Concluding remarks

The rapid success of the Reagan administration's policy of "trickle-down politics" and "freedom to the world" was hailed by many as a major breakthrough in U.S. foreign policy. However, the reality was somewhat different. The policies of the U.S. government in Central America and the Caribbean were often characterized by a lack of political and economic stability, and the region remained a source of conflict and tension for much of the 20th century.

In the context of the Cold War, the U.S. government's policies in Central America were seen as a way to contain the influence of the Soviet Union and its allies. However, the policies often had unintended consequences, leading to instability and social unrest.

The role of the United States in the region continued to evolve over time, with periods of cooperation and conflict. The region remains a complex and dynamic area, with a rich history and a diverse array of cultures and political systems.

In conclusion, the U.S. government's policies in Central America and the Caribbean have had a significant impact on the region's development and stability. While the policies were often aimed at promoting democracy and human rights, they also had the potential to undermine those very goals.

References

2. Ibid., 66–67.
3. The reference is to Geir Lundestad's article "Empire by Invitation? The United States and Western Europe, 1945–1952," Journal of Peace Research 23, no. 3 (1986), 263–277 in which he argues that the growth of the U.S. economic and military presence in Western Europe following World War II was in substantial part at the invitation of Western European governments.

Notes

Preface

1. Stephen G. Rabe, Eisenhower and Latin America: The Foreign Policy of Anticommu

nism (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 60; Stephen Schlesinger and

Stephen Kinzer, Bitter Fruit: The Untold Story of the American Coup in Guatemala (New

York: Doubleday, 1984), 216; Evan Thomas, The Very Best Men—Four Who Dared: The


2. The following brief overview of the intervention's operational aspects is drawn from

four basic sources: Schlesinger and Kinzer, Bitter Fruit; Richard H. Immerman, The CIA

in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982);

Piero Gleijeses, Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944–


CIA's Classified Account of Its Operations in Guatemala, 1952–1954 (Stanford, CA: Stan-

ford University Press, 1999).

3. CIA memorandum to Eisenhower, quoted in Immerman, CIA in Guatemala, 161

(emphasis in original).

4. Gleijeses, Shattered Hope, 246–247, 304–305, 307, 335; Cullather, Secret History, 68,

96–97. On 15 June 1954, the CIA station chief in Guatemala informed a high-ranking

Guatemalan army officer that the time had come to "get moving and take over the Army,"

warning that this was "the last opportunity for the Army to salvage its honor and even its

existence" (Ibid., 84).

5. Several authors have argued that U.S. economic self-interest was the primary mo-

tivation for the 1954 intervention. In Bitter Fruit, Schlesinger and Kinzer write that Ar-

benson's "takeover of United Fruit land was probably the decisive factor pushing the

Americans into action" (106). According to Jonas, "The U.S. could not tolerate the

Guatemalan Revolution essentially because a nationalistic independent capitalism directly

threatened existing U.S. interests there and called into question the feasibility of main-

taining the area as a 'safe' preserve for future investments" (Susanne Jonas, "Guatemala: Land

of Eternal Struggle," in Latin America: The Struggle with Dependency and Beyond, ed.

Ronald H. Chilcot and Joel C. Edelstein [New York: Wiley, 1974], 165). Also see José M.

Aybar de Soto, Dependency and Intervention: The Case of Guatemala in 1954 (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1978). Immerman, on the other hand, concludes that "the Eisenhower admini-
istration approved the CIA operation because all concerned officials believed that Communists dominated Guatemala's government and leading institutions. . . . The United States did not ultimately intervene in Guatemala to protect United Fruit. It intervened to halt what it believed to be the spread of the international Communist conspiracy" (CIA in Guatemala, 68, 82). Gleijeses offers a more holistic explanation: that "a complex interplay of moral hubris, security concerns, and economic interests" produced the U.S. intervention (Shattered Hope, 7).


12. Ibid., 154; Immerman, CIA in Guatemala, 75–79; Gleijeses, Shattered Hope, 93, 103.


18. Schneider, Communism in Guatemala, 193; Gleijeses, Shattered Hope, 147, 182, 189.


20. Gleijeses, Shattered Hope, 147–148; Schneider, Communism in Guatemala, 80. According to José Manuel Fortuny, "The Guatemalan Labor Party does not propose to fight immediately for a socialist society in Guatemala. It fights now against the absurd feudalism and imperialist oppression from which our country suffers, especially the oppression of North American imperialism which plunder our wealth, monopolizes our foreign trade and tries to impose upon us its political dictates and drag us into its warlike adventures. We fight for the economic development of Guatemala along capitalist lines, not because capitalism is 'good,' but because existing national and international conditions suggest that Guatemala take the path of liquidating feudalism and the backward forms of production which obtain today in our country" (quoted in Daniel James, Red Design for the Americas: Guatemalan Pre-Hide [New York: Day, 1954], 95).


22. Gleijeses, Shattered Hope, 144–147, 152; Schneider, Communism in Guatemala, 80.

23. Gleijeses, Shattered Hope, 155–156, 164, 194–196; Immerman, CIA in Guatemala, 65–67, 81. Also see U.S. Department of State, Office of Intelligence Research, "Agrarian Reform in Guatemala," Intelligence Report no. 6001, 5 March 1953, 5–6, in Kesari, ed., OSS/State Department Intelligence Microfilm, reel 9, frame 0208. Among the landholdings expropriated under the agrarian reform program were 1,700 acres owned by Arbenz and 1,200 belonging to his friend and future foreign minister Guillerermo Torrelio. See Schlesinger and Kinzer, Bitter Fruit, 55.


26. Ibid., 148, 177.

27. Ibid., 94, 99; Immerman, CIA in Guatemala, 75–78.


37. Scott, “Dismantling the Good Neighbor,” 15–17; Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope*, 129. As Robert F. Woodward, deputy assistant secretary of state for inter-American affairs in 1953–1954, later recalled: “So far as ‘indocrimination’ is concerned, there was no deliberate, planned or systematic training in the Foreign Service Officers (FSOs) who were working on Latin American relations. But ‘non-intervention’ was so much the centerpiece of all relations with Latin America that it loomed like Mount Hood or Mount Rainier on the landscape. It was just there. You took it for granted as being something big and immovable” (quoted in Wood, *The Dismantling of the Good Neighbor Policy*, 160).


39. FRUS, 1951, vol. 2: *United Nations; Western Hemisphere* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1979), 1437; Calllther, *Secret History*, 17, 24, 27. In August 1950, the CIA began recruiting “suitable indigenous Guatemalan personnel” as assets, but as late as December 1953 the agency’s Guatemalan station had “no penetrations of the PGT, government agencies, armed forces, or labor unions”—raising questions about the agency’s sources of field information (Calllther, *Secret History*, 18, 46).


42. Calllther, *Secret History*, 19, 37; FRUS, 1952–1954, 4: 191–196. The NSC hypothesized additional repercussions: “Institution of the action would provide a propaganda weapon generally to Communists and leftists in Central America. Moreover, to the degree that it would promote governmental seizure, it would assure the placement of extremists in charge of the former Company properties, and would thus increase the power of elements opposed to the United States in Central America, possibly including Panama, and make uncertain the cooperation of the governments of the area with the United States. Finally, it might contribute to the spread of the Guatemalan example and to the eventual overthrow of four Central American governments now friendly to the United States, which would transform our present security in the Caribbean into a dangerous threat at our backyard . . . . In Latin America generally, nationalization of the United Fruit Company properties would further stimulate the already serious movement for similar action against U.S. companies, which have properties with an established value of $5 billion in Latin America, including strategic industries in the fields of mining and petroleum . . . . Action by one branch of the U.S. Government against one private company, as a monopoly, would make most difficult the successful defense of that company’s legitimate interests by the Department of State, and weaken very seriously the ability of that Department to oppose the tide of nationalization of other American properties in the entire area and elsewhere. Increased nationalization of U.S. properties would not only deprive the United States and U.S. nationals of a degree of control of strategic resources, but would be contrary to the policy . . . of encouraging Latin American countries to take measures to attract private investment” (FRUS, 1952–1954, 4: 193).


46. Ibid., 26–27; Immerman, *CIA in Guatemala*, 82, 232n8; FRUS, 1952–1954, 4:
1095n1, 1106, 1109–1110. CIA officials “assumed the existence of links between the PGT and Moscow.” They believed that “all Communist Parties, acting under the direction of the Soviet Union, followed the same general pattern in seeking to capture free social institutions and democratic governments. Some operate openly and others clandestinely, but all are integral parts of the world-wide Communist effort” (Cullather, Secret History, 26, 47n27). Eisenhower’s ambassador to Guatemala, John Peurifoy, was more colorful in his assessment: “Communism is directed by the Kremlin all over the world,” he told a congressional committee in 1954, “and anyone who thinks differently doesn’t know what he is talking about” (ibid., 26). After Arbenz’s overthrow, U.S. agents combed through the ousted government’s records but found “nothing conclusive” linking the PGT with the Soviets (Rabe, Eisenhower and Latin America, 57).


48. Ibid., 1145–1148; Cullather, Secret History, 33; Gaddis Smith, The Last Years of the Monroe Doctrine, 1945–1993 (New York: Hill & Wang, 1994), 85. “Communist penetration in Guatemala was the most striking example of the Kremlin’s strategy in Latin America,” U.S. Ambassador Peurifoy told a congressional committee three months after the 1954 intervention. “Busy with power expansion in Europe and Asia, the Red rulers of Russia have long pushed their conspiracy in Latin America as a diversionary tactic which, while showing no immediate gain of territory under their domination, would at least weaken and harass our defenses” (Peurifoy testimony, U.S. House of Representatives, Select Committee on Communist Aggression, Subcommittee on Latin America, Hearings on Guatemala, 83rd Cong., 2nd sess., 27 September 1954, 116).


55. Ibid., 135.


60. Quoted in Time magazine, 11 January 1954, 27.


64. Pach and Richardson, Presidency of Dwight D. Eisenhower, 16–20, 50, 53–82, 88–89; Bowie and Immerman, Waging Peace, 43, 70–71, 73, 75, 78–79.


66. There were tactical benefits as well. In contrast to Western Europe or Asia, a U.S.
rollback of communism in the United States’ Central American sphere of influence was a “safe” intervention in the sense that it was unlikely to provoke a Soviet military response that might trigger a general war. If carried out covertly, utilizing Central American proxies, a U.S. intervention would also enable Eisenhower to “plausibly deny” U.S. involvement, shielding the administration from outraged protests by its Latin American allies (Bowie and Immerman, Waging Peace, 220; Scott, “Dismantling the Good Neighbor,” 5, 12–13, 28).

68. Gleijeses, Shattered Hope, 280, 295–304; Callacher, Secret History, 80–82; Immerman, CIA in Guatemala, 156, 158.
72. Scott, “Covert Operations as an Instrument of Foreign Policy,” 134–135; Richard Harkness and Gladys Harkness, The Mysterious Doings of the CIA, Saturday Evening Post, 30 October–13 November 1954; Thomas, Very Best Men, 124. Meanwhile, at lower echelons of the CIA, the intelligence officers who carried out the intervention were basking in the confident assurance “that their careers would take off.” After Guatemala, the wife of one CIA operative recalled, “it was, ‘You can have any job you want! You can own the world!’” (Thomas, Very Best Men, 126).

Chapter Two. Cuba, 1961

2. Welch, Response to Revolution, 87–88; Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy, 1961 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1962), 304–306; Michael R. Beschloss, The Crisis Years: Kennedy and Khrushchev, 1960–1961 (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 129; Lloyd C. Gardner, Pay Any Price: Lyndon Johnson and the War for Vietnam (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1995), 44. As Richard J. Walton noted, Kennedy’s denial of U.S. military involvement in the Bay of Pigs invasion was “quite an extraordinary statement. Not only was the invasion planned by the United States, but the United States recruited, paid, and trained the exile force. . . . The exiles used American military equipment. They were trained by American military men. . . . The warplanes were American, flown by Americans. The frogmen who were first on the beach were American. American ships carried the invaders, and American naval units accompanied them. Americans were killed in the operation. To claim that America did not intervene was to lie and be caught in the lie” (Cold War and Counterrevolution: The Foreign Policy of John F. Kennedy [New York: Viking, 1972], 49–50).