



**NAVAL
POSTGRADUATE
SCHOOL**

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**GETTING IT WRONG: A CRITIQUE OF THE CIA'S
EARLY COVERT OPERATIONS**

by

Nicholas I. Bryant

March 2021

Thesis Advisor:
Second Reader:

Christopher N. Darnton
Erik J. Dahl

Approved for public release. Distribution is unlimited.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			<i>Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188</i>	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington, DC, 20503.				
1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)		2. REPORT DATE March 2021	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Master's thesis	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE GETTING IT WRONG: A CRITIQUE OF THE CIA'S EARLY COVERT OPERATIONS			5. FUNDING NUMBERS	
6. AUTHOR(S) Nicholas I. Bryant				
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A			10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.				
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release. Distribution is unlimited.			12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE A	
13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words) The CIA's initial regime change operations between 1953 to 1961 were marred by intelligence leaks and lacked critical mission assessments. In addition, perceptions held by top-level decision makers were so distorted that unsupported claims of communist infiltration were made in order to support the decision to proceed with an operation. Three operations were conducted in the span of eight years with nearly indistinguishable similarity, and the third operation resulted in failure. It was only after that failure that investigations revealed the extent of the problem. After examining these three cases, this thesis concludes that the accrual of misperceptions with regard to intelligence and unexamined mission tactics led to the failure at the Bay of Pigs.				
14. SUBJECT TERMS CIA, organizational learning, regime change, international affairs			15. NUMBER OF PAGES 73	
			16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU	

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Approved for public release. Distribution is unlimited.

**GETTING IT WRONG:
A CRITIQUE OF THE CIA'S EARLY COVERT OPERATIONS**

Nicholas I. Bryant
Lieutenant, United States Navy
BA, Rollins College, 2009

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES
(WESTERN HEMISPHERE)**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
March 2021**

Approved by: Christopher N. Darnton
Advisor

Erik J. Dahl
Second Reader

Afshon P. Ostovar
Associate Chair for Research
Department of National Security Affairs

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

ABSTRACT

The CIA's initial regime change operations between 1953 to 1961 were marred by intelligence leaks and lacked critical mission assessments. In addition, perceptions held by top-level decision makers were so distorted that unsupported claims of communist infiltration were made in order to support the decision to proceed with an operation. Three operations were conducted in the span of eight years with nearly indistinguishable similarity, and the third operation resulted in failure. It was only after that failure that investigations revealed the extent of the problem. After examining these three cases, this thesis concludes that the accrual of misperceptions with regard to intelligence and unexamined mission tactics led to the failure at the Bay of Pigs.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	GETTING IT WRONG: A CRITIQUE OF THE CIA'S EARLY OVERT OPERATIONS.....	1
A.	MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION.....	1
B.	PROBLEMS AND HYPOTHESES	2
C.	LITERATURE REVIEW	5
D.	METHODS AND SOURCES	10
E.	THESIS OVERVIEW	11
II.	OPERATION: TPAJAX	13
A.	BACKGROUND	13
B.	DISCUSSION	15
C.	CONCLUSION	22
III.	OPERATION: PBSUCCESS.....	29
A.	BACKGROUND	29
B.	DISCUSSION	33
C.	CONCLUSION	39
IV.	CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS: OPERATION: JMATE.....	47
A.	BACKGROUND	48
B.	DISCUSSION	50
C.	CONCLUSION	52
	LIST OF REFERENCES.....	55
	INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST	59

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
NIE	National Intelligence Estimate
NSC	National Security Council
OAS	Organization of American States
OCI	Office of Current Intelligence
OIR	Office of Intelligence and Research
ONE	Office of National Estimates
OPSEC	Operational Security
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
PEMEX	Petróleos Mexicanos
SIS	Secret Intelligence Service
SOCAL	Standard Oil Company of California
UFCO	United Fruit Company

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge my wife and kids. Their patience and acceptance (however reluctant) of this consuming undertaking cannot be repaid. I am in debt for innumerable dates, games of hide-and-seek, and bedtime stories. I love you all immeasurably.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

I. GETTING IT WRONG: A CRITIQUE OF THE CIA'S EARLY OVERT OPERATIONS

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

Shortly after its inception in 1947, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) undertook operations to overthrow the democratically elected leaders of Iran and Guatemala—Mohammad Mosaddeq and Jacobo Árbenz. Both operations nearly failed, yet both were touted as successful and were lauded for being heroic since hardly anyone had died.¹ In the absence of after-action reviews for both missions, policies and practices became entrenched and repeated leading up to the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion which ended in disastrous failure. Those policies and practices were the result of a combination of cold war ideology and widespread misperceptions regarding the prevalence of communist infiltration.

That combination resulted in operations to eradicate any semblance of perceived communist threat in each country, despite intelligence which broadly indicated minimal communist presence or influence. This study will show that the distorted perceptions held by high-level U.S. officials were self-serving in the face of contradictory intelligence, and after the success of TPAJAX, the CIA's first covert regime change operation, those officials were "flushed with its triumph" and "about to overthrow another country."²

With this in mind, this thesis will provide an analysis of the operations in Iran and Guatemala, TPAJAX and PBSUCCESS, and identify the operational blunders as they apply to each and how the accrual and repetition of such mistakes ultimately factored into the failed operation to overthrow Fidel Castro. Each case study will consider the history, the operational details, and attempt to identify the carryover of practices identified to be faulty. On a broader scale, this thesis will seek to identify the leadership approaches which

¹ Kermit Roosevelt, *Countercoup: The Struggle for the Control of Iran* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), ix.

² Stephen E. Ambrose and Richard H. Immerman, *Ike's Spies: Eisenhower and the Espionage Establishment*, 1st ed. (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1981), 224.

were responsible for the continuation of such deleterious practices and whether attempts to adjust planning and practices were suggested and ignored.

B. PROBLEMS AND HYPOTHESES

U.S. interventions around the world generate substantial, long-lasting consequences. This analysis will not venture into the realm of whether the reviewed cases were right or wrong in a foreign policy sense, however the Iranian revolution of 1979, the Guatemalan civil war, and the rise of Fidel Castro warrant further examination in order to fully understand the repercussions of such undertakings. Take-aways from honest, critical post-mission analyses are essential and provide invaluable insights that serve to improve the tactical acuity of the armed forces, and, at times, simultaneously provide intelligence that can inform the advisability of foreign policy decisions. As Richard Immerman states in his book *The CIA in Guatemala*, “the effects ... continue, and subsequent events suggest that the United States success in 1954 may turn out to be one of its most serious failures.”³

Each of the cases covered occurred during the Cold War period and the specter of creeping communism cannot be overstated as an impetus for their execution. But that is only part of the background. In Iran, Mosaddeq had recently nationalized the country’s oil which had serious economic repercussions for Britain. Documents from the CIA archives released as recently as 2017 indicate that Britain had reached out to the U.S. for assistance, was initially denied, and reached out a second time but instead claimed that Mossadegh was entering the Soviet orbit.⁴ In Guatemala, Árbenz instituted sweeping land and labor reforms, ultimately seizing over 1.4 million acres by 1954.⁵ There was a heightened tendency for policy makers in the U.S. government and CIA leadership to view any revolutionary government reforms as a sign of communist influence, which resulted in an

³ Richard H. Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention*, 1st ed., (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), ix.

⁴ 1953 Iran Coup: New U.S. Documents Confirm British Approached U.S. in Late 1952 About Ousting Mosaddeq, https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/iran/2017-08-08/1953-iran-coup-new-us-documents-confirm-british-approached-us-late#_ftnref1 [accessed 02 Sep 2020].

⁵ Piero Gleijeses, “The Agrarian Reform of Jacobo Arbenz,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 21, no. 3 (1989): 465.

enthusiastic inclination towards regime overthrow. However, “during the period of cold war tension,” Richard Immerman concludes, “neither the United States government nor the public could understand”⁶ that not every attempt at reform was indicative of communist infiltration.

Numerous missteps and leaks plagued both the Iranian and Guatemalan operations which nearly derailed them. Ultimately, the planning of the Bay of Pigs operation was advanced despite similar missteps and known intelligence leaks. That cavalier approach to such significant operations quickly resulted in failure and laid bare the U.S.’s role in the invasion, with lasting and substantial repercussions. While it is not necessary to invoke John Quincy Adams’s advice about not going “abroad in search of monsters to destroy”,⁷ it should be readily apparent that operational planning needs to be thorough and well-developed as well as justifiable and based upon sound intelligence assessments.

The primary issue that arose in the study of these historical military operations is that of their success or failure. Opinions regarding the case studies within range from alarmists who see any effort to thwart the spread of communism as justified, no matter the cost, to pragmatists such as Nick Cullather who, given access to the CIA documentary archive, concluded that a number of mistakes were made to include misunderstood intelligence that provided justification for the operation.⁸ Nearly three-quarters-of-a-century have passed since these operations and vast amounts of historical records have been declassified, which confirms that Cullather’s assessment (and others who have had similar access and come to similar conclusions regarding the Iranian and Cuban operations) carries significant weight. On the contrary, many argue that had the operations not proceeded then Iran would have been trapped behind the Iron Curtain and that Soviet-style

⁶ Richard H. Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention*, 1st ed., (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1982), ix.

⁷ Benjamin H. Friedman, and A. Trevor Thrall, *U.S. Grand Strategy in the 21st Century: The Case for Restraint*. New York: Routledge, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315111773>.

⁸ Nick Cullather, *Secret History: The CIA’s Classified Account of Its Operations in Guatemala, 1952–1954* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999).

communism would have firmly established itself on the doorstep of the U.S. In any case, the topic is still debated.

A second issue is that this study is focused on operations that were undertaken under unique Cold War circumstances which inevitably affected all aspects of international interaction. As such, arguments against conclusions derived in this study center around the idea that there existed a sort of hive mind approach to the perceived threat of the spread of communism which resulted in a less critical operational environment. The conclusion involving a justification akin to a wholesale discharge of the responsibility in legal cases involving a heat of passion defense. This study acknowledges the existence of such opinion and engages it, rather than attempting to isolate or disregard it.

A final issue that was not found to contribute to the conclusion of this study involves the complication of the threat of nuclear war. The nuclear threat enhances the severity of situations in ways that no other aspect had before; there was no precedent to refer to and there was no established strategy for dealing with such a crisis. While the Bay of Pigs operation proved to be a watershed moment, the nuclear option was not in play which prevented such “a crucible in which a president and his administration are tested as nowhere else.”⁹

Throughout this thesis, each case study will examine how the decision-making process may have been affected by various conceptual frames over a nearly decade-long span. For structural purposes, this will be addressed as individual case studies with a focus on lack of variation of perception among the actors involved, carry-over of policy objectives, and the combined effects of which ultimately resulted in the mission failure at the Bay of Pigs. With regard to the variation of perception among the actors involved, this thesis will show that there was an inability to adjust policy as a result of the perceptions that were held by top-level decision-makers and that resulted in the carry-over of operational methods across each mission. Conversely, it may be the case that the Cold War perception was overwhelming and a substantial strategic failure was necessary in order for adjustments to occur.

⁹ L.W. Koenig, *The Chief Executive* (Bloomington, Indiana: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1964), 371.

Regarding the carry-over of policy objectives, this study will show that the policies and approaches towards each operation involved little to no variation and that imbued a dangerous level of overconfidence. Each successive operation involved strategic and tactical similarities despite the unique situational variation in each country. Each successive operation involved increasing occurrences of strategic and tactical mistakes. Lastly, with regard to the cause of failure at the Bay of Pigs, this study hypothesizes that the combination of the stagnant situational perception and strategic and tactical overconfidence likely resulted in the increase of operational blunders.

While these aspects taken individually may have had enough of an impact to have been the causal factor in the Bay of Pigs failure, the combined effect is estimated to have been insurmountable. The conclusion will make the case that, in order to avert such operational pitfalls, the identification of similar potential errors is essential. History has shown that this is the case, despite slight variations of circumstances, and that it is not only the lives of the men and women involved on the ground that are at stake, but the continued stability of the international system.

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of these cases can be examined using the existing literature from two combined vantage points: the first involving the organizational policies and practices utilized, retained, and repeated in each successive mission; and the second on the organizational learning aspect that led up to the Bay of Pigs operation. These two aspects provide a framework in which the research questions asked in this thesis can be answered by identifying the specific circumstances during each case study, then applying learning concepts to identify possible shortcomings.

The first case study will cover the joint operation between the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS, also known as MI6) and the CIA which developed and executed Operation Ajax in an effort to overthrow the prime minister of Iran, Dr. Mohammad Mosaddeq. Among sundry other decisions, Mosaddeq nationalized the Iranian oil operations which drew the ire of the British government and led them to approach the United States to assist in a plan to overthrow him. President Harry Truman refused and urged the British to

continue to try for a peaceful resolution. Dwight Eisenhower initially shirked the issue but was quickly convinced to authorize the operation in an effort to prevent Iran from being overrun by communists.¹⁰ The exaggeration of a communist threat became a sort of pathological policy component of each of the cases in review.

The election of Eisenhower brought in brothers John Foster Dulles and Allen Dulles as secretary of state and CIA director, respectively. Both men advocated for U.S. intervention and the decision to move ahead with the coup was approved shortly after the presidential transition. Despite intelligence estimates that Mosaddeq had refused collaboration with Iran's communist Tudeh party, that the Soviet Union was unlikely to invade,¹¹ and that any coup attempt was unlikely to succeed,¹² embassy situation reports began to report escalation and the operation moved ahead. Information leaks caused the failure of the initial coup attempt on August 15, and even CIA leadership recommended that the attempt be aborted. However, the CIA officer in charge, Kermit Roosevelt, refused, and after a second attempt on August 20, 1953, Mosaddeq surrendered.¹³ The "almost alarmingly enthusiastic" opinion of the outcome led to the estimation that the covert option could be an effective weapon in future operations.¹⁴

Within weeks of the Iranian operation, the CIA offered Kermit Roosevelt command of another coup in development that would depose Guatemalan President Jacobo Árbenz.¹⁵ Árbenz was elected president in 1951 having relied heavily on a land reform platform,

¹⁰ Kermit Roosevelt, *Countercoup: The Struggle for the Control of Iran* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), 2.

¹¹ Artemy M Kalinovsky, "The Soviet Union and Mosaddeq: A Research Note," *Iranian Studies: Iran and the Cold War* 47, no. 3 (2014): 401–18, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00210862.2014.880633>.

¹² United States Central Intelligence Agency, *The Iranian Situation 1953.*, <http://libproxy.nps.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.nps.edu/docview/1679072162?accountid=12702>, 3–5 [accessed 02 Sep 2020].

¹³ Mark J. Gasiorowski, *Mohammad Mosaddeq and the 1953 Coup in Iran*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004), 252–253.

¹⁴ Kermit Roosevelt, *Countercoup: The Struggle for the Control of Iran* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), 209.

¹⁵ Roosevelt, 210.

particularly the agrarian reform bill Decree 900.¹⁶ The crux of that bill was the transfer of uncultivated portions of plantations that were larger than 672 acres to the local peasantry. This proved unacceptable to some, particularly the United Fruit Company, which owned approximately one-fifth of the country's arable land, and which had "undervalued its land for years in order to reduce its tax liability."¹⁷

United Fruit responded by invoking the alliances of its members within the U.S. government, to include the Dulles brothers and a slew of other prominent, high-ranking officials. The Eisenhower administration declared the reforms to be proof of communist influence in Guatemala and that the Árbenz government posed a significant enough threat to warrant covert action.¹⁸ Despite it being "impossible to produce evidence clearly tying the Guatemalan government to Moscow," John Foster Dulles and colleagues carried out the coup "based on our deep conviction that such a tie must exist."¹⁹ For the Dulles brothers and other United Fruit beneficiaries, regime change in Guatemala was a goal before the transition into office and the success of the Iranian operation had provided them with a model on which to base the action.

Fidel Castro's patchwork of guerrilla forces rolled into Havana on January 8, 1959. This was worrisome for the U.S. which had no real idea of the political direction in which Castro wanted to take the country. While the fear of communism was ubiquitous, Castro had not proclaimed any allegiance to the ideology, and had only espoused a nationalist fervor at that point; his Marxist-Leninist affiliation came later.²⁰ President John F. Kennedy made an effort to acknowledge the injustices that had been endured by the Cuban people under the Batista regime, but the gesture was hollow as plans for CIA intervention

¹⁶ George Black, *Garrison Guatemala* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984), 13.

¹⁷ Stephen C. Schlesinger, *Bitter Fruit: The Story of the American Coup in Guatemala*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University, David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, 2005), 54.

¹⁸ Stephen. Kinzer, *Overthrow: America's Century of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq*, 1st paperback ed. (New York: Times Books/Henry Holt, 2007), 133.

¹⁹ Kinzer, 337.

²⁰ Lawrence Freedman, *Kennedy's Wars: Berlin, Cuba, Laos, and Vietnam* (New York; Oxford University Press, 2000), 123.

had been in development prior to Kennedy's inauguration. In *U.S. Presidents and Latin American Interventions*, Michael Grow states that it was precisely the threat of Castro's non-alignment and anti-Americanism that was the deciding factor in the decision to overthrow him.²¹

For the third time in less than a decade, the Eisenhower administration had approved the use of the CIA to overthrow a foreign government. It was also the third time in which the CIA had resorted to the same tactics of assembling and training a force comprised of disaffected citizens of the target nation. Therein lies the source of the failure. Hubristic reliance upon past successful actions ultimately guaranteed failure. Intelligence estimates were ignored, in similar fashion with the prior two operations, and the "military and political assumptions underpinning the plan were questioned."²² Among mistakes such as internal organizational failures including inadequate tactical training, Castro had prepared. Not only had he learned much from the operation conducted in Guatemala, but the group of Cuban exiles assembled and trained was no secret, and Castro was afforded time to prepare for contingencies.²³

With regard to the second aspect, Jack Levy's simple question of whether "political leaders learn from historical experience, and do the lessons of history influence their foreign policy preferences and decisions?"²⁴ provides a suitable lens through which to view the progression of each of the three operations. His definition of experiential learning involves "a change of beliefs" or "the development of new beliefs, skills, or procedures as a result of the observation and interpretation of experience."²⁵ When applying this

²¹ M. Grow, *U.S. Presidents and Latin American Interventions: Pursuing Regime Change in the Cold War* (University Press of Kansas, 2008), 37–40.

²² Freedman, *Kennedy's Wars: Berlin, Cuba, Laos, and Vietnam*, 130.

²³ Paul P. Kennedy, "U.S. Helps Train an Anti-Castro Force at Secret Guatemalan Air-Ground Base: Clash With Cuba Feared -- Installations Built With American Aid U.S. Helps Anti-Castro Force at Secret Base in Guatemala," *New York Times*, January 10, 1961, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times.

²⁴ Jack S. Levy, "Learning and Foreign Policy: Sweeping a Conceptual Minefield," *International Organization* 48, no. 2 (1994): 279–312, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300028198>.

²⁵ Levy, 283.

definition to decision-makers in each of the three cases, either individually or in progressive sequence, the variation of the lessons learned is further clarified and the persistence of the rationale through the Bay of Pigs disaster is illuminated.

The decision to carry out TPAJAX was made despite intelligence assessments that contradicted the official end goal of preventing a communist takeover of the government. While the two conflicting identities of American and Soviet provided the conceptual environment in which the decisions were made, the takeaways were quite opposite. John Dulles saw a covert operations tactical model that could be broadly applied, while Kermit Roosevelt recognized shortcomings and declined an offer for command and subsequently resigned from the CIA “before the Bay of Pigs disaster underlined the validity of [his] warning.”²⁶

Jack Levy points to Philip Tetlock’s assertion that the difference between those two learning outcomes is based on each of their foreign policy belief systems. Those belief systems are “organized hierarchically, with fundamental assumptions and policy objectives at the highest level, strategic policy beliefs and preferences at an intermediate level, and tactical beliefs at the bottom.”²⁷ He goes on to assert that the majority of learning is accomplished at the tactical level, and that repeated strategic failures are the catalyst for change in high-level decision makers assumptions.²⁸ It was Roosevelt whose experience on the ground led him to request changes in the tactical realm of operational and policy requirements, while Dulles maintained his strategic assumptions until his death.

Building on Tetlock’s system, Dominic Johnson’s premise in *Overconfidence and War* is that overconfidence is a human trait that plays a role in every day decisions and can be shown to have contributed to decisions to enter into conflicts despite a misjudged

²⁶ Kermit Roosevelt, *Countercoup: The Struggle for the Control of Iran* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), 210.

²⁷ Jack S. Levy, “Learning and Foreign Policy: Sweeping a Conceptual Minefield,” *International Organization* 48, no. 2 (1994), <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300028198>, 286.

²⁸ George W. Breslauer, *Learning in U.S. and Soviet Foreign Policy*, ed. Philip. Tetlock (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 27–31.

military balance.²⁹ His three part theory that overconfidence is an adaptive evolutionary trait that has become prevalent in human psychology and thus is a contributing factor in wars aligns neatly with Tetlock's hierarchy in clarifying the military and political decision maker's aversion to changing their perceptions. Johnson is careful to point out that while a balanced level of exaggerated confidence can be strategic, too much can lead to disaster.³⁰ In planning and executing military operations, careful consideration of justifications, intentions, and situational awareness are paramount to mission success and the successful maintenance of the subsequent consequences from an international relations standpoint.

All military operations involve a level of inherent risk, and it is not enough to rely on brute force and the record of past successes. It is the responsibility of those involved not simply to recognize possible problems that may jeopardize a mission, but create and foster an environment that is supportive of critical assessment. With an attentive organizational environment comprised of individuals that are equipped to identify and correct causal errors, to learn from experiences, and adapt or integrate those lessons as necessary, military operations will be better positioned for positive outcomes.

D. METHODS AND SOURCES

The primary method for analyzing the extent to which established organizational constraints factored into the Bay of Pigs failure will involve an historical examination of three case studies. In examining the operations from planning through post-mission analysis and identifying matching operational and policy aspects successively carried over, flawed traits can be identified and prepared for during future operations. In each case study, U.S. motivation for proceeding with the operations, operational missteps, and after-action evaluation will be tested against conceptual paradigms of learning and decision-making in an effort to identify flawed root causes in the decision-making process. As a result, the subsequent conclusions can be applied to future operations and recommendations can be made to prevent repeated errors.

²⁹ Dominic P. Johnson, *Overconfidence and War* (Harvard University Press, 2009), 3.

³⁰ Johnson, 6.

That said, the examination of the case studies does not involve U.S. military actions prior to the beginning of the earliest, 1953, nor is there any consideration of subsequent activities after the Bay of Pigs. Therefore, in writing this thesis, the assumption can be made that the conclusions arrived upon can be applied to critical analysis of any number of U.S. military actions provided access to sufficient information can be obtained. Furthermore, this study is focused primarily on learning and decision-making concepts as they relate to military operations, and thus non-military related concepts will play a smaller role in its development.

E. THESIS OVERVIEW

The primary method for analyzing the extent to which established organizational constraints factored into the Bay of Pigs failure will be divided into four chapters:

- Introduction
- Case Study 1: TPAJAX – Iran 1953
- Case Study 2: PBSUCCESS – Guatemala 1954
- Conclusions and Implications: JMATE – Cuba 1961

The case study on TPAJAX is important as it establishes a baseline for the two successive operations. Additionally, it marks the first covert operation conducted by a nascent CIA. The operation details and post-mission analysis provide a unique insight to the initially disavowed regime change effort. The PBSUCCESS case study will review the motivation for the operation and identify the similarities between it and the Iranian undertaking a year earlier. This study is particularly important as the socio-political situation in Guatemala was quite different than in Iran, yet the justification for proceeding and the operation itself were nearly identical.

Lastly, the conclusion will combine the similarities between each operation and apply the conceptual learning framework to explain how and why it resulted in catastrophic mission failure. The JMATE operation provides additional insight into the carry-over of the distorted rationalizations for policy and operational methodology. This section will

describe how the individual aspects came together and were ignored, even in the face of what should have been identified as criteria to abort the mission.

The combination of Cold War ethos and the tendency to mistakenly identify nationalism as communism reinforced the perception that the threat was growing and so, therefore, was the risk. Additionally, the sequential operational successes reinforced the positive illusions that “we could walk on water everywhere”³¹ as a result of self-serving biases as expectations went unchecked. By studying the history of these cases and identifying and understanding the progression of mistakes, answers to fundamental questions will be posed and leadership will be better prepared to identify and correct dangerous elements and thereby mitigate adverse consequences.

³¹ Scott A. Koch, *Zendeabad, Shah!: The Central Intelligence Agency and the Fall of Iranian Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadeq*, August 1953, 79 [accessed 15 Sep 2020].

II. OPERATION: TPAJAX

OPERATION: TPAJAX, the covert operation to overthrow Mohammad Mossadeq, failed initially. The second attempt succeeded only by luck. No “investigation or post-mortem analysis of the operation to determine what the Agency did wrong and what it did right”³² was conducted. Yet, the TPAJAX model was used in subsequent operations in Guatemala and in Cuba at the Bay of Pigs. Inherent in that model were skewed perceptions related to the threats posed by the actions of foreign governments involving reforms that were being implemented. Accompanying the threat perceptions were measurable cognitive biases directly related to the estimated risk which help to provide an explanation for the misperceptions and, subsequently, clarification for the undertaking of such operations. This chapter will attempt to identify the decision-making processes behind this fateful operation.

A. BACKGROUND

World War II brought British military forces into Iran in order to challenge a possible German incursion, however the exaggeration of that threat was part of a larger objective.³³ For decades, the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company had become increasingly vital to the British Empire, providing over £24 million in taxes annually and £92 million in foreign exchange, in addition to the vast supply of cheap oil.³⁴ Securing access to that resource was both an economic and strategic imperative, and when Prime Minister Mohammed Mosaddeq nationalized Iranian oil assets in early 1951, Britain began to draw up plans for military action to achieve it.

U.S. assistance to remove Mosaddeq was initially requested in 1952, but was rebuffed by the Truman administration, which considered the action untenable. Assistant

³² Kermit Roosevelt, *Countercoup: The Struggle for the Control of Iran* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), 79.

³³ FRUS, 1941, 862.20291/14a, The Minister in Iran to the Secretary of State, 28 June 1941, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1941v03/d382> [accessed 07 Sep 2020].

³⁴ E. Abrahamian, *The Coup: 1953, the CIA, and the Roots of Modern U.S.-Iranian Relations* (New Press, 2013), 37.

Secretary of State Henry Byroade presented the conundrum succinctly in a November 1952 memo that “it would be virtually impossible to proceed with plans to overthrow Dr. Mosaddeq while at the same time giving him open assistance.”³⁵ That assistance included diplomatic support as well as military and economic aid, according to a policy paper produced by the National Security Council (NSC) in 1949 (NSC 49). Diplomatic actions had, up until then, effectively prevented Soviet intervention, and that subtler policy approach was preferred by the Truman administration.

However, the specter of Soviet influence was of increasing concern to the U.S., and NSC 54 had also concluded that “because of its resources, strategic location, vulnerability to armed attack, and exposure to political subversion, Iran must be regarded as a continuing objective in the Soviet program of expansion.”³⁶ Additionally, U.S. intelligence had been collecting on the Soviet elements within the country and Iran’s communist Tudeh party since 1941 and the CIA had begun an anti-Soviet/Tudeh propaganda operation code-named TPBEDAMN in 1948. Despite the elevated scrutiny, a February 1952 CIA National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) concluded that the Soviet military was unlikely to invade, that Mosaddeq retained a stable popularity, and that the Iranian security forces could have prevented any Tudeh uprising.³⁷

Britain was not deterred and wasted no time to regroup and repackage their appeal. MI6 Officer C.M. Woodhouse attended a meeting at the White House during which he rationalized the tactic as “not wishing to be accused of trying to use the Americans to pull British chestnuts out of the fire, I decided to emphasize the communist threat to Iran rather

³⁵ “State Department Memorandum of Conversation, Byroade to Matthews, Proposal to Organize a Coup d’etat in Iran” (official memorandum, Washington, DC, 1952), <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/dc.html?doc=3914379-01-State-Department-Memorandum-of-Conversation> [accessed 08 Sep 2020].

³⁶ FRUS, Study Prepared by the Staff of the National Security Council, No. 6, 1949, Volume X, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v10/d6>, 545 [accessed 08 Sep 2020].

³⁷ National Intelligence Estimate, “Probable Developments in Iran in 1952 in the Absence of an Oil Settlement,” NIE-46, February 4, 1952, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP79R01012A001400010012-1.pdf> [accessed 08 Sep 2020].

than the need to recover control of the oil industry.”³⁸ That meeting in December 1952, caught the CIA off-guard, as the question of joint action to remove Mosaddeq was unexpected and one which they were unprepared for.³⁹ Nonetheless, the ploy succeeded.

Kermit Roosevelt Jr., President Theodore Roosevelt’s grandson, was the CIA operational officer who spearheaded what became Operation: TPAJAX. He worked closely with Allen Dulles, the recently appointed director of the CIA, during 1952 to establish the details of the plan which was presented in June 1953 to Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, Allen’s brother. Eisenhower approved the plan directly on July 11. With an allotted budget of \$1 million, Kermit Roosevelt was in Tehran just two weeks later.⁴⁰

B. DISCUSSION

Since the end of World War II, America has assumed an unprecedented level of global responsibility. Numerous foreign policy challenges accompanied that standing and those historical experiences could be expected to have produced a level of learning and intelligence with regard to repeat engagements. However, after the successful conclusion of Operation: TPAJAX, the perception that “we’ll think we can walk on water, everywhere”⁴¹ seemed to be the primary lesson learned despite the caution towards restraint that Kermit Roosevelt had implored.

The decision to proceed with the operation involved an enormous amount of risk, which is inherent in political decisions. Upon initial consideration, the high-level decision makers involved in the coup: Eisenhower, Roosevelt, and both John and Allen Dulles, may seem justified in their “alarmingly enthusiastic”⁴² reaction to the successful overthrow of

³⁸ C.M. Woodhouse, *Something Ventured*, (Unknown Publisher, 1982), 117.

³⁹ Don Wilbur, CIA History of the Coup in Iran, March 1954, 2 [accessed 10 Sep 2020].

⁴⁰ Mark J. Gasiorowski, *Mohammad Mosaddeq and the 1953 Coup in Iran*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004), 273.

⁴¹ Scott A. Koch, *Zendebad, Shah!: The Central Intelligence Agency and the Fall of Iranian Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadeq*, August 1953, 79 [accessed 15 Sep 2020].

⁴² Kermit Roosevelt, *Countercoup: The Struggle for the Control of Iran* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), 209.

Mosaddeq. After all, the outcome was exactly what they had hoped. However, as Robert Jervis and other social and political scientists have found, it is a near certainty that actors overestimate their effectiveness, as well as their abilities and level of control of events.⁴³ In reality, it is far more likely that the decision to proceed with the operation involved an extreme level of risk that was at least underestimated and possibly disregarded.

Acceptance of the risk involved in TPAJAX can be explained by two separate theories: the theory of positive illusions and prospect theory. Both theories predict common patterns in decision-making, specifically in high-risk situations. The theory of positive illusions suggests that risk assessments will be consistently biased towards a positive, self-serving outcome in large part due to the expectation of an easy victory.⁴⁴ Accordingly, TPAJAX was approved without thorough examination or consideration in less than nine months with minimal attention paid to the possibility of an Iranian response or fallout due to operational failure.⁴⁵ Prospect theory holds that decision-makers “will be risk-averse if facing potential gains, and risk seeking when confronted with potential losses.”⁴⁶ For U.S. policymakers writ large, any prospect involving the expansion of Soviet communism was a substantial loss, the prevention of which was worthy of tremendous risk.

In contrast with other international relations theories, (rational choice and neorealism, for example) positive illusions and prospect theories are able to explain why misperceptions were present throughout the planning and execution of all three operations. Rational choice theory posits that actors in a conflict will identify and assess the possible outcomes and “act rationally in pursuit of what they believe to be their own best interest.”⁴⁷

⁴³ Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), 344.

⁴⁴ Dominic P. Johnson, *Overconfidence and War* (Harvard University Press, 2009), 30.

⁴⁵ Kermit Roosevelt, *Countercoup: The Struggle for the Control of Iran* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), 18–19.

⁴⁶ Rose McDermott, *Risk-Taking in International Politics: Prospect Theory in American Foreign Policy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 36.

⁴⁷ Rose McDermott, *Political Psychology in International Relations, Analytical Perspectives on Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), <https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.10847>, 50.

This behavior is also known as “utility maximizing.”⁴⁸ When that framework is applied to these case studies, it can be assumed that the parties involved would seek to avoid fighting (risk) and attempt to negotiate (of note, it is not a requirement that negotiations be balanced, as the weaker party may be required to submit to greater concessions). It is prima facie that this was not the case, as these reviews will show, and rationalist arguments are not sufficient to explain the irrational behavior present in each.

Neorealism has been given a dominant place in international relations theory since its conception toward the end of the twentieth century. In brief, the theory posits that conflicts between states occur as a result of the “enduring anarchic character of international politics”,⁴⁹ resulting in constant power-grabs to ensure self-preservation in the absence of a central authority. Generally, relationships between the U.S. and the various states involved in these cases do fit nicely within Ken Waltz’s theory as they relate to variations among state power polarity.⁵⁰ But, as Dominic Johnson points out, uncertainty regarding another state’s intentions is a constant, yet conflicts are not. Furthermore, “misperceptions and mistakes in evaluating power differences” are insufficient when trying to understand the “proximate causes” of a conflict as they “do not explain the source of [the] misperceptions.”⁵¹ In contrast, both the positive illusions and prospect theories provide an explanation for the misperceptions, or proximate causes.

The primary aspect of the positive illusions theory is the identification of misperceptions that would bias a decisionmaker’s assessment of an opponent. Declassified CIA planning documents lend substantial support to the assertion that instances of significant bias were present in the operating environment both during and after TPAJAX. Examples of those records reveal that the success of the coup relied upon the support and cooperation of the individual that it sought to empower, Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi.

⁴⁸ *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, Second edition (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Elsevier, 2015), 892.

⁴⁹ Kenneth Neal Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Long Grove, Ill: Waveland Press, 2010), 66.

⁵⁰ Waltz, 163–170.

⁵¹ Dominic P. Johnson, *Overconfidence and War* (Harvard University Press, 2009), 29.

Yet, the agency's assessment of the Shah was that he was a vacillating coward with a "pathological fear"⁵² of British machinations and that "it is unrealistic to expect (the) Shah to sponsor a coup."⁵³ Additionally, a special study completed by the State Department's Office of Intelligence and Research (OIR), a mere 16 days before the commencement of the operation, concluded that "opposition to Mosaddeq was weak, (and) lacked a plan".⁵⁴ Nonetheless, Roosevelt was certain that "there was no prospect of failure."⁵⁵

Experiments by social psychologist, David Dunning, have shown that the greater the ambiguity in character traits attributed to others, the greater the likelihood of the overestimation of one's own relative abilities.⁵⁶ While there can be no question of the disproportionate strength between the U.S. and Iran in 1953, the exaggerated opinions of American observers towards Iranians, and the Middle Eastern populace generally, further influenced the decision to proceed with the operation. There was a common tendency to stereotype the cultures of the region as having "a very uncertain quantity, explosive and full of prejudices,"⁵⁷ and that their way of thinking was, at its core, centered around "violence, emotion, and ignorance."⁵⁸ For TPAJAX planners, the persistent notions of the "incapacity of Iranians to plan or act in a thoroughly logical manner"⁵⁹ made it highly

⁵² James Risen, *Secrets of History - The CIA in Iran*, 1, <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/library/world/mideast/041600iran-cia-chapter1.html> [accessed 15 Sep 2020].

⁵³ Don Wilbur, *CIA History of the Coup In Iran*, March 1954, 89, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB28/10-Orig.pdf> [accessed 15 Sep 2020].

⁵⁴ Wilbur, 89 [accessed 15 Sep 2020].

⁵⁵ Kermit Roosevelt, *Countercoup: The Struggle for the Control of Iran* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), 14.

⁵⁶ David Dunning, Judith A Meyerowitz, and Amy D Holzberg, "Ambiguity and Self-Evaluation: The Role of Idiosyncratic Trait Definitions in Self-Serving Assessments of Ability," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 57, no. 6 (1989): 1082-90, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.57.6.1082>, 1089.

⁵⁷ D. Little, *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945* (University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 27.

⁵⁸ FRUS, Memorandum of Conference with President Eisenhower, 23 July 1958, 99, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1958-60v12/d30> [accessed 15 Sep 2020].

⁵⁹ Don Wilbur, *CIA History of the Coup in Iran*, March 1954, 26, <https://www.nytimes.com/library/world/mideast/iran-cia-appendix-b.pdf> [accessed 15 Sep 2020].

susceptible to the threat of foreign, particularly Soviet, subversion techniques. As such, U.S. intervention was necessary.

Heightened threat levels also serve to increase the prevalence of positive illusions which may also become extreme, thereby exacerbating a decision maker's actions.⁶⁰ From the U.S. perspective, the possibility of an Iranian collapse during the Cold War was a worst-case scenario. Despite repeated studies conducted by the NSC, CIA, and the OIR between 1949 and August 12, 1953, (two days before the initial coup attempt) that concluded that Mossadegh would likely remain in office and that the Tudeh party was too weak to come to power. In addition, the studies concluded that the Iranian economy was doing reasonably well and that the U.S.S.R. would not directly intervene. Nonetheless, the CIA received authorization to proceed. Prospect theory can be used to explain why.

Prospect theory's central goal is to understand why decisions made in situations involving elevated levels of risk are "based not on the individual's predispositions," but that "evolve [s] out of a cognitive response to a situation that constrains the way options are interpreted and choice is made."⁶¹ Those constraints are the product of uncertainty. As individuals develop their judgements, they base them upon the assessment of probable outcomes. As Rose McDermott points out, not only is there no way to always know the likelihood of an outcome, in situations that have never occurred before, there is no basis upon which to reliably make a prediction.⁶² When probable outcomes are unknown, the uncertainty in choices increases. This was the condition under which the decision was made to undertake America's first covert operation to overthrow a foreign government.⁶³

⁶⁰ Shelley E. Taylor et al., "Maintaining Positive Illusions in the Face of Negative Information: Getting the Facts Without Letting Them Get to You," *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology* 8, no. 2 (1989): 114–29, <https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.1989.8.2.114>, 127.

⁶¹ Rose McDermott, *Risk-Taking in International Politics: Prospect Theory in American Foreign Policy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 4.

⁶² McDermott, 5.

⁶³ Stephen. Kinzer, *Overthrow: America's Century of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq*, 1st paperback ed. (New York: Times Books/Henry Holt, 2007), 121.

Kermit Roosevelt's account of the TPAJAX proposal meeting provides a striking example of the relationship between judgment and decision making. When asked to provide insight on the "'flap potential' what could happen if things should go wrong," Roosevelt stated that he saw "no prospect of failure" if the requested support were provided.⁶⁴ He further noted that, if the operation did fail, the consequences "would be very bad, perhaps terrifyingly so"⁶⁵; an assessment of the magnitude of risk involved. By the end of the meeting, approval had been granted, although Roosevelt "was morally certain that almost half of those present, if they had felt free or had the courage to speak, would have opposed the undertaking."⁶⁶ We can assume that he did not include himself in that reflection.

The "London" draft of the TPAJAX Operational Plan further highlights the authors' judgements based upon their "intensive knowledge of the country and its people."⁶⁷ It was made clear from the start that the plan was hamstrung by the significant reliance on "Orientals" for its execution due to their "recognized incapacity ... to plan or act in a thoroughly logical manner".⁶⁸ Nevertheless, they felt that they had devised a plan that was comprehensive enough to confer a "reasonable chance of success even if not carried out 100 percent."⁶⁹ The authors reasoned that since no precedent for the sort of operation existed, the most serious weakness was that of the "Persian character," and Kermit Roosevelt made it plain to Secretary of State Dulles that his decision would be based upon "no more than a projection of what might happen."⁷⁰

⁶⁴ Kermit Roosevelt, *Countercoup: The Struggle for the Control of Iran* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), 14.

⁶⁵ Roosevelt, 14.

⁶⁶ Roosevelt, 19.

⁶⁷ Don Wilbur, CIA History of the Coup in Iran, March 1954, <https://www.nytimes.com/library/world/mideast/iran-cia-appendix-b.pdf>, 26 [accessed 16 Sep 2020].

⁶⁸ Wilbur, 26 [accessed 16 Sep 2020].

⁶⁹ Wilbur, 26 [accessed 16 Sep 2020].

⁷⁰ Kermit Roosevelt, *Countercoup: The Struggle for the Control of Iran* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), 12.

While ultimate approval of TPAJAX rested with President Eisenhower, the decision-making authority on the ground in Iran resided with Roosevelt. After the failure of the first coup attempt on August 15 and the Shah's flight from the country, he made the decision to continue pursuit of the operation. Roosevelt had some previous experience in the Middle East, as he had served in Cairo during his tenure with the Office of Strategic Services (OSS, the predecessor of the CIA) and spent time in Iran and the Levant prior to joining the CIA in 1950. This prior experience with Middle Eastern affairs likely influenced an overestimation of his abilities and control of the situation, as Jervis suggests. Indeed, he reflected that "if they had simply reported what they were doing, London and Washington would have thought they were crazy and told them to stop immediately."⁷¹ It is a near certainty that Roosevelt's propensity towards risk increased as the possibility of failure had become much more tangible than predicted.

In defiance of a CIA telegram which stated that they "regret we cannot consider going on fighting" and that "operations against Mosaddeq should be discontinued",⁷² Roosevelt and the skeleton crew of operatives regrouped and adjusted their tactics. It was a fateful decision, and it succeeded by pure luck. The operation could have benefited from the various levels of expertise of both "the Office of National Estimates (ONE) or the analysts in CIA's Office of Current Intelligence (OCI) at [every] stage",⁷³ had Roosevelt not avoided them at every stage. In his study of the operation, Scott Koch pointed out that "exclusion damaged the analytical product because it prevented analysts from basing their judgements on complete information" and "harmed the analytical process because it impeded the creation of a valid framework for assessing future developments."⁷⁴ His observation highlights the inherent tensions and complications of covert operations.

⁷¹ Don Wilbur, CIA History of the Coup in Iran, March 1954, <https://www.nytimes.com/library/world/mideast/iran-cia-appendix-b.pdf>, 78 [accessed 16 Sep 2020].

⁷² FRUS, Telegram from The Central Intelligence Agency to The Station in Iran, 18 August 1953, 684, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1951-54Iran/d278> [accessed 16 Sep 2020].

⁷³ Scott A. Koch, *Zendebad, Shah!: The Central Intelligence Agency And The Fall Of Iranian Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadeq*, August 1953, 113.

⁷⁴ Koch, 120.

There is a delicate balance between operational security (OPSEC) and the total number of those involved in covert missions. Specifically, operational planning requires informed personnel to provide as much relevant information as is available in an effort to negate as much uncertainty as possible, thereby providing decision makers with a well-informed selection of available options. At the same time, OPSEC dictates that those involved in such an operation be kept at a minimum. TPAJAX was drawn up and executed without the integration of additional intelligence assets, such as ONE and OCI, that could have provided timely, relevant assessments such as the NIE or daily presidential intelligence updates, as well as an improved overall intelligence product.

C. CONCLUSION

Four days after the first coup attempt failed due to an Iranian Army officer's haphazard disclosure of the plan, the second effort succeeded. Kermit Roosevelt's quick decision to utilize media outlets to allow the Shah to proclaim the content of two fabricated decrees which proclaimed his dismissal of Mosaddeq and the appointment of General Fazlollah Zahedi as interim prime minister began to bear fruit on the morning of August 19. Pro-Shah crowds began to appear throughout Tehran, many instigated by CIA agents or paid agitators, "needed only leadership"⁷⁵ in order to succeed the second time around. The CIA's Iranian agents provided it.

Mosaddeq was taken into custody and military officers who were "known supporters of TPAJAX" had been placed "in command of all units of the Tehran garrison, seized key military targets, and executed the arrest lists."⁷⁶ CIA headquarters received no updates on the situation until the next morning when "someone burst in from the hall pouring out what at first seemed to be a bad joke."⁷⁷ Kermit Roosevelt's explanation for the lack of reporting to headquarters was met with acceptance and even praise, but it was noted that "if the outcome had been different, a substantially different attitude toward that

⁷⁵ Don Wilbur, CIA History of the Coup in Iran, March 1954, <https://www.nytimes.com/library/world/mideast/iran-cia-main.8.pdf>, 65 [accessed 17 Sep 2020].

⁷⁶ Wilbur, 75 [accessed 17 Sep 2020].

⁷⁷ Wilbur, 77 [accessed 17 Sep 2020].

action might have been found in many quarters.”⁷⁸ The reception is nonetheless puzzling, as analysts at the CIA and policy makers in Washington knew about the capabilities of the U.S.S.R., Tudeh party machinations, Mosaddeq’s governing coalition, and the threat of growing communist influence.

U.S. intelligence agencies had been collecting on the Soviets and on the thousands of operatives within Iran for over a decade before TPAJAX was undertaken. It was a foregone conclusion that they could have occupied the country easily and rapidly in a regular war, yet the assessments continued to conclude that an invasion was unlikely. Stalin was pessimistic about “Iran’s revolutionary potential” and between 1947 and 1952, Soviet policy was focused on the protection of its “economic interests and keeping a watchful eye on the British and American presence.”⁷⁹ Subversive tactics were assessed to be the primary method of Soviet intrusion into Iranian affairs, and the Tudeh party was their main instrument.

Tudeh party ranks waxed and waned during the post-WWII decade. Membership during the late 1940s rose to approximately 70,000 members,⁸⁰ but by the time of the coup it had dwindled to an estimated 20,000 core members.⁸¹ Intelligence estimates indicated that the Tudeh party was an influential group that could mobilize large crowds and infiltrate institutions such as the military, and possibly Mosaddeq’s cabinet. Yet, there is no evidence of any U.S. concern being raised about party members having made any progress in either of those avenues. Regarding that level of cooperation, Mark Gasiorowski points out that:

Because U.S. field intelligence suggested that the Tudeh was not an immediate threat to Iran, it seems that the decision to launch TPAJAX must have been made at higher echelons of the U.S. government. This decision

⁷⁸ Wilbur, 79 [accessed 17 Sep 2020].

⁷⁹ Artemy M Kalinovsky, “The Soviet Union and Mosaddeq: A Research Note,” *Iranian Studies: Iran and the Cold War* 47, no. 3 (2014): 401–18, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00210862.2014.880633>, 404.

⁸⁰ Mark J. Gasiorowski, “U.S. Perceptions of the Communist Threat in Iran during the Mossaddegh Era,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 21, no. 3 (2019): 185–221, 191.

⁸¹ Yassamine Mather, “Iran’s Tudeh Party: A History of Compromises and Betrayals,” *Critique (Glasgow)* 39, no. 4 (2011): 611–27, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03017605.2011.621250>, 618.

to seem to have had little to do with on-the-ground realities and much to do with the ideological imperatives of the period: the Cold War.⁸²

Mosaddeq's government was never infiltrated by Tudeh party members. Officially, the party had been outlawed since 1948 after a party member attempted to assassinate Reza Shah. That status was weakly enforced and the party was permitted to organize and they are assessed to be responsible for the majority of strikes and demonstrations throughout the country during Mosaddeq's brief rule.⁸³ Assertions that Mosaddeq was dependent upon Tudeh support after several key ally defections were also unfounded. Those defectors did have substantial parliamentary influence and employed it to increase the opposition within that body, but Tudeh party members did not have comparable influence nor were they predicted to gain any in the next election. At any rate, Mosaddeq dissolved the parliament in August of 1953, shortly before the coup.

The Tudeh was not the only Iranian political party influenced by communism, but it was the most influential, and Mosaddeq did have their support on some issues such as the nationalization of Iranian oil reserves. However, Mosaddeq frequently suppressed Tudeh activities such as rallies, had members arrested, and openly refused to join with them in a united front. This tentative balance likely benefitted Mosaddeq in some instances, such as large Tudeh rallies that may have intimidated non-communist elements. Yet, those same elements may have been spurred to act against his continued position for fear of a communist takeover. Whether or not this was the case is beyond the scope of this paper, but U.S. intelligence reports up to the week of the coup continued to assess that Iranian security forces were able to contain threats from rebellious uprisings.⁸⁴

⁸² Mark J. Gasiorowski, *Mohammad Mosaddeq and the 1953 Coup in Iran*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004), 125.

⁸³ Farhang Jahanpour, "Iran: The Rise and Fall of the Tudeh Party," *World Today* 40, no. 4 (1984): 153.

⁸⁴ NSC, "Note by the Executive Secretary to The National Security Council on the Position and Actions of the United States with Respect to Possible Further Soviet Moves in the Light of the Korean Situation, NSC 73/4," 25 August 1950, in FRUS, 1950, Vol I, 375–389, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000010612.pdf [accessed 17 Sep 2020].

The official narrative that communism was spreading in Iran is equally transparent. Intelligence reports between the approximately eight-month period beginning with the initial British suggestion to undertake a coup in November 1952, and through Eisenhower's approval of TPAJAX in July 1953 did not identify an imminent threat, but rather a precipitous decline in Soviet hostility and their "extremely unlikely" intervention.⁸⁵ The intelligence reports remained consistent throughout that period and were not revised during the planning of the coup, "as we would expect if major developments had occurred."⁸⁶ And so, the question remains, what was the dominant motivation for the coup?

Gasiorowski drew two implications from the lack of evidence available to support the official rationale for pursuing the overthrow of Mohammed Mosaddeq. The first was that the U.S. made the decision to overthrow him based upon the evidence that a communist threat was so great that a takeover was imminent. The second, as a result of the first, was that the decision to proceed with TPAJAX "was premature, at best, to forestall a communist takeover. The evidence ... does not seem to have warranted such dramatic intervention."⁸⁷ What did it take for this shift to occur within such a brief timeframe? It was, simply, the incoming Eisenhower administration.

With the administrative transition came a very different idea about how the U.S. should wield its newfound global influence. There was an immediate refocusing of the military, economic, industrial, and scientific power borne by a nation newly elevated to superpower status, towards the defeat of communism on a global scale. The CIA began to immediately claim full credit within U.S. government circles. For John Foster Dulles in particular, the import of the coup's success was quite evident. "His eyes were gleaming; he seemed to be purring like a giant cat."⁸⁸ Dulles and President Eisenhower's delightful satisfaction with the outcome of TPAJAX was due to more than just relief at the creation

⁸⁵ Gasiorowski, "U.S. Perceptions of the Communist Threat in Iran during the Mossadegh Era," 216.

⁸⁶ Gasiorowski, 220.

⁸⁷ Gasiorowski, 221.

⁸⁸ Kermit Roosevelt, *Countercoup: The Struggle for the Control of Iran* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), 209.

of a pliant dictatorship in the fight against communist expansion. It was more than the substantially reduced price established for the export of 24 billion barrels of oil during the twenty-five years of the Pahlavi dynasty⁸⁹ in a region “where the oil resources constitute a stupendous source of strategic power.”⁹⁰

The most salient result of the operation was how it had influenced the U.S. president and Congress of the “enormous power and resources” to the CIA, “a largely unaccountable and opaque agency to conduct a range of subversive and violent operations against the nations enemies.”⁹¹ This was an unlearned lesson. As the historical record states, the “CIA did not conduct an investigation or post-mortem analysis of the operation to determine what the Agency did wrong and what it did right.”⁹² Instead, the successful “king-making” effort left those involved with a feeling that “should never have ended ... for it carried with it such a sense of excitement, of satisfaction and of jubilation that it is doubtful whether any other can come up to it.”⁹³

To maintain that jubilant high, the CIA chased the dragon across the globe to Guatemala, as plans were concurrently developed in an effort to repeat a nearly identical operation within the year. The agency had been officially identified as the civilian counterpart which was now responsible for clandestine activities. However, the seductiveness of being able to prevent, reverse, or halt events in the Third World cheaply and with impunity served to be too much to ignore. The certainty that “something would

⁸⁹ J.A. Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion: The Tragedy of American-Iranian Relations*, Tragedy of American-Iranian Relations (Yale University Press, 1988), 93.

⁹⁰ FRUS, Memorandum by The Under Secretary of State (Acheson) to the Secretary of State, 09 October 1945, 45, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945v08/d20> [accessed 17 Sep 2020].

⁹¹ W.I. Hitchcock, *The Age of Eisenhower: America and the World in the 1950s* (Simon & Schuster, 2018), 149.

⁹² Scott A. Koch, *Zendeabad, Shah!: The Central Intelligence Agency and the Fall of Iranian Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadeq*, August 1953, 79.

⁹³ James Risen, *Secrets of History - The CIA in Iran*, 4, <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/library/world/mideast/041600iran-cia-chapter4.html> [accessed 17, Sep,2020].

turn up” drove Dulles’s confidence in proceeding with the Guatemalan mission dubbed Operation: PBSUCCESS; the name alone an indication of the sentiment.

Roosevelt’s admonition against an hubristic reaction to the success of the operation went unheeded. The dubious conclusions drawn from the experience “seemed to herald a ‘golden age’ of covert action”⁹⁴ which captured the imaginations of U.S. officials and the public that spies and secret missions might be able to decide who might win the Cold War. Imagination gave way to reality as “American words did not match American deeds and ‘our orthodox diplomacy [was] hamstrung and our reliance upon clandestine operations’” increased.⁹⁵ While covert actions do confer certain benefits to international foreign policy, specifically the ability to influence another nation’s behavior without having to resort to military confrontation, the overreliance on them led to miscalculations, and ultimately, to mission failure.

⁹⁴ Scott A. Koch, *Zendeabad, Shah!: The Central Intelligence Agency and the Fall of Iranian Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadeq*, August 1953, 89.

⁹⁵ Koch, 79.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

III. OPERATION: PBSUCCESS

Planning for OPERATION: PBSUCCESS occurred in parallel with the planning and execution of TPAJAX. As will be evidenced, the same biased rationalizations were obviously present. However, the release of documentation associated with both operations reveals the degree to which the success of TPAJAX influenced the Guatemalan effort, and those directly involved with its approval. Kermit Roosevelt's advice went unheeded, and the attempts by "Arévalo and Árbenz ... to end [the] injustice through moderate reforms" was thwarted by the CIA which made moderation impossible.⁹⁶

A. BACKGROUND

Jorge Ubico had been president of Guatemala for thirteen years in 1944. He is regarded as "one of the most oppressive tyrants Guatemala has ever known",⁹⁷ having even considered himself to "be like Hitler."⁹⁸ However, regional developments in 1944 such as the resignation of the president of El Salvador and the overthrow of the Ecuadoran president led to an increase in Ubico's authoritarian tactics in an effort to prevent such revolutionary growths from being established in Guatemala. He undertook various repressive measures, including appointing his supporters to high level positions in academia, suspension of constitutional guarantees, and widespread arrests.⁹⁹ On June 25, he ordered police and military forces to intervene in a protest in Guatemala City; bullets tore through the crowd of people, killing two teachers. Six days later, Ubico resigned.

President Ubico's resignation was an unceremonious and hasty affair. He ordered an aide to select three generals who would form a junta and take over the presidency, and

⁹⁶ Richard H. Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), 201.

⁹⁷ J. Shillington, *Grappling with Atrocity: Guatemalan Theater in the 1990s* (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2002), 38.

⁹⁸ V. Perera and D. Chauche, *Unfinished Conquest: The Guatemalan Tragedy* (U. of California Press, 1995), p 36.

⁹⁹ Richard H. Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), 39.

then he exited the presidential palace.¹⁰⁰ Of the three generals selected, General Federico Ponce proved to be the most ambitious and persuaded the congress to install him as the provisional president a mere three days later. Ponce promised free elections, and permitted opposition political parties and trade unions to be formed. However, to opposition leaders, civilians (primarily students), and a group of young army officers led by Captain Jacobo Árbenz, it was clear that the military remained in control of the country's political future and that Ponce had little intention of relinquishing his new position.

Ponce quickly reinstated the familiar practices of his predecessor: press censorship, incarceration, and torture. Intimidation tactics did not have the level of efficacy that he had hoped and early in the morning of October 19, the small group of army officers and student supporters led by Árbenz attacked the presidential palace. Bereft of external support, including that of the U.S., Ponce quickly reached out to the Mexican embassy and was granted asylum. By the end of October, the U.S. State Department had signaled approval of the government transition by acknowledging that it had met many requirements for that recognition, as “programs and policies of the various rebel movements all appeared to be designed to attract U.S. support or at least neutralize U.S. opposition.”¹⁰¹ However, Ponce's defeat signaled the start of Guatemala's revolution, a revolution that united the “urban workers, the middle class, the landed elite, and the officer corps,” but while “The quest for democracy had united them, the definition of democracy would divide them.”¹⁰²

March of 1945 brought Juan Jose Arevalo to power as the first president elected by an overwhelming majority since the republic had gained its independence. Arevalo had spent a significant amount of his life as a teacher at the University of Tucuman in Argentina, and his musings regarding his political approach left many observers skeptical of his leanings. He considered himself a “spiritual socialist” in that he considered

¹⁰⁰ Piero Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944–1954* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1991), 26.

¹⁰¹ Cole Blasier, *The Hovering Giant: U.S. Responses to Revolutionary Change in Latin America*, Rev. ed., Pitt Latin American Series (Pittsburgh, Pa: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985), 31.

¹⁰² Piero Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944–1954* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1991), 30.

democracy to be a social system and that the government should take steps to prevent special interests from blocking societal progress. This doctrine of “Arevalismo” set the standard for reforms that would take place over the next decade, up until the fall of Árbenz.

One of the most substantial reforms was the drafting and ratification of a new constitution. It included over sixty provisions which ranged from the decentralization of powers divided among executive, legislative, and judicial branches, nearly-universal suffrage (excluding illiterate females), the establishment of governmental programs and agencies, freedom of assembly, and the freedom to form and operate political parties except those of foreign or international groups or communists. Of particular importance were laws that affected the labor code, which became significantly controversial for employers like the United Fruit Company (UFCO) and wealthy landowners. The establishment of a minimum wage, the right to organize, workplace standards, severance packages, and preferential hiring of Guatemalans drew increased criticism of his policies.

Under Arevalo’s reforms, the urban middle and lower classes showed improvement; however, the rural masses, primarily Indians, remained largely unaffected by the changes. While it can be argued that the focus of the reforms were the city centers and the rural peasantry was too far removed from the new political establishment, in actuality, the landed elite, or *latifundistas*, prevented reforms from expanding to the countryside. “The conservative elements attribute labor unrest to communism, look with horror on social reforms and reflect that it was safer and easier to live during the dictator era.”¹⁰³ The upper class remained unwilling to cooperate with the government, which they asserted had been taken over by communists, and instead plotted against Arevalo; during his tenure, he survived at least two dozen assassination attempts.

Arevalo survived them all and complied with his promise to allow free elections at the end of his six-year term. During the election of 1950, he expressed his support for Jacobo Árbenz, who had served as his minister of defense, and “with the backing of all the

¹⁰³ Piero Gleijeses, “The Death of Francisco Arana: A Turning Point in the Guatemalan Revolution,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 22, no. 3 (1990), 534.

parties in the governing coalition, Árbenz's election was all but assured."¹⁰⁴ Registration figures noted that of 404,239 votes cast, 258,987 individuals had cast their votes for him, out of a pool of ten total candidates.¹⁰⁵ For the second time in Guatemala's one hundred and thirty year history, approximately sixty percent of eligible Guatemalans had participated in a relatively free election.

Árbenz, a career military man, made the audacious promise during his inauguration address that his administration would transform Guatemala from "a backward country with a predominantly feudal economy into a modern capitalist state."¹⁰⁶ A key aspect to achieving that goal was land reform, and with the passage of Decree 900, the Agrarian Reform Law, local councils were formed and the expropriation of uncultivated land began in earnest. For Washington, Guatemalans were failing to show the proper respect for 'friendly representations',¹⁰⁷ and for Americans in general, that type of behavior could only be explained by the ubiquitous threat of communism. By 1952, "officials in CIA's Directorate of Plans had been working on ... schemes to depose President Jacobo Árbenz," because in their assessment, he, "Like Mosaddeq, was willing to turn a blind eye to communist machinations in his country."¹⁰⁸

Distorted rationalizations were widespread during both TPAJAX and PBSUCCESS operations (planning for both was nearly simultaneous). While some accounts focus on the role of economic factors (such as the UFCO connection) or as collateral damage of U.S./Soviet Cold War machinations, those hypotheses "fail to emphasize sufficiently that

¹⁰⁴ Richard H. Immerman, "Guatemala as Cold War History," *Political Science Quarterly* 95, no. 4 (1980), 633.

¹⁰⁵ Kalman H. Silvert, *A Study in Government: Guatemala* (Louisiana: Middle American Research Institute, Tulane University, 1954), 59–60.

¹⁰⁶ Streeter et al., *Managing the Counterrevolution: The United States and Guatemala, 1954–1961*, (Ohio University Center for International Studies, 2000), 18.

¹⁰⁷ FRUS, Memorandum of Telephone Conversation, By Mr. Ernest V. Siracusa of The Division Of Central America And Panama Affairs, 02 August 1949, 659, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1949v02/d399> [accessed 05 Nov 2020].

¹⁰⁸ Scott A. Koch, *Zendeabad, Shah!: The Central Intelligence Agency and the Fall of Iranian Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadeq*, August 1953, 79.

the [coups] typified the foundations of cold war diplomacy, providing a model to be emulated, and resisted, in subsequent years.”¹⁰⁹ Anticommunist sentiment was so prevalent that “the pressures for conformity approached a kind of social tyranny” which prevented objective evaluation of the developing situation in Guatemala.¹¹⁰

B. DISCUSSION

The National Security Act of 1947 established the Central Intelligence Agency as a replacement for the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and codified its charter rules. Under Sec. 503. [50 U.S.C. §413b] (F)(e) of NSA 47, covert action is defined as “an activity or activities of the United States government to influence political, economic, or military conditions abroad, where it is intended that the role of the United States government will not be apparent or acknowledged publicly.”¹¹¹ Within the same section, Sec. 503. [50 U.S.C. §413b] (a), it is indicated that “The President may not authorize the conduct of a covert action by departments, agencies, or entities of the United States Government unless ... such an action is necessary to support identifiable foreign policy objectives ... and is important to the national security of the United States.”¹¹² PBSUCCESS was subject to the same misleading effects of positive illusions and the risk-seeking behavior associated with heightened prospects of loss when it was deemed to fit within the parameters of that code and given the green light.

The build-up to the operation progressed in near parallel to that of TPAJAX. Much of the intelligence that was communicated between the time of Arevalo’s inauguration in 1945 until the election of Árbenz in 1950 indicates that communist elements within Guatemala in general and the political and military organization more specifically were

¹⁰⁹ Richard H. Immerman, “Guatemala as Cold War History,” *Political Science Quarterly* 95, no. 4 (1980), 629.

¹¹⁰ Cole Blasier, *The Hovering Giant: U.S. Responses to Revolutionary Change in Latin America*, Rev. ed., Pitt Latin American Series (Pittsburgh, Pa: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985), 10.

¹¹¹ ODNI, Reference Book - 1947 National Security Act, Public Law 235 of July 26, 1947; 61 STAT.496, <https://www.dni.gov/index.php/ic-legal-reference-book/national-security-act-of-1947> [accessed 07 Nov 2020].

¹¹² *ibid* [accessed 07 Nov 2020].

almost nonexistent. Assistant Secretary of State Spruille Braden, a fervent anti-communist, had his concerns assuaged after he contacted then chargé d' affaires of the U.S. embassy in Argentina, John Griffiths, who responded that

[Concerning] the suspicions that might be had about Arevalo ... it is my considered opinion that anyone even reasonably well informed about his teachings, writings, and general activities would be inclined to pass over such suspicions as being so utterly without foundation as to call for no response.¹¹³

However, reforms that began under Arevalo and continued under Árbenz had caught the attention of the Truman administration as well as the CIA, which assessed that the Guatemalan administration was being “distinctly unfriendly to U.S. business interests.”¹¹⁴

It is imperative that the distinction of “U.S. business interests” is explicitly identified. In the same way that the Mossadegh administration, and Mossadegh specifically, was improperly accused of communist affiliations and tendencies after he nationalized the Iranian oil industry, the Guatemalan administrations of Arevalo and, with greater fervor, Árbenz were painted with the same brush. The grievances put forth by UFCO and other affected U.S. corporate interests that they were subjected to communist tactics are not adequate explanations for the decision to proceed with the operation. For contrasting example, a review of the U.S. response to the 1938 Mexican expropriation of its oil industry is apposite.

In early 1938, Mexican President Lázaro Cárdenas created Petróleos Mexicanos (PEMEX), a national oil firm that assumed control of the Mexican oil industry, and restricted the operation of foreign firms within the country. Prior to this, the Mexican Eagle Company (a Royal Dutch/Shell subsidiary) commanded over 60% of the oil production

¹¹³ Richard H. Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), 86

¹¹⁴ Review of The World Situation, CIA, 17 August 1949, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP67-00059A000500080006-2.pdf>, 6 [accessed 07 Nov 2020].

and Standard Oil Company of California (SOCAL) commanded another 30%.¹¹⁵ In response, President Roosevelt cautioned against hostilities in an effort to avoid driving them to “seek assistance elsewhere and/or into political and economic chaos.”¹¹⁶ Negotiations continued for two years under the prevailing rationale that “the U.S. government and the American oil companies [had] everything to gain by helping Mexico ... to get on her feet; and much to lose by continued and intensified pressure for cash payments or return to the oil companies of their oil properties.”¹¹⁷ In 1942, the U.S. and Mexico entered into the Cooke-Zevada agreement which provided a \$29 million dollar payout to the American firms affected by the expropriation.¹¹⁸

Eisenhower, and those directly involved with the conception and planning of PBSUCCESS, had determined that Guatemala was as close to turning communist as possible. The fear which that prospect engendered was the impetus for the intervention. In parallel with TPAJAX, once the threat had been couched in terms of an imminent communist threat, the perception of the Árbenz government grew redder and redder. Rational perspective was obscured and led to snap judgments that were not based on realities on the ground, as has been demonstrated in the previous chapter and will be further elucidated here.

The CIA ‘Review of the World Situation’ from August 1949 made the assessment that “the (Guatemalan) government certainly does not have the ability, and probably does not have even the inclination, to side with the USSR ... it will probably continue and may

¹¹⁵ Mexican Expropriation of Foreign Oil, 1938, Milestones in the History of U.S. Foreign Relation 1937–1945, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1937-1945/mexican-oil> [accessed 01 Feb 2021].

¹¹⁶ Harry D. White to Secretary Morgenthau, Treasury Dept., Inter Office Communication: The Mexican Situation, 01 Apr 1938, http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/_resources/images/morg/md0155.pdf, 27 [accessed 01 Feb 2021].

¹¹⁷ Harry D. White to Secretary Morgenthau, Treasury Dept., Inter Office Communication: The Mexican Situation, 01 Apr 1938, http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/_resources/images/morg/md0155.pdf, 27 [accessed 01 Feb 2021].

¹¹⁸ Mexican Expropriation of Foreign Oil, 1938, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/wwii/92455.htm> [accessed 01 Feb 2021].

intensify its opposition to certain U.S. policies during the present “cold-war” period.”¹¹⁹ Nonetheless, it was the convictions involving communist infiltration and collaboration with the U.S.S.R. that were used as justification to proceed with both TPAJAX and PBSUCCESS. In the case of the latter, the convictions supplanted facts as evidence was “impossible to produce ... clearly tying the Guatemalan government to Moscow,” and that “the decision ... must be based on our deep conviction that such a tie must exist.”¹²⁰

President Truman’s adherence to diplomatic means to stave off the perceived communist threat applied to the western hemisphere as well as the near east. That does not mean that the option of covert intervention was not already being considered in Guatemala during the planning and execution of TPAJAX. Both he and his successor, Eisenhower, understood the importance of the relationships with Latin American countries, and espoused an “overarching objective of containing communism.”¹²¹ But it was after Eisenhower had come into office, along with the Dulles brothers, that a significantly more aggressive foreign policy approach was implemented.

Within the first year of the Eisenhower administration, a “Proposed Talking Paper” had been developed that explained the new administration’s stance involving any Soviet aggression. The paper emphasized the need for the U.S. to develop “the capability of inflicting effective retaliatory damage” (the original draft used the word “offensive” rather than retaliatory), with the realization that it was “indispensable that the free world possess and maintain a capacity for instant and formidable retaliation.”¹²² For Eisenhower and the Dulles brothers, it was not enough to posture; examples of massive retaliatory actions needed to be made. Covert operations provided a method for the message to be

¹¹⁹ Review of the World Situation, CIA, 17 August 1949, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP67-00059A000500080006-2.pdf>, 6 [accessed 07 Nov 2020].

¹²⁰ Memorandum of Conversation by The Secretary of State 11 May 1954, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v04/d437> [accessed 07 Nov 2020].

¹²¹ Richard H. Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), 9.

¹²² FRUS, Western European Security, Volume V, Part 1, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 1953, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v05p1/pg_511, 511 [accessed 08 Nov 2020].

communicated while maintaining the appearance of anonymity, and at a significantly reduced cost. Fallout from these operations was not considered.

From a tactical standpoint, the operations in Iran and Guatemala served “as warnings to others in the Middle East and elsewhere” that “if not punished, might have encouraged others to try ... to move toward a social revolution.”¹²³ The nationalization of Iranian oil resources and Guatemalan land may have been unfriendly to U.S. business interests, but each were presented as confirmation supporting the conviction that communist ties existed. In reality, conditions of the business arrangements in both countries were indisputably unbalanced in favor of Britain and the U.S., respectively. From a positive illusions position, willingness to proceed with covert military action reflected a level of enthusiasm and expectation that the end would justify the means, despite the presence of faulty assumptions which, again, were not scrutinized.

The Agrarian Reform Law passed in 1952 (Decree 900) provided the Guatemalan government the ability to seize and redistribute fallow land on estates that were larger than 672 acres. Additionally, it stipulated that “all uncultivated land in private estates of more than 672 acres would be expropriated; idle land in estates of between 224 and 672 acres would be expropriated only if less than two thirds of the estate was under cultivation.”¹²⁴ Any estates smaller than 224 acres would not be affected by the reforms. Those from whom the land was taken were to “be compensated with 3% agrarian bonds maturing in 25 years; the value of the expropriated land would be that declared by the owners on their tax returns prior to May 10, 1952, the day the agrarian reform bill had been presented to Congress.”¹²⁵ For the United Fruit Company, this “was a direct challenge” as it “owned more than

¹²³ Barton J. Bernstein, Foreign Policy in The Eisenhower Administration, Foreign Service Journal Volume 50 No. 5, May 1973, <http://www.afsa.org/foreign-service-journal-may-1973>, 29 [accessed 08 Nov 2020].

¹²⁴ Piero Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944–1954* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1991), 150.

¹²⁵ Gleijeses, 151.

550,000 acres, about one-fifth of the country's arable land."126 would have to be forfeited as the company cultivated "less than 15% of it."127

Together with the United Fruit Company, International Railways of Central America and Electric Bond and Share had over \$100 million (nearly \$1 billion when adjusted for inflation) worth of investments and assets in the country.¹²⁸ The United Fruit Company had been severely undervaluing their assets in the country for years and in exchange for the 234,000 acres seized by the Guatemalan government, they were offered \$1.185 million — the figure at which the company had valued its land holdings.¹²⁹ Of course, the offer was rejected by company executives as well as by John Foster Dulles, the lawyer from the Sullivan and Cromwell firm that represented all three corporations.

According to Miles Copeland, a CIA agent who took part in the TPAJAX coup, Alan Dulles perceived himself to be a sort of character out of a spy novel.¹³⁰ Kermit Roosevelt confided in him regarding his perception of the head of the CIA as well. Any opportunity that would have presented itself anywhere in the world would have proved to be irresistible to Dulles as he "wouldn't be able to restrain himself - or us," and that "Allen would give his left ... well, let us say index finger, if he could go somewhere in the field and engineer a coup d'état himself."¹³¹ As noted in the previous chapter, the after-effects of TPAJAX were enthralling. The "day that should never have ended"¹³² had set a

¹²⁶ Stephen. Kinzer, *Overthrow: America's Century of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq*, 1st paperback ed. (New York: Times Books/Henry Holt, 2007), 133.

¹²⁷ Kinzer, 133.

¹²⁸ Kinzer, 133

¹²⁹ Kinzer, 133.

¹³⁰ David Talbot, *The Devil's Chessboard: Allen Dulles, the CIA, and the Rise of America's Secret Government* (New York, NY: Harper, an imprint of HarperCollins, 2015), 239.

¹³¹ M. Copeland, *The Game Player: Confessions of the CIA's Original Political Operative* (Aurum Press, 1989), 127.

¹³² James Risen, *Secrets of History - The CIA in Iran*, Chapter 4, <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/library/world/mideast/041600iran-cia-chapter4> [accessed 08 Nov 2020].

precedent and, with planning and preparation for PBSUCCESS well underway, induced high-ranking officials to chase the dragon in search of a repeat occurrence.

Contingency plans were being drawn up by 1951, well before Decree 900, as the CIA worried that land reforms would provide an opening for communism in the hemisphere. The U.S. State Department hosted Nicaraguan President Anastasio Somoza in April 1952 in a recruitment effort that culminated in his agreement to coordinate with ex-Guatemalan military officer, Castillo Armas, in an effort to overthrow the Árbenz government. Allen Dulles, then Deputy Director of Central Intelligence, received approval for Operation: PBFORTUNE to provide arms and \$225,000 to Armas and his group of rebels in September of that year. However, by the next month agency officials had learned that Somoza had been bragging about his coordination with the CIA and had blown the cover of the operation.¹³³ The operation was terminated. Eisenhower's election served to revive it.

In August of 1953, with Eisenhower's encouragement and the "New Look" policy approach towards military posture and massive retaliation capabilities, cabinet members begin to re-examine the possibilities of covert action in Guatemala. The success of TPAJAX that same month served to bolster the confidence of planners, as evidenced by the operation's title. By December 3, authorization of an initial payment of \$3 million was made by the CIA. On December 16, the U.S. ambassador to Guatemala, John Peurifoy, met at Árbenz's home to discuss the current state of affairs. This was the first and last meeting that Peurifoy had with Árbenz, in the next day he reported to Allen Dulles that "If he is not a communist, he will certainly do until one comes along."¹³⁴

C. CONCLUSION

PBSUCCESS mirrored TPAJAX in nearly every way. Planning proceeded under the conviction that Guatemalan society and military would respond favorably to the actions

¹³³ Nick Cullather, *Secret History: The CIA's Classified Account of Its Operations in Guatemala, 1952-1954* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1999).

¹³⁴ Stephen. Kinzer, *Overthrow: America's Century of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq*, 1st paperback ed. (New York: Times Books/Henry Holt, 2007), 137.

leading up to the coup. The plan involved elements of psychological and political warfare, relying heavily on radio as a propaganda tool. However, Kermit Roosevelt's warning that "we must be absolutely sure"¹³⁵ about the assessment of the target country's politics, society, and military conditions for operations to succeed proved to be immediately applicable.

During TPAJAX, local radio stations played an integral part in conveying "well-intended lies, or 'pre-truths'"¹³⁶ which were intended to rally supporters of the Shah to various points within Tehran. The assumption that the situation in Guatemala was the same was not only mistaken, but indicative of a dangerous arrogance that had developed within the institution. "Only one Guatemalan in 50 owned a radio, and the vast majority of the nation's 71,000 sets were concentrated in the vicinity of the capital, in the homes and offices of the wealthy and professional classes."¹³⁷ One analyst within the planning group assessed that Guatemalans would "probably consider [radio] and authoritative source, and they may give wide word-of-mouth circulation to interesting rumors" that were broadcast."¹³⁸

To add to the difficulties involved with the dissemination of propaganda, the "controlling factor" that would decide the success of the operation was the "loyalty of regular army officers."¹³⁹ CIA planners recognized that the rebel forces would have to confront far superior military forces and that "If Árbenz's regular forces elected to fight, they could repel the invasion without any difficulty."¹⁴⁰ In essence, the plan relied more substantially upon the psychological impact of the impression of strength generated

¹³⁵ Kermit Roosevelt, *Countercoup: The Struggle for the Control of Iran* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), 209.

¹³⁶ Roosevelt, 191.

¹³⁷ Nick Cullather, *Secret History: The CIA's Classified Account of Its Operations in Guatemala, 1952-1954* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1999).

¹³⁸ Cullather, 41.

¹³⁹ Richard H. Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982). 161.

¹⁴⁰ Immerman, 161.

through propaganda than the actual strength of the invading forces. This created a sort of regressive cycle where each flawed element of the plan relied upon the other flawed element, yet the ability to recognize the flaws was impeded by the general institutional memory of recent exploits.

During TPAJAX, the support of elements of the military ensured the success of the second coup attempt. An assessment of the Guatemalan military in 1953 found that it possessed “an army of 7,000 ... well-trained, and quite well-equipped”¹⁴¹ troops; the strongest military power in Central America at the time. For PBSUCCESS, military support was equally imperative. To achieve that support, planners needed to assess the likelihood of defection by some or all the officer corps, as the initial invasion force which consisted of only 480 “shock troops” was “never intended... to challenge the Guatemalan Army. Instead, it was to be used as another psychological weapon in the campaign to intimidate Árbenz and incite an army revolt.”¹⁴²

As planning proceeded, the reality set in regarding the role that the army would play as the operation progressed,

[The Army] could affect a rapid and decisive change in the Guatemalan political situation if it were to take concerted action. Although a quick change of attitude is always possible, there is no present reason to doubt the continued loyalty of the Army high command and most of the Army officer corps to Árbenz. The Army would be unlikely to take revolutionary action [against Árbenz] unless the high command or a substantial body of unit commanders became convinced that their personal security and well-being were threatened... The Communists have little power of their own.¹⁴³

The conclusion to be drawn from this is that the intention was to drive elements of the military to treason. Months of targeted propaganda never achieved that goal, but it

¹⁴¹ FRUS, Memorandum for The Record, 11 September 1953, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54Guat/d51> [accessed 08 Nov 2020].

¹⁴² Archival Document, Produced at The National Archives, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/ciacase/E50.pdf>, 50 [accessed 08 Nov 2020].

¹⁴³ FRUS, Special Paper Prepared in The Division of Research for Latin America, Department of State, 26 May 1953, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54Guat/d37_2 [accessed 08 Nov 2020].

served to convince much of them that the invasion forces “were U.S. proxies whose defeat would trigger a U.S. invasion.”¹⁴⁴

There is no evidence that a U.S. led invasion was a contingency, in fact, there was a concerted effort by Eisenhower and both John and Allen Dulles to “avoid the appearance of unilateral action”¹⁴⁵ in Latin America. That would maintain the illusion that the U.S. was adhering to international law and maintaining plausible deniability for the operation. It also served as a “comforting conviction in the political and intellectual elites, and the press, and the Congress, and in the public at large that Guatemala was the aggressor in the United States, the long-suffering victim.”¹⁴⁶

Árbenz could have taken ample amount of evidence to either United Nations or to the Organization of American States (OAS), as security breaches had provided ample details surrounding PBSUCCESS. One senior agency official, Jacob Esterline, noted that the Guatemalan government had a substantial number of details, but that “they have decided to let the operation proceed undisturbed”¹⁴⁷ until they were ready to present their case to the OAS. As a result of that revelation, PBSUCCESS was paused for two brief days, then resumed on the third. There is no evidence that indicates why the Árbenz government failed to present or even alert the international organizations to the evidence in their possession prior to the invasion on commencement on 18 June 1954. Fear of U.S. reprisal seems to be the most likely cause.

On the day of the invasion, Guillermo Toriello, the Guatemalan foreign minister, brought a complaint to the UN Security Council seeking a halt to the hostilities that he attributed to elements of Nicaragua, Honduras, and the United Fruit Company; U.S.

¹⁴⁴ Piero Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944–1954* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1991), 247.

¹⁴⁵ FRUS, Statement of Policy by The National Security Council, NSC 144/1, 18 March 1953, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v04/d3> [accessed 09 Nov 2020].

¹⁴⁶ Piero Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944–1954* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1991), 248.

¹⁴⁷ Esterline to [redacted] “Items for Inclusion in CE Report,” 22 April 1954, Job 79–01025A, Box 70.

involvement was conspicuously absent from the charges. Nonetheless, Foster Dulles was obliged to sign a French motion that called on all members to refuse to contribute to the rebel forces in order to maintain operational integrity. Despite his signature, there was “universal assumption of U.S. complicity in the invasion.”¹⁴⁸ The operation continued unaffected.

The invasion force suffered some setbacks, particularly when they were met with armed resistance. Desertion, death, capture, and no reinforcements led Castillo Armas to request additional supplies and 500 more men just three days into the attack. Árbenz and the chief of the Army, Col. Carlos Diaz, were not afraid of the invading forces, but they did fear that it may have been the precursor of invading U.S. forces. They planned to destroy the rebel forces by allowing them to progress further into the country before attacking. It was too little, too late. As the forward-deployed Guatemalan troops awaited the advancing forces, they shared their fears of the possibility of incoming U.S. support, and pondered whether the Marines had already landed.

The week of June 17–24, 1954 proved to be strikingly similar to the second successful effort during TPAJAX. While there was no point at which the operation was aborted, success was questionable as a result of the lack of sources and input regarding the linchpin of the operation - the army elements. As of June 17, a CIA analysis reported that “So far as the Army is concerned, its preferred choice unquestionably would be to keep Árbenz,”¹⁴⁹ and “As of June 20 the outcome of the efforts to overthrow ... Árbenz ... remains very much in doubt.”¹⁵⁰ But on June 23 during a visit to the front lines, officers were found “cowering in their barracks, terrified and unwilling to fight.”¹⁵¹ On the afternoon of June 27, Peurifoy, Col. Diaz, and a few other officers convened to discuss the

¹⁴⁸ Nick Cullather, *Secret History: The CIA's Classified Account of Its Operations in Guatemala, 1952–1954* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1999), 93.

¹⁴⁹ Piero Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944–1954* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1991), 335.

¹⁵⁰ DCI to President, “The Situation in Guatemala as of 20 June,” FRUS, 1952–1954, 4:1174.

¹⁵¹ Nick Cullather, *Secret History: The CIA's Classified Account of Its Operations in Guatemala, 1952–1954* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1999), 97.

removal of Árbenz. Just after 9 p.m. that same evening Árbenz agreed to resign his presidency.¹⁵²

His address was partially jammed by the CIA, and the text was censored for over a month. Nonetheless, Árbenz read his resignation over the radio for his countrymen that night. His assertion in the address as to the motivation behind the coup was partially correct:

In the name of what do they do these things? We all know what. They have taken the pretext of communism. The truth is elsewhere — in financial interests of the United Fruit Company and other U.S. firms that have invested much in Guatemala. Time will show if what they say is true, but there are those who claim that Guatemala is the cause of what happens. My Government has been called Communist in nature. We have used every means to convince world reactionaries that what U.S. Government circles say is untrue.¹⁵³

Árbenz's attempt at national reforms were a radical departure from what the country had experienced throughout its history. It was precisely that idealized liberalization that was misconstrued as communism and, once that illusion had taken hold, it rapidly metastasized.

Over the next several days CIA agents gathered 150,000 documents, although little of what they collected related to “the aspects that we are most interested, namely the elements of Soviet support and control of communism in Guatemala.”¹⁵⁴ The trove of documents was indicative of the gulf between the exaggerated perception of rampant communist infiltration in Guatemala, and reality. The CIA, embassy officials, and military attachés all knew that Guatemala was not under the control of communists. The most significant indicator of such subversion would have been the presence of communists or communist sympathizers within the Guatemalan Army, and they never “claimed that the

¹⁵² Stephen C. Schlesinger, *Bitter Fruit: The Story of the American Coup in Guatemala*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University, David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, 2005), 199.

¹⁵³ CIA Historical Review Program, Arbenz's Speech Delivered at 0310–0320 EST 27 June 1954, https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000920952.pdf, 1 [accessed 10 Nov 2020].

¹⁵⁴ CIA Reading Room, Memorandum for The Record, Report on Activity [redacted] In Guatemala City 4–16 July 1954, https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000920205.pdf, 4–16 [accessed 10 Nov 2020].

Guatemalan army was infiltrated by communists.”¹⁵⁵ The sanctioned conviction that communists would attempt to gain control of the country was evidenced by the reforms that Árbenz had undertaken, as it set a dangerous example for other countries in the region that were experiencing similar social conditions.

Grievances brought by UFCO triggered increased scrutiny, but it cannot be argued that they were the justification for the coup. The supposition is presented in *Bitter Fruit* that “Without United Fruit’s troubles, it seems probable that the Dulles brothers might not have paid such intense attention to the few communists in Guatemala.”¹⁵⁶ UFCO certainly had connections at the highest levels of the U.S. government, and they were leveraged in an effort to end their perceived persecution. However, it was the pathological adherence to the notion that the U.S. was being encroached upon from all sides by the specter of communism. It was a battle of good versus evil, and evil was everywhere.

United Fruit’s tribulations did provide the opportunity to present the aggressor as the victim, even though very few other countries regarded the communist threat as eminent. A relieved Eisenhower graciously thanked “the people of Guatemala [who] in a magnificent effort have liberated themselves from the shackles of international communist direction and reclaimed their right of self-determination.”¹⁵⁷ Within the CIA, the success of the coup once again “induced euphoria: we can do anything if we want to!”¹⁵⁸ and, once again the glorious success of the mission negated the need of a postmortem review. There was no attempt made to try and understand the conditions on the ground in Guatemala nor why Árbenz had agreed to step down so willingly, nor what repercussions might follow.

¹⁵⁵ Piero Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944–1954* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1991), 365.

¹⁵⁶ Stephen C. Schlesinger, *Bitter Fruit: The Story of the American Coup in Guatemala*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University, David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, 2005), 106.

¹⁵⁷ Brad Simpson, “The United States and the Curious History of Self-Determination,” *Diplomatic History* 36, no. 4 (2012): 675–94, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7709.2012.01049.x>, 685 [accessed 10 Nov 2020].

¹⁵⁸ Piero Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944–1954* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1991), 372.

When a review was eventually conducted seven years later, in conjunction with the review of the Bay of Pigs operation, Inspector General Lyman Kirkpatrick informed Allen Dulles that “The Agency did a miserable job.”¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁹ Gleijeses, 372.

IV. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS: OPERATION: JMATE

The successes of TPAJAX and PBSUCCESS had served to affirm the perception that “the U.S. always wins!”¹⁶⁰ The solidification of positive illusions had created a dangerous environment which left out the opportunities for debate and critical appraisal that could have identified faults in the invasion plan and possibly the motives behind it. President Kennedy “knew little of the strengths and weaknesses of the men who were advising him,”¹⁶¹ and the decisionmakers within the CIA brought their skewed situational perception and strategic and tactical overconfidence to this operation. It never occurred to them that they could not “provide the necessary objectivity and skepticism about their own plan.”¹⁶²

Critical elements of the intelligence community, such as the CIA Directorate of Intelligence, had been excluded from both PBSUCCESS and JMATE operations as details were increasingly kept compartmentalized after TPAJAX.¹⁶³ Between the few high level decision makers retained from PBSUCCESS, it was decided that the very same operational approach, a mix of psychological and guerilla warfare, would be pursued. As Jack Esterline, CIA Chief of Western Hemisphere Branch, reflected in an interview given to Piero Gleijeses, “the Guatemalan thing stumbled to success.” and “It reinforced the feeling that anything the U.S. did would succeed.”¹⁶⁴ The “repeated assurances of senior officers

¹⁶⁰ Piero Gleijeses, “Ships in the Night: The CIA, the White House and the Bay of Pigs,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 27, no. 1 (1995), 7.

¹⁶¹ Joshua H. Sandman, “Analyzing Foreign Policy Crisis Situations: The Bay of Pigs,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 16, no. 2 (1986), 314.

¹⁶² Sandman, 314.

¹⁶³ Piero Gleijeses, “Ships in the Night: The CIA, the White House and the Bay of Pigs,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 27, no. 1 (1995), 7.

¹⁶⁴ Gleijeses, 41.

who were not authorities on Cuba led to the exclusion of the true experts.”¹⁶⁵ Being clever for another time had run its course.

A. BACKGROUND

In 1898, the U.S. intervened in the Cuban independence movement and helped liberate the island from Spanish rule. However, U.S. officials immediately passed legislation that allowed for the indirect U.S. rule of the island. U.S. officials voiced their concerns regarding the Cuban peoples’ ability to govern themselves, as some believed that Cubans “are children, and I am afraid they are pretty bad children, just as little qualified to govern themselves as so many youngsters.”¹⁶⁶ In an effort to fulfill the promise of granting independence while maintaining Cuban subservience, the Platt Amendment was signed into law in early 1901. Not only did the amendment allow for U.S. intervention in Cuba whenever it was deemed necessary in order to “‘preserve’ Cuban independence and restore stability,” but the Cuban government was required to sign the amendment to guarantee formal independence.¹⁶⁷

In rapid succession, tariffs were reduced on American imported goods and “over 90% of Cuba’s exports” were sent to the U.S. market.¹⁶⁸ The result was a depressed local economy, which led to increased unemployment and underemployment as well as a reduction in wages. Social unrest accompanied these conditions, especially in the labor sector, and that sort of instability would have involved U.S. intervention had it not been managed appropriately. In order to manage the social situation, those Cubans elected to public office did what they could to settle that unrest and that often-involved violence in the form of suppression of protests and even assassinations. Nonetheless, labor movements

¹⁶⁵ William Daugherty, *Executive Secrets: Covert Action and the Presidency* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 137.

¹⁶⁶ Christos Frentzos and Antonio Thompson, *The Routledge Handbook of American Military and Diplomatic History: 1865 to the Present*, Routledge Handbooks (London: Routledge, 2013), 54.

¹⁶⁷ Jana K. Lipman, *Guantánamo: A Working-Class History between Empire and Revolution*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 23.

¹⁶⁸ Christos Frentzos and Antonio Thompson, *The Routledge Handbook of American Military and Diplomatic History: 1865 to the Present*, Routledge Handbooks (London: Routledge, 2013), 55.

continued and economic crises during the Great Depression provoked many workers to go on strike.

Throughout this time, Cuba was led by several different presidents who realized that deference to Washington guaranteed their mandate. It was not until a young sergeant in the Cuban Army, Fulgencio Batista, was able to reinforce actions taken by the government with military backing that the U.S. began to reduce its level of intervention in Cuba. As a result of his reorganization of the Cuban Army officer corps, significant military influence on the political and social system was exerted and “after 1936, the old political class never again attempted to regain power.”¹⁶⁹ While the Batista-led government implemented several reformist demands including the implementation of a “national bank, support for agricultural diversification, land-tenure guarantees, profit-sharing between mill owners and colonos [sugar cane growers], distributing public lands to peasant families, enacting labor legislation, and reforming education and public health”,¹⁷⁰ it did not sufficiently eradicate corruption.

Increasingly resolute agricultural interests continued to consolidate political power in the upper class to the detriment of the working class. In 1953, progressive opposition groups developed their own support and would have likely succeeded in bringing a candidate to power had the effort not been cut short. A coup installed the military as the preeminent political power and Batista at the head of the dictatorship. Elections were held the following year and Batista ran practically unopposed, as the single opposition candidate urged his followers not to vote.¹⁷¹ During the next five years his repressive actions increased and his refusal to relinquish power “undermined the moderate opposition and braced the radical nationalism of Fidel Castro, the Rebel Army, and the July 26th

¹⁶⁹ Marifeli Pérez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course, and Legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 42.

¹⁷⁰ Pérez-Stable, 42.

¹⁷¹ Philip Wilson Bonsal, *Cuba, Castro, and the United States* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971), 12.

Movement.”¹⁷² Batista fled Cuba on New Year’s Eve in 1958. Two columns of Fidel Castro’s rebel army arrived in Havana on January 2 and Fidel arrived triumphant four days later.

B. DISCUSSION

When Fidel Castro first assumed control of Cuba, his allegiances were difficult to discern, but it did not take long for him to realize that he would not find a supportive ally in the U.S. Eventually, he and Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara, his second in command, solicited the support of the Soviet Union, which they quickly received. In this way, the approach of U.S. policy makers to prevent Cuba from entering the Soviet orbit and embracing communism actually set them on a collision course.

John F. Kennedy was inaugurated on January 20, 1961, as the 35th President of the United States. As Eisenhower’s successor, “he retained the same people in all these key positions whom President Eisenhower had. Allen Dulles was there, ... the same Joint Chiefs of Staff. He did not attempt to move any of those people out. And these were the people who were around this table when they were making the decisions.”¹⁷³ For Allen Dulles, the Bay of Pigs operation “would be much more effective than Guatemala” and it was “sure of success.”¹⁷⁴ For those individuals retained and employed to pursue another operation to overthrow a foreign government, there was minimal productive learning taken from the previous operations. Robert Jervis states that such problems recur because:

Decision-makers usually fail to strip away from the past event those facets that depend on the ephemeral context. They often mistake things that are highly specific and situation-bound for more general characteristics because they assume that the most salient aspects of the results were caused by the

¹⁷² Marifeli Pérez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course, and Legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 57.

¹⁷³ E.O. Guthman, J. Shulman, and A.M. Schlesinger, *Robert Kennedy: In His Own Words: The Unpublished Recollections of the Kennedy Years* (Bdd Promotional Book Company, 1991), 246.

¹⁷⁴ Guthman, Shulman, and Schlesinger, 247.

most salient aspects of the preceding situation. People pay more attention to what has happened than to why it has happened.¹⁷⁵

As a senator, John F. Kennedy was aware of the plight of Cubans under Batista's rule as well as U.S. imperial treatment of the island. In a speech made in 1960 while still on the campaign trail, Kennedy stated that U.S. "action too often gave the impression that this country [U.S.] was more interested in taking money from the Cuban people than in helping them build a strong and diversified economy of their own."¹⁷⁶ He prefaced that statement with a few statistics involving American corporate interests in Cuba which "at the beginning of 1959, [U.S. companies] owned about 40 percent of the Cuban sugar lands—almost all the cattle ranches—90 percent of the mines and mineral concessions, 80 percent of the utilities—and practically all the oil industry—and supplied two-thirds of Cuba's imports."¹⁷⁷ These economic figures are very similar in proportion to those in Guatemala when Arbenz began his reform efforts.

Despite this acknowledgement, President Kennedy agreed that action to overthrow Castro was necessary, and authorized planning that had begun in January of 1960 to continue.¹⁷⁸ However, as that plan developed, so did its ambitiousness. The initial plan for the development of a guerilla force within Cuba was scrapped in favor of landing a small force and providing it with air support. Near the end of that year, top secret internal CIA documents released in 1998 reveal that the plans that had been developed (including the one which was approved) were:

seen to be unachievable in the face of the controls Castro has instituted. There will not be the internal unrest earlier believed possible, nor will the

¹⁷⁵ Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1976, 228.

¹⁷⁶ The American Presidency Project, "Speech of Senator John F. Kennedy, Cincinnati, Ohio, Democratic Dinner. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/speech-senator-john-f-kennedy-cincinnati-ohio-democratic-dinner>," [accessed 03 Mar 2021].

¹⁷⁷ The American Presidency Project, "Speech of Senator John F. Kennedy, Cincinnati, Ohio, Democratic Dinner. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/speech-senator-john-f-kennedy-cincinnati-ohio-democratic-dinner>," [accessed 03 Mar 2021].

¹⁷⁸ Lawrence. Freedman, *Kennedy's Wars: Berlin, Cuba, Laos, and Vietnam*, (New York ; Oxford University Press, 2000), 125.

defenses permit the type strike first planned. Our second concept (1,500 - 3,000 man force to secure a beach with airstrip) is also now seen to be unachievable, except as a joint Agency/DOD action. Our Guatemala experience demonstrates we cannot staff nor otherwise timely create the base and lift needed.¹⁷⁹

Department of Defense support was not an option that Kennedy was comfortable with, so it was ruled out, further damning the operation.

The review, conducted in 1979, correctly questions how the plan developed in November 1960 involving a “1,500–3,000 man force ... was envisioned by senior personnel as ‘unachievable’” yet it became “‘achievable’ in March 1961 with only 1,200 men?” In addition, security leaks from within the highest levels of the U.S. force structure led to the assessment by the head of the invasion planning that “Security already has been damaged severely.”¹⁸⁰ Castro had also been informed by a member of the Honduran assembly “that thirty U.S. transport planes with supplies and former soldiers of the Batista regime had flown to the Guatemalan bases of Puerto Barrios and Retalhuleu.”¹⁸¹ Castro was thus provided with time to strengthen his forces in preparation for an invasion he could confidently assume was inevitable. The “miscalculations ... from the failure of Kennedy’s advisors to carefully consider the various options and contingencies”¹⁸² ensured Castro’s success.

C. CONCLUSION

After the Shah was installed in Iran, he instituted a campaign of widespread crackdowns on political dissent including torture and arbitrary imprisonment of individuals accused of being leftists or communists. Thousands were killed. This environment

¹⁷⁹ The National Security Archive, Top Secret CIA ‘Official History’ of the Bay of Pigs: Revelations, Volume III. <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB355/index.htm>, [accessed 04 Mar 2021], 149

¹⁸⁰ The National Security Archive, Top Secret CIA ‘Official History’ of the Bay of Pigs: Revelations, Volume III. <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB355/index.htm>, [accessed 04 Mar 2021], 149.

¹⁸¹ Fursenko, A. V., *One Hell of a Gamble: Khrushchev, Castro, and Kennedy, 1958–1964*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1997), 104.

¹⁸² Richard H. Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention*, 1st ed., The Texas Pan American Series (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), 270.

persisted for nearly three decades before the Iranian revolution forced the Shah's abdication of the throne and the creation of the Islamic republic. In Guatemala, Castillo Armas and his successors undertook a campaign of terror and repression that amounted to an all-out war on the population. Concentration camps were built to house the overflow from the prisons, and the human toll after 36 years of civil war is estimated at 200,000 dead and another 45,000 disappeared.¹⁸³ In the immediate aftermath of the Bay of Pigs operation, John F. Kennedy sought to save political face by going to battle with Soviet forces in Asia and escalated the war in Vietnam.

Positive illusions surrounding the intelligence assessments of opponents in each scenario directly resulted in the decisions to proceed with covert operations to overthrow those governments. In the absence of after-action reviews for both TPAJAX and PBSUCCESS, undue and dangerous levels of overconfidence in tactics and purpose culminated in the failure at the Bay of Pigs. Details of the three operations covered leave no doubt that the leadership in charge of approval and planning of the operations, including Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy, CIA Director Allen Dulles, and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, were subject to such positive illusions. For John Foster Dulles in particular, "No distinctions among variants of neutralism, nationalism, socialism or communism"¹⁸⁴ were enough to justify the exploration of more diplomatic avenues.

Janice Stein implies that it is more difficult for those with entrenched beliefs and greater expertise with foreign policy and defense matters to alter their beliefs.¹⁸⁵ She used Mikhail Gorbachev as an example of the contrary, that he was an "uncommitted thinker" who recognized that failure occurring around him required him to learn and to be open to learn. As it turns out, failure can be a great teacher. In this interpretation, the unreviewed planning and tactical approaches of the covert operations reviewed here helped to

¹⁸³ Heather McMaster Ewing, *A Perfect Storm: How the Guatemalan Civil War, U.S. Immigration Policy and Drug Trafficking Organizations Debilitated the Guatemalan State*, 2018, 1.

¹⁸⁴ Stephen C. Schlesinger, *Bitter Fruit: The Story of the American Coup in Guatemala*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University, David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, 2005), 101.

¹⁸⁵ Janice Gross Stein, "Political Learning by Doing: Gorbachev as Uncommitted Thinker and Motivated Learner," *International Organization* 48, no. 2 (1994): 155–83.

perpetuate their application. This is not a promotion of failure nor is it a lamentation that operational failure should have occurred sooner. Rather, the takeaway is the fact that it took a failure such as the Bay of Pigs for detrimental practices to be revealed and addressed.

It is imperative that leadership, as well as the subordinate cadre, are aware of the possibility of such mistakes. While the regime change operations reviewed in this case study were all covert, overt operations are not immune from succumbing to the same shortcomings. The Vietnam war and the second war in Iraq and Afghanistan are two examples from which insight regarding the rationale of the acceptance of risks involved could be garnered as they relate to large scale overt operations. With those two examples and in each of the cases covered here, as planners and decision makers progressed, “firmly believing in U.S. superiority, they unquestionably accepted ... faulty analysis and proposal.”¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁶ Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention*, 270.

LIST OF REFERENCES

- Abrahamian, E. *The Coup: 1953, the CIA, and the Roots of Modern U.S.-Iranian Relations*. New Press, 2013.
- Ambrose, Stephen E., and Richard H. Immerman. *Ike's Spies: Eisenhower and the Espionage Establishment*. 1st ed. Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1981.
- Bill, J.A. *The Eagle and the Lion: The Tragedy of American-Iranian Relations*. Tragedy of American-Iranian Relations. Yale University Press, 1988.
- Black, George. *Garrison Guatemala*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984.
- Blasier, Cole. *The Hovering Giant: U.S. Responses to Revolutionary Change in Latin America*. Rev. ed. Pitt Latin American Series. Pittsburgh, Pa: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985.
- Bonsal, Philip Wilson. *Cuba, Castro, and the United States*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971.
- Breslauer, George W. *Learning in U.S. and Soviet Foreign Policy*. Edited by Philip Tetlock. Boulder: Westview Press, 1991.
- Copeland, M. *The Game Player: The Confessions of the CIA's Original Political Operative*. Aurum Press, 1989.
- Cullather, Nick. *Secret History: The CIA's Classified Account of its Operations in Guatemala, 1952–1954*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1999.
- Daugherty, William. *Executive Secrets: Covert Action and the Presidency*. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2004.
- Dunning, David, Judith A Meyerowitz, and Amy D Holzberg. "Ambiguity and Self-Evaluation: The Role of Idiosyncratic Trait Definitions in Self-Serving Assessments of Ability." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 57, no. 6 (1989): 1082–90. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.57.6.1082>.
- Ewing, Heather McMaster. *A Perfect Storm: How the Guatemalan Civil War, U.S. Immigration Policy and Drug Trafficking Organizations Debilitated the Guatemalan State*, 2018.
- Farhang Jahanpour. "Iran: The Rise and Fall of the Tudeh Party." *World Today* 40, no. 4 (1984): 152–59.
- Freedman, Lawrence. *Kennedy's Wars: Berlin, Cuba, Laos, and Vietnam*. New York; Oxford University Press, 2000.

- Frentzos, Christos, and Antonio Thompson. *The Routledge Handbook of American Military and Diplomatic History: 1865 to the Present. The Routledge Handbook of American Military and Diplomatic History*. Routledge Handbooks. London: Routledge, 2013.
- Fursenko, A. V. (Aleksandr Vasil'evich). *One Hell of a Gamble: Khrushchev, Castro, and Kennedy, 1958–1964*. 1st ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1997.
- Gasiorowski, Mark J. *Mohammad Mosaddeq and the 1953 Coup in Iran*. 1st ed. Modern Intellectual and Political History of the Middle East. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004.
- Gasiorowski, Mark J. “U.S. Perceptions of the Communist Threat in Iran during the Mossadegh Era.” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 21, no. 3 (2019): 185–221. https://doi.org/10.1162/jcws_a_00898.
- Gleijeses, Piero. *Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944–1954*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1991.
- Gleijeses, Piero. “Ships in the Night: The CIA, the White House and the Bay of Pigs.” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 27, no. 1 (1995): 1–42.
- Gleijeses, Piero. “The Agrarian Reform of Jacobo Arbenz.” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 21, no. 3 (1989): 453–80.
- Gleijeses, Piero. “The Death of Francisco Arana: A Turning Point in the Guatemalan Revolution.” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 22, no. 3 (1990): 527–52.
- Grow, M. *U.S. Presidents and Latin American Interventions: Pursuing Regime Change in the Cold War*. University Press of Kansas, 2008.
- Guthman, E.O., J. Shulman, and A.M. Schlesinger. *Robert Kennedy: In His Own Words: The Unpublished Recollections of the Kennedy Years*. Bdd Promotional Book Company, 1991.
- Hitchcock, W.I. *The Age of Eisenhower: America and the World in the 1950s*. Simon & Schuster, 2018.
- Immerman, Richard H. *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention*. 1st ed. The Texas Pan American Series. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982.
- Immerman, Richard H. “Guatemala as Cold War History.” *Political Science Quarterly* 95, no. 4 (1980): 629–53. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2150608>.
- International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*. Second edition. Amsterdam, Netherlands: Elsevier, 2015.

- Jervis, Robert. *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976.
- Johnson, Dominic P. *Overconfidence and War*. Harvard University Press, 2009.
- Kalinovsky, Artemy M. "The Soviet Union and Mosaddeq: A Research Note." *Iranian Studies: Iran and the Cold War* 47, no. 3 (2014): 401–18.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00210862.2014.880633>.
- Kennedy, Paul P. "U.S. Helps Train an Anti-Castro Force at Secret Guatemalan Air-Ground Base: Clash with Cuba Feared -- Installations Built with American Aid." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*. January 10, 1961. 115440447. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times.
- Kinzer, Stephen. *Overthrow: America's Century of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq*. 1st paperback ed. New York: Times Books/Henry Holt, 2007.
- Koenig, L.W. *The Chief Executive*. Harcourt, Brace & World, 1964.
- Levy, Jack S. "Learning and Foreign Policy: Sweeping a Conceptual Minefield." *International Organization* 48, no. 2 (1994): 279–312.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300028198>.
- Lipman, Jana K. *Guantánamo: A Working-Class History between Empire and Revolution*. *Guantánamo*. 1st ed. Vol. 25. American Crossroads. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.
- Little, D. *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945*. University of North Carolina Press, 2009.
- Mather, Yassamine. "Iran's Tudeh Party: A History of Compromises and Betrayals." *Critique (Glasgow)* 39, no. 4 (2011): 611–27.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03017605.2011.621250>.
- McDermott, Rose. *Political Psychology in International Relations*. Analytical Perspectives on Politics. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004.
<https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.10847>.
- McDermott, Rose. *Risk-Taking in International Politics: Prospect Theory in American Foreign Policy*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998.
- Perera, V., and D. Chauche. *Unfinished Conquest: The Guatemalan Tragedy*. University of California Press, 1995.
- Pérez-Stable, Marifeli. *The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course, and Legacy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

- Roosevelt, Kermit. *Countercoup: The Struggle for the Control of Iran*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979.
- Sandman, Joshua H. "Analyzing Foreign Policy Crisis Situations: The Bay of Pigs." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 16, no. 2 (1986): 310–16.
- Schlesinger, Stephen C. *Bitter Fruit: The Story of the American Coup in Guatemala*. Rev. and Expanded ed., 2nd David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies ed. David Rockefeller Center Series on Latin American Studies, Harvard University; 4. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University, David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, 2005.
- Shillington, J. *Grappling with Atrocity: Guatemalan Theater in the 1990s*. Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2002.
- Silvert, Kalman H. *A Study in Government: Guatemala*. Louisiana: Middle American Research Institute, Tulane University, 1954, 1954.
- Simpson, Brad. "The United States and the Curious History of Self-Determination." *Diplomatic History* 36, no. 4 (2012): 675–94. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7709.2012.01049.x>
- Stein, Janice Gross. "Political Learning by Doing: Gorbachev as Uncommitted Thinker and Motivated Learner." *International Organization* 48, no. 2 (1994): 155–83.
- Streeter, S.M. *Managing the Counterrevolution: The United States and Guatemala, 1954–1961*. Ohio University Center for International Studies, 2000.
- Talbot, David. *The Devil's Chessboard: Allen Dulles, the CIA, and the Rise of America's Secret Government*. New York, NY: Harper, an imprint of HarperCollins, 2015.
- Taylor, Shelley E, Rebecca L Collins, Laurie A Skokan, and Lisa G Aspinwall. "Maintaining Positive Illusions in the Face of Negative Information: Getting the Facts Without Letting Them Get to You." *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology* 8, no. 2 (1989): 114–29. <https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.1989.8.2.114>.
- Waltz, Kenneth Neal. *Theory of International Politics*. Long Grove, Ill: Waveland Press, 2010.
- Woodhouse, C.M. *Something Ventured*. Unknown Publisher, 1982.

INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST

1. Defense Technical Information Center
Ft. Belvoir, Virginia
2. Dudley Knox Library
Naval Postgraduate School
Monterey, California