circum-Caribbean. (The book was published in 1989; Palmer does note that international terrorism and drug trafficking had become dimensions of low-intensity conflict.) While Palmer is hardly alone in this regard, his conclusions nevertheless offer little guidance for understanding future military policies in a new international environment devoid of issues related to the Soviet presence. The book is valuable in revealing the policy perceptions, calculations, and actions of a high-ranking U.S. military participant in Caribbean affairs of the 1960s.

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The U.S. government was involved in covert operations in Mexico before the administration of James Knox Polk (1845–1849). But Polk followed in the footsteps of Andrew Jackson and John Tyler with even greater imagination. He made a political commitment to annex Texas and later to acquire California and New Mexico. Polk was willing to buy, but Mexico was not willing to sell. The president’s plan for expansion of the United States at the expense of Mexico could be realized only by war. "To conquer a peace" was Polk’s expansion policy; to force the Mexicans to hand over their land as part of a peace treaty (p. 43).

Brooke Caruso’s book is an intricate account of Polk's covert operations to annex Texas to the Union and to promulgate an attitude of hostility toward Mexico in order to bring about war, which would allow the United States to fight for California and add New Mexico in the bargain. In minute detail Caruso follows the heavy traffic of information, or disinformation, between the spies and the U.S. administration about the Mexican government’s capacity to govern, its ability to wage a war, its army’s troop movements and intentions and its relations with the British and the French.

For so much detail, however, it is not easy to discern the larger historical picture into which Caruso’s work should fit. If the author had one, it might be the process by which the power of the people could be transferred to the few. If the essence of covert operations is the capacity to deny responsibility, then such operations conducted by the president rendered him and other elected representatives unaccountable for the policies they pursued. As Caruso concludes, by taking land from Mexico to add to the United States, Polk also took power from the American people, changing the rules and the relationship of the president to the people and the other branches of government.

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