Early Experiments in Soft Power:

State-Building in Haiti, 1915-34

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Abstract

While state-building is a standard tool of American foreign policy, the support for it came after a series of unpopular military occupations. How did these military disasters lead the U.S. to conclude that state-building was an attractive approach? We investigate this question looking at soft power initiatives in Haiti during the occupation of 1915 to 1934. We use an intelligence report from 1932 with data on the political leanings of over 1,100 prominent citizens around the country. One of the U.S.'s biggest initiatives was building roads, and we show that a one standard deviation increase in market access from navigable roads is associated with a 65% decrease in anti-occupation sentiment. We also show that the U.S.'s other major initiative, expanding education, is only weakly associated with lower anti-occupation sentiment.

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State-building has long been a central, though contested, tool of American foreign policy. Historically, many of these efforts have been strategic attempts to shape political outcomes and foster alignment with U.S. interests, especially during the Cold War. But some of the earliest conceptions of state-building were embedded even earlier in military doctrines. In the 1940s, the U.S. Marines published the *Small Wars Manual*, codifying lessons from occupations in places like Haiti, Nicaragua, and the Dominican Republic. These doctrines emphasized state-building interventions, such as building roads, schools, hospitals, as essential for creating legitimacy and reducing resistance to occupation. Yet this raises a historical puzzle: the Marines developed doctrine advocating state-building after experiences in occupations that were, at best, cautionary tales rather than exemplary case studies of success. As a striking counterexample, after the Vietnam War, many American military officers believed nation building had been a harmful distraction (Fitzsimmons, 2008). Why, then, did the US codify an approach emphasizing infrastructure and institutional development when the occupations themselves seemed unable to yield clear successes?

In this paper, we examine the US's attempt at state-building in Haiti during the occupation of 1915-1934. After a severe military suppression of a resistant insurgency, the occupation decided in 1921 to switch to state-building. It built roads, expanded education, and reduced bureaucratic corruption. This paper investigates whether U.S. officials perceived their state-building efforts as successful in winning support for the occupation.

Rather than estimating causal effects, we examine the associations visible to the Americans at the time—correlations that may have informed the development of soft power doctrine in later decades.

To investigate how the U.S. occupation may have drawn lessons from its own experience, we combine archival data on state-building projects with a 1932 intelligence report covering over 1,100 prominent citizens across Haiti. The report records their political leanings, which we link to their district's exposure to major U.S. policies: road construction, school expansion, and counterinsurgency operations. Our primary empirical strategy is to compare support for the occupation between citizens who were more exposed to the projects to those with less exposure. Our goal is not to estimate the causal effect of these policies on support for the occupation. Instead, we ask: Would American officials have observed patterns in the data that suggested their policies were working? Military and foreign policy doctrine at the time was based on observed associations, not experimental designs. We therefore focus on the correlations visible to policymakers—patterns that could have shaped the U.S.'s growing emphasis on soft power in later decades. Nevertheless, we address the issue of the endogenous placement of projects using vote counts from the 1918 constitutional referendum.

Our first policy of interest is counterinsurgency operations. The American occupation was prompted by a series of revolutions. From 1911 to 1914, seven different men held the office of president. Many were deposed by a group of rebels called kakos.

When the occupation began in July 1915, it faced fierce resistance from the kakos. The initial phase of counterinsurgency reorganized the kako operations, causing them to flee to the eastern-central region of the country, where they gathered in camps. By the end of 1920, the Marines had subdued them. Our first analysis examines how the prominent individuals exposed to these insurgent camps perceived the occupation. We geolocate a 1920 map of the 87 camps and find that individuals living in districts with camps were 15 percentage points less likely to oppose the occupation. We hypothesize that because the kakos had antagonized local villages, the locals appreciated the counterinsurgency actions.

Second, we look at the largest public works program implemented by the occupation: road construction. These roads enabled the use of motor vehicles and improved connections between markets. We examine their effect on occupation sentiments by looking at how roads changed a district's market access. Using a 1930s logistics table, we measure changes in market access using the travel times between districts with the roads and create a counterfactual travel time assuming that roads had not been constructed. The regressions show evidence for these projects improving feelings towards the Americans: a one standard deviation increase in market access is associated with a 65% decline in anti-occupation sentiment. We confirm the importance of the economic opportunity created by the occupation by showing that individuals with more market-connected professions were also less likely to oppose the occupation.

Finally, we look at the occupation's education initiative. The occupation emphasized vocational training and started rural farm schools around the country. We use reports on the number of schools, enrollment, and attendance by school district in 1922 and 1931, the major period of school expansion. While we find some support for a relationship between school expansion and favorable feelings towards the occupation, the results have weak statistical significance. This weak result may come from measurement error in the data, but it also is consistent with the occupation ending because of protests that started in these schools.

One concern about the data is that the intelligence reports, despite being mission-critical information, might not reflect the true feelings of the locals. We argue that the true feelings are not as important as the occupation's perceptions. Historians have documented cases where the Americans believed an individual was in favor of the occupation while in secret he was acting against it (Alexis, 2021, p. 124). But we are not trying to identify the causal effect of the policies on sentiment. We are interested in whether the Americans believed there was an effect. If they saw a relationship between their policies and what they thought the locals felt, then that would have been sufficient for informing future policy. Since we find a relationship, we argue that the Haitian experience laid an experiential foundation for the hearts and minds doctrine.

This paper contributes to the literature on how effective public good provision can increase government legitimacy. The evidence for this is mixed (Mcloughlin, 2015). In

contexts where a weak government is trying to expand its legitimacy, the citizens do not necessarily interpret the increase in projects as an increase in legitimacy, mostly because they do not even notice that the projects were implemented (Blattman et al., 2017; Khan et al., n.d.). To increase legitimacy, projects need to be visible (Krause, 2024) or implemented effectively, which is more likely to happen in places where state capacity is already high (Blattman et al., 2022). Our findings are consistent with the literature, since investments in roads would have been highly visible and the network was executed well. But while these papers focus on increasing legitimacy of a sovereign government, we show that these projects are also effective in increasing legitimacy of an occupying government. Our work, therefore, aligns with the counterinsurgency literature, which has shown that investments in nation building can sway citizens away from supporting insurgents (Berman et al., 2011; Dell & Querubin, 2018), but we are examining policies implemented after the counterinsurgency operations ended.

Historical context

Haiti began in 1804 as a country of people willing to overthrow its government, and that tradition continued over the next century. After their coerced labor made Saint Domingue one of the most productive territories in the West during the 1700s, the slaves of the French Empire revolted, gained independence, and started the nation of Haiti. But ideological conflicts led to the assassination of Haiti's first president, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, in 1806, and the country split into the Republic of Haiti in the South and the

Empire of Haiti in the North (Stieber, 2020). Revolts became a common event, often happening at the local level. Peasant farmers regularly revolted against the state to weaken its capacity to enforce coercive labor laws (Chochotte, 2018). But sometimes these revolts would extend beyond local boundaries and reach the national level. As a result, the leadership of Haiti was perpetually instable. From 1806 to 1915, 17 of Haiti's 24 presidents were overthrown by revolution (Schmidt, 1971, p. 26).

These national-level revolts triggered the US occupation of Haiti in 1915. In July 1915, a revolt against President Guillaume Sam, the seventh man to hold the presidential office in four years, left him dead in the streets of Port-au-Prince. The U.S., fearing the collapse of Haiti would give Germans the opportunity to gain a strategic foothold in the Caribbean, immediately landed Marines and started occupying the country.

Upon landing, the Marines' first objective was to neutralize the revolts, but since Haiti was one of the first occupied territories, the Marines had not yet developed a counterinsurgency doctrine. The Marines began with a two-pronged strategy (Long, 2016, p. 74; Schmidt, 1971, pp. 83–85). First, they tried an arms-buying/amnesty-granting approach where the Marines would buy guns from insurgents and allow them to reintegrate into society. Second, they used direct attacks against militant groups. These strategies proved effective against the resistance, and by the end of 1915 the insurgents were contained. The Marines felt the strategy in Haiti was so effective, it implemented similar strategies later in Nicaragua in 1928 (Long, 2016, p. 76).

But after the initial insurgent suppression, resistance began to build again. By 1919, the U.S. estimated there were 6,000-15,000 fighters resisting the occupation (Alexis, 2021, p. 88). The leader, Charlemagne Peralte, had effectively established a rival government, sending ministers around the country (Alexis, 2021, p. 84). In the face of such opposition, the occupation could not fight the insurgents without information from locals. American leaders pled with Haitians to find information on where the insurgents were located and what they planned to do (Alexis, 2021, pp. 93–96). Sometimes the requests were accompanied by threats to destroy homes, livestock, and crops of villages who were not cooperating (Alexis, 2021, p. 95). Other times, they were combined with bounties to reward cooperation (Alexis, 2021, pp. 115–116). These tactics had varying success, with some Haitians delivering mission-critical information while many others feeding useless or bad information (Alexis, 2021, p. 127).

The occupation forces eventually defeated the active resistance, but it is unclear whether they won the people. The turning point in the counterinsurgency came in November 1919 with the assassination of Peralte. In the following year, Franklin D Roosevelt, who had been Assistant Secretary of the Navy during the initial occupation years, ran as the Democratic candidate for vice president. The occupation became an easy opportunity for Republicans to discredit Roosevelt, and they began a senate investigation. In the congressional testimony, Americans claimed they had won the support of the average Haitian (U.S. Senate, 1922). But the occupation may have misinterpreted the

natives' actions and intents (Alexis, 2021, pp. 89, 124). In 1922, the investigation, despite uncovering several abuses by U.S. military, concluded that the situation was too unstable to withdraw troops and extended the occupation.

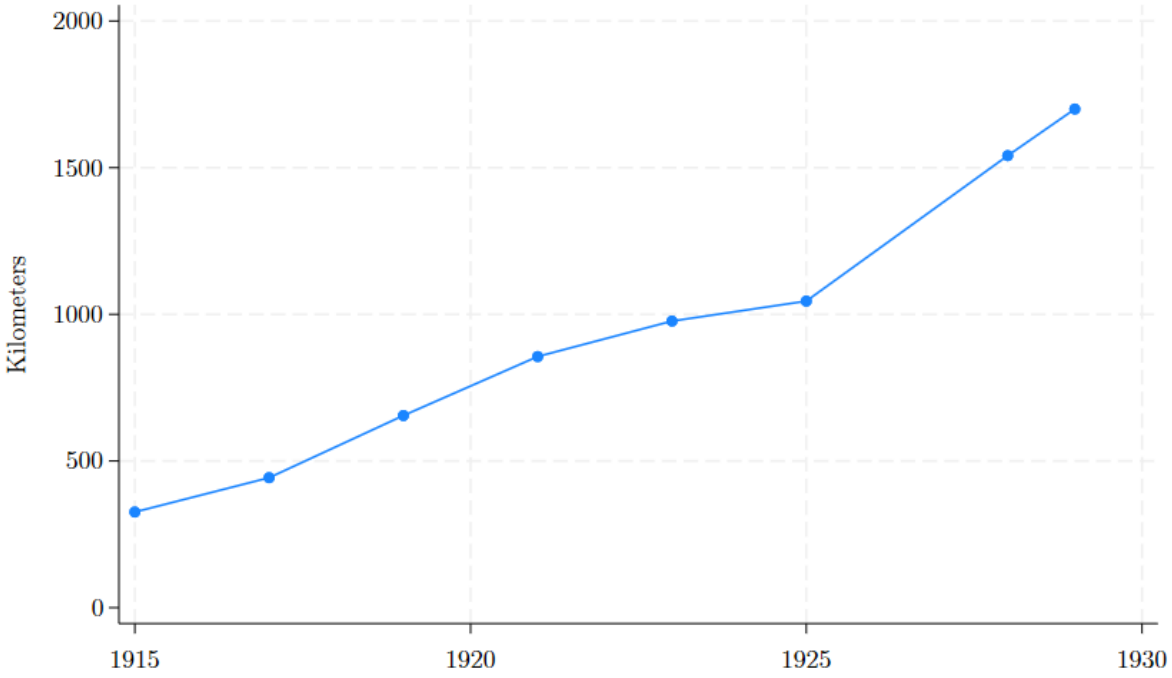
The extension was accompanied by a shift in strategy, but the occupation began to unravel at the end of the 1920s as new resistance mounted. From 1915 to 1922, the occupation focused strategy on stabilizing the political situation with only nominal attention to economic development. Even though policy did not focus on development, stabilizing the political environment had an immediate effect on the economy (Palsson, 2023). When America committed to a long-term occupation, it began focusing on development policy and nation building. Two of the main policies were road construction and school expansion. Both created mixed responses from the population.

From the beginning of the campaign, the occupation focused on road construction. Construction included "well-drained trails which are sufficiently wide and which have grades and curves of a character to permit the passage of a motor vehicle," generally including a gravel surface but sometimes, on heavily-trafficked roads, an asphalt surface (State Department, 1929, pp. 62–63). The roads served two purposes. First, they improved military logistics in the occupation's initial phase. Second, during the second phase, it was part of the occupation's development package. "While there is still great need of improvement in the National and departmental roads, there is even greater need for opening up rich areas which are now accessible only by trails which are traversed with

difficulty even by animal traffic" (State Department, 1929, p. 62). Cumulative road construction from 1915 through 1929 is given in Figure 1.

The roads had countervailing effects on drawing support for the occupation. On the one hand, they improved travel between districts and facilitated exchange. On the other hand, in the early occupation, the roads were constructed with corvée labor, and this coercion was one of the primary drivers of insurgency (Schmidt, 1971, p. 100). Thus, we do not know the net effect.

Figure 1. Cumulative road construction by the occupation, 1915-29

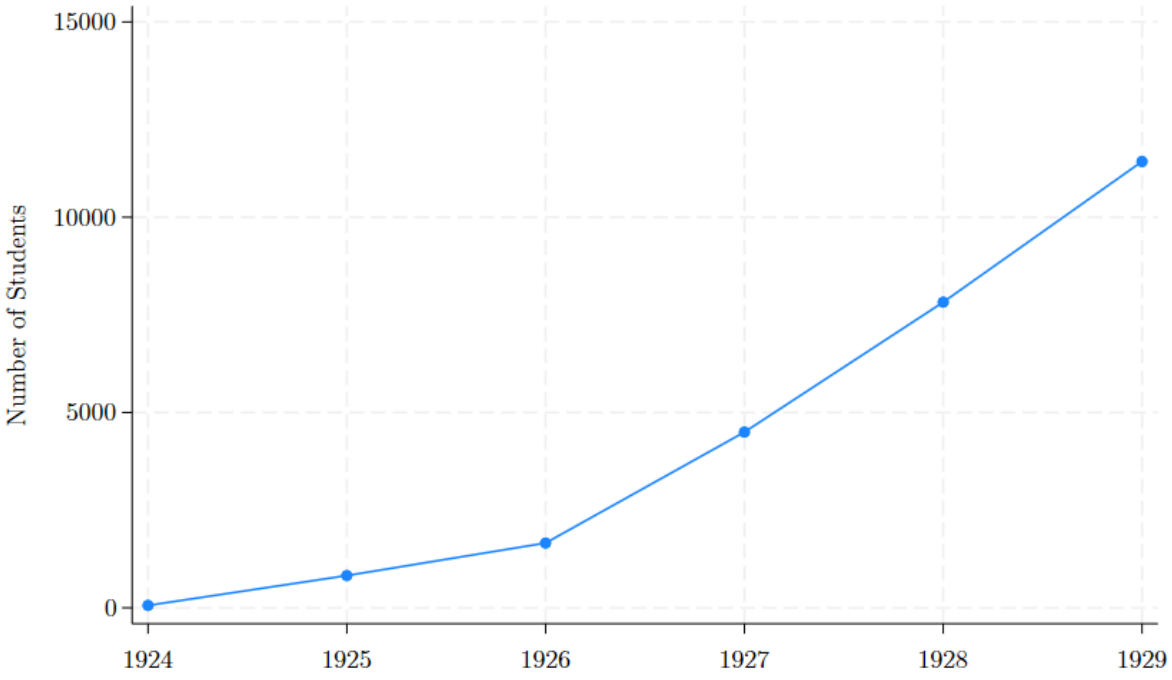


Source: State Department (1929)

The occupation's other signature achievement was the creation and expansion of rural farm schools. Established in 1923, these schools focused on vocational education related to agriculture. The government pushed for these schools to such an extent that the department of public instruction gave the service technique control of national rural primary schools in 1930 to get access to the larger budget (Haiti, 1932, p. 93). Enrollment for schools from 1924 through 1929 is reported in Figure 2.

The occupation believed these farm schools were generating significant support. "Perhaps more significant than any other development is the continued drift of public sympathy toward vocational and industrial education. Not only are men of affairs coming to recognize more and more the absolute necessity of teaching modern productive methods (both agricultural and industrial), but the young men themselves are learning the dignity of labor. They are discovering that the only sure road to personal prosperity lies in personal efficiency in some industrial line. This drift of sentiment is exhibited in the greater attendance at all of the industrial and agricultural schools" (State Department, 1927, p. 40).

Figure 2. Enrollment in rural farm schools, 1924-29



Source: State Department (1929)

But the school expansion sowed the seeds for the occupation's end. In 1929, students at the occupation's flagship school in Damien walked out in protest and called for the resignation of the occupation's head of instruction (Schmidt, 1971, p. 196). This inspired other protests, culminating in a protest in Les Cayes in December 1929 where marines massacred several protesters. The massacre became international news (Dalleo, 2016, p. 34), convincing the U.S. government that the occupation needed to come to a rapid end.

Today, the occupation is not regarded well. Most of the development projects did not endure after American withdrawal. For example, the roads quickly fell into disrepair because maintenance was too costly (Schmidt, 1971, pp. 233–234). But the memory of the abuses lasted. The one lasting contribution was the creation of effective military and gendarmerie personnel, a legacy that allowed political strongmen to more effectively control the country (Schmidt, 1971, p. 235). But we do not have a good understanding of how Haitians felt on the eve of the occupation's ending.

Data and Descriptive Statistics

To explore the connection between occupation policies and political support, we collect data from several archival sources.

Political support

We collect data on political sentiments using an intelligence report written by the American occupation in the early 1930s. Since 1921, the occupation intelligence tracked "the reputation, influence, and attitude of all prominent Haitians toward the occupation" (Schmidt, 1971, p. 121). We collect our data from the 1932 report, which listed 1,127 prominent citizens around the country along with their demographic information and their political feelings.

Two features of the data are crucial for contextualizing our analysis. First, the sample is intentionally unrepresentative of the average Haitian. The intelligence reports

covers individuals ("prominent citizens") the occupation believed were influential or strategically important. Other reports reference these individuals alongside town infrastructure and security resources, suggesting they were central to operational planning. While not a random sample, these elites likely shaped public opinion (Garbiras-Díaz et al., 2024).

Second, the data reflect the Americans' perceptions, not necessarily Haitians' own views. That includes our dependent variable, anti-occupation sentiment, which, even if it was directly solicited, could misrepresent actual beliefs due to preference falsification (Kuran, 1997). But it also affects classifications like race and education, which were recorded without standardized criteria. For example, the distinction between "Black" and "Brown" may reflect both skin tone and social cues filtered through American racial categories. While such subjectivity complicates interpretation, it also emphasizes our central claim: we are studying how American officials perceived their environment—and those perceptions are what informed the policies they developed next.

Table 1. Characteristics of prominent citizens

Feature	Mean
Anti-Occupation	0.25
Age	48.0
Black	0.45
Brown	0.32
Highly Educated	0.27
Market-connected Profession	0.43

Notes: Sample has 1,127 prominent citizens. It is unclear whether citizens would agree with the classifications provided or if these are just the judgments of intelligence officers.

The report tracked two variables on political sentiments. First, it had the citizen's attitude towards the occupation; second, it had the citizen's political affiliation. While the variables were reported separately, the values were not standardized and there are cases where the values appear switched. For our analysis, we classify a citizen as anti-occupation if either the attitude or the political affiliation indicated a feeling or association opposed to the occupation or the occupation-controlled government. This includes an explicit declaration of "anti-occupation" or "anti-American," or it could be a citizen who belongs to the Union Patriotique, the primary political party organizing against the occupation. By this classification, as reported in Table 1, 25% of citizens were anti-occupation. Figure 3 maps the spatial distribution of anti-occupation sentiment. Most of the anti-occupation was in the Southern peninsula and in the North around Cap-Haitien.

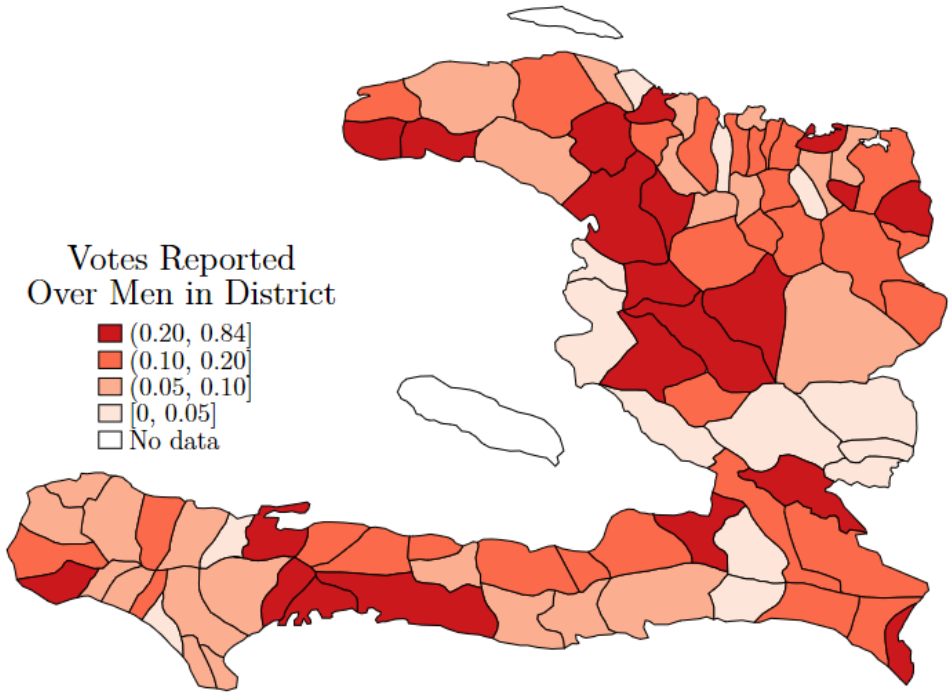
Table 1 also lists some features of the prominent citizens, as reported by the Americans. Their ages ranged from 19 to 95, with the average citizen aged around 48. The intelligence reports described 45% of these citizens as black and 32% as brown. The educational categories were not standardized, so in some cases there are explicit categorizations like "secondary" or "college," but in other cases it says "mediocre," "good," or "very good." We classify anyone with a secondary education or higher, or anyone classified as "very good," as highly educated. Table 1 reports 27% fell in this category. Finally, we create an indicator for whether the citizen is in a market-connected profession. We used OpenAI's 4o model to one-shot classify whether a profession was likely engaged with markets in other villages and not if it was primarily engaged in local goods or services (see Appendix for prompt). For example, a lawyer or teacher is not a market-connected profession while a merchant or farmer is. Table 1 shows that 43% were market-connected.

1918 Referendum

We also collect data on the 1918 constitutional referendum. The Americans tried to push a reform through the National Assembly to allow foreigners to own land. When it failed, the Americans dissolved the National Assembly and held a referendum. The results reported 98,993 votes, of which 98,225 voted in favor and only 768 voted against. The extremely lopsided vote was a result of American intervention and Haitian protests, as discussed below in our Empirical Framework section.

We use vote district-level vote tallies found in the Marine archives which report the total number of yes and no votes by district. Despite the credulity of the election, the data still serve two purposes. First, the yes votes are indicative of the occupation's ability to mobilize supporters. Second, even though the occupation reported only 768 votes against the referendum, taking a stand against the Americans was costly, so those votes are informative about opposition to the occupation. The spatial distribution of reported voter turnout is shown in Figure 3.

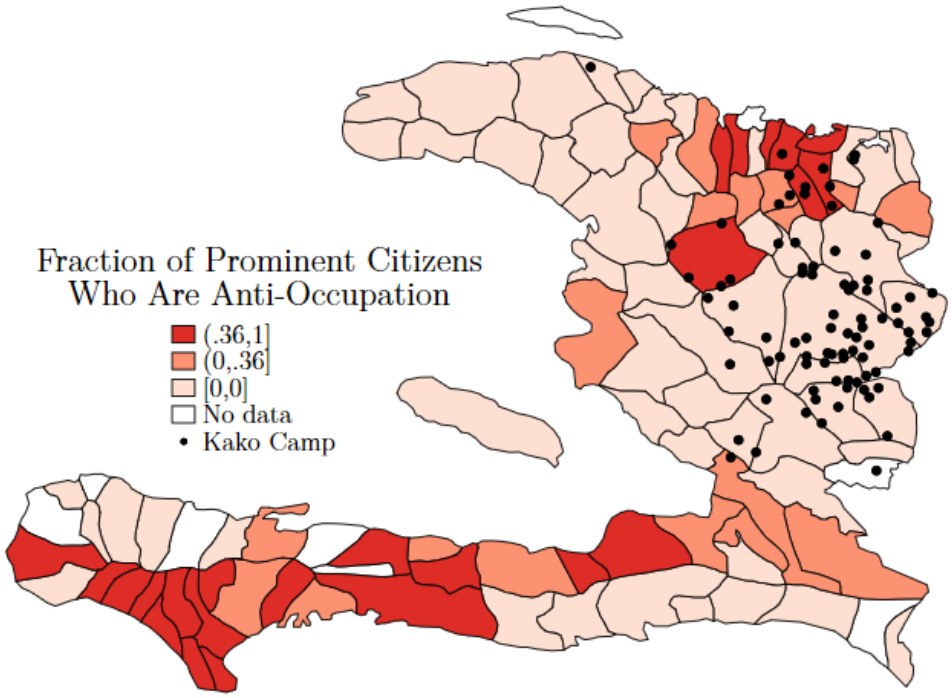
Figure 3. Reported voter turnout in the 1918 referendum



Bandit camps

We digitize a map of insurgent camps created by the marines in 1923 (Intelligence Unit Gendarmerie d'Haiti, 1923). The map charted the location of 87 camps, shown in Figure 3. With the exception of one camp in the North, all camps were located in the mountains in the East.

Figure 4. Map of bandit camps and anti-occupation sentiment



Road Building and Market Access

One of the occupation's biggest nation-building projects was building roads. The importance of roads is not just having direct access to an improved road, but the network of connections that road opens. We hypothesize that the most important impact of these roads is their effect on market access. We measure market access for district i as

$$MA_i = \sum_{i \neq j} e^{-\theta \tau_{ij}} M_j.$$

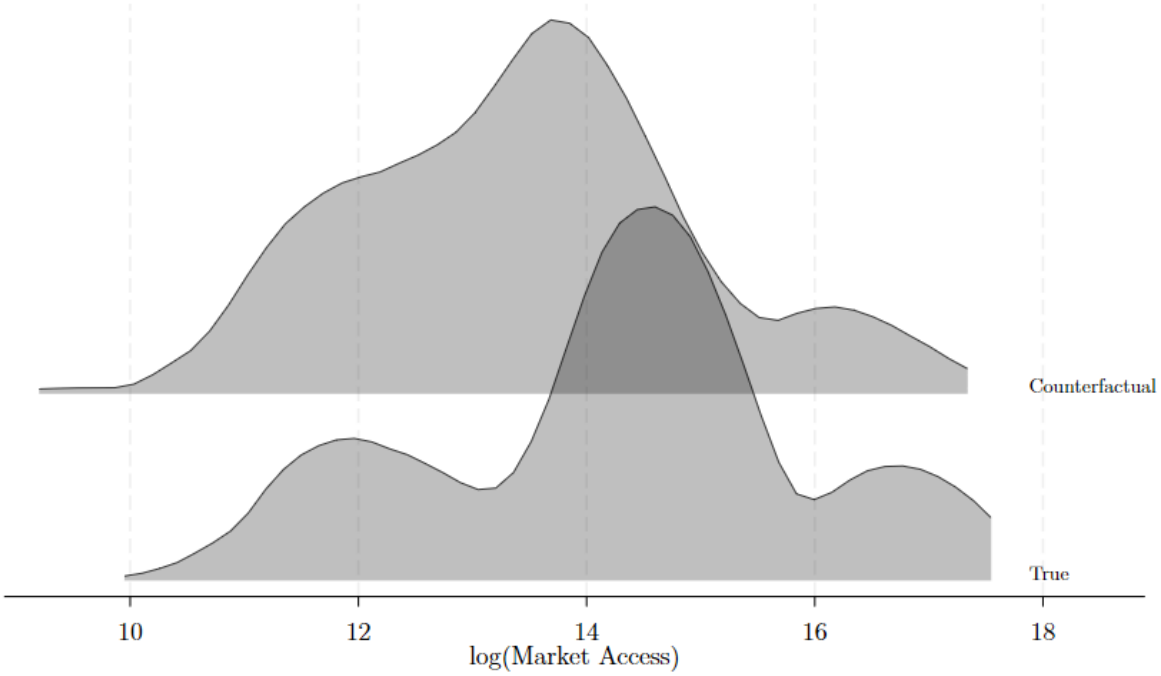
where M_j is the size of the market in district j, τ_{ij} is the travel time between between district i and j, and θ is a parameter that controls how quickly market access decays with travel time. Roads affect market access through τ_{ij}.

We measure the effect of roads on τ_{ij} using a logistics table from a marine intelligence report. The logistics table reports three key variables. First, it gives the distance between all districts in the same department. Second, it gives the travel time between all districts. Finally, it gives the transportation methods one needs for each trip. For example, Port-au-Prince is 95 km from Jacmel, and one can travel the entire distance in a car in 3.0 hours; Cornillon, on the other hand, is only 63 km from Port-au-Prince, but one must use a mix of car and horseback, so the trip takes 7.5 hours. We calculate the market access variable using the travel times reported in this logistics table for τ_{ij}. To get the effect of the roads, we calculate a counterfactual market access variable that assumes that assumes there are no cars. Using the trips within a department that use only horseback, we calculate the average travel speed. Then we use that horseback speed and calculate the time it would take to travel the distance of each trip, giving us a counterfactual, no-car travel time. We then calculate the market access variable again using the counterfactual travel times.

The other pieces of the market access variable are derived either from data or by assumption. For market size (M_j), we use average annual district-level tax collections from 1925 to 1931 as a proxy for economic activity. We do not have data to estimate the decay function variable (θ), so we have to rely on some assumptions. This variable describes how important a market τ hours away is relative to the home market. We assume that a market at the median travel time (5.25 hours) is half as important as the home market, which gives us a θ equal to 0.13. In the appendix, we test the robustness of the results with respect to this assumption.

The distributions of the true and counterfactual market access values are reported in Figure 5. Roads had the largest effect on the bottom half of the distribution. Many districts that would be relatively isolated because of long travel times on horseback became effectively closer to their neighboring districts through cars. The top of the distribution, on the other hand, saw only a little change. As one would expect, the biggest markets were already close to other markets.

Figure 5. Market access distribution: true vs counterfactual



Schools

The other significant nation-building project was the expansion of schooling. We use two reports on schooling to calculate how school availability changed during the occupation. We can collect the total of number national urban, national rural, and Presbyterial schools, as well as enrollment and average attendance for two years of the occupation: 1922 (Commission on Education in Haiti, 1930) and 1931 (Haiti, 1932). The data's timing is convenient for using it to measure the shift in education during the occupation. While the 1922 numbers come 7 years into the American occupation, they represent the state of schools when the Americans switched their strategy from establishing stability to promoting development (Palsson, 2023). The 1931 data come at

the same time that the intelligence report was collected, making it the most relevant for the opinions.

The data were reported by school districts. Since we do not know the distribution of schools across political districts within each school district, we assign the school district numbers to each political district. For example, the 24 schools reported in the Saint Marc school district in 1931 are attributed to Saint Marc, and the same 24 are assigned to both La Chapelle and Verrettes. In the empirical work, the standard errors are adjusted to account for the common data across political districts.

Empirical Framework

We aim to understand the relationship that U.S. occupation officials could plausibly observe between their policies and local political sentiment. While modern policy evaluation often seeks causal effects, causal identification is not necessary for understanding how doctrine developed. Instead, we ask whether the Americans would have seen evidence that their state-building efforts were associated with greater support for the occupation. We treat these associations not as proof of impact, but as the empirical patterns that could have informed their beliefs.

Our empirical goal is to look at how support for the occupation varied by exposure to the occupation's policies. To do this, we run the following regression:

$$Support_{id} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Exposure_d + \Gamma X_{id} + \varepsilon_{id}$$

$Support_{id}$ is the support for the occupation by prominent citizen i in district d. We measure support as whether the intelligence report assesses the citizen as having anti-occupation or anti-government feelings, or if they are associated with parties that are anti-occupation. $Exposure_d$ is the treatment variable and measure's district d's exposure to a nation-building policy. We investigate three policies: (1) counterinsurgency against the Kako camps; (2) road construction; and (3) schooling expansion. Since various factors influence whether someone opposes the occupation, we also include a series of demographic and district controls, X_{id}. The individual controls include the citizen's age, education, and reported race. The district control is the log-distance to Les Cayes, the source of the 1929 massacre that made international news and hastened the end of the occupation. Since exposure is at the district level, and since there is a spatial correlation in where policies were located, all regressions use Conley standard errors, adjusting for spatial correlations within 20 km. The coefficient of interest is β_1, the difference in anti-occupation sentiment between citizens living in districts more exposed to the policy and those living in districts that were less exposed. Since the outcome is whether the individuals held anti-occupation sentiments, the policy would be considered a success if β_1 is negative.

While we are not interested in identifying a causal effect, there are two factors that would confound even the learning aspect of an observed correlation. First, the occupation may have placed projects according to pre-existing sentiment. It may have rewarded districts that already supported it, or it may have tried to garner support in areas where

it was low. If such targeting occurred, officials would have known the correlation was not a sign of program success but an artefact of program design. Second, there is the concern that the occupation intelligence report did not reflect actual sentiments but instead was a piece of propaganda. There is evidence that the intelligence officers believed they had the support of individuals who were covertly working against the occupation's interests (Alexis, 2021, p. 124). If there was a correlation between projects and support, it may have been artificial. As in the first case, officials would have been aware of the factors driving the observed correlation and would not have learned from it.

We address these concerns with the 1918 constitutional referendum. The referendum was a vote to eliminate the ban on foreign property ownership, and the occupation pushed to guarantee the result. Ahead of the vote, it suspended its use of coerced labor and even sponsored local barbecues to garner support (Schmidt, 1971, p. 99). But it also threatened to arrest Haitians who publicly opposed the measure. This pressure was significant enough that it co-opted the local journalists, with articles appearing the day after the election condemning the opposition as deserters and unpatriotic.[1] After the referendum, the National School of Medicine dismissed six of its professors for voting against the constitutional reform (Logan, 1930, p. 450).[2] Thus, it is

[1] *Le Matin*, 13 June 1918, "La Constitution Nationale"

[2] The professors were later reinstated by President Dartiguenave at the insistence of the minister of public instruction, M. Dantès Bellegarde (Logan, 1930).

not surprising that the official counts show that 99% of voters supported to amendment, with 72% of districts reporting no votes opposed.

We use district-level data from the election to measure pre-project sentiment. Since the occupation suppressed the opposition, the results do not measure the true feelings towards the occupation. But we argue there are two variables that still signal local feelings. First, the number of "yes" votes in each district, conditional on population, reflects the occupation's ability to mobilize supporters. Second, the 28% of districts who registered at least one opposition vote show that there were locals with strong enough convictions against the occupation that they were willing to risk the threats of reprisal.

In Table 2, we examine the relationship between these two variables from the 1918 election and the outcomes and treatments in this paper. In the first column of the first panel, we show that there is a weak relationship between the 1918 votes and the 1934 anti-occupation sentiments. The coefficient on "yes" votes is positive, as we would expect, but it is not statistically significant. But the coefficient on any "no" votes is positive and statistically significant at the 10% level. Despite the election manipulation, the results have some information about local sentiment 16 years later. We do not find a relationship between the 1918 votes and the location of the kako camps where counterinsurgency operations would take place. But the remaining columns in Table 2 show that the "yes" votes predict more market access, schools, enrollment, and attendance, while the "no" votes predict less.

Table 2. Pre-existing sentiment and project placement by district

	Anti-Occupation	Any Camps	Δ ln(MarketAccess)
ln(Votes Yes)	-0.04	0.004	0.16**
	[0.066]	[0.054]	[0.068]
Any No Votes	0.15*	0.14	-0.58***
	[0.081]	[0.12]	[0.15]
ln(Population)	0.03	-0.036	0.16
	[0.046]	[0.063]	[0.10]
N	100	100	100
	Δ ln(Schools)	Δ ln(Enrollment)	Δ ln(Attendance)
ln(Votes Yes)	0.056**	0.092***	0.088**
	[0.024]	[0.033]	[0.040]
Any No Votes	-0.026	-0.14*	-0.15**
	[0.046]	[0.075]	[0.062]
ln(Population)	0.048*	0.077*	0.14***
	[0.027]	[0.040]	[0.038]
N	100	100	100

Notes: The level of observation is the district. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Thus, in addition to the baseline specification, we also estimate an augmented specification:

$$Support_{id} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Exposure_d + \beta_2 \ln(Yes\ Votes_d) + \beta_3 AnyNo_d + \Gamma X_{id} + \varepsilon_{id}.$$

This specification controls for the pre-project sentiment using the district-level 1918 election results. These controls for the pre-period should absorb the variation caused by project targeting, meaning the β_1 is a better approximation of what the occupation learned from the intelligence reports.

Results and Discussion

Counterinsurgency

Table 3 reports our results with the kako camps. The dependent variable in each column is whether the individual had anti-occupation sentiments. The first column of the first panel shows that citizens in a district with any camps were 13.1 percentage points less likely to oppose the occupation. Table 1 shows the mean anti-occupation sentiment was 25%, so these individuals were 52% less likely to oppose the occupation. The difference is significant at the 10% level using Conley standard errors. Column 3 of Table 3 uses a Poisson regression and the number of kako camps in the district, with a similar negative coefficient. In columns 2 and 4, we control for the 1918 votes. The coefficient on the kako camp dummy increases by 15%, though the difference between the two coefficients is not statistically significant, and the coefficient itself is only significant at the 10% level.

While the results' statistical significance is only moderate, the size and direction are noteworthy. It is natural to think that the insurgents placed their camps in areas sympathetic to their cause. But the intelligence reports show that these areas were the least likely to have prominent citizens to oppose the occupation. There are a few interpretations of these results. First, the prominent citizens might not represent the average citizen. Second, since finding camps required the help of locals, the map might reveal where citizens were most sympathetic to the occupation. Finally, the citizens in these areas might secretly oppose the occupation but publicly support it to deter the Americans from further invasive actions.

Table 3. Relationship between insurgent locations and anti-occupation sentiment

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Any Kako Camps	-0.131*	-0.146*		
	[0.0784]	[0.0763]		
Number of Kako Camps			-0.0144*	-0.0140*
			[0.00843]	[0.00836]
1918 Controls		X		X
N	1,115	1,115	1,115	1,115
R^2	0.28	0.331	0.276	0.323

Notes: Dependent variable is a dummy equal to one if the individual opposed the occupation. All regressions contain the full set of demographic controls, district population, and the distance from Cayes. Conley standard errors in brackets. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Road Building and Economic Improvements

Table 4 reports the results from road building and the changes in economic conditions. A one standard deviation increase in market access (0.72 log points) is associated with a 21 percentage point decrease in anti-occupation sentiment, significant at the 1% level. Column 2 controls for the 1918 referendum, which reduces the magnitude of the coefficient to 15.5 percentage points, consistent with the political targeting of the projects, but it is still significant at the 1% level. In column 3, we use the market-connected profession dummy. Individuals with a market-connected profession were 10 percentage points less likely to have anti-occupation sentiments, significant at the 10% level. The magnitude stays the same with the 1918 controls, though the precision increases, leading to statistically significant results at the 5% level. Since the two treatments could be related,

we include both in columns 5 and 6, but the magnitudes and statistical significance all remain.

Table 4. Market improvements and anti-occupation sentiment

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Δ ln(Market Access)	-0.212***	-0.155***			-0.210***	-0.155***
	[0.0798]	[0.0456]			[0.0768]	[0.0459]
Market-connected			-0.0994*	-0.0922**	-0.0949**	-0.0926**
Profession			[0.0554]	[0.0433]	[0.0481]	[0.0433]
1918 Controls		X		X		X
N	1,115	1,115	1,115	1,115	1,115	1,115
R^2	0.328	0.341	0.278	0.325	0.336	0.348

Notes: Dependent variable is a dummy equal to one if the individual opposed the occupation. All regressions contain the full set of demographic controls, district population, and the distance from Cayes. Conley standard errors in brackets. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Schools

The schooling results are reported in Table 5. Whether we use the log-change in schools, enrolment, or attendance, the coefficient is negative, suggesting expanding schooling may have helped reduce anti-occupation sentiment, but only one result is statistically significant at the 10% level. After we add the 1918 controls, the magnitudes shrink and no results are significant at conventional levels.

While there is weak evidence that the schooling project reduced anti-occupation sentiment, it is plausible that the schools had no effect on the feelings towards the occupation. The Americans did not focus on general education, focusing more on vocational. Furthermore, the state of education was poor, with one Haitian official reporting that many of the teachers were tested and discovered to be illiterate (1932 expose p. 114). The expansion of schooling might not have expanded education, generating no additional support from the prominent citizens. Finally, the issues around schooling inspired the protests that convinced the Americans to leave.

Table 5. Anti-occupation sentiment and schools

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Δ ln(Schools)	-0.0773	-0.0407				
	[0.187]	[0.170]				
Δ ln(Enrollment)			-0.0499	-0.00352		
			[0.0943]	[0.105]		
Δ ln(Attendance)					-0.169*	-0.11
					[0.0865]	[0.0772]
1918 Controls		X		X		X
N	1,115	1,115	1,115	1,115	1,115	1,115
R^2	0.270	0.317	0.271	0.317	0.292	0.326

Notes: Dependent variable is a dummy equal to one if the individual opposed the occupation. All regressions contain the full set of demographic controls, district population, and the distance from Cayes. Conley standard errors in brackets. ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$

Discussion and Conclusion

This paper has examined the puzzle of how the U.S. developed a doctrine for cultivating soft power after a series of poorly executed military occupations. Using intelligence reports from the Haitian occupation of 1915 to 1934, we find that occupation officials perceived that beneficiaries of development programs were more likely to support the occupation. While we do not claim a causal effect, we argue that the correlation would have given the Americans reason to believe that soft power was a worthy policy goal.

Not only do the results contribute to the intellectual history of state-building in conflict and post-conflict countries, it helps us understand the role of process legitimacy and performance legitimacy in interventions. The US occupation of Haiti failed to establish process legitimacy: the Haitian presidents were widely seen as American puppets, and in 1918 the occupation dissolved the legislature and manipulated a plebiscite to amend the constitution. This paper suggests that the elite evaluated the occupation not on process but on performance.

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