

An Investigation into the Reasons for U.S.A. Intervention in Guatemala in 1954

**To What Extent was the Fear of Communism Responsible for CIA Intervention
in Guatemala During 1954?**

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Introduction

On the 15th of June 1954, Guatemala was attacked on four fronts. Castillo Armas, a former exile of Guatemala, had gathered rebels together in an attempt to overthrow the Guatemalan government and install himself as president. This was not Armas' first attempt at overthrowing the legitimate Guatemalan government, Armas had once participated in Arana's coup but was exiled due to its failure. However, this would be Armas' first successful attempt at removing the left-leaning regime. Besieged both militarily and politically, Jacobo Árbenz, then president of Guatemala, announced his resignation through a recorded broadcast on the 27th of June 1954, and on the 7th of July, Carlos Castillo Armas ascended the vacant throne Árbenz left behind. What followed was decades of authoritarian rule and blatant human rights abuses.

In this endeavor, Armas was supported by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), who claimed their intervention was due to the growing United Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) influence in Guatemala. Therefore the question is to what extent was the fear of Communism the deciding factor in CIA intervention in Guatemala in 1954. The question will be explored by investigating whether or not United States of America (US/USA) policymakers were more influenced by the growing international communist movement or other concerns such as the economic opportunities Guatemala presented and the USA mindset that South America should belong fully in their sphere of influence. This is important because the Guatemalan coup is arguably the most successful CIA intervention, and would be cited by the CIA as a

supporting factor when discussing the disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961. Therefore an examination of the aforementioned factors will make clear the foreign policies and the thinking of Washington. Overall an examination of both orthodox and revisionist perspectives will be conducted to conclude that although economic considerations and the imperialist tendencies influenced the planning of PBSUCCESS, it was ultimately the domestic fear of international Communism that led to CIA intervention.

Chapter 1- Historical Context

Set in the mid-1950's, the Guatemalan coup d'état occurred early in the Cold War. To understand the origins of the coup, an examination of the background factors that may have influenced decisions is required. Therefore, this section aims to provide detail on events prior to 1953 that may have shaped the coup in 1954. It is important to note that Latin America was oft seen as the personal fiefdom of the United States, and as such, much of the historical background pre-1950 will be of American initiatives.

United States policy on Latin America was shaped by the Monroe Doctrine, which was announced by President James Monroe on the 2nd of December, 1823.¹ Its message is essentially the idea that the Western Hemisphere is under the control of the United States, and that all European powers must respect that and must not consider any Latin American state "as subjects for future colonisation".² The reason was twofold, firstly to protect America's influence in South America by preventing European influence and secondly to further American economic interests by making itself the biggest trading partner available. Another, more modern, reading suggests that the Monroe Doctrine also aimed at protecting US interests back when Spain was attempting to regain its colonies and Russia trying to take the Pacific Northwest.³

¹ Message of President James Monroe at the commencement of the first session of the 18th Congress (The Monroe Doctrine), 12/02/1823; Presidential Messages of the 18th Congress, ca. 12/02/1823-ca. 03/03/1825; Record Group 46; Records of the United States Senate, 1789-1990; National Archives.)

² Ibid.

³ McNamara, Robert. "What Was the Monroe Doctrine?" ThoughtCo. Accessed September 23, 2017. <https://www.thoughtco.com/monroe-doctrine-1773384>.

The Monroe Doctrine has been called upon multiple times in history, most notably in Mexico in 1865.⁴ Most relevant, however, is that it has been used in order to justify intervention in Latin American states such as Nicaragua in 1911 and Haiti in 1915.⁵ This was due to President Theodore Roosevelt's Corollary (1904) to the doctrine, which added the stipulation that the United States would intervene as a last resort by "[exercising] international police power in 'flagrant cases of such wrongdoing or impotence'".⁶ This addendum must be acknowledged as an aggressive rewording of the Monroe Doctrine to justify unilateral US military, political or economic activity in Latin America.

Guatemala attained independence in 1821 and fell into chronic civil instability. In 1944, Jorge Ubico, Guatemala's latest dictator was overthrown by a pro-democratic military coup and Arévalo was elected.⁷ Arévalo's government was nationalist, being left wing and famous for its social reforms.⁸ However, Arévalo was committed to democratic reform which enraged much of Washington.⁹ President Arévalo termed this type of politics "Arevalismo", and called it "Spiritual Socialism".¹⁰ Most importantly however, was Arévalo had begun rhetoric on Agrarian reforms that aimed to redistribute land to the long-oppressed Indian community in Guatemala.¹¹

⁴ "Monroe Doctrine (1823)." Our Documents - Monroe Doctrine (1823). Accessed August 5, 2017. <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=23>.

⁵ Ibid

⁶ U.S. Department of State. Accessed July 13, 2017.

<https://history.state.gov/milestones/1899-1913/roosevelt-and-monroe-doctrine>.

⁷ Woodward, Ralph Lee. A short history of Guatemala. La Antigua, Guatemala: Editorial Laura Lee, 2008.

⁸ The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica. "Juan José Arévalo." Encyclopædia Britannica. November 07, 2016. Accessed August 13, 2017. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Juan-Jose-Arevalo>.

⁹ Gleijeses, Piero. Shattered hope: the Guatemalan revolution and the United States, 1944-1954. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992. P 38.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Handy, Jim. Revolution in the countryside: rural conflict and agrarian reform in Guatemala, 1944-1954. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994. P 25.

Jacobo Árbenz's government arose from Juan Jose Arévalo's administration in 1945.

¹² Árbenz's administration turned this rhetoric into policy, nationalising and redistributing much of the land in order to balance land ownership in a country which over seventy percent of the land was held by approximately two percent of the population prior to redistribution. ¹³ Much of this land was owned by the United States based company, the United Fruit Company Corporation (UFCO).

The 1954 coup originated from the CIA operation PBSUCCESS which was a CIA operation that received the permission from the presidents to put into action. ¹⁴ An initial meeting between CIA's deputy director Allen Dulles and lobbyist lawyer Thomas G. Corcoran planted the seeds of PBSUCCESS for the future. ¹⁵ Seeking an appropriate figurehead, The CIA interviewed Castillo Armas in Mexico City in 1950 after catching him purchasing arms from Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic, and claimed that Armas would be the one to "lead a successful revolt against the present regime". ¹⁶ In early 1952, Guatemala was deemed "a potential threat to US security" by CIA analysts. ¹⁷ An early operation by the name PBFORTUNE would have sent arms to Armas' rebels, but circumstances led to its failure and termination.

¹⁸ The next push came from Eisenhower's "New Look" policy, which led to the United

¹² copied Handy, Jim. "The Guatemalan Revolution and Civil Rights: Presidential Elections and the Judicial Process under Juan José Arévalo and Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán." *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies / Revue Canadienne Des études Latino-américaines Et Caraïbes* 10, no. 19 (1985): 3-21. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41799561>.

¹³ Schlesinger, Stephen C., and Stephen Kinzer. *Bitter fruit: the story of the American coup in Guatemala*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 2005.

¹⁴ Haines, Gerald K. *CIA and Guatemala Assassination Proposals 1952-1954*. Report. Historical Review, Central Intelligence Agency. CIA.

¹⁵ Cullather, Nicholas. *Operation PBSUCCESS: The United States and Guatemala 1952-1954*. Report. Historical Review Department, Central Intelligence Agency. Vol. 1. CIA, 1997. 8-9.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Haines, Gerald K. *CIA and Guatemala Assassination Proposals 1952-1954*. Report. Historical Review, Central Intelligence Agency. CIA.

States favouring clandestine operations over military intervention due to operations being more economically effective. The situation escalated in Guatemala and eventually, it led to an improved version of PBFORTUNE inspired by Operation Ajax (the 1953 operation by the CIA that was behind the Iranian Coup) which was also planned by Allen Dulles and combined “psychological, economic, diplomatic and paramilitary actions”.¹⁹ ²⁰ It culminated on the 18th of June, 1954 when a plane swooped over the National Palace and dropped leaflets.²¹ After days of advancing rebels and US diplomatic threats, PBSUCCESS became, as its name implied, a success.

More concerning is the legacy left behind by PBSUCCESS. Being the first operation in Latin America, it served as the ‘precedent’ behind the Bay of Pigs incident that the CIA, again, orchestrated. Many historians cite success in Guatemala as the basis for the Bay of Pigs invasion due to it being the first operation in South America.²² This means that the reasoning behind the intervention in Guatemala, which has seen much debate over whether or not the intervention was due to Communism or due to America’s desire to retain an iron grip over their sphere of influence determined the nature of the legacy left behind by the other CIA interventions in Latin America.

¹⁹ Central Intelligence Agency, Office of the Director of Intelligence, Job 80R01731R, Box 9, Folder 350, White House. Secret; Security Information.

²⁰ Cullather, Nicholas. Operation PBSUCCESS: The United States and Guatemala 1952-1954. Report. Historical Review Department, Central Intelligence Agency. Vol. 1. CIA, 1997. 26.

²¹ Schlesinger, Stephen C., and Stephen Kinzer. Bitter fruit: the story of the American coup in Guatemala. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 2005.

²² Haines, Gerald K. CIA and Guatemala Assassination Proposals 1952-1954. Report. Historical Review, Central Intelligence Agency. CIA.

Chapter 2 - The Orthodox Historians

The orthodox view of the Guatemalan coup is reminiscent of the orthodox view on the wider Cold War. It places the blame on the USSR and the “international communist” movement. Mainly, orthodox historians draw upon four factors. Firstly the close ties between Árbenz and the Guatemalan communist party. Secondly Guatemala’s ties with the Soviet Union. Thirdly on the socialist nature of the land reforms and lastly on the structure of the Guatemalan government. Specifically on Guatemala, orthodox historians would argue the Árbenz had become a “Soviet puppet” and Guatemala a Soviet satellite.²³ Clearly, the orthodox perspective succeeds in examining the world from the perspective of a US policymaker from the 1950’s but does not offer a holistic view.

Orthodox historians argue that US policymakers feared that the growing Communist presence in Guatemala would destabilise US influence over South America. According to historian Nicholas Cullather, “United States officials’ concern about Communism in Guatemala grew as Cold War tensions increased”.²⁴ Therefore, the CIA was likely to be concerned with USSR influence, measured by the power of the local Communist party or socio-political ties with the USSR in Guatemala which, according to the US, expanded as the Cold War progressed. Therefore the CIA investigated the origins of Árbenz’s leftist policies in order to discover whether or not

²³ Streeter, Stephen M. "Interpreting the 1954 U.S. Intervention in Guatemala: Realist, Revisionist, and Postrevisionist Perspectives." *The History Teacher* 34, no. 1 (2000): 61-74.

²⁴ Cullather, Nicholas. *Operation PBSUCCESS: The United States and Guatemala 1952-1954*. Report. Historical Review Department, Central Intelligence Agency. Vol. 1. CIA, 1997. 24.

they originated from the Communist party. These investigations revealed that a lot of the more Communist policies of Árbenz came from his wife Maria Villanova who was a known Communist. Maria was seen as a “radical leftist” by many governmental analysts and was significantly more socialist than her husband.²⁵ This is because she was raised as a wealthy heir in the US, and during her rebellious phase, turned to Socialism as a “reactionary” ideology to her lifestyle.²⁶ As such, the CIA evidently thought that the communists held much influence over Guatemalan society through Árbenz’s wife. This can be seen in a 74 man hit list by the CIA composed entirely of communists.²⁷ It was amplified because Arbenz, in the words of historian Schlesinger and Kinzer, “enthusiastically accepted the backing of the Communists”.²⁸ This means that the CIA objectively thought of the communists as obstacles. Communist support of Arévalo and Árbenz’s reforms was seen as them ‘propping-up’ the regime. Scholar John Zunes here argues that the CIA then resorted to covert action because “economic leverage was largely lacking, diplomatic pressure ineffective, Communist influence apparently growing”.²⁹ This shows why the CIA was so willing to spend approximately \$20 million USD in overthrowing Árbenz’s government.³⁰ However, this source has its limitations; since all 74 names have been redacted for security reasons. Therefore it is difficult to verify that all names were indeed taken from the list of communists owned by the Guatemalan

²⁵ United States. Department of State. Foreign relations of the United States, 1952-1954. By Susan K. Holly and David S. Patterson. Guatemala. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1986. 41.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ "CIA and Assassinations: The Guatemala 1954 Documents." The National Security Archive. Accessed July 16, 2017. <http://nsarchive2.gwu.edu//NSAEPP/NSAEPP4/index.html>.

²⁸ Schlesinger, Stephen C., and Stephen Kinzer. Bitter fruit: the story of the American coup in Guatemala. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 2005.

²⁹ LEHMAN, KENNETH. “Revolutions and Attributions: Making Sense of Eisenhower Administration Policies in Bolivia and Guatemala.” Diplomatic History, vol. 21, no. 2, 1997, pp. 185–213. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/24913280.

³⁰ Ibid.

army. Furthermore, even if all individuals were Communists, it must be noted that the CIA only selectively released documents due to the Eisenhower administration's staunch denial of any involvement in Guatemala or with Castillo Armas. Therefore, it becomes difficult to gauge how much of a threat the State Department of the US thought the PGT or individual Communists were. Furthermore this source is limited in that the selected materials may have been manipulated in order to display the Eisenhower administration as more morally righteous than it actually was. It is undeniable however, that the PGT leadership became Árbenz's advisors due to their support of the reforms. Historian Piero Gleijeses used the term "kitchen cabinet" to describe the relationship between Árbenz and the two leaders and the secretary general of the PGT.³¹ However, it could also be that Árbenz was close with the Communists because of his naturally left-leaning policies, which included various land reform and wealth distribution plans that were synonymous with Communist development, and not because he himself possessed Communist tendencies. A distinction must be drawn between supporting leftist policies, and supporting the international Communist movement.

Although the precise relationship between Árbenz and the Communists is still up for debate, it is undeniable that the USSR had designs to expand its influence in South America. This occurred due to a change in Soviet perception of Latin America which led to closer ties between Guatemala and the USSR. Before the 1950's the Soviets had been locked the view of 'geographic fatalism', which stated that each superpower owned certain hemispheres of the globe, and the hemispheres that lay

³¹ Gleijeses, Piero. "The Agrarian Reform of Jacobo Arbenz." *Journal of Latin American Studies* 21, no. 3 (1989): 453-80. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/156959>.

outside of theirs were the most intense 'battlegrounds' in an attempt to claim the hemispheres.³² However, orthodox historians argue that the United States saw that view as merely temporary. Their greatest proof came in the discovery of the cargo of MS *Althem*.³³ The Swedish ship was discovered to have been carrying a cache of Soviet-made arms from Czechoslovakia to Guatemala.³⁴ This was concerning to the US because Czechoslovakia was distinctly under USSR influence at the time. In May 1954, the shipment was discovered by the Americans and a report given by Allen Dulles states that the discovery "first alerted us to the fact that massive Soviet support was being given to strengthen the position of a Communist regime".³⁵ This was significant because the implementation of PBSUCCESS occurred in June of that very year. It would not be a massive leap in logic to then attribute the cargo of the MS *Althem* as a short-term cause for PBSUCCESS. This shows that the consideration of USSR influence in Guatemala was highly prioritised as a reason for intervention because if it was not, PBSUCCESS would not have been implemented so rapidly after first discovery and report, meaning that *Althem's* shipment was the lynchpin for the approval of PBSUCCESS. This is supported by Washington's idea that Árbenz's Guatemala, had become a centre of Soviet influence in Latin America. The shipment gave Washington the necessary evidence to alarm the decision makers, which in turn authorised PBSUCCESS on the 15th of June, fearing that further Soviet arms would come to Guatemala.³⁶ Therefore, the fear of communism

³² Prizel, Ilya. "Latin America: The Long March." *The National Interest*, no. 12 (1988): 109-20. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42894573>.

³³ Haines, Gerald K. *CIA and Guatemala Assassination Proposals 1952-1954*. Report. Historical Review, Central Intelligence Agency. CIA.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ MOYE, LAURA. "The United States Intervention in Guatemala." *International Social Science Review* 73, no. 1/2 (1998): 44-52. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23883544>.

³⁶ "Swedish ship quits U.S. after quiz on Guatemala arms". *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 30, 1954.

was at least, a catalyst for the implementation of PBSUCCESS. Conversely, it can be argued that Guatemala turned to the USSR to acquire weapons, not as an indication of closeness but because the US would no longer sell Guatemala weapons due to an embargo established in 1951.³⁷ This embargo was further modified and strengthened in 1953, with the US preventing Germany, Canada and Rhodesia from selling arms to Guatemala.³⁸ Therefore it is logical to assume that the reason Árbenz purchased arms from Czechoslovakia was because Guatemala could not obtain arms from nations affiliated with the West. Therefore, the purchase of Soviet arms was not indicative of Guatemala turning to Communism, but a desperate last move to obtain much needed arms for its army. The CIA was chasing a ghost of its own making.

Overall, the Orthodox perspective offers an argument where America felt threatened by an increasingly Communist Guatemala, which had connections with the Kremlin, in their backyard and acted in self-preservation and defense. However, it seems unreasonable to those that aren't an American living in the 1950's as it rests on broad definitions of Communism and presents only one point of view.

³⁷ Immerman, Richard H. *The CIA in Guatemala: the foreign policy of intervention*. Austin: University of Texas, 1982. 144-150.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

Chapter 3 - The Revisionist Historians

Revisionist view the reasons behind the Guatemalan coup as symptomatic of the reasons behind the wider Cold War. It places most of the blame on the US and its 'economically imperialist' policies. Mainly, revisionists draw on three key arguments. Firstly that the intervention was a protectionist move to secure economic interests of the UFCO. Secondly that the intervention was a move to deepen American influence in Latin America and lastly that Washington in the Cold War failed to properly define communism and thus misinterpreted most nationalist movements across the globe. Clearly, the revisionist view is retrospective and benefits from being able to use hindsight and patterns that would emerge later in the Cold War to explain events but contains a level of bias. Yet it is the most holistic perspective and thus the most reasonable.

Revisionists would argue that a long-term cause of *PBFORTUNE* and *PBSUCCESS* was Washington's desire to defend the interests of the UFCO in Guatemala. This is a viewpoint that president Árbenz would have agreed with.³⁹ This can be seen when Washington ran articles on Guatemala through friendly reporters in the United States in order to exaggerate and create an unfriendly atmosphere towards Guatemala in the US. Communist threats and attacks on US staff were faked and put into newspapers through manipulation, for example, US ambassador to Guatemala Richard C. Patterson was alleged to have been attacked.⁴⁰ However, the content of

³⁹ Árbenz, Jacobo. "President Arbenz's Resignation Speech." Speech, Guatemala, June 27, 1954.

⁴⁰ "US envoy returns plot on life alleged." The New York Times, March 31, 1950.

the newspapers appeared to have been significantly different from what actually happened. An internal memorandum of the US government reveals that the Guatemalan government had requested a recall of ambassador Patterson due to him allegedly interfering with internal affairs.⁴¹ This means that the attack may well have been exaggerated or over reported in an attempt to create an illusion of Guatemalan hostility. Therefore, the questionable content of the source means that its purpose is no longer to inform, as newspapers should, but more to persuade the general American public that Guatemala was 'evil'. This was because the UFCO were most heavily affected by the nationalisation of land by Árbenz. According to historian Schoultz Lars, the UFCO was the single largest landowner in Guatemala and Arbenz had tried to appropriate approximately forty percent of the land owned by the UFCO.⁴² This was important to the UFCO which relied on that land to grow its fruits, specifically banana as Guatemala was known as 'banana country', for export.⁴³ All in all, between 1953 and 1954 UFCO lost approximately seventy-four percent from two of its plantations.⁴⁴ In 1950, UFCO found the compensation by the Guatemalan government lacking and began hiring lobbyists and publicists in order to create a Washington that would favour the overthrow of Árbenz in order to repossess their land.⁴⁵ Guatemala's public relation expert Edward Bernay's, Sigmund Freud's nephew and was personally close to many leading Democrats of the time such as the owner of The New York Times, started anti-Guatemala campaigns in

⁴¹ United States. Department of State. Office of the Historian. *The United Nations ; the Western Hemisphere*. By W. J. McWilliams. Vol. II. Washington: U.S. G.P.O., 1976. 444-75.

⁴² Schoultz, Lars. *Beneath the United States: a history of U.S. policy toward Latin America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Gleijeses, Piero. "The Agrarian Reform of Jacobo Arbenz." *Journal of Latin American Studies* 21, no. 3 (1989): 453-80. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/156959>.

⁴⁵ Schlesinger, Stephen C., and Stephen Kinzer. *Bitter fruit: the story of the American coup in Guatemala*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 2005. 77.

newspapers.⁴⁶ This shows that the UFCO was willing to attack Guatemala on its policies which shows that US policy was dictated by the economic elite. Meanwhile, UFCO officials continued to influence Washington on its policies. Here UFCO played on the US' lack of knowledge on Latin America in order to twist the facts of the situation, biasing officials against Guatemala.⁴⁷

Whilst it is clear that UFCO made active attempts to demonise Guatemala over its economic policies, post-revisionists and orthodox historians would disagree with UFCO being the critical factor. This view is echoed by Manuel Fortuny, former leader of the Guatemalan Communist Party, arguing that "They would have overthrown us even if we had grown no bananas".⁴⁸ Similarly, interviews with Eisenhower's staff have revealed that interests of the UFCO were "subsidiary" to combating the "Communist threat".⁴⁹ These interviews have a valuable origin as they came from those involved in the planning of PBSUCCESS, which means that they are likely to be an accurate reflection of the thought behind their process. However, considering that the Eisenhower administration had denied involvement due to the negative international response, the source is limited because the transcripts may have been made out of self-preservation to avoid the regime being tainted by accusations of corruption or pandering to the economic elites. Therefore, it would be difficult to ascertain whether or not the purpose of the source is to persuade or if it was made with a genuine desire to inform.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Gleijeses, Piero. *Shattered hope: the Guatemalan revolution and the United States, 1944-1954*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992. 4.

⁴⁹ Cullather, Nicholas. *Operation PBSUCCESS: The United States and Guatemala 1952-1954*. Report. Historical Review Department, Central Intelligence Agency. Vol. 1. CIA, 1997.

A strong argument could be made that the Guatemalan reforms of Arévalo and Árbenz's administration were not, as the CIA believed, communist. The 1947 labour code piqued CIA interest as it allowed the formation of unions and allowed them to strike.⁵⁰ This was seen as proof of "Communist influence" by the CIA.⁵¹ The revisionist argument is that these policies were representative of a democratic development rather than a communist one, and definitely not a Soviet government. This is supported by the fact that ninety percent of the normal populace only owned about fifteen percent of land- and practically none belonged to the Indian community.⁵² Therefore, in order to avoid monopolies and severe wealth gaps, the nationalisation and redistribution of the land was necessary for a more democratic society. As Schlesinger and Kinzer argued, Árbenz represented a beginning in Guatemala's democratic progression, being "only Guatemala's second President elected under a democratic constitution in 133 years of independence".⁵³ Therefore, US analysts failed to understand the true nature of Guatemala's reforms. A more sinister argument can be made in that the intervention by America was purely imperialist, as it was hypocritical for America to condemn policies that were derived from their own. An example of this is the Social Security Law (30th of October, 1946), which was amongst the first social security programmes in Latin America.⁵⁴ The programme resembled the New Deal measures of the United States, and was

⁵⁰ Schlesinger, Stephen C., and Stephen Kinzer. *Bitter fruit: the story of the American coup in Guatemala*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 2005. 38-39.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.* 9-10

⁵⁴ "Social Security Administration." Research and Analysis by Carl H. Farman. Accessed September 17, 2017. <https://www.ssa.gov/policy/authors/FarmanCarlH.html>.

about coverage for maternity leave and accident compensation.⁵⁵ For the US to deride it as 'Communist' was hypocritical. Therefore it can be said that there was no reason for the US to treat the social reforms by Arévalo and Árbenz as anything but a country following a natural route of development.

An alternative view which is an amalgamation of both the orthodox and revisionist view on whether or not Árbenz's reforms are Communist can be argued. Many post-revisionist historians argue that the US suffered from an overly broad view of Communism. That just as it would later in Vietnam, the United States confused nationalism with Kremlin-backed Communism. Immerman argued that the reforms were aimed at returning Guatemala to a fair society since the only way to equalise land distribution and ownership then was government intervention.⁵⁶ Therefore although the reforms may have seemed communist, they were in fact nationalist. Which means that although the US intervention was planned and executed in order to combat Communism, the definition of Communism was excessively broad. Thus PBSUCCESS rested on faulty premises and misunderstandings by Washington.

Overall, the revisionist perspective offers an argument about a US that failed to properly understand the nuance in political stance and perspective, and was influenced by economic interests, then responded in an unnecessary and imperialist manner. However, it only offers a basic explanation for all factors individually and fails to address new nuances created when different factors act together.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Immerman, Richard H. *The CIA in Guatemala: the foreign policy of intervention*. Austin: University of Texas, 1982.

Conclusion

In conclusion, both orthodox and revisionist perspectives offer valid points. The Orthodox perspective excels at giving a narrative of what Washington thought of the world and displaying the short term and long term factors that shaped both PBFORTUNE and PBSUCCESS. However, its weakness lies in its unreliable evidence due to questionable sources and that it fails to successfully identify valid catalysts. The Revisionist perspective offers a strong criticism on American foreign policy in regards to Guatemala and benefits from supporting details from the later events of the Cold War. However it fails in countering Guatemala's apparent ties with the USSR and the 'Communist' basis of Árbenz's policies, meaning that it lacks comparative power.

In the face of this, both perspectives can be reconciled into the post-revisionist point. In regards to Guatemala, it can be summarised as followed. The narrow view of Communism held by the United States led it to exaggerate and misinterpret nationalist behaviours of Árbenz's government. This in turn fed into the pre-existing McCarthy era paranoia of US State Department decision makers, meaning that their response was constructed as an attack on Kremlin-led international communism. From this perspective, the central question of to what extent did the fear of Communism lead to US intervention in Guatemala can be answered. It can be said that the fear of Communism was mostly responsible for US intervention, but only because the US labelled most occurrences as communism due to its 'monolithic Communism' policy. Therefore the succinct answer is that the fear of Communism

was, to an overwhelming extent, responsible for the planning and execution of PBSUCCESS, leading to US intervention in Guatemala. The defining feature of this conclusion is also that it has a place in explaining later US interventions such as the Vietnam War, which was also widely credited to US misinterpretation of nationalist movements. The implications of this conclusion are significant in that it showcases a major weakness in US foreign policy during the Cold War; it fuels the overall post-revisionist argument that the Cold War was the responsibility of both the United States and the USSR. I that mutual fears and blunders led to ever-increasing tensions of which Guatemala is an example of. At the end of the day, Guatemala was another misstep in US' relationship with Latin America, which set it on an inevitable collision course, and a humiliating loss, with Cuba. More than that, Guatemala displayed the true nature of the Cold War- a period of misunderstandings and apathy on both sides.

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