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**AFFECTING U.S. POLICY TOWARD LATIN AMERICA:
AN ANALYSIS OF LOWER-LEVEL OFFICIALS**

by

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AN ANALYSIS OF LOWER-LEVEL OFFICIALS**

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I examined U.S. foreign policy toward Latin America, primarily during the Cold War. I sought to answer the following questions: (1) What factors influenced the behavior of lower-level U.S. officials stationed in Latin America at the time? and (2) How much policy-affecting agency did these officials have? Using primary source documentation contained in the State Department's Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) volumes to the maximum extent possible, I examined the following case studies: Guatemala circa 1954, Costa Rica circa 1948, and lastly, present-day Bolivia. In my research and analysis, I shed light on the dynamic that existed between Washington policymakers and lower-level officials stationed in-region, mainly ambassadors. My analysis resulted in the following conclusions: (1) anti-communist Cold War hysteria clouded the judgment of lower-level officials, (2) pressure from Washington elites largely influenced the behavior of these officials, and (3) U.S. officials stationed in-region had relatively little policy-affecting agency. Ultimately, I make a case for a U.S. foreign policy apparatus that empowers lower-level officials stationed in-region. This arrangement will prove most effective in observing, analyzing, and appreciating the nuances present in foreign countries, which would result in a flexible and tailored U.S. foreign policy.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION.....	1
A.	MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION.....	1
B.	SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION.....	2
C.	LITERATURE REVIEW	4
1.	Exaggerated Fear of Communism in Latin America	5
2.	U.S. Paternalistic Image of Latin America.....	7
3.	Lack of Latin Americanists.....	9
D.	POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS AND HYPOTHESES	10
E.	RESEARCH DESIGN	11
F.	THESIS OVERVIEW AND DRAFT CHAPTER OUTLINE.....	14
II.	REFORM AND REACTION IN GUATEMALA.....	15
A.	INTRODUCTION TO GUATEMALAN CASE STUDY	15
B.	WHERE THE CURRENT DEBATE STANDS.....	16
C.	AMBASSADOR KYLE’S RESPONSE TO A REVOLUTION, 1945–48.....	20
D.	PASSING AMBASSADOR PATTERSON’S “DUCK TEST,” 1948–51.....	23
E.	THE “RED MENACE” CONTINUES TO RISE: AMBASSADOR SCHOENFELD, 1951–53	25
F.	MAN ON AN ANTI-COMMUNIST MISSION: AMBASSADOR PEURIFOY, 1953–54.....	28
G.	CONCLUSIONS REGARDING GUATEMALAN CASE STUDY	30
III.	COSTA RICA AND PRESIDENT FIGUERES.....	35
A.	INTRODUCTION TO COSTA RICAN CASE STUDY.....	35
B.	PRESIDENT RAFAEL CALDERÓN GUARDIA, 1940–44	37
C.	PRESIDENT TEODORO PICADO MICHALSKI, 1944–48.....	39
D.	PRESIDENT JOSÉ FIGUERES FERRER: 1948–49 AND 1953– 58.....	41
E.	CONSISTENCY IN U.S. POLICY DESPITE DIFFERENT OUTCOMES	45
F.	ANALYSIS OF AGENCY OF LOWER-LEVEL U.S. OFFICIALS.....	47
IV.	A CONTEMPORARY CASE STUDY: EVO MORALES IN BOLIVIA	53
A.	INTRODUCTION TO BOLIVIAN CASE STUDY	53

B.	A CONTROVERSIAL FIGURE RISES IN BOLIVIA	54
C.	U.S. OFFICIALS' REACTIONS TO MORALES.....	57
D.	MORALES'S MOTIVES AND AN ANALYSIS OF THE FACTS	64
E.	FINAL THOUGHTS ON MORALES-BOLIVIA CASE STUDY	69
V.	CONCLUSION AND FINAL THOUGHTS	71
A.	REVIEW OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.....	71
B.	LIMITATIONS OF THIS PROJECT	74
C.	THEN AND NOW IN U.S. FOREIGN POLICY.....	75
D.	CONGRESSIONAL FINDINGS ON THE ISSUE OF U.S. FOREIGN POLICY	77
	LIST OF REFERENCES	81
	INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST	87

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
DEA	Drug Enforcement Administration
FDR	Franklin Delano Roosevelt
FRUS	Foreign Relations of the United States
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MAS	<i>Movimiento al Socialismo</i>
UFCO	United Fruit Company
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USSR	United Soviet States of Russia

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

During the Cold War, the United States government often paid close attention to the internal affairs of Latin American countries, especially when a real or perceived communist threat existed. In an attempt to combat the spread of communism and the USSR's influence in the region, the United States made a habit of intervening in the domestic affairs of its Latin American neighbors. U.S. presidents, cabinet members, diplomats, and military advisors all focused their efforts on the region to a greater extent than they had in the decades prior to the Cold War.

Despite the focused efforts of the U.S. government, Latin American military officials were still disappointed in the apparent ignorance U.S. policymakers and diplomats demonstrated regarding the social, political, and historical context of the countries they were trying to help. On this topic, Brian Loveman notes, "Latin Americans pretended, usually, not to notice the feigned (and unfeigned) naiveté of U.S. diplomats and officers."¹ He later adds, that these Latin American officials "were frustrated by the incomprehension and ignorance of U.S. policymakers, diplomats, and military personnel regarding local history, political circumstances, and sociocultural conditions."²

My research question stems directly from Loveman's observations. First and foremost, what factors contributed to the perceived incomprehension U.S. officials demonstrated with regard to the affairs of Latin America during the Cold War? Secondly, how much agency did these lower-level officials have with regard to U.S. policy toward Latin America? Ultimately, my research and analysis led me to the following conclusions: (1) the anti-communist hysteria of the Cold War years largely clouded the judgment of U.S. officials in Latin America; (2) decision makers in Washington retained overwhelming policy-affecting agency, thereby leaving relatively little agency for lower-

¹ Brian Loveman, *For la Patria: Politics and the Armed Forces in Latin America* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1999), 153.

² *Ibid.*, 170.

level officials; and (3) these undesirable characteristics, though somewhat improved in modern times, are still present in U.S. policy toward Latin America.

B. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The United States wields a great deal of power and influence in the world, and this is especially true with regard to the Western Hemisphere. U.S. foreign policy has significant repercussions both inside and outside its own borders, and this reality underscores the need for U.S. officials to craft a thoughtful and responsible foreign policy. When U.S. officials focus their attention on a specific region or country, they can tap into an incomparable depth of resources; therefore, the resultant foreign policy should logically be based on a relatively sound understanding of the challenges faced.

During the Cold War, however, Latin American officials on the receiving end of a more highly concentrated U.S. foreign policy thought U.S. officials assigned to the region still demonstrated a surprising level of ignorance. This assessment presents a potentially troubling fault in U.S. foreign policy during the critical Cold War years. In the previously mentioned excerpt, Loveman makes a general and critical statement regarding U.S. foreign policy, but he does not reference a specific source in making this assertion, nor does he dive deeper into the root causes of U.S. ignorance at this time.³ He left the door open for further research and understanding on this matter.

Not surprisingly, this period of U.S. foreign policy has received a relatively great deal of attention from the academic community—more so than perhaps any other period of U.S.-Latin American relations. Back then, as is the case today, talented though imperfect men and women attempted to develop a U.S. foreign policy that met the demands of their nation. In examining this topic, scholars typically attribute the character of U.S. foreign policy to the pertinent presidents, senior advisers, and secretaries of state.⁴ On this issue, Stephen Rabe claims that “officers in the State Department, the CIA, and the U.S. military

³ Loveman, *For la Patria*, 170.

⁴ John D. Martz, *United States Policy in Latin America: A Quarter Century of Crisis and Challenge, 1961–1986* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1988), XVI; Robert Wesson and Heraldo Munoz, *Latin American Views of U.S. Policy* (New York: Praeger, 1986), 70; Robert Pastor, *Not Condemned to Repetition: The United States and Nicaragua* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2002), 296.

adopted the prejudices of their superiors in the White House and the National Security Bureaucracy.”⁵ Here, we see a reputable scholar attributing very little agency to the lower-level U.S. officials in the field, and this is in fact the general consensus view.

Comparatively, much less literature focuses on lower-level U.S. officials in region. Social scientists mention ambassadors in some of their works, but most works stop there. Kyle Longley dives deeper, though, and claims that “U.S. policies toward Latin America originated not in the White House but largely with U.S. officials in the field and in the lower levels of the State Department.”⁶ This is clearly the minority view with respect to this topic.

My intent with this project is not to cast blame on any U.S. officials for tragedies experienced in Latin America—especially in the case of Guatemala. Instead, I simply want to uncover the underlying factors that contributed to any misguided, ill-informed, or intentionally counterintuitive decisions on the part of U.S. officials. My intent is therefore to contribute to our understanding of a period in U.S. foreign policy that seemed to incorporate a questionable calculus.

Ultimately, after analyzing case studies during the Cold War, I apply a similar analytical pattern to a contemporary case study where the primary source material is not as abundant. The primary take-away from this specific investigation is a critique of a contemporary foreign policy case study to see if, or to what extent, the behavior of U.S. officials in Latin America has evolved since the Cold War. This sheds light on whether or not similarly detrimental causal factors still exist. If current U.S. policymakers, diplomats, and military advisers are still operating under a comparably questionable logic, this issue is worth addressing and then rectifying.

⁵ Stephen G. Rabe, *The Killing Zone: The United States Wages Cold War in Latin America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 205.

⁶ Kyle Longley, *The Sparrow and the Hawk: Costa Rica and the United States during the Rise of Jose Figueres* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1997), 160.

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

As I alluded to previously, there is no shortage of literature on U.S. foreign policy toward Latin America during the Cold War. Many scholars have conducted extensive research in attempts to understand U.S. foreign policy and its effects during the Cold War, and the continued declassification of U.S. documentation will undoubtedly result in further research and writing on the topic. Specifically, for this project, my question pertains to why U.S. officials demonstrated miscomprehension in their dealings with their Latin American counterparts, and many possible answers exist.

I have grouped existing answers to this question into three thematic categories. The first possible explanation is that in the heated anticommunist context of the Cold War, U.S. officials had a myopic view of insurgencies and other forms of revolution in Latin America—they were all communist-inspired and most likely a manifestation of USSR meddling in the region. This answer largely addresses the level of analysis of the international system. A second explanation is that U.S. officials thought of themselves as superior to their Latin American counterparts, therefore countries in the region depended on the United States for guidance. According to this logic, the dependent, inferior, and child-like officials in Latin America were incapable of managing their own affairs; therefore, it was incumbent on U.S. officials with a greater understanding of the Cold War context to aid them in managing their own domestic affairs. This second explanation largely addresses the level of analysis of the individual, as it addresses personal biases and prejudices.

The final explanation I encountered is that U.S. officials did not have a deep understanding of the nuances of domestic affairs in Latin America because historically, the United States had neglected the region. The United States simply did not have at its disposal a pool of regional experts to construct an effective foreign policy for Latin America. This last category largely pertains to the level of analysis of the state, as this lack of expertise was generally of a national nature. Of note, these three existing explanations are not necessarily mutually exclusive—they could all be partly true at the same time. Furthermore, each of these three categories contains various nuanced arguments, which I will discuss in the following pages.

1. Exaggerated Fear of Communism in Latin America

The first existing explanation for U.S. miscomprehension of Latin American affairs can be labeled as the “communist bogeyman” explanation and subscribes to an East-West view of the world.⁷ The fear of communism’s spread is perhaps the most recurring explanation in existing literature. The rationale for this explanation is that in the context of the Cold War, the United States feared any insurgency or potential political leftward shift in a Latin America country, because it meant that communism had infected the country. This fear led to a myopic, clouded view of the international arena, and it contributed to U.S. officials creating a reactionary policy to combat this real or perceived communist threat.⁸

I have broken down this possible explanation into two subcategories. The first subcategory is of an ideological nature. According to this logic, an irrational fear and hatred of communism as an ideology led U.S. policymakers to misdiagnose as communist-inspired the causal factors of insurgencies and political shifts in Latin America, when in fact, these occurrences instead had discernable, domestic origins.⁹ This misunderstanding on the part of policymakers in Washington then shaped the U.S. officials on the ground in Latin America. In fact, the majority of U.S. foreign policy analysis during the Cold War is Washington-centric and focuses on major players of the time, such as U.S. presidents, secretaries of state, and high-ranking advisors to the president.

Additionally, much of the existing literature on U.S.-Latin America relations during the Cold War points to the ideological clash between the capitalism espoused by the West and the communism of the USSR-led eastern bloc.¹⁰ For U.S. policymakers, issues

⁷ William M. LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard: The United States in Central America, 1977–1992* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 5; Brian Loveman, *For la Patria*, 149; Peter Smith, *Talons of the Eagle: Latin America, the United States, and the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 176.

⁸ Smith, *Talons of the Eagle*, 177.

⁹ Thomas C. Wright, *Latin America in the Era of the Cuban Revolution* (Westport: Praeger, 2001), 88; Stephen G. Rabe, *The Killing Zone*, XXXVI; Peter Smith, *Talons of the Eagle*, 176–77.

¹⁰ Hal Brands, *Latin America’s Cold War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 68.

involving communism were different and warranted a distinct U.S. response.¹¹ Certain politicians and scholars have framed this ideological clash as being between the “free world” and the “evil empire.”¹² Communism’s incompatibility with both democracy and capitalism therefore could not be accepted, especially not in the Western Hemisphere. In Latin America, communism was a poison that threatened to exploit the already existing grievances of millions of have-nots in the region.¹³ This ideological clash created a myopic and distorted lens through which many U.S. policymakers viewed the events in Latin American countries. For U.S. officials, this overly simplistic view of the world masked the authentic, underlying causes of the grievances espoused by insurgents in the region.¹⁴ Therefore, a myopic view of the world born from an ideological clash contributed to U.S. officials’ miscomprehension of the true nature of events in Latin America, when in many instances, Latin American insurgents and reformers were not concerned with USSR-sponsored ideologies.¹⁵

The second subcategory of the communist explanation is grounded more firmly in security concerns. The U.S. government wanted to stifle the spread of USSR and Cuban influence in the Western Hemisphere, and this was the driving motivation in U.S. intervention in other countries’ domestic affairs.¹⁶ In an attempt to avoid “another Cuba,” the United States often hastily and without an accurate understanding intervened in a country’s internal affairs. This realist perspective found its base in U.S. officials’ zero-sum calculus during the Cold War.¹⁷ Any leftist politician or insurgency represented a win for the USSR and a loss for the United States. Officials then developed the United States’

¹¹ Smith, *Talons of the Eagle*, 147.

¹² Loveman, *For la Patria*, 198; Rabe, *The Killing Zone*, 162.

¹³ Ethan B. Kapstein, “Success and Failure in Counterinsurgency Campaigns: Lessons from the Cold War.” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 19, no. 1 (Winter 2017): 133.

¹⁴ Gregory Weeks, *U.S. and Latin American Relations* (New York: Pearson Longman, 2008), 143.

¹⁵ James D. Cockcroft, *Latin America: History, Politics, and U.S. Policy* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers, 1998), 47.

¹⁶ Robert Wesson and Heraldo Munoz, *Latin American Views of U.S. Policy*, 63; Stephen G. Rabe, *The Killing Zone*, XXXVI; George Fauriol, *Latin American Insurgencies* (Washington: Georgetown University Center for Strategic & International Studies, 1985), 14.

¹⁷ Smith, *Talons of the Eagle*, 151.

containment strategy—largely attributed to the views of George Kennan—to combat the USSR’s attempts to conquer the world. Again, this East-West view of the world skewed reality for U.S. policymakers, thereby leading them to misdiagnose the origins of conflict in Latin American countries.

Fidel Castro’s triumph in Cuba in 1959, along with Che Guevara’s threats to the United States in *Guerrilla Warfare*, exacerbated this tendency in U.S. foreign policy. U.S. presidents desperately wanted to avoid another Cuba, and this fear further contributed to their frequent misunderstanding of the complexities of Latin America’s issues.¹⁸ In this view, the USSR and Cuba were the real underlying threats behind Latin American insurgencies. Unfortunately, U.S. officials often neglected the domestic grievances that fueled many of these insurgencies.¹⁹

2. U.S. Paternalistic Image of Latin America

I have labeled the second possible general explanation for U.S. miscomprehension as the “white man’s burden” explanation, as it states that U.S. officials viewed their counterparts in Latin America as somehow inferior and in need of help from the United States.²⁰ This ethnocentric view would have distorted U.S. officials’ understanding of reality in the region and certainly could have contributed to Latin American armed forces’ poor perception of them. I have broken this broad thematic category into three subcategories. First, some social scientists state that policymakers in Washington believed that only they accurately understood the challenges Latin American countries were facing, because they (U.S. officials) could comprehend the global Cold War context better than officials in the region. Therefore, U.S. officials thought of themselves as more adept at identifying communist threats.²¹ Their experience combatting international communism

¹⁸ Che Guevara, Brian Loveman and Thomas M. Davies Jr., *Guerrilla Warfare* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1997), 20–22.

¹⁹ Martz, *United States Policy in Latin America*, 283.

²⁰ Lars Schoultz, *Beneath the United States: A History of U.S. Policy Toward Latin America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), XVI; Martha Cottam, *Images and Intervention: U.S. Policies in Latin America* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1994), 11.

²¹ Smith, *Talons of the Eagle*, 122.

gave them a feeling of superiority, and in some ways, this arrogance resulted in U.S. naïveté regarding the complexities of certain domestic issues in Latin America.²²

The second subcategory to this explanation contains outright and blatant racism on the part of U.S. policymakers and officials in the region. A quote from former Secretary of State for Economic Affairs Thomas C. Mann perhaps best encapsulates this explanation: “I know my Latinos... They understand only two things—a buck in the pocket and a kick in the ass.”²³ Additionally, chief architect of the U.S. containment strategy implemented in Latin America, George Kennan, also left behind some racially charged and unflattering descriptions of Latin America after he visited the region.²⁴ Again, racism would inhibit an accurate assessment of reality in the region.

The third subcategory in this general explanation relates to the first two, but I believe it warrants further analysis as its own category. This subcategory portrays the United States as the teacher of the childlike and dependent Latin America.²⁵ Martha Cottam notes that this dependent image of Latin Americans inhibited U.S. policymakers’ ability to grasp the nuanced and complex nature of domestic politics in the region during the Cold War.²⁶ Because of this view, based on the perceived existence of dependency, U.S. policymakers concluded that the inferior populations of Latin America needed guidance from a more experienced and wiser country. As Stephen Rabe comments, many in Washington thought they needed to save Latin America from itself.²⁷ Once again, we see another tendency in U.S. foreign policy that led to an inaccurate and offensive assessment of domestic situations in Latin America.

²² Cottam, *Images and Intervention*, 182.

²³ Smith, *Talons of the Eagle*, 146.

²⁴ Rabe, *The Killing Zone*, 23.

²⁵ Walter LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 1983), 300–302.

²⁶ Cottam, *Images and Intervention*, 11, 35.

²⁷ Rabe, *The Killing Zone*, 25.

3. Lack of Latin Americanists

The third and final broad explanation related to my research question simply states that the United States had a lack of regional expertise, or Latin Americanists, that were capable of shaping a sound foreign policy grounded in an accurate understanding of the region's affairs.²⁸ After World War II, an experienced Latin Americanist in the State Department observed that, "Men [in high office] who know the [Western] hemisphere and love it are few...and those who are known by the hemisphere and loved by it are fewer still."²⁹ Many scholars have stated that this was a common theme through much of the Cold War.³⁰ Furthermore, if Washington dominated the crafting of foreign policy, as is the general consensus, than U.S. policy and the lower-level officials that implemented it would have also reflected this ill-informed character. In fact, Smith and Loveman observe that this lack of regional knowledge was indeed also evident in lower levels of the State Department and military, particularly in the early years of the Cold War.³¹

In addition to "men of high office," the U.S. public was also generally ignorant and not interested in the affairs of Latin America.³² This lack of interest from constituents possibly granted Washington officials greater freedom in policy implementation.³³ Furthermore, this disinterested population meant that government agencies had a smaller pool of qualified professionals from which to choose. On this topic, Hal Brands points out that USAID had a difficult time finding people with language and regional expertise to execute its mission in Latin America.³⁴ Logically, this reality also probably contributed to the lack of knowledge Smith and Loveman critiqued in the ranks of the U.S. State Department and military.

²⁸ Martz, *United States Policy in Latin America*, XV.

²⁹ Smith, *Talons of the Eagle*, 125.

³⁰ Rabe, 165–166; Martz, *United States Policy in Latin America*, XV; Pastor, *Not Condemned to Repetition*, 295–296.

³¹ Smith, *Talons of the Eagle*, 188; Loveman, *For la Patria*, 139, 169–170.

³² Martz, *United States Policy in Latin America*, XIV.

³³ Wesson and Munoz, *Latin American Views of U.S. Policy*, 70.

³⁴ Brands, *Latin America's Cold War*, 56–57.

D. POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS AND HYPOTHESES

First, I acknowledge the complexity of this issue, so I do not seek a simple explanation with universal applicability. I also concede that existing explanations provide part of the answer to my question. For example, extensive evidence shows that the heated, bipolar nature of the Cold War and the United States' ideological and security concerns played some part in senior U.S. officials' misunderstanding of the complex nature of domestic affairs in Latin American countries. However, my question dives deeper into the conduct of lower-level U.S. officials in an attempt to understand this conduct's causal factors and potential policy implications.

My hypothesis is that in some cases, U.S. officials in region were effectively extensions of Washington policymakers, but at times, certain individuals with relevant experience, competence, and commitment were able to shape U.S. foreign policy toward their assigned countries. I believe some lower-level officials were able to effectively analyze the complexity and nuanced character of affairs in their assigned country, which resulted in tailored policy recommendations for Washington. Policymaking was not always a one-way street with Washington, nor were all officials inescapably driven by a myopic view of the bipolar world during the Cold War. To be sure, there will be examples of unquestioned obedience and lack of critical thinking and analysis, but there will also be examples of proactive, imaginative U.S. officials that wielded agency and affected change.

To test this hypothesis, I primarily rely on official U.S. correspondence found in Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS). I look for evidence of resistance from U.S. foreign service officers (and military officers when possible) in their correspondence with Washington. I expect to find instances of disagreement between Washington and its embassies. Additionally, I look for detailed and thoughtful analyses of affairs in specific Latin American countries as opposed to myopic assessments clouded by the anti-communist and Cold War context.

I believe this research and analysis reminds us of the need to design a foreign policy tailored to meet the nuanced and complex character of the countries with which we interact. U.S. foreign policy decisions matter in Latin America and having competent and properly

trained individuals on the ground that are willing to contest misguided policies increases the likelihood of producing a sound, moral policy. My research underscores the significance of individual agency at the lower levels of policy implementation.

E. RESEARCH DESIGN

In my thesis, I primarily focus on U.S. officials in Latin America and how they operated within the Cold War context. I am interested in understanding what factors contributed to them seemingly demonstrating miscomprehension in their conduct in Latin America. For my research, I rely heavily on primary source documents, specifically collections found in FRUS, which include correspondence between policymakers, diplomats, and advisers. I want to see to what extent U.S. officials in region pushed back against policymakers in Washington. Any resistance, questioning, or challenging of Washington's guidance demonstrates potential agency on the part of lower-level U.S. officials.

At the individual level, I want to know how much agency U.S. officials in Latin America actually had—did their own personal perceptions, prejudices, and assessments significantly impact U.S. policy in the region? In researching this level of analysis, I again rely heavily on correspondence between embassies and Washington contained in FRUS. The voices of Latin American scholars also enrich this analysis, as they provide a glimpse into the other side of this foreign policy exchange.

At the level of analysis of the state, I want to discover how influential the broad U.S. objectives were in shaping the specific policy U.S. officials implemented in their assigned countries. Was guidance from Washington insurmountable for U.S. diplomats and advisers in Latin America? Again, official U.S. documentation and correspondence between Washington and embassies in the region aid in uncovering explanations at this level of analysis.

Finally, at the level of the international system, I seek to attribute an accurate level of significance to the bipolar context of the Cold War. Was this East-West, capitalism-versus-communism perspective the driving force behind any potential misguided actions on behalf of U.S. officials in Latin America? Again, declassified U.S. State Department

documentation in FRUS is somewhat revealing, but I also rely on the wealth of relevant scholarly sources to reach a conclusion at this level. In primary sources, I want to see to what extent U.S. officials refer to a fear of communism and the spread of USSR influence.

In an attempt to narrow the scope of my research to a manageable level, I first select specific timeframes and countries in Latin America during the Cold War. Along these same lines, I target specific individuals that participated in these events. In Washington, I look primarily to presidents, high-level advisers, and secretaries of state. In region, if and when existing sources permit, I target specific lower-level officials—mainly U.S. ambassadors.

For my case studies, I selected two Central American countries in which the United States intervened to some extent in response to a perceived communist threat. First, I selected a country that experienced a bloody civil war and an unsuccessful insurgency: Guatemala. Second, I selected a country that experienced a relatively quick and less brutal civil war and no insurgency: Costa Rica. These two case studies have various similarities as they both: (1) experienced a civil war during the Cold War years, (2) had a reformist president elected around 1950 that caught the attention of Washington, and (3) experienced some level of U.S. intervention in their domestic affairs. However, the experience of these two countries differed greatly beginning in the 1950s. For example, Costa Rica moved past the brief civil war that took the lives of 2,000 citizens and went on to experience decades of relatively peaceful, stable, and prosperous democratic rule. Guatemala on the other hand endured government overthrows and a decades-long civil war that extinguished the lives of 200,000 of its citizens. These two similar, but also very different cases elicited different U.S. responses and eventually provided two distinct challenges confronting U.S. officials. I want to see if causal factors driving officials' behavior were similar or different in these two instances. My intent with these case studies is not to necessarily attribute a specific outcome to U.S. intervention in each specific country, but rather to see how U.S. officials handled their affairs in distinct situations.

Guatemala is an interesting case study because it marks the first successful U.S.-supported coup of a democratically elected president in Latin America during the Cold War. Even to present day, a certain degree of mystery still surrounds Guatemalan President Jacobo Árbenz and his potential communist ties and motivations. Ultimately, though, fear

of a leftist president in Guatemala certainly contributed to some extent to the U.S. decision to intervene. Subsequently, a military regime and a brutal civil war followed this intervention.

For this case study, I specifically focus on Guatemala's revolution beginning in 1944, which eventually met its conclusion in 1954 with the U.S.-sponsored coup. Again, I do not seek to attribute responsibility to any one side in this case study—that is beyond the scope of my paper. I simply seek to understand the role U.S. officials played in these events and the factors that contributed to their possible miscomprehension at this time.

Costa Rica presents an intriguing case study because it is a Central American country that avoided the type of extended, brutal civil war experienced by many of its neighbors.³⁵ Some have attributed Costa Rica's relative peaceful and distinct outcome to the agency of Costa Rican President Jose "Pepe" Figueres and his ability to effectively manage relations with the United States. However, I want to uncover the role played by U.S. officials in their interactions with the Figueres administration. For this case study, I will specifically focus on the years leading up to Costa Rica's civil war in 1948 and the two subsequent presidential administrations. This particular timeframe is similar to the period I examine in my Guatemalan case study. Compared to this Guatemalan example, were U.S. officials any more or less informed about the complexity of Costa Rica's domestic affairs during this period?

Following the two Cold War cases, I select the contemporary case of Bolivia and President Evo Morales. In this case study, I will still examine the dynamic that existed between Washington and lower-level officials and how much agency these in-region officials had. However, due to the currency of this case study, I will not be able to rely on declassified material—the Department of State is still decades away from publishing the relevant FRUS volumes for this Bolivian case. Therefore, I instead examine interviews with officials in newspapers and also memoirs when available.

³⁵ The Costa Rican Civil War lasted only weeks and cost the lives of approximately 2,000—a significant number, but a total that pales in comparison to casualties experienced by Nicaragua and Guatemala.

F. THESIS OVERVIEW AND DRAFT CHAPTER OUTLINE

I have included five chapters in my thesis: an introduction, two Cold War case studies, a contemporary case study, and finally a conclusion. In this introductory chapter, I have presented my research question, which seeks to uncover causal factors of the miscomprehension U.S. officials apparently demonstrated in Latin America during the Cold War. Additionally, I have also included an explanation of the question's significance to current scholars and policymakers as well as a review of relevant literature.

Chapter II contains my Guatemalan case study beginning with Guatemala's "October Revolution" in 1944 and ending with the U.S.-supported coup of a democratically elected president in 1954. In this chapter, I begin with a brief overview of the scenario followed by a description and analysis of key individuals involved in U.S. policy toward Guatemala, with a primary focus on lower-level U.S. officials and the causal factors of their behavior. Throughout this chapter, I frame events in a broader U.S. foreign policy context. The final section of this chapter will include a summary of my findings.

Chapter III has a similar outline to Chapter II. I begin with an overview of Costa Rica's brief civil war in 1948 and the various administrations of Costa Rican presidents surrounding this civil war. Similar to Chapter II, I frame events in a broader U.S. foreign policy context. The final section of chapter summarizes my findings as well as compares and contrasts these findings with my Guatemalan case study.

In Chapter IV, I include a contemporary Bolivian case study in which a similarly reformist-minded political leader, Evo Morales, rises to power. After analyzing this episode in its own right, I then compare and contrast it to the two Cold War case studies to loosely measure the degree of evolution, maturation, and/or continuity present in U.S. foreign policy during the two separate eras. And lastly, the concluding chapter, Chapter V, includes my final analysis of these three case studies, in which I include lessons learned that might be relevant to current policymakers and officials stationed in Latin America.

II. REFORM AND REACTION IN GUATEMALA

A. INTRODUCTION TO GUATEMALAN CASE STUDY

Why did the U.S. government back the coup of Guatemala's democratically elected president in 1954? More specifically for this chapter, what factors influenced the behavior of U.S. officials in Guatemala leading up to this coup, and how much agency did they have in affecting U.S. policy toward Guatemala at the time? Answering these questions about the 1954 coup in Guatemala supplements existing literature by providing a thoughtful examination of structural and organizational factors influencing the most immediate level of U.S. foreign policy implementation—officials on the ground in Guatemala. Ultimately, I argue that the views of decision-makers in Washington coupled with the pervasive Cold War hysteria came together to largely influence the behavior of lower-level U.S. officials stationed in Guatemala, which resulted in a low degree of policy-influencing agency for the officials in-country at the time.

The structure of this chapter contains four separate sections. First, the introduction, which states my argument and provides a framework for my analysis. The second section contains a literature review in which I summarize the most relevant works of scholars that have endeavored to understand this event as it pertains to U.S. foreign policy. The third section forms the bulk of this paper and contains research into primary sources, primarily the correspondence items and reports found in the Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) collection.³⁶ I researched documents from the 10-year period leading up to the 1954 coup in Guatemala to see what factors ultimately led to President Dwight Eisenhower's decision to proceed with the plans to overthrow President Árbenz. I organized this section to correspond to the tours of the following U.S. ambassadors to Guatemala: Edwin Kyle, 1945–48; Richard Patterson, 1948–51; Rudolf Schoenfeld, 1951–53; and John Peurifoy, 1953–54. In my conclusion, which is the final section of this paper,

³⁶ I primarily focused on the FRUS series because it provides a relatively—and perhaps the most—comprehensive and consolidated collection of documents that influenced U.S. foreign policy. Given the time constraints for this project, I concluded the FRUS series was the most effective and efficient means of uncovering the answer to my research question.

I propose some potential lessons learned, mainly: (1) that lower-level officials (diplomats, attachés, etc.) must balance pressure from their chain of command with accurate reporting of events on the ground, and (2) even in relatively small and weaker countries, heads of governments may still retain significant agency to maneuver politically, even in the face of an overbearing hegemon.

B. WHERE THE CURRENT DEBATE STANDS

The controversial U.S.-backed coup that ousted democratically elected Guatemalan President Árbenz in 1954 was a pivotal episode in the broader context of a polemical period of U.S. foreign policy toward Latin America during the Cold War. In the bipolar atmosphere of the Cold War, U.S. foreign policy was marked by a relatively myopic, black-and-white tendency—communism was bad, capitalism was good; and any government exhibiting a reformist or socialist tendency was probably a result of USSR interference. During this period, various Latin American governments implemented reformist policies to address their own social problems, and in part as a result of these reforms, some of them were on the receiving end of U.S.-backed overthrows—Guatemala in 1954, Cuba in 1961 (which failed), Brazil in 1964, the Dominican Republic in 1965, and Chile in 1973 to name a few. Most scholars attribute these contentious and often times ill-informed U.S. decisions to the aforementioned myopic view of international relations held by U.S. officials owing to the Cold War context.³⁷

Other scholars offer supplementary explanations for this divisive chapter in U.S. Latin American foreign relations. First, U.S. officials had a paternalistic view of their perceived to be inferior Latin American counterparts. Second, the U.S. government did not have sufficient Latin Americanists with the experience and ability to understand the domestic events occurring in these foreign countries.³⁸ Additionally, most scholars focus

³⁷ These views can be found in many texts. The following list is not all-inclusive: Thomas C. Wright, *Latin America in the Era of the Cuban Revolution 176–77*; Stephen G. Rabe, *The Killing Zone*, 162; Peter Smith, *Talons of the Eagle*, 177; Hal Brands, *Latin America's Cold War*, 68; Brian Loveman, *For la Patria*, 149; Ethan B. Kapstein, "Success and Failure in Counterinsurgency Campaigns: Lessons from the Cold War," 133; Gregory Weeks, *U.S. and Latin American Relations*, 143.

³⁸ Martz, *United States Policy in Latin America*, 283; Brands, *Latin America's Cold War*, 56–57

their attention almost entirely on the decision-makers in Washington, attributing relatively little policy-crafting agency to lower-level U.S. officials stationed in-region.³⁹

Existing literature specifically addressing the U.S. role in the overthrow of President Árbenz in 1954 provides explanations that generally fit into the three previously mentioned thematic categories. First, U.S. officials had a myopic view of international relations during the Cold War. Second, U.S. officials viewed their Latin American counterparts from a paternalistic and superior perspective. Third, endogenous factors to the United States were important, including Washington's domination of U.S. foreign policy and a lack of regional expertise among U.S. personnel. Also, the economic interests and influence of the United Fruit Company (UFCO) is a fourth significant consideration when debating U.S. foreign policy in Guatemala leading up to the coup of Árbenz. On this topic, Richard Immerman offers perhaps the most succinct synopsis of all these factors when he states that the contextual framework for the 1954 coup consisted of:

an underdeveloped country in a region traditionally viewed as vitally important to the United States, a nationalist and reformist political movement [in Guatemala], the most powerful capitalist country in the world, and two administrations of that country whose overriding concern was to advance the capitalist system in the face of alleged Soviet expansion. The combination of such forces led to a major confrontation in the cold war.⁴⁰

This concise analysis of this Guatemalan case sets a valuable foundation for a deeper dive into each of the prominent explanations for the controversial U.S. foreign policy decisions of the Eisenhower administration.

First, the majority of scholars overwhelmingly acknowledge that the myopic, anti-communist, and anti-USSR tendency of U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War

³⁹ This is not an all-inclusive list of explanations for U.S. Latin American foreign policy during the Cold War, but it does address three of the most prominent explanations for decisions during this contentious period in U.S. international relations.

⁴⁰ Richard H. Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1982), 7.

significantly contributed to the United States' decision to back the 1954 coup.⁴¹ This explanation for U.S. foreign policy decisions tends to have either a security or ideological dimension. The security element of this explanation led U.S. officials to view the Guatemalan government's reformist policies—most notably the Labor Code in 1947 and the agrarian reform policy in Decree 900 in 1952—not as policies necessarily designed to address Guatemala's domestic social issues. Instead, U.S. officials viewed these reforms as potential signs that the USSR was interfering and trying to gain influence in Guatemala, or at the very least, that officials believed Communists would hijack the social movement.⁴² On the other hand, U.S. officials were also concerned with a competing ideology that threatened the success of U.S.-sponsored international capitalism.⁴³ These views were largely manifestations of the U.S. foreign policy of containment associated with the domino theory that characterized the Cold War era for the United States.

Existing literature focuses much less attention on the second thematic category of the paternalistic, superior view of U.S. officials regarding their Latin American counterparts. Piero Gleijeses is one noteworthy scholar that addresses this explanation, though. He opines, “American officials could not imagine that the president of a banana republic might hold a broader view of political democracy than they did; they also believed that communist influence in Guatemala was more pervasive than Arévalo [the Guatemalan President] claimed.”⁴⁴ This view is representative of the idea that U.S. officials believed they held a deeper understanding of global affairs, and they therefore could act more effectively abroad, even if it meant intervening in the domestic affairs of another country.

The third explanative category pertaining to endogenous factors to the U.S. foreign policy-making apparatus is of particular interest to the research I undertake on this topic.

⁴¹ Examples of this rationale can be found in the following sources: Susanne Jonas's *The Battle for Guatemala: Rebels, Death Squads, and U.S. Power*, 30; Piero Gleijeses's *Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944–1954*, 235; Jim Handy's *Gift of the Devil: A History of Guatemala*, 136; Stephen G. Rabe's *The Killing Zone: The United States Wages Cold War in Latin America*, 38; Hal Brand's *Latin America's Cold War*, 16; and Richard Immerman's *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention*, 93.

⁴² Piero Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1991), 228.

⁴³ Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala*, 7.

⁴⁴ Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope*, 120.

First, most scholars agree that Washington—primarily the president and secretary of state—were overwhelmingly responsible for the direction of the United States’ Latin American foreign policy.⁴⁵ In the case of the 1954 coup in Guatemala, President Eisenhower and Secretary of State Dulles were the key decision-makers. Scholars attribute relatively very little agency to lower-level U.S. officials in Guatemala and their ability to affect U.S. policy.

Additionally, these U.S. decision-makers in Washington and lower-level officials in Guatemala did not generally know much about Latin America, but rather only considered the region relevant within the context of the United States’ “anticommunist crusade.”⁴⁶ U.S. officials on the ground—most notably U.S. ambassadors to Guatemala at the time—lacked the regional background to accurately analyze the situation in Guatemala.⁴⁷

The presence of UFCO in Guatemala during the 1940s and 1950s is also worth mentioning as a potential factor contributing to Eisenhower’s ultimate decision to go ahead with plans to oust Árbenz. The Guatemalan agrarian land reform articulated in Árbenz’s Decree 900 in 1952 threatened UFCO’s profit margins and potentially other U.S. companies operating in Guatemala. UFCO effectively argued their case back in Washington, and arguably influenced U.S. policy. However, contemporary literature still generally attributes greater responsibility to the myopic calculus and hysteria of the Cold War era.⁴⁸

While many scholars have written about the U.S. role in the 1954 coup of President Árbenz, what we lack is a more in-depth analysis of what influenced lower-level U.S. officials in Guatemala and to what extent their reports and recommendations shaped the

⁴⁵ Ibid., 235; Handy, *Gift of the Devil*, 139, 143.

⁴⁶ Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope*, 236.

⁴⁷ Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala*, 97.

⁴⁸ Any scholarly work pertaining to the 1954 Guatemalan coup includes some level of discussion regarding UFCO’s influence on the matter. In their work *Bitter Fruit*, Schlesinger and Kinzer do an especially admirable job detailing UFCO’s efforts to lobby government officials and members of the media in the United States. After examining the evidence, I have concluded that UFCO effectively exploited anti-communist fears in the United States to strengthen their case against the Árbenz government. Their complaints would arguably not have been nearly as convincing without this anti-communist hysteria in the United States.

decisions of policy-makers in Washington. Additionally, the 1954 coup offers a valuable case study to analyze the U.S. foreign policy process, focusing specifically on the relationship between Washington decision-makers and lower-level officials stationed abroad. Current literature frames the debate in a way that attributes little significance to actual events and reporting in Guatemala, instead attributing much greater agency to Washington decision-makers and the Cold War context. This analysis leads readers to conclude that the coup was almost just a foregone conclusion that was not significantly dependent on the reality on the ground in Guatemala. My research analyzes the U.S. reports coming out of Guatemala to see (1) how they perceived the communist threat and (2) to what extent their recommendations fell in line with or contradicted the views of their superiors in Washington.

Ultimately, I seek to answer the following question: what factors influenced the behavior of U.S. officials in Guatemala leading up to the coup in 1954, and to what extent did their efforts influence Eisenhower's decision to go ahead with the coup? More specifically, I want to know if lower-level U.S. officials in Guatemala allowed the Cold War hysteria and the dominance of Washington decision-makers to influence their perceptions of events in Guatemala. In an attempt to answer these questions, I have primarily focused my research on documents compiled in the FRUS beginning with 1944, which was the start of Guatemala's October Revolution, and ending in 1954 with the coup that ousted Árbenz. In my research, I have analyzed the reports and correspondence coming from U.S. officials in Guatemala—both from the State Department and CIA. Through comparing U.S. reports coming out Guatemala with responses and decisions made in Washington, I attempt to deduce the agency of the lower-level players in Guatemala.

C. AMBASSADOR KYLE'S RESPONSE TO A REVOLUTION, 1945–48

The October Revolution of 1944 that ousted Guatemalan dictator Jorge Ubico marked the beginning of Guatemala's broader revolution that eventually met its untimely end with the 1954 coup of President Árbenz. The United States had considered Ubico an ally, as he supported policies that benefited U.S. interests in Guatemala; most notably, United Fruit was able to prosper under his administration. Considering the favorable light

in which the United States viewed Ubico's administration, seeing him leave office under revolutionary circumstances potentially troubled U.S. policy-makers. However, that does not seem to be the case initially. In fact, in 1944, following a coup in Guatemala, U.S. Chargé Affeld in Guatemala City described a military junta that included eventual President Árbenz as a group of "sound and responsible persons."⁴⁹ Furthermore, at this time, just before the onset of the Cold War—when the United States still considered the USSR a necessary ally—the U.S. government was even willing to accept diplomatic ties between Latin American countries and the USSR.⁵⁰

When Ambassador Kyle arrived to Guatemala in 1945 and throughout his term in the embassy, he continued to have a similar nonthreatening view of developments in Guatemala. Accordingly, Gleijeses describes Kyle as a "courteous" man.⁵¹ Kyle also demonstrated an ability for thoughtful and nonthreatening analysis regarding Guatemala's internal affairs. During his time as ambassador, Kyle made comparisons between developments in Guatemala's revolution and FDR's New Deal. He stated that a large portion of the criticisms thrust at Arévalo "came from the country's wealthy property owners," and that it reminded him of "opinions expressed by some of his wealthy fellow Texans relative to President Roosevelt."⁵² It is worth noting that Kyle had come to Guatemala prior to the onset of the Cold War. Even though he was still in place during the first couple years of the Cold War, his perceptions of the Guatemalan Revolution did not contain the manifestations of anti-communist paranoia perceptible in later reports coming from Guatemala.

As is evidenced in their correspondence with Washington, in the last couple of years before the Cold War, U.S. officials in Guatemala still maintained a certain degree of agency and an ability to think critically in the foreign country to which they were assigned. In one instance, in 1945, the U.S. chargé in Guatemala City disobeyed a request from the

⁴⁹ Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: The American Republics, 1944*, vol. VII (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1967), 1143.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 170–71.

⁵¹ Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope*, 98.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 97–98.

secretary of state to pass on a note to President Arévalo, because in his own personal estimate, such a note would have damaged U.S. interests at the time.⁵³ This incident is not necessarily of monumental significance, but it does effectively demonstrate that lower-level U.S. officials in the State Department were willing to think critically and provide a respectful pushback against their superiors when they felt it necessary.

Much like Ambassador Kyle's overall assessment of the Guatemalan Revolution, this chargé also noted that the revolution's opposition in Guatemala had started communist rumors as a mechanism to weaken the reformist forces in power.⁵⁴ Furthermore, after attending meetings with Guatemala's minister of foreign affairs, the U.S. chargé relayed to Washington that Guatemalan officials—to include President Arévalo—were aware of concerns coming from abroad—particularly fears of growing communism—and that they would respond to this emerging threat.⁵⁵ In his report, the U.S. chargé appears to downplay the communist threat in Guatemala, as he reassures Washington that local officials are taking care of the situation.

The reaction of lower-level U.S. officials to Guatemala's Labor Code reforms in 1947 also lacked an irrational fear of communism. Arévalo's Labor Code was part of a political philosophy he labeled spiritual socialism, which was largely inspired by and had much in common with FDR's New Deal policies in the United States.⁵⁶ Nonetheless, these reforms caught the attention of Washington—in no small part due to the potential negative repercussions for companies like United Fruit.⁵⁷ However, Ambassador Kyle again demonstrated a willingness to present an analysis that contradicted Washington's assessment of the situation in Guatemala. Kyle informed Washington that the Labor Code

⁵³ Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: The American Republics, 1945*, vol. IX (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1969), 1087–88.

⁵⁴ Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: The American Republics, 1946*, vol. XI (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1969), 893.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 893–94.

⁵⁶ Jonas, *The Battle for Guatemala*, 25; Schlesinger and Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit*, 30.

⁵⁷ Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: The American Republics, 1947*, vol. VII (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1972), 705–06.

did not discriminate against U.S. business interests in Guatemala.⁵⁸ In his various meetings with Arévalo, Kyle continued to portray him as a reasonable man that was willing to cooperate with the United States.⁵⁹ At this point in time, the “red menace” in Guatemala became a concern in Washington, but the correspondence from U.S. officials in Guatemala did not share this fear. Instead, lower-level officials sent reports back to Washington that demonstrated thoughtful analysis coupled with character assessments grounded in actual contact with Guatemalan officials.

D. PASSING AMBASSADOR PATTERSON’S “DUCK TEST,” 1948–51

Ambassador Patterson’s tour in Guatemala from 1948 to 1951 marked a perceptible shift in the U.S. reports coming out of Guatemala City. To begin with, the work of scholars present an unflattering description of Patterson. Whereas Gleijeses had described Kyle as courteous, he describes Patterson as “devoid of sympathy for the Guatemalan government and highly receptive to allegations of communist influence.”⁶⁰ Similarly, Schlesinger and Kinzer describe Patterson as “brash, dim...who couldn’t speak Spanish and was given to colorful outbursts on the menace of Soviet Communism in Guatemala.”⁶¹ Immerman continues this critical portrayal of Patterson by pointing out that he “had little diplomatic experience and knew virtually nothing about Latin America.”⁶² Patterson is perhaps most famous—or infamous—for his application of the duck test to President Arévalo. In Patterson’s view, “a duck wore no label identifying it as a duck. But...if the bird quacked and swam like a duck, it was probably a duck,” and “within the framework of Cold War ethos that informed Ambassador Patterson’s thinking, Guatemala passed the duck test. Guatemala was a stooge of the Soviet Union.”⁶³ Considering Patterson’s hostile, brash nature and the highly visible diplomatic position he held, it is not surprising that the

⁵⁸ Department of State, *The American Republics*, 1947, 706.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 710–12, 712–13, 718–19.

⁶⁰ Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope*, 98.

⁶¹ Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit*, 85.

⁶² Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala*, 97.

⁶³ Rabe, *The Killing Zone*, 39.

Guatemalan government had him declared persona non-grata, which led to his premature departure from Guatemala.⁶⁴

Before his untimely departure from Guatemala, Patterson and the U.S. mission in Guatemala received from Washington concerns about communist developments in the region and guidance on how to handle this issue—much like Ambassador Kyle had experienced previously. However, while Kyle had been appointed by FDR before the onset of the Cold War, Patterson arrived to his post under a new administration and at a moment in time when anti-communist paranoia had increased. Additionally, State Department guidance to U.S. embassies in Latin America had begun to demonstrate a much more explicit fear of communism's spread. In June of 1948, the secretary of state instructed his ambassadors to “prevent agents at the service of international communism,” and further informed them that “by its anti-democratic nature and its interventionist tendency, the political activity of international communism...[was] incompatible with the concept of American freedom.”⁶⁵ Another policy paper prepared in Washington earlier that year concluded that international communism should be seen as a “tool of the Kremlin” and that it was a security threat to the United States and should be prevented in Latin America.⁶⁶ The guidance from Washington was clear regarding communism, and this guidance apparently influenced Patterson.

In addition to the general guidance sent out to U.S. missions in Latin America, Washington also specifically directed Patterson to pressure Arévalo regarding the spread of communism in Guatemala. The assistant secretary of state wanted Patterson to caution the Guatemalan president that relations between the two countries were not heading in the right direction and that he needed to take a firmer stance against communism.⁶⁷ While Patterson at times still portrayed Arévalo as a reasonable man willing to cooperate with the United States, memos of conversations with the ambassador reveal that he believed foreign

⁶⁴ Schlesinger and Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit*, 86.

⁶⁵ Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: The Western Hemisphere, 1948*, vol. IX (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1973), 193.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 198–99.

⁶⁷ Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: The United Nations and the Western Hemisphere, 1949*, vol. II (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1975), 650–51.

elements were influencing the internal affairs of Guatemala and that U.S. interests were at risk.⁶⁸

Ambassador Kyle had been appointed to his post in Guatemala prior to the onset of the Cold War—and his reports of Guatemalan affairs reflect this fact. Ambassador Patterson on the other hand arrived in Guatemala during a time where U.S. foreign policy reflected a heightened paranoia regarding the spread of communism and the USSR’s influence—and his reports on Guatemalan affairs reflected this fact as well. From this perspective, we can view both men as products of the structural factors in which their appointments occurred. FDR sent Kyle to Guatemala at a time when the United States was not terribly concerned with communism in Guatemala, whereas Truman sent Patterson to Guatemala with a much more perceptible fear of communism present in U.S. policy. The behavior of the next two U.S. ambassadors in Guatemala would continue this trend.

E. THE “RED MENACE” CONTINUES TO RISE: AMBASSADOR SCHOENFELD, 1951–53

Ambassador Schoenfeld arrived in Guatemala as fears of international communism were continuing to grow in the United States. Guidance from State Department headquarters clearly articulated a concern over the danger communism represented in Guatemala.⁶⁹ A State Department policy paper noted that “for several years there has been developing in Guatemala a situation which the Department has viewed with concern,” which included a “serious penetration by international Communism.”⁷⁰ In Washington’s view, the Guatemalan government “by ignorance of the danger or by design (and perhaps by a mixture of both) has allowed communist influence to grow in Guatemala and relations with the United States had suffered as a result.”⁷¹

Schoenfeld’s tour in Guatemala was also particularly significant owing to the election of Árbenz as Guatemala’s president. Once Árbenz came to power, the State

⁶⁸ Department of State, *The United Nations and the Western Hemisphere, 1949*, 659-662.

⁶⁹ Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: The United Nations; The Western Hemisphere, 1951*, vol. II (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1979), 1415.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 1415–16.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 1418.

Department concluded that U.S.-Guatemalan relations depended primarily on Árbenz's actions while in office.⁷² Árbenz's arrival generated mixed reactions initially in Washington. Some reports described Árbenz as an opportunist, but not a communist.⁷³ Though other reports demonstrated a concern that he would not be hard enough in combatting communism in Guatemala.⁷⁴

According to a report prepared in Washington, U.S. officials in Guatemala attempted to steer the Árbenz administration in what the U.S. government deemed to be the correct, anti-communist direction by highlighting threats that were not apparent to their Guatemalan counterparts.⁷⁵ However, these efforts were to no avail, and fears in Washington continued to grow. A report prepared for an undersecretary of state in June of 1951, several months into Árbenz's presidency, articulated the U.S. view that he would not be tough enough on Guatemala's communists.⁷⁶ Unlike previous years, particularly under Kyle's ambassadorship, there is little or no evidence in the FRUS that lower-level State Department officials provided any course corrections to this view.

Considering the CIA's involvement in the plans to overthrow Árbenz, it is surprising that perhaps the most favorable report of the Guatemalan president came from this agency. In October of 1952, a CIA report concluded that:

Although President Árbenz appears to collaborate with the Communists and extremists to the detriment of Guatemala's relations with the United States, I am quite certain that he personally does not agree with the economic and political ideas of the Guatemalan or Soviet Communists, and I am equally certain that he is not now in a position where they can force him to make decisions in their favor.⁷⁷

⁷² Department of State, *The United Nations; The Western Hemisphere, 1951*, 1419.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 1412, 1445–46.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 1431–33.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 1419.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 1436–37.

⁷⁷ Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Guatemala, 1952–1954* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2003), 39.

This report also concluded that U.S. New Deal policies inspired the Árbenz reforms and not Soviet Communism.⁷⁸ Furthermore, the report stated that the wealthy landowners in Guatemala that stood to lose money due to the Árbenz reforms were the ones that initially “turned the Communist spotlight on all reform measures regardless of merit.”⁷⁹ Another conclusion that should have comforted U.S. decision-makers was that Arbenz did not want to be dominated by the USSR, and in fact, “he definitely would prefer U.S. domination to Soviet domination.”⁸⁰ Despite the possibly comforting conclusions in this report, it still ends, though, with a warning—almost as if coming from another voice—that communists in Árbenz’s administration could conduct a “palace coup” and assassinate him.⁸¹ The majority of CIA reports in 1952 contain similar concerns about growing communist influence in Árbenz’s government.⁸²

In my view, it appears that certain lower-level officials in the minority—in this case, from the CIA—attempted to write their reports and analyses from a rational point of view based in sound logic and observations. However, even reports that took a nonthreatening stance toward Árbenz still included examples of communist paranoia. Unfortunately, I am not able to deduce the origins of the inflammatory statements that are juxtaposed with perfectly benign assessments. The pervasive fear of the “red menace” is one possible explanation, as is the possibility that higher-ranking officials insisted on edits to the original report that played up the real or perceived communist threat in Guatemala.

Moving forward, the implementation of land reform in Guatemala as a result of Árbenz’s Decree 900 was perhaps the pivotal moment from which there was no avoiding Eisenhower’s decision to approve the CIA’s PBSUCCESS—the covert operation to support the coup of Árbenz. Rabe effectively describes the communist paranoia that tainted U.S. officials’ views of Decree 900 as follows:

⁷⁸ Department of State, *Guatemala, 1952–1954*, 39.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 2–4, 7, 20, 57–66.

For U.S. officials, the promulgation of Decree 900 did not stir memories of Thomas Jefferson's faith in the value of the independent yeoman farmer or Abraham Lincoln's commitment to the slogan of "free soil, free labor, free men." Land reform had become associated with Joseph Stalin's forced collectivization of Russian peasants or kulaks in the 1920s and what the "Red Chinese" were carrying out in rural China.⁸³

Land reform in Guatemala did not occur in a vacuum, but rather in the heated context of the Cold War, which ultimately bent the subjective responses and estimates of U.S. officials. Again, a minority voice existed that encouraged a closer look at this agrarian reform, a voice that could have resulted in the realization that it was not all that different from political philosophies accepted in the United States at the time.⁸⁴ However, policy-makers in Washington did not ultimately make their decisions based on reports and conclusions such as this one.

F. MAN ON AN ANTI-COMMUNIST MISSION: AMBASSADOR PEURIFOY, 1953–54

John Peurifoy's appointment as U.S. ambassador to Guatemala in 1953 presents strong evidence supporting my claim that Washington decision-makers and the Cold War-inspired anti-communist paranoia shaped the behavior of lower-level officials in Guatemala. First, before Ambassador Schoenfeld's eventual dismissal, CIA Director Allen Dulles had stated that "our ambassador [Schoenfeld] is timid," and that "the whole Embassy should be given a look over."⁸⁵ This remark is indicative of the fact that Washington elites, particularly those that had the ear of the president, might have had the power to make personnel changes that better suited their objectives.⁸⁶ Ambassador Schoenfeld was therefore removed, and Ambassador Peurifoy was sent to Guatemala with a specific reason in mind. As Schlesinger and Kinzer note, "Peurifoy, a prickly and heavy-

⁸³ Rabe, *The Killing Zone*, 40.

⁸⁴ Department of State, *Guatemala, 1952–1954*, 212.

⁸⁵ *Ibid* 1952, 79.

⁸⁶ In their article "Effective National Security Advising: Recovering the Eisenhower Legacy," Fred Greenstein and Richard Immerman describe the team of advisors Eisenhower had assembled to handle national security and foreign policy issues. Their conclusions regarding this team and Eisenhower's process lend further credibility to my own conclusion that Washington elites had enough agency to impact Eisenhower's decisions.

handed diplomat, had been especially chosen to exert pressure on Arbenz and, if that failed, to overthrow him.”⁸⁷ Peurifoy did not represent an individual sent to Guatemala to provide a reasonable, unbiased assessment of the situation on the ground, but rather to be an extension of views held in Washington.

The CIA brief Peurifoy received prior to traveling to Guatemala provides further evidence that his mind was made up regarding the situation in Guatemala before he ever set foot in the country. In this briefing, CIA personnel informed Peurifoy that “conditions in Guatemala are obviously adverse to U.S. interests in view of the close working alliance between the administration of President Jacobo Árbenz and the Communist Party.”⁸⁸ Additionally, agents advised Peurifoy that the CIA had “now been authorized to take strong action against the government of President Árbenz in the hope of facilitating a change to a more democratically oriented regime.”⁸⁹ The CIA staff went on to inform Peurifoy that their success might depend on cooperation with the embassy. In response, Peurifoy stated that he “understood the situation in general terms, appreciated the need for positive action and would be prepared to support the program.”⁹⁰ Of note, this particular report ended with a request made by Peurifoy that he wanted the chief with whom he would work on this matter to have “complete facility with the Spanish language,” which is indicative of his own lack of regional and technical expertise before arriving in Guatemala.⁹¹ Considering the specific anti-communist mission that Washington had sent him there to accomplish—a mission that did not necessarily and accurately reflect the situation in-country in Guatemala—this ignorance probably served him well.

Once in Guatemala, Peurifoy’s reports and actions were predictably heavy-handed, anti-communist, and offensive to Guatemalan officials. After his one and only meeting with Árbenz, Peurifoy concluded, “I spent six hours with him one evening, and he talked like a communist, he thought like a communist, he acted like a communist, and if he is not

⁸⁷ Schlesinger and Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit*, 12.

⁸⁸ Department of State, *Guatemala, 1952–1954*, 93.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 93–94.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* 93.

one...he will do until one comes along.”⁹² In a report to the assistant secretary of state, he later added that, “I am fully convinced that continuance of his [Árbenz’s] administration until its term expires in 1957 will result in a further and dangerous advance of Communism in this country, with all the attendant peril to our security and economic interests in this area.”⁹³ In Guatemala, Peurifoy found exactly what he had been sent there to find—a red menace.

The CIA reports regarding Guatemala—not surprisingly—paired nicely with Ambassador Peurifoy’s conclusions. These reports claimed that “Guatemala ha[d] become the leading base of operations for Moscow influenced communism in Central America,” and that, “Guatemala now represents a serious threat to hemispheric solidarity and to our security in the Caribbean area.”⁹⁴ Additionally, a report from 1954 left no doubt that, in the CIA’s view, the communist movement in Guatemala was part of a worldwide movement.⁹⁵ These conclusions are surprising considering that scholars now point out that “finding hard evidence to sustain U.S. fears about communism in Guatemala continued to prove problematic.”⁹⁶ Secretary of State Dulles himself admitted it would be “impossible to produce evidence clearly tying the Guatemalan government to Moscow.”⁹⁷ Instead, many U.S. officials in Guatemala allowed Washington’s expectations and the anti-communist hysteria to shape their reporting and analysis in-country, whether or not they found convincing evidence to support their findings.

G. CONCLUSIONS REGARDING GUATEMALAN CASE STUDY

The following factors largely influenced lower-level U.S. officials stationed in Guatemala leading up to the 1954 coup of President Árbenz: (1) the views and guidance of decision-makers in Washington—often times they owed their appointment to these very

⁹² Handy, *Gift of the Devil*, 143.

⁹³ Department of State, *Guatemala, 1952–1954*, 159.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 102.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 239.

⁹⁶ Rabe, *The Killing Zone*, 45.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 48.

same Washington elites—and (2) the communist paranoia that permeated U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War.⁹⁸ In most instances during 1944 to 1954, these officials arrived in Guatemala not to produce unbiased reporting, but rather to accomplish an anti-communist mission. Few exceptions to this general statement exist, and these exceptions do not appear to have significantly influenced U.S. foreign policy.

Leading up to the 1954 coup, President Eisenhower—and arguably Secretary of State Dulles—ultimately had the power and decision-making authority that led to the overthrow of the Árbenz government.⁹⁹ My findings do not refute this consensus view. In several instances, they specifically assigned ambassadors to Guatemala in order to accomplish objectives based on their previously formulated conclusions—Ambassador Peurifoy being a prime example. A statement by CIA Director Allen Dulles further supports the argument that Eisenhower and his cabinet drove U.S. policy toward Guatemala: “This [PBSUCCESS] is a top priority operation for the whole agency and is the most important thing we are doing. I am under pressure by others to get on with this.”¹⁰⁰ The implication here is that he was receiving pressure from above, which would mean someone from the executive branch, and probably President Eisenhower.

If Eisenhower ultimately had the decision-making authority regarding U.S. foreign policy, I have simply concluded that the anti-communist reports from lower-level U.S. officials in Guatemala made Eisenhower’s ultimate decision much easier to make. As Immerman states, “the Eisenhower administration approved the CIA operation because all concerned officials believed that Communists dominated Guatemala’s government and leading institutions.”¹⁰¹ It is not my intent to try to prove a counterfactual—which would be that without these anti-communist reports coming out of Guatemala, Eisenhower would not have approved the coup of Árbenz. Such an attempt would be futile. Instead, I desire to call attention to how Washington elites used lower-level officials to create a desired end

⁹⁸ This, of course, is not an all-encompassing list, but rather simply the two factors I deemed most prominent during my analysis.

⁹⁹ Jonas, *The Battle for Guatemala*, 235–36, 366; Handy, *Gift of the Devil*, 139.

¹⁰⁰ Department of State, *Guatemala, 1952–1954*, 140.

¹⁰¹ Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala*, 68.

that was a reaction to an inaccurately perceived reality. Various correspondence items coming out of Washington leading up to the 1954 coup reflected Washington's attempts to use U.S. officials in an anti-communist crusade against a reality that did not necessarily warrant such a reaction.¹⁰² As Immerman states, this set of circumstances led government experts to repeatedly use “McCarthy-like inferences rather than facts to find evidence of Guatemalan Communism. They inferred that any policy opposing that of the United States, or even independent of it, was inherently pro-Soviet.”¹⁰³

This episode in U.S. foreign policy, therefore, underscores the necessity of accurate, unbiased reporting of events in foreign countries. Assessments and conclusions arrived at in Washington, which occur far from the reality abroad—both geographically and perhaps substantively—that skew the perceptions of officials on the ground are a potential hazard to U.S. foreign policy. Of course, if Washington decision makers either do not permit or deliberately choose to ignore this more accurate and unbiased reporting, it will not be a panacea for all the shortcomings present in the U.S. foreign policy-making process. However, accurate reporting potentially increases the likelihood that U.S. policy will be grounded in an accurate analysis of circumstances in foreign countries.

One last conclusion I have drawn from my research into this particular chapter in U.S. foreign policy—a conclusion I arrived at somewhat paradoxically and unexpectedly—is that relatively small and weak countries still maintain a certain degree of agency vis-à-vis an over-bearing and intrusive hegemon. Documented instances exist in which U.S. officials acknowledged the possibility that Arévalo and later Árbenz were not communists and that they did not threaten the security of the United States. A politically savvy president could have exploited these openings to tell the U.S. officials what they wanted to hear and demonstrate tangible steps toward achieving political ends more favorable to the United States.¹⁰⁴ Needless to say, this is a troubling burden to place on the head of a sovereign

¹⁰² Department of State, *Guatemala, 1952–1954*, 145, 275, 326–27.

¹⁰³ Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala*, 93.

¹⁰⁴ Potential examples of such effective maneuvering exist in Latin America during the Cold War; Jose Figueres in Costa Rica being one example. Additionally, I admit that even savvy presidents such as Figueres benefited from lower level contacts he had with U.S. officials.

nation, but it was the unfortunate reality Árbenz faced while president of Guatemala. A hegemon has certain expectations and often times the power to enforce them. Weaker states then have the opportunity—or challenge—of acting within these constraints, and making calculated decisions to provide for their people in the best possible way. Leaders (of smaller countries) will have to make concessions at times.

Ultimately, though, this case study informs us that U.S. foreign policy needs to be grounded in an accurate assessment of reality, and not skewed by pervasive, ill-informed paradigms. Lower-level officials have to balance the pressures they feel from above with the reality they experience on the ground. This specific Cold War case study serves as a useful subject for U.S. officials that find themselves implementing, and potentially influencing, U.S. foreign policy abroad.

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III. COSTA RICA AND PRESIDENT FIGUERES

A. INTRODUCTION TO COSTA RICAN CASE STUDY

U.S. involvement in Costa Rica's civil war in 1948 has received much less attention from scholars than the Guatemalan coup in 1954.¹⁰⁵ This disparate depth of analysis is not surprising considering the brutal volatility Guatemala endured in the decades after the coup compared to the relative stability Costa Rica enjoyed.¹⁰⁶ Additionally, scholars point to U.S. covert intervention in Guatemala in 1954 as a pivotal event in the formation of U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War, but they rarely mention the case of Costa Rica's civil war, which actually predates the Guatemalan coup. This fact is unfortunate, because a deeper analysis of this Costa Rican case study proves surprisingly enlightening in various ways: (1) in understanding the factors that influenced in-region U.S. officials' behavior, (2) in measuring the agency these officials possessed in affecting U.S. foreign policy, and (3) in revealing a consistency in U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War, despite differing outcomes in different countries.

In this chapter, I first argue that U.S. officials in Costa Rica in the years surrounding the 1948 civil war possessed slightly more policy-affecting agency than their counterparts in the Guatemalan case study, though not as much as other authors suggest. Second, I argue the constant fear of communism and the top-down nature of the U.S. foreign policy-making process still largely influenced their behavior. Additionally, and unique to this specific case, I find that savvy Costa Rican officials also influenced the behavior of U.S. officials and seem to have exerted a notable degree of agency in affecting U.S. foreign policy toward their country.

Costa Rica is worthy of further research and analysis precisely because of the stability and relative prosperity it enjoyed throughout the Cold War. This feat is even more

¹⁰⁵ Longley, *The Sparrow and the Hawk*, 159.

¹⁰⁶ Due to the relative lack of literature analyzing U.S. foreign policy toward Costa Rica during its civil war, I have had to heavily rely on the work of Kyle Longley, *The Sparrow and the Hawk*, for a secondary scholarly analysis of this case study. I largely arrive at similar conclusions as Longley, but my own conclusions differ greatly with regard to who possessed ultimate U.S. policy-shaping agency toward Latin America during the Cold War.

impressive considering the severe brutality and volatility that developed all around Costa Rica in the second half of the 20th century—Guatemala, Nicaragua, and El Salvador all having experienced extended and brutal civil wars. Furthermore, Costa Rican presidents—most notably José Figueres Ferrer—avoided large-scale U.S. intervention while successfully implementing social and economic reforms that the U.S. deemed communist and more worrisome in neighboring countries.¹⁰⁷ So then, how did the Costa Rican government accomplish this feat while its neighbors, particularly Guatemala, failed to do so without eliciting U.S. intervention?

Before examining this and other questions, I must first provide a brief overview of the 1948 Costa Rican Civil War in order to set the context for my analysis. To begin with, a disputed presidential election was the immediate cause of the conflict, while a communist threat—real, perceived, or fabricated—also played a significant role in the development of events.¹⁰⁸ The president at the time, Teodoro Picado Michalski, and his supporters in government did not want to accept the apparent electoral defeat of their candidate, Rafael Calderón Guardia. This defeat would have resulted in the victory of the opposition candidate, Otilio Ulate Blanco. In response to this threat from the party in power, Figueres led rebels against the government's forces, and he eventually triumphed in a matter of months. After this rebel victory, Figueres headed a military *junta* that ruled the Costa Rican government before relinquishing control to democratically elected Ulate in 1949.

The United States was not a completely innocent bystander during these events, but they did not directly intervene or instigate a rebellion, as they would later do in Guatemala. Nonetheless, the Cold War context and anti-communist stance still influenced the more tempered U.S. response to Costa Rica's civil war.¹⁰⁹ Of note, by 1948, due to political calculations, Picado and Calderón had formed an alliance with Costa Rica's communist party, the *Partido Vanguardia Popular*.¹¹⁰ Figueres and Ulate on the hand represented the

¹⁰⁷ Longley, *The Sparrow and the Hawk*, 90.

¹⁰⁸ John Patrick Bell, *Crisis in Costa Rica: The 1948 Revolution* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971), 41, 46, 57.

¹⁰⁹ Longley, *The Sparrow and the Hawk*, 63.

¹¹⁰ Bell, *Crisis in Costa Rica*, 42, 44.

firmer anti-communist position in Costa Rican politics. Not surprisingly, the United States acted in a way that favored success for Figueres—a topic I will address later in this chapter.

Intentionally, I have structured my analysis of this Costa Rican case study in a similar, but also different way than the preceding Guatemalan case study. I again use relevant and prominent government officials to organize my analysis. However, instead of selecting U.S. ambassadors to Costa Rica, I have selected Costa Rican presidents—a nod to the policy-affecting agency they possessed, whether they used it effectively or not vis-à-vis the United States.

B. PRESIDENT RAFAEL CALDERÓN GUARDIA, 1940–44

Calderón had been president of Costa Rica during World War II and had enjoyed relatively warm relations with the United States. During his time in office, Calderón pursued reformist rather than radical social and economic policies. In an attempt to more effectively serve the needs of the majority, Calderón sought to restructure parts of Costa Rican society by restructuring the tax system, developing a social security program, enacting land reform, providing low-cost housing, and founding a national university.¹¹¹ Due to the moderation with which he enacted these reforms coupled with fortunate timing—the Cold War had not yet heated up—Calderón largely enjoyed support from U.S. diplomats in Costa Rica.¹¹²

By the end of his presidency, though, Calderón faced gridlock in the legislature, and in order to continue to enact his reforms, he made the fateful decision to form an alliance with Costa Rica's Communists. When Calderón sought a second term in office in 1948, his earlier decision to ally with Communists eventually chilled the previous warm relations he had enjoyed with the United States. This occurred in spite of the less-than-radical policies Costa Rican Communists backed. For example, they did not promote class warfare nor seizure of property, but rather a more gradual approach to change—evolution as opposed to revolution.¹¹³

¹¹¹ Longley, *The Sparrow and the Hawk*, 23.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 31.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 24–26.

Throughout the 1940s, Calderón's political ideology changed little; therefore, his ideology was not primarily responsible for any change in Costa Rican-U.S. relations. Instead, U.S. views and foreign policy changed as the Cold War began and as the United States increasingly turned its focus to the Soviet Union and combatting Communism. Calderón's alliance with Communists in Costa Rica and the changing nature of U.S. foreign policy put him in a difficult position vis-à-vis U.S. officials, and he did not manage these changing conditions as well as the Figueres-led opposition party in Costa Rica.¹¹⁴

As previously mentioned, U.S. diplomats in Costa Rica initially vouched for Calderón and his reforms, but as the Cold War mentality began to dominate U.S. foreign policy, Washington decided to appoint a new ambassador in Costa Rica, one that would take a firmer stance regarding Communism.¹¹⁵ In a meeting with interim Ambassador Walter Donnelly in 1947, Calderón tried to distance himself from the Communist movement, but he failed to convince the new ambassador. Calderón argued that "the government over which I reside is not and never has been Communist...the ideology and spirit of this country is identified with the United States foreign policy and with the democratic doctrines of the bloc of the western nations."¹¹⁶ Less than a month after this meeting and in the lead-up to Costa Rica's 1948 presidential elections, Donnelly wrote:

Present indications are that Rafael Calderón Guardia, with the support of the Vanguardia party and the Communist leaders, will be elected President in February, 1948. While he has openly solicited their backing, he tries to allay the fears of anti-Communists by saying that he is doing so for political expediency and that he "never has been, is not, and never will be a Communist." The fact is, however, that he is aligned with them and in doing so has contributed to their standing and influence in Costa Rica.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Longley, *The Sparrow and the Hawk*, 40.

¹¹⁵ In the next subsection of this chapter, I will address and analyze the Truman administration's decision to remove Ambassador Johnson—an official that had strongly supported Calderon and his successor Picado despite their alliance with Communists—with interim Ambassador Donnelly, and then ultimately Ambassador Davis, who was considered more of a credible source regarding Communism.

¹¹⁶ Department of State, *The American Republics, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1947*, vol. VIII (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1972), 586–87.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, 590.

Ultimately, Donnelly was not convinced. Furthermore, Ambassador Donnelly's predecessor in the U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica, Ambassador Johnson, had consistently showed his support for Calderón and his political ally Picado, but Washington's decision to remove and replace Johnson demonstrated the much stronger policy-affecting agency possessed by Washington decision makers in relation to the lower-level officials in region. While U.S. ambassadors did indeed implement U.S. policy in Costa Rica, the administration in D.C. made deliberate decisions with regard to which personnel it sent into the country. This reality tipped the power-balance largely in favor of policymakers in Washington. During the Cold War, the threat of Communism largely influenced these decisions.

C. PRESIDENT TEODORO PICADO MICHALSKI, 1944–48

Like Calderón, President Picado was also a member of the National Republican political party that had formed an alliance with the Costa Rican Communist Party, the Vanguard. Picado's presidency spanned the end of World War II to the beginning of the Cold War. This timing and the associated shift in U.S. foreign policy would noticeably affect Costa Rican-U.S. relations during Picado's time in office.

Picado's acceptance of Costa Rica's Communist movement did little to improve his relations with the United States. He, like Calderón before him, accepted Communists in his country due to political calculations.¹¹⁸ Additionally, he had concluded that Costa Rican Communism had domestic origins rather resulting from the international, Soviet-led movement. Therefore, it could be tolerated. This soft stance on Communism contributed to the widening of the gap that had formed between his administration and U.S. officials in Costa Rica.¹¹⁹

Ambassador Hallet Johnson's stint in Costa Rica from 1945 to 1947 represents a useful period in analyzing the nature of U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War.

¹¹⁸ As I mentioned in this chapter's introduction, Picado, much like Calderón before him, relied on an alliance with Costa Rica's Communist part in order to have a majority in congress with which to implement reforms.

¹¹⁹ Longley, *The Sparrow and the Hawk*, 42, 55.

Ambassador Johnson, much like Calderón and Picado, did not successfully adapt to the changing nature of U.S. foreign policy during the onset of the Cold War, and he lost his job as a result. Despite Picado's alliance with Communists, Johnson continued to view favorably the Costa Rican president, even describing Picado's Foreign Minister as "vehemently anti-communist."¹²⁰

In his correspondence with his superiors in Washington, Johnson continued to vouch for the Picado administration. Early in 1946, Johnson wrote, "the attitude of the Picado Government toward the United States has been from the beginning one of complete cooperation. Both President Picado and Foreign Minister Acosta have time and time again reiterated that the basis of the Administration's foreign policy is to follow the exclusive lead of the United States. Such has proven to be the case in many instances."¹²¹ Later in 1946, in a similar vein, Johnson wrote "President Picado and the Minister of Foreign Affairs have many times assured me that the international policy of Costa Rica will be guided by that of the United States. The sincerity of these statements has been proven many times. Communism and the Soviet Government has long been the 'bete noire' of Don Julio Acosta, and his attitude in case of trouble between the United States and Russia would be unequivocal."¹²² Johnson clearly supported the Picado administration, but this softer more moderate stance could not last as Cold War concerns grew in the late 1940s.

Johnson's removal from the U.S. embassy in 1947 caught him by surprise. In a letter to President Truman, Johnson complained, "I am desperately puzzled to understand...why I have been dismissed so abruptly."¹²³ At this time in U.S. politics, as Kyle Longley accurately points out, "the influence of the hard-liners contributed to a new round of anticommunism in the United States, resulting in activities to undermine the Communists in countries where beforehand the United States had tolerated popular-front

¹²⁰ Longley, *The Sparrow and the Hawk*, 43; Department of State, *The American Republics, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946*, vol. XI (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1969), 693–94.

¹²¹ Department of State, *The American Republics, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946*, vol. XI, 692.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 693.

¹²³ Longley, *The Sparrow and the Hawk*, 54.

governments.”¹²⁴ Johnson’s acceptance of a political party aligned with Communists could not be tolerated in such an atmosphere. An excerpt from a memo from the State Department’s Division of Central America and Panama Affairs in 1948 illustrates this heightened concern with regard to developments in Costa Rica: “Communism in Costa Rica, operating under the name of Vanguardia Popular...today occupies a position of importance far out of proportion to its numerical strength.”¹²⁵

Washington’s increased emphasis on taking a hard stance against Communism led to Johnson’s removal in 1947, and it meant the loss of an ally for Picado and Calderón. After Johnson’s departure, “the embassy and State Department became noticeably more hostile toward communism and its perceived allies in the Costa Rican government.”¹²⁶ As I will argue in the concluding section of this chapter, U.S. officials in Costa Rica might have clung to some level of policy-affecting agency, but only when their decisions fell within the parameters policymakers in Washington established for them. In Costa Rica, Ambassador Donnelly, and later Ambassador Davis, led a shift toward a firmer anti-communist stance in San José. The key point, though, is that the Truman administration deliberately placed them in Costa Rica to do exactly that—an interpretation that diminishes the agency possessed by lower-level U.S. officials.

D. PRESIDENT JOSÉ FIGUERES FERRER: 1948–49 AND 1953–58¹²⁷

José “Don Pepe” Figueres is perhaps the most prominent figure in Costa Rican politics in the 20th century, and during his multiple terms as president, he demonstrated an impressive ability to successfully pursue domestic policies even when they alarmed some U.S. officials.¹²⁸ Perhaps more than any other democratically elected politician in the

¹²⁴ Ibid, 51.

¹²⁵ Department of State, *The American Republics, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1948*, vol. IX (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1972), 502.

¹²⁶ Longley, *The Sparrow and the Hawk*, 54.

¹²⁷ Otilio Ulate Blanco was President in Costa Rica in between the two terms of Figueres, but Figueres remained the leading figure of their opposition party. Therefore, in order to make my point more succinctly and efficiently, I will primarily focus on Figueres; Ulate’s term as president was relatively uneventful in comparison with regard to Costa Rican-U.S. relations.

¹²⁸ Nobel Peace Prize winner President Oscar Arias would be the only other potential challenger to Figueres as the most prominent figure in Costa Rican politics in the 20th century.

region, Figueres understood the significance of the communist issue in his dealings with the United States.¹²⁹ His political savvy won over U.S. officials in San José and Washington, and granted him more flexibility in implementing potentially contentious domestic and foreign policies.

With regard to winning the support of the United States, Figueres had the benefit of leading the Costa Rican opposition that fought against the established Communist-friendly official party. This position promoted the favorable view U.S. officials tended to hold of Figueres and his allies. Other heads of state in Central America also held a firm line against Communism within their borders—most notably the authoritarian leader Somoza in Nicaragua. However, one characteristic that distinguished Figueres was that he genuinely despised Communism, viewing it as a threat to democracy and capitalism in Costa Rica.¹³⁰

Much like the establishment he opposed, Figueres still sought a more equitable distribution of wealth in Costa Rica. For example, as leader of the military *junta* that came to power in 1948, Figueres oversaw the nationalization of Costa Rica's banking system—an act that alarmed U.S. officials and threatened business interests. In fact, some of his policies even resembled policies of parties in other countries that the United States had labeled as Communist. Figueres overcame this problematic situation, though, by consistently pointing to (1) his anti-communist efforts in Costa Rica's civil war; and (2) the fact that the junta he led had banned Communism in 1948—an astute political maneuver that unquestionably improved his relations with the United States.¹³¹ As Longley states, “he [Figueres] understood the United States and played a game of give-and-take that allowed him to walk the fine line between nationalism and anti-Americanism.”¹³²

The arrival of Ambassador Nathaniel Davis in 1947 also benefited Figueres' relations with the United States. By the time Davis arrived in San José in 1947, he had

¹²⁹ Longley, *The Sparrow and the Hawk*, XII.

¹³⁰ Longley, *The Sparrow and the Hawk*, 89

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 88–90.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 85.

already built a reputation as “an authority on communism.”¹³³ This point again supports the conclusion that lower-level U.S. officials only drove policy to the extent the policymaking apparatus in Washington allowed them to. In other words, Davis was sent to San José to be harder on communism. Longley argues:

Davis, often working within broad parameters established by U.S. officials above him, helped move the United States toward a policy that aided the insurgents. The escalation in the conflict mirrored the increasing fear among U.S. officials of a perceived Communist threat and became a major factor in the U.S. response to the Costa Rican civil war. This stance paired well with the anti-communist forces in Costa Rica led by Figueres.¹³⁴

While I do not entirely disagree with this claim, I place more significance on the “parameters established by U.S. officials above him” rather than the policy-affecting agency Davis had as U.S. Ambassador to Costa Rica. Policymakers in Washington did not give Davis a *carte blanche* to handle the issue of Communism in Costa Rica as he saw fit; his guidelines were much narrower and anti-communist than that.

Davis predictably sided with the Figueres-led opposition during the Costa Rican Civil War. Under Davis’ leadership, the U.S. embassy described the Communist *Vanguardia* “as being both directly and indirectly responsible for the present state of chaos and uncertainty in Costa Rica.”¹³⁵ State Department correspondence between San José and Washington during the Costa Rican Civil War supports Longley’s argument that Davis legitimized Figueres’ rebel forces during cease-fire negotiations. Additionally, he later backed the junta’s policies, drawing parallels between Figueres’ initiatives and FDR’s New Deal policies back in the United States.¹³⁶ This ambassadorial backing did not necessarily guarantee Washington’s support for the Costa Rican junta, but it certainly did not hurt.

The warm relations between Costa Rica and the United States during the terms of Davis and Figueres were a result of many factors, but two factors stand out: (1) Davis had

¹³³ Ibid, 66.

¹³⁴ Longley, *The Sparrow and the Hawk*, 70.

¹³⁵ Department of State, *The American Republics, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1948*, vol. IX, 502–03.

¹³⁶ Longley, *The Sparrow and the Hawk*, 63, 91.

been sent to San José to carry out an anti-communist mission, and (2) the victorious forces in Costa Rica's civil war happened to also be anti-communist. This friendly and productive bilateral relationship was not primarily the result of lower-level U.S. officials successfully directing U.S. policy toward Costa Rica, but rather the direct result of a Washington-driven policy that happened to share common characteristics with the new domestic leadership in Costa Rica.

This favorable scenario set a precedent in the bilateral relations between Costa Rica and the United States that carried on through Ulate's presidency from 1949 to 1953 and into Figueres' first term as the democratically elected president of Costa Rica from 1953 to 1958. In his campaign for the presidency, Figueres put forth a very nationalistic platform that could have been potentially troubling for Costa Rica, because the United States by now had a track record of associating such policies with Communism. However, Figueres could always defend his stance by pointing to his having fought against the Communists and their allies in the civil war of 1948.¹³⁷ Furthermore, even though his policies were nationalistic, Figueres was genuinely influenced by ideologies similar to those that influenced the United States at the time, namely Keynesian economic policy and the New Deal reforms.¹³⁸

U.S. reports during Figueres' second term in office in the 1950s downplayed in any potential concerns about the nature of his political ideology. In 1954, a State Department report stated:

As for the situation in Costa Rica, we do not regard Figueres as a Communist himself or that his well-known friendship with Betancourt is ground for the charge of Communist sympathies. There is a long history of charges and defenses on both sides of this question; the available evidence has been reviewed from time to time by the Department and intelligence agencies of our Government, and in balance simply does not support the conclusion that Figueres is a Communist, or even ideologically favorable to Marxism. His program is basically nationalistic and partially socialist, but he and his party have consistently fought the Communists. The Costa Rican legislature, under leadership of the Figueres forces, outlawed the Communist Party in 1953, before Figueres was inaugurated as President.

¹³⁷ Department of State, *The American Republics, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–1954*, vol. IV (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1983), 826.

¹³⁸ Longley, *The Sparrow and the Hawk*, 118–20.

Figueres has also sought to persuade President Árbenz of Guatemala to alter his course of encouragement to the Communists in that country.¹³⁹

This conclusion demonstrates first, the significance of the Communist issue in U.S. foreign policy, and second, the United States had not forgotten Figueres' anti-communist stance from several years earlier. Interestingly, though, even Figueres, a clear and ardent anti-communist still had to defend himself against criticisms that he was a Communist—outlawing Costa Rica's Communist party was not enough. And when he had to defend himself, he did so very astutely and effectively. In response to one such criticism, Figueres said that “a liberal government such as his would always be criticized by certain [U.S.] Congressmen and others of an extremely conservative bent. He [Figueres] said he realized that his socially inclined government would be accused of being communistic,” but he did “not get mad at them...one has to be very patient with those kind of people, who generally mean well.”¹⁴⁰

Even after his presidency from 1953 to 1958, though the potential threat of Communist penetration was never completely extinguished, U.S. reports on Costa Rica's politics continued to demonstrate a lack of real concern.¹⁴¹ In 1955, the U.S. embassy in San José concluded, “Communism does not pose a present threat to the stability of the Costa Rican government due to the general opprobrium with which it is regarded by the people.”¹⁴² Figueres had set his country on a path to friendly relations with the Western Hemisphere's hegemon.

E. CONSISTENCY IN U.S. POLICY DESPITE DIFFERENT OUTCOMES

An analysis of this episode of U.S. foreign policy reveals a surprising consistency in policy in relation to the Guatemalan case study from the preceding chapter, despite the

¹³⁹ Department of State, *The American Republics, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–1954*, vol. IV, 840.

¹⁴⁰ Department of State, *The American Republics, 1952-1954*, 837.

¹⁴¹ Department of State, *The American Republics: Central and South America, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955–1957*, vol. VII (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1987), 4, 9; Department of State, *The American Republics, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958–1960*, vol. V (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1991), 804.

¹⁴² Department of State, *The American Republics: Central and South America, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955–1957*, vol. VII (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1987), 3.

different levels of intervention and the significantly different domestic outcomes for the two countries. In both cases, the U.S. foreign policy objective was to achieve an anti-communist outcome, and both cases resulted in this desired objective, though the U.S. officials used different means. A more in-depth overview of U.S. involvement in Costa Rica's civil war will illustrate this point.

In 1948, U.S. policymakers did not need to play a primary role in Costa Rica in order to achieve their desired outcome. As Longley correctly points out with regard to the Costa Rican Civil War:

While significant, the U.S. role was secondary to that of the Costa Ricans. In contrast with its policy in Guatemala, the United States did not orchestrate in Costa Rica the overthrow of a government it perceived to be collaborating with the Communists. Instead, the Costa Ricans themselves settled the problem before the United States concluded that it needed to intervene militarily or covertly to remove the National Republican-Vanguard coalition.¹⁴³

The Costa Ricans themselves primarily obtained the anti-communist outcome that U.S. officials desired; therefore, this Costa Rican case study did not require a greater level of U.S. intervention. In other words, U.S. policymakers received a comparatively better return on their minimal investment in Costa Rica.

The United States still played a relatively active role with respect to the Costa Rican Civil War, but it did so in more of a support role. First, the United States, through meetings with the Nicaraguan Ambassador to the United States, convinced Somoza to cease aid to the Costa Rican government.¹⁴⁴ This diplomatic pressure in Washington convinced Nicaragua to adopt a "hands off" policy with regard to Costa Rica's affairs.¹⁴⁵ This diplomatic feat weakened Costa Rica's official party and strengthened Figueres and his rebels.

¹⁴³ Longley, *The Sparrow and the Hawk*, 64.

¹⁴⁴ Department of State, *The American Republics, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1948*, vol. IX, 495.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 494–500.

Second, U.S. officials failed to provide aid to Picado's administration when his ambassador to the United States asked for help. Costa Rican Ambassador to the United States, Francisco Gutiérrez, told U.S. officials that President Picado was reportedly "broken hearted" due to the lack of U.S. support for his administration during the civil war.¹⁴⁶ Unfortunately for his government, it did not address the Communist issue as effectively as the opposition forces led by Figueres.

Lastly, the United States also increased the odds of an anti-communist outcome in Costa Rica by seemingly "turning a blind eye" to Guatemala's pro-opposition involvement in Costa Rica's civil war.¹⁴⁷ In a letter to diplomatic representatives in the American Republics, Secretary of State Marshall informed his subordinates that he had taken a firm stance against Nicaraguan involvement, but he paid little credence to claims that Guatemala had supported rebel forces in Costa Rica.¹⁴⁸ This stance—coupled with exerting pressure on Nicaragua and refusing to help Picado's administration—helped ensure a rebel victory and anti-communist solution to Costa Rica's civil war. Therefore, the United States demonstrated a similar foreign policy logic in Costa Rica as in Guatemala. Officials only had to adapt their approach to the two distinct situations. Also worth noting is that all of these foreign policy moves stemmed from Washington, and not the U.S. embassy in San José.

F. ANALYSIS OF AGENCY OF LOWER-LEVEL U.S. OFFICIALS

Just as U.S. foreign policy maintained a consistent anti-communist quality through both of these case studies, so too did lower-level U.S. officials demonstrate a relatively low degree of policy-affecting agency in relation to Washington decision-makers. In my view, the roles of in-region lower-level U.S. officials were remarkably similar in both the 1954 Guatemalan coup and 1948 Costa Rican Civil War—despite the distinct methods of U.S. involvement in the two case studies. In both cases, presidential administrations sent U.S.

¹⁴⁶ Department of State, *The American Republics, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1948*, vol. IX, 508.

¹⁴⁷ Longley, *The Sparrow and the Hawk*, 157.

¹⁴⁸ Department of State, *The American Republics, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1948*, vol. IX., 499.

ambassadors in-country specifically with an anti-communist agenda. This action from Washington resulted in predictable outcomes in both countries—a hard line against communism and support for anti-communist opposition forces.

At this point, I will present my primary disagreement with the work of Kyle Longley. For Longley, the lower-level U.S. officials stationed in Latin America during the Cold War largely shaped U.S. foreign policy toward the region. He claims that, “because Washington remained preoccupied with events in Europe and Asia, U.S. diplomats in the embassies in Latin America and lower-level officials in Washington maintained prominent roles in determining policy.”¹⁴⁹ He again overstates the agency of lower-level officials by arguing, “U.S. policies toward Costa Rica and Latin America originated not in the White House but largely with U.S. officials in the field and in the lower-levels of the State Department.”¹⁵⁰

I will concede that there is some truth to his claims, mainly that Washington’s primary concern was not Latin America during the second half of the 1940s. Additionally, U.S. ambassadors and their subordinate staff certainly played a noteworthy role in implementing U.S. policy in reaction to Costa Rica’s civil war. A letter from Secretary Marshall to Ambassador Davis illustrates this point. In this letter dated March 15, 1948, Marshall relayed a message President Truman had received from the Costa Rican opposition leader Ulate. The note informed Truman that the Costa Rican official party along with Communists were using U.S. arms to kill innocent Costa Ricans. Secretary Marshall authorized the lower-level officials of the U.S. embassy in San José “in its discretion to make appropriate reply.”¹⁵¹ This is one example of lower-level officials acting with some level of freedom. However, Longley overstates the agency of these lower-level officials, and part of the proof lies in his own work.

First, in analyzing Ambassador Johnson’s role in shaping U.S. policy toward Costa Rica from 1945 to 1947, Longley claims, “Johnson used his position effectively to shape

¹⁴⁹ Longley, *The Sparrow and the Hawk*, 44.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 160.

¹⁵¹ Department of State, *The American Republics, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1948*, vol. IX., 494.

U.S. policy toward Costa Rica, momentarily outmaneuvering other groups in the State Department and intelligence organizations that tried portraying Picado as a Communist dupe.”¹⁵² However, Longley also goes on to say, “His [Johnson’s] ability to mold perceptions began changing as the cold war heated up and U.S. policymakers increasingly focused attention on any perceived Communist threat. This modification led in part to Johnson’s removal and replacement by a more hardline representative who pointed out the dangers of the alliance between the Communists and the Costa Rican government.”¹⁵³ The logical conclusion is therefore that Washington changed personnel in its embassies in order to bring about a specifically desired outcome. In the case of the U.S. embassy in San José, Ambassador Johnson’s views did not align with Washington’s views, so Truman removed him and replaced him with an ambassador that better represented the anti-communist trend in U.S. policy. As I have already mentioned, Ambassador Davis had already established himself as a credible authority on communism, and that is a large part of why he replaced Johnson in Costa Rica.

Clearly, Washington’s expectations and the Communist-fearing Cold War hysteria influenced the behavior of U.S. officials in Costa Rica in the later years of the 1940s. Additionally, though, Costa Rican officials themselves maintained a certain degree of agency—whether they chose to effectively wield it or not—in influencing the behavior and decisions of U.S. officials in San José. Figueres was perhaps most successful in this area.

Before examining Figueres’ skillful management of Costa Rica’s relations with the United States, I will address the unsuccessful attempts of Calderón and Picado—leaders of the National Republican-Vanguard alliance—to maintain support from the United States. As Longley states, “in part, the Vanguard contributed directly to the adoption of a tougher U.S. policy against Picado. U.S. officials increasingly noted the domination of the Vanguard by the more radical, pro-Soviet clique.”¹⁵⁴ Additionally, a reorganization of the Communist political party resulted in a platform more closely aligned with Marxist

¹⁵² Longley, *The Sparrow and the Hawk*, 44.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 54.

principles, and this scared U.S. policymakers. Furthermore, Picado largely ignored his advisors' recommendations to distance himself from Communists, a decision that certainly did not aid his efforts to obtain U.S. backing during the civil war.¹⁵⁵ Calderón on the other hand better understood the significance of the Communist issue in his interactions with the United States, but domestic political calculations required that he maintain his alliance with the Communists—a necessity that widened the gap between him and U.S. officials.

Figueres, in comparison, proved most successful in “wagging the dog” with regard to obtaining his desired outcomes vis-à-vis the powerful United States. He became very adept at understanding the United States and telling its officials what they wanted to hear. Longley in fact concludes that Figueres and his fellow *Figueristas* were the most important part of Costa Rica's ability to maintain cordial relations with the United States through the Cold War period.¹⁵⁶ Figueres understood, better than his political rivals, the significance of the Communist issue as the Cold War developed, so he knew how to handle this issue when making his own domestic and foreign policy decisions. As Longley keenly articulates, “this keen understanding of geopolitical conditions allowed Figueres and his advisers to make informed decisions that both resisted and accommodated Washington. This response reduced the potential for conflict and allowed cordial relations to continue in a period characterized by Washington's overreaction to most forms of nationalism in the nonindustrialized world.”¹⁵⁷

Figueres maintained his effective understanding of U.S. views through various methods. First, he read the *New York Times* daily to stay abreast of current developments in U.S. public opinion. Additionally, he had the benefit of having previously studied in the United States, where he familiarized himself with concepts such as the Jeffersonian yeoman farmer. Furthermore, he astutely drew parallels between the United States and Costa Rica in this respect when communicating with U.S. officials. Most importantly, Figueres remained anti-communist, and he made sure U.S. officials knew it.¹⁵⁸ In pushing

¹⁵⁵ Longley, *The Sparrow and the Hawk*, 55.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, XII.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, XII.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 121, 139, 167.

his nationalist, reformist, and at times socialist agenda, Figueres made sure to proceed with caution and moderation. Because he was aware of the possibility of stoking U.S. anti-communist concerns, he limited some radical elements that other *Figueristas* were promoting.¹⁵⁹ It is also worth mentioning that he had the added fortuitous benefit of genuinely being anti-communist; it was not a façade he maintained to appease U.S. officials. In the end, Figueres savvy maintenance of strong ties with U.S. officials results in an enticing policy prescription for smaller countries when dealing with a more powerful partner.

In summary, my analysis of this Costa Rican case study reveals several conclusions regarding U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War. First, in contrast to Longley's view, Washington policymakers and decision makers still predominantly shaped U.S. foreign policy toward Latin America. Second, the real or perceived Communist threat significantly influenced U.S. officials' perceptions and behavior. Third, lower-level U.S. officials had relatively little agency in affecting U.S. policy. Fourth and finally, political leaders of smaller powers can still "wag the dog" to a certain degree through astute analysis of their region's hegemon.

¹⁵⁹ Longley, *The Sparrow and the Hawk*, 172.

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IV. A CONTEMPORARY CASE STUDY: EVO MORALES IN BOLIVIA

A. INTRODUCTION TO BOLIVIAN CASE STUDY

For this chapter, I have selected a contemporary case study to compare and contrast with the two Cold War case studies of Guatemala and Costa Rica. President Evo Morales's rise in Bolivia, beginning with his election in 2005, presents, in many ways, a scenario similar to the previously studied cases of Guatemala and Costa Rica. With Morales in Bolivia, we see a significant shift in the politics of a Latin American country, embodied in a leftist president with controversial reforms and rhetoric with regard to economic and foreign policy objectives. Morales's election in 2005 was one of the most noteworthy events in Latin America's "Left Turns," a movement that saw left-of-center presidents elected throughout the region beginning in 1998 with Hugo Chavez's election in Venezuela. Morales's rise in the context of these Left Turns coupled with the U.S. response creates a scenario comparable in some ways to the early Cold War period in Latin America, when newly elected reformist heads of state piqued the interest of U.S. officials and stoked their anti-communist paranoia.

Through examining Morales's presidency in Bolivia, I seek to answer the following questions: (1) how similar or different is contemporary U.S. foreign policy toward Bolivia compared to the previous Cold War case studies, (2) what major factors influenced the behavior of lower-level U.S. officials with respect to Morales and Bolivia, and (3) how much policy-affecting agency did these lower-level officials have in this case? Ultimately, I argue that U.S. policy toward Latin America has marginally matured since the Cold War, but lingering paranoias and the likely top-down policymaking process still limit the United States' ability to understand and adapt to the nuances of its Latin American neighbors.

Because this Bolivian case study is still ongoing—Morales is still the current president of Bolivia—I have had to adapt my research methods. First and most importantly, the State Department is still many years away from releasing the associated Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) volume for this case study, so I had to select alternate sources to examine this chapter in U.S. foreign policy. Without the detailed

diplomatic correspondence the FRUS provides, my findings and conclusions will be more limited and circumstantial than the previous case studies. In an attempt to overcome these limitations, I selected what I deem to be the most revealing available sources: memoirs of the U.S. players involved, congressional hearings related to U.S.-Bolivia relations, and relevant newspaper articles. Combining and examining these sources will not produce a perfectly complete and nuanced analysis, but it is the best possible means of doing so considering the limitations of studying a contemporary case study.

The organization of this chapter is also different from the two preceding chapters. In the first section of this chapter (following this introduction), I provide a contextual background to Evo Morales's rise in Bolivia. Next, I analyze the U.S. officials involved in creating and implementing U.S. policy toward Bolivia. Following this analysis of U.S. officials, I examine Morales's likely motives in employing controversial reforms and rhetoric. A discussion of Morales's likely motives then leads into a thorough analysis of what actually happened in Bolivia—as opposed to what was perceived to happen—during Morales's presidencies. By placing this section after my analysis of U.S. officials, I hope to provide a useful critique of their actions. And lastly, the final section of this chapter contains my conclusions regarding U.S. policy toward its Latin American neighbors, both past and present.

B. A CONTROVERSIAL FIGURE RISES IN BOLIVIA

As previously mentioned, Evo Morales's election in Bolivia occurred within the context of a regional leftward shift in Latin America, a phenomenon commonly referred to as the Latin America's Left Turns. This shift was embodied by the rise of reform-minded heads of state that were often times openly hostile toward the United States.¹⁶⁰ Most notable on this list were Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, Evo Morales in Bolivia, and Rafael Correa in Ecuador. These three controversial figures provoked a reactionary response from U.S.

¹⁶⁰ Lumping all of Latin America's Left Turns into the same category would oversimplify this movement in the region's politics. For example, Chile's left turn personified by its current president Michelle Bachelete was of a much more moderate and uncontroversial nature when compared to Chavez in Venezuela. Suffice to say that a wide spectrum exists within this movement. The introduction to Maxwell Cameron and Eric Hershberg's book *Latin America's Left Turns: Politics, Policies, and Trajectories of Change* makes this point well.

officials, in part because they promoted policies that did not work well with the prevailing Washington-led neoliberal consensus. As Jeffrey Webber states, “Bolivian popular movements have been at the cutting edge of anti-neoliberal resistance in Latin America.”¹⁶¹ This apparent ideological and economic confrontation contains obvious parallels to the ideological clash of the Cold War, though admittedly to a lesser degree. In fact, Morales apparently viewed his government “as part of a continental or even worldwide movement aimed at the realignment of international politics,” with Morales himself declaring, “We want Bolivia...with its political, economic, programmatic cultural and ecological proposals, to be a hope for the entire world.”¹⁶² Predictably, the United States was paying attention to these events.

This ideological leftward shift increasingly appealed to many Bolivians, and Morales capitalized on this trend. Much of Morales’s base came from “left-behind” and “angry poor” Bolivian citizens.¹⁶³ Developments in Bolivia during Morales’s rise increasingly drew comparisons to the controversial administrations of Chavez in Venezuela and even Castro in Cuba.¹⁶⁴ Considering Morales’s rhetoric and agenda, these comparisons were not completely unwarranted. During his campaign for president, Morales even branded himself as a “nightmare” for Washington, opposing “almost everything the Bush team stands for in Latin America.”¹⁶⁵ As Raul Madrid explains, Morales and his political party the *Movimiento al Socialismo* (MAS) “appealed to the growing pool of disaffected voters in part by developing a traditional leftist agenda. It opposed trade liberalization, privatization, and other neoliberal policies and called for income redistribution, agrarian reform, and the nationalization of natural resources.”¹⁶⁶

¹⁶¹ Jeffrey R. Webber, *From Rebellion to Reform in Bolivia: Class Struggle, Indigenous Liberation, and the Politics of Evo Morales* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2011), 205.

¹⁶² Cynthia J. Arnson and Carlos de la Torre, “Viva el *Populismo*: The Tense Future of Latin American Politics,” *Foreign Affairs* (April 16, 2014), <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/americas/2014-04-16/viva-el-populismo>.

¹⁶³ “A Different Latin America,” *New York Times*, December 24, 2005, A16.

¹⁶⁴ Webber, *From Rebellion to Reform in Bolivia*, 10; “A Different Latin America,” A16.

¹⁶⁵ “A Different Latin America,” A16

¹⁶⁶ Raul Madrid, “Bolivia: Origins and Policies of the Movimiento al Socialismo,” in *The Resurgence of the Latin American Left*, ed. Steven Levitsky and Kenneth M. Roberts (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2011), 239

This last element, the nationalization of Bolivia's natural resources, was perhaps the most tangible example of his reforms, as it decreased foreign companies' profits in Bolivia while significantly increasing the Bolivian government's revenues.¹⁶⁷ As a result of this shift, Bolivia was seemingly and increasingly distancing itself from the United States.¹⁶⁸

Bolivia's place in the U.S.-led war against drugs further complicated U.S.-Bolivian relations at this time.¹⁶⁹ Morales relied a great deal on the support from his *cocalero* (coca growers) base. As the lead representative of this *cocalero* movement, Morales had to pit himself against the U.S.-led war on drugs to some extent.¹⁷⁰ As Juan Forero points out, these confrontational circumstances made Morales a "pariah" to the United States, which had "bankrolled the army's effort to eradicate the crop [coca]."¹⁷¹ Consequently, Morales's leftist rhetoric and agenda were not the only factors exacerbating his relations with the United States; his deep ties with Bolivia's coca growers also complicated the matter.¹⁷²

Before providing a brief overview of the U.S. response to Morales, it is worth mentioning the broader international context in which the U.S.-Bolivian relationship evolved. Webber provides a useful description of this context:

While U.S. intervention by way of nonmilitary "democracy promotion" remained a threat, as did the multileveled facets of economic imperialism in this period of global capitalism, it was nonetheless apparent that the United States was suffering a crisis of imperial overreach in the Middle East, neoliberalism had been rejected ideologically by much of the Latin American population, the IMF's influence in the region was in decline, relations with Venezuela and Cuba were providing Bolivia with new room

¹⁶⁷ Madrid, "Bolivia: Origins and Policies of the Movimiento al Socialismo," 248.

¹⁶⁸ Also of note, nationalization and resource sovereignty are key issues in Bolivia's domestic politics that predate Morales's rise. This reality represents further evidence explaining Morales's motives.

¹⁶⁹ Morales himself had originally been a coca grower.

¹⁷⁰ Webber, *From Rebellion to Reform in Bolivia*, 12.

¹⁷¹ Juan Forero, "Elections Could Tilt Latin America Further to the Left," *New York Times*, December 10, 2005, A3.

¹⁷² The indigenous movement for equal rights and representation in Bolivia was another significant element of Morales's rise, but it is not relevant to my discussion of U.S.-Bolivian relations, therefore, I will not address it in this paper.

for maneuver, and the combative impulse of popular movements was on the ascent in many countries.¹⁷³

In fact, Venezuela and Cuba were not the only countries Bolivia looked to for support. As Madrid points out, Morales also became closer friends with countries such as Iran, Russia, and China—polemical relationships as far as the United States was concerned.¹⁷⁴ As I will discuss later, though, Morales’s rhetoric, particularly with respect to his foreign policy, often times contained more “bark” and less “bite.” At times, though, Morales did act antagonistically toward the United States. Most notably, Morales declared persona non-grata U.S. Ambassador to Bolivia Philip Goldberg while also clashing with U.S. forces carrying out counternarcotic operations in his country.¹⁷⁵

C. U.S. OFFICIALS’ REACTIONS TO MORALES

The United States monitored developments in Bolivia as Morales became increasingly popular and powerful. Perceptions and interpretations varied, though most U.S. officials viewed the unfolding of events with concern. In this context, determining the agency of lower-level officials in crafting the U.S. response to Morales is made more difficult by the absence of the relevant FRUS volumes. However, analyzing the available sources—mainly memoirs, congressional hearings, and interviews with relevant officials—allows us to create at least a plausible analysis and some preliminary conclusions until the State Department publishes applicable FRUS volumes. In this section, I will first analyze the limited information available pertaining to Bolivia in the memoirs of the following key decision-makers in Washington: President George W. Bush, and Secretaries

¹⁷³ Webber, *From Rebellion to Reform in Bolivia*, 96.

¹⁷⁴ Madrid, “Bolivia: Origins and Policies of the Movimiento al Socialismo,” 248.

¹⁷⁵ Simon Romero, “Bolivia Orders U.S. Ambassador to Leave, Accusing Him of Supporting Rebel Groups,” *New York Times*, September 11, 2008, A14; “Bolivia Suspends U.S.-Backed Antidrug Efforts,” *New York Times*, November 2, 2008, 20. Regarding the expulsion of Ambassador Goldberg, the Morales administration justified its action on grounds that Goldberg had made contact with and was aiding opposition forces—a claim that the State Department denied. However, as the congressional hearing entitled “U.S.-Bolivia Relations: Looking Forward”—a source I cite later in this chapter—demonstrates there had been some contact between U.S. officials and Bolivian opposition forces.

of State Condoleezza Rice and Hillary Clinton.¹⁷⁶ Next, I will discuss the views of lower-level officials involved in the U.S. foreign policy process. In this subsection, I will look at a congressional debate pertaining to U.S.-Bolivian relations as well as statements from officials in the State Department and Department of Defense. Lastly, I will examine the paranoia that seemed to exist with regard to Morales and compare this apparent hysteria with what existed during the Cold War.

Perhaps not surprisingly, President Morales and Bolivia are not centerpieces in the memoirs of President Bush and Secretaries of State Rice and Clinton. After the attacks of September 11, 2001, Washington had more pressing foreign policy concerns than issues pertaining to Latin America. However, the brief mentions Morales and Bolivia receive are still somewhat revealing regarding Washington's views of the controversial Bolivian figure. Additionally, the mere absence of in-depth discussion pertaining to Morales in itself is useful for this analysis—Washington policymakers did not consider Morales a primary concern and likely did not devote significant time to thoroughly understanding this part of U.S. foreign policy.¹⁷⁷

In his memoir, President Bush only mentions Bolivia once, and in fact, he never mentions Morales by name. The one mention of Bolivia actually revolves around Hugo Chavez and Venezuela. Bush wrote:

Venezuela also slid back from democracy. President Hugo Chavez polluted the airwaves with hard-core anti-American sermons while spreading a version of phony populism that he termed the Bolivarian Revolution. Sadly, he squandered the Venezuelan people's money and is ruining their country. He is becoming the Robert Mugabe of South America. Regrettably, the leaders of Nicaragua, Bolivia, and Ecuador have followed his example.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁶ Unfortunately, President Barack Obama has not yet published his memoirs. Obama was certainly a key figure in this case study, but his personal take on this issue is not yet available. Realistically, though, much like the other memoirs discussed in this chapter, Obama's memoirs will probably hardly mention Morales and Bolivia.

¹⁷⁷ An interview Bush gave in 2005 supports this claim. In this interview, when asked about Morales, his leftist movement, and a possible "axis of evil" in Latin America, Bush's response was vague, with no mention of specifics to the situation in Bolivia. This interview is available at: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=64540&st=morales&st1=bolivia>.

¹⁷⁸ George W. Bush, *Decision Points* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2010), 436.

This excerpt is worth mentioning because it illustrates the tendency of Washington decision-makers to lump Morales into the same category as Chavez. More precisely, Bush portrays Morales as a follower, even a subordinate of Chavez. While this perception is not completely unwarranted, it demonstrates only a superficial understanding of the situation in Latin America. He uses easy-to-make, though imperfect analogies in an attempt to understand disparate circumstances. Such a view would undoubtedly obscure his ability to understand the domestic nuances pertinent to the Bolivian case study. As we will see later, U.S. policy toward Bolivia tended to resemble President Bush's skeptical and shallow understanding of Morales.¹⁷⁹

In their memoirs, Secretaries Rice and Clinton pay a comparable amount of attention to Bolivia and President Morales—that is to say next to none.¹⁸⁰ Rice, though, actually includes a brief, but detailed description of an encounter she had with Morales. Rice remembers an embarrassing encounter she had with Morales that involved a gift of a ukulele. She unknowingly accepted the gift that had been decorated with coca leaves—a banned substance and primary ingredient in cocaine—and then posed with it for pictures with the press.¹⁸¹ As a result of this encounter—and other factors to be sure—Rice did not have a high opinion of Morales. In fact, she advised President Bush that they would not be able to work with Morales, referring to him as a “clone of Chavez” but “lacking his master’s cunning.”¹⁸² In this excerpt, we again see the tendency in Washington to lump Morales into the same category as Chavez, writing him off as a subservient disciple to the controversial Venezuela president. This conclusion is understandable, but just like Bush’s analysis, it lacks depth and appreciation for Bolivia’s domestic nuances.

¹⁷⁹ Morales was aware of this tendency in Washington, as he demonstrated in a (comical at times) interview with John Stewart on *The Daily Show* in 2007 when he begged not to be lumped into President Bush’s “Axis of Evil.”

¹⁸⁰ Note that this is not a criticism of what they chose to include and not include in their memoirs or what they (President Bush and Secretaries Rice and Clinton) chose to focus on during their terms as Secretary of State. I make this statement only to illustrate the relative lack of material available in this case study.

¹⁸¹ Condoleezza Rice, *No Higher Honor: A Memoir of My Years in Washington* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2011), 448.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 448.

Hillary Clinton, Rice's successor as secretary of state, like Bush in his memoir, does not mention Morales by name. She mentions Bolivia, again though, only in the role of a subservient follower to Chavez. She refers to the heads of state of Nicaragua, Bolivia, and Ecuador as "his [Chavez's] cronies."¹⁸³ Her implicit description of Morales, coupled with the views of Bush and Rice, demonstrate a clearly skeptical view and shallow understanding of the Bolivian president.

Next, an examination of available sources pertaining to lower-level U.S. officials reveals a similar view of Morales. In fact, evidence from congressional hearings and interviews with undersecretaries of state and defense display greater paranoia regarding Morales and his motives.¹⁸⁴ A congressional hearing in 2009 pertaining to U.S.-Bolivia relations began with a representative stating, "I think we understand the problems in Latin America. We understand that there are many, and I think it is time now we start looking for solutions."¹⁸⁵ Perhaps the members of this subcommittee did indeed understand Latin America's problems, but such a simple and broad statement seems to demonstrate a lack of in-depth understanding and appreciation for the many nuances that exist in a region as large as Latin America.

Another representative demonstrated a similarly shallow comprehension of the situation in Bolivia when he asks, "would we be better off...if Evo Morales does not want a relationship with the United States...to take those resources and support our allies and others that may be in a position, that want to have a relationship with us?"¹⁸⁶ He goes on to state, "it is clear that Hugo Chavez and Evo Morales and Fidel Castro are all playing from the same playbook. I mean, it is the steady drumbeat. You know, it is predictable at

¹⁸³ Hillary Rodham Clinton, *Hard Choices: A Memoir* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014), 257.

¹⁸⁴ Of note, the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Subcommittee of on the Western Hemisphere, Representative Eliot Engel, was not even present at the beginning of the hearing entitled "U.S.-Bolivia Relations: Looking Ahead." His initial absence at this hearing resembles the lack of in-depth discussion regarding Bolivia in the memoirs of Bush, Rice, and Clinton.

¹⁸⁵ U.S.-Bolivia Relations, *Looking Ahead: Hearing before the Committee on Foreign Relations, House of Representatives, 111th Cong., 1st sess., March 3, 2009*. 1.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 58.

this point.”¹⁸⁷ Even in congress, the tendency was to label Morales as a mindless follower of Chavez.

In previous chapters of this thesis, I have demonstrated that an anti-communist paranoia was a pervasive characteristic of U.S. policy toward Latin America during the Cold War. For this chapter, an analysis of comments from members of congress and lower-level diplomatic and military officials referencing Morales demonstrates a similar, though more subdued, tendency. A deputy assistant secretary of defense for Western Hemisphere affairs and senior adviser to Donald Rumsfeld on Latin America was quoted as saying, “You have a revolution going on in Bolivia, a revolution that potentially could have consequences as far-reaching as the Cuban revolution of 1959.”¹⁸⁸ This comment has a certain domino-theory quality to it.

Other lower-level U.S. officials also focused heavily on Bolivia’s connection to and dependency on Venezuela. As one analyst observes,

If Bolivians who support Morales seem drawn to thinking in conspirational [sic] terms about the U.S., the mirror image of this attitude is found in Washington. There is a powerful consensus in the U.S. government circles that Morales is being bankrolled by Chavez—a charge that the Bolivian leader flatly denies.¹⁸⁹

Latin American analyst Michael Shifter went as far to say that “there was a tremendous sense of hysteria about Morales within the [Bush] administration and especially at the Pentagon.”¹⁹⁰ Some military officials even reportedly labeled Morales a “terrorist, a murderer, and “the worst thing ever.”¹⁹¹

Some Department of State officials were also skeptical to even borderline paranoid about Morales’s rise to power. Prior to Morales’s election, a U.S. ambassador to Bolivia warned that the United States would have to “reconsider all future aid” if he [Morales]

¹⁸⁷ U.S.-Bolivia Relations, 58.

¹⁸⁸ David Rieff, “Che’s Second Coming,” *New York Times*, November 20, 2005, E72.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, E72.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, E72.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, E72.

became president.¹⁹² Another State Department official described Morales as “potentially our worst nightmare.”¹⁹³ These statements demonstrate that the views from lower-level officials paralleled those held by decision makers in Washington.

Certain excerpts from statements in the previously referenced congressional hearing further illuminate this pervasive hysteria stoked by a lack of in-depth analysis. The testimony of Representative Dan Burton is particularly colorful and useful in this respect. He concluded that “President Morales and the President of Venezuela seem to be committed to a Bolivarian kind of revolution which will lead to a socialistic government and control of all of Latin America, if they have their way.”¹⁹⁴ He included Cold-War-esque views in his following analysis:

Now we have seen with Mr. Chavez everything is starting to move to the left. He has taken an awful lot of his oil money and used it not to enhance the lives and quality of life for his people there in Venezuela, but he has used it to try to cause revolution in South America and Central America, his Bolivarian goals, and Mr. Morales is going along with him...and when I see these countries moving to the left, as they did back in the eighties, it seems like a repeat of an old movie, and I do not want Raul Castro to emulate his brother, and I do not want Chavez to be able to use the oil money to promote revolution and move to the left and destroy democracies and move toward socialism, and I want to see Mr. Morales, along with Mr. Chavez and Mr. Ortega in Nicaragua continue to push everything to the left because that is destructive not only of their countries but of all of Latin America.¹⁹⁵

Before concluding his remarks, Mr. Burton also referenced potential security threats for the United States due to Bolivia’s “cozying relations” with Russia and China.¹⁹⁶ Clearly, the Cold War ethos still persisted in certain areas of the U.S. government, even into the current millennium.

¹⁹² Rieff, “Che’s Second Coming,” E72.

¹⁹³ Joel Brinkley, “U.S. Keeps a Wary Eye on the Next Bolivian President,” *New York Times*, December 21, 2005, A3.

¹⁹⁴ U.S.-Bolivia Relations, 55.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 61.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 76.

Evidence exists, though, that U.S. policy toward Latin America had evolved—even matured—since the Cold War. Another representative in the U.S.-Bolivia Relations hearing stated, “I do not think it is necessarily bad that a country moves to the left...If the people in Bolivia wanted to move to the left, then that is what they want. I think we need to learn to work with countries.”¹⁹⁷ While this comment does not necessarily display a mastery of foreign policy nor a deep understanding of Bolivia’s domestic nuances, it nonetheless provides a counterpoint and balance to the hysteria held by U.S. officials such as Rep. Burton.

Some lower-level State Department officials also demonstrated a cautious willingness to understand and work with the Morales administration. As Juan Forero reported, “American officials acknowledged that they viewed his [Morales’s] presidency with serious concern, while insisting that they would wait to see how he actually governed.”¹⁹⁸ This quote demonstrates U.S. officials’ readiness to observe the facts as opposed to overreacting to hostile rhetoric. Such an approach served as a healthy balance to the hysteria present in other circles.

The Bush administration at times demonstrated a tendency to overreact to Morales’s hostile rhetoric; however, in pursuit of a greater good for both countries, the administration also showed a willingness to overlook Morales’s controversial political maneuvering. For example, shortly after Morales’s inauguration, the Bush administration actually “quietly tried to engage the new Bolivian Government” in bilateral negotiations, which was a relatively nuanced and mature approach to foreign policy.¹⁹⁹ Bush even decided to send a senior level official to La Paz to congratulate Morales after his victory.²⁰⁰

Another example of the Bush administration’s tempered concerns regarding Morales can be found in its 2006 budget proposal, which coincidentally immediately

¹⁹⁷ U.S.-Bolivia Relations, 63.

¹⁹⁸ Juan Forero, “Bolivia’s Newly Elected Leader Maps His Socialist Agenda,” *New York Times*, December 20, 2005, A8.

¹⁹⁹ Simon Romero and Juan Forero, “Bolivia’s Energy Takeover: Populism Rules in the Andes,” *New York Times*, May 3, 2006, A8.

²⁰⁰ Brinkley, “U.S. Keeps a Wary Eye on the Next Bolivian President,” A3.

followed Morales's election in Bolivia. Initially, Bush had planned on cutting 96 percent of U.S. military aid to Bolivia less than a month after Morales's inauguration.²⁰¹ However, shortly after this initial decision, Secretary Rice stated that reducing or eliminating this aid was "sort of like shooting ourselves in the foot" considering the Bolivian government's role in combatting the drug trade.²⁰² An anonymous source also confirmed that Secretary Rice had told Morales that the United States would be willing to provide economic opportunities to some of Bolivia's "marginalized sectors."²⁰³ Clearly, the Bush administration had some reservations with respect to the Morales presidency, but it also demonstrated a maturity at times—this course correction regarding the budget being a prime example. Overall, the U.S. response to Morales included paranoia and hysteria at times, but these dramatic reactions were often tempered by sound decisions and genuine attempts to appreciate Bolivia's nuances.

D. MORALES'S MOTIVES AND AN ANALYSIS OF THE FACTS

In an attempt to enrich the preceding analysis of the U.S. response to Morales, I now want to provide a similar analysis of Morales's possible motives—why did he do what he did—followed by an examination of what actually happened during Morales's presidency. In other words, did the hostile rhetoric match actual occurrences? Examining Morales's political logic and motives after having looked at the U.S. response will supplement my previous analysis, providing a sort of post mortem for U.S. policy toward Bolivia. I have identified the following primary motives to explain Morales's controversial rhetoric and policies: (1) he had a democratic mandate to pursue the policies he chose, (2) regarding efforts to combat the drug-trafficking, Morales still had to satisfy the demands of his *cocalero* base, and (3) logical and unthreatening calculations largely drove Morales's decisions to seek alliances with countries like Venezuela, Cuba, and Russia.

²⁰¹ Joel Brinkley, "Bush Budget Would Slash Bolivia Military Aid," *New York Times*, February 9, 2006, A10.

²⁰² Steven Weisman, "U.S. Rethinks Its Cutoff of Military Aid to Latin American Nations," *New York Times*, March 12, 2006, 6.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 6.

To begin with, Morales won a majority of votes in the 2005 presidential election, and the millions of Bolivians that voted for him expected him to accomplish the objectives outlined in his campaign. As Andean drug policy expert Bruce Babley explains, “Evo Morales simply cannot accede to U.S. demands after being democratically elected by a large mass of angry and hungry Indian peasants who see no real alternatives for themselves and their children.”²⁰⁴ Morales largely framed his campaign as an alternative to the neoliberal consensus that had prevailed. Inherently, this meant some level of conflict with the United States. Failing to deliver on this campaign promise would have been an unwise political decision. In his testimony before congress, Ivan Rebolledo, President of the Bolivian-American Chamber of Commerce, wisely suggested:

As the current U.S. [Obama] administration attempts to reestablish its eroded international “soft power” and to repair its tarnished reputation as a benevolent regional power, it is essential to recognize that Morales also possesses similar “assets” and a legitimate democratic mandate, which has been reaffirmed during the recent referenda processes. U.S. policy measures designed to discipline his government’s conduct are more likely to stiffen its resistance and to hurt the Bolivian people by further reducing their desire for social progress.²⁰⁵

Therefore, understanding Bolivia’s domestic nuances is a critical part of crafting a U.S. policy response to Morales’s oftentimes provocative stances.

Second, before becoming a national phenomenon, Morales initially found his political base among his fellow *cocaleros*. After winning the presidency, he could not turn his back on these allies. Additionally, Morales made attempts to explain his case regarding decriminalizing the coca leaf in Bolivia. In a *New York Times* article, he stated, “In 1961, the United Nations Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs placed the coca leaf in the same category with cocaine—thus promoting the false notion that the coca leaf is a narcotic.”²⁰⁶ He further explained, “Why is Bolivia so concerned with the coca leaf? Because it is an important symbol of the history and identity of the indigenous cultures of the Andes. The

²⁰⁴ Simon Romero, “As U.S. Presses Drug War, Bolivian is Antagonist and Uneasy Ally,” *New York Times*, August 29, 2008, A1.

²⁰⁵ U.S.-Bolivia Relations, 33.

²⁰⁶ Evo Morales Ayma, “Let Mew Chew My Coca Leaves,” *New York Times*, March 14, 2009, A21.

custom of chewing coca leaves has existed in the Andean region of South America since at least 3000 B.C.”²⁰⁷ The United States did not always agree with this logic, but U.S. policy must nonetheless take note of these motives.

Third, logical and unthreatening calculations—and not necessarily anti-American sentiment—largely drove Morales to nurture relations with other countries that were also hostile to the United States, namely Venezuela. As Rebolledo points out, “A tactical alliance with Venezuela and Cuba has provided Bolivia with the resources and political support, respectively, to allow Morales to move ahead with radical agendas without compromising with the opposition.”²⁰⁸ Therefore, as U.S. influence and aid dwindled in Bolivia, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez stepped in with millions of dollars in loans for Morales.²⁰⁹ Morales largely made these decisions out of political and economic necessity. For example, Morales’s decision to nationalize Bolivia’s gas sector scared away some foreign investors, which meant he had to look elsewhere for capital, and Russia and Venezuela were potential investors.²¹⁰ Again, sound logic and not a deliberately hostile stance toward the United States drove many of these decisions.

If those motives explained many of Morales’s decisions, the next question is this: What were the actual results of Morales’s reforms? Did this controversial figure pose a serious threat to the economic interests and security of the United States? Simply stated, no he did not. His rhetoric and actions often seemed hostile toward the United States, but actual developments did not match these surface-level observations. Morales actually proved relatively uncontroversial and even friendly in the following areas: (1) economic reforms, (2) cooperation with the United States in its war on drugs, and (3) foreign policy statements toward the United States.

Morales did indeed implement some economic reforms that received some negative attention from abroad, mainly nationalization of Bolivia’s lucrative gas sector. However,

²⁰⁷ Morales, “Let Mew Chew My Coca Leaves,” A21.

²⁰⁸ U.S.-Bolivia Relations, 32.

²⁰⁹ Simon Romero, “Bolivia Leader Lets Venezuela Send Soldiers, Angering Foes,” *New York Times*, January 9, 2007, A3.

²¹⁰ U.S.-Bolivia Relations, 32.

considering Bolivia only exported gas to Argentina and Brazil, analysts expected these moves to have only a minimal impact on international energy markets.²¹¹ Additionally, Morales pledged that this process would be “nationalization without confiscation,” promising to compensate foreign companies appropriately and continue to foster an environment conducive to private profit.²¹² Nationalization was a reasonable and domestically popular move for Morales to make.

On a broader economic scale, Morales did not change much to the already existing primary-export model of capital accumulation.²¹³ In fact, as Webber points out, Morales’s overall economic policy has largely upheld the neoliberal status quo that existed before his election.²¹⁴ Madrid also supports this argument by concluding, “Despite its periodic criticisms of capitalism, however, the government has not sought to carry out a transition to socialism or change the existing pattern of development.”²¹⁵ Furthermore, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and various economists generally gave high marks to Morales for his management of Bolivia’s economy.²¹⁶

For all the hostile anti-U.S. and anti-capitalist rhetoric, Morales actually proved to be an economic ally to the United States. Webber points out that, “At the same time that Morales speaks about anticapitalist ecological politics to the international media, his domestic policies reinforce a complex and reconstituted neoliberalism.”²¹⁷ In part due to this gap between rhetoric and actual policies, Webber also explains, “The social landscape of contemporary Bolivia is perhaps more privy to misunderstanding than that of any other

²¹¹ Romero and Forero, “Bolivia’s Energy Takeover: Populism Rules in the Andes,” A8.

²¹² William Powers, “All Smoke, No Fire in Bolivia,” *New York Times*, May 6, 2006.

²¹³ Jeffrey R. Webber, “Evo Morales and the Political Economy of Passive Revolution,” *Third World Quarterly* 37, no. 10 (October 2016), 1863.

²¹⁴ Webber, *From Rebellion to Reform in Bolivia*, 13, 18, 95.

²¹⁵ Madrid, “Bolivia: Origins and Policies of the Movimiento al Socialismo,” 248.

²¹⁶ Webber, “Evo Morales and the Political Economy of Passive Revolution,” 1866; Simon Romero and Andres Schipani, “In Bolivia, a Force for Change Endures,” *New York Times*, December 6, 2009, 10.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 208.

country in Latin America.”²¹⁸ Morales did not always make the task easy for U.S. policy makers, but he proved to be an ally to the United States in many ways.

Though there were clashes at times, Morales by and large also proved to be a strong partner to the United States in its war against drugs in Latin America. As Romero observes, “in a drug war in which contradictions abound, Mr. Morales is doing better than antinarcotics experts feared when he rose to power.”²¹⁹ Romero explains this development by stating, “Morales has been eager to show that he does not run a narco-state, and working with the Americans helps bolster his international legitimacy.”²²⁰ Before congress, Cathryn Ledebur, director of the Andean Information Network, agreed that cooperation had characterized the U.S.-Bolivia bilateral relationship with regard to combatting drug-trafficking.²²¹

In a broader foreign policy sense, Morales even showed clear signs that he was willing to cooperate with the United States, especially after Barack Obama’s election in 2008.²²² A statement prepared by the Bolivian government presented during a congressional hearing in the United States stated,

As a developing country, we need assistance, but I also feel that we are needed. We want respect, transparent cooperation and aid directed to people who need it. I’m interested in seeing how we can improve the relationship with the new President [Obama]; I believe we have many things in common.²²³

In this report, the Bolivian government also declared that it wished to “reiterate its willingness to negotiate a fair commercial agreement with the United States as long as this is based in the general framework that must govern commercial relations and principles

²¹⁸ Webber, “Evo Morales and the Political Economy of Passive Revolution,” 1871.

²¹⁹ Romero, “As U.S. Presses Drug War, Bolivian is Antagonist and Uneasy Ally,” A1.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, A1.

²²¹ U.S.-Bolivia Relations, 21.

²²² In a 2009 interview, President Obama in fact articulated an openness to working with Morales in spite of the Bolivian president’s ties to Chávez. Interview available at: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=86033&st=morales&st1=bolivia>.

²²³ U.S.-Bolivia Relations, 78–79.

agreed upon by both Bolivia and the United States.”²²⁴ If the Morales administration was often guilty of spouting hostile record to the United States, there were also instances of willingness to cooperate. One clear example of this can be found in the following quote from Morales, “Everything is pardoned... We are in new times. Let us start talking not in a dialogue of submission, but to find solutions.”²²⁵

E. FINAL THOUGHTS ON MORALES-BOLIVIA CASE STUDY

With the limited evidence available, I have reached several conclusions. First, U.S. policy toward leftward shifting governments in Latin America has matured to some extent since the Cold War. Second, paranoia can still, however, manifest itself in the U.S. foreign policy process. Third and lastly, though it is impossible to say with any certainty, a circumstantial evidence-based case can be made arguing that lower-level U.S. officials still cling to relatively little policy-affecting agency vis-à-vis Washington decision makers.

In comparison to the Guatemalan case study in Chapter II, this more contemporary case study exhibits a more balanced and thoughtful approach to U.S. foreign policy. While paranoia and hysteria in certain circles still existed within the U.S. government, these dramatic reactions found a counterpart in sympathetic and rational voices that sought acceptance and cooperation with regard to Bolivia. As Morales stoked U.S. fears by spouting anti-U.S., anti-capitalist rhetoric and by strengthening ties with countries like Venezuela, Cuba, and Russia, the United States understandably remained cautious with regard to Morales’s controversial decisions. However, in spite of these challenges, the two governments were still able to forge a mutually beneficial alliance at times. The U.S.-Bolivian bilateral relationship certainly experienced setbacks. For example, Morales declared persona non-grata U.S. Ambassador Goldberg. Also, clashes erupted between Bolivian officials and Americans working for Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). However, these setbacks were

²²⁴ U.S.-Bolivia Relations, 82.

²²⁵ Juan Forero and Larry Rohter, “Bolivia’s Leader Solidifies Region’s Leftward Tilt,” *New York Times*, January 22, 2006, 1.

not the norm. As I have demonstrated, many analysts conclude that cooperation still characterized this bilateral relationship.

The existence of a U.S. paranoia at times with regard to the controversial Bolivian president serves as a reminder, though, that present-day officials are not completely impervious to the mistakes made by past U.S. officials. Hysteria clouds one's ability to accurately understand a situation, especially when that situation is occurring in a foreign country. Instead of a heated reaction to hostile rhetoric, what U.S. foreign policy requires is policymakers and policy-implementers that seek to understand and appreciate the nuances of any given international scenario. Drawing shallow and imperfect parallels to past times and distant lands confuses our understanding of the situation at hand.

At the present moment, unfortunately, reaching any convincing conclusions is difficult to impossible regarding whether or not U.S. foreign policy still demonstrated a top-down quality. My evidence provides a circumstantial argument at best. However, the sources do demonstrate a noteworthy degree of similarity between upper and lower levels of the U.S. foreign policy apparatus. For example, during the Bush administration, when Secretary Rice concluded that Morales would not be an ally to the United States, lower-level officials in the State Department and Department of Defense held similar views. Also, the Bush administration's eventual shift to a more sympathetic stance was also predictably present at lower levels.

Considering my findings in previous studies, I believe the limited evidence for this Bolivian case study still potentially points toward a Washington-led foreign policy with little agency reserved for lower-level officials. Ultimately, what I deem important in this area is the necessity for a solid and accurate understanding of actual events, rather than erroneous perceptions, to shape U.S. foreign policy. Solid and sound reporting from lower-level officials, coupled with Washington's willingness to respect these findings, can only serve to strengthen U.S. foreign policy.

V. CONCLUSION AND FINAL THOUGHTS

A. REVIEW OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS

In this last chapter, before presenting my final conclusions, I first want to provide a brief synopsis of each of the three foreign policy case studies I researched. These three case studies were Guatemala and Costa Rica both during the early Cold War years and then lastly contemporary Bolivia under President Evo Morales. In all three of these case studies, I primarily sought to understand what influenced the behavior of lower-level U.S. officials stationed in Latin America. Secondly, I wanted to determine how much policy-affecting agency these lower-level officials had vis-à-vis decision makers in Washington, such as the president and secretary of state.

First, in the case of Guatemala, I examined the events and years leading up to the U.S.-supported coup of Guatemala's reformist and democratically elected president in 1954. After reviewing more than ten years of official U.S. correspondence in the Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), I made several conclusions that generally supported already existing literature on the topic. Most notably, I concluded that both the anti-communist hysteria and pressure from superiors in Washington largely influenced the behavior of lower-level U.S. officials in Guatemala City. In this context, lower-level U.S. officials, mainly ambassadors, enjoyed relatively little policy-affecting agency. Ambassadors predictably reflected views held by Washington policymakers. For example, as Washington's fear of communism grew, so too did this concern grow in the minds of U.S. ambassadors in Guatemala. In this case study, I ultimately argued that this anti-communist hysteria—a notable feature of the Cold War—largely influenced and even clouded the judgement of lower-level officials in Guatemala.

Second, I examined the years surrounding Costa Rica's civil war in 1948 and the associated U.S. response. Compared to my Guatemala case study, this particular case had received much less attention from scholars. In the example of Costa Rica, the United States' response was less interventionist, but only because the perceived threat of communism was correspondingly less threatening. The United States had the good fortune

of watching a fellow anti-communist in José Figueres triumph in Costa Rica's civil war; therefore, an outright intervention was not necessary.²²⁶ Instead, the United States accordingly acted more discreetly to affect its desired outcome. With respect to this Costa Rican case study, I similarly concluded that the anti-communist hysteria and pressure from Washington largely influenced the actions of lower-level U.S. officials. Again, this framework ultimately resulted in relatively little policy-affecting agency for U.S. officials in Costa Rica. Additionally, I concluded that Costa Rica's *junta* leader and eventual president, Figueres, skillfully and successfully wielded his political and diplomatic agency to notably shape U.S. policy toward his country.

Third, in the case of contemporary Bolivia, I examined the rise of another reformist president, Evo Morales, and the subsequent U.S. response. The case of Morales in Bolivia was similar in some ways to the preceding two case studies in that a potentially threatening reformist political leader rose to power during an apparent social revolution. However, his rise occurred outside of the Cold War era—Morales first became president in 2006. While I did not have access to declassified official correspondence for this case study, I cautiously concluded that U.S. policy has evolved and even matured somewhat since the Cold War years, but not entirely. Pervasive fears (of a reformist leader with controversial allies) still clouded the perceptions and behavior of U.S. officials assigned to Bolivia. Though I could not provide conclusive evidence due to the lack of declassified material, I surmised that Washington decision makers still largely controlled U.S. policy toward Bolivia, which again resulted in relatively little agency for lower-level officials on the ground in Bolivia.

In comparing the Cold War case studies of Guatemala and Costa Rica, despite largely different outcomes and actions in the two separate countries, I found a surprising level of consistency in U.S. foreign policy. Washington and its anti-communist agenda was still ever-present in the U.S. foreign policy calculus, but different circumstances in Guatemala and Costa Rica respectively elicited different responses from the United States.

²²⁶ Notably, José Figueres was still a reform-minded political leader, which was a trait that typically alarmed officials in Washington. However, Figueres had strong anti-communist credentials. Additionally, Figueres had the added benefit of knowing that the side he was fighting represented a greater communist threat than he did.

Mainly, the reformist and possibly communist leader in Guatemala in 1954 still worried U.S. officials, while the convincingly anti-communist leader in Costa Rica in 1948 did not stoke these fears to the same extent. These two distinct scenarios provoked distinct U.S. reactions, though the anti-communist feature remained very much constant in both cases. Comparing these two cases also revealed that leaders of smaller countries still retain notable agency in affecting U.S. policy toward their countries.²²⁷ Figueres in Costa Rica successfully managed his relations with U.S. officials, while Árbenz in Guatemala did not do enough to allay the anti-communist fears of U.S. officials.

Bringing in the contemporary case study of Bolivia enriched my overall findings. Compared to the two Cold War cases, U.S. policy toward Bolivia demonstrated more thoughtfulness and appreciation for the domestic nuances present in this small Latin American country. However, a myopic tendency based in fear still manifested itself at times in response to the Bolivian president's reformist policies and rhetoric. In this example, as was the case with my two Cold War cases, I again tentatively concluded that lower-level U.S. officials retained relatively little policy-affecting agency vis-à-vis their superiors in Washington.

Overall, with respect to U.S. foreign policy toward Latin America during the Cold War, in the end, my research, analysis and subsequent conclusions largely confirm the preexisting scholarly consensus. After reviewing primary documents, I first found that the anti-communist hysteria during the Cold War years certainly affected U.S. officials' ability to accurately assess and respond to conditions in the Latin American countries to which they were assigned. Secondly, I concluded that detached policymakers in Washington still largely controlled U.S. policy toward Latin America, which resulted in relatively little policy-affecting agency for lower-level U.S. officials in region. Lastly, I determined that U.S. policy toward Latin America has matured somewhat since the Cold War, but that U.S. policy is at times still susceptible to fear and myopia.

²²⁷ For further discussion regarding the limits of U.S. foreign policy and the agency of smaller countries vis-à-vis the United States, see Christopher Darnton's *Rivalry and Alliance Politics in Cold War Latin America*. In the section entitled "Persistent Conflicts: Costa Rica—Nicaragua and El Salvador-Honduras, he similarly concludes that U.S. intervention does not always dictate final outcomes.

These conclusions are not entirely comprehensive, nor do they provide an all-encompassing answer to my original research question regarding the apparent ignorance U.S. officials demonstrated with respect to the affairs of the countries in which they worked. However, these primary conclusions do, in a general sense, enrich our understanding of the U.S. foreign policy-making process toward Latin America during the Cold War, specifically with regard to (1) the impact of pervasive paradigms and (2) the Washington-Embassy relationship dynamic. These initial conclusions become more pertinent, though, when compared and contrasted to the contemporary Bolivian case study I selected. This comparison reveals varying levels of evolution, maturity, and even a surprising degree of continuity in U.S. policy.

I have constructed the remaining portion of this concluding chapter in a way that, I hope, provides an insightful and meaningful analysis of my findings, particularly for lower-level U.S. officials assigned to diplomatic posts in Latin America. First, I will state some of the limitations present in my conclusions. Second, I will further discuss the significance of my comparison between the Cold War and contemporary case studies. Lastly, I will integrate into my own conclusions the findings of a 1964 congressional study on the conduct of U.S. foreign policy, which will prove to be surprisingly relevant to my own findings.

B. LIMITATIONS OF THIS PROJECT

First, I relied heavily on relatively few sources—first and foremost the FRUS volumes. My research has only scratched the surface, particularly with respect to my Costa Rican case study. Many scholars had already conducted thorough research regarding the 1954 coup in Guatemala, but comparable breadth and depth does not exist regarding U.S. policy towards Costa Rica. This case study still awaits further scholarly research and analysis. Findings from such a project could be very fruitful by instructing the officials involved in policy creation on how to maintain relatively cordial relations with another country during hectic times while simultaneously achieving desired ends with only minimal investment on the United States' part. The Bolivian case study too still awaits

further research, though such a project might have to wait some time before the State Department declassifies relevant documentation.

Second, my findings did not provide every single answer to my question regarding what influenced U.S. officials' behavior in Latin America during the Cold War. The anti-communist hysteria of the "Red Scare" and the dominance of distant policymakers in Washington were not the only factors clouding the judgement of U.S. officials in Latin America. However, both primary and secondary evidence consistently point to this anti-communist frenzy as a significant contributing factor. Somewhat surprisingly, though, as I have demonstrated, U.S. officials' susceptibility to hysteria does not appear to be exclusive to the Cold War years—leaders like Fidel Castro and Hugo Chavez continued to stoke similar fears into the 21st Century.²²⁸

Lastly, I encourage other scholars to more notably incorporate the views of Latin Americans themselves in future research and analysis pertaining to U.S. foreign policy. Robert Wesson and Heraldo Munoz's edited volume *Latin American Views of U.S. Policy* is a suitable source with which to start further research and analysis on this topic. Research projects that more fully combine views from both the United States and Latin American countries will undoubtedly yield a deeper understanding of international relations between our nations.

C. THEN AND NOW IN U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

The most valuable finding of this project comes from having including the contemporary case study of President Evo Morales in Bolivia and then comparing it to the previous Cold War case studies. Prior to this project, other scholars had already impressively documented the anti-communist "Red Scare" that had gripped many Americans during the Cold War. Additionally, scholars had also demonstrated that leaders involved in U.S. foreign policy were not always immune to this frenzy. In this author's view, it is easy to look to history and identify past leaders' mistakes, and then subsequently conclude that we have learned from these past mistakes. However, my analysis of a

²²⁸ Fear of China's involvement in Latin America is another possible manifestation of this characteristic of U.S. policy.

contemporary episode in Bolivia demonstrates that perhaps crafters of U.S. foreign policy toward Latin America have not come as far as one might have reasonably assumed—an unsettling realization.

In the Bolivian case study, statements from officials at all levels of the U.S. foreign policy apparatus demonstrated their susceptibility to jump to frenzied conclusions with respect to President Evo Morales. In their memoirs, President Bush and Secretaries of State Rice and Clinton all classified Morales as a subordinate to Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. They feared Chavez's rising influence as he led a revolution that seemed to threaten U.S. interests in Latin America. Their analyses of Morales portray him as another domino that had fallen in favor of Chavez and his Bolivarian Revolution. Additionally, lower-level officials in both the State Department and Department of Defense came to similar—and often times more radical—conclusions regarding Morales. In context, we can understand these frenzied responses to the Bolivian president, because Chávez was a prominent leader in the region with growing influence and an openly hostile stance toward the United States. And in many ways, Morales did indeed appear to follow Chávez's lead with respect to maintaining an antagonistic stance vis-à-vis the United States. However, even though we can explain and understand these U.S. reactions, that does not necessarily make them effective responses in furthering U.S. interests in the region.

I argue that the general U.S. response to Morales in Bolivia in many ways resembles the myopic response the United States demonstrated to various reformist Latin American presidents during the Cold War. With Morales, U.S. officials feared economic reforms in Bolivia that would not be compatible with U.S. trade policy—this proved to largely not be the case. Additionally, the United States feared the Bolivian government would cease to cooperate in the U.S.-led war on drugs in Latin America—this too was largely an erroneous conclusion. Perhaps most importantly and most pertinent to this discussion, U.S. officials viewed Morales as being under the threatening influence of a revolutionary leader. These concerns were not completely unfounded, but perhaps exaggerated. All of these tendencies demonstrate clear parallels to U.S. policy toward Latin American during the Cold War, when a contentious ideology (communism) and foreign power (the USSR) stoked fears in the United States.

In my view, these reactions from both the Cold War and more recent years demonstrate a lack of in-depth understanding of the causal factors leading to apparent shifts in Latin American countries. In many cases, U.S. officials reached easy-to-understand, superficial, and threatening conclusions regarding changes in Latin America. In other words, they took events at face value. For example, if Morales supported Chávez in public, he was clearly a crony under the Venezuelan president's command. However, a more in-depth analysis of Bolivia's domestic circumstances leads to a more nuanced, accurate, and less threatening assessment of the situation. As I outlined in Chapter IV, Morales had domestic constituents to please, and this reality led to many of the foreign policy decisions he made. Morales spouted hostile rhetoric toward the United States not necessarily because he sought to harm U.S.-Bolivian relations, but rather because he was making calculated political maneuvers. In fact, as I previously demonstrated, in many instances, Morales's actions continued to be cordial to the United States despite occasional hostile rhetoric.

Appreciating the nuances of a foreign country's domestic climate is not an easy task, and I can certainly understand how intelligent and well-intentioned U.S. officials made mistakes regarding U.S. policy toward Latin American countries. Even so, I encourage measures that result in a slight increase in the agency of well-qualified lower-level officials in the U.S. foreign policy-making process. In addition to regional—or better yet, country-specific—expertise, these lower-level officials must be aware of pervasive paradigms that might cloud an otherwise sound logic. Ultimately, decision makers in Washington will maintain the greater power associated with their vital positions, but a healthy respect for the analysis and recommendations of their subordinates would certainly improve U.S. foreign policy. As we will see in the next section, I am not alone in this conclusion.

D. CONGRESSIONAL FINDINGS ON THE ISSUE OF U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

As it turns out, my own analysis and subsequent conclusions largely coincide with a congressional subcommittee's findings in 1964 on the conduct of U.S. foreign policy—specifically with regard to the Washington-Embassy relationship. This work, edited by Senator Henry M. Jackson, and entitled *The Secretary of State and The Ambassador:*

Jackson Subcommittee Papers on the Conduct of American Foreign Policy concluded that Washington decision makers should grant lower-level U.S. officials—primarily ambassadors—greater policy-affecting agency than they enjoyed at the time. The study determined that “Washington can, of course, assert its authority in any matter. But it should not assert it in every matter. The division of labor between Washington and the field needs to be reexamined.”²²⁹ The report similarly acknowledged that, “the advice of our Ambassadors should be significant in shaping policy, and could be more important than it has been in the past.”²³⁰

This study, though, was realistic in its possible recommendations for U.S. foreign policy. First, it acknowledged and accepted the Washington-topped hierarchy present in U.S. policy creation. For example, this report quoted President Kennedy as having said, “There are no easy matters that will ever come to you as President. If they are easy, they will be settled at a lower level;” therefore, “the matters that come to you as President are always the difficult matters...that carry with them large implications.”²³¹

However, the president will understandably not have time to—nor should he be expected to—address all significant issues in U.S. foreign policy. As the report stated, “delegation is therefore not merely desirable; it is unavoidable,” and that “he [the President] must know how to put them [lower-level officials] to work in planning and executing national security operations—how to make them serve his needs while they carry on the important tasks that cannot receive his attention.”²³² This assessment acknowledges the ultimate decision authority the President maintains, but it also makes a compelling case for increased agency in lower levels of government.

The president and other high-ranking officials in Washington are simply not in the best position to understand events taking place in foreign countries. As the report explained, “the kind of knowledge and understanding needed to produce answers to such

²²⁹ Henry M. Jackson, *The Secretary of State and the Ambassador: Jackson Subcommittee Papers on the Conduct of American Foreign Policy* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1964), 27.

²³⁰ *Ibid*, 73.

²³¹ *Ibid*, 3.

²³² *Ibid*, 8, 4.

questions is not likely to be gained at a desk, reading second-hand accounts of what is happening in a society. Direct observation, study, and a wide acquaintance in many social groups are needed.”²³³ This inherent disadvantage for Washington encourages a greater level of agency at lower levels. As a result, the report recommends to Washington decision makers that they “might exercise greater self-restraint in issuing instructions,” and that they show “more respect...for the judgment of Ambassadors and more restraint in second-guessing them.”²³⁴

Unfortunately, the report observed that U.S. foreign policy was not trending in the right direction in this respect. It noted that “some progress has recently been made in delegating authority to the field for administrative decisions,” but that “no similar trend is evident in policy matters. In fact, the contrary is true. More and more issues are referred to Washington, or handled by officers sent up from Washington, or settled in Washington negotiations with visiting foreign officials.”²³⁵ As this statement’s multiple references to Washington demonstrate, lower-level officials stationed abroad did not exert a great degree of policy-affecting agency.

The report’s prescription for ambassadors on this matter was for them to acknowledge that their “first job is to carry out [their] instructions,” and that “the problem is to find a balance between the extremes of overinstruction [sic], on the one hand, and free-wheeling, on the other.”²³⁶ In the end, ambassadors and other lower-level officials should possess “the capacity to understand the forces building up in a society and the skill to influence events in some degree in accordance with our national policy.”²³⁷ To this statement, I would add that lower-level officials also need the freedom, flexibility, and trust from Washington to carry out this responsibility.

²³³ Jackson, *The Secretary of State and the Ambassador*, 25.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 27-28.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 27.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 70.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 84.

In conclusion, as Richard Immerman observes regarding U.S.-Guatemalan relations during the Cold War, “the basis for the conflict between the two countries was, in sum, this: during the period of cold war tensions, neither the United States government nor the public could understand Guatemalans.”²³⁸ While I believe this statement underestimates the agency of the smaller power in affecting relations with the United States—my Costa Rican case study provides convincing evidence that smaller countries can “wag the dog” to a certain extent—I do think that Immerman gets to the core of a significant fault present in some instances of U.S. foreign policy. U.S. policy, both past and present, toward countries in Latin American has demonstrated an inability or unwillingness to understand its southerly neighbors. In my estimation, pervasive and flawed paradigms coupled with a Washington-dominated foreign policy process has exacerbated this deficiency.

²³⁸ Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala*, IX.

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