1890s, all but one Lakota reservation—the Pine Ridge Agency—were back in civilian hands.⁴⁶

Issues that had plagued the Army during the Pullman Strike resolved themselves in more complicated ways under a set of reforms orchestrated by Secretary of War Elihu Root, a corporate lawyer and lifelong civilian determined to apply managerial science to military problems. U.S. Steel, Root told Congress, had heightened its efficiency and reduced costs by bringing diverse operations under one central command, and “it does seem a pity that the Government of the United States should be the only great industrial establishment that can not profit by the lessons which the world of industry and of commerce has learned to such good effect.” That a secretary of war even voiced opinions as to the Army’s management represented a radical break from the past. Ever since Andrew Jackson’s presidency, it had been the custom for the secretary to confine himself to budgetary and political affairs and leave it to generals to run the Army. Root established himself as the man in charge—the conduit through which the president exercised his supremacy as commander in chief. The net effect of his reforms was to bring the military machine under tighter civilian control, not by Congress but by the executive branch. The Army standardized officer training by establishing a network of schools and a central War College in Leavenworth, Kansas. Federal reins on state militias grew tighter under the Dick Militia Act of 1903, which reorganized the National Guard under the Army’s supervision, required that militiamen meet the regulars’ standards with respect to training and discipline, and empowered the president to conscript state troops for up to nine months of service under federal command. Although the Army would mobilize against dozens of labor uprisings over the next forty years, the National Guard was now a more reliable line of defense than it had been during the Pullman Strike, and guardsmen’s deployments against strikers would number in the thousands. Root’s capstone reform institutionalized the new authority he had claimed. In 1903, over the protests of Nelson Miles, who had replaced John Schofield as commanding general of the Army, the General Staff Act abolished that post, to which generals had been promoted on the basis of seniority alone. The Army’s highest-ranking officer would now be the chief of staff, appointed by the secretary of war irrespective of seniority. The chief would oversee a new general staff of officers charged with keeping the Army battle-ready, policing its efficiency, assisting the secretary of war, making sure his directives were carried out, and performing what the Act described as “other military duties not otherwise assigned by law as may be from time to time prescribed by the President.”⁴⁷

By some measures, the Army’s star rose as the American empire expanded overseas. In 1898 gigantic crowds of civilians turned out to cheer the troops bound for Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. The popular press celebrated their exploits abroad in lavishly illustrated chronicles of “exciting experiences,” “American heroes,” and “daring deeds.” When President McKinley ran for reelection in 1900, he chose as his running mate Teddy Roosevelt, widely known as a war hero thanks to his best-selling memoir about experiences in Cuba as commander of the First US Volunteer Cavalry—better known as the Rough Riders (a nicknamed borrowed from performers in Buffalo Bill’s Wild

West). To defend against critics of the Philippines War, Republicans billed their ticket as champions of valiant soldiers sadly unappreciated by the Democratic candidate William Jennings Bryan and other anti-imperialists. Stumping for McKinley and Roosevelt in the battleground state of Ohio, Elihu Root applauded the president for denying national independence to “Tagalogs whose hands were red with the blood of American soldiers,” condemned war opponents for second-guessing the soldiers’ negative assessments of Filipinos’ capacity for self-rule, berated Bryan for referring to Army regulars as “idlers,” and commended the troops overseas not only for heroism in battle but also for their skill at what we would now call nation-building: “Our soldiers are conspicuous in the arts of peace. Where they go, law and order and justice and charity and education and religion follow. They are not only enduring under hardship and brave in danger, but they are patient under provocation and magnanimous after victory.” Such rhetoric worked with the electorate. McKinley and Roosevelt carried Ohio by close to 70,000 votes and handily won the national election. During Root’s tenure as secretary of war, Congress vastly expanded the regular Army, capping it at 100,000—close to four times its size during the Pullman Strike.⁴⁸

As the new century wore on, deployments of US troops overseas became the new norm, and much of civilian society came to worship soldiers. In 1904 Roosevelt topped the Republican ticket, redoubled his championship of empire-building and military spending, and won in a landslide. National politicians opposed to overseas deployments were henceforth few and far between, and presidents from both parties sent troops into many countries—Haiti, China, Panama, Turkey, Mexico, the Dominican Republic, and others—without obtaining congressional declarations of war. Civil society reflected the new militarism. Just as Elihu Root sought to make the Army more like U.S. Steel, corporations touted soldiers as models for workers, distributing tens of millions of copies of Elbert Hubbard’s essay “A Message to Garcia,” which called on civilian employees to follow orders with the same unquestioning zeal as did the Army’s Captain Andrew Rowan when he carried secret messages to and from Cuban *independistas* on the eve of the Spanish-American War. (Later serving in the Philippines, Rowan destroyed two towns to avenge the death of a US corporal killed in retaliation for a rape, but newspapers buried that part of Rowan’s story.) Multitudes of boys meanwhile received military training in private academies, public schools, and, starting in 1911, the Boy Scouts of America. In a widely quoted speech delivered at Stanford University, the moral philosopher William James declared himself a pacifist who nonetheless believed soldiering brought out the best in humanity. “Militarism,” he asserted, “is the great preserver of our ideals of hardihood, and human life with no use for hardihood would be contemptible.” Countless stories, songs, and movies about soldiers delivered much the same message.⁴⁹

In his novel of the Pullman Strike, Captain Charles King offered a rhapsodic description of the Army entering Chicago: “[A] squadron of regular cavalry came sweeping down the avenue, the guidons fluttering over the uniforms of

dusty blue, the drab campaign hats shading the stern, soldierly faces, the grim cartridge-belts bulging with copper and lead, the ugly little brown barkers of carbines and revolvers peeping from their holsters.” Their presence, he concluded, announced to the world that, “the United States is a government, a *Nation*.” This was an immensely powerful image to a generation that remembered the Civil War, and it formed a central component of the Army’s self-perception in the 1890s. In the twentieth century, more and more Americans would come to share that vision of the soldiers, celebrating the military as a national treasure, but military life would make it ever clearer that the Army belonged not to the nation or even to soldiers but to executives of an imperial state.⁵⁰

NOTES

1. Nelson A. Miles et al., “The Lesson of the Recent Strikes,” *The North American Review* 159 (August 1894): 180–206. See also Grover Cleveland, *The Government in the Chicago Strike of 1894* (Princeton, NJ, 1913): 14–20; and William A. Dunning, “Record of Political Events,” *Political Science Quarterly* 9 (December 1894): 769–71. Quotations are from Miles et al., 181, 183, 184, 187, 188.

2. Robert Wooster, *Nelson A. Miles and the Twilight of the Frontier Army* (Lincoln, NE, 1993), 5–18, 50–51; Robert M. Utley, *Frontier Regulars: The United States Army and the Indian, 1866–1891* (New York, 1973), 10–18; Oliver Knight, *Life and Manners in the Frontier Army* (Norman, OK, 1978), 220–30. Comments in the *New York Sun* were reprinted in *Army and Navy Journal*, October 20, 1877, 170, quoted in Utley, 22.

3. Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, 22–23, 80–85; Knight, *Life and Manners*, 163–170. On the composition of state militias, see Eleanor Hannah, *Manhood, Citizenship, and the National Guard: Illinois, 1870–1917* (Columbus, 2007), 217–18; and Geoffrey R. Hunt, *Colorado’s Volunteer Infantry in the Philippine Wars, 1898–1899* (Albuquerque, 2006), 44–45. Quotations are from *Army and Navy Journal*, January 13, 1883, 526, quoted in Knight, 222 and 71.

4. Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, 86–90; Knight, *Life and Manners*, 153–55.

5. Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, 818–22, 31–32; Knight, *Life and Manners*, 71–77, 222.

6. Frederic Remington, “Chicago Under the Mob,” *Harper’s Weekly*, July 21, 1894, 680–81; “Chicago Under the Law,” *Harper’s Weekly*, July 28, 1894, 703–5 (quotations from 703); “The Withdrawal of U.S. Troops,” *Harper’s Weekly*, August 11, 1894, 748. See also Peter Hassrick, “Frederic Remington the Painter: A Historiographical Sketch,” *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 46 (Summer 1996): 18–35.

7. Charles King, “A Tame Surrender: A Story of the Chicago Strike,” *Lippincott’s Monthly Magazine*, March 1895, 291–403; quotation is from 376. See also King, *A Tame Surrender: A Story of the Chicago Strike* (Philadelphia, 1896).

8. United States, War Department, *Annual Report of the Secretary of War for the Year 1894*, Volume I (Washington, DC, 1894): 55–66; “An Increased Army Needed,” *The New York Times*, October 12, 1894; George D. Ruggles, “The Proposed Increase of the Army,” *The North American Review* 159 (December 1894): 728–34. Quotations are from *Annual Report*, 58.

9. War Department, *Annual Report . . . 1894*, Volume I, 110–130, 148–60; quotations are from 125, 115, 114. See also Clayton D. Laurie and Robert H. Cole, *The Role of Federal Military Forces in Domestic Disorders, 1877–1945* (Washington, DC, 1997): 111–31.

10. “Mutinous Michigan Militia” and “National Guard in Active Service,” *Army and Navy Journal*, July 21, 1894, 832; “Worthless National Guardsmen” and “Knights of Labor as Militiamen,” *Army and Navy Journal*, July 28, 1894, 850. “The New Rebellion,” *Army and Navy Journal*, July 7, 1894, 789. Quotations are from “The New Rebellion.” When volunteers were scarce, federal marshals conscripted the help they needed. In Little Rock, Arkansas, for example, J. W. Deslion, was summoned to federal court, sworn in for a five-day stint as a deputy marshal, and assigned to duty as a railroad watchman. When his service was up, the marshal’s office declined to pay him, instead referring him to the railroad. See J. W. Deslion to

Attorney General [Richard] Olney, July 17, 1894, U.S. Justice Department, Strike Files, Subfile 9, July 2, 1894-April 26, 1895.

11. Samuel Yellen, *American Labor Struggles, 1877-1934* (New York, 1936): 101-36; Jeremy Brecher, *Strike!* Rev. ed. (Boston, 1999): 78-96; Richard Schneirov et al., *The Pullman Strike and the Crisis of the 1890s: Essays on Labor and Politics* (Urbana, 1999): 1-8, 179-231.

12. John Vance Lauderale, Scrapbook, John Vance Lauderale Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, Box 12, folder 454, unnumbered page between 176 and 177; Charles King, *Found in the Philippines* (New York, 1899), 277; Hunt, *Colorado's Volunteer Infantry*, 144-45; William S.E. Coleman, *Voices of Wounded Knee* (Lincoln, NE, 2000), 234-35. Quotations are from Lauderale; King; Hunt, 144; Coleman, 234.

13. For a survey of civilian writers' comparisons of Indians, strikers, and Filipinos, see Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (New York, 1992), 88-122. On anarchists' identification with Indians, see Dave Roediger and Franklin Rosemont, eds., *Haymarket Scrapbook* (Chicago, 1986), 101-2. Quotations are from: Michael J. Schaack, *Anarchy and Anarchists: A History of the Red Terror and the Social Revolution in America and Europe* (Chicago, 1889), 207; *Railway Age*, March 3, 1899, 159; United States, Congress, Senate, *Affairs in the Philippine Islands: Hearings before the Committee on The Philippines of the United States Senate, April 10, 1902, 57th Congress, 1st Session, Part 3* (Washington, DC, 1902), 2669; Theodore Roosevelt, *Campaigns and Controversies* (Whitefish, MT, 2005), 338; *Proceedings of the Third Annual Meeting of the Lake Mohonk conference of Friends of the Indian, held October 7-9, 1885* (Philadelphia, 1886), 43; George S. Boutwell, "Address," in New England Anti-Imperialist League, *Free America, Free Cuba, Free Philippines* (Boston, 1901), 15-16, cited in Kristin L. Hoganson, "As Badly off as the Filipinos": U.S. Women's Suffragists and the Imperial Issue at the Turn of the Twentieth Century," *Journal of Women's History* 13 (Summer 2001), 24.

14. James Parker, *The Old Army: Memories, 1872-1918* (Philadelphia, 1929), 23.

15. War Department, *Annual Report*, 60; Charles King, "From the Ranks," *Lippincott's Monthly* 40 (December 1887): 858.

16. Coleman, *Voices of Wounded Knee*, 237, 241. Coleman's *Voices* is by far the best narrative history of the "Sioux War" and the massacre at Wounded Knee. Unless I note otherwise, my account of these events derives from Coleman's. Quotation is from Remington, "Chicago Under the Law," 703. On the Sioux War of 1876 and the Army's defeat at Little Bighorn, see Utey, *Frontier Regulars*, 246-62.

17. L.W. Colby, "The Sioux Indian War of 1890-1891," *Transactions and Reports of the Nebraska State Historical Society* 3 (1892): 144-90; quotation is from 156-57. Regarding disputes over the death toll, see Coleman, *Voices of Wounded Knee*, 354-57.)

18. Nelson A. Miles, "The Future of the Indian Question," *The North American Review* 152 (January 1891), 7; "Relieving Colonel Forsyth," *Army and Navy Journal*, January 10, 1891, 329; "The Seventh Cavalry Defended," *Army and Navy Journal*, January 17, 1891, 354; "Official Reports of the Wounded Knee Affair," *Army and Navy Journal*, January 24, 1891, 366. Quotations are from "Official Reports," "Relieving Colonel Forsyth," and "The Seventh Cavalry Defended."

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20. Marshall Everett, ed., *Exciting Experiences in Our Wars with Spain and the Filipinos* (Chicago, 1899), 178; Thomas M. Anderson, "Our Rule in the Philippines," *The North American Review* 170 (February 1900): 272-83; H.M. Brace, "Itamo, the Insurrecto: A Story of the Philippines," *The Soldier's Letter* 1 (December 1898): 15-20; William M. Salter, "America's Duty in the Philippines," *American Journal of Ethics* 12 (April 1902): 364; Luther S. Kelly, "Memoirs Describing Expeditions and Military Service in Alaska and the Philippines, 1898-1926," unpublished manuscript, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, 133. There are two indispensable books on the Philippine American War: On military strategy and tactics, see Brian McAllister Linn, *The U.S. Army and Counterinsurgency in the Philippine War, 1899-1902* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1989); on the war's

political and social history, see Stuart Creighton Miller, *"Benevolent Assimilation": The American Conquest of the Philippines, 1899–1903* (New Haven, CT, 1982).

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