

Recipes for Insurgency

*A Comparative Study of the Insurgencies Against
Jacobo Árbenz (1954), Fidel Castro (1959-1964),
and the Guatemalan State (1960-1983)*

Håvard Sand



Master Thesis in History
Department of Archeology, Conservation and History

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

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Abstract

This thesis examines three cases of insurgency; the 1954 Coup against Guatemalan President Jacobo Árbenz, the insurgent side in the Guatemalan Civil War from 1960-1996 (the thesis will not go beyond 1983), and the insurgency against Fidel Castro's revolutionary Cuba from 1959 to 1964. All three cases saw heavy involvement from the United States of America, which will be a focus throughout the thesis.

Out of the three insurgencies only the one against Árbenz succeeded in toppling a regime, despite consisting of only a small force of 480 soldiers. A combination of unhappiness with domestic reform within the Guatemalan military, and the impression of an impending invasion by the USA created by US propaganda, led to the Guatemalan military toppling their own leader, and giving into US demands for an anti-communist government.

The Guatemalan Civil War was long and horribly bloody. The insurgents fought the regime to rid the country of the US backed military dictatorship that succeeded Árbenz. Despite enjoying a time of considerable support and success in the beginning of the 1980s, the insurgency failed to topple the government. The determination of the government to quash the insurgency, as well as its indiscriminate use of violence, and US support, resulted in the insurgency failing.

The insurgency against Castro examined in this thesis deals with the period where the USA was most active in the struggle. As a reaction to the revolution, and its continuous move to the left, many Cubans joined different resistance groups against the new regime. From the end of 1960, the USA started to plan for the overthrow of the new government on Cuba. Part of the strategy was to unite the different anti-Castro groups, and to train exile Cubans for armed struggle against Castro. The exile forces were used both for the failed invasion at the Bay of Pigs in 1961, and through a guerrilla struggle before and after the invasion. As with Guatemala, propaganda was used as a tool to weaken the Cuba regime. Despite massive US support for the insurgency, the Cuban government proved resilient, and did not collapse.

The thesis concludes by explaining that multiple factors determine whether any particular regime is vulnerable to an insurgency. Due to the complex interaction between different variables, a short, concise, conclusion is impossible to make.

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I take full responsibilities for any errors or shortcomings.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AID	Agency for International Development (Now called USAID)
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CNUS	Comité Nacional de Unidad Sindical (National Committee of Trade Union Unity)
COIN	Counterinsurgency
CUC	Comité de Unidad Campesina (Committee of Peasant Unity)
DOD	(United States) Department of Defense
EGP	Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres (Guerrilla Army of the Poor)
FAR	Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes (Rebel Armed Forces)
FRD	Frente Revolucionario Democrático (Cuban Democratic Revolutionary Front)
FRUS	Foreign Relations of the United States
GOG	Government of Guatemala
MLN	Movimiento de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Movement)
NSArchive	National Security Archive
NSC	National Security Council
NSD	National Security Doctrine
ORPA	Organización del Pueblo en Armas (Organization of the People in Arms)
PGT	Partido Guatemalteco del Trabajo (Guatemalan Party of Labor, often referred to as the Communist Party of Guatemala)
PGT (Guerrilla group)	Núcleo de Dirección Nacional del Partido Guatemalteco del Trabajo (National Directing Nucleus of PGT, a breakaway faction of the original PGT)
Psy-ops	Psychological Operations
Psywar	Psychological Warfare

SGA	Special Group Augmented
UN	United Nations
URNG	Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (Guatemalan National Revolutionary Union)
US	United States (of America)
USA	United States of America
USIA	United States Information Agency
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
UW	Unconventional Warfare
WH/4	The Cuba Task Force (Western Hemisphere Division Branch 4)
WHD	Western Hemisphere Division of the CIA

1 Introduction

Presentation of the Thesis

The Cold War resulted in massive changes in the world's power structures. The ascendancy of the United States of America (USA) and of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) would color world politics through the entirety of the Cold War. Especially for many poor third-world countries, the new world order would have massive consequences. The polarization between the superpowers led them to a fight for undecided countries' allegiance, using political, economic and military means. Both superpowers also founded their policies and existence on strong ideologies. The free market capitalism and democracy of the USA, and the Communist system of the USSR, both promised a better society, free of exploitation and imperialism. The combination of these ideas, the superpowers tendency of intervention, and preexisting conflicts around the world was explosive.

Although Latin America was far from the Soviet Union, it became the arena for many of the hotspots of the Cold War. The countries there were underdeveloped and had highly unequal internal distribution of wealth and property. They were also poor countries overall, but at the same time rich in natural resources. The domestic structures of the countries made the countries highly susceptible to the ideologies of the superpowers. The ideals of democracy and freedom inspired the population in the fight against repressive and undemocratic oligarchies. US interests were also high, due to the countries' strategic location, and resources. The conflict between domestic interests and US interests made the region a perfect breeding ground for classic Cold War confrontations.

Two of the countries that went through severe unrest in this period were Cuba and Guatemala. Guatemala became a prime example of how risky it was to go against US wishes during the Cold War. The 1954 coup against Guatemalan President Jacobo Árbenz Guzmán was important for several reasons. The operation, named PBSUCCESS, gave the USA great confidence in the potential of covert operations, and it showed Latin Americans that the USA did not accept even moderate reformists in the region. The coup did not mark the end point for US involvement in the country, however. A civil war broke out in Guatemala in 1960, which would last for the remainder of the Cold War, and a little more, until 1996. The left-wing insurgency that started the war against the military regime of Guatemala was inspired both by the democratic governments that ended with Árbenz, and the success of the Cuban

Revolution. The Cuban Revolution also showed the military regime and the USA how dangerous such an insurgency could be, and the Guatemalan state cracked down on with incredible violence. The conflict ended up costing more than 200 000 people their lives, on top of the countless tortured, disappeared and raped victims.

Cuba's revolution in 1959 pulled the country from relative obscurity into a world phenomenon. A group of domestic freedom fighters managed to topple a dictatorship, in the "backyard" of the USA. As Fidel Castro's regime did not fit into the template of how a Latin American country should behave, it was branded as communist and an enemy of the "Free World". The subsequent actions of the USA were based on their experience from Guatemala in 1954. This time however, the attempt at overthrowing a regime through a proxy army did not succeed. In part because the Castro regime had intimate knowledge of the 1954 coup. Whether Castro had been a communist before or not, it was irrelevant after the Bay of Pigs invasion in April of 1961, in which a US-led band of Cuban exiles failed in trying to invade the island in a naval attack. He declared the Revolution socialist and placed himself in the Soviet camp. The failure of the Bay of Pigs did not end US covert efforts at overthrowing Castro. Over the next year another US operation, code-named Mongoose, tried to overthrow the revolutionary regime through guerrilla activity. Fidel's open alignment with the Soviet Union, and his legitimate fears of further US intervention, partly enhanced by Operation Mongoose, paved the path for the placing of Soviet nuclear missiles on the island, as a deterrent for US aggression. The Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, where the USA and the USSR became locked up in thirteen-day confrontation over Soviet nuclear missiles secretly set up in Cuba, cemented the status quo between the USA and Cuba. In part of the deal that solved the confrontation, the Soviets had to remove the missiles and, the USA quietly indicated it would not invade the island. Although the US wish for ridding Cuba of Castro was not reduced, the risks of trying were too high, and US policy against Castro was less aggressive, but still harsh, for the remainder of the Cold War.

The conflicts represent two of the most appalling stories of the Cold War. The most brutal civil war in Latin America, and the perhaps closest the world has come to nuclear annihilation.

Research Question/Intention of Thesis

The thesis will treat strategies of insurgency, and how to combat them, in Cuba and Guatemala during the Cold War, specifically unconventional warfare (UW) and

counterinsurgency (COIN). Diplomatic, political and economic means of pressure will be included, but not focused on to the same degree. As such, the thesis will put more emphasis on the military aspects of the cases. That is not to say that other kinds of force were not important. Readers are encouraged to seek other literature that deals with these other aspects in order to get a more complete picture of the cases.

In the analytic chapter I will try to answer some concrete research questions. First, that chapter will assess each case of insurgency within an analytic framework. The cases will then be compared based on this analysis, which will help to answer the question why the 1954 coup against Guatemalan President Árbenz succeeded, while the US backed insurgency against Castro, and the Guatemalan insurgency against the military dictatorship, failed.

Delimitation

The portion of the thesis dealing with Cuba will examine the period from the Cuban Revolution in 1959, to the assassination of US President John F. Kennedy in 1963, focusing on the Bay of Pigs operation and Operation Mongoose. The empirical chapter on Guatemala will have a considerably longer timeframe, analyzing the 1954 coup d'état, and the civil war from 1960 till-1983.

In both the Guatemalan cases and the Cuban case, the period of US intervention did not end with the cutoff point of this thesis. In the case of Cuba, the delimitation was chosen based on the period with the most activity, and of the best availability of sources. While there has been plenty of sporadic insurgent activity against the Castro regime throughout the years it has not been tied to US policy through credible sources. Neither has it had the same scale as the operations of the early 1960s. It seems that the USA focused more on political, diplomatic and economic pressures after Kennedy's death, while Cuban exile groups have continued limited insurgent activities against the island. Whether this activity has been approved by the USA is impossible to say, but the USA has at the very least shown little interest in cracking down on what the Cuban government views as terrorists. Known exile activists lived largely untouched in Florida, with serious accusations towards them from the Cuban government.¹

¹ Sergio Alejandro Gómez, "Terrorist Posada Carrilles Dies Without Paying his Debt to Justice," Electronic newspaper, *Granma*, no. May 23, 2018 (Accessed April 23, 2019), <http://en.granma.cu/mundo/2018-05-23/terrorist-posada-carrilles-dies-without-paying-his-debts-to-justice>.

The coup against Árbenz includes the essential period of action, from the US decision to remove him from office to his fall. The formation of a new government, and the years prior to the civil war's beginning in 1960 is, however, only treated very briefly, as it is not clearly relevant to my research questions.

The delimitation on the Guatemalan Civil War case is based on the most intensive period of insurgent activity. From 1960 to 1983, the insurgency varied a lot in size and potency. The high point of it was in the early 80s, when it posed the biggest threat to the government, and controlled the most territory. This changed in the 1982-83 period, when bloody government offensives crushed the insurgent movements to a point where they were not able to fully recover. The civil war continued until the peace agreement in 1996, but the insurgent movement was severely weakened. For this thesis the period chosen provides plenty of data on the insurgency. And since the insurgency can be viewed as failed after 1983, the timeline serves the purposes of the thesis, as it gives sufficient information to explain the failure of the insurgency.

Sources

The thesis varies quite a bit in its use of sources on the different cases. For PBSUCCESS and the campaign against Castro primary sources have been used more extensively than in the treatment of the Guatemalan Civil war, which is mostly based on secondary literature. The main reasons for this are that the availability of primary sources is better with the two former cases, and that the timespan is so much more limited than in the Guatemalan Civil War, which makes an overview of primary sources more feasible.

The scholarship on the Cold War is vast, and Cuba and Guatemala represent two very well-known cases. Especially the Bay of Pigs has been thoroughly investigated in many books and research papers. Operation Mongoose has not been treated with the same thoroughness. The most important literature for this thesis concerning Cuba is contributed by Don Bohning's *The Castro Obsession*, Lawrence Freedman's *Kennedy's Wars*, Morris Morley's *Imperial State and Revolution*, and Michael Grow's *U.S. Presidents and Latin American Interventions*. These are thorough books on US policies against Castro.

Official government reports on the case has also been used extensively. These give both an interesting perspective and frankness, as they were not meant for public access, but rather for internal functions. They can however be problematic, as the interests and biases of the authors

can have interfered with the conclusions drawn from the data.² The main reports used are, the *Official History of the Bay of Pigs Operation*, a five-volume work on the operation by CIA's, then, chief historian Jack Pfeiffer, and Inspector General Lyman Kirkpatrick's *Survey of the Cuban Operation*.

The account of PBSUCCESS is based heavily on Nicholas Cullather's *Operation PBSUCCESS*. It is an excellent account of the operation that was ordered by the CIA, and therefore has the advantage of being based on classified documents. Andrew Fraser's article *Architecture of a Broken Dream* was also very helpful.

For the Guatemalan Civil War Jennifer Schirmer's *The Guatemalan Military Project*, and Michael McClintock's *The American Connection*, were the two main foundations. A report made by the Guatemalan Truth Commission on the civil war, *Memoria del Silencio* (Memory of Silence), has also given valuable insights.³

All three cases also relied on a slew of other articles and books, too many to be mentioned here, that filled out the gaps left by the previously mentioned works and gave greater insight into certain aspects. This is especially the case for the Guatemalan Civil War.

Despite the secretive nature of the two US-led insurrections, there is a lot of information available. This is partly thanks to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), which gives any citizen or organization the right and method to force government agencies into releasing documents. Although there are many limitations to this act, especially when it comes to matters concerning national security, many documents released have had great value for historians and others.⁴ The continuous publication of important documents through the *Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS) series is also very valuable. These two sources of government documents have been extremely helpful for the thesis, and the literature that the thesis is based on. Many of these documents, and the majority of the important/interesting ones, are available online through each separate agency's FOIA pages.

² Pfeiffer and Kirkpatrick's reports for instance differs in their view on blame for the Bay of Pigs failure. Pfeiffer sought to spread blame to other actors outside of the CIA, which was the main culprit according to Kirkpatrick. For more info: Peter Kornbluh, "Top Secret CIA 'Official History' of the Bay of Pigs: Revelations," The National Security Archive, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB355/>.

³ The version used for this thesis is the Spanish language one (4383 pdf pages), not to be confused with the much shorter English version that is based on the Spanish one. I have not been able to find the full version in English.

⁴ United States Department of Justice, "Frequently Asked Questions," <https://www.foia.gov/faq.html>.

There are also other hosts for important official and declassified documents around the web. Out of these, the National Security Archive (NSArchive) has been a very valuable provider of information.⁵ The NSArchive is a non-profit NGO that concerns itself with government openness and disseminating historical knowledge. They provide a huge database of collected documents, and are constantly pushing new FOIA-requests.

There are several issues connected to these cases in terms of sources. The easy availability, and sheer quantity makes it easy to become reliant on US sources. The government of Guatemala, and to an even larger degree the Cuban government are reluctant to share information. The same can be said about the insurgency movements in all cases. This lack of information from the other parties is frustrating, the Cuban case in particular. Two very interesting books written by Cuban authors, Fabián Escalante's *The Cuba Project*, and Jacinto Valdés' *Operation Mongoose*, bring up different perspectives, and serious accusations towards the USA. The books are based on US documents like the *FRUS* series, but also on highly classified Cuban government and security archives. The closed nature of the Cuban regime, and the closed nature of the archives make it hard to verify accusations brought up by the Cubans.

The US sources can also be problematic. All documents are vetted by officials of the government and/or the relevant agencies before release and can be held back if it is deemed necessary. We can therefore just imagine what kind of information is still being kept secret. Decisions and policy that was never put into writing to avoid a paper trail are also hard if not impossible to recover through the FOIA. And due to the secretive nature of the cases treated in this thesis, it is not unreasonable to assume that there are examples of this.

Definitions

As an aid to readers that are not so familiar with the themes of this thesis, as well as a means to explain my own views of the terms I use, I have defined some key concepts below. These include insurgency, terrorism, guerrilla warfare, special operations/warfare, counterinsurgency, unconventional warfare, covert and clandestine operations, and psychological warfare. These are all widely used terms in the kind of literature and sources this thesis is based on.

⁵ The National Security Archive, "Frontpage," <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/index.html>.

Insurgency:

[Is] a struggle between a nonruling group and the ruling authorities in which the former consciously employs political resources (organizational skills, propaganda, and/or demonstrations) and instruments of violence to establish legitimacy for some aspect of the political system it considers illegitimate.⁶

Terrorism:

[Is] a form of insurgent warfare conducted either by individuals or very small groups, involves the use of systematic, arbitrary, and amoral violence – for example, murder, torture, mutilation, bombing, arson, kidnapping, and hijacking – in order to achieve both long- and short-term political aims. Unlike conventional soldiers and guerrillas, terrorists direct their operations primarily against unarmed civilians rather than military units or economic assets.⁷

Guerrilla warfare: A method of warfare where small groups of insurgents take advantage of their mobility, and ability to vanish quickly, in order to harass their opponent. Guerilla warfare can often seem quite similar to terrorism in its operating methods, the main difference being their choice of targets. Where terrorism targets civilians, guerrilla warfare primarily target the security forces of their opponent, or economic targets of importance

Special Operations: Operations run by forces behind enemy lines, with the intent of organizing local resistance against the enemy. This includes a wide range of methods, including organizing guerrillas, sabotage, psychological and economic warfare, and similar.⁸

Counterinsurgency (COIN): The method of combatting insurgencies, using political, psychological, economic and military-means by the government.⁹ COIN can be considered a form of UW, but its purpose is to be a countermeasure to the strategy of UW.¹⁰

⁶ Bard E. O'Neill, William R. Heaton, and Donald J. Alberts, *Insurgency in the Modern World*, A Westview Special Study (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1980), 1.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁸ Michael McClintock, *Instruments of Statecraft: U.S. Guerrilla Warfare, Counterinsurgency, and Counter-Terrorism, 1940-1990* (New York and Toronto: Pantheon Books, 1992), 38.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 417.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 34.

Unconventional warfare (UW): Can be used to define both a kind of war, and different tactics. It encompasses the use of irregular forces (guerrillas for example) and subversion, in areas controlled by the enemy.¹¹

Covert and clandestine operations: Covert operations are meant to hide the sponsor of the operations, in order to be able to deny responsibility of blame, or to blame another actor. Clandestine operations are meant to be totally secret, and not to be noticed at all.¹²

Psychological warfare: A problematic term. Strictly speaking it is related to propaganda and other non-lethal way of altering enemy behavior. Historically though, the term has often been used interchangeably with unconventional warfare and special operations.¹³

¹¹ Ibid., 34, 41.

¹² Ibid., 140.

¹³ Ibid., 35-40.

2 Background Chapter on the Cold War

Why Did the USA Intervene?

The cases treated in this thesis happened during a remarkable period in history. The Cold War affected every country in the world in some way or another. The following chapter will give some background to the international context which affected the cases of the thesis profoundly. The cases are not fully understandable without the context of the Cold War, but it is not the intention to claim that the Cold War was the sole reason for these insurgencies.

The Cold War had a profound impact on the way conflicts around the world were thought about. It was possible to superimpose the dichotomy of capitalism vs communism on all kinds of struggles. This undermined the nuances of conflicts around the world, and downplayed the regional, national and local factors that caused them. This binary view was not only an issue of the past, but it is also an issue for present day students of the period. If we fail to be aware of the power of the dichotomy, we will misunderstand the nature and nuances of the conflicts.

One theory which explains the actions of the USA in the period is found in *The Global Cold War*, by Odd Arne Westad. He argues that the basic framework for US intervention was already in place before World War Two, and that the Cold War was a conflict between two ideologies of modernity. From an interventionist perspective, the USA had already started to get involved in other countries, especially in Latin America, and to an extent in Asia before World War Two. The ideological perspective and the fear of communism was also important before the war, particularly as a cause of the Russian Revolution. Westad argues that the main threat posed by Communism was that it was seen as a competing alternative to the modernity of the liberty and democracy the USA was based on. The European states, while becoming increasingly democratic, were still considered backward when it came to their colonial systems, which were not considered to be viable for the future. Communism on the other hand provided a modern alternative to the liberal democracy of the USA, an alternative with great appeal for the many nations still under old monarchial, dictatorial, and colonial rules. It promised a greater status and power for the masses, along with a promise of prosperity. As such it was an ideological enemy with great potential. These appeals were also found in the

fascist movements that appeared in Europe from the 1920s. And along with communism, they were viewed with deep skepticism in the USA.¹⁴

The devastation and death brought by World War Two proved how dangerous these alternative modernities were to the USA, the world, and liberal democracy. When the war was over, the USA had no intention of letting such ideas take root again. At the same time the surviving alternative modernity of the war, the Soviet Union, rose to the world stage as a superpower together with the USA. The old powers, Great Britain, France, and Germany did not have the potential to operate internationally as they had before. Thus, the USA were faced with one enemy which possessed an ideology which was a direct competitor to their own, and that had the resources for intervening around the world.

One component of the fear of communism was the idea that ideologies of modernity were especially attractive for nations in deep crisis, the prime example being the rise of Nazism in Germany during its great economic crisis. To avoid the spread of competing ideologies, and to promote their own, the US decision was therefore offer aid to European nations after the war. The Marshall Plan (formally the European Recovery plan or ERP) was in this sense a tool to combat the spread of communism in a war-torn Europe. This idea of aiding by promoting economic development was however not limited to Europe, and would later spread to other nations around the globe as a means of fighting communism. In Latin America this was exemplified with the Alliance for Progress under Kennedy.¹⁵

Although the USA had intervened militarily outside its borders prior to World War II, it had been mostly in the Western Hemisphere. As the USA rose as a superpower after World War Two, with a reinvigorated economy, and new technology developed as a result of the war, the potential for US intervention grew immensely. Combined with the increasing tensions between the two superpowers, and the fear of a Third World War, US military capabilities were greatly expanded across the globe.¹⁶

One of largest confrontations in the Cold War happened quite early in its existence, the Korean War. There were aspects of this conflict which particularly affected the cases treated in this thesis. One of them was the Domino Theory. The theory argued that communism

¹⁴ Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War : Third World Interventions and the Making of our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 16-19.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 20, 24.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 110-11, 68.

would spread throughout South-East Asia if not contained. The region was both underdeveloped and largely under colonial leaderships at the eve of the Cold War and had, by 1949, already suffered the “loss” of China to communism. The region was therefore considered especially vulnerable to Communism. This made stopping communist North Korea’s advance on South Korea imperative, so as not to lose the entire region.¹⁷

The idea of communism’s modernity as a threat, and the Domino Theory, go hand in hand. The Domino Theory was applied to Latin America, which was also considered vulnerable to communism. Losing one country to communism increased the risk of losing them all, as one revolution could inspire others, and even help militarily.

Losing Latin America to communism would be devastating. From a military strategic perspective, this could possibly bring Soviet military bases closer to the USA. It could also result in the loss of one of the USA’s most important sources of raw materials. During World War Two the USA bought resources worth \$2.4 billion from Latin America, out of its total wartime spending abroad of \$4.4 billion.¹⁸ Thus the loss of Latin America posed a grave threat to both the US economy, and its ability to fight a future large-scale war.

What we can take from this is that at the end of World War Two, the USA was convinced of the threat of communism as a competitor to its own ideology and political system. And that if communism was to get a foothold on the Latin American continent, the risk of the loss of the entire continent would increase exponentially, a loss that could not be afforded. This explains the fear which provoked the USA to intervene in Guatemala and Cuba. In the insurgencies directed at Árbenz and Castro it was feared that communists would take control, and steer the countries in the wrong direction something which turned out to be correct in the Cuban case.¹⁹

US intervention in the Guatemalan Civil War took a different form, as instead of replacing a regime, the USA sought to protect a regime. The seriousness of the Guatemalan insurgency was further increased by the successful revolution in Nicaragua in 1979, and the insurgency in

¹⁷ George.C. Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975* (McGraw-Hill, 2002), 20-21.; Robert J. McMahon, *The Cold War : a Very Short Introduction*, vol. 87, Very Short Introductions (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 70.

¹⁸ Stephen G. Rabe, *The Killing Zone : the United States Wages Cold War in Latin America* (New York: Oxford UP, 2012), 16.

¹⁹ Thomas E. Skidmore, Peter H. Smith, and James N. Green, *Modern Latin America*, 8th ed. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 104.

El Salvador.²⁰ Both contributed to the likelihood of a success for the insurgents in Guatemala.²¹

Long History of US Intervention in Latin America

As mentioned above, Westad argues that the framework for US intervention already existed prior to the Cold War. During the early twentieth century the US interest in the Caribbean region increased dramatically, due to new economic interests in the banana industry, and through the building of the Panama Canal. During the first three decades of the twentieth century the USA undertook more than thirty armed interventions in the region to protect its economic interests there, and perhaps even more importantly, the Panama Canal.²² What is important to draw from this, however, is that US intervention in the region was neither a new thing, nor necessarily tied to a communist threat.

Why Did the USA Intervene the Way they Did?

The Development of Unconventional Warfare and Counterinsurgency

The US decision of intervening the way it did was not chosen at random. Its involvement in Guatemala and Cuba was primarily based on strategies that were relatively new to the US military institutions. Below I will give a historical review of the developments which caused the USA to employ strategies of unconventional warfare, and counterinsurgency. It will deal with the period from the end of World War Two, to the administration of John F. Kennedy. The development of US UW and COIN capabilities did not stop with Kennedy, but it is not the intention to give a complete historical review of the development of doctrine in this thesis. The focus is instead on the decision to go with these strategies, which started under US President Harry S. Truman (1945-1953). President Dwight D. Eisenhower (1953-1961) and Kennedy (1961-1963) decided to further increase the capabilities within the field. As such, the basis was laid for PBSUCCESS, the campaign against Castro, and the US involvement in the Guatemalan Civil War.

Again, we can look to the Korean War to find that it served as an important influence on how the USA fought the Cold War. The Korean War was mainly a conventional war, with large

²⁰ Ibid., 94-95, 99-100.; Rabe, *The Killing Zone : the United States Wages Cold War in Latin America*, 164-72.

²¹ Virginia Garrard-Burnett, *Terror in the Land of the Holy Spirit: Guatemala Under General Efraim Rios Montt 1982-1983* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2010), 25.; Susanne Jonas, "Dangerous Liaisons: The U. S. in Guatemala," *Foreign Policy*, no. 103 (1996): 147.

²² Further discussion of this theme can be found in the Background Chapter on Guatemala pp 22-23.

numbers of troops on both sides. The massive use of US troops was costly, both economically and politically.²³ The high tension of the conflict, and the talk about using nuclear arms was also worrying. On top of this was the devastating effect the conflict had on the Korean peninsula, both in terms of the cost of human lives and suffering, and the material impact. 54,246 US soldiers died as a result of the war, and perhaps as much as two million civilians perished.²⁴ A conflict on such a scale and to such a cost was not appealing. This was an important reason behind the change in focus concerning how to fight the Cold War in the US government. From relying on more conventional military force, to one based on unconventional warfare through covert and clandestine operations.²⁵ Many scholars also argue that the Korean War turned the Cold War onto a more international track. As a result of the conflict the USA rapidly built up its global military capabilities, to be able to contain communism anywhere in the world.²⁶

In *Instruments of Statecraft*, Michael McClintock describes the evolution of US unconventional warfare and counterinsurgency during the Cold War. One of the main arguments of the book is that COIN and UW were based on each other.²⁷ That is to say, the development of doctrine based itself on an enemy considered similar in terms of tactics as the respective opponent supported by or created by the US military. The imagined and real guerrillas fought through COIN were therefore considered similar to US sponsored guerrillas, and US sponsored guerrillas were thought to fight methods similar to those found in US COIN doctrine. There are obviously differences as well, especially ideological differences. The development of UW and COIN are therefore intimately connected.²⁸

One of the main reasons for US interest in UW was the fear of another war in Europe, or World War III. During World War Two there had been a lot of activity behind enemy lines in Europe. It was the war that provoked the creation of US UW forces, with the creation of the precursor to the CIA. First as the Office of the Coordinator of Information in July 1941, later

²³ Warren I. Cohen, *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations: Volume 4, America in the Age of Soviet Power, 1945-1991* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 86-87.

²⁴ Maurice Isserman, *Korean War*, Rev. ed. ed. (United States: Chelsea House, 2010), 120.

²⁵ Nicholas Cullather, *Operation PBSUCCESS: The United States and Guatemala 1952-1954* (Washington, DC: Historic Staff, Center for the Study of Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency, 1994), 23.

²⁶ McMahon, *The Cold War : a Very Short Introduction*, 87, 51.

²⁷ McClintock, *Instruments of Statecraft: U.S. Guerrilla Warfare, Counterinsurgency, and Counter-Terrorism, 1940-1990*.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 51-52.

known as the Office of Strategic Services (OSS).²⁹ The organization dealt with matters of intelligence gathering, sabotage and the like during the war, and reached a high-point with 13 000 personnel at the end of 1944.³⁰

As the Cold War heated up in the early 1950s preemptive planning for another European war became prioritized. One of the ways to prepare for this was to organize latent guerrilla capabilities in Europe. The Lodge Bill of 1951 gave the US military the ability to recruit émigrés to their forces. These could aid in the creation of guerrilla networks in Europe pending a Soviet invasion, or nuclear war.³¹

The creation of the United Nations, and with it, the emergence of a stronger system of international law, also affected the development of UW. The consequences of unilateral intervention against other states became more costly, especially in terms of the loss of legitimacy in opposition to the communist bloc. This played on the one hand into the hand of the USA, as it reduced the threat of overt political and military intervention by the communist bloc and other enemies, on the other hand, it curtailed US power. The USA could not rely on its old way of intervening, like the numerous unilateral military interventions by the USA in the start of the twentieth century. One way to avoid international embarrassment was through the use of UW. The use of covert and clandestine operations, and the recruitment of proxy armies, removed the USA from immediate culpability and responsibility for interventions.³²

A little later than the emergence of the UW focus came the COIN focus as well. It was the Korean War in particular that showed the need for an efficient COIN doctrine. While the USA had experience fighting guerrillas from the wars against the Indigenous Americans, as well as in the Philippines after the invasion in 1898, they lacked a modern doctrine suited for modern conditions. While some focus was put on COIN as a result of the difficulties of fighting North Korean guerrillas during the war, the main focus remained with UW forces throughout the 1950s. The troops meant to organize for UW were named Special Forces, and were first deployed in Europe in 1953 to train local soldiers for resistance behind enemy lines, as well

²⁹ Ibid., 24.

³⁰ Ibid., 26.

³¹ Ibid., 44.

³² Ibid., 22-24.

as to deploy behind enemy lines in case of war. In 1956 the initiative spread to Asia, to prepare for a large scale war there.³³

In the aftermath of the Cuban Revolution, and the massive outbreak of Marxist insurgencies in Latin America, US COIN operations expanded massively in that region as well. Which is explained further below.

The Colonial System Crumbles

As mentioned previously, the end of the Korean War signaled a cool down in the Cold War, in terms of violent confrontation between the superpowers. The increase in nuclear capabilities of the nations, and the threat of mass retaliation from the USA was part of the reason.³⁴ The death of Joseph Stalin in 1953 also contributed to the cooling down, as the new leader of the Soviet Union, Nikita Khrushchev, sought to follow a more peaceful line than his predecessor.³⁵ Not until the Vietnam War would the USA get involved in a large scale war, and in that case it was a less conventional and more unclear conflict than that of Korea. As largescale interventions became less interesting for both of the superpowers, the appeal of smaller-scale conflicts rose.

One aspect of this was the increased activity of the USA, like their support of the 1953 coup of Mossadegh in Iran, and the 1954 Guatemalan coup.³⁶ At the same time the fear of the USSR doing the same increased. This way of thinking influenced President Kennedy, and had a great impact on his policy of intervention.³⁷ The appearance of this school of thought coincided with a period which made such actions by the Soviet Union more likely. The old colonial system of the European powers crumbled after World War Two. The imperial powers lacked the resources to keep their colonies secured due to the destruction suffered by the home countries during the war. This issue came at the same time as an increased demand for repression- and economic development in the colonies if the colonizers wanted to stay in power there.

³³ Ibid., 18-20, 30-34, 45-46.

³⁴ Cohen, *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations: Volume 4, America in the Age of Soviet Power, 1945-1991*, 86-88.

³⁵ Westad, *The Global Cold War : Third World Interventions and the Making of our Times*, 99.

³⁶ Cohen, *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations: Volume 4, America in the Age of Soviet Power, 1945-1991*, 108.

³⁷ McClintock, *Instruments of Statecraft: U.S. Guerrilla Warfare, Counterinsurgency, and Counter-Terrorism, 1940-1990*, 162.

Since before the turn of the century elites of the colonies had sent their children to the West for education. The students returned home, not just with an education, but also with a new understanding of the world, and the potential for developing their home country. The wealth, industry and sometimes democracy were powerful inspirational forces for leaders during the decolonization era, like Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh.³⁸ During the war the alliance of the United Nations also ran on a platform of national self-determination, and democracy, as opposed to the ideologies of the Axis powers, which were explicitly racist and colonial. In the Guatemalan background chapter, it will be shown how this rhetoric had an important effect, in many countries influenced by an imperial power.³⁹ These factors had a profound influence on nationalist movements that developed in the Third World. In many cases however, these factors were downplayed, both intentionally and by ignorance in the context of the Cold War. There was an alternative modernity in Communism, which certainly influence many movements, but was also wrongly imposed on other movements.

As independence movements appeared in Asia and Africa, and in a different form in Latin America, it became imperative for the USA to have a way to combat potential threats to its power and its regional and global vision. The movements rarely possessed great economic resources and had to rely on those they did have, manpower and popular support. Where conflicts with colonial powers could not be solved by peaceful means and diplomacy, guerrilla warfare was thus a natural option.

The National Security Doctrine

The National Security Doctrine (NSD) is a term used to describe a general trend in most Latin American countries, beginning in the 1960s. It is a set of ideas and strategies that was promoted by the military establishments in the area at the time, as well as the United States.

The emergence of the National Security Doctrine is connected to changes in the military situation in Latin America over the first decades of the Cold War. The creation of the Organization of the American States in 1948, and the reduction in the external threat of Soviet military power in the region in the late 1950s, made the region less susceptible to military threats from the communist bloc and from each other.⁴⁰ Defense against outside forces was not so pertinent anymore. However, that the direct Soviet military threat was not regarded as

³⁸ Westad, *The Global Cold War : Third World Interventions and the Making of our Times*, 74-79.

³⁹ Background Chapter on Guatemala pp. 25-27.

⁴⁰ Rabe, *The Killing Zone : the United States Wages Cold War in Latin America*, 27.

imminent did not mean that the general threat of communism was reduced. The transference of power from oligarchies to democracies around Latin America in the period after World War Two had put many reformist politicians in power. This threatened the status quo of social and economic elites, and was viewed by many in the military establishment as a weakness that the communists could capitalize on. The Cuban Revolution in 1959 further increased the paranoia about Communist takeovers, and it did, indeed, lead to a wave of new Marxist insurgencies in the region.⁴¹ The most prominent period of the National Security Doctrine started with the numerous military coups throughout Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s, including the coups in Brazil (1964), Argentina (1966) and Chile (1963), and many more.⁴² It can be argued that Guatemala was an early adopter of the National Security Doctrine. The governments that ruled Guatemala, after the successful coup against Árbenz in 1954, were focused on stopping the emergence of an internal communist threat, which is in line with the NSD.⁴³ Repression of the left and the focus on internal security did, however, increase during the 1960s, and represent a more classic version of the doctrine.

These were the main reasons for several military coups around Latin America in the 1960s. The military dictatorships that appeared shared many ideas, which are collectively described as the National Security Doctrine. In general, the doctrine saw the military as the best tool for protecting the country against communist threats, and usually involved an aspect of economic development of some sort, to reduce the grievances that were thought to create conflict.⁴⁴

The doctrine is referred to as a US invention by scholars.⁴⁵ This is not surprising, as the Doctrine coincided with US political aims in the region at the time. The move from external to internal defense, and economic development, were promoted by the USA, particularly by the Kennedy administration. This led to increased military aid and support of military dictatorships in Latin America, and the development of the Alliance for Progress. The Alliance for Progress was an economic plan for Latin America under Kennedy, much like the

⁴¹ McClintock, *Instruments of Statecraft: U.S. Guerrilla Warfare, Counterinsurgency, and Counter-Terrorism, 1940-1990*, 155-58.; Thomas M. Leonard, "Search for Security: The United States and Central America in the Twentieth Century," *The Americas* 47, no. 4 (1991): 484-85.

⁴² Hal Brands, *Latin America's Cold War* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2010), 72, 119.

⁴³ Leonard, "Search for Security: The United States and Central America in the Twentieth Century."

⁴⁴ Brands, *Latin America's Cold War*, 70-82.

⁴⁵ Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico, "Guatemala Memoria del Silencio: Conclusiones y Recomendaciones: Capítulo cuarto: Conclusiones," (Ciudad de Guatemala 1999), <http://www.centrodememoriahistorica.gov.co/descargas/guatemala-memoria-silencio/guatemala-memoria-del-silencio.pdf> (Accessed 09.01.2019). 24.

Marshall Plan had been for Europe after World War Two.⁴⁶ Its intention was to reduce the causes of unrest and insurgency.⁴⁷

That the policies of the USA and the military dictatorships coincided is not ground enough to say the USA invented the National Security Doctrine. The motivations of the military dictatorships were enough in themselves to explain its development. It should also be noted that while the term is used concerning many different cases and countries, they were not identical. There were important differences between countries, concerning the degree of repression of the left, and the strategy for economic development.⁴⁸

Guatemala offers a strong case of the rise of the National Security Doctrine. The elements of internal defense, and economic development were both important, as will be showcased in the empirical chapter on Guatemala. The Guatemalan case does however stand out, in terms of how early the military dictatorship came to power.

Fighting Subversion and Undesirable Regimes

The capabilities of COIN and UW were used relentlessly for the remainder of the Cold War. The cases treated in this thesis are just some examples of how these intervention tactics were employed. The UW methods used in PBSUCCESS and against Castro inspired further similar campaigns against undesirable regimes, such as those in Brazil in 1964 and in Chile in 1973.⁴⁹ These two cases involved governments that were considered too radical for the liking of the USA. That is not to say that the USA was solely to blame for these cases, or was indispensable for the success of them. The cases were primarily a result of domestic military forces' unhappiness with the regimes, and both in Brazil and Chile the burden of the coup was carried by their respective militaries.⁵⁰

Counterinsurgency capabilities were increased vastly under President Kennedy. This was due to his own fascination with Unconventional Warfare, but also due to the impact of the Cuban Revolution. The Revolution inspired a generation of people, both in and outside Latin America. Throughout the Cold War the USA sent military aid and trainers to Latin American

⁴⁶ The groundwork for the program was initiated under Eisenhower: Rabe, *The Killing Zone : the United States Wages Cold War in Latin America*, 87.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 86-88.

⁴⁸ Brands, *Latin America's Cold War*, 78-82.

⁴⁹ Westad, *The Global Cold War : Third World Interventions and the Making of our Times*, 149-52.

⁵⁰ Skidmore, Smith, and Green, *Modern Latin America*, 286-90, 323-26.

countries to help them combat the threat of insurgencies. Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, Venezuela and Uruguay, all had to fight domestic insurgencies.⁵¹

It was within this context that the USA gave military aid to the military dictatorship of Guatemala. The success of the Cuban Revolution, and the threat the insurgency in Guatemala posed a threat to the stability of the region as a whole, prompted the USA to act. Guatemala was thus not a unique case in terms of a US decision to intervene. It was rather just one of many countries faced with a problem of insurgency. What made it unique, however, was the massive and brutal violence which resulted from the civil war.

Conclusion

While the following chapters will focus more on the unique circumstances which created the situations, this chapter has put them into a wider, international context. Although the conflicts are national in their origin, they were also shaped and inspired by the Cold War, and cannot be fully understood without an understanding of this connection.

The Cold War also affected US choices when it came to methods employed in foreign intervention. The low price of special warfare in terms of money, men and political damage, both international and domestic, was a deciding factor in this choice.

⁵¹ Timothy P. Wickham-Crowley, *Guerrillas and Revolution in Latin America: A Comparative Study of Insurgents and Regimes Since 1956* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992), 79.

3 Background Chapter on Guatemala

Introduction

To get a better understanding and overview of how the Cold War affected Guatemala it is necessary to look at its past. The development the country went through, from the liberal revolution of 1870 up to the fall of Árbenz, will be dealt with in this background chapter. It will show both how changes in Guatemalan society led to the two relatively progressive governments during the “Ten Years of Spring”, and how US policy towards the country developed in relation to the domestic changes.

From the Liberal Revolution to Ubico

Economic and Political Shifts

As was the case with many other countries in Latin America, Guatemalan politics after independence from Spain was characterized by a battle for power between liberal and conservative forces. In 1870 this culminated in a liberal revolution in Guatemala, and a liberal hold on power until the fall of the dictator Jorge Ubico Castañeda in 1944.⁵²

The liberal platform sought to change and modernize Guatemala, primarily through economic liberal reforms, while retaining control by the elites.⁵³ Over the following decades the government introduced several reforms with the goal of encouraging coffee production for export. Large-scale coffee production required three key prerequisites to be met: a sufficient pool of laborers, good infrastructure to deliver the goods to markets, and a credit system that could finance the coffee plants which took several years to grow to maturity. Owing to the fact that Guatemala’s economy was based on large *fincas* (estates/ranches) and subsistence agriculture, it lacked all these prerequisites. In 1877 the government enacted the *Reglamento de Jornaleros* (day-laborer law) which gave coffee producers the right to recruit laborers from the large indigenous population to work on their plantations, even against their own will. Infrastructure projects were initiated, financed with taxes, government bonds and forced labor from the peasantry. The road network was thus improved, and a railroad system started to take form. The government also attempted to start a national bank which could provide credit for farmers. These attempts did not succeed, but private banks appeared in the latter half of

⁵² Skidmore, Smith, and Green, *Modern Latin America*, 82-84.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 84.

the 1870s. By 1880 coffee constituted 92 percent of Guatemala's export, with Britain as the biggest trading partner.⁵⁴

In the 1890s another export crop appeared, the banana. Although the banana plantations and companies became huge in Guatemala, and Central America in the late 1800s and the first half of the 1900s, they had a limited effect on the local economies. Banana production required a lot of capital. In order to finance the infrastructure required to get bananas to market quickly. Smaller companies struggled with this, and most banana plantations in Guatemala ended up in the hands of the US owned United Fruit Company (UFCO from here on). They had the means to build their own railway, cooling storage, port and ships to get the bananas to the USA before they perished. Due to corruption and incompetence the UFCO paid little taxes. On top of that the wages paid to their laborers were only usable in company stores, which sold imported goods. Thus, local business earned nothing on the company's presence.⁵⁵

Even though democratic principles were an important aspect of liberal ideology at the time, they did not impact Guatemala much. De facto dictatorship was the norm until 1944.

Elections did occur, but with severely limited suffrage. Politics were very much based on personal relations, rather than political or institutional ties. Prior to the liberal revolution the country did not have a proper army, but instead several groups of armed gangs. The shifting loyalty of these gangs had made Guatemala prone to fighting between different strongmen, which weakened the state. Guatemala's two first liberal presidents, Miguel García Granados (1871-1873), and Justo Rufino Barrios (1873-1885), were instrumental in forming a proper national army. In 1873 they established the *Escuela Politécnica*, a military academy, staffed by Spanish and French officers. This was the first step in making the army a national one.⁵⁶

Although the army was united, it was not a modern army by any means. The army was first and foremost a tool for the sitting president of the country, to secure his power and repress unwanted activities. The army was underfunded, underpowered and underorganized.

Promotions were not given based on a set of rules or norms, but rather based on the discretion

⁵⁴ One should take into account that Guatemala did not really have a big export sector before the growth of the coffee industry. *The Cambridge History of Latin America: Volume 5: c.1870 to 1930*, vol. 5, The Cambridge History of Latin America (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 201-10.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 210-15.

⁵⁶ Stefan Karlen, "Make the Escuela Politécnica as near like West Point as possible." Jorge Ubico and the Professionalization of the Guatemalan Military, 1931 - 1944," *Ibero-amerikanisches Archiv* 20, no. 1/2 (1994): 122-23.

of the president. Promotions were therefore given on personalistic criteria, and politically strategic decisions by the president.⁵⁷ This naturally undermined the quality of the army, as higher positions were not necessarily given to those best suited. It also led to a bloating of the upper ranks.

Due to its reliance on coffee as a main export crop, the Guatemalan economy was prone to economic crisis as prices fluctuated. The fall in coffee prices from 1929 in correspondence with the Great Depression made the coffee oligarchy demand a stronger leader, who could help them through the economic downturn, and avoid social chaos.⁵⁸ The choice was Jorge Ubico.

US Policy

In the period previously treated US-Guatemalan relations were relatively limited, both economically and politically. US activity in the region increased with the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt (1901-1909). During his presidency the US strategic interests in the region increased as a result of increased economic interactions, and the building of the Panama Canal. The new interests were however vulnerable to the influence of European nations. Many countries in the region had massive debt to European banks, and military invasions of the countries were threatened in case of default on debt. This inspired a corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, referred to as the Roosevelt Corollary. The Monroe Doctrine of 1823 stated that the USA did not accept further European colonies on the continent.⁵⁹ Roosevelt added to the doctrine by stating that the USA intended to police the region with its military to keep it stable politically and economically, and keep European powers from intervening. This was the basis for more than 30 military interventions in the Caribbean during the early twentieth century. At the same time the US government also encouraged US banks to buy up the loans the Caribbean nations had to European countries, to reduce their influence in the region.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Ibid., 123.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 112.; *The Cambridge History of Latin America: Volume 7: Latin America since 1930: Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean*, vol. 7, The Cambridge History of Latin America (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 216.

⁵⁹ Skidmore, Smith, and Green, *Modern Latin America*, 434.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 92.; Leonard, "Search for Security: The United States and Central America in the Twentieth Century," 479.

These new US interests demanded greater regional stability. US economic investments in the region had increased from \$6 million to \$47 million between 1897 and 1924.⁶¹ These investments needed protection. Well-functioning banana plantations required a steady work force, with minimal revolts. If the governments of Central America could not ensure this American companies risked losing harvests and capital investments. There was also a fear in the USA that a local insurrection in the region could spread to the other countries. The Panama Canal, which was finished in 1914, was a massive improvement in international transport as well as communications. It cut the shipping time and distance considerably for boat traffic between the US West- and East Coast, as they did not have to go all the way around the south coast of Argentina and Chile. It also improved the efficiency and mobility of the US Navy in the same way. Political stability in Panama was therefore essential for US economic and military interests.⁶²

Guatemala was also affected by the new US policy. Even though the government mostly complied with US wishes, the USA intervened militarily in 1920 to prevent a nationalist coming to power. And in other cases of transfer of power the USA made its voice heard. Guatemala was, however, saved from long military occupations like the ones in Nicaragua, where they had troops stationed nearly uninterrupted from 1909 until 1933.⁶³ As Guatemala faced a possible crisis at the end of the 30s the USA also involved themselves in the ascension of Jorge Ubico to the presidency.⁶⁴

Ubico's Reign: 1931-1944

Economic and Political Shifts

When Ubico took over the presidency in 1931 the Guatemalan economy was in an uncertain state. Coffee prices had begun to fall in 1929 as a result of the Great Depression. Coffee exports fell from \$34 million in 1927 to \$9.3 million in 1932. This meant that the income of the coffee plantation owners was severely reduced. Lacking sufficient income, they might not be able to service their debt, and risked that their creditors might take over their land. One way to make up for the fall in prices was to increase production. This required more laborers

⁶¹ Stephen M. Streeter, *Managing the Counterrevolution : the United States and Guatemala, 1954-1961* (Athens: Ohio university press, 2000), 8.

⁶² Leonard, "Search for Security: The United States and Central America in the Twentieth Century," 477-79.

⁶³ Streeter, *Managing the Counterrevolution : the United States and Guatemala, 1954-1961*, 10-11.; Rabe, *The Killing Zone : the United States Wages Cold War in Latin America*, 8.

⁶⁴ Karlen, ""Make the Escuela Politécnica as near like West Point as possible." Jorge Ubico and the Professionalization of the Guatemalan Military, 1931 - 1944," 112.

however, which were difficult to find. As prices on coffee fell, so did the wages of the coffee laborers. The old system of debt-peonage could not deal with the crisis, as a key motivator for doing labor was to service one's debt, and with lower wages it made less sense to work at the plantations. Ubico's answer to this was to put in place a vagrancy system. The new system stated that peasants who farmed less than 3 hectares of farmland had to work 100-150 days a year on either a *finca* or in the service of the government building roads.⁶⁵

The Guatemalan state also had a lot of loans abroad and were affected by the fall in tax income. To avoid financial chaos Ubico started an austerity policy by cutting 30 percent of state expenditures and defaulting on the country's debt. The increased social tensions that emerged from the economic crisis was met with increased repression by government forces. And a law that gave landowners immunity from crimes committed while protecting their own property, increased the landowner's potential for repression.⁶⁶

Despite the increased social tensions due to the economic crisis, it was not the middle class, nor the labor movement that was decisive for Ubico's fall in 1944. Neither of these were strong enough, nor had the leadership to do so alone. Instead it was the institution from which Ubico came from that would stab him in the back, the Guatemalan military.

When Ubico came to power the Guatemalan military was, as has been mentioned earlier, in a sorry state. It was a poorly organized institution, riddled with corruption and nepotism. This changed dramatically under Ubico's rule, as a new generation of professional officers emerged, eager to contest the power of the old guard. The change had its origin in a US military mission to Guatemala in 1929. Their mission was twofold: to make an assessment of the military, and to instruct cadets at the *Politécnica* in physical exercise, drill and target practice. Ubico was impressed with the work of the Americans and asked for further help in modernizing the army after a US model. This led to the USA supplying a director for the military academy until 1945. Not only did the Yankees provide expertise not found in Guatemala; this practice also made sure that the director of the institute would not get involved in the domestic politics of Guatemala.⁶⁷ Ubico's motivation for modernizing the

⁶⁵ *The Cambridge History of Latin America: Volume 7: Latin America since 1930: Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean*, 7, 216.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*; Karlen, ""Make the Escuela Politécnica as near like West Point as possible." Jorge Ubico and the Professionalization of the Guatemalan Military, 1931 - 1944," 112. (Karlen claims a 2/3 cut, while Cambridge claims a 30 percent cut.)

⁶⁷ Karlen, ""Make the Escuela Politécnica as near like West Point as possible." Jorge Ubico and the Professionalization of the Guatemalan Military, 1931 - 1944," 129-33.

army was to increase discipline and reduce the army's involvement in politics. The army was to stay within its realm of military matters. Such a development might have made the army less of a threat to Ubico's rule in theory, but in practice it had the opposite effect.⁶⁸

The graduates from the *Politécnica* under US supervision were of a different caliber than the old establishment of the army. They went through rigorous training, not only physically and in terms of military strategy, but were also taught social sciences. The school also created a strong unity among the officers not found in the old army. As mentioned earlier, the army of Guatemala had been a personalistic tool for whoever ruled Guatemala. The higher officer posts were given based on personalistic preferences, not abilities nor merit. The new graduates were appalled by this as they were placed in the regular army. Often their expertise far superseded that of their superiors, and the culture of corruption and nepotism collided with their ideal of a disciplined army that they had been taught. Another way to see the transformation and difference in the generations of the army is the philosophical basis for its existence. The old army's allegiance was personal, the troops were tied to the army through a personal obligation to their superiors. The new cadets on the other hand had a more nationalistic view of the army. They thought of the army as more of an institutional end in itself, and also a means to protect the country.⁶⁹

There were other aspects that provoked the army to revolt in 1944. One of them was how Ubico effectively made the military subservient to the National Police. Ubico feared the potential power of the army, were they to go against him, and he therefore chose the National Police as the elite institution for repression. The army in turn became a tool for them to use. This did not sit well with many in the military. Another important aspect was the lack of funding the army received. And much of the funding was given as salaries for the top echelon of officers, not the new graduates. As tensions increased the Ubico regime remained oblivious of the discontent, due to the harsh repression of any political activity within the army.⁷⁰

In June 1944 student protests broke out, for increased autonomy for the San Carlos University. The protest did not arrive out of thin air. The Guatemalan middle class was pressured by the crisis in the coffee sector, which had not yet ended, and the rising prices of imports due to the war. The war also brought with it new ideas, that were very much the

⁶⁸ Ibid., 118-20.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 139-42.

opposite of Ubico's. Siding with the allies in the war made for a public-relations nightmare for Ubico, as the allies started to heavily promote democracy in the face of fascism. At the same time the dictator in El Salvador, General Martínez, fell to public pressure. It showed both the potential of the people, and that the USA was not protecting old dictators as it used to. With much of Guatemalan society against him, Ubico decided to step down. He did however hand power over to another general, Fredrico Ponce, and thus the system did not change. The change in leadership bought the old system some time, but when extremely fraudulent elections were held in October the same year, its days were numbered. A group of young officers, graduates from the *Politécnica*, led by majors Francisco Arana and Jacobo Árbenz, took power. They promised free and fair elections.⁷¹

US Policy

This period in Guatemalan history coincides with the "Good Neighbor" policy of the United States. After fighting bitterly for constitutional rule in Central American states since the start of the century, the USA changed policy from the late 1920s. US government officials had come to view a heavy interventionist policy as failing in its aim of creating political stability. This factor, combined with domestic pressures to stop the interventions and the reduced threat posed by European nations due to their preoccupation with domestic issues after World War I, reoriented US policy away from armed intervention. Thus, throughout most of the 1930s, intervention was off the table. Focus was instead put on creating a more amicable relationship with the Central American nations. US-Guatemalan relations were relatively good in the period. The US military mission to Guatemala was a way to keep control while being invited by the country to do so. In fact, the USA planned to withdraw the director of the *Politécnica* in the mid-1930s, but Ubico threatened to give the post to some other country's military, and so they stayed.⁷²

The USA chose not to intervene as Germany pushed trade in the region in the late 1930s. Germany managed to oust Britain as the main trading partner to Guatemala in 1938. It was also worrisome that Ubico, like many dictators in the region at the time, was deeply inspired by the fascist leaders and ideology of Europe. When Germany invaded Poland however the

⁷¹ *The Cambridge History of Latin America: Volume 7: Latin America since 1930: Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean*, 7, 217-19.

⁷² Karlen, ""Make the Escuela Politécnica as near like West Point as possible." Jorge Ubico and the Professionalization of the Guatemalan Military, 1931 - 1944," 132.; Leonard, "Search for Security: The United States and Central America in the Twentieth Century," 482-83.

situation changed, and Guatemala sided with the USA. In return for fighting fascist propaganda spread by Germans in Guatemala, confiscating German land, sending Germans to internment in the USA and providing the USA with military bases to protect the Panama Canal, the USA took over the trade that Guatemala lost to the Germans.⁷³

Ten Years of Spring: 1944-1954

Economic and Political Shifts.

The first free election in Guatemalan history was held in 1945 and was won by a landslide by the teacher Juan José Arévalo. He was not affiliated with a party, but was a strong proponent of democracy and political rights. During his presidency the civil- and political rights of Guatemalan citizens were widely expanded. Suffrage was extended — although it did not include illiterate women — municipal elections were held, and a labor code was put in place by 1947. The old vagrancy law was abolished. Guatemalan laborers were allowed to organize and bargain collectively for the first time. The rights were limited, however, especially for workers in rural areas, who had fewer rights than those in the cities. Despite workers gaining new powers there were surprisingly few strikes. One reason for this is that the world economy was improving, and coffee prices rose. The increased income due to this helped to limit the effect the abolition of the vagrancy law had. The government of Guatemala (GOG) was more limited in what they could accomplish in terms of social programs. Their available funds were low, and gave little potential for improving the low literacy rate and lack of healthcare in the country.⁷⁴

There were two popular possible successors to Arévalo as president, the two leaders of the coup against the old regime, Arana and Árbenz. Arana was chief of the armed forces under Arévalo, but did not agree with the massive political shifts happening in Guatemala under his rule. It is likely that Arana planned a coup against Arévalo, but it was cut short by his assassination. Parts of the army believed the man responsible for the assassination was Árbenz, at the time minister of defense. This led to a massive revolt by parts of the army, which resulted in many deaths, and was only stopped by a general strike. The assassination of Arana marks an important shift for Guatemalan politics, as he was the most important

⁷³ Leonard, "Search for Security: The United States and Central America in the Twentieth Century," 483-84.

⁷⁴ *The Cambridge History of Latin America: Volume 7: Latin America since 1930: Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean*, 7, 220-22.

conservative challenger to the regime. Árbenz on the other hand was situated more to the left.⁷⁵

Árbenz won the election and took office in March of 1951. His time in office was marked by the government getting more involved in the economy. He built a public road to the Caribbean port, Puerto Barrio, and constructed a state-owned electric plant. Both initiatives competed with US owned companies, with ownership of the railroad and an electric company. The most iconic and far-reaching, if destabilizing, policy of his time in office was the land reform. Enacted on June 27, 1952 the land reform sought to improve the vastly uneven distribution of Guatemalan farmland. Two percent of the population owned 74 percent of the farmable land. According to Árbenz, the goal was to create a large sector of small capitalist farmers. Measures were also taken not to unnecessarily disrupt the farms that existed. Outside of the land taken from UFCO, less than 4 percent of private land was affected, and 88 000 families gained their own farmland. It helped that almost a third of the land was owned by the government, much of it a result of the confiscations of German land during World War Two.⁷⁶

The land reform did not sit well with the oligarchy, nor with the UFCO. Despite its limited effect on their land, the reform was undoubtedly far too radical for the conservative elite. The UFCO felt the same way, and they were also the biggest loser of the reform, losing as much as 15 percent of their land. Due to having set the tax value of their land low for several years they also got little compensation. In the next chapter I will discuss the hypothesis that the expropriation of UFCO land was the deciding factor for the US intervention in the country. I conclude that it was not.

The remaining period of Árbenz' rule will be a matter for the next chapter.

US Policy

Despite the US overt support of democracy, and their self-imposed role as the protector of the free world, they were not too happy about the development in Guatemala. Relations began to sour already under Arévalo's presidency. His political reforms were considered too radical,

⁷⁵ Ibid., 223.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 226.

and gave too much power to unions. This led to a ban on weapon sales to the country in 1948.

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It was however the assassination of Arana and the election of Árbenz that made the country an enemy. It proved to the USA that Guatemala was on a leftward course. The timing of this development was unfortunate, as the Cold War was intensifying.

Conclusion

In the 1870 to 1954 time period Guatemala went through drastic changes, both economically and politically. The liberal revolution in 1870 was essential for Guatemala's entrance into the world market for the first time as a free nation. But the same reforms that made big scale coffee and banana production possible, also increased the strain on the lives of Guatemala's poorest. It also made the Guatemalan economy much more affected by swings in the international economy. The threat of financial chaos that the Great Depression posed on Guatemala culminated in the election of Jorge Ubico, whose politics increased social tensions and paved the way for a reorganized military. Not only did this eventually mean the end to his reign, but it would also change the way Guatemalan politics worked, shifting from personalistic to institutional. This likely increased the stability of the army during the civil war, as the institution of the army was prioritized over personalistic politics.

The "Ten Years of Spring" following Ubico opened up Guatemalan society in a way never witnessed before in the country. Democratic and social rights enjoyed during this time would inspire a new generation of Guatemalans, by giving them a taste of a freer society.

In the next chapter we will see how these new thoughts would affect Guatemalan society when democracy was shut down. Mixed with the ideologies and thought patterns of the Cold War, political convulsions led to a long and bloody civil war.

The US role also changed drastically throughout this period. Its involvement in Guatemala was not so much dependent on the situation in this country in particular, but rather a result of a regional strategy. The creation of the Panama Canal, and increased US investments in Central America in the early 1900s gave the USA a reason to be worried about the stability of the region. By 1944 the USA had displaced Germany and Britain as the leading trade partner

⁷⁷ Ibid., 223-25.

of Guatemala and was also intimately involved in the development of the Guatemalan military.

4 Empirical Chapter on Guatemala

Introduction

This chapter will treat the coup against Árbenz, and the Guatemalan Civil War. It will focus on how these conflicts were fought by both sides. The previous chapter helps to show how the 1954 coup and the civil war are connected through historic patterns in Guatemala. The fear of the spread of communism grew to new heights as the Cold War ramped up. As in many other countries with a high degree of inequality, the ideas of communism appealed to the impoverished peasantry, but perhaps to an even greater extent, terrified the elites. The Cold War discourse also gave the authorities a reason to crack down on all kinds of dissent. Any kind of thought that did not fit the regime could be labeled as communism, whether it was or not.

The Ten Years of Spring was an anomaly in Guatemalan history. The liberation of Guatemalan society was short lived, and the country returned to its “normal” condition of having a repressive regime. But the Ten Years’ very occurrence showed what was possible, and it inspired a generation of Guatemalans. Combined with the Cuban Revolution proving that a small guerrilla force could topple a dictatorship, it is not surprising that violence broke out. The result was more than 200 000 dead over the next 36 years, with thousands disappeared, tortured, raped and orphaned.

The USA feared the spread of communism as much as the Guatemalans. US support should not be overestimated, however. It is impossible to give a definite answer to how the situation would have developed without US involvement. But it is not unlikely based on his lack of support from the military, that Árbenz would have been deposed eventually, albeit a few years later. The same can be said about the civil war. The underlying conditions that could start a civil war were present, and US involvement in Guatemala was not necessary for the start of the war. However, this thesis will not focus much on such counterfactual speculations, but rather on facts.

This chapter deals with two insurgencies. First the USA backed insurgency against Árbenz, referred to as Operation PBSUCCESS, which caused the Guatemalan military to turn on the country’s president, and unseat him. The second insurgency is that of the Guatemalan Civil War. From 1960 to 1996 the country was in a constant state of violence, at times genocidal. The insurgency varied greatly in scope and composition over time, but it was fighting against

the Guatemalan government in some way over all these years. Due to space and time limitations, however, this thesis will only treat the civil war from 1960 to 1983, and not until its end in 1996.

Operation PBFORTUNE

As shown in the previous chapter there was some involvement from the United States government in Guatemala prior to the Cold War. The US interest in the country, and the region for that matter, got a whole new perspective with the new world order that emerged from the ashes of World War Two. The threat of communism had affected the US perception of the world for decades already. With the Soviet Union stepping onto the international stage as a true superpower this fear was exaggerated, often it became difficult to separate local and national changes in policy from the alleged conspiracy of international communism.

This failure to distinguish between the two from the US side has been criticized by many a scholar, particularly in the case of Guatemala. US perception did have some merit, though. Parallel with change in the US perception of the world, was a similar process of change among many people around the globe. For many people living in dire circumstances some of the ideas propagated by the ideology of socialism resonated strongly. The apparent success of the ideology in the USSR, Eastern Europe and China, was proof of the possibilities of achieving change, even in ancient systems of repression. But as the socialist bloc represented one idea of how the world could be, so did the “Free World”, with the United States as the prime example. Despite receiving its fair share of criticism, the USA was and is the strongest symbol of democracy and self-determination. But although many movements were inspired by the example of the USA, this did not mean that those movements were not viewed as too radical by the very country they admired.

There are two main theories as to why the USA decided that they needed to get rid of the Árbenz government. One centers on the influence of the United Fruit Company (UFCO), the most prominent fruit company of the time. According to the theory UFCO lobbied the USA into believing that Árbenz was a communist, and that his policies were a great threat to US economic interests. They did this because they were very unhappy with the changes made under both president Arévalo and Árbenz, which included labor and land-reforms. In this

theory the lobbying of the UFCO was the deciding factor in the USA deciding to oust Árbenz.⁷⁸

The other theory centers on a fear in the US government surrounding the developments in Guatemala under the two presidents previously mentioned. Especially concerning was president Árbenz's strong connection with the Guatemalan Communist party. The USA believed that the government was controlled by communists, and that they were in cahoots with the Soviets in a conspiracy to transform the country into a communist beachhead in the Western Hemisphere.⁷⁹

Although the UFCO theory is quite popular, especially due to its propaganda value for critics of US imperialism, as it shows a USA that would do anything to protect the economic interests of its domestic companies, even by going as far as to disturb another nation's right to self-determination. As documents have been declassified this theory seems to have become less common in scientific papers. The UFCO did have good connections in Washington, and they did try to lobby the government into action against the Guatemalan government (GOG). But their concern alone was not enough to push the government into action.⁸⁰ That is not to say that the land and labor reforms that affected the UFCO were considered as harmless by the USA. They were a part of a bigger picture of activities that convinced the USA that Árbenz was a threat to the stability of the region. The mere acceptance of the communist party in Guatemala as a legal one by Árbenz, and its inclusion in his government, although in a limited way, posed a threat by example. So was the deconstruction of the old power structures of the more or less feudal *finca* system, which would leave a power vacuum ready to be exploited by subversive groups.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Dirk Kruijt, "Guatemala's Political Transitions, 1960s-1990s," *International Journal of Political Economy* 30, no. 1 (2000): 11.

⁷⁹ Streeter, *Managing the Counterrevolution : the United States and Guatemala, 1954-1961*, 7.

⁸⁰ Andrew Fraser, "Architecture of a Broken Dream: The CIA and Guatemala, 1952-54," *Intelligence and National Security* 20, no. 3 (2005): 489.

⁸¹ Cullather, *Operation PBSUCCESS: The United States and Guatemala 1952-1954*, 15-17.; United States Department of State. National Intelligence Estimate, March 11, 1952, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954*, vol. IV, The American Republics. Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1983. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v04/d410>.(Accessed December 4, 2018), Document 410.; United States Department of State. National Intelligence Estimate, May 19, 1953, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954*, vol. IV, The American Republics. Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1983. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v04/d422>.(Accessed December 4, 2018), Document 422.

Parallel to the warming up of the Cold War during the Korean War, the Central Intelligence Agency began to plan Árbenz's demise in 1952, under President Truman.⁸² Diplomatic and economic efforts were at first dismissed. It was believed that hurting the economy of Guatemala would just play into the hands of the communists, when the economy eventually recovered.⁸³ It was decided that covert action was the best recourse. The man put in charge of the operation was the chief of the CIA's Western Hemisphere Division, Joseph Caldwell King. J.C. King would later be involved in several other CIA operations in Latin America, including the ones targeting Fidel Castro.

The first attempt at overthrowing Árbenz, named PBFORTUNE, was in fact largely based on an already existing conspiracy between several dictators in the Caribbean basin. Ever since the wave of democracy spread in the region during and after World War Two, the dictators of the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, and Honduras, as well as exiles from Guatemala and Venezuela, had cooperated in the halting of the democratic progress, through an anti-democracy league they had created.⁸⁴ The group feared the inspirational effect of the successful implementation of democracy in their neighboring states of Guatemala, Venezuela and Costa Rica, on their own population. They also feared direct and covert meddling that could topple their regimes, from the democratic states in the region. Their fears had merits as a group of pro-democracy governments in the region attempted to create a paramilitary force to invade the Dominican Republic in 1947, known as the Cayo Confites expedition, which failed.⁸⁵

Getting rid of Arévalo and Árbenz was a high priority. Guatemala had a slew of disgruntled officers after the revolution of 1944. One of these was Carlos Castillo Armas. Armas had been involved in two failed coups, in 1949 and 1950.⁸⁶ Despite his failures he did not give up, and he planned a new attack against the GOG. The plan called for a coordinated invasion by rebel troops from Mexico, Honduras and El Salvador, along with an internal uprising in Guatemala. He gained support from the anti-democracy league of the dictatorships, and with it some founding and arms.⁸⁷ At the same time the CIA was looking for possible local

⁸² Cullather, *Operation PBSUCCESS: The United States and Guatemala 1952-1954*, 16.

⁸³ United States Department of State. National Intelligence Estimate, March 11, 1952.

⁸⁴ Aaron Coy Moulton, "Building their own Cold War in their own Backyard: the Transnational, International Conflicts in the Greater Caribbean Basin, 1944-1954," *Cold War History* 15, no. 2 (2015): 139.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 144.

⁸⁶ Cullather, *Operation PBSUCCESS: The United States and Guatemala 1952-1954*, 4-5.

⁸⁷ United States Department of State. Memorandum by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs (Mann) to the Secretary of State, October 3, 1952, *Foreign Relations of the United States*,

collaborators in getting rid of Árbenz, and they found Armas. The CIA involvement in Armas's plan was under a certain amount of duress from the Guatemalan rebels. As the Agency assumed that the invasion by Armas would be executed with or without their involvement. In the case of failure, the expected government crackdown on opposition could eliminate their assets in the country. September 9, 1952 the CIA received approval for the operation and proceeded to ship a large cache of arms and ammunition to Armas. PBFORTUNE was soon called off on October 8, as the Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza García managed to leak the existence of the operation.⁸⁸

Despite the operation's cancellation, J.C. King tried to save the CIA's capabilities as well as he could, in case he got another shot at Árbenz. Armas continued to receive money, and some arms, but was not interested in doing anything without proper US backing. Other rebels did not possess the same restraint. March 19, 1953 a group of rebels attacked the city of Salamá. The following crackdown deprived the CIA and the rebels of most of their assets in the country.⁸⁹

PBSUCCESS

With the loss of their assets the situation seemed even grimmer, for the USA, in Guatemala. During the summer of 1953 briefings on Guatemala were turning more negative. The theory that the communists were trying to gain control over the country gained traction, despite their low numbers. During the Árbenz government the *Partido Guatemalteco de Trabajo* (the Guatemalan Communist Party or PGT) party controlled 4 seats out of 58.⁹⁰ The PGT did also have members working in different ministries, most notably the National Agrarian Department.⁹¹ It is hard to quantify the degree of influence the PGT exerted on Árbenz. The

1952-1954, vol. IV, The American Republics. Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1983. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v04/d413>.(Accessed December 4, 2018), Document 413.

⁸⁸ Cullather, *Operation PBSUCCESS: The United States and Guatemala 1952-1954*, 18-19.; Fraser, "Architecture of a Broken Dream: The CIA and Guatemala, 1952-54," 491.

⁸⁹ Fraser, "Architecture of a Broken Dream: The CIA and Guatemala, 1952-54," 492.

⁹⁰ Official English name is Guatemalan Party of Labor, but its referenced as the Guatemalan Communist Party or PGT in the thesis.

According to Cullather there were 61 members of Congress in 1950, and 4 representatives from the PGT. According to Fraser and Wikipedia there were 56 members of Congress in total with 4 PGT representatives, but this was in the 1953 election. Cullather, *Operation PBSUCCESS: The United States and Guatemala 1952-1954*, 12.; Fraser, "Architecture of a Broken Dream: The CIA and Guatemala, 1952-54," 489.; colaboradores de Wikipedia, "Elecciones legislativas de Guatemala de 1953," Wikipedia, https://es.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Elecciones_legislativas_de_Guatemala_de_1953&oldid=106059674

⁹¹ Fraser, "Architecture of a Broken Dream: The CIA and Guatemala, 1952-54," 490.

CIA at least thought the degree was high, and they did not see Árbenz doing anything to stop it. Especially Árbenz' close relationship with PGT leader, José Manuel Fortuny, was worrisome.⁹² It was assumed that eventually the communists would take control, and eliminate US political influence and economic interests in the country.⁹³ August 12, 1953 the National Security Council, the President's council on matters of national security and foreign policy, reached the conclusion that the Árbenz regime had to go. It posed too great a threat to US national security, as the US state had come to define US security.

It was again decided to go for a covert operation. In addition to the already existing covert framework, with Armas as the prime asset, there were several additional reasons for this approach. At this point Eisenhower had taken over the presidency of the USA. Part of his election campaign was a promise to address the budget deficit that had developed during the administration of Harry S. Truman (his middle name was "S"). One of the means to achieve this was to reduce the military budget, which had skyrocketed under Truman. Reducing the military budget while maintaining US strength vis-a-vis the USSR meant that resources had to be used in a different way. Covert operations fit the bill well, as a means to avoid the spread of communism at a low cost.⁹⁴

The belief in the potential of covert operations had also been bolstered by several successful CIA operations in Europe, Asia and the Middle East, especially the fall of Iranian prime minister Mohammad Mosaddegh in 1953, a joint British-US operation. This had proved that democratic leaders could be toppled by covert means.⁹⁵

At the time propaganda and advertising were becoming increasingly popular, and great faith was placed in their potential for influencing people. Psychological warfare, or "psywar", would become a hallmark of the operation.⁹⁶

The plan developed for getting rid of Árbenz was to combine all the means the USA had at their disposal, short of committing their own troops. This meant psychological, economic, diplomatic, political, and paramilitary means. The psychological aspect involved extensive use of radio propaganda, dropping leaflets, spreading rumors and influencing national press.

⁹² Cullather, *Operation PBSUCCESS: The United States and Guatemala 1952-1954*, 13.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁹⁵ McMahon, *The Cold War : a Very Short Introduction*, 87, 65-66, 72.

⁹⁶ Cullather, *Operation PBSUCCESS: The United States and Guatemala 1952-1954*, 26-27.

The economy of Guatemala was considered an easy target, as they relied heavily on certain foreign imports, like oil, and also to be able to export their own cash-crops. Diplomatic pressure was exerted through the Organization of American States (OAS), where they could smear Guatemala's image, and isolate it from the other countries in the hemisphere.⁹⁷ The intention of the operation was to create an environment of chaos within Guatemala. The combination of all the means of influence stated above was supposed to weaken Árbenz grip on power and reduce the populations belief in him and his political agenda. When pressure was considered to have reached its peak, Armas would invade the country with his troops, while the country was bombarded by unmarked US planes. The USA would drop extra weapons and arms to arm sporadic volunteers to Armas' force.⁹⁸ At this point it was intended that one or more high ranking military officials would execute a coup against the government.

The most limiting factors for the operation were the lack of CIA assets within the country, and the weakness of the opposition. The CIA found that the army was loyal to Árbenz, as he was a military colonel himself, and it would struggle to find anyone willing to work actively against him. The opposition outside the military did exist, but it was not unified. The Catholic church had limited potential in influencing the government, as a large part of their priests were not native Guatemalans. The foreign priests could face deportation from the country if the GOG so desired. Furthermore, the big landowners were disheartened by the failed coup in 1953. Building up sufficient opposition was assumed to take more than a year.⁹⁹

The plan was approved by Allen Dulles, director of CIA, on December 9, 1953.¹⁰⁰ It was meant to be a joint operation between government agencies and departments, the State and Defense department, the Navy, Air Force, and the CIA.¹⁰¹

Things moved quickly. The headquarters of the operation was set up in Florida, and would eventually employ more than a hundred agency employees.¹⁰² By the end of January 1954 a paramilitary training base was set up for training Armas' rebels in Panama.¹⁰³ US Secretary of

⁹⁷ Ibid.; Central Intelligence Agency. *Guatemala -- General Plan of Action*, (redacted author). 0000135872, 1953. https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000135872.pdf (Accessed December 5, 2018).

⁹⁸ Cullather, *Operation PBSUCCESS: The United States and Guatemala 1952-1954*, 73.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 28.; United States Department of State. National Intelligence Estimate, May 19, 1953.

¹⁰⁰ 7. Central Intelligence Agency. *Report on Project PBSUCCESS*. 0000928348, 1954. https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000928348.pdf (Accessed December 6, 2018).

¹⁰¹ Cullather, *Operation PBSUCCESS: The United States and Guatemala 1952-1954*, 29.

¹⁰² Ibid., 30.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 35.

State John Foster Dulles, went to an OAS meeting in March to get in place the economic sanctions against Guatemala. He was unable to enact an embargo on coffee beans, but he was successful in starting an embargo on trade of arms and ammunitions.¹⁰⁴ A resolution against Guatemala was also decided on during the meeting, which was not as much a result of other Latin American countries dislike of the Árbenz regime, as it was a result of threats against their commerce with the USA.¹⁰⁵

As the CIA had a hard time gaining concrete evidence that Árbenz was involved with the USSR, they decided to fabricate some. In February they put a cache of Soviet arms on a beach in Nicaragua, to look like it was meant for the GOG.¹⁰⁶ Unknown to them, however, Árbenz was already in talks with Czechoslovakia about an arms deal. The weapons arrived in Guatemala in May.¹⁰⁷ This was the only proven trade with the Eastern Bloc, which was ironically a result of the US arms embargo placed on the GOG in 1948.

Before Armas' invasion on June 18, the operation had achieved some success, but had also suffered some devastating setbacks. It was not a given that it would succeed. Already in September 1953 Árbenz gained access to a source which gave him information on the operation. Later in the end of January 1954, the CIA discovered their operation was blown as the GOG gained access to documents detailing critical parts of the operation. Despite this the operation was not cancelled, as it was considered to have moved too far to do so. It helped that the GOG was unable to take advantage of the situation properly. In an effort to increase the seriousness of the documents they decided to forge additional ones. The forgery was uncovered by the press, and weakened the GOG's allegations, and strengthened US counter allegations that the entire operation was made up by the GOG. Thus, news media in Guatemala, the USA and internationally painted the allegations as false.¹⁰⁸

The GOG was however very aware that there was a threat to their country. This played into the CIA's strategy of making the Guatemalan people believe there was a strong underground

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 36.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 41.

¹⁰⁶ 159-60, 77-79. Central Intelligence Agency, *Report on Project PBSUCCESS*.

¹⁰⁷ United States Department of State. Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs (Holland) to the Secretary of State, May 18, 1954, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954*, vol. IV, The American Republics. Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1983. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v04/d440>. (Accessed December 4, 2018), Document 440.

¹⁰⁸ Cullather, *Operation PBSUCCESS: The United States and Guatemala 1952-1954*, 37-39.; 50. Central Intelligence Agency, *Report on Project PBSUCCESS*.

ready to take up arms against Árbenz. This included an anti-communist student league, leaflet dropping, and the anti-communist radio station *La Voz de la Liberación* (the Voice of Liberation). During the first months of 1954 the GOG was cracking down on papers and radio stations that were overly critical of the regime. By April freedom of speech and assembly was no more, in large part provoked by CIA-sponsored propaganda, and the GOG's fear of US intervention in the country.¹⁰⁹ By removing these rights, the GOG ended up looking more like the regime that the USA wanted them to look like, a repressive dictatorship.¹¹⁰ May 1, *La Voz de la Liberación* was turned on, spewing out propaganda against the government.¹¹¹ This radio station has been given a lot of credit for the success of the operation. Coincidentally the national radio station in Guatemala City was down for maintenance, giving *La Voz* monopoly over the airwaves. The importance is hard to quantify, but the US belief in its effectiveness most likely led them to create a similar radio station against Castro several years later, Radio Swan.¹¹² On June 8 Árbenz ordered further restrictions on civil rights, and suspended civil liberties. Massive arrests of suspected rebels ensued, and at least 75 persons were killed, and possibly tortured.¹¹³

The propaganda efforts had had great effect in Guatemala, and it had pushed the GOG to the authoritarian side. With the population starting to expect an invasion, and the GOG on edge, the operation was reaching “maximum pressure”.¹¹⁴ While propaganda had great success, the political aspect was lacking. The USA were struggling to find military figures willing to risk it all by going against Árbenz when the invasion eventually occurred. Although there were a lot of officers unhappy with the land reforms, and the influence of the communists, it was still a huge risk going against their own government and military.¹¹⁵ This was a big problem for the operation, as the invading force of Armas had a severely limited military capability. His army numbered 480, while the Guatemalan army numbered 5000, and was vastly better

¹⁰⁹ 191-96. Central Intelligence Agency, *Report on Project PBSUCCESS*.; United States Department of State. Excerpt From the Diary of James C. Hagerty, Press Secretary to the President, June 16, 1954, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954*, vol. IV, The American Republics. Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1983. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v04/d470>.(Accessed December 4, 2018), Document 470.

¹¹⁰ Cullather, *Operation PBSUCCESS: The United States and Guatemala 1952-1954*, 46-48.

¹¹¹ 168. Central Intelligence Agency, *Report on Project PBSUCCESS*.

¹¹² Cullather, *Operation PBSUCCESS: The United States and Guatemala 1952-1954*, 55-57.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 50.

armed.¹¹⁶ Invading without knowing that someone in the military would attempt a coup was considered suicide, and it was not taken for granted that the operation would be executed. When the Czechoslovakian arms arrived in Guatemala May 17 this all changed. The shipment from the Eastern Bloc clearly linked Guatemala with the USSR and removed any doubts the USA had on the Guatemalan position. Additionally, the USA put out a rumor that the arms were meant to equip a civilian militia, which turned out to be true to some extent. Árbenz had intended to ship the arms secretly into Guatemala, then take some of the weapons for a militia and giving the rest to the military. This secrecy further undermined his position vis a vis the military.¹¹⁷

The invasion itself did not pan out the way that it was originally meant to. As noted before, Armas's army was severely outnumbered by the Guatemalan army and posed a very limited conventional threat. Even though the GOG were aware of an invasion being planned, they had little intelligence on its actual magnitude. Armas started the invasion on June 18, with 480 soldiers divided into five different groups. The army was split up this way to avoid losing everything to a single fight, giving the impression of a larger front. The ground invasion was accompanied by US sponsored air-raids. Within three days Armas lost over half of his original troops. One of the five forces meant to invade Guatemala had been arrested by Salvadorian police, depriving him of 60 troops. Two additional forces were soundly defeated in battles with the Guatemalan army, totaling the loss to 302. It should be noted that Armas had planned to let volunteers join him as the invasion went on, and Cullather gives a number as high as 1200 men. That is a combination of volunteers and original soldiers.¹¹⁸ The CIA still had no luck finding a high-ranking military officer willing to rebel against Árbenz. The invasion was certainly not off to a good start.¹¹⁹

The same day as the invasion the GOG had time to address the United Nations Security Council of the crimes against its country. They petitioned for a stop in foreign intervention in their country, for which they blamed Nicaragua, Honduras, and the UFCO.¹²⁰ The GOG no

¹¹⁶ Different sources give different numbers of soldiers within the Guatemalan army, ranging from 4500-7000. 2. Central Intelligence Agency, *Guatemala -- General Plan of Action.*; 223. Central Intelligence Agency, *Report on Project PBSUCCESS.*; Cullather, *Operation PBSUCCESS: The United States and Guatemala 1952-1954*, 28, 65.

¹¹⁷ Cullather, *Operation PBSUCCESS: The United States and Guatemala 1952-1954*, 59-61.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 72-73.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 64-69.

¹²⁰ Naciones Unidas Consejo de Seguridad (United Nations Security Council). *Cablegrama de fecha 19 de junio de 1954, dirigido al Presidente del Consejo de Seguridad por el Ministro De Relaciones Exteriores de Guatemala*,

doubt knew of the USA's involvement in the invasion. By not naming the USA as culpable they ensured that the petition did not come off as an attack on the USA. This hoped to make it harder for the USA to deny that what was happening in Guatemala was foreign meddling. The motion was passed the 20th, and the wheels were set in motion for creating a fact-finding mission to be sent to Guatemala to investigate the allegations.¹²¹ Combined with the discouraging development in Armas's army, the operation was again in jeopardy.¹²²

With the defeat of the two rebel army groups in the first days of the operation things were looking good for Árbenz. However, on the 23rd he received some disheartening news. Reports stated that several Guatemalan army groups had started to rebel against him, by refusing to fight. An entire 150-man garrison even surrendered to rebels without putting up a fight. Faced with mutiny Árbenz attempted to arm civilian supporters on the 25th, but it was futile, neither men nor weapons showed up. On the 27th Árbenz had to hand over power to the Guatemalan military.¹²³

The sudden shift in the CIA's fortune was surprising. In the later days of the operation it had looked like they were facing absolute failure.¹²⁴ After the coup against Árbenz the USA put a lot of pressure on the Guatemalan army. There was still some support for the ideas of Árbenz amongst them. Nothing but a reversal of the most radical reforms under Árbenz was good enough for the USA. After eleven days and after several different junta constellations had tried to gain an agreement with the USA, a compromise was made between the two parties. Armas would become the new president of Guatemala, and the Guatemalan army would avoid being bombed by the USA.¹²⁵

The Guatemalan Civil War

The civil war that Guatemala struggled with from 1960 to 1996 is intimately tied to the coup against Árbenz. The armed struggle that began in 1960 with the attempted military coup on November 13 was just one example of how the Guatemalan military dictatorship struggled

Guillermo Toriello. S/3232: Naciones Unidas, 1954.

https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/3232&Lang=S (Accessed December 5, 2018).

¹²¹ The investigation never went through, as the regime fell before it could be organized. Stephen C. Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, *Bitter fruit : the Untold Story of the American Coup in Guatemala* (Garden City, N.Y: Anchor Books, 1983), 181-83.

¹²² Cullather, *Operation PBSUCCESS: The United States and Guatemala 1952-1954*, 70-71.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 75-77.

¹²⁴ 215-25. Central Intelligence Agency, *Report on Project PBSUCCESS*.

¹²⁵ Cullather, *Operation PBSUCCESS: The United States and Guatemala 1952-1954*, 78.

with severe social unrest. The opening of Guatemalan society during the ten years of spring, increased suffrage and social participation in organizations and unions, was severely quelled during the Armas administration. Repression of social life did not lessen, and social tension increased during the military regime that followed, led by General Manuel Ydígoras Fuentes. Another factor in the outbreak of the armed struggle was the Cuban Revolution, which sent shockwaves throughout Latin America. Not only did it show that ruthless military dictators could be taken down, it even provided a blueprint for doing so through the *Foco*-theory, the guerrilla strategy of the revolution. From then on, any opposition to a government seemed much more threatening in the region.¹²⁶

The insurgency of the Guatemalan Civil War changed over time, and strictly calling it a communist insurgency is slightly misleading. The initial revolt that started the war was provoked by nationalist sentiments, and grievances with the government of Ydígoras, not communism. This changed as part of the rebels went guerrilla, and had an ideological “epiphany” during their stay with the peasants of Guatemala.¹²⁷ From this point out the majority of the Guatemalan guerrilla groups had a Marxist foundation. Since the first wave of insurgency was more limited in its scope, it can be argued that it was indeed a communist insurgency. The second wave however relied more on collaboration with the indigenous people, and their political organizations, like the Comité de Unidad Campesina (Committee for Peasant Unity or CUC). These groups were arguably left-leaning, but not necessarily communist. Thus, calling the second wave of the Guatemalan insurgency communist is correct in terms of the guerrillas, but for the insurgency as a whole it removes some important nuances, like the indigenous elements, the importance of liberation theology and with it the support of the Guatemalan Catholic church.¹²⁸ Calling it communist also undermines the importance of the factors that caused Guatemalans to join and support the insurgents. Poverty and repression as motivators for fighting oppression does not necessitate that the insurgent is inherently communist.

¹²⁶ Streeeter, *Managing the Counterrevolution : the United States and Guatemala, 1954-1961*, 211-15.; *The Cambridge History of Latin America: Volume 7: Latin America since 1930: Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean*, 7, 228-30.

¹²⁷ Jeffery M. Paige, "Social Theory and Peasant Revolution in Vietnam and Guatemala," *Theory and Society* 12, no. 6 (1983): 711-14.

¹²⁸ Garrard-Burnett, *Terror in the Land of the Holy Spirit: Guatemala Under General Efraim Rios Montt 1982-1983*, 37-38, 124-25.

There are several useful ways of organizing the civil war. The different phases the insurgent movement went through, the repressive tendencies of the government, and the periods of US support. Below I have split each of these aspects of the conflict into the different phases they experienced over time, to give the reader an easy oversight of the conflict. Due to the timeframe of this thesis the post-Montt period will not be explored further.

The phases of guerrilla struggle:

- The first wave 1960-1969: The first wave of guerrillas. From the November 13 coup that forced several officers into exile, to the guerrilla's relative growth through the sixties, and the near obliteration in the late 1960s.
- The second wave 1970-1981: From the ashes of the first guerrilla movements rises a new wave that has a much stronger connection to the indigenous population. The second wave reaches its peak in the early 1980s, when they pose a real threat to the Guatemalan government.
- The third wave 1982-1996: The insurgent movement's progress is halted and reversed. A long process that culminates in a peace treaty ends the war.

The phases of government counter-measures and repression:

- 1954 – 1960: Government repression starts during the last months of the Árbenz regime. When Armas takes over the targets of repression changes, from anti-Árbenz to left-wingers and those opposed to the coup.
- 1960 – 1969 As the government starts to view the guerrilla movement as more of a threat, they increase the severity of their countermeasures. A massive counteroffensive is launched in the Zacapa region in 1966 was the beginning of the end of the first wave of guerrillas, and it forced the remains from the countryside into the cities. Right wing death squads appeared and were not stopped by the government.
- 1970-1981: In the beginning of the decade the GOG softened its chokehold on Guatemalan civil society and allowed civil participation through organization to a certain degree. As the insurgency grew again repression was increased, and violence grew steadily.
- 1982-1996: An unprecedented campaign of violence managed to curb the insurgency, but at a high human cost. Peace was eventually achieved.¹²⁹

The US involvement.

- 1954-1960: The US help through PBHISTORY laid the groundwork for repression of the left. US financial aid started.

¹²⁹ II McGill, William D., "The Guatemalan Counterinsurgency Strategy" (United States Army War College Studies Program Paper, U.S. Army War College, 1989).; Mario M. Hernandez Ponce, "Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Guatemala" (United States Army War College Studies Program Paper, U.S. Army War College, 1991).; Kruijt, "Guatemala's Political Transitions, 1960s-1990s."

- 1960-1975: The USA supported the GOG both financially, and through training and strategic guidance. Financial support varied with the observed need for it.¹³⁰
- 1977-1981: During the Carter years the GOG was heavily criticized for the human rights violations occurring. The GOG refused to accept financial aid, but continued to get loans and equipment. The lack of aid had little to no effect.¹³¹
- 1982-1996: Reagan had a more positive outlook on the GOG, and resumed financial support. Despite a ban on support in 1990 due to death of US citizens, the CIA channeled in illegal funds. Continuation of US training.¹³²

The Origins of the First Guerrillas

The new regime turned Guatemalan politics in a classic “Cold War Central-American republic” direction, heavily influenced by the National Security Doctrine.¹³³ It was strongly anticommunist and gave the USA an important role in its military. Many of the reforms enacted during the Ten Years of Spring were thrown out. The land reforms were reversed, democracy was strangled, and police and military brutality increased. The military made sure to cement its role as an autonomous political power through a new constitution in 1956. Ironically, the new powers held by the military were a result of their increased participation in politics during the Ten Years of Spring, now however in an authoritarian form.¹³⁴

The following pages will deal separately with the efforts of the three main actors in the civil war, the USA, the Guerrillas (insurgents), and the Guatemalan government, from the inception of the civil war, to the 1970s. The second section on the civil war deals with the period from the early 1970s, to the end of the Montt regime.

US involvement

The USA was involved in the Guatemalan Civil War, but not on the level which it had been involved in the 1954 coup. As Vincente Collazo-Davila points out in his article “The Guatemalan Insurrection”, “While the contribution of U.S. aid to the counterinsurgent effort

¹³⁰ Michael McClintock, *The American Connection, Volume Two: State terror and Popular Resistance in Guatemala* (London and Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Zed Books, 1985), 107-09.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 182-92.

¹³² 18. Intelligence Oversight Board. *Report on the Guatemala Review*, Anthony S.; Allen Harrington, Lew Jr.; Caracristi, Ann Z.; Pote, Harold W., 1996. <http://publ.princeton.edu/sheetreader.php?obj=wd375x288> (Accessed January 17, 2019).; Jonas, "Dangerous Liaisons: The U. S. in Guatemala," 149-50.

¹³³ The National Security Doctrine is explained in the Background chapter on the Cold War on pp 16-18.

¹³⁴ Charles D. Brockett, "An Illusion of Omnipotence: U.S. Policy toward Guatemala, 1954-1960," *Latin American Politics and Society* 44, no. 1 (2002): 94-107.; Jennifer G. Schirmer, *The Guatemalan Military Project: A Violence Called Democracy* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 14-15.

should not be underestimated, it would not have been decisive without a Guatemalan government totally dedicated to the task at hand".¹³⁵ There are strong indications that some US troops were involved in combat, but their presence in the country was primarily for training and advisory purposes. Financial aid to the military was not massive compared to the military budget of Guatemala, but it had a big impact on how much weaponry the army could afford. Despite US military aid varying between 6 percent and 26.9 percent of the total military budget in Guatemala in the 1962-1968 period it increased the purchasing power of arms by 58 percent.¹³⁶ What is perhaps most important was the help related to training and doctrine. The GOG started to take counterinsurgency seriously from 1966 onwards, taking full advantage of US military advisors in their country, as well as sending officers for training in the USA and Panama and adopting US COIN doctrine. This marked a profound change in the military's effectiveness against the guerrillas. US military support was reduced during the years of President Jimmy Carter's administration (1977-1981), but the effect was limited as the GOG found other sources for arms, like Israel.¹³⁷ Thus, the lack of aid had little effect on the military's effectiveness.

The military opened their military academy, the *Escuela Politécnica*, to US instructors, for the first time since Ubico fell from power, setting the stage for further US involvement in Guatemalan military affairs.¹³⁸ The police system under Armas was first and foremost set up to fight communism and other kinds of subversion, and it did so with US assistance.¹³⁹

The rapid collapse of the Árbenz regime made it likely that it was possible to recover sensitive documents that the government and the Communist party had not had time to destroy. Obtaining these documents became a top priority in the USA for several reasons: it would help them in getting an overview of communist movements in Guatemala, and possibly in other Latin American countries as well. Furthermore it would enlighten them on Soviet strategies of spreading communism, and as negative press mounted against the USA in the

¹³⁵ Vicente Collazo-Davila, "The Guatemalan Insurrection," in *Insurgency in the modern world*, ed. Bard E. O'Neill, William R. Heaton, and Donald J. Alberts, A Westview Special Study (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1980), 120.

¹³⁶ Wickham-Crowley, *Guerrillas and Revolution in Latin America: A Comparative Study of Insurgents and Regimes Since 1956*, 68-72.

¹³⁷ Cheryl A. Rubenberg, "Israel and Guatemala: Arms, Advice and Counterinsurgency," *MERIP Middle East Report*, no. 140 (1986): 16-21.

¹³⁸ Schirmer, *The Guatemalan Military Project: A Violence Called Democracy*, 14.

¹³⁹ McClintock, *The American Connection, Volume Two: State terror and Popular Resistance in Guatemala*, 32-37.

aftermath of the operation any proof of communist infiltration would help justify the coup.¹⁴⁰ The effort to recover the documents was named “PBHISTORY”, and was done as a combined effort between the CIA and the GOG’s *Comité de Defensa Nacional Contra el Comunismo* (Committee Against Communism). In the archives were records of political parties and organizations, with names of thousands of members. These were used as basis of repression of the political left for decades.¹⁴¹ Techniques taught by PBHISTORY personnel through the process also aided the GOG in building a competent surveillance community.¹⁴² The CIA failed however in obtaining damning evidence of Soviet interference, and with regards to mending the damage PBSUCCESS had on the international view of the USA, PBHISTORY was a failure.¹⁴³

To tie all the security services together, so that they could share intelligence and coordinate their efforts, a central intelligence hub was created. Known first as the *Centro Regional de Telecomunicaciones* (Regional Communications Centre), or *la Regional*, it would go under many different names. They aided in setting up the communication center in the presidential palace. Radio and telephone communication went out to all the different military and civilian security institutions, making it possible for the military to keep an overview of the situation of the country, and directing the counterinsurgency efforts. When in 1966 the presidential chair was handed over to a civilian, the military made sure to move *la Regional* from the presidential palace to the defense department. Thus, they avoided losing control over one of their now most important resources to a civilian.¹⁴⁴

The increased US involvement in Guatemala was not to everyone’s liking however. As a part of what was to become the Bay of Pigs Invasion, the USA had a secret training camp in Guatemala for Cuban exiles. This presence of a foreign army on their own soil angered many officers in the army. Combined with a distaste of the military regime’s rampant corruption and reversion of political and economic reforms, it inspired the coup attempt amongst 120

¹⁴⁰ Max Holland, "Operation PBHISTORY: The Aftermath of SUCCESS," *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence* 17, no. 2 (2004): 301-02.

¹⁴¹ McClintock, *The American Connection, Volume Two: State terror and Popular Resistance in Guatemala*, 32-33.

¹⁴² Holland, "Operation PBHISTORY: The Aftermath of SUCCESS," 306.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 310, 21.

¹⁴⁴ McClintock, *The American Connection, Volume Two: State terror and Popular Resistance in Guatemala*, 70-75.

young military officers November 13, 1960.¹⁴⁵ Another factor which provoked the revolt was the split between the graduates from the *Escuela Politécnica* and the old military officers, as mentioned in the background chapter. The regime of Ydígoras was systematically favoring the older officers over graduates from the *Politécnica*, which further increased the split within the military that caused many graduates to revolt.¹⁴⁶ Worried that the attempted coup would hinder the planned action against Cuba, the USA backed the regime of Ydígoras with air support. The coup failed, but many of the officers involved fled the country, and later returned as insurgents. They formed the basis of the group MR 13, which started a guerrilla campaign in 1962.¹⁴⁷ The campaign was received with support in Guatemala City, in the form of strikes and protests. The GOG answered with violence, leading to the death of 20 students, which outraged the Guatemalan society. Both the left and the right of Guatemalan society petitioned for Ydígoras' resignation. One year later Ydígoras fell under a bloodless coup. The rampant corruption and incompetence of his regime had not only alienated the political right, but also the army. The USA had also found Ydígoras to be a liability for the country's stability and urged the army to perform the coup.¹⁴⁸

Aware of his predecessor's error in giving the USA too many privileges in the country, Colonel Enrique Peralta Azurdia decided to limit the US role in Guatemala. The new Guatemalan leader, who was not technically president, was a big fan of the USA and its institutions, and a true anti-communist. Continuing to receive US support was therefore natural for him, but he made sure to keep it more discreet than what Ydígoras had done. Under Peralta's rule the repression of the left was once again increased, rights were revoked, and police brutality hit new heights.¹⁴⁹

The Guerrillas

The guerrillas in the 1960s were made up of a combination of former military officers (some of which had been trained in UW by the USA) and students, as well as members of the PGT,

¹⁴⁵ McClintock and Schirmer have very different views on the motivation of the coup. McClintock denies the influence of left-wing ideas in the coup, and claims it was inspired solely by nationalistic sentiments. Schirmer however claims left-wing ideas, economic and social equality were important factors in addition to the nationalistic sentiments. Gerrard Burnett writes that pro Árbenz officers started the coup attempt due to the presence of the US-led forces, so both the political and nationalistic aspects might have been present. *Ibid.*, 49-50.; Schirmer, *The Guatemalan Military Project: A Violence Called Democracy*, 15.

¹⁴⁶ Streeter, *Managing the Counterrevolution: the United States and Guatemala, 1954-1961*, 222-23.

¹⁴⁷ McClintock, *The American Connection, Volume Two: State terror and Popular Resistance in Guatemala*, 50.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 50-51.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 52-53.

peasant unions and worker unions.¹⁵⁰ Their main goal was to create a socialist revolution in Guatemala through violent guerrilla struggle. The severe inequality between rich and poor, and the massive poverty in Guatemala were important motivation for the guerrillas. These issues also played important roles in their propaganda effort.¹⁵¹ The *Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes* (Rebel Armed Forces), a consolidation of three different guerrilla groups, constituted the military front, while the remains of the PGT was the political front. In tune with the time, the strategy of the guerrilla was based on the *foco* strategy popularized through the Cuban Revolution, and in particular Ernesto “Che” Guevara’s writings on the strategy in 1960.¹⁵² The strategy based itself on limited and favorable attacks on the army, mostly ambushes of local patrols. Another key aspect of this strategy was local support, which was imperative for the guerrillas, as they relied on them for food and shelter. An important distinction between this first wave of guerrillas, and that of the late 70s and 80s was the lack of support from the indigenous population of Guatemala. As they constituted nearly half the population, and mostly lived in poverty, this meant a huge loss of potential support and active fighters. At the time, however, the guerrillas were not so interested to work with the indigenous population, and they worked instead with the smaller ladino peasant population, in the departments of Zacapa and Izabal in Eastern Guatemala, which they were more similar to ethnically and culturally.¹⁵³ As will be explained later, the indigenous population was also not so preoccupied with politics during the period of the first guerrilla wave.

The first guerrilla action occurred in 1962, but the guerrillas were badly prepared. They were unfamiliar with the terrain and the region they operated in, and were unable to gain support from locals. The fronts were wiped out within the year.¹⁵⁴ After the defeat in 1962 the leaders regrouped and started new fronts in 1963. This time they were better prepared and more careful, had far more success, and gained some support from locals.

From 1963 to 1965 they were fairly cautious with their attacks. After killing three or four soldiers they would retreat. They claimed that they managed to kill 142 soldiers and police

¹⁵⁰ Garrard-Burnett, *Terror in the Land of the Holy Spirit: Guatemala Under General Efraim Rios Montt 1982-1983*, 26-27.; Schirmer, *The Guatemalan Military Project: A Violence Called Democracy*, 16.

¹⁵¹ Collazo-Davila, "The Guatemalan Insurrection," 122-25.

¹⁵² Thomas C. Wright, *Latin America in the Era of the Cuban Revolution* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001), 73-74.

¹⁵³ Operational Research and Analysis Establishment Ottawa (Ontario), David Charters, and Maurice Tugwell, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Central America* (Ontario Canada, discover.dtic.mil: U.S. Army War College, 1983), 142.; Schirmer, *The Guatemalan Military Project: A Violence Called Democracy*, 16.

¹⁵⁴ Collazo-Davila, "The Guatemalan Insurrection," 111.

officers during this period, with the loss of just twelve guerrillas.¹⁵⁵ During 1965 they grew bolder, and their attacks became riskier. They started a terror campaign of assassination and kidnapping. The motivation for these actions can be separated into two different strategies: political and financial. The political was the assassination and kidnapping of political figures. This included the American ambassador to Guatemala, Gordon Mein, in 1967, two US military attaches in 1968, and the West German ambassador, Count Carl von Spreti in 1970, who all died in kidnapping attempts or assassinations by the guerrillas. Operations like these were meant to give the impression of a lack of control by the government, and to provoke the GOG into violent and unpopular retributions. The financial kidnappings were the guerrillas most important source of income. By kidnapping members of wealthy families for ransom, or threatening to do so, the guerrillas managed to secure sufficient funds to operate independent of foreign support.¹⁵⁶

In the 1963-66 period the guerrilla seemed to do pretty well. The army struggled with counteracting their strategy effectively, and the media portrayed the guerrillas as winning. This impression turned out to be misleading, as the guerrillas' strength was put to the test.¹⁵⁷ From 1966 the GOG really put the hammer down on the guerrillas, and eradicated them in the rural areas of Guatemala. The remaining forces fled to the cities, where they continued their kidnappings and assassinations. When another government offensive against the insurgents started in late 1970, the remains of the first wave of guerrillas were steadily wiped out. And the disappearance of the entire Central Committee of the PGT in September 1972 can be seen as its definitive ending point.¹⁵⁸

The Government's Efforts

The GOG's counterinsurgency capabilities changed dramatically during the 1960s. So did the governments impression of the guerrillas. In the first years the army considered them mere bandits, rather than a threat to the stability of the nation. As the guerrillas grew bolder from 1965 onward, the GOG's view of them changed.¹⁵⁹ They now posed more of a threat to the government, and received a lot of national press coverage. This can explain the increased

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 112.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 112-13.

¹⁵⁷ Gabriel Aguilera Peralta and John Beverly, "Terror and Violence as Weapons of Counterinsurgency in Guatemala," *Latin American Perspectives* 7, no. 2-3 (1980): 94-96.

¹⁵⁸ Collazo-Davila, "The Guatemalan Insurrection," 114.

¹⁵⁹ McGill, "The Guatemalan Counterinsurgency Strategy," 10.

offers and acceptance of US support, and the way the security apparatus of Guatemala changed in the latter part of the decade.

In the last years of the Peralta Azurdía regime (1963-1966) the counterinsurgency capabilities of the Guatemalan security system greatly increased. Most of these capabilities were within the army. Special counterinsurgency units were created, like the 1st Airborne Infantry Company of paratroopers, the 1st Special Forces Company of counterterror troops, and a “Counter-Intelligence Detachment”. The two first are based on the US Rangers and Green Berets respectively. These units, and other parts of the army and police force, were not only based on US counterparts, they were also trained by US personnel, followed US doctrine and used weapons and material supplied by the USA. US grants to the Guatemalan security institutions grew rapidly during the Peralta regime.¹⁶⁰

Although the insurgent movement was of a socialist nature, they did attract much of its support as the only alternative of reinstating a bourgeoisie democracy in a time of military dictatorship. When the army seemingly let go of its hold of power in 1966 and let the democratically elected president, Julio César Méndez Montenegro, take power, the guerrilla movement lost an essential reason to be supported.¹⁶¹ Civilian leadership of Guatemala in the 1958-1995 period was limited to President Montenegro (1966-1970), after his term the army took back formal control of the country again.¹⁶²

Ironically, the return of a civilian president would lead the country into more terror. The army made sure to safeguard the strength it had amassed since the 1954 coup. Before the 1966 election they forced the candidates to sign a pact securing military privileges, in return the government would not be overthrown. The new government of Montenegro was forced to follow a strict anti-communist line, and refrain from intervening in military affairs, and was thus not allowed to end the anti-guerrilla campaign.¹⁶³ With these measures in place, the army had the power it needed to complete its task unhindered, and at the same time avoid the strain of running the country. The civilian government would have to take the blame for many of the abuses of the army. Another way in which the army avoided dealing with direct responsibility

¹⁶⁰ McClintock, *The American Connection, Volume Two: State terror and Popular Resistance in Guatemala*, 54-59.

¹⁶¹ Peralta and Beverly, "Terror and Violence as Weapons of Counterinsurgency in Guatemala," 96-97.

¹⁶² Kruijt, "Guatemala's Political Transitions, 1960s-1990s," 13.

¹⁶³ McClintock, *The American Connection, Volume Two: State terror and Popular Resistance in Guatemala*, 78.; Jonas, "Dangerous Liaisons: The U. S. in Guatemala," 146.

for its actions was in the use of paramilitary groups and their reluctance to stop so-called “Death Squads”.¹⁶⁴

The new government lifted the censorship of the press that had been in place for many years. The lifting turned out to be inefficient and short-lived. Campaigns against the left ramped up, and activists were found dead in ditches or disappeared. The media covered the cases, and many of them were put in front of the courts, pressing for habeas corpus in the cases of the disappeared. The new president had promised the cessation of government abuses, torture and assassinations, but nothing happened. The torture facilities promised to be closed, were not, and there was very little or no action in the cases of the disappeared. Victims, and families of victims were also attempted silenced by vigilante groups, by threats and killings.¹⁶⁵

November 7, 1966, the “Zacapa-offensive” began. The offensive was mostly targeted at the Zacapa region in eastern Guatemala, where the main guerrilla forces were situated at the time. Parallel to this the government had other offensives in other rural areas of the country, as well as in the cities. The government made use of a three-pronged strategy. The army was tasked with hunting down the main guerrilla units, a militia trained by the military was put in charge of keeping local communities safe, and the government sponsored social programs and public works.¹⁶⁶

A key factor of the US counterinsurgency doctrine that the Guatemalans followed was the use of paramilitary groups. The army organized bands of civilians to fight local threats, and to keep order. These paramilitary groups were made up of people with a stake in fighting against the guerrillas, landowners, anti-communists and so forth. They were trained and outfitted by the army, making them a capable “counter-guerrilla” force. Another key factor to combat the terror of the guerrillas was “counter-terror”. This meant fighting the guerrillas with the same tools the guerrillas used, and to force unruly peasants to comply with the demands of the state and cease to support the guerrillas. This use of often indiscriminate torture and killings would lead to tens of thousands of dead by the hands of the army and the paramilitary groups. The doctrine also urged measures meant to attract people to the government’s side, and not just

¹⁶⁴ McClintock, *The American Connection, Volume Two: State terror and Popular Resistance in Guatemala*, 83-86.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 80-83.

¹⁶⁶ McGill, "The Guatemalan Counterinsurgency Strategy," 11.

violent coercion. These measures included public works and other means to aid the population, but were often neglected in favor of terror.¹⁶⁷

One of the most infamous actors in the paramilitary realm was the *Movimiento de Liberación Nacional*, or MLN. The political party was situated far to the right and was strongly anti-communist. It was thus the perfect source of recruits for the paramilitary movement. To organize, the army had a vast network of military commissioners. Traditionally they had the role of finding recruits for the army, usually from the indigenous population. During the Peralta regime they gained the additional role of setting up local militias to fight the insurgency. This was one of the ways that the MLN became directly involved in the fight against the guerrillas. MLN supporters would join the military commissioners, and fight on behalf of the army, which they shared the main anti-communist sentiment with. Another aspect of this partnership however was that the violence usually would follow class lines. MLN supporters, often associated with the richer, land-owning class, would fight against the poorer, often indigenous, population. This naturally led to violence not necessarily caused by peasants being guerrilla supporters, but rather them being on the wrong terms with the elites.¹⁶⁸

Not to be confused with the government sponsored militias were the “Death Squads”, groups such as *Mano Blanca*, and *Consejo Anti-Comunista de Guatemala*. These were right-wing terrorist groups that appeared both in the cities and in the rural areas. Although not explicitly given government support, they were not prosecuted by the army either. They were responsible for much of the violence that occurred between 1967 and 1970, after which they were less active for some years before violence grew again in the late 1970s.¹⁶⁹

The Zacapa offensive was relatively successful, in that it managed to defeat many of the guerrilla groups and send the rest into hiding. The cost was however high, and over 8000 are believed to have been killed in the operation.¹⁷⁰ Considering the guerrilla only numbered 200-300 active fighters in the same period, this is an extremely high number. The government strategy in the cities was also very violent, and the first occurrences of forced disappearances started in this period. And, though state sponsored violence was reduced somewhat in the first

¹⁶⁷ McClintock, *The American Connection, Volume Two: State terror and Popular Resistance in Guatemala*, 59-64.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 63-69.

¹⁶⁹ Collazo-Davila, "The Guatemalan Insurrection," 116.

¹⁷⁰ McClintock, *The American Connection, Volume Two: State terror and Popular Resistance in Guatemala*, 83.

years after the offensive, it never stopped completely. A system was set up for repression, and the army saw no reason to dismantle it.¹⁷¹

Repression in the 1970s and early 1980s

Throughout the 1970s the insurgent movement went through massive changes. From being almost completely wiped out at the beginning of the decade, they managed to build up and become a bigger threat than ever before. By the end of 1981 they had so much control over the Western region of the country that they were about to declare it liberated territory.¹⁷² And they had a presence in nineteen of twenty-two Departments, including Guatemala City.¹⁷³ Considering the victory of rebel forces in Nicaragua just two years prior, it was not viewed as unlikely for the rebellion to win. Over the next couple of years, the GOG launched a counterinsurgency campaign of unprecedented violence. The campaign meant the end of the guerrillas' high point, and the death of most of the victims in a civil war that cost more than 200 000 Guatemalans their life.¹⁷⁴

Guatemala's three military presidents of the 1970s were all supported by the same two parties, MLN and the Institutional Democratic Party (PID), and were all active in the Zacapa offensive. During the 1970s violence the population continued to suffer state repression, but it was changes in the economic structure that laid the foundation for the new wave of guerrilla activity that emerged later in the decade, and led to violence on another level.

The first president, Colonel Carlos Arana Osorio (1970-1974) started a violent campaign of terror that would put Guatemala into the international spotlight. A state of siege was declared which led to hundreds of deaths. And there were several examples of critics of this policy being disappeared and killed. The killings in Guatemala were starting to get picked up by international human rights groups, which documented the atrocities and criticized them profoundly.¹⁷⁵ The US Congress also took note of the situation and started hearings. The presidency of Arana was the period where Guatemala received the most support from the USA.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 94.

¹⁷² Christopher Paul et al., "Guatemala, 1960–1996 Case Outcome: COIN Win," in *Paths to Victory*, Detailed Insurgency Case Studies (RAND Corporation, 2013), 140.

¹⁷³ McGill, "The Guatemalan Counterinsurgency Strategy," 16.

¹⁷⁴ Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico, "Guatemala Memoria del Silencio: Capítulo primero: Causas y orígenes del enfrentamiento armado interno," (Ciudad de Guatemala 1999), <http://www.centrodememoriahistorica.gov.co/descargas/guatemala-memoria-silencio/guatemala-memoria-del-silencio.pdf> (Accessed 09.01.2019). 65.

¹⁷⁵ Amnesty International, *Amnesty International: Annual Report: 1 June 1970 - 31 May 1971* (London: Amnesty International Publications, 1971).

Both financially and through US boots on the ground. The financial support for the Guatemalan military went from about \$2 million in 1970, to about \$10 million in 1971, and remained high for several years. The State Department denied that US troops were involved in combat in Guatemala, and that they were solely there as instructors or similar assistance for the Guatemalan military. It is however likely that troops were engaged in combat operations.¹⁷⁶

The administration of General Kjell Laugerud García (1974-1978) seemed at first to take a completely different path than that of Arana's.¹⁷⁷ The Laugerud administration coincided with the growth of the second wave of guerrillas in Guatemala. This new wave deviated from the former one in many ways, primarily in the origin of its combatants. Whereas the first wave of guerrillas had their background in the military, the new sprung out of the indigenous communities. While resistance from indigenous communities were nothing new for Guatemala, as there had been uprisings since the colonization, the one that sprung up in the 1970s was on a far broader scale. The background for the new guerrilla movement had a lot to do with changes in the Guatemalan economy that started in the 50s. As a way of getting access to foreign exchange the government started to promote industrial agriculture, like cotton and sugar cane, in the late 1950s.¹⁷⁸ The sector grew considerably over the next twenty years and changed life for many indigenous citizens. Due to the location and requirement for labor of the farms, thousands had to travel from their villages inland, to the farms by the coast to help with the harvest. By 1970, more than 200 000 did this trip every year.¹⁷⁹ This meant that members of the many indigenous communities, previously relatively isolated from one another due to geography and language, were now stowed together for an extended amount of time. As they together experienced the horrible working and living conditions of these farms, and the abuses of their bosses, ties were made across cultural barriers.

Repression and organizing against it was not limited to the rural areas and the agricultural business. The urban areas of Guatemala were affected by economic development, and the increase in industry. Although Laugerud in his first years was relatively kind on the labor

¹⁷⁶ McClintock, *The American Connection, Volume Two: State terror and Popular Resistance in Guatemala*, 101-09.

¹⁷⁷ Laugerud had Norwegian roots. Alex Rosén, "Folk i farta -Alex Rosén møter Kjell Laugerud Garcia, diktator i Guatemala med røtter i Hokksund," Norsk Rikskringkasting (Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation), <https://tv.nrk.no/serie/folk-i-farta/2001/FUHA19000600/avspiller>.

¹⁷⁸ McClintock, *The American Connection, Volume Two: State terror and Popular Resistance in Guatemala*, 130.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

unions that quickly appeared and grew, his tolerance turned out to be both deceitful and damaging to the population in the long run. When an earthquake struck Guatemala February 4, 1976, the government utilized the chaos to instigate another wave of terror and repression.¹⁸⁰ The massive earthquake of 7,5 on the Richter's scale made over a million Guatemalans homeless, and killed over 22 000. Just days after the quake, while people were still in shock, mourning their dead, or finding a place to sleep, companies were firing unionized workers for not showing up to work. In the countryside the authorities started a campaign to destroy farmers' collectives that had been growing well under the first years of Laugerud's presidency, killing key leaders. The combined outrage of the poor being maltreated this way led to massive protests, and the creation of the umbrella labor organization *Comité Nacional de Unidad Sindical* (National Committee of Trade Union Unity, or CNUS), joining both industrial workers in the cities and peasant workers in the countryside.¹⁸¹ The advent of a newborn labor movement again increased government repression. Brutal crackdowns on strikes and assassination of labor leaders or sympathizers became more common.

One of the most important results of the increased cooperation between different indigenous groups was the creation of the *Comité de Unidad Campesina* (Committee for Peasant Unity or the CUC). This semi clandestine organization managed to organize indigenous peasants across the different groups and combine their efforts.¹⁸² The fact that it was partly clandestine, without lists of members or leaders, made it stronger against the repression of the government. As other unions and organizations were continuously harassed and struck by assassination of leaders and members. The CUC was not directly involved in guerrilla operations, but sympathized with their struggle, and later supported them.

By the end of the 1970s four major guerrilla groups had developed. The Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP), the Organization of the People in Arms (ORPA), the Rebel Armed Forces (FAR) and a group from the Guatemalan Communist Party (PGT).¹⁸³ The government's ever-increasing repression pushed the indigenous communities towards the guerrillas, and the new

¹⁸⁰ Not everyone agrees on this. Christopher Paul argues that the insurgents used the chaos to their advantage, and started an offensive against the government while the military was preoccupied with disaster relief. Paul et al., "Guatemala, 1960–1996 Case Outcome: COIN Win," 139.

¹⁸¹ McClintock, *The American Connection, Volume Two: State terror and Popular Resistance in Guatemala*, 136-37.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 145.

¹⁸³ See Abbreviations and Acronyms pp. XI-XII, for Spanish names on the groups.

guerrilla groups were open to the idea of cooperating with the indigenous population in contrast with their predecessors of the 1960s. Thus, the new guerrilla groups enjoyed far more support locally where they operated. They were able to spread wider geographically and prove more of a challenge towards the government.¹⁸⁴ Just like in the 1960s the insurgency went through a period of organizing, laying low and taking few risky actions. During the 1977-1979 period they began operating again. The operations were low risk kidnappings, assassinations and bombings that mainly targeted political figures and members of the security forces.¹⁸⁵

On January 19, 1980, the four major guerrilla groups organized into a united guerrilla front, *Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteco* (URNG).¹⁸⁶ The unification of the groups came after pressure from Cuba and the new Sandinista regime in Nicaragua.¹⁸⁷ Although the different groups retained a large degree of independence, they agreed on a common two-step tactic. The first step was to take smaller communities and *fincas* and indoctrinate its inhabitants. The second step would increase the stakes, and aim for large scale confrontation against larger targets, like towns and cities. This last step was hoped to eventually bring a government collapse.¹⁸⁸ The URNG managed to take some larger cities at its high point in 1982.

The situation did not improve with Laugerud's successor, general Romeo Lucas Garcia. During his reign from 1978-82 the country experienced a downward spiral into a state of terror like nothing witnessed before, only to be continued with the next president. The security system had dealt with the threat of subversion mainly with assassination of individuals deemed as subversives, or leaders of "subversive" groups. During the Lucas regime they gradually came to rely more on massive violence like massacres. This coincided with a reduced tolerance for any form of protest or dissent, and meeting such with extreme violence. Thus, the death tolls spiked, and the population became more wary of open

¹⁸⁴ McClintock, *The American Connection, Volume Two: State terror and Popular Resistance in Guatemala*, 152-56.

¹⁸⁵ McGill, "The Guatemalan Counterinsurgency Strategy," 15-16.

¹⁸⁶ Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity.

¹⁸⁷ Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico, "Guatemala Memoria del Silencio: Capítulo segundo: Las violaciones de los derechos humanos y los hechos de violencia," (Ciudad de Guatemala 1999), <http://www.centrodememoriahistorica.gov.co/descargas/guatemala-memoria-silencio/guatemala-memoria-del-silencio.pdf> (Accessed 09.01.2019). 237.

¹⁸⁸ Garrard-Burnett, *Terror in the Land of the Holy Spirit: Guatemala Under General Efraim Rios Montt 1982-1983*, 41.

disagreement with the government. The result of this was not however in the government's interest. Being unable to fight the government in a peaceful manner, the population turned towards the guerrillas. They increased in popularity, personnel and support. Two especially important events in this development of the situation was the Panzós massacre and the Spanish Embassy fire. During a protest against land expropriation in the village of Panzós the military opened fire killing more than 50 indigenous activists. This event is seen by many as a watershed in the way the military dealt with protest, as it was very violent even by Guatemalan standards at the time.¹⁸⁹ Two years later the government again upped the ante. During a protest in the Spanish Embassy in Guatemala City, the military firebombed it. A group of indigenous protesters had occupied the embassy in an attempt to gain attention to the abysmal situation in the countryside, with the approval of the ambassador of Spain. By setting the embassy on fire the government killed not only most of the protesters, but also many of the staff, and the Guatemalan foreign minister. Again, the military showed that they would not stop at anything in their fight against subversion.

Montt's Reign

By the time Lucas Garcia was overthrown in 1982 the guerrillas had spread out and by some estimates controlled as much as 90 percent of the Guatemalan highland. They had run a bombing campaign against economic and infrastructure targets. This hurt the tourist industry in particular.¹⁹⁰ And their numbers of insurgent forces had grown to somewhere between 3000 and 6000 (the GOG estimated 10- 12 000), in contrast to the 200-300 prior to the Zacapa offensive.¹⁹¹

This was however only one of the reasons for Garcia's ouster. The high degree of violence also worried the military and the far right due to the way it isolated Guatemala internationally, making them fear for the long-term survival of the military institution itself. The increase in corruption within the government, and the military's eagerness of handing out the land in the northern parts of the country to themselves did not help either.¹⁹² The new leader of the nation (never officially president) general José Efraín Ríos Montt, however only escalated violence.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 46-47.

¹⁹⁰ McGill, "The Guatemalan Counterinsurgency Strategy," 16.

¹⁹¹ Paul et al., "Guatemala, 1960–1996 Case Outcome: COIN Win.;" Garrard-Burnett, *Terror in the Land of the Holy Spirit: Guatemala Under General Efraín Ríos Montt 1982-1983*, 41.

¹⁹² Garrard-Burnett, *Terror in the Land of the Holy Spirit: Guatemala Under General Efraín Ríos Montt 1982-1983*, 25, 50.

It is estimated that 43 percent of the 200 000 killed during the Guatemalan Civil War died during Montt's regime.¹⁹³

Montt's regime was characterized by its mixture of passionate religious rhetoric, nationalism and extreme violence. Montt, a born-again Pentecostal Christian blamed many of Guatemala's problems on a lack of religious morality. Were everyone to follow the same religious path as him the country would witness prosperity and peace. Coupled with this was his distaste at how the country was a split nation that did not speak the a single language. His criticism on this point was obviously targeted at the indigenous population. That was the part of the Guatemalan population that would suffer the most under him.¹⁹⁴

During the brief term of Montt the military made great progress towards destroying the guerrillas. The military tactic employed was ruthless and hit rural Guatemala extremely hard. Named *Victoria 82* (Victory 82) it was a campaign which mimicked the one used during the late 1960s. It was three pronged, where the three elements where: strengthening the military, setting up paramilitary civil defense forces that protected locally, and a comprehensive social program. In all three aspects of this strategy brutality was found. The military carried out a scorched-earth campaign, killing thousands and leaving people homeless. The civil defense groups forced participation by the rural population, and the social programs led to forced movement.¹⁹⁵ It proved to be very effective, and by 1985 the guerrillas were reduced to only its core.¹⁹⁶ Not only were the guerrillas decimated militarily, the support also dwindled from a people that found the price for fighting too high. Guerrilla sabotage of the economy affected the poor population proportionally higher than it affected the rich, and the increasingly more desperate guerrilla also started to threaten civilians with violence in order to obtain food. Thus, the amicable relationship between the guerrillas and the poor peasants crumbled, depriving the insurgency of one of its main advantages.¹⁹⁷

Despite the military success of Montt, his reign was cut short by a coup. When he was replaced by his own defense minister on August 8, 1983 the military made a big point of his and his followers' focus on religion, describing the dictator as a religious fanatic. Montt's

¹⁹³ Ibid., 6-7.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 65-71.

¹⁹⁵ United States Department of State. *Guatemala: Reports of Atrocities Mark Army Gains*. 1982. <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB11/docs/doc17.pdf> (Accessed February 2, 2018).

¹⁹⁶ Paul et al., "Guatemala, 1960-1996 Case Outcome: COIN Win," 142.

¹⁹⁷ Brands, *Latin America's Cold War*, 206-10.

focus on religious and moral issues were not shared by many in the army, but there were also other things that concerned them. The economy had suffered greatly from the war ravaging the country for so long. Especially the cash crop sector, like coffee production, was unable to function properly, depriving the country of valuable foreign currency. The same was true for the tourism sector. Montt was unable to get the economy to grow again. Coupled with an erratic way of running the country, the military felt unsure of his rule.

Conclusion

The two Guatemalan cases treated in this chapter are examples of quite different insurgencies. While PBSUCCESS was more top-down in its method and appeal, the insurgency of the civil war had, at least in the second wave, a strong tie to the popular classes. While both cases are primarily results of domestic Guatemalan historic currents, they were severely impacted by the Cold War, both ideologically and in terms of their basis in material support. Both the inspiration and fear that Marxist ideology injected into the conflicts had a profound impact. Materially however, the communist bloc had a limited impact.

The US impact on the cases was important, but it is not certain that it had a decisive role. While the USA had interests in both ousting Árbenz from power, and quelling the communist insurgency, domestic interests were arguably higher. It is more unlikely that these would have succeeded without domestic support, than without US support.

The analytical chapter will give a more thorough analysis of the insurgencies of this chapter, as well as the insurgency of the Cuban empirical chapter. With the help of that analysis the cases will be compared, and this comparison may yield an answer to the question of why PBSUCCESS was the only insurgency that succeeded of the three.

5 Background Chapter on Cuba

The US military involvement in Cuba after the Cuban Revolution was not the first time the USA had intervened on the island. The USA had a long tradition of involving itself in Cuban affairs. If anything, the US-created insurgency was the climax of a more than century-old conflict between the nations, which for good and bad, would render the Cuban nation independent of their giant neighbor to the north.

This chapter will deal with the relationship between the two countries from the early nineteenth century to the Cuban Revolution, and will showcase how the USA asserted their influence on the island in different ways over the years. The chapter will also deal with the domestic development of the country, from a colony with a slave economy, to an independent country with a revolutionary government. Factors internal to the country are the most important ones in explaining why Castro ended up in power.

Colonial Cuba

Unlike most of its sister colonies in Latin America, Cuba had not gained independence from Spain in the beginning of the century. In the same period, the Monroe Doctrine of 1823 laid the basis of what was to become a decisive part of US policy in the region in the following century. The Doctrine declared that the US did not find interference in South America by any European power acceptable, save for those colonies that still existed. As Cuba was still a colony of Spain, the USA would not interfere. At the same time, they would not accept interference by a third-party on the island.¹⁹⁸

The idea of Cuba becoming a part of the USA started to take shape in the same period. As the island shared their economic model with the southern states of the USA, this was an idea that was appealing for economic elites in both nations. The English ban on the slave trade in 1817 was especially important in this matter. The Spanish empire had weakened considerably with the loss of most of its colonies. The Cuban elites did not believe Spain was strong enough to protect the Cuban economic model from the threat of English anti-slavery.¹⁹⁹

For the Americans, the ability of Spain to protect Cuba was key. If they were to lose control the Americans wanted to take over the island, instead of a third party doing so, or the island

¹⁹⁸ Louis A. Pérez, *Cuba : Between Reform and Revolution*, 3rd ed. ed., Latin American Histories (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 80.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 78-81.

becoming independent. An independent island was seen as a threat by the Yankees, due to their fear of another black republic, like Haiti, and its possible effect on the Southern slave states of the USA.²⁰⁰ Therefore, attempts were made by the USA to purchase Cuba from Spain in the 1840s and 1850s as well as annexation attempts by individuals.²⁰¹ The idea of annexation was laid to rest with civil war in the USA. The fall of the slave states made it unattractive and pointless.²⁰²

The Cuban economy was centered around the cultivation of sugarcane, with few other industries or crops. This made Cuba prone to huge economic swings, booms and busts. In addition, there were big differences within the country, where the West of the island had a much better economic performance than the East. With a poor economy, and a bigger tax burden, the East grew unhappy with the state of affairs in Cuba, especially the Spanish control over the island. The wish for independence grew stronger in the region, and rebellions against the colonial power would start there.²⁰³

An unsuccessful rebellion broke out in 1868, called the Ten Years War. The war led the economy of the island further into chaos, and was devastating for the plantations in the east. The collapse of the plantations in the East after the war was the beginning of a shift in the Cuban plantation model. In order to compete on the international sugar market, the plantations would have to invest in new machinery and infrastructure. Their lack of capital made it impossible. The solution became the end of the traditional creole elite plantation class. American capital flooded into the plantation economy to make it profitable again, the drawback was that the old elite lost their ownership to US companies, and became administrators on their old plantations.²⁰⁴

Gradually the Cuban economy got back on its feet, and by the 1890s it was growing rapidly. But a tariff increase by the USA in 1894 sent the record strong economy into another massive crisis. The crisis was in many ways seen as a result of Spanish politics, and this, in

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 81.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 81-82.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 83; *The Cambridge History of Latin America: Volume 5: c.1870 to 1930*, 5, 229-30.

²⁰³ *The Cambridge History of Latin America: Volume 5: c.1870 to 1930*, 5, 231.

²⁰⁴ Pérez, *Cuba : Between Reform and Revolution*, 102-03.; *The Cambridge History of Latin America: Volume 5: c.1870 to 1930*, 5, 233-35.

combination with the high dominance of Spanish born Cubans in Cuban politics and public office, made the island ripe for revolt.²⁰⁵

As before the East was the starting point of the insurrection, but it spread surprisingly fast. By August the rebel army marched into the Western parts of Cuba, something they never managed in the former insurrections. Autonomous ideas had up to that point gathered some traction, making colonial rule slightly more reformist in an effort to weaken the rebellion. The spread of the insurrection did, however, have the effect of halting the reforms and instead Spain reverted to strong colonial conservatism, with the goal of crushing the rebellion.²⁰⁶

In the years leading up to the War of 1895 there had been a multitude of smaller, unsuccessful, rebellions in the name of "Cuba Libre". What made the insurrection of 1895 different, and more potent, was its ideology and structure. Earlier rebellions had been led by the planter elites of the West. They wanted Spain out of Cuba, while they protected their properties and privileges. The new rebellion had its basis in a Cuban Revolutionary party, along with its ideological framework. The party saw the conflict as something larger than just driving Spain out of Cuba, they wanted to change the Cuban society, and wanted to create a democracy with social justice and economic freedom. This made them natural enemies of the Cuban elites that did not want to lose their privilege. The basis of the movement was therefore also of another nature. It was professionals, workers, blacks and other groups with little social power that made up the backbone of the rebellion. It was a movement created from the bottom up, in contrast to the earlier movements with their origins from the top down.²⁰⁷

The Spanish answer to the Cuban rebel army's success was to attack the countryside. The war turned into a kind of proxy war, where the armies did not fight each other, but rather fought their opponent's supporters. The Spanish attacked the supporters of the revolutionaries, the peasantry, while the rebels attacked the planters. The free-moving peasantry was a source of intelligence on Spanish troops and resources. Spanish general Valeriano Weyler decided to stop this. Peasants were forcibly moved from their villages into protected reconcentration camps, their houses and crops were burned. In the camps, the peasants died by the tens of thousands due to illness and hunger. The Spanish strategy devastated the Cuban countryside.

²⁰⁵ Pérez, *Cuba : Between Reform and Revolution*, 113-15.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 118-19.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 120-22.; *The Cambridge History of Latin America: Volume 5: c.1870 to 1930*, 5, 235-38.

But instead of demoralizing the rural population, it forced the formerly peaceful part of the population into fighting for their independence.²⁰⁸

Despite the strong measures Spain got no closer to winning the war by 1897. The war took a huge toll on the Cuban elites, and they saw no possibility to win. This led to the renewed wish for a stronger relationship with the USA. It was the only power the Cuban elite believed could win the war, and at the same time protect the social structure of Cuba.²⁰⁹

Throughout 1897 the Cuban army gained control over the countryside and started to take smaller cities from the Spaniards. By 1898 the Revolutionaries were confident of victory over the increasingly weaker-looking enemy that was retreating to the bigger cities for a final defense.²¹⁰

While the Cuban Revolutionaries looked upon the situation with hope, the US government dreaded it. US policy on Cuba during the past century had made it clear that they did not want Cuba to fall into the hands of a third party; and neither did the Cuban population. There was a strong wish within the administration of President William McKinley to annex the island into the union. However, in the press and in the US Congress there was growing sentiment for the Cuba Libre cause, which limited the administration's options.²¹¹ Therefore, when the plans to intervene militarily in Cuba were approved by Congress in April 1898 it came with the clause that the USA were not to annex the island.²¹² The war ended the same year, with Spain utterly defeated.

Despite the promise of independence of the island the Cubans were not the victors of the war. Despite their sacrifice and long struggle, they were denied recognition. Instead the USA took all the credit for defeating the Spaniards, thus stripping the Cubans of any say in the peace negotiations with Spain.²¹³

The USA feared what would happen to Cuba if the *Independistas* took power. For them it seemed the next best alternative for Cuba, after annexation, was that the old, white elites continued ruling. The US government and press largely saw the *Independistas* as inferior and

²⁰⁸ Pérez, *Cuba : Between Reform and Revolution*, 126-28.; *The Cambridge History of Latin America: Volume 5: c.1870 to 1930*, 5, 239.

²⁰⁹ Pérez, *Cuba : Between Reform and Revolution*, 133-34.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 134-35.

²¹¹ *The Cambridge History of Latin America: Volume 5: c.1870 to 1930*, 5, 240.

²¹² Pérez, *Cuba : Between Reform and Revolution*, 136-37.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 137.

incompetent to rule the country. The McKinley administration did not feel the Cubans were ready for independence, but at the same time could not go against the US Congress. Congress had passed the “Teller Amendment”, which forbade the government from annexing Cuba. The solution to the dilemma was to force through an amendment to the new Cuban constitution. The “Platt Amendment”, named after Senator Orville H. Platt, explicitly stated that Cuba was a protectorate of the USA, and that the USA had the right to intervene militarily to ensure government stability, in the name of protecting life, property and civil liberties.²¹⁴ The issue for the Cubans was that the US government also wanted to protect the Cubans from themselves, and thus strangling Cuba’s right to self-determination. The Platt Amendment effectively gave the USA a veto power over Cuban politics, and made sure they would strangle any attempt at armed insurrection or other disturbances it deemed undesirable. Despite protests in Cuba, it was ratified by their constituent assembly in 1901, with the USA threatening to not seize their occupation unless their demands were met.²¹⁵

Limited Independence

Cuba was in ruins after the war. Farms and mills were burned, the economy was bad, but worst of all the people had experienced unimaginable suffering. The population was down by roughly 300 000, from a peak of 1.8 million.²¹⁶

There were three important issues in the Cuban politics of the early twentieth century. The dominance of foreign powers in the economy and politics, the increased struggle between the labor movement and industry, and the fight against corruption in domestic politics.²¹⁷

The old economic elites were ruined, and the island lacked capital to build up the old farms and industry. As a result, foreign investments soared. European investors from France, England, Spain and Germany invested heavily, but were dwarfed by US investments. In the years after the war US capital started to dominate every aspect of the Cuban economy. They bought the majority of Cuban agricultural land, mines, railroads and other infrastructure. In addition to this, new tariffs on trade between Cuba and the USA were put in place, lowering duties in general. This cemented the Cuban economy's dependency on the sugar industry, and

²¹⁴ *The Cambridge History of Latin America: Volume 5: c.1870 to 1930*, 5, 247.

²¹⁵ Pérez, *Cuba : Between Reform and Revolution*, 138-44.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 144.; Cambridge History of Latin America gives a more conservative figure of 161 000. *The Cambridge History of Latin America: Volume 5: c.1870 to 1930*, 5, 244.

²¹⁷ Marifeli Pérez-Stable, *The Cuban revolution : Origins, Course, and Legacy*, 2nd ed. ed., Cuban Revolution (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 36-60.

crushed the local industry. The tiny factories of Cuba could not compete with those of the USA.²¹⁸

Capital was controlled by foreign powers, and the Platt Amendment controlled or at least limited many aspects of political life. Several smaller revolts were quashed by the US-military, which through the Platt Amendment had the right to intervene if they feared disorder on the island. Alongside the Platt Amendment the USA also asserted pressure on Cuba through the sugar industry. This was the main export and source of growth for the island, and the USA was their biggest market. Threatening to increase the special low tariffs that made Cuban sugar more competitive in the US market gave the Americans another means of control, and this especially hampered diversification of the Cuban economy.²¹⁹

The labor movement grew and became more active. It developed from local unions fighting for better wages and conditions for themselves, to a nationwide movement of considerable political power. The Communist party became a powerful player early on, and controlled the national labor union from the 1920s to the 1940s. Even though their share of the vote was around 7 percent they had a lot of influence in Cuban politics, and often collaborated with the government.²²⁰

As the economy was dominated by foreign capital, the only true Cuban arena was domestic politics. Getting into political office guaranteed power and money. Unfortunately, the political realm developed into a world of nepotism and corruption. An ever-expanding national budget created more offices for corrupt officials to hold, and more public works to exploit. Corruption naturally became a contested subject in national politics, receiving a lot of criticism.²²¹

The economy had its ups and downs in the first half of the twentieth century. World War One gave the economy a boost when sugar prices rose, and gave an equal blow when prices fell and overinvestments indebted plantations.²²² Then, as the economy started to improve in the later part of the 1920s, the depression hit. The political turmoil that followed led to a military coup in 1933, and a new civilian government. The new government was too radical for the

²¹⁸ Pérez, *Cuba : Between Reform and Revolution*, 149-53.

²¹⁹ Pérez-Stable, *The Cuban revolution : Origins, Course, and Legacy*, 5,36.

²²⁰ Pérez, *Cuba : Between Reform and Revolution*, 180-83.; Pérez-Stable, *The Cuban revolution : Origins, Course, and Legacy*, 49.

²²¹ Pérez-Stable, *The Cuban revolution : Origins, Course, and Legacy*, 38.

²²² Skidmore, Smith, and Green, *Modern Latin America*, 118.

USA's likings, and the USA made a deal with the orchestrator of the coup, Sergeant Fulgencio Batista. Soon the radical government was out of office and replaced with a more moderate one. More importantly though, was the change in the role of the military. It now became a power factor itself, instead of being a tool for the Cuban government. Over the next quarter of a century Batista would have a key role in Cuban politics, both as the chief of the armed forces, and as President of Cuba. In 1934 President Franklin D. Roosevelt of the USA abrogated the Platt Amendment. Responsibility for order on Cuba was now in the hands of the Cuban army.²²³

From 1934 to 1940 Batista ruled the nation through puppet presidents, until he ran for office in 1940.²²⁴ In these early years Batista was both reform-friendly and popular.²²⁵ The economy was growing, and the strong hand of the army prevented unrest. The governments succeeding Batista in 1944, though reform-friendly, were not able to mend the largest flaws of the nation. Corruption increased, the economy did not diversify, and social unrest and violence rose again.²²⁶ The army under the leadership of Batista overthrew the government again in 1952. Although the fall of the old government did not create much protest from the people, it did not create enthusiasm for the new government either.²²⁷ Batista did not enjoy the support he had his first term in office, when he inserted himself as President in 1952.²²⁸ Over the next seven years in office his hold on the nation weakened. The people of Cuba started to lose faith in the president, as neither the economy nor democracy became stronger. Protests against the government was met with increased repression, and violence. Batista was not able nor interested in giving in to popular demands, and instead looked to increased corruption and cheating in elections to hold on to his power.

December 2, 1956, Fidel Castro landed with his 26th of July Movement on the eastern coast of Cuba. Castro and his movement, already well known for their attack on army barracks in 1953, managed to build up a rebel army in the Sierra Maestra. Armed resistance against Batista grew slowly all over the island, usually as guerrillas hiding in remote mountains. As the political and economic situation deteriorated in the rest of Cuba, the guerillas managed to take control in the provinces. Despite their superior numbers and arms the Cuban Army was

²²³ Pérez-Stable, *The Cuban revolution : Origins, Course, and Legacy*, 40-42.

²²⁴ Pérez, *Cuba : Between Reform and Revolution*, 211.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 211-12.

²²⁶ Pérez-Stable, *The Cuban revolution : Origins, Course, and Legacy*, 50-52.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 52.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

not able to effectively fight the guerillas. By 1958 the USA had lost faith in Batista's ability to control the island. They seized arms shipments and begged him to step down to halt the progress of Fidel's army. Batista refused to step down, and by the end of the year his army had more or less collapsed, while the rebel army was on the offensive. By January 1, 1959, Batista had fled the island, the army had surrendered, and Fidel Castro had proclaimed a new and revolutionary government.²²⁹

Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen how Cuba underwent a transformation from a colony with a slave-based economy, to a *de facto* US protectorate, to succeeding with a domestic revolution. With this knowledge the following chapters will appear in a different light. The stubborn opposition from the revolutionary regime to the US-backed interventions are more understandable with the historic context. The US betrayal following the liberation war with Spain, and the following undermining of Cuban self-determination, made the Cuban's suspicious of US intentions and determined to avoid falling into the sphere of influence of the USA again. The Cuban's intent of going their separate way would turn out to not be acceptable to the USA. The following conflict between the nations did not only turn Castro into one of the most prominent revolutionary leaders of the world, especially after his forces defeated the US backed Bay of Pigs invasion. It also firmly cemented Cuba within the communist world, and almost caused a third World War.

Although the dynamics of the Cold War would influence the following conflict immensely, its influence can be overplayed. The events recounted in this chapter show that US interventions on the island had a long history prior to the outbreak of the Cold War. The following chapters can therefore also be viewed within the perspective of US reluctance to break with the old ways of viewing the island, as a country that had to be within the US sphere of influence, and through protecting US economic interests on the island. If anything, the Cold War affected the old patterns by raising the conflict to a new level ideologically, something which served Castro as a tool of appeal and control, but also made him that much more dangerous to the USA.

²²⁹ Ibid., 52-60.; Skidmore, Smith, and Green, *Modern Latin America*, 122-23.

6 Empirical chapter on Cuba

Eisenhower

Before the Cuban Revolution, Latin America seemed fairly stable for the US government, and their concern about the region was fairly low. Suddenly Cuba went from being a problematic dictatorship to a revolutionary regime, gaining attention by the day from US policymakers and politicians. During the years of the Castro insurgency on the island the USA had a troubled relationship with Batista. The regime was riddled with issues of corruption, nepotism and human rights violations. Batista's personalistic dictatorship was inefficient, corrupt and unpopular, which made for many enemies, Castro being only one of them. As the years went by in the latter period of Batista's presidency, 1952-59, the USA viewed him less as a stabilizer of Cuban society, and more of a liability. The insurgency against him clear proof of this. It became apparent that Batista's resignation would be the most effective way of ensuring stability on the island and avoid the unsure future a victory by the insurgents would bring. Batista refused to do any such thing and decided to stay in office. Not even a weapons embargo of the island from the USA could change his mind.²³⁰

The USA were suspicious of the leader of what became the most important insurgency against Batista. The fear of communism was the sign of the times. However, Castro did not proclaim himself a communist, but rather a nationalist. The CIA, which had a strong presence in Cuba, and a tight relationship with the Batista security apparatus, could not attest that Castro was a communist either. Considering the broad resentment of Batista in Cuban society, not only from the working class and peasants, but also from middle and business classes tired of the rampant corruption and bad state of the economy, it was not necessary that opposition against him would be communist in nature. It was, however, of concern to the USA that Fidel's brother Raúl and other higher-ups in the 26th of July movement, like Che Guevara, were proclaimed communists.²³¹

²³⁰ Lawrence Freedman, *Kennedy's wars : Berlin, Cuba, Laos, and Vietnam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 61-68.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 74.; Michael Grow, *U.S. Presidents and Latin American Interventions : Pursuing Regime Change in the Cold War* (Lawrence: University press of Kansas, 2008), 28,29.; Morris H. Morley, *Imperial State and Revolution : the United States and Cuba, 1952-1986* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 91.

Castro in Charge

When Castro's forces moved in on Havana January 8, 1959, the USA had a dilemma on their hands. Castro's political direction for the island was unclear but worrisome. He was considered a possible liability for the entire hemisphere were he to turn communist, in the age of the domino theory. The USA had strong interest in the island, due to its strategic location close to the US mainland, which would make for a disaster if it were to fall within Soviet influence. More pressing at first were the substantial US investments, of around \$ 1 billion, on the island, which the USA wanted to protect.²³² Interestingly, during the first months of the revolution there was cautious optimism surrounding Castro's regime from many in the business sector.²³³ Stabilizing the Cuban economy and getting rid of corruption were popular causes amongst investors. In his first cabinet Castro also made sure to include several figures that were considered conservative and professional, thus easing uneasiness amongst local business owners, and US politicians and policymakers.²³⁴

The sense of optimism eroded quickly.²³⁵ The revolutionary regime sought ends not in favor of the higher classes of Cuban society, but rather the lower ones. The regime's main concerns were to improve the situation for the popular classes, diversify and strengthen the economy, and improve the trade deficit. In some ways these goals were tied together. Increasing wages for workers would increase their buying power, thus increasing demand for many goods that could be created locally. It did not turn out to be so easy, however. Many of the means used to improve the situation for the workers were unpopular amongst powerful foes. Rates on telephony and electricity were reduced, at the beginning of 1959, to the displeasure of the US owned companies providing these services.²³⁶

Stepping over the Line

Perhaps the most important step however was the Agrarian Reform Act. On June 3, 1959, the Cuban government enacted the law limiting the size of private land ownership. The idea was to redistribute land from the giant sugar plantations, into the hands of peasants and state-run farms. The law was met with strong opposition from the United States. This despite the fact

²³² Grow, *U.S. Presidents and Latin American Interventions : Pursuing Regime Change in the Cold War*, 29.; Morley, *Imperial State and Revolution : the United States and Cuba, 1952-1986*, 46-55.

²³³ Morley, *Imperial State and Revolution : the United States and Cuba, 1952-1986*, 77, 91, 99-100.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 75.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 100-01.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 76-81.

that it was Cuban owned properties that were affected first. The USA argued that compensation for expropriated properties was too low, and threatened retaliation. Reduction of the sugar quota, prohibition of US investments on the island and stopping aid were all brought up. The strong opposition to the reform was caused by increasing worry about Castro's policy and rhetoric. It did not work, however, and gradually during the fall of 1959 several large plantations, ranches and mines were expropriated from US hands. This marked a watershed in US-Cuban relations. The period of observing Castro was over, and he was now viewed as an enemy to the United States.²³⁷ From here on out, serious planning was commenced on covert actions against Castro, which we will return to later.²³⁸

Whether it was the expropriations of the Castro regime that was the deciding factor is contested. Michael Grow argues in his book *US Presidents and Latin American Interventions* that there were other factors that were more important. According to Grow, it was the threat Castro posed as a non-aligned and anti-American leader that was the deciding factor. Through the Cuban Revolution he set an example that the USA feared would spread through the hemisphere, making other countries join a bloc hostile to US hegemony in the region. This would pose a massive threat to the USA in terms of military strategic concerns, and economic interests. In this sense, Cuban economic reforms posed a threat to US economic interest far outside the island's borders. Despite the uncertainty surrounding the question of whether Castro was socialist or not, the domino theory was applied to the Cuban revolution. The revolution even without a definite Marxist direction was blamed for unrest in other Latin American countries. Grow also points to domestic political pressure within the USA, where rivals attacked Eisenhower for being soft on communism by not being aggressive against Castro, was an easy way of damaging the president, thus pressuring the government into action. This became especially important during the president election in 1960 between Kennedy and Richard Nixon, Eisenhower's vice president from 1953 to 1961.²³⁹

The threat of cutting the sugar quota was serious for the Cuban economy. As the island's main export, sugar was the main source for US dollars. Losing this income meant that the island

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Grow, *U.S. Presidents and Latin American Interventions : Pursuing Regime Change in the Cold War*, 37.; Morley, *Imperial State and Revolution : the United States and Cuba, 1952-1986*, 81-88.

²³⁹ Grow, *U.S. Presidents and Latin American Interventions : Pursuing Regime Change in the Cold War*, 37-47.; . Memorandum From the Secretary of State to the President, November 5, 1959, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958-1960*, vol. VI, Cuba. Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1991. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1958-60v06/d387>. (Accessed October 2, 2018), Document 387.

would have to use from its low reserve of dollars, of about \$70 million. When this ran out the country would not be able to import all of the essentials that it could not manufacture themselves, like spare parts and medicine. It was therefore imperative to find a new trading partner. In February 1960 Cuba signed a trade deal with the Soviet Union. Sugar would be traded with the Soviets in return for 20 percent of the sugar's value in US dollars and the rest in goods from the Soviet Union. In addition, Cuba received a credit of \$100 million for purchase of industrial machinery and such. This ended the US monopoly of trading with the island, and secured income for Cuba's sugar harvest in the years to come.²⁴⁰ The Soviet-Cuban relationship only grew stronger, as Cuba started to import Soviet crude oil in the summer of 1960. The refineries in Cuba were foreign owned, US companies Texaco and Standard Oil, and Royal Dutch Shell. At first the oil companies were willing to refine the Soviet crude, due to their fear of expropriation. It did however mean a loss to them, as they had their own oil supply they wanted to export to Cuba, mainly from Venezuela. After conferring with the US government, the companies decided to refuse refining Soviet crude. June 29, 1960 the Cuban government started the process of taking control of the refineries. The oil companies reacted by refusing to hire ships that transported oil for the Cubans, and the US government helped by pressuring other countries into not trading with them either. After some debate in Congress, a revised sugar policy was enacted by the USA on July 6. The new policy reduced the Cuban sugar quota considerably.²⁴¹

The Cubans answered the cut of the quota by advancing the transformation of the Cuban economy. First any US interests not already under the control of the Cuban state, were nationalized. In October of the same year a second wave of nationalization was started, capturing most of the large-scale capital of the island.²⁴² Combining the change in the economic structure of Cuba, and their increasingly close relationship with the Soviet Union, the worst fears of the USA were realized. It begs the question whether this change in policy was a result of the USA pushing Cuba towards the Soviet Union by not letting them perform "reasonable" changes to their economy, or if it was Castro's goal all along to orient himself towards the communists. January 3, 1961 Cuba asked the USA to reduce their staffing at their

²⁴⁰ Morley, *Imperial State and Revolution : the United States and Cuba, 1952-1986*, 87.

²⁴¹ Richard Gott, *Cuba : A New History* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 2004), 182-84.

²⁴² Grow, *U.S. Presidents and Latin American Interventions : Pursuing Regime Change in the Cold War*, 50.; Gott, *Cuba : A New History*, 185-86.

Cuban embassy. This was answered with the USA closing their embassy and diplomatic relations with the island on January 12.²⁴³

Worldwide Pressure

During Eisenhower's time in office he not only sought to pressure Cuba through direct US-Cuban diplomatic channels, and US companies. He also put pressure on other countries within the "Free World", first and foremost through the USA's Western European and Latin American allies, to distance themselves from the regime.

In the early 1960, with the USA on clear collision course with Cuba, the USA started to ask for support within the OAS system.²⁴⁴ The Organization of American States was a regional institution, meant to function as a platform for the countries of the hemisphere to cooperate. Turning the member countries against Cuba would not only isolate Cuba from their closest neighbors, but also serve as an example for following such a treacherous path. It was however difficult for Eisenhower to convince the other countries to go against Cuba at this time. Most countries saw the issue as one purely between the USA and Cuba, not one that would or should affect them. Largely as a result of this earlier plans of aid for economic development were set in motion. This would later be known as the Alliance for Progress under Kennedy. The Cuban expulsion from the OAS would not come before February 1962, well into Kennedy's presidency.²⁴⁵

Diplomatic pressure did not help much, but Eisenhower was confident that economic warfare would. The plan was to damage the Cuban economy to the extent that Castro would lose popular support and force him out of office. Since the USA was the dominant trading partner for Cuba, a ban on US companies trading with the island would be catastrophic. Depriving Cuba of US technology that their industry was tailored to was thought to be the nail in the coffin for Castro. As an answer to the Cuban nationalizations in the fall of 1960 an extensive trade embargo was put in place on October 20. It was however feared that merely a US embargo was not enough, and the USA wanted its allies to join it. This would further limit Cuba from gaining access to foreign exchange through the sale of sugar and avoid reselling of US industrial equipment of spare parts. Many western European countries stopped delivering military equipment to the island but were more reluctant to end trading of non-military goods.

²⁴³ Morley, *Imperial State and Revolution : the United States and Cuba, 1952-1986*, 125-26.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 113-18.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 158.

The USA banned aid to countries purchasing Cuban sugar, but this affected few countries, and therefore had little effect.²⁴⁶

The measures taken against Cuba were damaging indeed.²⁴⁷ Cuba relied on US manufacturing for spare parts and equipment for their industry and services. Overnight the market disappeared, and the Cubans had to start importing Soviet equipment, which was not of the same quality, and required time to learn.²⁴⁸ Cuba could not purchase European or Japanese equipment either, because the sugar embargo deprived them of US dollars to purchase this equipment. Brain-drain was also an issue, as many highly educated, and technically skilled Cubans left for the USA.²⁴⁹ But Castro proved resilient and managed to survive the economic warfare, much thanks to the Soviet help, thus, Cuba was pushed further into the socialist camp.²⁵⁰

Eisenhower's Covert Campaigns

As we have seen, the US government was skeptical of the new Cuban government from the beginning but was not outright hostile. The Cuban government did however meet hostility from domestic groups in opposition to the new government. As Castro started to alter the Cuban society and economy many of the groups that in the beginning were more open and hopeful to his regime changed their allegiance. The opposition to Castro included former Batista associates, former supporters of Castro, the Church, and dissidents within universities and the state, but was not limited to these groups.²⁵¹ The opposition was both peaceful and violent, but this thesis will focus on the violent groups. The oppositions capabilities of violent opposition were substantial. Not only were they well founded as wealthy Cubans were alienated by Castro, but they also had the necessary experience to fight Castro. The fight against Batista was not only fought by Castro and his militias, but by several guerrilla groups

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 122-25.

²⁴⁷ Wright, *Latin America in the Era of the Cuban Revolution*, 59.; Enclosure 4, pp 2. United States Department of Defense. *Record of Paramilitary Action Against the Castro Government of Cuba: 17 March 1960 - May 1961*, Jack Hawkins. Clandestine Services History, 1961.
<https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB353/19610505.pdf> (Accessed December 8, 2017).

²⁴⁸ Gott, *Cuba : A New History*, 188.

²⁴⁹ Morley, *Imperial State and Revolution : the United States and Cuba, 1952-1986*, 124-25.

²⁵⁰ The trade embargo is still in place at the time of writing. One estimate claims it has cost the country \$130 billion since its inception. Nelson Acosta and Sarah Marsh, "U.S. trade embargo has cost Cuba \$130 billion, U.N. says," *Reuters.com*, no. May 9, 2018 (Accessed April 27, 2019), <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-cuba-economy-un/us-trade-embargo-has-cost-cuba-130-billion-un-says-idUSKBN1IA00T>.

²⁵¹ Central Intelligence Agency. *Cuban Opposition to the Castro Regime: Former Batista Associates; Former Castro Associates*. 0000132745, 1960. https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000132745.pdf (Accessed April 11, 2019).

around the island. Many of them, with time, realized they did not share Castro's vision of the future, and started to fight the Castro regime.²⁵² It was these groups, combined with exiles recruited in the USA, who would create the backbone of US plans to rid the island of its new ruler.

As 1959 unfolded, and the situation in Cuba changed there was an increasing disaffection with the new ruler of the island. Many started to distance themselves from the anti-dictatorial struggle they had supported earlier. As US intelligence had lost a great deal of its previous network of informers this was a godsend. Many state officials and army personnel either quit or were pushed out through 1959.²⁵³

On November 5, Eisenhower's secretary of state, Christian Herter, recommended that the USA should support the opposition in Cuba to overthrow Castro. At this point it was believed that Cuba was beyond saving as long as Castro stayed in office, and the recommendation was approved.²⁵⁴ Recruiting from the disillusioned population of Cuba, CIA was able to start a campaign of covert action already in the first year of the revolution. By the winter leading into 1960 they were coordinating bombings executed by exile Cubans against key Cuban interests. There was however no comprehensive plan at this moment.²⁵⁵

The use of Cuban citizens in the fight against Castro was influenced first and foremost by what is called "Plausible Deniability". The policy of plausible deniability was to hide involvement by US institutions in illegal or immoral cases that might harm the country, and to protect the president and other senior official from liability in these cases. By funding and coordinating Cuban exiles, the USA hoped to give the impression that any and all resistance in Cuba was a result of domestic quarrels. This policy has been criticized later, especially the work of the so-called Church Committee in 1975 would bring forward many of the questionable operations run by the CIA and other US institutions. Because this practice facilitates illegal and immoral operations, and because it aims to hide the involvement of the president and other officials, communication is kept vague between the top and bottom of the

²⁵² Morley, *Imperial State and Revolution : the United States and Cuba, 1952-1986*, 94.; Grow, *U.S. Presidents and Latin American Interventions : Pursuing Regime Change in the Cold War*, 35.

²⁵³ Morley, *Imperial State and Revolution : the United States and Cuba, 1952-1986*, 94.; Grow, *U.S. Presidents and Latin American Interventions : Pursuing Regime Change in the Cold War*, 35.

²⁵⁴ Grow, *U.S. Presidents and Latin American Interventions : Pursuing Regime Change in the Cold War*, 37.

²⁵⁵ Morley, *Imperial State and Revolution : the United States and Cuba, 1952-1986*, 94.

power hierarchy of the intelligence networks. Thus, orders from higher-ups can more easily be misinterpreted, or the higher-ups can miss crucial information from below.²⁵⁶

On January 18, 1960, the Cuba Task Force was created, also called WH/4, a part of CIA's Western Hemisphere Division.²⁵⁷ In charge of the station was Jacob D. Esterline, a World War Two veteran, experienced in guerrilla warfare, and had also been involved in the 1954 Guatemala coup.²⁵⁸ It was the WH/4 that had the main responsibility for the covert operations directed at Castro by the USA. The station grew quickly, from 40 people in the beginning of 1960 to almost 600 by the time of the Bay of Pigs attack. The decisions for action were formally taken by the National Security Council, an advisory body to the President on matters of international affairs, including representatives from numerous US government agencies.²⁵⁹ A "special group" was set up to deal with the Cuban issue, one that briefed President Eisenhower and (later) Kennedy daily. Thus several ministries were involved in the activities directed against Cuba, the Department of State and Defense, AID (Agency for International Development, now called USAID), USIA (United States Information Agency) and CIA, in addition to other high ranking officials in the administration, but the CIA would have the most hands-on approach to it.²⁶⁰ The main plan for US action was signed by the President on March 17, called "A Program for Covert Action against the Castro Regime", the only policy paper on the operation written. The program had four main points:

1. Create a unified opposition to Castro, located outside of Cuba.
2. Set up a radio signal and other capabilities to communicate propaganda to the Cuban people, in the name of the opposition.
3. Create an intelligence and action network within Cuba that answers to the opposition.

²⁵⁶ 11-12. United States Senate. *Alleged assassination plots involving foreign leaders: an interim report of the Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, United States Senate : together with additional, supplemental, and separate views*, Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities (Church Committee). 94-465, Washington, D.C., 1975. <https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/sites/default/files/94465.pdf> (Accessed October 17, 2018).

²⁵⁷ D. Bohning, *The Castro Obsession: U. S. Covert Operations Against Cuba, 1959-1965* (Potomac Books, Incorporated, 2006), 20-21.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.; 32. Central Intelligence Agency. *Official History of the Bay of Pigs Operation, Vol. III, Evolution of CIA's Anti-Castro Policies, 1959-January 1961*, Jack B. Pfeiffer. 1979.

<https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB355/bop-vol3.pdf> (Accessed December 7, 2017).

²⁵⁹ Morley, *Imperial State and Revolution : the United States and Cuba, 1952-1986*, 12.

²⁶⁰ 167-68. Central Intelligence Agency, *Official History of the Bay of Pigs Operation, Vol. III, Evolution of CIA's Anti-Castro Policies, 1959-January 1961.*; McClintock, *Instruments of Statecraft: U.S. Guerrilla Warfare, Counterinsurgency, and Counter-Terrorism, 1940-1990*, 167-68.

4. Train a paramilitary Cuban force outside that can help establish an area of resistance on the island.²⁶¹

The intention of the program was “...to bring about the replacement of the Castro regime with one more devoted to the true interests of the Cuban people and more acceptable to the USA in such a manner as to avoid any appearance of US intervention”.²⁶² The plan meant that the USA would fight Castro with the same method Castro used to fight Batista. A guerrilla campaign would eventually join forces with popular unrest to unseat the new regime. An important note is that this, the only formal policy paper on Cuba says nothing about an invasion.²⁶³

Propaganda and the Exile Government

The radio propaganda that was to undermine the Castro regime began operating May 17, 1960, under the name of Radio Swan.²⁶⁴ Although operated by the CIA, it was registered under a different name to avoid connection with US government.²⁶⁵ Radio Swan falls under the umbrella term of “psychological warfare”, or psy-war.²⁶⁶ Psy-war was waged also through dropping of leaflets, and the accumulated psychological effect of any other actions on the island, like sabotage or outright terror operations.²⁶⁷ Before this earlier the USA had experienced great success with this kind of tactic from the PBSUCCESS operation in Guatemala where they overthrew President Árbenz, and as with many other aspects of this operation it was used again in the Cuban theatre.

The organization of the Cuban resistance would prove to be extremely difficult. The opposition to Castro was chronically divided. The USA put a lot of effort into making it a strong unified front, within an organization called *Frente Revolucionario Democrático*

²⁶¹ . Paper Prepared by the 5412 Committee, March 16, 1960, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958-1960*, vol. VI, Cuba. Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1991. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1958-60v06/d481>.(Accessed October 2, 2018), Document 481.

²⁶² 1. *A Program of Covert Action against the Castro Regime*. 1960.

<https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB341/19600316.pdf> (Accessed October 18, 2018).

²⁶³ 75. Central Intelligence Agency, *Official History of the Bay of Pigs Operation, Vol. III, Evolution of CIA's Anti-Castro Policies, 1959-January 1961*.

²⁶⁴ Fabián Escalante, *The Cuba project : CIA covert operations, 1959-62*, Cuba la guerra secreta de la CIA (Melbourne: Ocean Press, 2004), 48.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 49.

²⁶⁶ See introductory chapter pp. 8, for definition

²⁶⁷ For more on terror during the campaign against Castro, see the Analysis and Reflections chapter, pp 106-107.

(FRD), but the groups' different political goals and political quarrels within made this challenging.²⁶⁸ The advantage of having a unified exile front was that it could act as the force behind the campaign against Castro, and thus shielding the USA from potential political damage. It was also intended for the front to act as a government in exile for Cuba, challenging Castro's legitimacy. The role as a government in exile would have an especially important role in the scenario imagined after the Bay of Pigs invasion. The intention was that the exile government would proclaim itself the legitimate government on Cuba. Due to the collaboration issues between the different resistance groups, it seems very likely that the new government would still be plagued with internal fighting if it had managed to take control of some ground in Cuba, however.

Recruitment of Exiles

Recruitment of Cubans for the Covert Action Plan, or code-name JMATE as it later would be called, began in April.²⁶⁹ In June the first recruits were sent for training in Panama, at Fort Randolph and Fort Sherman.²⁷⁰ There they were trained in "small-unit infiltration".²⁷¹ The first batch only measured twenty-nine recruits, but this was soon increased. By June the program called for the training of 500 soldiers.²⁷² The soldiers trained were meant to be dropped into Cuba in small teams, and join up with local resistance.²⁷³

Throughout 1960 the plan changed from one based on building up a guerrilla capability into a paramilitary invasion. The reasoning behind this is not mentioned often in sources. The Chief of Paramilitary Operations within the WH/4, Jack Hawkins, claims in a report on the Bay of Pigs that the reasoning behind the change was that Castro was set on crushing the guerrillas that opposed him. The support the USA had given these guerrillas was not very successful, and some other means had to be found. At the same time, intelligence said that there was

²⁶⁸ 9. Central Intelligence Agency. *Inspector General's Survey of the Cuban Operation and Associated Documents*, Lyman B. Kirkpatrick. 1961. <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB341/IGrpt1.pdf> (Accessed December 7, 2017).

²⁶⁹ 46. Central Intelligence Agency, *Official History of the Bay of Pigs Operation, Vol. III, Evolution of CIA's Anti-Castro Policies, 1959-January 1961.*; 10. Central Intelligence Agency, *Inspector General's Survey of the Cuban Operation and Associated Documents.*

²⁷⁰ 10. Central Intelligence Agency, *Inspector General's Survey of the Cuban Operation and Associated Documents.*; 84. Central Intelligence Agency, *Official History of the Bay of Pigs Operation, Vol. III, Evolution of CIA's Anti-Castro Policies, 1959-January 1961.*

²⁷¹ 12. Central Intelligence Agency, *Inspector General's Survey of the Cuban Operation and Associated Documents.*

²⁷² 105. Central Intelligence Agency, *Official History of the Bay of Pigs Operation, Vol. III, Evolution of CIA's Anti-Castro Policies, 1959-January 1961.*

²⁷³ Bohning, *The Castro Obsession: U. S. Covert Operations Against Cuba, 1959-1965*, 12.

considerable opposition to Castro's regime. A strike force was thought to spark an uprising, and the strike force itself would carry weapons to arm any volunteers to the cause.²⁷⁴

Discussions on the operation between the Special Group, and leaders further down the chain of command that were in charge of JMATE reveals some interesting differences in philosophy on the project, mainly the government's unwillingness to run risks. The original concept of the operation relied on the infiltration teams getting local support and joining up with local resistance. This was a gamble, since the CIA did not know whether they would get this support, or how strong Castro's forces were. Infiltrating teams would constitute a test on whether the concept could succeed at all. A failed infiltration might blow the cover of the operation, so it was a risky project. The Special Group on the other hand was not interested in the risk involved with this, and would in case of a failed operation cancel the entire project.²⁷⁵ The uncertainty surrounding the small infiltration team strategy effectively killed it, and all efforts were moved to planning an amphibious invasion. The new strategy involved landing a considerable force by boat and setting up a beach-head on Cuban soil. This invasion force was to join up with other resistance groups and oust Castro. It was also believed that the invasion would set off an uprising against Castro. And the invasion force carried weapons to arm this uprising. It was debated whether the USA should intervene with its military forces if the operation failed, but this was ultimately decided against. Partly due to belief in the viability of the operation, and partly because it would ruin the prospect of plausible deniability.²⁷⁶ An interesting note by the official review of the operation by the CIA published internally in 1979 was that within the WH/4 the invasion plan was viewed as unrealistic without support from the Department of Defense (DOD). The author points out the absurdity:

How, if in mid-November 1960 the concept of the 1,500-3,000 man force to secure a beachhead with an airstrip was envisioned by the senior personnel in WH/4 as

²⁷⁴ ii-iii, 7-8. United States Department of Defense, *Record of Paramilitary Action Against the Castro Government of Cuba: 17 March 1960 - May 1961*.

²⁷⁵ 145-46. Central Intelligence Agency, *Official History of the Bay of Pigs Operation, Vol. III, Evolution of CIA's Anti-Castro Policies, 1959-January 1961*.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 148-49.; . Staff Study Prepared in the Department of Defense, January 16, 1961, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963, vol. X, Cuba, January 1961-September 1962*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1997. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v10/d19>. (Accessed November 13, 2018), Document 19.; 82-83. Central Intelligence Agency. *Official History of the Bay of Pigs Operation, Vol. IV The Taylor Committee Investigation of the Bay of Pigs*, Jack B. Pfeiffer. 1961. <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB355/bop-vol4.pdf> (Accessed April 11, 2019).

“unachievable” except as a joint CIA/DOD effort, did it become “achievable” in March 1961 with only 1,200 men and as an Agency operation?²⁷⁷

The number of Cuban soldiers to be involved in the operation was a point of contention. The CIA pushed for an increase in the number of men, and asked in November for 3000 to be used for the invasion, but were turned down by the Special Group.²⁷⁸ At this point there were just some 400 Cubans in training in Guatemala, and the increase in manpower was slow and difficult.²⁷⁹ The final number of soldiers was still being discussed during the fall and early winter of 1960, but several factors made it difficult to just up the number no matter what was approved by the Special Group. The most important was the lack of real estate to train the soldiers. The training ground in Guatemala had the vast majority of Cuban trainees. At first it was based on only one *finca* (ranch), with limited capacity. But even as another *finca* was opened for training of Cubans there was an overhanging threat of closing down the Guatemalan training grounds.²⁸⁰ Part of this was due to fears of criticism within the State Department from the OAS or UN.²⁸¹ But the presence of foreign troops in Guatemala would turn out to have a long lasting effect on Guatemalan society. On November 13, 1960 there was a military revolt in Guatemala, which can be considered the starting point of the Guatemalan Civil War. The revolt was among other things provoked by the US training base in their home country.²⁸²

Up to this point of the operation direct involvement from the president had been limited, but that changed in the end of November. According to the chief of WH/4, Jake Esterline, the increased interest from the White House can probably be attributed to then Vice-President Richard Nixon’s loss in the 1960 election, against John F. Kennedy. He reckoned that the administration was reluctant to brief the new president on such an ambitious project, without giving the impression that they had given it their full support to the operation in the first place, to avoid any embarrassment.²⁸³ Eisenhower’s main intervention was to change the

²⁷⁷ 149. Central Intelligence Agency, *Official History of the Bay of Pigs Operation, Vol. III, Evolution of CIA's Anti-Castro Policies, 1959-January 1961*.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 147.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 160.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 152.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 151. Pfeiffer states that the presence of Cuban troops was a destabilizing factor for the Guatemalan government. This seems to be a point of contention between authors, as described in footnote 145 on page 47.

²⁸² Schirmer, *The Guatemalan Military Project: A Violence Called Democracy*, 15. This event is dealt with more thoroughly in the Guatemalan Empirical Chapter pp. 46-47.

²⁸³ 165-66. Central Intelligence Agency, *Official History of the Bay of Pigs Operation, Vol. III, Evolution of CIA's Anti-Castro Policies, 1959-January 1961*.

organization of the responsibilities of the operation. It ended up with Ambassador Whiting Willauer taking the role as the administration's most direct contact in the Special Group.²⁸⁴

During the last months of the Eisenhower administration there was a lot of debate surrounding the implementation of the program. Some points of contention were: the number of troops to be involved, the amount of air-support, presence of US troops, setting a date for intervention in the invasion force.

In November the CIA and the Special Group had decided on a 600-man brigade for the invasion force.²⁸⁵ Many still thought this number was too low, and it was discussed several times until the end of the administration without being resolved. Again, the lack of training grounds were the main limiting factor of how many could be trained. There were attempts at finding other third countries to train in, without success, and training in the USA was still off the table.²⁸⁶

Air support was a contentious topic. The State Department feared that air-support would make the US role in the operation too obvious. The types of planes used were to be restricted to ones available on the open market, and only Cuban pilots were to be used to avoid liability, this later changed however, and US pilots were asked to volunteer.²⁸⁷ The State Department also contested the plan's call for airstrikes against Castro's air force two days before the invasion, to protect the landing troops. They feared that this would alert the OAS and push for a cancellation of the invasion. The WH/4 however was adamant about its necessity for a successful operation. An internal memorandum stated that lacking air support the operation should be called off.²⁸⁸

There was also disagreement on whether to set a date for the operation. Again, there was a divide between the WH/4 and the State Department, with the new leader of the operation, Willauer supporting the WH/4. The State Department wanted to wait to see whether the OAS would get involved first. They also wanted to see if the economic sanctions against Cuba

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 171-73.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 168.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 190, 202-03.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 179.; 5. Central Intelligence Agency, *Official History of the Bay of Pigs Operation, Vol. IV The Taylor Committee Investigation of the Bay of Pigs*.

²⁸⁸ According to Bohning, Esterline's memorandum and his strong advocacy of air-support did not reach further than Bissel. Bohning, *The Castro Obsession: U. S. Covert Operations Against Cuba, 1959-1965*, 24.; Enclosure 1, pp. 6-7. United States Department of Defense, *Record of Paramilitary Action Against the Castro Government of Cuba: 17 March 1960 - May 1961*.

would have any effect. Willauer countered with pointing out that Soviet support cancelled the worst effects of the sanctions. The WH/4 pushed for a set date as they feared postponing the operation for too long would destroy morale amongst the Cubans.²⁸⁹

The situation of the program against Castro before Kennedy took over was rather undecided, and in many ways it seemed weak. The lack of decision on the number of troops, on the aspects of air-support and the lack of a D-Day were troubling. The weakness of the Cuban opposition meant to take power after the invasion perhaps even more so. Kennedy would have a lot of decisions to make, and time was running out.

Kennedy in Office

When Kennedy took office January 20, 1961, he had the option to cancel the operation, but the combined inertia of the operation, and choices he made during the election campaign made that difficult. Kennedy had made a point of attacking the sitting government and his opponent in the election, Vice President Richard Nixon, for being soft on Castro. Promising to support the Cuban resistance to Castro, Kennedy put Nixon in a difficult position. As Nixon knew about the plans to overthrow the regime but could not disclose it as this would ruin the secrecy of the operation. Ultimately Kennedy appeared to be the supporter of the Cuban resistance, while Nixon seemed weak, which might have decided the very close election. Interestingly, Kennedy had been briefed on the existence of the operation before he sided with the Cubans. He therefore knew that Nixon could not undermine the operation by talking about it. It was a rather cunning example of Kennedy undermining his opponent. Kennedy's clever political attack did however raise expectations of him doing something with Castro, and this severely limited his choices later in his presidency.²⁹⁰

This was not the only thing that pushed Kennedy into executing the plan. The CIA also pushed for an expedient attack. They used the same arguments as seen before. Morale was falling amongst the Cuban trainees, who were expecting action soon. The pressure also increased on the USA on getting out of Guatemala, as the government were having serious issues. After a botched coup in November 1960 the country experienced civil unrest and guerrilla campaigns, resulting in President Ydígoras being deposed by the army in 1963. The attempted coup can partly be attributed to young officers being dissatisfied with the presence

²⁸⁹ 178. Central Intelligence Agency, *Official History of the Bay of Pigs Operation, Vol. III, Evolution of CIA's Anti-Castro Policies, 1959-January 1961*.

²⁹⁰ Freedman, *Kennedy's wars : Berlin, Cuba, Laos, and Vietnam*, 127-28.

of the Cuban soldiers.²⁹¹ In addition to the political issues, the rainy season was about to set in, and training would have come to a halt. Kennedy had the choice to evacuate the soldiers to the USA, where they possibly could cause major political harm to him by spreading information on the operation, or to send them to Cuba, where they could harm Castro. On top of this Castro's army was getting stronger by the day, receiving arms from the Soviet Union. The eventual arrival of Russia MIG fighters would especially be a threat to the operation. Faced with all these facts Kennedy decided to move forward.²⁹²

The Fear of Getting Caught

The policy of plausible deniability has been brought up earlier, but at this point in the operation it started to really make a difference. Kennedy was not interested in showing the US hand in the operation, and he viewed the current plan as too dramatic. After several months of planning and deciding to go with the invasion approach, guerrilla warfare was brought back to the table. Kennedy thought a guerrilla strategy would look far more natural, and plausibly run by Cubans in exile on their own. Eventually a compromise was had, where the CIA said that in the case of failure with the landing and setting up a beachhead, the army would escape into the Escambray mountains and set up a guerrilla campaign.²⁹³ Kennedy also made it clear that he would not want to involve US troops in the operation.

Kennedy's wish for a low profile also change the landing spot from the Trinidad area, close to the Escambray mountains. The new landing spot, the infamous Bay of Pigs, was chosen in its place. The new landing spot was considered easily defensible, due to it being surrounded by large swamps, with only two small entry points that were easy to defend. There was also a couple of airstrips that was to be used.²⁹⁴ Kennedy was also skeptical towards giving air support, as he thought it showed the US hand too well. A couple of days before the D-Day of April 17, Kennedy ordered air support to be kept at a minimum.²⁹⁵

Thus, the sorties flown on April 14, to weaken Castro's air force before the invasion, became the only ones. There were plans to run forty sorties on Castro, but only eight were executed. And when the ships were carrying the invasion force into the bay the morning of April 17,

²⁹¹ McClintock, *The American Connection, Volume Two: State terror and Popular Resistance in Guatemala*, 49-50.

²⁹² Freedman, *Kennedy's wars : Berlin, Cuba, Laos, and Vietnam*, 128.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 134-35.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 136-37.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 140.

they were met with Cuban air attacks. This stranded one ship with men aboard, sank a ship carrying vital equipment and supplies, and scared away others from going into the bay. Therefore, only one ship of Cuban exile soldiers made it to the shores, where they met far more resistance than they had anticipated. The uprising the operation had relied on never materialized. Plan B was not going to succeed either, as the new landing ground was eighty miles of swampland away from the mountains where the soldiers were to run to.²⁹⁶

In Washington it became apparent that the operation would not succeed lest the USA committed troops to an overt invasion of Cuba. It was not even possible to evacuate the troops without US support. No such support was given, and the operation was a total failure. Of the 1400 troops involved in the operation, 1189 of them were taken prisoners by the Castro government, and 140 were killed.²⁹⁷

The attack has been thoroughly scrutinized since 1962, and several mistakes committed during the execution and planning has been credited with being the cause of its failure. Most of these can be attributed to the policy of plausible deniability in some way, which was a trademark of the project from its inception. The attack, already strangled, was limited further by President Kennedy. The cutback in air strikes and support in the days leading up to the attack could have had a fatal influence on the attack. The point is contested however, and some sources claim that further air attacks would have a far bigger impact on the Cuban air force than others. Had the limited Cuban air force been erased however, it would seem much more probable that all the ships with men, equipment and supplies would have made it to the beach. While Kennedy did order a cutback, he later claimed that if he had been notified of the possible repercussions of this he would have gone back on his decision.²⁹⁸

Similarly, a lack of communication can be attributed to the absence of an overt US invasion. The CIA and DOD were convinced that the president would commit US troops in the face of defeat, despite Kennedy's clear policy of plausible deniability. There is no doubt that the USA could topple Castro by invading the island with its military, but in the political climate of the day this would entail some serious tradeoffs that Kennedy was not willing to do. It is surprising that such a misunderstanding was possible, but their respective stances makes

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 142.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 142, 45.; according to Bohning there were 1500 troops involved in the operation: Bohning, *The Castro Obsession: U. S. Covert Operations Against Cuba, 1959-1965*, 33.

²⁹⁸ Freedman, *Kennedy's wars : Berlin, Cuba, Laos, and Vietnam*, 142.

sense. The men in charge of the Bay of Pigs invasion were focused on taking out Castro, at all costs. Kennedy on the other hand had to take into consideration any action's possible ramifications on an international scale. The planned invasion of Cuba came at the same time as tensions between the USA and the USSR regarding Berlin were at an all-time high. If the US hand showed too much in Cuba, it was feared that the Soviets would retaliate in kind by invading Berlin.²⁹⁹ Kennedy's choice was seen as either toppling Castro, or keeping Berlin away from the hands of the USSR. The WH/4's choice was between failure and success in their mission.

With respect to Kennedy's decision to keep the operation as low profile as possible, it is prudent to consider what a different administration would have done. Neither Eisenhower nor Nixon had to take the difficult decisions when the operation was to be executed. It is impossible to ever know, but they too could have become as reluctant to take risks as Kennedy. After all the decision to make the operation "deniable" was decided by the Eisenhower administration in the first place.

Finally, it is important to note that the operation was weak from its inception, and likely to fail. Even if the landing had succeeded the operation would not have succeeded in its mission unless the Cuban people revolted against Castro and managed to topple him. What made the CIA, other US ministries and the US government, believe that such a thing was possible is hard to say. Intelligence on Cuba was hard to come by, and it clearly had underplayed Castro's military power, and popularity, and overestimated the capability and willingness of the opposition to him, considering the failure of the operation. But still, the operation seems to have been fueled by a naïve optimism that such a farfetched operation could succeed. The operation relied on the attack having a catalytic effect on Cuba, as if it were a chemical reaction, but it seemed that was not how things worked in the real world – at least that of Cuba in 1961. It did however work previously in Guatemala, in 1954, and this undeniably gave the USA a false confidence. That case is dealt with in more detail in the Guatemalan Empirical Chapter, and in the Analytical Chapter.

Despite the, failure however, the Kennedy administration and WH/4 did not stop trying to topple Castro. And the administration's later following projects were even more far-fetched than the Bay of Pigs.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 58-64, 132.

Parallel Covert Operations

JMATE started as a planned guerrilla operation but turned into an invasion. This did not mean that the guerrilla aspect was completely forgotten. As the training in Guatemala changed from a focus on guerrilla tactics, a parallel effort was made to strengthen the local resistance on Cuba. This was ultimately meant to improve the chances and capabilities of an uprising during the invasion.

By the time of the change in operational concept in November of 1960 there were already 178 trainees being trained in guerrilla operations.³⁰⁰ They were trained in “security, basic clandestine tradecraft, intelligence collection and reporting, propaganda and agitation, subversive activities, resistance organization, reception operations, explosives and demolitions, guerrilla action, and similar matters.”³⁰¹ As the plans for training were changed, and a large influx of trainees were anticipated, 80 men were selected for infiltration.³⁰² They were taken out of the Guatemalan training camp, and sent to Panama for further training.³⁰³ At the time the message was received that training was to completely change, 10 teams were already ready to go into Cuba. There were a lot of problems surrounding the infiltration of troops in the following months, which meant that the Cubans ready for operation had to wait. As mentioned, there were morale problems in the Guatemalan training camps, this was also the case for the planned infiltrators, which were some of the first to be recruited to the project. Of those who got into Cuba, most were infiltrated in March and April of 1961. In the meantime, they got little training, and were locked up in safe houses.

Infiltration was meant to be done by air and sea. The first maritime and air-operations were executed on the same day, September 28, 1960. The airdrop was a major failure, while the boat operation succeeded.³⁰⁴ The airdrops were in general plagued by failures. Due to lack of training and common protocol amongst both the pilots and reception team, most of the packages dropped were not received. There were originally planned to be 105 airdrops in the fiscal year of 1961, of those only thirteen were successful.³⁰⁵ Approximately sixty-eight

³⁰⁰ 123. Central Intelligence Agency, *Inspector General's Survey of the Cuban Operation and Associated Documents*.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 129.

³⁰² Later increased to 90 men. *Ibid.*, 130-31.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 130.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 98, 110.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 98.

tonnes of supplies were flown over Cuba and meant to be dropped.³⁰⁶ Of those only thirty-one tonnes were actually dropped. To make matter worse about twenty-one tonnes were taken by Castro's forces. Thus, roughly ten tonnes of equipment ended up in the intended hands, which was roughly enough to equip 300 men. In addition, a team of three agents was infiltrated by air.³⁰⁷

Boat operations were severely limited by bad weather between December 1960 and March 1961. On addition there was little experience with maritime operation amongst the CIA staff at WH/4, which slowed down and limited their shipping capabilities.³⁰⁸ By boat the agency managed to get seventy-six persons and about thirty-two tonnes of equipment into Cuba, enough to arm roughly 1250 men.³⁰⁹ Most of the tonnage and men were delivered in March of 1962, though. As it was first then the agency had ships big enough for large deliveries.

In his report on the Bay of Pigs, Lyman Kirkpatrick points out that especially the air supply had a negative net effect on the resistance to Castro.³¹⁰ Although roughly forty-two tonnes of equipment was delivered to the resistance in total, it had limited effect. Most of that equipment was delivered to a small area around Havana, and guerrillas in other parts of Cuba did not receive much. Additionally, the failures of the airdrops put the resistance groups in risk of being caught by the Castro regime. Political infighting also hindered a rational allocation of the supplies received, as different groups were unwilling to share with each other.³¹¹ It also made troop infiltration harder.

The WH/4's accomplishments before D-Day in Cuba were meager. Infiltrating troops and supplies were slow and limited. The status of the guerrilla activity in Cuba was also depressing. In an operational plan from April 12, 1961, it was estimated that the Cuban resistance measured some 7,000 insurgents, that were under some kind of CIA control.³¹² These were considered not well armed, but they were meant to receive airdrops after Castro's air force was destroyed. The destruction of the air force did not happen, and the insurgent did not receive their arms to join the rebellion. It was also stated that "[e]very effort will be made

³⁰⁶ Metric tonnes, converted from 151 000.

³⁰⁷ 101. Central Intelligence Agency, *Inspector General's Survey of the Cuban Operation and Associated Documents*.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 114.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 113.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 108-09.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

³¹² *Ibid.*, Annex A.

to coordinate their operations with those of the landing parties”.³¹³ This did not happen either since the USA did not want to spoil the operation by giving out information about the attack. In an earlier briefing from February 17, 1961, intelligence claims there is only one active guerrilla zone in Cuba, in the Escambray mountains. The intelligence estimates that there are 200-300 guerrillas there in different groups, and that they are not very effective.³¹⁴

The sources regarding sabotage against the Castro regime are limited. According to the *Official History of the Bay of Pigs* the opposition’s sabotage actions did nothing "to impede the extension of Castro’s control or lessen his support".³¹⁵ The WHD (Western Hemisphere Division of the CIA) reported to the Taylor Commission, a presidential commission investigating the failure of the Bay of Pigs, that there was sabotage in all provinces of Cuba. The acts of sabotage included "burning of cane fields, damaging of power and communication lines and sugar mills, burning of schools and commercial buildings and damaging of petroleum and sugar refinery".³¹⁶ They claimed to not know what operations their teams were responsible for, but took responsibility of some burning of cane fields and commercial stores, as well as destroying power lines and sabotaging against an oil refinery. They also pointed out that the supplies they delivered to Cuba contained a lot of demolition equipment, which was probably used for that purpose.

The Cuban oil industry was one of the main targets of sabotage. However, on this front there was little success. The aforementioned attack against an oil refinery is referred to as a success by some, but in the *Official History of the Bay of Pigs* it is described as a failure.³¹⁷ Other points of interest regarding sabotage actions directed by the CIA, are that Soviet installations were not to be attacked.³¹⁸

Mongoose

The failure of the Bay of Pigs operation did not end the US dream, or the policy, of getting rid of Castro, although the operation was a colossal embarrassment. The failure became a massive propaganda victory for Castro, who cemented his grip on the island further, and used

³¹³ Ibid., Annex A: pp.5.

³¹⁴ Ibid., Appendix – A: pp.3.

³¹⁵ 233. Central Intelligence Agency, *Official History of the Bay of Pigs Operation, Vol. III, Evolution of CIA's Anti-Castro Policies, 1959-January 1961*.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Ibid., 238.

the occasion to officially proclaim the revolution a socialist one.³¹⁹ But a new plan for the overthrow was made, which turned out to run into many of the same mistakes as the previous actions had done. The focus put on plausible deniability was not reduced and would severely limit the CIA from following the plan that was put forward. A focus on a low “noise” level, the denial of overt US intervention, and sheer naivete that such operations could succeed in overthrowing Castro, were trademarks of what became named Operation Mongoose. Eventually Mongoose ended as a result of the Cuban Missile Crisis.

On May 5, 1962, the National Security Council reaffirmed the US government’s intent of ridding Cuba of Castro. Overt military intervention was once again confirmed not to be preferred way of doing this, but it was not taken off the table entirely. In general, the strategy of the USA prior to the Bay of Pigs, save for the invasion aspect, was to be maintained. There would still be a focus on gathering intelligence, to weaken Cuba internationally, especially in regards to the OAS, spreading anti-Castro propaganda, and to keep a good relationship with the FRD.³²⁰ Throughout the spring and summer there was a lot of planning being done in attempts to find a new way to topple Castro.³²¹ The general idea of a covert action campaign, organized by the CIA, but with Cuban exiles for the dirty work, was approved rather quickly. Many other ideas were aired, like urging people in the Cuban government to defect and efforts to weaken Castro’s image.³²²

On November 3, President Kennedy approved a new program aimed at Castro. All efforts would be put into it, which meant that all necessary arms of the US government would have to cooperate. Robert Kennedy was put in charge of the operation.³²³ By his request Air Force Brigadier Edward Lansdale was given the responsibility of making the final plan to take down Castro. Lansdale had experience with fighting communist insurgents in the Philippines, and aiding the regime of Ngo Din Diem in South Vietnam against its enemy in the North. Lansdale therefore had experience in psychological warfare, counterinsurgency, black

³¹⁹ Freedman, *Kennedy's wars : Berlin, Cuba, Laos, and Vietnam*, 147-48.

³²⁰ . Record of Actions at the 483d Meeting of the National Security Council, May 5, 1961, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963*, vol. X, Cuba, January 1961-September 1962. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1997. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v10/d205>.(Accessed November 13, 2018), Document 205.

³²¹ Bohning, *The Castro Obsession: U. S. Covert Operations Against Cuba, 1959-1965*, 72.

³²² . Paper Prepared in the Central Intelligence Agency, May 19, 1961, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963*, vol. X, Cuba, January 1961-September 1962. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1997. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v10/d223>.(Accessed November 13, 2018), Document 223.

³²³ Bohning, *The Castro Obsession: U. S. Covert Operations Against Cuba, 1959-1965*, 76.

propaganda, sabotage and in training paramilitary forces.³²⁴ In some ways he seemed perfect for the job. The Special Group that oversaw the Castro project was also altered in the end of November, and now included Robert Kennedy and Douglas Dillion, secretary of the treasury. The Special Group thus became the Special Group Augmented (SGA).³²⁵

Lansdale laid forward his first plan for operation Mongoose on January 18, 1963. Its objective was to overthrow the Castro regime by proxy, the proxy being the Cuban people. In order to achieve this the USA had to create a certain political climate on the island:

The revolt requires a strongly motivated political action movement established within Cuba, to generate the revolt, to give it direction towards the object, and to capitalize on the climactic moment. The political actions will be assisted by economic warfare to induce failure of the Communist regime to supply Cuba's economic needs, psychological operations to turn the peoples' resentment increasingly against the regime, and military-type groups to give the popular movement an action arm for sabotage and armed resistance in support of political objectives.³²⁶

The plan was very similar to the early JMATE plan, before it shifted its focus to invasion. Propaganda, political sabotage both nationally and internationally, economic warfare, as well as guerrilla warfare were the means to accomplish their goal. Radio Swan, which had been operating since the summer of 1960, was the backbone of the propaganda effort, supported by dropping of leaflets and similar operations. Internal politics would be attacked, by for instance attempts to get high-profile Cuban officials to defect. Putting Cuba in a bad international light, and promoting the exile government would damage the regime from the outside. In addition to the economic sanctions the USA had already put on the regime, sabotage was the most important factor in the economic warfare against Cuba. By destroying selected targets of economic importance, the already suffering Cuban economy would be forced to its knees. The economy would be targeted directly, such as sugar refineries, and indirectly by damaging infrastructure. Sustaining the guerrilla resistance on the island would also be important, both to perform sabotage against the regime, but also to show the Cuban people that there was

³²⁴ Freedman, *Kennedy's wars : Berlin, Cuba, Laos, and Vietnam*, 154.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, 153.

³²⁶ . Program Review by the Chief of Operations, Operation Mongoose (Lansdale), January 18, 1962, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963*, vol. X, Cuba, January 1961-September 1962. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1997. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v10/d291>.(Accessed November 13, 2018), Document 291.

resistance on the island. Avoiding civilian casualties was a focus as well, as it would probably have created bad press for the operation, and thus undermined the support the operation sought to gain from the Cuban population.³²⁷ Overt US military invasion was still discussed, although still not favored by the President. Kennedy did however make sure to develop the capabilities of doing so, by making contingency plans for the military. There was also organized a military drill in the Caribbean during April, where landing on a Caribbean island was practiced. 40 000 soldiers were involved in the operation.³²⁸

On February 20, Lansdale put forward his schedule for the operation. It was quite optimistic in its expectation of progress, assuming that Castro would be out in eight to nine months:

Phase I, Action, March 1962. Start moving in.

Phase II, Build-up, April-July 1962. Activating the necessary operations inside Cuba for revolution and concurrently applying the vital political, economic, and military-type support from outside Cuba.

Phase III, Readiness, 1 August 1962, check for final policy decision.

Phase IV, Resistance, August-September 1962, move into guerrilla operations.

Phase V, Revolt, first two weeks of October 1962. Open revolt and overthrow of the Communist regime.

Phase VI, Final, during month of October 1962. Establishment of new government. Plan of Action. Attached is an operational plan for the overthrow of the Communist regime in Cuba, by Cubans from within Cuba, with outside help from the USA and elsewhere.³²⁹

The expected rapid advances of the operation were probably not a coincidence. By overthrowing Castro in October, the Democratic party would certainly gather extra support for the Congressional elections in early November.³³⁰ And this is perhaps an indication of

³²⁷ Bohning, *The Castro Obsession: U. S. Covert Operations Against Cuba, 1959-1965*, 87.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, 113.

³²⁹ . Program Review by the Chief of Operations, Operation Mongoose (Lansdale), February 20, 1962, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963*, vol. X, Cuba, January 1961-September 1962. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1997. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v10/d304>. (Accessed November 13, 2018), Document 304.

³³⁰ Freedman, *Kennedy's wars : Berlin, Cuba, Laos, and Vietnam*, 155.

how the entire Mongoose program was a paper tiger more than anything. It promised so-and-so by certain dates, but in the end these dates would turn out to be far too optimistic. An interesting note is that Lansdale supported his program by comparing it to the American Revolution:

Americans once ran a successful revolution. It was run from within, and succeeded because there was timely and strong political, economic, and military help by nations outside who supported our cause. Using this same concept of revolution from within, we must now help the Cuban people to stamp out tyranny and gain their liberty.³³¹

Mongoose in Motion

Even though the plan got the go-ahead, and funding was plentiful, progress was slow, in spite of hopes to the contrary. There was little sabotage action in the first months. It seems it can be attributed to a combination of a lack of progress in building up sabotage capacity on the island, and a lack of support from the SGA.³³² In March it was decided by the SGA that Mongoose was to be an intelligence operation first and foremost.³³³ It was not an unanimous agreement that sabotage and “noisy” operations should be lower priorities, but again the policy of plausible deniability won against a more aggressive approach.³³⁴ But Mongoose grew, and the main operating base outside of Miami grew to become the biggest CIA base outside of Langley. It ended up with over 400 agents working there, hundreds of shell companies to hide its true mission, and in the end sported the third largest navy in the Caribbean.³³⁵ By August Mongoose had completed the first stage of Lansdale’s plan, way behind schedule. The wording for stage two was changed somewhat to: “the further containment, undermining and discrediting of the target regime while isolating it from other Hemisphere nations.”³³⁶ The noise level was to be turned up, but it was considered unlikely

³³¹ .Program Review by the Chief of Operations, Operation Mongoose (Lansdale), February 20, 1962.

³³² Bohning, *The Castro Obsession: U. S. Covert Operations Against Cuba, 1959-1965*, 89-90.; Freedman, *Kennedy's wars : Berlin, Cuba, Laos, and Vietnam*, 157.

³³³ United States Department of State. Guidelines for Operation Mongoose, March 14, 1962, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963*, vol. X, Cuba, January 1961-September 1962. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1997. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v10/d314>.(Accessed November 13, 2018), Document 314.

³³⁴ Freedman, *Kennedy's wars : Berlin, Cuba, Laos, and Vietnam*, 157.

³³⁵ Bohning, *The Castro Obsession: U. S. Covert Operations Against Cuba, 1959-1965*, 84.

³³⁶ United States Department of State. Memorandum From the President’s Military Representative (Taylor) to President Kennedy, August 17, 1962, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963*, vol. X, Cuba, January 1961-September 1962. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1997. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v10/d380>.(Accessed November 13, 2018), Document 380.

that there would be a revolt that could topple Castro anytime soon without direct use of US military forces.³³⁷

Intelligence from Mongoose proved to be useful, however. During the summer there was a military buildup by the USSR, which got a lot of attention. In the middle of August, the CIA received intelligence from one of their sources of entire villages being evacuated, and that something was going on. This led to the U-2 flight on October 14 that confirmed the presence of nuclear missiles on Cuban soil.³³⁸ The Cuban Missile Crisis that followed will not be discussed in detail here, but for a few aspects of its origins and effects.

There were several reasons for the USSR's desire to put nuclear missiles in Cuba. The Soviet Union were far behind the USA in terms of long-range ballistic missiles capabilities. Placing missiles in Cuba with shorter range would negate the discrepancy and give the USSR a more similar capability to hit the USA with nuclear weapons, to that the USA had at hitting them.³³⁹ Without this reasoning it would seem unnecessarily risky for the USSR to put up nuclear capabilities in Cuba just to protect the regime. Mongoose in turn probably aided the Soviets in convincing the Cubans to allow the missiles on their soil. The US attempts at overthrowing the regime had not been successful, but they were threatening, and did not stop. The close relationship between the USA and the Cuban resistance also meant that any acts of sabotage and other kinds of resistance could be viewed as US backed, whether it was so or not. Combined with the massive 40 000-man training operation in April, the Cubans could not count on the USA *not* invading.³⁴⁰

With the extremely tense political climate caused by the Missile Crisis it was decided to put Mongoose on ice. It was not advisable to cause any more conflict. As a part of the solution to the Crisis, and Khrushchev's withdrawal of the missiles, Kennedy had to promise not to invade the island.

The Final Efforts

A long silent period in terms of US efforts followed. This did not stop the Cuban resistance from launching their own operations, where hit and run by boat became common. There was a

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Bohning, *The Castro Obsession: U. S. Covert Operations Against Cuba, 1959-1965*, 122.

³³⁹ Ibid., 111-12.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., 111-13., Freedman, *Kennedy's wars : Berlin, Cuba, Laos, and Vietnam*, 162-63.

short resurgence of resistance attacks supported by the CIA in August, September and October. These attacks were stopped again as the effect was minor, and it made talks with the Soviet Union sour.³⁴¹ From September there were some attempts by the Kennedy government at reaching Castro through backchannels. It is impossible to say what kind of results these talks could have had, as they were cut short by the assassination of Kennedy on November 22.³⁴²

Assassination plots

One aspect of the campaign against Castro that has not been discussed yet is the US effort to assassinate Fidel Castro. Plans to kill Castro were developed during President Eisenhower's last year in office. In an official hearing on CIA's efforts to assassinate foreign leaders of state, conducted by a US Senate Committee led by Frank Church of Idaho, evidence for eight such plans between 1960 to 1965 was found.³⁴³ Several of these attempts coincided with the Bay of Pigs invasion, and Operation Mongoose. In this respect it can be argued that the assassination efforts were part of the larger campaign against Castro. The efforts were unsuccessful, and never really developed much further than the planning stage.³⁴⁴ Nonetheless, their failure makes the assassination plots worthy of mention in this thesis.

Conclusion

With the death of Kennedy, the most active, and well-documented, era of US actions against Castro's Cuba ended. That is not to say that attempts at toppling Castro, or even to kill him stopped after that. The Cuban exile resistance continued with sporadic terrorist attacks on the island. The Cuban government has also accused the US government of several crimes against the island, including biological warfare in the form of the spread of African swine fever.³⁴⁵ Although many accusations are impossible to verify, the continued presence of the revolutionary regime in Cuba is proof that US efforts have failed.

Despite the continued animosity between the countries in the years after the Cuban Missile Crisis, one can argue that the steam had gone out of the movement to unseat Castro. Until this

³⁴¹ Freedman, *Kennedy's wars : Berlin, Cuba, Laos, and Vietnam*, 240.

³⁴² *Ibid.*, 240-45.

³⁴³ 71. United States Senate, *Alleged assassination plots involving foreign leaders: an interim report of the Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, United States Senate : together with additional, supplemental, and separate views.*

³⁴⁴ Bohning, *The Castro Obsession: U. S. Covert Operations Against Cuba, 1959-1965*, 176-84.

³⁴⁵ Raymond A. Zilinskas, "Cuban Allegations of Biological Warfare by the United States: Assessing the Evidence," *Critical Reviews in Microbiology* 25, no. 3 (1999).

day, as far as we know at least, there have been no similar efforts from the US side to unseat the revolutionary regime. Thus, the Missile Crisis stands as the last big event in the unraveling of the Cuban dependency on the USA.

7 Analysis and Reflections

This chapter will serve to analyze and reflect on the three cases I have treated in this thesis. First, I will use an analytical framework to dissect the three insurgencies into more their more “basic” components. The data extracted from this will serve to answer the question on why only PBSUCCESS succeeded as an insurgency, while the insurgency against Castro and the insurrection of the Guatemalan Civil War failed.

Comparison of the Insurgencies

In order to compare the three cases of the thesis it is helpful to have theoretical framework to analyze the cases, in order to get data that can be compared. I will now use such a framework developed by Bard E. O’Neill, in his book *Insurgency in the Modern World*. O’Neill offers a framework of analysis which separates the different aspects of insurgencies in terms of their goals, their strategies, and variables which affects their outcome. By using this framework, we are given a structured disarticulation of the three insurgencies of the thesis, and gives additional insight into their workings, outside of the historical description of them in the earlier chapters. This makes it far easier to compare the different insurgencies to each other, and makes it easier for the reader to draw effectively on all the information provided in the earlier chapters.

The first part of the chapter will give an outline of O’Neill’s framework. The different cases will then be compared to the framework, before the cases are compared to each other based on that comparison, and the results are considered reflectively.³⁴⁶

The Framework

The first part of the framework identifies what the origin and desired end-goal of an insurgency are, and categorizes it accordingly as one or more out of six types of insurgencies. Insurgencies are also differentiated based on the scale of the insurgency, and the methods of struggle and warfare they employ.

The second part analyses five major variables: popular support, organization, external support, the environment, and the effectiveness of the government. By comparing these

³⁴⁶ The following sections are primarily based on: O’Neill, Heaton, and Alberts, *Insurgency in the Modern World*, 1-34.

variables one can get an overview of the challenges to the insurgents and the strategies they employed, as well as determining achievements made by the insurgencies.

Different forms of Insurgency

O'Neill categorizes insurgencies into six different groups. Some of these are very different from each other, while there are some cases where more than one of the forms of insurgency can be seen in a particular conflict. The six different forms of insurgency are as follows:

secessionist, revolutionary, restorational, reactionary, conservative, and reformist.

Secessionist insurgencies are conflicts where one group wants independence of their territory from an imperial power. This includes colonial insurgencies, resisting occupation by foreign powers, and fighting for independence of certain ethnic groups within a state. The revolutionary insurgency seeks a radical departure from the present social and political order and is usually based on egalitarian principles and popular participation. Marxist insurgencies fit in this category. Restorational insurgencies seek to revert the present political order to one that existed recently.³⁴⁷ The reactionary insurgencies are similar to the restorational ones, in that they seek to revert to a previous political system. However, the one that the reactionary seeks is one much further back in time, often ancient, and viewed as a "golden age".

While the first four groups seek radical change, the latter two do not. The conservative seeks to keep a present system in place. They view the present system as under attack and seek to stop those trying to destroy it. The last one is the reformist insurgency. It seeks more modest change and does not necessitate the removal of the present regime. It can for instance seek more rights for a group, or the right to participate in politics.

Scale and Methods of Warfare

Insurgencies differ widely in terms of scale, from conspiratorial elites that threatens with violence and terror, to full blown internal wars. The scale of the insurgency in turn decides what kind of methods for struggle are appropriate, or possible to use. There are three main forms of struggle associated with insurgencies, terrorism, guerrilla warfare, and conventional warfare. The types of warfare employed can be mixed. The choice of method is related to the strategy of the insurgency, and the scale of it, that is to say: the number of members, the

³⁴⁷ O'Neill defines the restorational regimes as only wanting to return to an oligarchical, elitist model without mass participation. I find this limitation unnecessary, as also leftist insurgents can have restorational motivations. The Guatemalan insurgents can arguably be one of these.

amount of resources, and the strength of the insurgency. Terrorism requires the least manpower and resources, while conventional warfare requires the most.

While terrorism and guerrilla warfare are methods that require relatively few resources, and therefore are the common strategies for weak movements, conventional warfare is largely the opposite. Conventional warfare entails open confrontation between two armed forces. Terror and guerrilla warfare are used because they require relatively limited funds and manpower, and are ideally used in situations where the insurgents can attack with the advantage of greater numbers than their adversary, can surprise them, and retreat quickly to avoid losses. In conventional warfare they lose these advantages. Thus, conventional tactics should ideally be employed only when the power balance between the insurgents and their adversary is to the advantage of the insurgents.

The Five Analytical Variables

While the previous points have been primarily descriptive of the insurgencies themselves, the following section seeks to analyze the variables that affects the insurgencies, and their chances of success. If an insurgency finds strength in each of these variables the chance of success increases. Likewise, the insurgency can find weaknesses which renders their goal impossible to achieve. These are the variables: popular support, organization, external support, the environment and the response of the government. I will now explain these variables briefly.³⁴⁸

- Popular Support

Popular support is one of the variables which can offset the inherent government advantage in power when facing insurgents. It can be split into two main categories, active and passive support. Active supporters will contribute to the cause of the insurgents, even if it puts them in harm's way. Passive supporters will at the very least not betray or work actively against the insurgents. For many forms of insurgency local support is essential. A mobile guerrilla for instance relies on help from the local population for food, shelter and the locals not telling government forces of their location. O'Neill mentions six ways of gaining popular support:

³⁴⁸ O'Neill operates with six, the sixth variable being "cohesion". In this thesis cohesion is moved under "organization". O'Neill, Heaton, and Alberts, *Insurgency in the Modern World*, 5.

charismatic attraction, esoteric appeals, exoteric appeals, terrorism, provocation of government counterterrorism, and demonstration of potency.

Charismatic appeal refers to the ability of gaining support based on the charismatic qualities of leaders. This is a difficult variable to quantify, but is certainly an important factor when insurgents seek to recruit. The focus on certain individuals in insurgencies, like Che Guevara, Augusto Sandino, Mao Zedong, and Vladimir Lenin, is a testament to the importance of personality.

Esoteric appeals are appeals targeted primarily at the educated elite. Especially ideology and other, less tangible, ideas are included in this category. Exoteric appeals on the other hand are more concrete appeals, that are easy to understand, and that applies to a larger part of the population. These two appeals can be, and often are mixed. The classic example of both is Marxist insurgencies. Marxist ideology has a focus on the fight against the bourgeoisie or the feudal system as an enemy by principle, the esoteric appeal, and at the same time the focus on sharing of resources and relieving of the lower classes suffering as an exoteric appeal.

Terror may be a result of the inability to appeal to the masses through esoteric and exoteric appeals. Terror can gain insurgents support by making the government look weak against the insurgents. The application of terror is however important, as the wrong use of it can lead to serious blowback and loss of support. The two main factors to consider are the targets of the attacks, and the duration of a terror campaign. By attacking targets disliked by large parts of the population the insurgents can gain support. Attacking much loved targets will have the opposite effect. Limiting the length of the campaign will also avoid that the population grows weary of it.

Provoking government excess is a way of turning terror on its head. By forcing or enticing the government into performing acts of violence that are viewed as unnecessary or excessive by the government, the insurgents can turn the population against the government. Targeting innocent civilians as payback for the acts of the insurgents is a common tactic to dissuade the insurgents from action. And they are not necessarily an advantage to the insurgents as they can be blamed for these violent acts. Thus, this strategy of gaining support is not without some serious downsides, both morally and strategically.

Demonstration of potency is the final way of gaining support. This can be done either through rendering services to the population, or through military initiative. If the insurgents manage to

persuade the general population that the government cannot stop the insurgents, and cannot harm the supporters of the insurgency, the potential for a mass uprising against the regime increases greatly.

- *Organization*

Good organization is key to a successful insurgency. A suitable way of organizing can make up for the weakness of the insurgency against the superior strength and resources of the government and give it both military and political advantages. This can manifest in the insurgent's' abilities of compartmentalizing their armed groups, and thereby prevent a captured group from revealing other groups. The political aspect can vary from the insurgency having a political front that fights for the insurgency in a more diplomatic fashion, to insurgents setting up parallel governments, and providing services that the government should. Organization can be reduced to three structural dimensions: scope, complexity and cohesion. Scope refers to the number of people involved, whether the insurgency is a small conspiracy, or so big that it can fight a full-blown internal war. Complexity refers to the power structures, and organizational partitioning of the insurgency. As the insurgency grows in size, and utilize additional methods, the complexity grows. Lastly, cohesion describes how unified the insurgency is, as it is not a given that an insurgency consists of just one group. It is common that several groups have different goals, that they fight each other, and that they are organized in completely different ways.

- *External Support*

Insurgencies are, despite being national in nature, often a part of a bigger international context. During the Cold War there was often a particular pattern to this. Where national insurgencies were viewed within the context of the dichotomy of capitalism vs communism. External support was not uncommon from one of the superpowers, but other countries and organizations were involved as well. External support can vary, depending on the resources of the supporter, and its willingness of political risk. External support can be split into four categories, increasingly costly and risky: moral, political, material and sanctuary.

- *The Environment*

The environment an insurgency operates in dictates what strategies and organization it can use. Areas with dense jungles, and similar difficult terrain, are much easier for a guerrilla to

operate in, than open steppes, where there is nowhere to hide.³⁴⁹ The terrain, climate, road and communications network, ethnicity, religion, size of the country and the quantity and distribution of people, are factors grouped under the term environment by O'Neill. These are the preexisting nonpolitical factors which affects the viability of the insurgency. Depending on the nature of the insurgency these factors have different levels of importance.

- *The Government Response*

Whether the insurgency succeeds in gaining advantages from all the earlier variables, it might be futile due to weakness in this variable. If the government is united, determined in their fight against the insurgents, and employs effective countermeasures against the insurgents, the chance of success is severely reduced. Likewise, a weak government response, which alienates the population by its countermeasures, will increase the chance of insurgency success. Timothy Wickham-Crowley argues in his book, *Guerrillas & Revolution in Latin America*, that weak governments are more important for a revolution to succeed if the government is weak. Without a weak government, a strong insurgency is not sufficient for the revolution to succeed.³⁵⁰ On the other hand, a weak government is not a guarantee for the insurgency's success.

Insurgency Strategies

The last aspect of O'Neill's analysis is the insurgent strategy. Throughout the twentieth century several insurgencies succeeded, with different methods. The different strategies used by the most well-known insurgencies are often used as ideal-types when describing other insurgencies. On a more practical level they have served as inspiration and a basis for other insurgencies. The examples mentioned by O'Neill are the Leninist, Maoist, Cuban and urban strategy. The Leninist strategy is based on a small conspiratorial group that has support from major discontented groups, like the populace or the military. While violence, terrorism, and guerrilla warfare can be a part of their strategy, it is not the main focus. This strategy therefore requires a very weak government to succeed. The Maoist is a strategy that has a large scope for its development. The insurgents move from gaining support and setting up secure bases, to guerrilla warfare and expanding their area of control, and finally to civil war. The Cuban, or

³⁴⁹ It should be noted that O'Neill's theory is published in 1980, and that new technology today can reduce the effectiveness of the old ways of hiding. This does not affect the historic cases treated in this thesis.

³⁵⁰ Wickham-Crowley, *Guerrillas and Revolution in Latin America: A Comparative Study of Insurgents and Regimes Since 1956*, 5.

Foco, strategy is in many ways similar to the Maoist strategy, but differs on some important points. The strategy states that it is possible to create revolutionary conditions, and that it is therefore not necessary to wait for these to appear. A small guerrilla group can increase tensions and discontent enough in society to create revolutionary conditions.³⁵¹ The Cuban insurrection started with a very small group of guerrillas, through its armed struggle it inspired people to join, and in turn it became a large movement. Mao's on the other hand built upon an already existing sizable communist movement.³⁵² Also in Foco insurgencies a focus is put on the military movement, rather than a party and political work. As all movements it might require a weak government to succeed. O'Neill mentions that if the insurgents only want reform, this strategy might work against a strong government. Lastly, the urban strategy is based on small cells that perform terror or propaganda actions in urban areas. In this case it is seen more as a support for the rural guerrillas rather than a strategy that can win power in itself, because it is unable to gain popular support as long as absolute secrecy is a must.

The Three Cases

This section will compare the cases to the framework above.

PBSUCCESS

The two main actors in the insurgency, the US government and the anti-Árbenz Guatemalans, had somewhat different motivations, but a similar desire for getting rid of the regime. Facing communist takeover, or what they perceived as communist, the USA wanted to revert to a system more like the one under Ubico, to protect Latin America from the spread of communism. While the domestic opponents had their economic interests threatened, along with their social status as reforms were changing the social order. The effort to unseat Árbenz can therefore be considered part restorational and part conservative. Since there had been no complete revolution, the focus was on restoring some aspects of Guatemala that had changed, along with maintaining other aspects which Árbenz threatened.

The scale and methods of warfare used are deceiving in this case. The number of actively fighting insurgents on the ground was relatively small, with only 480 soldiers in the invasion

³⁵¹ Wright, *Latin America in the Era of the Cuban Revolution*, 74.

³⁵² Jerome Ch'en, "The Cambridge History of China: Volume 13: Republican China 1912–1949," in *The Cambridge History of China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 168-229.

force. The psy-ops, political work, and the air campaign did however increase the scale of the operation dramatically.

The 1954 coup was, as insurgencies go, untypically conventional in its use of military strategies. It skipped the usual stage of building up guerrilla capabilities first, and instead started with large-scale conventional confrontations with the opposing forces, through the invasion by ground forces, and simultaneous air attacks. According to the definition used here I found no evidence of terror activities, but it can be argued that US activity was made to spread fear and terror with their psychological operations leading up to the coup. According to the plan Armas was supposed to change from a conventional strategy to guerrilla warfare in the event that the invasion was unsuccessful. Due to the success of the operation, and Armas's reluctance to go guerrilla, this did not happen. In the end the success of the operation depended on someone turning on Árbenz within the government or the army. As mentioned earlier, the use of conventional tactics in an insurgency is only viable if the government is weak. In the case of PBSUCCESS, it turned out that Árbenz did not have the support in the military that he needed. Without the army refusing to fight, a turn to guerrilla tactics would be pertinent, and perhaps PBSUCCESS would look more like the insurgency against Castro's government some years later. In addition to the conventional tactics used, unconventional tactics were also paramount. The psywar and political work done before the invasion made Árbenz more vulnerable.

With respect to the five analytical variables, PBSUCCESS did well. It had support from the groups that it needed to perform the coup. The organization was relatively cohesive and well synchronized in the struggle. The backing from the USA was both substantial and crucial. And perhaps most importantly, the government response was weak. In terms of the physical environment, the insurgency did not have to rely on it much.

PBSUCCESS gives the impression of an elitist coup, with limited popular appeal. Unlike Marxist insurgencies it did not seek support primarily from the masses, but rather among an elite that could topple Árbenz from within the government, particularly in the military. That is not to say that mass support was ignored as a factor. During the invasion it was reported that somewhere around 1000 men volunteered their service to the invading force.³⁵³ And they were supplied with weapons by airdrop.

³⁵³ Cullather, *Operation PBSUCCESS: The United States and Guatemala 1952-1954*, 72-73.

I have not found evidence of any great charismatic appeal by Armas on his followers. His ability to continuously be a thorn in Árbenz's side since 1949, recruit nearly 500 soldiers and being trusted by the USA to perform the operation does indicate that he was at least a capable insurgent leader.

Both esoteric and exoteric appeals were present in this case. The combination of the loss of concrete economic and political interests, and the fear of revolutionary ideology such as communism, were paramount. This applies to both the domestic actors and the USA. Árbenz project of land reform was just one of the policies which threatened the political and economic system of Guatemala. For the elite the change could both mean a loss of economic interests, but increased suffrage also meant increased political participation by ethnic groups that they deemed unworthy of such responsibilities. While fear of the spread of communism was likely present in the country, this was a far more worrisome aspect of the change in Guatemala for the USA. As discussed in the empirical chapter on Guatemala (pp 32-33) economic interests, especially those of the UFCO, were not the most pressing arguments for involvement. Rather it was the fear of the spread of communism in the region. This can be considered both an esoteric appeal due to its ideological quality, but the implications of a communist Latin America would have a profound concrete impact on the USA, as it threatened its military strategic and economic interests.

I have not found evidence that terrorism, according to the definition found in the introduction, was used by the invading force during PBSUCCESS. It is however possible to argue that the psywar directed at Guatemala did contribute to a state of terror within the country. By undermining the feeling of safety of the people and giving the impression of an impending US invasion. There is no doubt that fear was used as a tool in the operation, and that the foundation of the operation was fundamentally morally flawed, and contrary to international law.³⁵⁴

PBSUCCESS was especially successful in taking advantage of government excesses that the operation provoked. This was done with the psychological operations before the invasion led Árbenz down an authoritarian path. The increasing suspensions of civil rights, and cases of assassinations and possible torture of political dissidents, created an atmosphere of chaos in the country, proving that the government was not able to keep the country stable, reduced

³⁵⁴ Ibid., 95.

Árbenz's legitimacy. Although it was not a deciding factor in making the military turn on Árbenz, it was likely important in reducing his standing in the military before the Armas invasion.

The psywar operations were also important as a show of potency. The military's decision to turn on Árbenz was largely influenced by the assumption that the USA would invade the country. The 1954 coup was all about appearance, and making the invasion seem more extensive than it really was. Especially the use of airplanes, which implicates major commitment of economic resources, and the involvement of the US military, was intended to dissuade opposition to the coup. The psychological impact was in this sense, more important than the concrete military impact, which was rather limited. The decision to invade with several smaller groups rather than one big one also had the added effect of inflating the actual numbers, in addition to protect the invasion from losing everything to one bad engagement. Had the Guatemalan military engaged the insurgents with full capacity they would have eradicated them, no doubt. But the combination of distrust in Árbenz and his political project, and the prospect of full-fledged US invasion was enough to make them cave.

The organization of the insurgency was wide in scope, complex and relatively cohesive. There was involvement by several important US government departments, and agencies, as well as Armas's troops, and the dictator of Nicaragua. Although the relationship between the USA and Armas was not so amicable at times, it did weather the storm, and the alliance remained intact.

The insurgency differs from most insurgencies in the massive reliance on external power. The USA supported the insurgency morally, politically and materially. For instance through the campaign to smear Árbenz image in front of the OAS and the world, and making up fake conspiracies of Árbenz trying to arm civilians, and arming the rebels.³⁵⁵ According to government sources, the USA contributed \$3 million to the cause, but this number is impossible to verify due to the deletion of all numerical references to spending.³⁵⁶ The most striking contribution however was the importance the USA played in organizing the insurgency. As the planning and logistics of the operation seems to have been developed mostly by the CIA and the US government. Whether PBSUCCESS could have succeeded

³⁵⁵ The conspiracy that the US made up about Árbenz arming civilians turned out to be true. Parts of the arms shipment received from Czechoslovakia was meant to be given to a civilian militia. *Ibid.*, 60.

³⁵⁶ Fraser, "Architecture of a Broken Dream: The CIA and Guatemala, 1952–54," 498.

without external support or not is impossible to determine, but it is not unthinkable that the army would have turned on Árbenz given a few more years. It was not only USA that offered support. Nicaragua and Honduras provided vital support in form of sanctuary.

The last variable, the government response, played well to the advantage for PBSUCCESS. Árbenz support in the military turned out to be too weak to withstand the invasion. This was due to a mixture of uneasiness within the military regarding his radical reforms, as well as a result of the psywar campaign the USA led against the GOG. This point will be discussed further in the comparison section of this chapter.

When comparing PBSUCCESS with O'Neill's list of strategies for insurgency, it does not fit in easily. The strategy of PBSUCCESS was to create an environment within Guatemala, which would topple the government. This is somewhat similar to the Foco theory, where a small group of insurgents create the revolutionary conditions. PBSUCCESS was not limited to just the invasion force however, and it was especially the fear of US invasion which prompted the military to coup Árbenz. Rather than comparing PBSUCCESS to the ideal types of O'Neill, I will argue that PBSUCCESS can, and was looked at as an ideal type in itself. The apparent potency proved by PBSUCCESS gave the USA the confidence to try the same on Cuba, with some tweaks. It would be defined as: using a domestic force in combination with psychological warfare to topple a regime, without the appearance of foreign intervention and at minimal expense. Guatemala and Cuba were not the only targets of this strategy. The strategy was employed in some form or another on several other Latin American countries during the Cold War, including Brazil, and Chile.

The Insurgency against Castro

The insurgency fighting Castro was comprised of many different resistance groups with different intentions. Some had been involved in fighting Batista, and merely wanted to alter the direction of the revolution, away from its path against communism, but avoid returning to system that existed during Batista's reign. Others wanted a complete restoration of the *status quo ante*. The insurrection can therefore be categorized as mixed between restorational and reformist.

In terms of scale and method of warfare the insurgency was quite large and ambitious, including everything from psywar operations, airdrops, guerrilla fighting, and a large conventional landing with the Bay of Pigs.

As far as the five variables go, the insurgency was relatively strong, but the Castro government was even stronger.

Gaining popular support was a key factor in the plans for making the insurgency work. Both the Bay of Pigs and Operation Mongoose sought to create mass uprisings against Castro. But it came short in gaining support through all of the attempts by the USA and the insurgents. The lack of a strong unifying leader reduced the insurgency's potential for charismatic attraction. And considering the charisma of Fidel Castro, the competition was especially hard. The propaganda war directed at the island tried to appeal to the Cubans through esoteric and exoteric appeals, painting the revolution in a bad light.³⁵⁷ For example, *Radio Swan* broadcast claims that Castro had betrayed the Cuban people by diverging from the policies which he had originally promised, and which had given him support.³⁵⁸ The fear of communism was effective on Cuban business owners, which were important backers of the insurgency, but the response with the lower classes in Cuba seems to have been inadequate for turning them. There are examples of terrorism, but the lack of sources make them hard to verify, and harder to quantify in terms of effect.³⁵⁹ This includes bombing of civilian targets like theaters, hotels and student housing.³⁶⁰ The most famous incident branded as US supported terror is probably the explosion of the Belgian ship *La Coubre*, in Havana Bay in 1960, which killed 75 and injured more than 200.³⁶¹ On the other hand, US intelligence reports have referred to Cuban resistance activity as terror, which one can argue puts the USA in the awkward position of admitting that they supported terrorist groups.³⁶² Sources are also problematic with regards to government excesses. Demonstration of potency was supposed to be a trump card in Cuba, as it had been in Guatemala. The intended effect of the Bay of Pigs invasion, that the Cuban people would stand up united against Castro, did not materialize. Mongoose did not have any more success, and was not able to inspire the Cuban population to revolt either. If anything,

³⁵⁷ There is plenty of documentation of the CIA planning ridiculous propaganda plans to undermine the Castro regime. Including poisoning Castro so he would lose his beard, and faking the second coming of Christ. For further reading see: Bohning, *The Castro Obsession: U. S. Covert Operations Against Cuba, 1959-1965*, 93-106.; 229-33. Central Intelligence Agency, *Official History of the Bay of Pigs Operation, Vol. III, Evolution of CIA's Anti-Castro Policies, 1959-January 1961*.

³⁵⁸ 219-20. Central Intelligence Agency, *Official History of the Bay of Pigs Operation, Vol. III, Evolution of CIA's Anti-Castro Policies, 1959-January 1961*.

³⁵⁹ The sources referred to are Cuban intelligence reports that are not publicly available. Escalante, *The Cuba project : CIA covert operations, 1959-62*, 62-63.

³⁶⁰ Jacinto Valdés-Dapena, *Operation Mongoose : Prelude of a Direct Invasion on Cuba* (Havana: Editorial Capitán San Luis, 2004), 72.

³⁶¹ Escalante, *The Cuba project : CIA covert operations, 1959-62*, 45-46.

³⁶² 5. Central Intelligence Agency, *Cuban Opposition to the Castro Regime: Former Batista Associates; Former Castro Associates*.

these futile attempts played into the hands of Castro. There could be no better way for Castro to show his potency than to win against the most powerful military power on earth, ever.

The organization of the insurgency was, as has been mentioned, a definite weak point for the insurgency. The intended scope of the Cuban insurrection was quite ambitious. With the Special Group running the operation, top level officials of the USA were directly involved, and the potential manpower drawn from different US agencies and departments was staggering. This includes 400 CIA agents working on the Miami base, and eight B-26 bombers with their crew.³⁶³ The Cuban resistance consisted of hundreds of exile groups, attempted unified in the FRD, and the domestic guerrilla which was estimated by US intelligence as between 200 and 7000 insurgents.³⁶⁴ In addition to this there was Brigade 2506 with 1400 men. The Bay of Pigs plan did rely on a popular uprising, with an estimate from the CIA of 2500 to 3000 spontaneous recruits, and support from 20 000 sympathizers, but this never materialized.³⁶⁵ There were many reasons for the failure of the Bay of Pigs and Mongoose operations, the lack of cohesion is certainly one of them. The inability of the USA and FRD to combine the front, and create a viable exile government, was a deciding weakness against a Castro government that grew stronger and more cohesive by the day.

In terms of external support, the Cuban Campaign was very similar to PBSUCCESS. The types of support included the most important aspects from PBSUCCESS, like the training, weapons supplies, and psychological and propaganda operations. The amount of support in each category was however higher, both in terms of money and scale. The lack of unity and strength among the opposition makes it seem very unlikely that they would have stood a chance without US involvement. Sanctuary was very important in the Cuban case, as many of the exile groups were based in the USA. The US based insurgents were extremely difficult for the Cuban government to get a hold of, save for when they went to Cuba. Other countries were also involved in the operations. Guatemala served an important sanctuary function for Brigade 2506. While Nicaragua supplied a staging point for the ships and planes used in the Bay of Pigs invasion.

³⁶³ Freedman, *Kennedy's wars : Berlin, Cuba, Laos, and Vietnam*, 141.

³⁶⁴ 415 resistance groups to be precise according to 1. Central Intelligence Agency. *Papers of Robert F. Kennedy. Attorney General Papers. Attorney General's Confidential File. 6-6: Cuba: Counter Revolutionary Handbook*. RFKAG-217-007, JFK: John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, 1963. https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/RFKAG/217/RFKAG-217-007?image_id=RFKAG-217-007-p0190 (Accessed December 6, 2017).

³⁶⁵ Freedman, *Kennedy's wars : Berlin, Cuba, Laos, and Vietnam*, 137.

The environment in Cuba provided both benefits and disadvantages for the insurgency. The advantageous conditions for guerrilla warfare in Cuba aided the guerrillas, just as they had aided Castro some years before. The Castro government's deep familiarity with guerrilla warfare and the areas did, however, reduce this advantageous effect. In the case of the Bay of Pigs invasion, the decision of landing site severely hindered the invasion force from going guerrilla, as they were isolated from advantageous terrain by massive swamplands.

The Cuban government reaction doomed the operation. US intelligence painted a weak regime that was vulnerable to an insurgency. When push came to shove however, it turned out that Castro had both the backing, and the strategy he needed to make the insurgency inefficient. The Cuban reaction has not been discussed in too much detail in this thesis, mostly due to lack of reliable sources. But it seems like the Cuban intelligence apparatus was very effective in uncovering insurgent groups. The Cuban Government's reaction was with no doubt affected by what had happened in Guatemala in 1954, and their own experience from their time as guerrillas. They knew that the USA could and would come after them, and when they did, they were well prepared. Thus, they managed to stop the Bay of Pig invasion, and the guerrillas supported by the USA.

As discussed in the section on PBSUCCESS, the strategy employed by the USA in Cuba was based on their experiences from PBSUCCESS. An attempt at creating the impression of a strong insurgency that undermined the populations trust in the government's ability at maintaining stability and security, which would eventually lead to the fall of the government. The way that it was intended that the government would fall was a little different, however. Since the old military establishment had completely collapsed, and fallen under strict revolutionary control, it was difficult to find allies there.³⁶⁶ Instead the insurgency was intended to make the population stand up to the regime, in a mass uprising. This mimicked the strategy that Castro employed with his guerrillas a few years earlier.

Guatemalan Civil War

In the case of the Guatemalan Civil War from 1960 onwards the revolutionary aspect was strong, expressed in its socialist revolutionary goal. There can however be made a case that the insurgency had a restorational aspect as well. Many of the officers involved in the coup

³⁶⁶ Samuel Farber, *The Origins of the Cuban Revolution reconsidered*, Envisioning Cuba (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 119-20.

attempt in 1960, and in the following guerrilla struggle were heavily influence by Arbenz and inspired by the Ten Years of Spring.³⁶⁷ Thus a wish for a restoration of a previous political system was likely the motivation for many of the insurgents. The second wave of insurgency in the 1970s was made up of a much broader front of political organizations and interest groups, than the one of the 1960s. It is therefore reasonable to assume that part of the broad insurgency movement was not necessarily revolutionary, but rather reformist or restorational.

According to the definitions used in this analysis, the Guatemalan Civil War witnessed excessive use of terror from both sides of the conflict. This includes the kidnappings used by the insurgents, and the excessive use of violence from both government forces and the Death Squads. Terror was a tool used by the insurgents especially at their low point after the government offensive of the late 1960s. Their use of guerrilla warfare however marks the groups most successful periods, especially of the late 1970s and early 1980s. The movement never managed to weaken the government sufficiently to start a conventional military campaign.

The first phase of the Guatemalan Civil War was characterized by the relative isolation of the insurgents. Their inability and unwillingness to appeal to the indigenous population severely limited their potential as an insurgency. The increased amount of organization of the lower classes in Guatemala in the 1970s, and the increased cooperation among the indigenous population can be considered to have an origin in exoteric appeals. While labor unions often have an ideological background, their main responsibilities are dealing with concrete labor-related grievances. As the more ideologically focused guerrilla groups gained the support of these organizations in the late 1970s their potential strength increased dramatically.

Terror, as discussed above, was an important tool for the Guatemalan insurgents. The targets were primarily people the guerrillas viewed as enemies of the insurrection, or people that could secure a large ransom, these two reasons were not mutually exclusive. It is difficult to estimate the support gained by this strategy, but it is clear that the insurgents knew not to target persons which could give a negative affect from the people they wanted support from, the working class and reformist elite, in the early years of the insurgency. During the most

³⁶⁷ Garrard-Burnett, *Terror in the Land of the Holy Spirit: Guatemala Under General Efraim Rios Montt 1982-1983*, 26-27.

brutal face of the Civil War in the early 1980s, however, the guerrillas turned increasingly to targets that hurt their standing with the lower classes.³⁶⁸

Government excesses were plentiful during the Guatemalan Civil War. And it was a deliberate strategy by the guerrillas to provoke the government into excesses against the civilian population, in particular during the urban terror campaigns in the early 1970s.³⁶⁹ It is however difficult to determine the net result in terms of how the government excesses affected the population in terms of popular support for the guerrillas. The effect of the terror campaign is something that scholars disagree on.³⁷⁰ The strategy can lead either to the population being too afraid of government reprisals to support insurgents or to increased willingness to cooperate against the government. There was however a correlation between increasing repression and worsening living conditions for the indigenous population of Guatemala, and their increased propensity to get involved in standing up against the government in the late 1970s, and it is not unlikely that there is causation as well.³⁷¹

The Guatemalan insurgents offered services to the Guatemalan population, like economic and social services for villages, as well as conflict resolution and hindering local landlords from gathering rent.³⁷² The insurgency's capacity to render such services relied on some form of territorial control, something which it obtained for only relatively brief periods. The second wave of the insurgency incorporated political organizations, and was tied more closely to civil organizations, and it is likely that these contributed more to social welfare than did the guerrillas themselves. Militarily they also showed potency. Up until the Zacapa-offensive for instance, the insurgents' activities made the press think that they were about to unseat the government, a view that spread to the population.³⁷³ And even after the decimation of the guerrilla ranks following the offensive, they continued to show strength through urban terror attacks. Then, as the insurgency grew throughout the late 1970s, the guerrillas showed even greater military potency. What effect this had on the civilian population I can only speculate, but it certainly made the government and the USA worry about the potential of the movement.

³⁶⁸ Brands, *Latin America's Cold War*, 206-10.

³⁶⁹ Guatemalan Empiric chapter pp 49.

³⁷⁰ Collazo-Davila, "The Guatemalan Insurrection," 225.

³⁷¹ McClintock, *The American Connection, Volume Two: State terror and Popular Resistance in Guatemala*, 145-55.

³⁷² Paige, "Social Theory and Peasant Revolution in Vietnam and Guatemala," 726-27.; Collazo-Davila, "The Guatemalan Insurrection," 125.

³⁷³ Guatemalan Empirical Chapter pp 49.

Organization-wise, the Guatemalan insurrection varied greatly over the course of its existence. Starting as a military revolt by 120 officers, it turned into a guerrilla of 200-300 active fighters, after the Zacapa offensive the insurrection lost a lot of its men and became a small insurrection only able to perform urban terror attacks. The insurrection grew throughout the 1970s, and by their highpoint in 1982 there were between 3000 and 6000 active insurgents. The difference over time is not only in numbers. As pointed out earlier, the second wave of the insurrection was very different in its organization. As before there were several different guerrilla groups that performed the fighting, but the insurrection also obtained a pure political front in the CUC, which gave the insurrection a broader scope, and wider appeal and support. There were however four main insurgent groups in the second wave, the EGP, ORPA, FAR and the PGT. These four groups united in 1980, and this increased cohesion corresponded with the highpoint of insurgent resistance in the Civil War.

The insurgents in the Guatemalan Civil War also obtained foreign support. The support was mostly from Cuba, in the form of sanctuary and training for the rebels.³⁷⁴ The decision to unite the guerrilla front in the URNG was also pushed by the Cuban, and Nicaraguan governments.³⁷⁵ As far as material support there was limited support from the communist bloc as a whole.³⁷⁶ The relatively limited size of the guerrilla, and their ability to obtain funds of their own made it unnecessary to rely on foreign support. Their adversary in the conflict did receive massive foreign support however, although varying over the years.

The environment of Guatemala was very advantageous to the insurgency. The thick inaccessible rainforests and mountains, combined with a badly developed infrastructure made it easy for the guerrillas to escape government forces. Ethnicity played an important role as well. Institutional racism and repression made the indigenous population more open to cooperate with the insurgents, something the insurgents took advantage of in the second wave.³⁷⁷

The government response was varying over time, the two insurgency waves exemplify both weakness, and strength. One can view the high points of the insurgency effort, in 1966 and

³⁷⁴ Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico, "Guatemala Memoria del Silencio: Capítulo primero: Causas y orígenes del enfrentamiento armado interno," 128.

³⁷⁵ Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico, "Guatemala Memoria del Silencio: Capítulo segundo: Las violaciones de los derechos humanos y los hechos de violencia," 237.; Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico, "Guatemala Memoria del Silencio: Conclusiones y Recomendaciones: Capítulo cuarto: Conclusiones," 25, 389.

³⁷⁶ McGill, "The Guatemalan Counterinsurgency Strategy," 17.

³⁷⁷ Schirmer, *The Guatemalan Military Project: A Violence Called Democracy*, 40-41.

the start of the 1980s, as the low point of the government response. This does not mean that the government response was the weakest in sheer numbers at these times. But that the insurgency response was at its high point in relationship to the government's response. The two main responses of the government to the insurgency was the use of means to reduce grievances in the population, and massive use of violence and terror. In both 1966 and in 1982 massive government offensives were executed, which resulted high death tolls, both among civilians and guerrillas. At the same time social projects were started to reduce the grievances among the population which made them side with the guerrillas. The return to civilian rule in 1967 for instance seemingly turned the country to a democracy again, which removed one of the main reasons for the first guerrilla's existence. The campaign of the 1980s was even more expansive than the one of the late 1960s, but also involved forced relocation of entire villages, to remove the guerrillas' support base. In the end these measures did end in the government remaining in power. On the other hand, the government response of the early 1960s and the late 1970s were weak, and this played into the insurgents' hands.

In terms of strategy, the Guatemalans were inspired by the Cuban's Foco strategy. Just like Castro, the Guatemalan insurgents started their movement from nothing, and tried to create revolutionary conditions with only their relatively small guerrilla organizations. It is probably not a coincidence that many of the guerrilla leaders of this time went to Cuba to receive training in guerrilla warfare. Nevertheless, the first wave did not succeed. For several years the insurgency was reduced to following the urban strategy, until it grew in size once again. The second wave was not as closely tied to the Foco strategy as the first one. By creating strong ties to civilian organizations, the insurgency grew to a much larger scope than the first one, and gave them more leverage against the government forces. The second wave is in this regard more unique and tailored to the local condition than the first one was.

Reflections

Why (PB)Success?

One of the questions that we can answer based on the previous analysis is why PBSUCCESS achieved victory, while the two other insurgencies failed. The cases show that the scale of the insurgencies, and the methods of warfare employed, might not be so decisive in determining the success. PBSUCCESS was the smallest in terms of boots on the ground. A counterargument to this however is that PBSUCCESS indeed was large in scale, since the army decided to switch sides, and changed the power-balance heavily in favor of the

insurgents. After all, Árbenz did not manage to rally forces to counter the army's betrayal. This argument is problematic, since it can also be argued that the success of the operation was achieved the moment the military turned, and that they therefore cannot be counted into the scale of the insurgency.

I will argue that the answer is found primarily in the five analytical variables discussed above. PBSUCCESS managed to gain advantages by creating support for the overthrow of Árbenz. The esoteric and exoteric appeals that were already existing for unseating Árbenz, existed before the operation started, but shrewd propaganda increased their effect. The show of potency that caused the fear of an US invasion, and the success at directing Árbenz out on a more repressive track, further cemented these appeals. PBSUCCESS also drew advantage of strong cohesiveness, which can be attributed to only counting on one Guatemalan resistance group. The propaganda success is unlikely to have happened without the support of the USA. External support was also vital for the insurgents' ability to arm themselves, and to be able to move in over the Guatemalan border from several places with relative ease.³⁷⁸

As I have mentioned before, the strength, and the way the government responds is perhaps the single most important factor. PBSUCCESS is a clear example of this. The unity of the Guatemalan government, specifically the relationship between Árbenz and the army, was weak. The insurgency focused on this vulnerability, and exploited this to its full extent. And it worked.

The two other cases were more mixed when it came to the five variables. The Cuban campaign suffered in particular when it came to popular support, organization and the government reaction, while it was relative strong when it came to external support, and the environment. The Guatemalan insurgency had great popular support, varied organization and advantage from the environment, but did not draw advantages from extensive external support and was also faced with a varied, but ultimately strong government response. In both of these cases a weaker government would have counted against the insurgency's weaknesses. Saying that the government response is the only important factor would however be a gross overstatement. Instead I will argue in line with O'Neill's thinking, that we are talking about a complicated equation with several variables that affect the prospect of success. A simple conclusion would therefore be that the Cuban campaign, and the Guatemalan insurrection

³⁷⁸ Not counting El Salvador

failed because the equation did not pan out in their favor. The insurgencies were too weak compared to the sitting governments. It should be noted that this conclusion refers to only the cases treated in this thesis, and while it might be applicable on other insurgencies it is not the intention to give a comprehensive conclusion here.

The Disadvantage of Chronology

One aspect which O'Neill does not touch is the interconnection between insurgencies, when they are separate in time and space. The cases of this thesis are interconnected, and they did affect each other in interesting ways.

The government response, which has been given a fair bit of attention so far, is particularly interesting to look at in terms of interconnectivity. As explained earlier, the Campaign against Castro was very much inspired by PBSUCCESS. But it was not only in terms of the US aspect that they were interconnected. The fall of Árbenz was important because it sent a signal, to Latin America in particular, that the USA could unseat regimes they did not like. Castro was very aware of this, and Che Guevarra probably even more so. Che had witnessed PBSUCCESS first-hand, as he had been in Guatemala at the time.³⁷⁹ The possibility of US intervention against the revolutionary regime was very real. And the Cubans therefore prepared themselves for protecting the revolution from the Yankees.

Had PBSUCCESS not taken place, it is safe to assume that the Cuban government would have not been as paranoid of the USA. This would have weakened the government response and given an insurrection against the regime an advantage. Whether a campaign against Castro in a timeline without PBSUCCESS would have succeeded is impossible to know, however, but I will argue that it would have stood a better chance.

Much of the same can be said about the Guatemalan insurrection during the civil war. The success of the Cuban Revolution shortly before the insurrection started, made the USA, and the Guatemalan government that much more aware of the threat that insurgencies posed. Therefore, it can be assumed that an alternative timeline without the Cuban Revolution could have given the insurgents an edge. Without the Cuban Revolution however, the insurgents would not have the great inspiration that the Cubans provided by showing that revolution was

³⁷⁹ Holland, "Operation PBHISTORY: The Aftermath of SUCCESS," 309.; Morley, *Imperial State and Revolution : the United States and Cuba, 1952-1986*, 138.

possible. And this would have weakened them. The same can be said about the campaign against Castro, it was inspired by the success of PBSUCCESS.

The point is here to show that the placement of an insurgency can be very much affected by the when they occur. The contra-historic nature of this argument makes it hard to quantify.

Conclusion

This chapter has analyzed the three cases previously treated in this thesis. The analysis provided a way of comparing the different aspects of the insurgencies. And helped in answering why only PBSUCCESS managed to succeed while the other two insurgencies failed. The main reason for the success of PBSUCCESS was the weakness of the regime, which was due to numerous factors. PBSUCCESS was able to divide the government and the military establishment, which led to the military finally forcing Árbenz to resign.

The insurgents of the Guatemalan Civil War did not start out with the resources and support that the insurgency against Árbenz had. The military government also had the advantage of US support in the initial riot which started the civil war. Thus, the insurgency was in an unfavorable position *vis-à-vis* the government in terms of its military potential. This was the case for the insurgency through much of its existence, up until the late 1970s and early 1980s, where the power balance started to move in favor of the insurgents. Ultimately however, the government had the time and resources to react decisively against the insurgency threat. The blow dealt through Victoria 82 and subsequent government offensives damaged the insurgency beyond repair.

The insurgency against Castro seemingly had all the advantages of PBSUCCESS, but when push came to shove, it failed. US hubris as a result of PBSUCCESS led to an unwarranted optimism in the capabilities of Unconventional Warfare. Combined with a skewed image of the situation on the ground in Cuba, which gave the impression of a people ready for revolt against an unpopular government, as well as some ill-advised tactical decisions influenced by the doctrine of plausible deniability, led to the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion. The same causes led to the failure of Operation Mongoose, which was ended as a result of the Cuban Missile Crisis. The Cuban anti-Castro resistance was weak and would not have had any more success without US support. US support, however, was severely limited by the US government's reluctance to take risks. Combined with the Castro regime's awareness of the

danger the USA posed to the island after the insurgency against Árbenz, and its military and political strength, the insurgency could not succeed.

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